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Adventure education: Redux*

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ABSTRACT
This article discusses the meanings of adventure and its role in learning. An analysis of literature from the fields of education, recreation and tourism suggests that definitions of adventure are constantly undergoing reinterpretation. We highlight how 'narrow' views of adventure, which appeal to notions of risk and danger, are paradoxically shaped by control and predictability. A focus on activities involving risk and danger limit the pedagogical potential of adventure. We argue that current forms of adventure education practice fail to meet the needs of learners who are confronting a world of change, unpredictability and complexity. To better understand the broader social and educational landscape, we briefly outline some features of late modernity that require learners to cope with uncertainty in their everyday lives. We suggest an alternative approach to adventurous learning that embraces features of late modernity and takes as its starting point the everyday life of the learner.

KEYWORDS
Learning; adventure; mastery; authenticity; agency; uncertainty

Introduction

The meaning of adventure in contemporary western societies is 'subjective and fluid' (Varley, 2006, p. 174), contested and not easily defined (Beames & Pike, 2013). In order to gain useful theoretical purchase on various meanings of adventure, we will discuss its usage through the lenses of adventure education, adventure recreation and adventure tourism. We outline how a simplistic recourse to notions of risk, danger and uncertainty fails to capture the diverse ways in which adventure is perceived by a range of modern-day 'adventurers'. Drawing on a range of discourses we illustrate how definitions of adventure are open to ongoing reinterpretation. We then briefly discuss how understanding the conditions of contemporary life—exhibited in the fracture of grand narratives, the rise of uncertainty, the distrust of scientific explanations and the growing diversity in lifestyles and identities (Giddens, 1990; Thompson, 1992)—is a necessary precursor to reconsidering the educational relevance of adventure in a rapidly changing world. We believe it is important to understand the 'fluid form' of contemporary western society, because this offers the potential to reshape discourses of adventure and education.

In line with the call for papers of this special issue, we go on to introduce four themes that we argue point towards meaningful adventure in contemporary educational settings. These components of what we refer to as adventurous learning are proffered to 'illuminate new or undeveloped ways of learning through adventure, and stimulate critical discussion' (Allin & Humberstone, 2015, p. 93). The four themes place emphasis on student agency, authenticity of task/setting, a constructive degree of

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*This is a play on the film title *Apocalypse Now Redux* (2001) [Francis Ford Coppola and Kim Aubry. USA: American Zoetrope]. Redux—'restored; experienced or considered for a second time' (http://www.oed.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/view/Entry/160550?redirectedFrom=redux#eid).

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uncertainty and the acquisition and application of skills/knowledge (what we call 'mastery'). These features are not fixed, but interact in context-specific ways as a means of guiding educators who are interested in fostering adventurous learning in educational contexts. We commence with an examination of the term 'adventure', as a first step towards helping educators more deeply understand the educational potential adventure possesses when it is unshackled from the narrow definitions that have shaped much adventure education practice.

Adventure in adventure education

Central to many definitions of adventure within adventure education literature is the notion of uncertainty of outcome (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993; Mortlock, 1984; Priest, 1999). Priest suggests that 'the outcome of an adventure is uncertain when information (critical to the completion of a task or the solution of a problem) is missing, vague, or unknown' (1999, p. 112). Definitions relating to the use of adventure in education—frequently referred to as adventure education or adventure programming—draw on discourses of uncertainty, risk and danger. For example, Miles and Priest (1990) state that 'Adventure education involves the purposeful planning and implementation of educational processes that involve risk in some way' (p. 1), whilst Ewert and Garvey (2007) claim that 'inherent in adventure education is the inclusion of activities and experiences that often include elements of danger or risk and uncertain outcomes' (p. 22). The conflation of adventure with risk and danger as ways to achieve uncertainty has permeated adventure education textbooks (see, e.g., Berry & Hodgson, 2011; Miles & Priest, 1990, 1999; Priest & Gass, 1997; Wurdinger, 1997). Indeed, Wurdinger suggests that risk 'is the element that distinguishes adventure education from other educational fields' (1997, p. 43).

