

The Experience of Pedagogic Intensity in Outdoor Education

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This paper is a phenomenological examination of Nova Scotian teachers leading children outside the normal school environment for instructional purposes. Phenomenology can examine the everyday, taken-for-granted phenomena in human experiences. Absent in experiential research is the focus on teachers' experience in outside programs. In addressing this gap, anecdotes that capture unique elements of pedagogic intensity are shared as insight into the lifeworld of outdoor educators. Common to all the teachers in this study were feelings of intensity. These lived experiences are from various disciplines, at the senior high school level, and the teachers are engaged in outdoor practices connected to their respective subject areas. These teachers share past moments that show pedagogic intensity as a varied and unique instructional experience. All the teachers observed that the outdoors somehow magnifies the teaching experience. A key area is how this magnification applies to the pedagogic quality of outside teaching.

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In telling stories that encompass powerful events in our lives, the word “intense” is often used by many to illustrate the experience. In outdoor education, intensity often describes corporeal, emotional, intellectual, and environmental encounters. However, the use of intensity to support inarticulate attempts, or rich narratives in describing an extraordinary experience, does not always explain the very nature of the experience. When does an experience qualify as intense? According to Taylor (1989), intense experiences are distinguished by degrees of separation from everyday existence and this is best understood as an inward experience (p. 301). Many in outdoor education would refer to this as an “act of reflection.” In outdoor experiences, in particular, the word intense is frequently used by many students to capture reflective moments. Often this description is from the students’ experiential account, but for the purpose of this study pedagogic intensity of teachers’ lived experiences are presented.

Central to the study of *pedagogical intensity* is the importance of the relational aspect between the teacher and student, in contrast to a more common notion that pedagogy is the technical craft of teaching. From the teachers’ reflections, it was possible to gain insight into how the outdoor setting contributed to this teacher-student connection. Common to all the teachers in this study in outdoor education were degrees of intense feelings that emanated from outside moments. These lived experiences, from Nova Scotian teachers engaged in an outside-teaching practice, are from various disciplines at the senior high school level. All names have been changed to ensure confidentiality in order to allow these teachers to share past moments that show pedagogic intensity as a varied and unique instructional experience that is rooted in curriculum. All the teachers observed that the outdoors had somehow magnified the teaching experience by bringing the relational aspect into absolute focus. What is significant is how this magnification applies to the quality of an outside learning experience. To step outside the classroom opens the pedagogic relationship to an experience that is beyond what many in public education would call “traditional school.”

A Need for Phenomenological Research in Outdoor Education

To go outside with a group of school children is usually not a common *instructional* occurrence in public education. The inside act of teaching dominates curricular instruction. Yet, there is something unique in the

outdoor teaching experience that requires examination from many vantage points. "Phenomenology" examines the taken-for-granted in life; the simple act of passing through the doorway, from the inside to the outside world, is one of those everyday, overlooked experiences. Phenomenology is an examination of lived experiences that strives to represent the pre-reflected moments of being in the world (van Manen, 1997). In exploring relevant research focusing on the outside teacher's experience, the author has discovered that absent was the portrayal of the teacher's "lifeworld" (Husserl, 1970) outside the school. Strikingly absent from current studies on outside pedagogy, was a direct phenomenological connection to the outside teaching experience.

During a symposium sponsored by the *Coalition for Education in the Outdoors* (CEO), a report was presented revealing a network of partners in support of outdoor education (Henderson, 1992). The CEO symposium provides current and applicable literature reviews and field-research reports related to outdoor educational practices, complete with recommendations for future research. Included in its report is a recommendation for the articulation of a phenomenology of wilderness experiences. The notion of phenomenology as a research method for outdoor and experiential educational practices is not a unique concept. Rosenblatt and Bartlett (1976) relate the psychological dynamics of peak experiences in outdoor education to the philosophical orientation of phenomenology. They enhance the understanding of the peak experience as an integral part of adventure in outdoor and experiential education by comparing it to the experiential emphasis found in "Husserlian" phenomenology (Husserl, 1983). Since the research of Rosenblatt and Bartlett, the phenomenological examination into lived experiences of leaders, instructors, and teachers of outdoor education remains sketchy. Thus, there is a need to begin addressing the absence of phenomenology in research specific to outdoor education.

