

‘Is what you see what you get?’ The production of knowledge in-between the indoors and the outdoors in outdoor education

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Background: Many believe the ‘outdoors’ is a key factor influencing student learning in ‘outdoor education’ because it is so different from the ‘everyday’ indoor contexts of students’ lives. In much of the outdoor education literature the outdoors is construed as a neutral and simplified space which allows students to have more ‘real’ and meaningful experiences than is possible in mainstream or ‘indoor’ schooling.

Purpose: In this paper we draw on Foucauldian theoretical insights to interrogate some of the ways this binary distinction of indoor/outdoor is both produced and sustained in outdoor education and the effect this has on practice. We examine how this presumed indoors/outdoors distinction works to make particular assumptions about what and how students learn in outdoor education appear coherent and plausible while excluding possibilities of alternative student learning in this field.

Participants and settings: This article focuses on one aspect of a larger ethnographic study of the outdoor education programme in a New Zealand all girls secondary school.

Data collection: The first author observed and participated in the outdoor education programme of this school during 2002. Students were interviewed about their perceptions of their experiences on camp at the end of each residential camp. The two outdoor education teachers were interviewed about their perceptions of outdoor education at the end of the year.

Findings: The rhetoric of the role of the outdoors in outdoor education provides a limited and partial understanding of students’ experiences and what it is possible for them to learn in the outdoors. We argue that this indoors/outdoors binary produces particular knowledge of self and others and environment and specific ways of understanding students that are not necessarily advantageous to all.

Conclusion: We conclude by urging a re-consideration of the sanctity of the indoors/outdoors divide—one that attends to the potential effects on students, teachers and outdoor education as a subject area, of continuing to premise outdoor education philosophy and practice on its unproblematised ‘existence’.

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Introduction

Outdoor education literature is rich with reference to the educative power of the outdoors. One of the sources of this educative power is held to be in the ways that the outdoors are different from the indoors within which students ordinarily live. This relation of difference tends to be presented as 'fact' in the outdoor education literature. That is, it is presumed that we all 'know' what the outdoors is and that it differs substantially from that we understand as the 'indoors'. What counts as outdoor education does occur in the outdoors but it also occurs in places such as indoor climbing walls and swimming pools. It can occur in classrooms and on the sports field at school. Nevertheless, students and teachers alike can readily claim that other activities such as sport that occur on the same outdoor fields are not outdoor education.¹ This suggests that the 'outdoors' of outdoor education has a more slippery and complex meaning than that advanced in much of the outdoor education scholarship. Indeed it is one of our aims in this paper to show how the outdoors is intimately tied to place, space, activity, process and ways of 'being' in rather more complex ways than are ordinarily suggested.

One source of meanings for the 'outdoors' is the ever-expanding volume of material being written about 'outdoor education'. Commentary on what the outdoors entails and what outdoor education, in particular, comprises can be found in academic treatises, professional literature and, of course, circulating in popular culture (e.g. adventure magazines and films such as *Touching the Void*). In this paper it is the kinds of meanings advanced in outdoor education textbooks and journals that we look to, because these are the ones most readily recontextualised into the secondary field of the school (Bernstein, 1986). In other words, these are the sites where those who have the power to define what the field constitutes are writing. The knowledge encoded at these sites is that used in the education of future outdoor education teachers and that which informs contemporary curriculum initiatives.

In much of this kind of outdoor education literature the outdoors is characterised as an unequivocally good place to be (Dickson, 2003). A place that is said to enhance the educational experiences students can have across a multitude of dimensions [e.g. student understanding of mathematical concepts, social science, geography, and understandings of self, others and the environment (Bunting, 2006)]. The outdoors is thought to be good for all students and to influence their learning in similar ways. When discussion does arise about what the outdoors is within the outdoor education literature it tends to be linked to notions of a 'natural' environment which, in turn, tends to be equated with National Parks or other areas that are viewed as 'wild' in some way. One of the definitions of outdoor education regularly advanced in the literature is 'learning in, through and about the outdoors' (Hammerman *et al.*, 2001)—a definition that is shared, in New Zealand at least, by physical educators who often refer to their subject area as comprising education 'through, about and of the *physical*'