These foundational definitions of adventure education have been subject to a number of critiques, such as the absence of a sound educational justification for using activities involving risk as an effective learning strategy (Beedie, 1994; Beedie & Bourne, 2005; Brown & Fraser, 2009; Bunting, 1999; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005) and the belief that creating uncertainty, by putting learners outside their comfort zone, is desirable and beneficial (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005; Brown, 2008; Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002; Leberman & Martin, 2003). Mikaels, Backman, and Lundvall (2015) have recently highlighted how discourses of adventure (risk, safety, skill and pursuit-based activities) continue to dominate in New Zealand secondary school outdoor programmes. They highlight how this hegemonic discourse, with dual foci on performance and competence, creates a tension with the school curriculum that has a broader focus on learning. References to risk and danger may be found in the influence of imperial and military traditions that were formative in early adventure education practices (see Beedie, 1995/96; Cook, 1999; Lugg, 2004; Lynch, 2006; Nicol, 2002a, 2002b). Wattchow and Brown (2011) explain how the 'fingerprints of these traditions are visible in practises where nature becomes a site for building character or self-development through arduous self-propelled travel, or the development of leadership qualities through the performance of contrived tasks in simulations and role playing' (p. 28).

As will be discussed in the following, the issues facing contemporary society (e.g. rapid shifts in technology, climate change, global migration) are markedly different from the challenges associated with preparing young men for battlefields and imperial posts, which gave rise to the early manifestations of adventurous training that continue to permeate contemporary adventure education practices. Indeed, what may have been appropriate definitions of adventure in previous times —which adventure educators subsequently appropriated—will not necessarily assist people in dealing with the complexities of the world in which they live now (Bauman, 2007; Beedie, 1995/96; Robinson, 2011). Put another way, adventure education practice, such as it was in the 1940s and 1950s, was conceived to address issues of its time (see Nicol, Beames, & Higgins, 2016). The trouble is that the world has moved on and notions of adventure, as frequently used in adventure education, have failed to keep up.

We now turn our attention to other perspectives on adventure, as a means of gaining a more nuanced appreciation of its characteristics and how they are perceived by participants.

Contesting understandings of adventure

By drawing on research from the fields of adventure recreation and adventure tourism we can see how simple definitions of adventure that are tied to risk and the manipulation of uncertainty are problematic. This is shown by Kane and Tucker (2004), who argue that the focus on risk has obscured the value that participants find in adventure recreation and tourism. Some of these valued potential outcomes include problem-solving, developing and testing skills, social interaction, exhilaration, excitement and achievement.

In a thoughtful exploration of the philosophical underpinnings of risk and adventure sports participation, Krein (2007) explains that it is easy to see how some people might see risk and adventure sports as being inseparable, because the attraction to adventure must be based on its inherent risks. This logic is flawed, according to Krein, because it 'does not follow from the fact that risk is a necessary component of adventure sports, that it is the main point of such sports, or that this is the reason why people participate in them' (2007, p. 82). To support his assertion Krein draws on an example provided by William James in 1890: just because ships burn coal crossing the Atlantic does not mean that burning coal is the purpose of crossing the Atlantic.

Media portrayals of adventure athletes as carefree, reckless adrenaline junkies who take 'unnecessary pathological and socially unacceptable risks' (Brymer, 2010, p. 220) lie in stark contrast to how these athletes view their own behaviour. Rather than chancing their survival to factors outside their control, adventure athletes are meticulous in their preparation (Lyng, 1990) and carefully assess situations to ensure that they maintain control, can meet the challenge and have the ability to exercise agency (Gordon, 2006; Krein, 2007). Adventure athletes do not appear to set out to maximise risks—quite the contrary: they seek a kind of control that comes from high levels of experience (Brymer, 2010; Krein, 2007; Lyng, 1990). After all, if one wants to be exposed to risks, one simply needs to blindfold oneself and attempt to cross a road. This is much cheaper and less time consuming than going on an outdoor adventure.

As we dig deeper into the notion of an 'ideal-original' adventure (Varley, 2006, p. 186), the elements of skill and planning become increasingly dominant. Varley defined an ideal-original form of adventure in terms of taking responsibility, facing uncertainty and finding transcendence through marginal experiences that occur beyond 'the structures and strictures of society' (2006, p. 187). Epics (unplanned for events) are for people who are not in control of the situation. People who continually experience 'epics' might be considered to be poor adventurers in that they overestimate their ability, underestimate the difficulty of the challenge and fail to adequately prepare.