Relevant works of Knapp and Woodhouse (2000), and Lewicki's (1998) observe that place-based education is a relatively new term associated with teaching in the outdoors, but progressive educators have promoted the underlying concept for over a 100 years. Place-based education usually includes conventional outdoor education and experiential methodologies, such as those advocated by John Dewey, to help students connect with their unique context in the world. Lewicki formalized the notion of pedagogy of place by establishing an educational consideration of teaching about nature in natural settings. Pedagogy of place is the school connection to the surrounding outside world. However, missing from Knapp and Woodhouse, and Lewicki, is any explanation of the *teachers'* outside experiences and lifeworld.

This evolving paradigm shift to place education is understandable, considering that rural schools are beginning to use the greatest teaching resource at their disposal—the surrounding outdoors, the community, and the natural world. Legault (1991) describes an approach to wilderness education that facilitates an ongoing dialogue between students and elements of nature. This phenomenological study contains student relevance, but it also falls short of an adequate exploration of the experiential dimensions of the teacher's experience in a natural setting. Legault's work proves indispensable in revealing learning implications that are accessible through an outside space. Davidson's (2001) research demonstrated that a student's lived experience, and specifically his/her improved self-concept, strongly emerged from "being-in-the-outdoors." Davidson's study focused on 10 New Zealand male secondary students, aged 17–19, and their outdoor educational experiences. This source is an indication of the "Heideggerian" orientation of being-in-the-world, which is crucial in a phenomenological study (Heidegger, 1962). From a more philosophical source, Wohlgemut (2000) draws on Heidegger's analyses of being human to deconstruct the current technological outlook of many educators. The challenge is in creating a space where all participants can become attuned to the world and consider their possibilities of "dwelling-in-the-world," including the alternative teaching environment—the outdoors. However, Wohlgemut does not provide a phenomenological examination of the outside lifeworld for the teacher.

From these research sources, it was observed that the teachers' lived experience of teaching outside the school is lacking and phenomenologically void. This absence of phenomenology is ironic due to the fact that experiential education, outdoor education, adventure education, place-based education, and community-based programs are rooted in lived experiences. The research methodology of phenomenology is well-suited to exploring the meaning of outside experiences because of its specific focus on lived experiences in the human sciences.

Phenomenological Showing

Represented in this section are some of the findings based on a qualitative phenomenological inquiry utilizing a descriptive, hermeneutic research process. An aspect of pedagogical uniqueness from each teacher's anecdote explores the intensity of teaching outside the school. Phenomenology is an examination of lived experiences and the showing of this experience. Phenomenology asks simply what an experience is like, and through various sources of data the experience (and in this instance, the outside experience) can be made more recognizable through a textual representation. A human phenomenon viewed through a hermeneutic, interpretative-reflective lens is a writing to evoke the "phe-

nomenological showing" (van Manen, 1997). The seeing is the affirmation of human lived experiences. A phenomenological study draws on experiential lived experiences—concrete experiences—and relies on a range of descriptive text to show us the moment. Moran (2001) refers to this as the "phenomenological now" (p. 43).

In examining the lived experiences of educators implementing lessons outdoors, the author conducted open-ended conversations with six selected outdoor educators in Nova Scotian public schools. These teachers were asked to share their outdoor stories and craft anecdotes that captured specific outside pedagogical moments. Their stories were collected during two interviews. The first interview was largely to illicit their impressions and descriptions of outside experiences. The second interview was pivotal in allowing the teachers and the author (interviewer) to reinterpret their experiences of leading students outside. It is through the data of experiential moments of teaching outside, which the author can access as closely as possible, the pre-reflective moments of teaching outdoors.