(see Culpan, 1996/97; Gillespie & Culpan, 2000, our emphasis). The educational focus in much of school-based outdoor education emphasises personal and social development, that is, learning *in* and *through* the outdoors, while environmental education has a much more explicit focus on the outdoor environment with aims geared towards enhancing students' awareness and knowledge of both the environment and their relationship with the environment (Priest & Gass, 2005). For the purposes of this paper, it is outdoor education rather than environmental education that is our focus and we confine our enquiry to questions linked to the 'in' and 'through' dimensions of this dominant view of outdoor education (i.e. the personal and social development objectives of outdoor education).

The aim in this article is not to establish whether in fact students can have more meaningful learning experiences or if and how they can learn more about themselves or others by having educational experiences in the outdoors. Rather, we want to examine how personal and social development objectives (and thus presumable outcomes) can be seen as both plausible and coherent in contemporary outdoor education practices and how the role distinctions between indoors and outdoors plays itself out in constructing that plausibility. We suggest that the educative power of outdoor education resides in this relationship of difference as much as it does in what the outdoors 'is'. The indoor, or everyday experiences of students' lives we refer to in this article are confined to their 'normal' school and educational experiences and do not extend to include 'everyday' as in home, family and other social experiences.

We draw on theoretical resources afforded by Foucault's work especially in *The order of things* (2002) to ask how categories such as indoors/outdoors are produced and secondly, how they function. Categories are not foundational. Rather categories and the boundaries used to define them are mobile and multiple and the relationships between categories work in specific ways to produce knowledge about objects and about human beings (Gore, 1995; Fine, 1998; Foucault, 2002). The intent in troubling this relationship is not to erase the categories of indoor and outdoor. We follow Davies (2000) in our desire to bring the relationships between categories, in this case, of indoor/outdoor into clearer focus to make visible what is being produced therein. Of particular interest in this instance is how relations of meaning produced through the indoor/outdoor binary intersect with broader educational discourses to produce outdoor education practices that normalise the idea that outdoor education per se is a vehicle for meaningful learning and deeper understandings of self and others.

We begin with a brief summary of the ways in which the outdoors is written about in much of the mainstream outdoor education literature pointing to the key ideas about what the outdoors offers students in terms of learning processes and outcomes. We then sketch out how notions of space and processes of categorisation work in producing knowledge about and ways of understanding distinctions between indoors and outdoors. Next, the place of outdoor education in the New Zealand curriculum is described briefly to provide a context for two examples drawn from a larger New Zealand-based project that examined the 'what' and 'how' of student learning in

school-based outdoor education (Zink, 2005). The two empirical examples are used to illustrate how relationships between the indoor/outdoor binary work to normalise particular understandings and meanings of outdoor education.

The outdoors of outdoor education

While a definitive answer to the question ‘what is outdoor education?’ is far from reach (as scholars continue to debate the defining constituents of the ‘subject’), the field is most pervasively characterised as education that occurs in the outdoors (see for example, Barnes & Sharp, 2004). The outdoor of the outdoors that is most generally referred to in the outdoor education literature is the ‘natural’ environment but Priest and Gass (2005) point out that it is not exclusively this.² Being in the outdoors is said to enhance the educational experience possible, partly because the outdoors opens up possibilities but also because of the ways in which the outdoors is different from the indoors. The fact that the outdoors is different from students’ everyday school lives is said to enable students to behave differently (Priest & Gass, 2005), and to reassess the ways in which they live their lives (Martin, 1999). It is argued that one of the strengths of education in the outdoors is that students can have ‘real’ experiences where they receive direct, meaningful and unbiased feedback (Potter & Gray, 1999). The outdoors is also conceived as yielding considerable potential for students to learn more deeply about themselves (Henderson, 1999).