Brymer (2010) makes it clear that the participants in his studies were not looking 'to go beyond the edge of their control' (p. 231). While risk might be inseparable from many adventure recreation, 'risking death or serious injury is not *the* point of participating in them' (Krein, 2007, p. 80; emphasis in original). Rather, participants in adventure recreation reported a number of alternative explanations for their involvement, which included a 'deep sense of relaxation and mental and emotional clarity' (Brymer, 2010, p. 228); a connection with the natural world that cannot be found in other sporting activities (Brymer, Downey, & Gray, 2009; Brymer & Gray, 2009; Krein, 2007); and feelings of mastery that came from possessing the skills, experience, knowledge and judgment that permitted them to take part in activities which might result in death or serious harm if any of the aforementioned capacities was not appropriately exercised (Langseth, 2012).

Adventure and tourism

Many of the studies already mentioned draw from studies of adventure athletes (e.g. BASE jumpers, mountaineers, surfers, kayakers)—all of whom are highly skilled performers. At the other end of the

adventure spectrum are participants in adventure tourism, which is a commodified form of activity provision. Here again we do not find participants seeking risk, which is typically a hallmark of simplistic definitions of adventure.

The role of risk in adventure tourism has been examined extensively (see Cater, 2006; Fletcher, 2010; Holyfield, 1999; Holyfield, Jonas, & Zajicek, 2005). These writers highlight the inherent tension in providing 'safe' adventures for tourists who possess limited knowledge and skills, but who want to feel the thrill of being close to danger. These highly commodified adventures (e.g. white-water rafting) are designed to provide 'novice consumers with just enough security that they can taste the heroic … without taking all the necessary risks' (Holyfield, 1999, p. 27). Cater (2006) notes that the prime motivation for participating in adventure activities is 'thrill and excitement' (p. 321), rather than a desire to take a risk. This has led him to argue that theoretical models connecting the pursuit of risk as the motivating reason for participating in adventure activities are 'fundamentally flawed' (2006, p. 321).

There is undoubtedly an appeal in participating in activities that are thrilling and outside the banalities of everyday life. We find echoes of this 'otherness' quality of adventure in seminal outdoor education textbooks, such as Mortlock's (1984) *Adventure Alternative*, where adventures are claimed to provide an escape from the 'anxieties of modern existence' (p. 19). Conversely, Lynch and Moore (2004) argue that far from being an alternative to, or an escape from, the pressures of everyday life, adventure 'is a central pillar of modern capitalist discourse' (p. 6). They explain how adventure is often positioned as a panacea for what is missing in everyday life, yet is also central to the economic development of capitalist societies. Whilst adventure experiences, whether they be tourist activities or educational interventions, do not sit 'outside' the broader social world that we inhabit, they do have clear episodic characteristics, with defined starting and end points, and feature practices that evoke high levels of emotional intensity and a sense of the extraordinary for participants.

What adventure tourism activity providers purvey as adventures may not contain much actual uncertainty or risk at all. From the perspective of the adventure activity operator, 'creativity, chaos and freedom will be generally undesirable elements in the supply of commodified, risk-assessed experiences offered for paying customers' (Varley, 2006, p. 177). Through skilful 'stage management'—recasting guides as actors, the equipment as props and well-used one-liners as dialogue—the perception of adventure becomes the reality for consumers (see, e.g., Cater & Dash, 2013). Wherever possible, 'uncertainty' and foreseeable hazards will be eliminated or mitigated. Seen this way, discussions around risk and uncertainty, as motivators for participation in adventure tourism, are misplaced. Rather, adventure tourism activities are focused on the provision of stimulating, pleasurable, fun experiences—or in Holyfield's (1999) terms the 'Buying and selling of emotions' (p. 3). Central to conceptions of adventure tourism is embodied engagement where one is exposed to a gamut of emotions and possibilities for gaining something of value (Becker, 2008; Cater, 2006; Holyfield, 1999).

We are conscious that the opportunity to 'gain something of value', through 'consuming' an adventure, is a luxury afforded to a relatively small proportion of the world's population. Gordon (2006) has highlighted how citizens of affluent western societies travel to exotic locations to have adventures, which then serve to display their 'economic and cultural power' (p. 20). A similar point is raised by Varley (2006), who questions whether the very term adventure is a 'product of the leisured imaginations of those who live in comfort and convenience-obsessed modern industrialised countries' (p. 192).