These experiential stories are provisional glimpses of concrete meanings that are presented through the reduction method. This method is powerful, insightful, and a tangible extension of the lifeworld due to the varied meanings and possible viewpoints. This method best utilizes the specific research technique of the written anecdote—the "lived experience description" (van Manen, 1997, p. 39). van Manen explains this methodological device as crucial to the phenomenological showing, "to make comprehensible some notion that easily eludes us" (p. 116). The crafting of anecdotes, written by teachers through reflective conversations, provides the data of a concrete lived experience; it captures the "here and now" (see Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and guards against "abstract theoretical thought" (van Manen, 1997, p. 119). The purpose of the anecdote is to open up the researcher to the lifeworld of teachers leading children outside their schools. These stories provide a suspended, bracketed moment outside the school building. The uniqueness, distinctiveness, and inevitable vagueness of each story in this paper show elements of pedagogic intensity. The importance of anecdotes, within the phenomenological method, is not intended to validate science, prove theories, or establish factual-empirical quantification (van Manen, p. 116). The aim of this study is to bring the reader as close as possible to the lived experience of teachers engaged with children outside the school; to reveal to the reader the recognizability of the outside teaching experience as a possible human experience. To assist in recognition, pedagogy needs to be fully explained as a central term in this article.

A Relational Pedagogy

Exploring the meaning of pedagogy reveals a pertinent history. The word *agogos* is derived from the Greek notion of leading or guiding. When

linked with the word *peda* or *paides*, meaning child, a literal interpretation of pedagogy would be to lead a child (Yale University Library, 2001). This provides an etymologically rich image—a “watchful slave or guardian whose responsibility it was to lead” children (van Manen, 1991, p. 37). Extending one’s imagination into the ancient world, one could see a caring, sensitive leader who is focused on the student’s learning engagement. The teacher-like figure leads children toward educational experiences of growth and learning challenges—an adult that was “fully there” for the child. The pedagogical relationship is teacher as leader, not merely conveyor of knowledge. In the outdoors, this relationship—which is concerned with student growth, student risk, the excitement of hands-on learning, and distance of leading—allows the teacher only to intensely watch, look and hope. Outdoor education seems to bring the educational experience closer to the authenticity of the Greek intention of pedagogy.

Pedagogic relationships based on the ability of teachers who “enter into the world of a child” are based on thoughtfulness and tact (van Manen, 2002, p. 3). van Manen explains pedagogic intention as the “ability to actively distinguish what is appropriate from what is less appropriate for children or young people” (p. 8). The challenge for any educator, inside or outside the school, is to cultivate his/her pedagogical thoughtfulness. “Tactful educators have developed a caring attentiveness to the unique—the uniqueness of children, the uniqueness of every situation, and the uniqueness of individual lives” (van Manen, p. 8). The outdoors is a natural place for people to create opportunity that opens our existence to relationships with others and with our world. For the purposes of this article, and for clarification, the term pedagogy will refer to the relational aspects that are inherent in the student-teacher relationship.

Intendere

Many people can concretely understand “intensity” as strength of a color, for example, especially in the degrees of brightness and contrasting shades. Is our experience of color similar to the inner reaction we reflect on powerful-past events? The understanding and meaning of intensity is needed to make sense of our experiential moments. Etymologically, the *intendere* experience is one that is too overwrought, tight, a stretching of our normal existence, a focused consuming-emotional event (Hoad, 1996, p. 238). For many outside educators the pedagogic intensity must then lie in the extremes. Therefore, the word intensity captures and describes the magnitude of an experience that falls outside of everyday teaching to possibly include moments of heightened focus, thrill, vigor, or the direct focus of our being-in-the-moment. As the teachers in my study, Jamie, Jody, Kelly, Bobby, Chris, and Leslie share their anecdotes, this notion of “magnitude as intense” can only partially

explain many of the lived experiences of outside pedagogic moments.