Writers such as Brookes (2002) and Wattchow (2001) alert the reader to the powerful influence that dominant discourses about the outdoors can have on the nature of experiences it is possible to have in outdoor education. Brookes (2002) argues that the outdoors in outdoor education in Victoria, Australia, is predominantly regarded as either comprising empty sites where context-free personal development can occur or as some sort of abstract form of ‘nature’. He argues that one of the attractions of context-free accounts of the outdoors and outdoor education is the promise of immediate applicability. That is, ideas imported from other locales, such as Great Britain or North America can be used in Australian contexts without consideration of how they fit within the curriculum or the Australian landscape. They are presumed to be universally applicable even when the geographical, cultural and ethnic contexts within which students reside are markedly different. Wattchow (2001) states that the experience of place has been largely ignored in education generally and in outdoor education in particular, and that when land and identity are written about in Australia, place tends to be dealt with as a theme, rather than as an experience of particular ‘places’. In both cases teachers and outdoor educators are excused from having to know much about the outdoors in which they work.

Many of the claims made within the outdoor education literature about the outdoors being a strange or unfamiliar place for students tend to universalise this strangeness across all students. Just as the outdoors is drawn as context-free and abstract, students are also depicted as context-free and abstract beings in that they are presumed to come to the outdoors as blank slates (Brookes, 2002). Many students will have experiences of going to the beach, hunting and camping for example, and the

universality of claims of the strangeness of the outdoors excludes the range and variety of experiences children bring with them to school and the different meanings they will ascribe to their experience outdoors.

Theoretical framework

Notions of space

While, as previously mentioned, debates about what constitutes outdoor education are prevalent; the question of 'What is the outdoors?' tends not to elicit a comparable degree of debate or enquiry. On one level this is understandable, because defining the 'outdoors' seems such a straightforward business. To most people the outdoors is that which is beyond the walls, windows and doors of enclosed spaces. 'What you see is what you get' when you look out the window at the outdoors, beyond the walls of buildings and past urban spaces. One consequence of the outdoors being understood in such a straightforward manner is that the outdoors takes on the appearance of neutrality, that is, there are no meanings vested in it as such. What meaning there is in the outdoors appears to emanate from within the space of the outdoors. Thus, the question of what counts as the outdoors in outdoor education does not necessarily seem an important question to ask. The apparent neutrality of this space opens the possibility for context free outdoor education in abstract nature which, in turn, normalises abstract understandings of nature. This is not a closed, deterministic circle. Rather, discourses produce knowledge and practices and correspondingly knowledge and practices produce discourse in an endless relationship (Foucault, 2002).

The apparent neutrality of the outdoors can be seen as unsurprising given that space has been theorised as being fixed and immobile for a long time. Lefebvre (1991) commented that we have become so accustomed to seeing space as immobile that the notion of producing space seems a bizarre idea. When the taken for granted or common sense understandings of space are challenged, we are made aware that space is not neutral or factual territory. The inclusion of indoor climbing, for example, in the curriculum of outdoor education highlights that the 'outdoors' is not tied to the object of which it speaks.³ That is, what counts as the outdoors in relation to outdoor education is not tied to that which is beyond the windows, walls and doors.

Sharp *et al.* (2000) point out that relations of power, and therefore meaning and ways of being are entangled with the material spaces of the world. As Lefebvre (1991) argues, space is not a blank slate on which meaning is inscribed, but rather both natural and urban spaces are, if anything, over inscribed with meaning. He went on to say that the types of inscriptions to be found of space are in a 'context of conventions, intentions and order' (p. 142). One of the conventions and ways of ordering the outdoors in outdoor education is that the outdoors is different from students' usual schooling experiences. Gilbertson *et al.* (2006) for example comment, 'the very term *outdoor education* connotes a location distinctive from most educational settings' (p. 4, original emphasis).

