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Cultural issues in adventure programming: applying Hofstede's five dimensions to assessment and practice

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ABSTRACT

Adventure programming has seen considerable growth throughout the world. While newly established programs aim to meet the needs of their prospective clients, failing to account for cultural differences when conducting or designing programs may impede this goal. Non-western approaches to implementing adventure programs have rarely been discussed, because there is a lack of a clear theoretical framework for addressing cross-cultural issues in adventure programming. This article seeks to address these limitations by drawing attention to the existing literature on the impact of cultural differences on adventure programming and relevant fields (e.g. education), providing suggestions for how such theories could inform facilitation styles. It is proposed that a model adapted from the work of Hofstede offers one useful framework for assessing groups from different cultural contexts, which can strengthen the practice of adventure programs to better meet the needs of participants.

KEYWORDS

Adventure; programming; cultural differences; facilitation

Introduction

The rapid spread of adventure programming and adventure education, sometimes referred to as outdoor education, across various cultures has been exemplified by the worldwide growth of Outward Bound (OB), the National Outdoor Leadership School and Project Adventure. By 1998, Project Adventure had built over 1100 challenge courses throughout the United States, Australia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Europe (Prouty, 1999). The expansion of these types of challenge courses worldwide typifies the growth in adventure programs at the international level. Historical analyses of Outward Bound Schools (Freeman, 2011; Millikan, 2006) and recent analyses of cultural issues in adventure programming (Martin & Ho, 2009; Miner & Boldt, 2002; Priest & Gass, 2005) have suggested that it is important for adventure educators to adapt their methods to align with clients' specific cultural dynamics to better integrate the concepts of adventure programming into different cultures. By doing so, adventure facilitators can better meet the cross-cultural needs of participants by creating space for individual and collective voice and rejecting a hegemonic, 'power over' approach. When this occurs, they can maximize the experience of individual participants within specific cultural contexts and improve the quality of service delivery.

Adventure programming includes the facilitation of adventure-based activities with a strong focus on enhancing relationships. Often situated in an outdoor setting, used for recreational,

educational, developmental or therapeutic purposes (Priest & Gass, 2005), adventure programming is an important element of adventure education, outdoor education and adventure therapy. In this article, the terms adventure programming, adventure education and outdoor education will be used interchangeably.

Culture is a broad concept, consisting of values and influences from a variety of sources, including family, organizations, community, country and so forth (Hofstede, 2001). One's experiences, including those gained through adventure programming, often occur through the lenses of one's own cultural beliefs. As a result, adventure programming created within a specific cultural context may yield different outcomes than originally intended when applied with participants from differing cultural backgrounds. For example, during the early development of adventure education in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan in the mid-1900s, many people associated the word 'adventure' with the words 'dangerous' and 'risk' (mao-xian—冒險) (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). To make the term more congruent with overall program goals in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan, adventure education was redefined locally. Adventure educators in Taiwan translated adventure education as 'exploring' or 'discovering' education, removing the element of danger or risk (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). This example illustrates how even the definition of the word 'adventure' itself may vary across cultural contexts.

Despite translation challenges, there have been attempts to incorporate adventure education into different cultures. For instance, Singapore has integrated adventure programming into its educational system and currently requires a week-long OB course in their middle school curriculum (Martin & Ho, 2009). Although having a week-long OB course in middle school alone does not prove that the program is fully integrated into their culture, the buy-in of the government agents is the first step of such integration. Similarly, the Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology in Aotearoa, New Zealand, has developed a curriculum that incorporated cultural history (e.g. The Treaty of Waitangi) into an outdoor curriculum that helps students foster a deeper connection with the land (Cosgriff et al., 2012). There are many steps that need to be taken to completely integrate adventure education curriculum and culture; however, these examples show that these adventure education programs have drawn policy-makers' and scholars' attention in making it more suitable for their own cultural needs.

Culture is not limited to ethnicity or country of origin, but also can be applied more locally. For example, in the 1970s, as OB began to adapt its goals and mission to influence school reform in the United States, Project Adventure applied OB's conceptualized practices into existing school systems to enhance students' learning, help students develop a sense of personal responsibility and help to create a sustainable community (Miner & Boldt, 2002). Project Adventure successfully maintained the essence of OB courses, while adapting programs to better fit into the culture of both a school and urban environment.

This process of adjusting adventure program goals and objectives based on the values and needs of the target population may help to increase program efficacy and support the continued development of the field across different cultural contexts. According to Raiola and O'Keefe (1999):

[a]dventure education has been, and continues to be, an evolving field, shaped by the needs of both participants and the specific environment in which it occurs ... these basic concepts and values will continually respond to global, social, and environmental changes. (p. 52)

Similarly, awareness of the cultural differences within and between countries could help facilitators to better conceptualize adventure programs in multicultural settings (Waite & Pleasants, 2012). In order to increase cultural awareness in adventure programming, this article argues that Hofstede's (2001) model of five cultural dimensions could be used as a clear, concrete tool for both assessment and programming in adventure settings.