During a routine day-trip kayaking on St. Margaret's Bay, Nova Scotia, Jamie shared a realization from an outdoor experience that in life there are few surprises, and these teachable moments are powerful. What is a surprise? Hoad (1996) traces surprise to mean a sudden attack where the person is overcome and overwhelmed by desire (p. 475). Surprise is more than the feeling of the unexpected. In the right context this sudden, unplanned moment can intensely involve those within the lived experience. For Jamie, this teachable moment—the surprise—was described as pedagogically intense. According to Jamie, the kayaking flotilla was “utterly absorbed, learning in a moment that had nothing to do with my lesson plan.” Jamie was not resentful of the interruption, for it was what many teachers will refer to as pure engagement. The outdoors has a way of presenting these moment—surprises:

I brought them in to debrief their draw stroke, but this girl had her hand down in the water playing with something, and she was clearly not listening to me. I specifically asked her how she made out and she replied in a distant voice, “I don't know, but look at this.” She had a clear, spongy, jelly substance that she found in the water. It was an egg of some kind; no one knew what it was. It was striated like a pumpkin. There was something inside it. Everyone is in awe at this thing and it was far more interesting than the draw stroke. At the end of the *Show and Tell* she said her draw stroke was pretty good! She did not care about her draw stroke at that point. She found something of intense interest. The moment captivated everybody. She was the teacher by creating a moment that absorbed everybody; we were intensely focused on one of nature's little surprises. (Jamie, At-risk Support teacher)

Jamie explains that this intensity in the outdoors is possible because the four walls, the staleness, and classroom structure is removed. Jamie states that actually doing the lesson in the midst of the natural environment is novel for students and many teachers. Jamie states, “Outdoors is not just a pencil and paper thing. You don't get that level of surprise in the classroom because inside it is all in the books.” A teachable moment can be achieved indoors through class discussion or as a result of reading the text, but outdoors, a teachable moment—the clear, jelly-like pumpkin thing—can be picked up and held; unlike a book, for it is beyond the abstractions of text (Burkholder, 2003, p. 22). The intensity of the surprise is held right in their very hands as a direct experience. Jamie was connected to the class

through fascination. As a class, they were bonded in a moment of learning and not for the simple reason that Jamie was the teacher.

Jody shared a memory of a peaceful and subdued pedagogic experience that was an “epiphany.” Jody never imagined that learning was possible in an outside setting, nor was Jody prepared for the intensity in learning about their community history as an old mill town. This was as an intense exchange between the student and teacher; an awareness of a shared consciousness outside the school. Is the intensity in being a teacher in the natural world, in “being-seen-by-another”—the student—who in turn, shares in the state of natural learning? The following example illustrates:

When I looked across the dam I was overwhelmed. Something inside me swelled and I was not alone. This knowing or connection was revealed to me when I caught the eye of Samantha. It was in her eyes and smile; it radiated from her face. I have never seen that expression in school! Her face revealed a beauty of learning, a hint of what I dreamed teaching to be. I lived as a student in that look. We just gave each other gentle nods as if sharing a secret. She noticed, no doubt, that I was as much of a student as she. I think she saw the child in my face, the person in her teacher. There was innocence and intensity in our exchange that held personal meaning. I experienced a teaching moment that connected me to learning like no history lesson I had ever experienced. (Jody, History teacher)

That day in the woods, Jody experienced what Aristotle considers as *tode ti*—a true recognition of the individual, the being, that is presented only as shown, not in words (Gadamer, 1998). Jody’s intense experience is centered on *seeing*; Jody seeing a student in engaged learning, during a time in which the student was really *seeing* Jody discovering an outdoor-teaching identity. At that moment of seeing, both were experiencing the richness of the relational in pedagogy. As humans we are naturally a part of nature, not separate from it, and it is here, in the woods, where one explores the self through all senses of his/her being. Following Rousseau’s (1969) encouragement of outdoor lessons is a reminder that educational growth “comes to us from nature...we gain by our experience of our surroundings” (p. 6). Pedagogic development of the child’s senses in the natural world should include the teacher’s development as well. The intensity may be the growth that occurs when development is imposed on us by nature, and the teacher and student can share their awareness of being outside together as learners.