Categories and relations of difference

That the relationship between the indoors and outdoors is characterised as one of difference is not surprising. Foucault (2002) argues that terms of identity and difference define both what it is possible to know and how it is possible to know something. One of the processes in which difference is fixed is through the formation of categories. Categorisation is a process of ordering and hierarchy based on difference (Deleuze, 1994; Fine, 1998). The object from which difference is established and measured is held to be the independent or the normal form. In much of the outdoor education literature, the indoors is held as 'normal' and the outdoors are positioned as different from what counts as normal. The process of categorisation does more than signify difference; it also establishes relationships between categories. Categories do not denote a priori forms of knowledge; rather the processes of categorisation and the relationships between categories are embedded in relations of power.

Categories work to appear as if they were a priori forms of knowledge and as such, objective concepts. The outdoors appears as if it were an objective category. Layered into this is the way in which space is seen as an objective form. We all 'know' what the outdoors is and the objectivity makes it appear as if it were an unproblematic category. This works to make the role of the outdoors in the practices of outdoor education appear as if it were transparent. This transparency obscures how the production of categories produces knowledge (Gore, 1995). Particular ways of understanding the outdoors are normalised and appear to be the outdoors. The ways in which knowledge about the outdoors and therefore, the indoors, is produced are obscured.

As Lefebvre points out, space is not a blank slate but it is already inscribed with meaning and order. Truth games and normalising practices that work to constitute the outdoors privilege a particular view of the outdoors that is applied across all groups and deemed to hold the same meanings for all people (Descola, 1996). The apparent immobility of space adds to the weight and unity of privileged views of the indoors and the outdoors. Truth games work to obscure the production of the truths and practices that are privileged and normalised; they transform themselves into factual systems. Things that seem natural or factual do not invite questioning easily. One of the truth games and normalising practices privileged in Western society is the knowledge that the indoors (or urban spaces) are socially constructed and by inference the outdoors is 'natural' (Valentine, 2001). The indoors as socially constructed implies complexity and tensions in ways in which this space is interpreted and understood. In comparison, natural spaces are less complex as that which is considered natural is not implicated in processes of social construction in the same ways. Davies (2000) argued that this split is reflected in the way culture is positioned as active and nature as passive and Western culture as culturally superior and nature as morally superior.

In examining the categories of the indoors and the outdoors we are interested in the relationship between these two categories and how this relationship works to constitute the practices of outdoor education in relation to what and how students can learn. Following Fine (1998) we set out to work the hyphen between the indoors/outdoors

to examine how relations of difference work to constitute and maintain outdoor education and how outdoor education, in turn, constitutes and maintains the indoor/outdoor binary. This binary intersects with educational discourses and together both subjugates and subjects the outdoors and students in particular ways. The layering of meanings that occurs provides a powerful conceptual and perceptual framing of the outdoors, the indoors and outdoor education.

Outdoor education in the New Zealand curriculum

The outdoors is used as a learning medium or context across the whole curriculum in New Zealand but outdoor education is located as a key learning area within Health and Physical Education (H&PE) in the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). The role of outdoor education as stated in the curriculum is to 'provide students with opportunities to develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe, and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the environment' (Ministry of Education, 1999). The H&PE curriculum represents outdoor education as a mix of experiences in the outdoors, largely with an adventure focus, that 'foster students' personal and social development through experiences involving co-operation, trust, problem solving, decision making, goal setting, communication, leadership, responsibility, and reflection' (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46).

As part of a larger ethnographic study, the primary author interviewed and observed a range of female students during their New Zealand school-based outdoor education experiences in an effort to understand the nature of these experiences and students' responses to them. The secondary school that was part of this study was an all-girls school of about 400 students from Year 7 to Year 13.⁴ The outdoor education programme mostly took place in residential camps varying in length from four to seven days. The outdoor education programme was compulsory for all students in Years 8, 9 and 10. In Years 11, 12 and 13 H&PE, and therefore outdoor education, became an elective subject. Personal and social development were the principle objectives of the Years 8, 9 and 10 camps. Activity skill development, leadership and planning skills were emphasised in the Years 11, 12 and 13 camps. Both of the outdoor education teachers at this school thought that the outdoors was a great place for learning to occur. Amongst the strengths of outdoor education they highlighted were learning about attitudes and values through having to persevere to learn a skill or to tolerate others in a hut situation. They also saw the outdoors as a wonderful medium for students to build relationships.