From this brief literature review we can see that drawing on simplistic notions of risk and uncertainty of outcome is problematic when attempting to define adventure in contemporary society. Many things in life are uncertain, but they are not necessarily considered adventurous. Indeed, Gordon (2006) states that people take risks all the time, but it does not mean they are having an adventure. Examples of this might include driving a car, playing contact sports and gambling in casinos. Likewise, Zink (2003) outlines how discourses of adventure pervade many aspects of everyday living (e.g. buying a fruit juice or opening a bank account) that are not

necessarily associated with risk or uncertainty. 'Adventures', whether undertaken as tourist 'products', embraced as a means of conveying identity (e.g. branded clothing, type of vacation) or as part of a school outdoor education programme, are increasingly commodified and delivered as goods and services. Our attention now turns to how the provision of adventure education has been impacted by commodification.

Adventure education as an increasingly commodified product

Rationalisation, the 'systematic, measured application of science to work and everyday life' (Varley, 2013, p. 35), is one of the hallmarks of late-modern industrialised societies. It has led to the efficient production of goods and has shaped the way in which services are offered (e.g. the construction of abseil towers). The quest to quantify goods and services is referred to as commodification, and can be defined as the process 'by which the value of goods or services is not only understood in terms of the intrinsic benefits they provide, but also, or often exclusively, for the extrinsic value (such as money) that can be made' (Loynes, 2013, p. 138). Examples of rationalisation and commodification in the adventure education sector include the advent of national governing bodies, instructor qualifications, licensing authorities and activities that allow mass participation with low supervision ratios (e.g. ropes courses and indoor climbing gyms).

Several authors (Beames & Brown, 2014; Beames & Varley, 2013: Loynes, 1998, 2013; Roberts, 2012) have drawn attention to the commodification of adventure experiences in recreation and education settings. These analyses have been based on the McDonaldisation and Disneyisation theses of consumption proposed by sociologists Ritzer (1993) and Bryman (1999). Both approaches detail mechanisms by which businesses can 'create predictable and efficient environments for the consumption of experiences and goods' (Beames & Brown, 2014, p. 7). Because one of the hallmarks of contemporary western societies is the increasing desire for predictability, the principles of commodification have reached into many areas of contemporary life (e.g. the packaged holiday, national standards in schools).[1]

Rationalisation has also led to increasingly formulaic and restrictive practices that have been the subject of a number of critiques within adventure education. These have examined a variety of issues, including facilitation (Humberstone & Stan, 2012; Loynes, 2002; Seaman, 2008), the packaging of experience (Beames & Brown, 2014; Loynes, 1998, 2013), teaching styles (Estes, 2004; Hovelynck, 2001) and the use of prescribed outcomes (Martin & Leberman, 2005). While this kind of rationalisation might have some advantages, important questions need to be asked regarding hidden messages that are conveyed when adventure education is provided in this manner, and how this influences student learning (Beames & Brown, 2014).

Rubens' (1999) distinction between 'narrow' and 'broad' adventure provides a useful framework for considering the impact of commodified adventures in education, where students are positioned as consumers. Narrow adventures feature short timescales, high thrills, minimal participant effort and almost no responsibilities devolved to students (e.g. the zip wire). Broad adventures, on the other hand, are characterised by long timescales, varied challenges, sustained effort demanded of the participant and increased responsibilities for decision-making given to students. There are worrying implications for student learning when adventure education is provided through a series of 'quick fire' activities that are typically a hallmark of multi-activity residential programmes. Brown and Fraser (2009) have argued that activities conducted in highly controlled environments may prevent learners from developing autonomy because they are cocooned in a 'network of technologies' comprising safety equipment, standardised procedures and a mechanistic sequencing of activities (p. 71). Activities that feature high levels of risk (perceived or actual) may be counterproductive, because technical activities demand high levels of staff supervision and provide fewer opportunities for students to make decisions and experiment as they develop their knowledge and skills. Becker (2008) argues that these kinds of orchestrated experiences restrict opportunities for learning, and all that remains afterwards 'are some tickling and thrilling feelings' (p. 208). In a more

recent work, Roberts (2012) highlights that behind adventure education's appealing rhetoric of choice, autonomy and responsibility lies the insidious influence of rationalisation and commodification:

> Presented with 'experiences' and 'choices' and 'autonomy' they will happily comply, all the while never realizing that such experiences have been carefully planned and selected *for them*. Yes, you can have it 'your way' it's just that 'your way' and 'our way' turn out to be the same thing. (2012, p. 95; emphasis in original)

The provision of activities in constructed settings (either indoors or outdoors) also conveys a set of messages that serve to reinforce how experiences are to be consumed and that connections to the natural environment are largely irrelevant (what Eisner, 1985, might label the 'null curriculum'). This approach imparts messages about human domination (or manipulation) of the environment. Take, for example, one well-established outdoor provider in Southeast Asia who used a series of shipping containers to simulate caving. From a business point of view, this is an activity that can be regulated, controlled and completed within a set time frame. The hidden curriculum, however, suggests that local landscapes are inadequate and unsuited to exploration, adventure and discovery. Rather than being an alternative to mainstream schooling practices, 'narrow' interpretations of adventure (Rubens, 1999) can become part of the very problem that adventure education sets out to subvert: students are not empowered, they perform skills that are abstracted from the 'real world' and they have few opportunities to exercise initiative, to experiment and to take responsibility for their actions.

In the previous sections we have argued that meanings of adventure are contested and have been shaped by socio-cultural and economic factors. This is both problematic and liberating. It is problematic if one tries to 'hang on to' a form of adventure (e.g. for 'King and country') that no longer resonates with young people. For example, Kane (2011) details how modern adventurers who can no longer take on the mantle of 'discoverers of new lands', with the possibility of accruing wealth or fame, have been required to base their 'symbolic role-model stories on past geographic discovery heroes but also on an abstract relationship to the personal, social and environmental learning in outdoor education' (p. 16). Yet such contestation is also liberating in that it provides outlets for self-expression or a potential career pathway that is freed from nationalistic or militaristic overtones. Modern adventurers, with access to digital media, have the opportunity to gain sponsorship and endorsements through novel or 'made for media' endeavours (e.g. the proliferation of documentaries at mountain film festivals).

Notwithstanding the contestation mentioned earlier, aspects of the mytho-poetic ideal of the adventurer (e.g. Odysseus), the explorer adventurer (e.g. Cook) and the entrepreneurial vagabond adventurer (e.g. Drake) continue to resonate in contemporary understanding of adventure. They resonate in the narratives that are constructed, but do not necessarily reflect the needs of contemporary society where risk and uncertainty have become a central motif (Beck, 1992;[2] Furedi, 2002; Giddens, 1991). Kane's (2011) analysis of adventure and adventurers, based on Bourdieu's conceptualisation of social practice, reinforces the need for adventure educators to think in new ways, rather than drawing on out-dated or less relevant forms of social capital.

Our analysis points to an imperative for adventure education to be liberated from restrictive and narrow definitions of adventure that focus on risk and danger, and to move towards one that starts with, and is firmly rooted in, the world of the learner. In the section that follows, we briefly draw on social theory to assist us in reframing how adventure might play a more central role in shifting educational contexts.

The contemporary world: fluid, complex and uncertain

The era of modernity has given way to what various authors have referred to as postmodernity (Lyotard, 1985), late modernity (Giddens, 1991), hypermodernity (Virilio, 2000) and liquid modernity

(Bauman, 2007). We now live in time that is hallmarked by vast social networks (Castells, 2000), global mobility (Elliot & Urry, 2010), constantly evolving technology and communications (Castells, 2000), risk aversion (Beck, 1992; Furedi, 2002) and the diminishing 'grand narrative' of accepted life paths (Young, DaRosa, & Lapointe, 2011).