Jody captures that day as a moment that transcended the teaching

body, leaping out, and connecting with conviction to an outside world. “I know the students were experiencing what I felt because their faces had that *look*—an intense look.” This was the look of engaged learning, not the dull stare of traditional learning that is typical indoors. There was a connection to people, learning, and landscape. Jody concluded our discussion with the following: “That day I abandoned my past notion of teaching and embraced the role as an outdoor educator. I came alive as a teacher.”

Many experiences are deemed intense for the purpose of making sense of an experience that occurred outside our normal, everyday existing. Through language we struggle to recapture the fleeting moment of the event by some post-description. It could be that we have powerful moments that are thrilling, stressful, exciting, scary, but in the experiential sense they may not be intense. Is intensity only reserved for the extremes—the climber of Everest, the paddler on a white-water stretch, the explorer of the deep wilderness, or the participant struggling and participating in *great* challenges? How far outside our normal mode of existence do we have to stray before an experience can be called intense? If intensity is reserved only for events that are beyond the normal mode of existence then how do we rightfully classify everyday events as intense? This question is central to common everyday educative approaches that many in experiential practices can consider—outdoor education—going out is an expected and normal element to this practice.

An outdoor educational experience is a personal process, where the teachers lead those in their care towards learning challenges for growth. However, there is for the teacher, a heightened awareness for safety, control, and environmental risk; learning lessons outside places a greater focus on the pedagogic relationship. It could be that in the outdoors the intensity emanates from a teacher’s focus on his/her need of environmental awareness. Kelly’s teaching practice seems to be closely affiliated with the Greek intention of pedagogy. Is intensity the relationship of *agogos* with children, leading them to the experience—not robbing students of the experience? To be pedagogic is to know when to intervene and when to hold back (see van Manen, 1991). Dwelling in this notion of pedagogy was an intense lived experience for Kelly. Kelly shares a moment from a “check-in” during a winter survival module where students have built emergency shelters and are trying to make it until morning:

That level of trust is intense; it is so strong. This feeling is an intense one-on-one relationship with the person, and this space under the plastic tarp or in the pile of brush, becomes our whole world. The connection I have from our on-going conversation is so powerful, but possible because of the level

of trust. They feel safe with you, real safe! The trust is so immediate and giving; this is the trust of the infant and the parent. The kids do not balk at my advice. I felt their respect, the trust is absolute. That level of trust is being built regardless of age difference, gender, or academics. Because of this intense trust I know I am more than their teacher. (Kelly, Physical Education teacher)

Kelly explained that the centrality of the intensity was due to more than sharing feelings with the students: “I felt their cold, their fear, their discomfort, their doubt, and their depression when they said they could not make it.” Despite wanting to hold and comfort the students, Kelly stated an obligation to not only keep the students safe, but to lead them to discover their self-confidence and self-determination. Kelly referred to this as almost painful to witness, knowing how much some of the students were struggling. This created an intense connection between the student and the teacher. The class experience, being in a natural place, being a little unfamiliar, a little uncomfortable, but having someone there that can take you through the survival process—students making it until morning, with next to no supplies—builds trust at a magnified level. Outside, during a survival lesson, there is a focus; an undeniable purpose and a realization of the authentic learning environment—the immediate consequences of not cooperating with the natural world is not an abstract consequence; outside is not pretend. Accordingly, the level of care that is needed to teach outside becomes intensely focused, and the relational aspect between the student and the teacher is heightened as a result.