Students echoed the sentiments expressed by the teachers when they talked about their camp experiences. Many highlighted that one of the major differences between their outdoor education experiences and other schooling experiences was the level of responsibility they were given to work out their own solutions to problems. A theme that emerged in all of the students' talk about camp was that while the activities were fun and they might have learnt some things, many of the things that were important to the students occurred in-between the activities. For many of the students it was the

in-between times and spaces where they generated the fun they remembered more vividly after the camp than the activities. The in-between times were also the spaces where they made friendships they felt could last a lifetime.

It is from within this context that the following two exemplars are drawn. While space prohibits a full description of the research site, its participants and the richness of the data derived, the statements we draw on here are reflective of the tenor of much of the teachers' and students' testimony. They serve, in this instance, as powerful exemplars of the dominant discourses informing and circumscribing this particular New Zealand programme, and they also epitomise some of the prevailing notions in Outdoor Education more generally. In interrogating the two statements, we endeavour to point to the ways they intersect with 'truths' regularly articulated in the Outdoor Education literature.

Findings

'You'll be wet, hungry, uncomfortable'; or what it is possible to learn in this space

One of the teachers described the strength of outdoor education as being its potential to provide students with 'real' feedback on their actions in the outdoors in a way that was unavailable to them in the school context. She characterised it as 'real' because the feedback students received was immediate and she thought the consequences were more meaningful to the students than the consequences of their actions at school. As she said, 'If you don't do sort of what you are meant to, then you will be wet or you'll be hungry, or you'll be uncomfortable or whatever. So the consequences are real'. This notion is one regularly articulated in the outdoor education literature (see for example, Barnes & Sharp, 2004; Priest & Gass, 2005; Bunting, 2006). Potter and Gray (1999) made explicit some of the assumptions that underpin the notion of the outdoors providing students with more meaningful learning when they said that the outdoors provided simplified, straightforward problems for individuals to solve and gave meaningful, unbiased feedback.

Regardless of how individual students may encounter the outdoors, much of the rhetoric of outdoor education assumes that students will understand and know what is going on in similar ways. Yet, for many students Outdoor Education and the 'outdoors' are construed as being both a strange and an unfamiliar phenomenon in both the professional and academic writing about outdoor education. Some outdoor education writers, in fact, suggest the strangeness and unfamiliarity of the outdoors is one of the reasons why it can be such a powerful learning medium (McKenzie, 2000). Students in Zink's study often spoke of not knowing what to expect before they went on camp or that the camp was very different from how they had thought it would be. The students did talk about having more responsibility and having to make more decisions than they usually did at school. But it was not always clear that what they learnt or the decisions they made were necessarily more meaningful to them than their other school experiences. When asked about why they had done something in a particular way or made a particular decision a

common response was 'it just happened that way'. Similarly, when they were asked about how a group came to a particular decision, students would often respond with 'oh, they [other members of the group] decided'.

The frequency with which students made comments such as 'it just happened that way' or 'oh, they decided' is somewhat surprising given the assumption that students have more meaningful experiences in the outdoors. It is also surprising given that the young women frequently said that 'camp is what you make of it' in that if they wanted something to be successful or fun, for example, the responsibility for this lay with them. The attitude of 'it's what you make of it' pervaded the whole school culture. There were high expectations that students would achieve to their potential. The ambivalence that students expressed in relation to decision making and problem solving calls into question the assumption that the outdoors provides clear, direct and meaningful experiences.

Lefebvre (1991) wrote of a double illusion at work which hides the social production of space. Space appears at once to be both transparent, where action has free rein, and opaque, giving the illusion of natural simplicity or realism. This double illusion works to depoliticise space and sediments particular ways of understanding space and ways of being and doing in space as natural. An effect of this depoliticisation is to normalise the divide between the indoors and outdoors and give it the appearance of objective fact. The relations of meaning in operation between the indoors and the outdoors work to locate the outdoors as a simple, straightforward, uninscribed and natural space in relation to the complex and overinscribed indoors. An effect of this is to make statements about students having 'real' and 'meaningful' educational experiences in the outdoors possible and for these to be seen as coherent and plausible statements to make even though the outdoors may be a space that is different or strange to the students.