Adventure programming with diverse ethnic groups

Because adventure programming was initially developed in western cultures, the structures and philosophies of predominant adventure methodologies have not been entirely successful in addressing the needs of different ethnic minority populations within and across different nations. Hall (1987) identified potential issues that ethnic minorities in the United States might experience in adventure programming which can inhibit them from fully benefiting from outdoor experiences. One such issue can be the act of encouraging people to 'push their limits.' Participants who identify themselves as Chicano or Latino may have different interpretations of this concept (Hall, 1987). One of the interviewees in Hall's (1987) study suggested that OB courses should help people identify their limits instead of simply pushing past them unaware. The value often assigned to 'pushing one's limits' within US adventure programming models may conflict with cultural concepts of valuing participants' ability and their self-defined limits (Ashley, 1990; Hall, 1987). Furthermore, some ethnic minority populations view outdoor experiences as leisure/recreational activities instead of educational experiences (Hall, 1987). Wu (2007) also stressed how 'major barriers for minority students' participation in wilderness education included financial difficulties; lack of exposure to wilderness, cultural issues, racial stereotypes, and fear' (p. 132). These authors suggested that such barriers for minority groups can greatly affect their ability to engage in traditional adventure programming, which if not modified or integrated with specific cultural practices might limit its effectiveness to only white Anglo-Saxon individuals. For example, Hall (1987) identified that personal value systems which differ from those inherent in an adventure program and a lack of basic skills like swimming or camping may limit minorities' comfort in participating in outdoor and adventure programs. It is important not only to recognize these perspectives but to change programming to adapt to the specific needs of these groups.

Considerations of cultural relevance, values and goals

The efficacy of adventure programming relies heavily on matching models and techniques with participants' needs (Priest, Gass, & Gillis, 2000), and there are important issues to consider within this adaptation. Bailey (1999) found that English is the primary language of discourse in the adventure literature, which makes it difficult for people writing in other languages to access the collaborative knowledge of the field and limits their participation in the larger discourse. Also, not all forms of adventure education fit in different countries. Bailey (1999) provided several examples of the mismatch. For instance, in the United States people often focus on individual risk and divergence, but in Asian countries people tend to focus more on group performance and convergence. According to Bailey (1999), people in India do not always understand why others are willing to spend money to go on a solo trip with OB when simply finding food and shelter can be a daily challenge. Moreover, Purdie and Neill (1999) concluded that when adventure programming is conducted in different countries, outdoor educators '[need] to pay close attention to the cultural relevance and impact of the activities and methods they use' (p. 56), because activities can promote values in opposition to the values of the culture. Tham (1996) highlighted this point in his discussion of adventure education in Asia, where people may not be used to sharing their own feelings in front of a group before understanding the majority's point of view. Adventure facilitators could benefit from considering these differences so that they can modify and adjust the programs to better meet the needs of diverse clients and cultures.

As the importance of cultural relevance in adventure programming has grown, the concept of cultural competence has similarly been promoted in the literature. Prouty (1996) stressed how 'becoming aware of (and acknowledging) the spoken and unspoken culture of the mainstream adventure field is crucial to work effectively cross-culturally, both in the US and internationally' (p. 5). Similarly, Waite and Pleasants (2012) highlighted how understanding commonalities and differences between cultures is key in order to 'explicate the role of culture in outdoor learning

processes' (p. 161). Norton and Hsieh (2011) found that in order to create effective adventure therapy experiences, the ability to work effectively within a cultural context different from one's own was essential. It is the responsibility of the facilitator to appropriately build culturally competent relationships within the particular context of the participant's specific culture (Norton & Hsieh, 2011). This may include the task of delineating more local goals of adventure programs by facilitators, which can vary across culture and countries (Martin & Ho, 2009). For example, the concept of resilience in Singapore is understood as a prolonged personal effort that benefits the larger society. It is possible 'that this socially grounded resilience differs from the individual resilience of self that may well be a goal of traditional western outdoor education' (Martin & Ho, 2009, p. 86). Perhaps programming would differ depending on which type of resilience is understood to be the desired outcome.

Although researchers in adventure facilitation have urged practitioners to be more aware of cultural differences (Allison, 1996; James, 1996; Roberts & Rodriguez, 1999), a clear paradigm for assessing cultural issues and guiding choices in facilitation is lacking. For example, in exploring the barriers to participating in environmental education, James (1996) identified two implications for experiential education: '... increasing recognition and affirmation of cultural differences may be evident in changing program content' (p. 133) and 'improving communication across racial and cultural lines seems to be a critical first step' (p. 133). However, James (1996) did not provide a clear roadmap or a concrete way of recognizing and affirming cultural difference. Warren (1998) suggested that facilitators need to be aware of their own culture and its level of focus on individualism. According to Warren, experiential education often focuses on personal growth, but it is important to consider that community is more important in some other cultures. Western programs that involve individual demonstrations of competence might therefore not be congruent with the goals and culture of certain participants (Warren, 1998). Brookes (2002, 2004) highlighted the importance of considering the contextual, social and cultural differences when incorporating outdoor education into one's curriculum. For local outdoor educators, developing an outdoor/adventure curriculum that reflects the norms and values of specific cultures in specific contexts allows the curriculum to better connect to the population. However, Brookes (2002, 2004) did not fully account for facilitators who have no experience in a certain cultural context yet need to create an outdoor education curriculum for people from a different, unfamiliar culture. Given that it is extremely important to consider specific social contexts when designing a program, one tool that may be helpful in enhancing cross-cultural or multicultural adventure programming when an adventure practitioner has no reference and personal experience within a foreign culture is Hofstede's cultural dimensions model (Hofstede, 2001). Hofstede's dimensions can provide a basic framework to help develop awareness of and assess cultural differences and to guide adventure choices and practices.