The outside offers variables that are not always about human survival. Intense, still, are group challenges that teachers and students experience outside the school. Bobby recalls a moment of “color and choice” that brought his class in touch with achievement. When the challenges are real and everyone committed, the emotional release is profound. For some, the climb in Bobby’s account was the challenge, for others it was the cold, or the exertion of trudging through the snow, and still for others, it could have been putting on a mismatched hat—all could contribute to the intense discovery of self. Bobby experienced a pedagogic intensity in the moment when the power of choice was given to students:

I keep this lost and found box and we are pulling out pink hats, neon mitts, and polka dot scarves, and the kids are just taking whatever fit. They just want to be warm! We were hiking up Back Mountain—the big hill at the back of the school. We were half-way following the path that had fresh snow cover. It was well past our knees because the trees thin out allowing

for deep drifting. We had to decide whether to continue on and stock the feeders, or turn around. They had to face the challenge: go for something that we know is possible, just extremely hard, or give up? The feeders were a class responsibility, but I would have fully understood [its] wanting to return because the wind-chill was bitter. After a debated-class decision they decided to go for it. The climb was hard work, but it was full of laughter, camaraderie, determination, and support. The commitment seemed to come from nowhere! A moment previous they were a bunch of kids playing in the snow, and earlier a bunch of kids that wanted to stay inside where it was warm. It took us over an hour to make it to the top plowing through the snow. I saw something in myself and in those kids that day that made us feel extraordinary. I still do not know what was so significant about that walk in the snow, but it was intense. Because of that struggle there was something in us that made us feel so alive, so powerful, so excited, and so together. (Bobby, Biology teacher)

Bobby recalled that before the parents came the class relationships were different—closer. The students just kept talking about the hike again and again, reliving each step. Bobby's comment revealed that as a class, they went through some remarkable event, and that experience will not be easily forgotten. This was a shared moment, different for each student, and for the teacher. Bobby did capture one unifying feature; the moment was intense. This does not happen every time you go outdoors, but when the moment presents itself outdoor teachers need to see the possibility, and decide if the learning experience is appropriate for the class. The release of intensity may very well have originated in the challenge, but the outdoors has a wonderful way of offering a multitude of possible moments.

Despite how important the natural environment is for outside teaching, intensity is more than just being in a place. It has to do with *how* to be in a place with children. Chris shares a story about a group challenge, team-building initiative at Camp Kidston: "How many times did I want to join them in an adventure activity to help, or provide the solution, helping them finish?" The reason Chris provided for wanting to join was to avoid the class possibly failing. Chris recalled feeling powerless, and afraid of having led them incorrectly, or that the task created would not work because it was too hard or inappropriate for the class—a result of misreading the performance level of the group. Chris emphatically stated, "My role was to bring them together and build a community of caring, supportive, accepting youth through adventure-cooperative games. My

instincts would point me to an activity based on the physical, emotional, and intellectual characteristics, along with group maturity.” But Chris, like many outdoor educators, would then allow direct experience to take over as the teacher, observing the activity, the development of the class, and the experiential process. This process, for Chris, was critical for the class to become a community of learners. Is pedagogic intensity a result of outside lessons that are more fully experiential? Chris recalls the following:

It was so hard watching. I was stamping my feet in the mud and I realize now I was not trying to warm my body; it was more to relieve the frustration. It was so simple; build on the ideas, support, and swing the group, one at a time, across the mud bog, but the group must find their own plan. It is much more than getting a group across the bog with a swinging rope. It is care, support, encouragement, celebrations for those that have a particular ability, and respect for different strengths that are revealed in a trusting group. Students find a personal identity in the group, and a group identity as a community. I lead them to the experience, but I can't live it for them; but I want to! They were down to the last three and they were at that point a couple of times already that morning. Mistakes sent all twenty-three back to the other side. Simple mistakes like an innocent slip within the zone or the illegal touch of the boundaries. Experience is the real teacher, and the possibility of failure was so intense I wanted to scream out and warn them reminding them of the past. (Chris, Career and Life Management teacher)