An example of how the changing social landscape is conceptualised can be seen in the writings of Zygmunt Bauman (2007), who argues that we live in 'liquid times', where things change quickly, little is fixed and people have to cope with constant insecurity that is a result of the uncertainties that feature in different parts of their lives. Bauman outlines several features of liquid modernity, the first of which is that few social forms (e.g. institutional routines, accepted individual behaviour) are able to keep their shape for long. Thus, these social forms cannot not serve as 'frames of references for human actions and long-term life strategies because of their short life expectation' (2007, p. 1). So, on one hand, having fewer frames of reference (perhaps necessitated by the virtue of 'swiftly forgetting' out-dated information and habits) might be considered liberating, while, on the other, having too many possible courses of action for which we as individuals (as opposed to the state) must bear responsibility can be overwhelming. Because social forms are so fluid, 'there are no authoritatively endorsed recipes which would allow errors to be avoided if they were properly learned and dutifully learned, or which could be blamed in the case of failure' (2007, p. 4). Seen this way, there is less and less in the way of a 'script' for people to follow as they go through life, because there are fewer and fewer precedents on which to base their actions. Bauman goes on to explain how liquid times benefit those who are flexible and have the capacity to swiftly change tactics, rather than those who conform to established rules and societal norms.

Another feature of contemporary societies has to do with the highly complex nature of many elements of our lives. For example, there was a time when children could take apart things that interested them (e.g. lawnmowers) and come to understand how they work by examining them and putting them back together. Complicated items such as these can be dismantled and re-assembled so that they function in precisely the same, predictable manner (Davis & Sumara, 2006). Complex systems, by contrast, cannot be taken apart, put back together and continue to operate in the same way, because the individual elements within the system are themselves destroyed when the 'relationships between them are broken' (2006, p. 11). Consider, for a moment, the countless grandfathers who used to do all of the basic tune-up work on their cars, but whose skills have been rendered useless, as a contemporary mechanic's actions are now largely guided by computer diagnostics. No longer is our universe 'fixed and fully knowable' (2006, p. 4) and scientifically calculable through probability and statistics, which were all features of modernity. We live in a world that is characterised by complex and constantly changing systems, where 'each component has a function that relies on multiple, intricate inter-relationships with other components; tweaking one component will influence all others in ways that can be very difficult to predict' (Beames & Brown, 2016, p. 29). This shift away from less dynamic and more stable structures is not necessarily 'bad', however, because the 'change, disequilibrium and unpredictability' inherent in complex systems are actually necessary for human survival (Morrison, 2008, p. 21).

The reason for outlining these two key features of contemporary human life (rapid change and complexity) rests in our belief that before educators can consider the most appropriate ways to teach, they must first understand the defining features of the world in which learning is to take place (insofar as this is possible). We argue that outdoor adventure education has become far too prescriptive and inflexible to be as educational relevant as it can be in these liquid times. Out-dated paradigms of manipulating levels of perceived risk, increasingly rigid operating procedures and rational economic imperatives have chipped away at the alternative form of educational experiences that adventure programmes set out to provide. Many of these initiatives were originally intended to provide a counter-narrative to post-World War Two social conditions (Nicol, 2002a). Adventure education today has not responded to society's complex, rapid changes and is deficient in its capacity to 'provide students with the skills and attributes needed to thrive in 21st century society' (Author & Author, in press). Adventure education is not alone in dealing with the need to

adapt and adopt practices to meet the changing world in which learners live. For example, Sir Ken Robinson (2011, p. 47) has written extensively on the need for education to reform in order to cultivate children's 'abilities of imagination, creativity and innovation' in order to thrive in a rapidly changing world.

Educational practice (whether a Grade Three indoor classroom or a five-day residential outdoor centre course for 14 year olds) needs to distance itself from 'over-determined, tidy, traditional, externally mandated and regulated prescriptions' that supposedly aid learning (Morrison, 2008, p. 24). Seen this way, adventure educators need to facilitate conditions that allow learners to 'exercise autonomy, responsibility, ownership, self-direction and reflection' (2008, p. 25). This involves young people learning to adapt to the kinds of diverse circumstances that they will (and do) 'encounter in a dynamic world' (Davis & Sumara, 2006, p. 14). Barnett (2000, p. 420) advises developing an 'epistemology of uncertainty' that enables learners to develop their capacity to think critically in an uncertain world. In the next part of this article, we present a reframing of adventure that we maintain will better equip learners for a world of uncertainty and complexity.