The problems that students encounter in the outdoors can be seen as simple and straightforward because the space of the outdoors is considered to be 'natural' and uninscribed in ways that the indoors is not. Encounters in this space can, therefore, be construed as being more straightforward. The outdoors is not simpler or more straightforward than the indoors, but it is nevertheless positioned as such in relation to the indoors. The notion that outdoor education can be simplified and straightforward, a curriculum area where students can experience real, unbiased and meaningful consequences, is an effect of relations of meaning between the indoors/outdoors, which produces knowledge about the outdoors and what is possible in the outdoors. As the work with students we have described above shows, students themselves do not necessarily perceive the outdoors in the ways anticipated by these assumptions.

The notion that students experience 'real' consequences and that what they learn is more meaningful to them in the outdoors than in the 'indoors' is also supported by humanist ideas of the individual that underpin much of contemporary education (St. Pierre, 2000). The humanist individual and, therefore, the student, are re-presented in orthodox educational theory and policy as unified and stable beings that can and should make knowledge claims based on reason. A student's ability to act on knowledge claims is said to reside with the individual and thus, in a sense, one's

destiny is represented as an 'up to you' kind of phenomenon. In effect the outdoors, according to this educational premise, should facilitate the ability of students to make knowledge claims about their experiences because it is a less complex context than the indoor world they normally operate in. The ways in which the binary of indoor/outdoor and educational discourses intersect normalises the notion that the outdoors provides real and meaningful lessons to students in a simple and straightforward way. Knowledge produced through the categories of the indoors/outdoors shape both what it is possible to know and do in the outdoors and also how it is possible to come to know and be in outdoor education.

'Our trip is better than theirs'; or how it is possible to be in this space

During a Year 12, seven-day trip that involved sea kayaking and tramping⁵ a cruise ship came into the bay where we were camping. The passengers disembarked to spend the day at the beach or to walk to the next bay where they were collected by boat and returned to the first bay for a gourmet picnic lunch. The arrival of the cruise ship generated much discussion amongst the group and the general tenor of this discussion was that we were having a better experience than the cruise ship passengers could hope to have. Students arrived at this conclusion because they had had to work harder than the ship's passengers to get to the particular bay we camped in. The students felt that they had 'earned' the pleasures and enjoyment they had while they were in the bay and could therefore appreciate them more fully than the ship's passengers could. The students were also aware they were living more simply than the ship's passengers. They had left behind the comforts of their normal lives whereas the ship's passengers had brought the comforts of their daily lives, such as hot showers, clean clothes and tables, chairs and awnings for their picnic, with them into the outdoors. Even though they were in the same location as the cruise ship passengers, the students thought their experience was more remote and exotic than the experience the ship's passengers were having.⁶

The students' response to their encounter with the cruise ship follows the patterns of the rhetoric in much of the outdoor education literature. A dominant discourse in outdoor education literature is that one of the reasons why the outdoors is a good place to be is because it is a space where students can leave behind their social conditioning and learn more deeply about themselves (Potter & Gray, 1999). The students' assertion that their outdoor experience was better than the experience the ships' passengers were having was not only based on the different material approaches they had to the space they were in. To be in the outdoors, according to much outdoor education commentary, requires the 'right' attitude. Outdoor education literature is littered with what Brookes (2000) calls vacuous claims imploring instructors and teachers to require of themselves and their students a whole range of practices to demonstrate their 'right' attitude. Living simply and leaving behind the comforts of everyday life verify the right attitude.