A well-led learning endeavor does not just happen for students; this is the result of prudent teacher planning, indoors or outdoors. In planned learning activities students “learn best, and are willing to extend and risk themselves in an educational environment that is experienced as safe and secure” (van Manen, 1991, p. 58). This is possible only if teachers create a place of tactful understanding where students can trust, care, and support one another as they push the limits, risking in the adventure activity to become a community. Meaningful education is not something that can be easily packaged. The uncertainty of the result for Chris was an intense waiting, hoping, and desire for success. Pedagogic intensity was magnified because the possibility of failure was not limited to one or two students, but the activity was central to the entire class. Intense for Chris was the leading that allowed students to engage in an experience that hopefully would bring their class into a genuine community. Even though the outdoor educator is not directly

involved in the learning experience, they too, became a part of this lived experience. Chris states, "I may have been the bystander, but I was knee deep in the mud as well."

Intensity is not always a result of anticipation, of failure, or accomplishment. Leslie experienced an intense, pedagogic high during times of peace and relaxation. During Leslie's trips the campfire was always a gathering place; a time as a sharing community; at the end of a day's paddle. This was a place where healing-worn bodies could warm themselves in the intensity of a fire. Many outdoor educators will attest that the nightly fire can be the best part of the trip. Leslie situates the communal fire with the following: "It is around the soothing glow where we could relax. It was a well-deserved break from the intense use of our bodies pushing physical, and at times, mental limits to travel deeply into the wilderness." The intensity of these fires is not in the coals or flames. This intensity supersedes the bodily strain that was exacted to come to the resting place around the inviting spill of firelight. How can a person experience pedagogic intensity staring into dancing flames? Leslie tells of intensity as students' discovered their right of passage:

It is amazing how much these kids love to talk, sorting out issues of religion, morality, and mortality. They are so sincere. It started with this one comment, "This is so cool, to be this far out following one of the routes of the Mi'Maq. Think about it, the waterways of an ancient people, our First Nations People. I realized today that to get here, I needed all your help. I really didn't think I was going to be able to get this far. I was nervous. I have never been this far from home." And then he said, "How do you really think all this came to be? What I mean is the waterfall on Teflagar Lake. It was so beautiful. Do you think something or someone created all this?" These are only some examples that are so personally intense for these kids. When they are telling their piece, the group's attention is so focused, so attuned; nothing else matters at that moment. It seems they often end their piece with, "I don't know why I told you that." That's the moment, the declaration of a personal truth, and I am a part of it. (Leslie, Geography teacher)

Campfires bring out the spiritual realization, the fears, and our histories. We make public thoughts and stories we would never tell one another at home or inside a classroom. Stankey (1989) states it is within the sanctuary of wilderness where we face ourselves, our fears, and our survival as a civilization: "Perhaps deeply scored on the genetic code of

humans are the fears of our ancestors as they huddled around the fire, listening to the sounds of the night around them, ever mindful of their precarious status and vulnerability" (p. 9). By exploring wild places, Leslie discovered that there is a deep-seated emotion concerning children and wilderness. Outdoors becomes the place to seek adventure, and to test strengths, as proof of our ability in a personal challenge. For many students, they generally portray wilderness as a synonym for wild uninhabited lands; the manifestation of supreme creation, and "out there" one could prepare for this element of spiritual contact. It is in the intensity of a campfire that we are most vulnerable and secure. The fire draws us inward. In conclusion Leslie says, "It is in the circle of light that people share what is most important to them and these night talks become intense sharings." The camp fire is our place of balance; the separation of light and darkness, and what we know to be private about ourselves and the intensity, not so much the burning from the heat, but from sharing publicly.