Adventure and learning

Our position is that 'narrow' adventure programmes (e.g. a two-hour abseil session), where students are positioned as consumers of a product, offer limited opportunities for students to develop skills or take responsibility for their actions (Rubens, 1999). Arguably, these types of 'adventures' have more in common with an amusement park than with an educational endeavour (Hunt, 1990). Highly contrived, artificial settings might provide students with a fun and enjoyable consumer experience, but offer few opportunities for learning and growth, as they 'do not require significant decision-making by the learner, and thus no ownership of consequences' (Brown & Fraser, 2009, p. 70)—nor do they situate learning within the social, cultural and environmental communities that the students normally inhabit. Brown and Fraser's (2009) point about the lack of decision-making leads us to ask how can students be expected to make decisions if they do not possess adequate skills and knowledge?

Earlier we briefly discussed how mastery and skill were featured frequently in skilled participants' definitions of adventure (Brymer, 2010; Krein, 2007; Lyng, 1990). We believe that the role of mastery, developed through appropriate challenges, is given insufficient attention in many conventional adventure education programmes.[3] Developing mastery demands sustained effort from learners, as they build on and extend their skills and knowledge in order to tackle meaningful and manageable challenges. The vital point here is that learners have input into the selection of challenges, rather than having challenges imposed upon them. Addressing meaningful, real-world challenges demands investment from the learner. Success is not guaranteed and luck should have little to do with determining the outcome.

It is important to state that we do not see challenge as being synonymous with risk. When employing the notion of challenge in any educational setting, educators must consider the abilities of the learner in order to help foster the acquisition and application of skills and knowledge needed to achieve the desired outcome. In contrast to widely accepted wisdom (e.g., Priest, 1999), challenges (as opposed to risks) do not require the 'presence of dangers' (p. 113) or the possibility of suffering physical, mental, social or financial harm in order to learn.

In our re-articulation of adventure in education we are cautious about making rigid claims with regard to what adventure is, or is not. Such a binary fails to capture the complex and shifting nature of both contemporary society and educational practices. Rather than harking back to romantic notions of adventure or physical feats of daring, we take the central premises of fluidity, complexity and uncertainty, as features of late modernity, as a helpful starting point for reconsidering the role that adventure might play in education. What form might adventurous experiences take in an educational enterprise that aims to usefully equip students for an uncertain, changing

and complex world? How might we embed adventure into the everyday worlds of learners, rather than consigning it to residential outdoor centres or wilderness journeys?

As we have detailed, rather than being an emancipatory project, current approaches to adventure education are arguably complicit in limiting students' opportunities to develop their capacities in contemporary society. In a world that is becoming increasingly unpredictable and moving at ever-increasing speeds, organisations of all kinds require creative thinkers who can work well with others and who are highly adaptable (Robinson, 2011). We believe that adventure has an educational contribution to make to society—one that greatly transcends what is currently made available through short-duration, highly commodified and predictable thrills provided in a barrage of 'taster' activities that often sit outside the school curriculum.

We envisage a pedagogy of adventure that moves away from 'linearity, conformity and standardization' (Robinson, 2011, p. 8) to one that embraces unpredictability and cultivates learner's 'powers of creativity' (2011, p. 5). A pedagogy of adventurous learning would: first, situate learning in authentic contexts that draw on learners 'outside school' knowledge; second, encourage students to be agents of their learning, with opportunities to be involved in the planning and running of meaningful tasks; third, encourage the mastery of skills and knowledge through ongoing engagement with appropriate challenges that builds on and extends their current skills/knowledge base; and, fourth, embrace uncertainty in process and outcome, for the learner and the teacher. If we want learners to thrive in a constantly changing world, we as facilitators of learning need to be open to uncertainty of process, and sit alongside our students as they grapple with issues that have strong relevance to their lives. Seen this way, adventure becomes re-positioned as a pedagogical tool that is integral to learning across all curriculum areas—both within formal school structures and through extra-curricular activities. Rather than adventure being viewed as activities that occur at a residential centre or as part of an expedition—outside the 'real work of educators'—adventurous learning adventure can be seen as a pedagogical approach that has strong resonance with the dynamic and shifting world in which it takes place.