Students at the school were aware of how experiences they could have in the outdoors were different from the ones they could have in the indoors and were also

encouraged to know that some experiences in the outdoors allowed them to learn more about themselves than others. For example, the further they went away from and the more they left behind the vestiges of their 'normal' lives, the more meaningful and 'real' their experiences in the outdoors were purported to be. Portraying the outdoors as a place where uniquely meaningful self-knowledge can be gleaned shapes the particular ways in which students can come to know themselves as individuals. Categories do more than define what belongs and what does not belong. Categories are one of the most powerful forms of maintaining a subject, in the sense of a form of power that subjugates and subjects, based on difference (Gore, 1995). The term subject denotes the ways in which human beings are fashioned through relations of power, knowledge and truth and how they come to understand themselves as human beings (Macdonald *et al.*, 2002).

Space interacts with ways of being and how it is possible to both be a human being and how one comes to know oneself as a human being. One thing that is held to occur in outdoor education is that students can more readily find out who they 'really' are. The idea that students will find the ultimate freedom to be themselves in the outdoors is based on an assumption that the 'natural' and un-inscribed space of the outdoors allows students to shed the inscribed and complex meanings contained in the indoors so that they will come to know their 'true' selves (Henderson, 1999).

In much contemporary outdoor education thinking and writing, knowing one is in the outdoors in the 'right' way is presumed to allow human beings to reconnect with the 'natural' and the more 'natural' the outdoors the more powerful this reconnection is thought to be. The assumption is that the more 'natural' the space, the more likely human beings will be able to discover who they really are. 'Natural' is associated with remote and pristine and entangled with romantic visions of a pre-human time when nature was in balance. Given that 'pristine' spaces, free of human interference are increasingly difficult to find, 'pristine' can at least be simulated by going into the outdoors in an 'authentic' way. This rhetoric evokes a subject that can come to know a 'true' self if only they can remove enough layers of social conditioning and repression (Foucault, 2000). Further, the existence of a 'true' self draws on the previously alluded to liberal humanist concepts of a free individual, whose actions are grounded in independence and autonomy (Butler, 1995; St. Pierre, 2000). The layers of social conditioning and repression are said to loosen and shift in the outdoors as the links that normally bind these to people are not as strong in natural spaces, therefore students can learn to act independently and autonomously. Butler (1995) describes the quest for independence and autonomy in the humanist project as a heroic quest. The moral superiority of the outdoors (Davies, 2000) becomes a space that facilitates the heroic quest of coming to know oneself as an independent and autonomous being. The subject who can come to know herself in the ways much of the outdoor education rhetoric espouses is the same subject that is evoked by the humanist and developmental discourses that so powerfully inform educational practices (St. Pierre, 2000). This begs the question of what it is about the outdoors that enhances the educational experiences students can have.

Discussion: the production of knowledge and subjects

The difference between the indoors and the outdoors is characterised as a mechanism that allows students to reassess and critically view their normal lives. The outdoors is situated as a key characteristic of outdoor education that allows the experiences that students have to be more meaningful and potentially facilitative of coming to know a 'real' self. That these notions permeate so much of the outdoor education academy suggests that they seem self evident in the practices of outdoor education. Students undoubtedly can have very different experiences in the outdoors than they do in the indoors. Meaning and ways of being are entangled with space. What is not self evident though is whether or not the outdoors of outdoor education allows students to necessarily have experiences that are more meaningful to them or allow them to discover a more 'real' self than school allows. Obscured by the hyphen are the ways in which the outdoors shores up and reiterates the indoors.

Categories, in the Foucauldian sense, are not the result of a reductionist process of order and hierarchy (Foucault, 1998). Nor do they result from, or represent in some way, objects. Objects, in the Foucauldian sense are correlatives of practice in that 'the object to which it [practice] applies is what it is only in relation to that practice' (Veyne, 1997, p. 155). Outdoor education has not taken the form it does as a result of the ways the indoors and the outdoors, as such, are. The difference of the outdoors from the indoors is not the ground from which the notion of the outdoors enhancing the educational opportunities available to students springs. Rather, the practices of education, both indoor and outdoor, produce knowledge about education and subjects within outdoor education that correlates to and gives the appearance of the indoor/outdoor binary being an objective fact.