Intensity is not confined to the heat of coals from a fire. There are times when teaching in the outdoors is a moment of intense fear. Is intensity in teaching experientially facing fear? The intensity may reside in fear, but only as one of the many emotions and feelings that went with the student-teacher relationship. Bobby's account raises many questions regarding outside teaching that brings people to experience fear:

It was Lea, the pole, and her fear. Watching Lea climb was so hard; seeing her shaking legs lift, and with her feet blindly searching for the next clip. The trembles are so hard to control. She was shaking her hands. Shaking the hands seems to help release the tension. The last half of the clips always brings the climber so close and intimate with the pole. You feel everything, smell every foot of it, and see the swirls of wood grain every step up to the top. I knew she could do it, so I encouraged her upward. Ten more clips, eight, six, four, two...her hand finally grabbed the top. I was really happy for her. Lea made it to the top of the Pamper Pole, and I felt so responsible for her fear. (Bobby, Physical Education teacher)

Is there intensity even in perceived risk? Bobby believes that the intensity is present as soon as the student chooses to make the climb. However, intensity for this teacher was not rooted in the student's fear. Bobby *felt* something that day that was described as a "strange and intense sensation." A post discussion with the ropes course manager revealed that the entire class stopped—some were frozen in the middle of their climbs, some at the top waiting to descend, and others respectfully

waiting to start. The entire course has come to a stand still, a moment of absolute dedication to Lea's moment. According to Bobby, "the kids were intently focused only on her. To this day, I have no idea as to how long they gave Lea that silent encouragement and support." A silent intensity that seeps, radiates, and connects the teacher to each climber through an umbilical rope of safety. Bobby explained that the intensity was rooted in how the class accepted and supported each other, and for the teacher, the pedagogic intensity was in facing fear with students together.

Outdoor education is teaching in the realm of the unpredictable, and in this, leading others to face fear, their fear experientially, without knowing the outcome. The intensity could reside in a practical knowing—leading students to extreme experiences could prove disastrous. Heidegger (1962) reminds us that the moment of fear is "characterized as threatening...[when] freed and allowed to matter to us" (p. 180). Heidegger furthers this notion: "One can also fear about others, and we then speak of 'fearing for' them" (p. 181). Bobby feared for Lea, and the intensity has its origins in fear, but the relational aspect of Bobby's teaching was undeniably heightened because of the perceived risk, not associated with the climb, but more so in the uncertainty of student outcome.

Pedagogical Meanings

Each teacher shared an account that was unique in context, but common to each was the outside as a site of instruction. For these teachers an outside place was more than just space; it provided feelings of endowed value, memories and identity. These teachers presented stories on the convergence of people, a physical setting, and a common interest—the subject. Important here, is the similar expression of intensity as it expressed the relational elements of teaching—pedagogy as powerful and educationally significant. The outside places allowed these teachers to link to the direct experiences in the natural environment, learning with children outside the traditional school setting. Teaching outside was not the extreme for these outside teachers, nor was it the thrill associated with grand adventures. For outdoor educators, teaching outside is their way of instruction and their way of "being-in-the-world." Each teacher referred to the intensity embedded within their pedagogic relationships with students.

The concept of intensity attempts to explain the extraordinary moments of these outside teachers, but more so to describe the simple reality of being outside the school with students. Intense encounters resulted from the relational focus in teaching outdoors, the place of learning, the emotions and feelings that emanate from the uncertainty, the student growth, the risk, the excitement from hands-on learning, and the experience of leading for the teacher outside the school.

In outdoor education, the intensity is a constant “pathway connection” that exists between teacher and student, resulting in a teaching identity that is weaved with relationships, places of learning, events, memories and reflections; constructing a past, informing the pedagogic present. Teaching outside may seem intense because of the novelty that is not typically experienced in traditional indoor education. These events on their own, without children, may not carry the same intensity for teachers. And these lived experiences do not capture intensity in its entirety. Husserl (1962) is mindful of achieving the essence of human phenomena: “an essence can be quite vague in context” (p. 67), but meanings are possible through the lived experiences of others.

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