You will notice that in our articulation of adventurous learning there is no mention of activities, nor a discussion of risk management, instructor qualifications or appropriate sequencing. This is because our starting point is markedly different from needing to manage an abseil session or devising a way to get 12 people across a toxic swamp using barrels and planks. What follows is a very brief example of a programme based on the principles that we have outlined, which involves a class of Year 10 students who are approximately 16 years of age:

> Their teacher challenged them to devise a self-propelled, overnight journey that would start at a point of interest and finish at their school, which is located 400 metres (1/4 mile) from a significant waterway. The students decided to paddle two 10-person *waka*(double-hulled canoes) down the nearby river. They arranged for a minibus and trailer to take them to a public park that was 40 kilometres upstream where they could do some paddling practice and then launch the boats. Their finishing point was within walking distance from the school. About halfway along their route was an old country hall and community centre. The students negotiated with the local council to use the buildings, which included a kitchen and multi-purpose room area. This allowed the boys' and girls' groups to sleep in separate rooms and for the class to be able to cook and eat under shelter.
>
> Although the journey was somewhat contrived, it would not be unusual for people to paddle *waka*on that stretch of river. Indeed, this was the traditional 'highway' for Māori (indigenous people of New Zealand) for many centuries. *Waka*paddling is an activity that many of these students had done before and would do again, both recreationally and competitively. Travelling through and exploring the environs of one's community also has a stronger resonance with the daily lives of those who live locally (as the students do); they were getting to know 'their place'. Thus this journey incorporated elements of place- and culturally-responsive pedagogy. The students had a fair degree of agency, in that they chose the mode of travel and they arranged the logistics associated with transportation, accommodation and food. Adults were needed to supervise, but their role was more of guides than 'commanders'. There was not a huge amount of uncertainty in the outcome, but every step of the way involved some uncertainty of process, as the tasks involved in addressing the overall challenge of travelling from point A to point B were not entirely the same as ones the students had faced before. Finally, the project involved building upon existing canoeing, cooking and negotiating skills, through direct and real-world application—all of which could continue being developed after the project ended.

We propose that adventurous learning begins in the world in which our learners normally inhabit, and focuses on the kinds of challenges, problems and issues they are likely to confront in their day-to-day lives, rather than telling them what will 'be good for them', 'will build character' or is what Hillary or Shackleton (insert any white heroic male figure you wish) did to make the nation proud. For adventure to have educationally relevance, it needs to provide students with opportunities to exercise agency, seek understanding in authentic learning environments, gain mastery through progressively complex challenges and thrive in uncertain, complex and rapidly changing contexts. We acknowledge that these four individual qualities, in and of themselves, are not new. What is of important pedagogical value to outdoor educators is the combination of these qualities, as part of a sound pedagogical framework, based on an understanding of contemporary society.

Concluding comments

In the call for papers for this special edition, contributors were asked to critically examine the concept of adventure and its relations with contemporary outdoor education and learning. We have heeded this call and examined the ambiguity and multiple interpretations that surround the term 'adventure' in late-modern society. It is clear that current discourses contain vestiges of a mythical and romantic past, a strong link to imperial and masculine notions of conquest, and misplaced notions of the centrality of artificially manipulating risk.

New forms of adventure need to be based on a range of factors, such as increasing global mobility, rapid advances in media and communications, and constantly evolving technology. Educators must strive to remain current with the continually shifting worlds that our students inhabit.

The ideas we have presented challenge assumptions about the current 'fit for purpose' litmus test that all established fields of practice should periodically face. We are serious about promoting new ways of thinking that refresh the educational value of adventure in a world that has been shaped by events markedly different to those that informed current practices. Adventurous learning that features agency, authenticity, uncertainty and mastery is one way to more closely align adventure and education, in order to better equip learners with the skills and attributes needed to thrive in unpredictable and complex times. Politicians, policy-makers, corporations and the media are constantly adapting to shifts in social life, in ways that adventure education has not. Failing to respond to these rapid changes risks further marginalising the role of adventure in contemporary educational debates.

Notes

1. Holyfield's (1999) 'Manufacturing Adventure: The Buying and Selling of Emotions' and Kane's (2011) 'New Zealand's Transformed Adventure: From Hero Myth to Accessible Tourism Experience' are both excellent articles that detail the processes by which adventure experiences are commodified.
2. *Risk Society* was first published in German in 1986.
3. We realise that mastery formed one of the pillars of Walsh and Golins' (1976) paper on the Outward Bound process. However, we believe that it is worth re-emphasising mastery in the context of adventurous learning as a distinct component separated from an association with Outward Bound.

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