Categories work to appear fixed, yet the borders of categories are created and patrolled by relations of power and are in a constant state of flux. It is not just that which is held as the 'normal' which determines what is different. Any category is at work on both sides of the boundary so not only is it maintained, but also those categories which it is not, are maintained (Fine, 1998). The indoor/outdoor binary is not just a relationship of difference. It is also a relationship of maintenance. The hyphen does more than mark a boundary; it also denotes a relationship at work. What students can come to know about themselves and how they come to know themselves in outdoor education may in fact have as much to do with how it is possible for them to be as human beings in the indoor world, as it does with the features of the outdoor world they are presumed to have more meaningful or 'deep' experiences in. An effect of foregrounding the difference between indoors and outdoors in the ways outdoor education does is to reiterate and support particular forms of knowledge and ways of being that appear as a departure from normal educational experiences. What is lost is the ways in which outdoor education replicates and reproduces broader educational imperatives.

The outdoors may be seen as a medium in which students can learn about themselves more deeply precisely because the self they are learning about is that of the humanist 'knowing subject' that is so pervasive in wider educational discourses.

Experiences that are possible in outdoor education produce subjects consistent with the subjects of education. The relationship between the categories of the indoors and outdoors works to further bolster the notion that individuals have experiences rather than categories being a powerful form of maintaining subjects. In other words, outdoor education produces experiencing subjects in the same mode of educational discourses. In this the outdoors may be less of a space where students can learn about a 'real' self but be a space where they come to understand themselves as particular forms of educated subjects more fully.

Conclusion

Davis (2000) reminds us that the point of troubling binary relationships is not to erase categories of difference, but rather to bring the relationship into clearer focus. Foucault did not advocate that we should embark on a project of eradicating differences or seek an acategorical world. He warns that abandoning categories does not lead to a world where difference can rein free, but to a world where everything is reduced to equivalences and it all 'comes down to the same thing' (Foucault, 1998, p. 361). He argues that categories create a space to understand knowledge, its production and its relationships to truth and power, in its forms of both truth and error. We are not suggesting that the categories of the indoors or the outdoors be dismantled. Rather, we are advocating that we pay careful attention to the ways in which this indoors/outdoors relationship works and the effects it has on the practices of outdoor education.

Paying attention to this binary highlights operations in play in outdoor education and the knowledge and subjects that these operations work to produce. Focusing on the relationships between indoor and outdoor provides a tactic to locate students' behaviours and responses to outdoor education within the discursive regimes that constitute the practices of outdoor education. Paying attention to the indoor/outdoor binary provides an avenue to challenge some of the assumptions about how students can learn and what they can learn in outdoor education. It also points to ways to reconsider outdoor education that move away from abstract understandings of the outdoors and universalised notions of what students bring with them to outdoor education. It may also yield a more nuanced understanding of the meanings students themselves ascribe to their experiences.

Notes

1. This draws on an ethnographic study by Zink (2005) investigating how contemporary outdoor education practices in a New Zealand secondary school came to be seen as coherent and logical. Both students and teachers stated that they thought sport and outdoor education were very different, even though they were both located in the Health and Physical Education curriculum, the same teachers taught in both sport and outdoor education, and many of the same teaching spaces were utilised. One teacher said 'they [the students] don't get them mixed up'.

2. Outdoor education in urban and built environments is well established. Organisations such as Project Adventure have a long history of adapting outdoor education to the school and urban environment (see for example Rohnke, 1999).
3. An example of this can be seen in *Interdisciplinary teaching through outdoor education* (Bunting, 2006). The chapter on rock climbing only has photos of students climbing on indoor walls. The author does note that indoor walls are great places to learn and train but she asserts that climbing in the outdoors provides an *enhanced* educational experience due to its location in a natural environment. Nevertheless, climbing on an indoor wall still comes under the auspices of outdoor education.
4. These students range in age from 11 to 18 years of age.
5. Tramping is known as bushwalking in Australia, hill walking in Great Britain and hiking in North America.
6. A number of the passengers we spoke to in the morning were from North America and had travelled to New Zealand specifically for this cruise. New Zealand was regarded, by most of them, as a distant and exotic location in relation to North America.

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