Application of Hofstede's cultural dimensions

Through years of research across more than 70 countries, Hofstede (2001) identified five dimensions of cultural differences that could be useful for understanding different approaches to working in groups within business as well as schools, families and communities. These dimensions include: Power Distance (PD); Uncertainty Avoidance (UA); Individualism and Collectivism (Ind/Col); Masculinity and Femininity (MAS); and Short-term versus Long-term Orientation (LTO).

Hofstede's dimensions have been applied to a variety of educational settings which look at one or multiple dimensions to help understand culture and its relationship to learning. Auyeung and Sands (1996) employed Hofstede's Ind/Col dimension to understand the impact of cultural background on students' learning styles. Niehoff, Turnley, Yen, and Sheu (2001) applied three of Hofstede's five dimensions to evaluate the different classroom expectations of students in the United States and Taiwan. While this model was not designed to specifically address cultural issues in the adventure programming field, the cultural dimensions that Hofstede (2001) identified may

help to also inform how adventure-based practices could be modified to maintain program efficacy when working in different cultural contexts.

Power Distance

Definition and conceptualization

The concept of PD is '... a measure of the interpersonal power or influence [among people who are involved in a hierarchical relationship] as perceived by the less powerful [ones]' (Hofstede, 2001, p. 83). Simply stated, PD is a concept of how power is distributed in a culture (or organization) (Harrison, McKinnon, Wu, & Chow, 2000). Cultures with a high PD heavily value hierarchical order and the power is distributed more unequally, while cultures with a low PD tend to be oriented toward the individual, which means that the power is more equally distributed among individuals.

In low PD cultures like Austria and the United States, people tend to not value hierarchical order to the same degree and seem to focus more on individual freedom (Hofstede, 2001). Authority often arises from expertise and knowledge in such settings (Harrison et al., 2000). For example, in low PD cultures, students tend to 'view teachers as relative equals and expect them to respond more attentively to their needs' (Niehoff et al., 2001, p. 292). American teachers encourage their students to voice their differing opinions in class, which can be in direct opposition to Asian students' expectations of teacher behavior (Den Brok & Levy, 2005).

On the other hand, people in a high PD culture, like many Asian countries, tend to listen to and obey authority (Hofstede, 2001). For example, in high PD schools, students perceived their teachers as more dominant in the classroom than their western counterparts (Den Brok & Levy, 2005). Students believe that they should be attentive and listen to the teachers (Watkins, 2000), all of which may lead to more fear or concern in public speaking when authority is present. McCargar (1993) pointed out that in these cultures young students are less willing to voice their own opinions if they differ from those of the elders or teachers. Also in cultures with high PD, leadership falls within a formally constituted hierarchy (Harrison et al., 2000). Students in high PD cultures often prefer teachers who have a deep knowledge of their subject and are able to answer questions (Niehoff et al., 2001; Watkins, 2000).

Application

Since different levels of PD across cultures impact thoughts and behaviors of individuals in those cultures, adventure facilitators need to consider how differing PD can impact their programming. In the United States, facilitators often introduce themselves by their first name; however, in certain cultures, calling people by titles represents a sign of respect to people of greater hierarchical status. This can be seen as a typical behavior that represents the need for hierarchical order in high PD cultures. If this is observed early on in the program, facilitators need to carefully design how and when to put their given power to use. In high PD cultures, students tend to affirm everything the facilitator suggests, which can potentially increase resistance to speaking up. Adventure programming typically values and promotes thought sharing. Facilitators often provide a considerable time for processing the experiences in debriefing sessions (Priest & Gass, 2005). This is done to allow participants to reflect on their own learning, in order to advance these concepts and foster transference of learning from the adventure experience to their daily lives. However, in high PD cultures, people do not always feel comfortable speaking in front of authority figures, hence adaptations would be needed to allow participants to learn from the experience but still feel comfortable within the group. Similarly, when conducting a youth program cross-culturally, one may want to keep in mind that the expected student-teacher (participant-instructor) dynamic could be very different than those found in western cultures. Given that people in high PD cultures are used to receiving and obeying orders from authority, it may be more culturally congruent to set greater expectations for participants to share responses before moving on to the next activity, if the goal is for students to share their own opinions. Other possible solutions might be to increase

the amount of preparatory work done with the group before the actual program. This would include redesigning the sequence of activities (e.g. more ice-breakers) to increase the group's comfort in sharing personal statements, or to provide additional processing time to help participants to open up to share their true ideas and thoughts (Tham, 1996). In addition, dyad sharing and journaling, as well as less group-oriented models of processing, would seem a better fit in these settings.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Definition and conceptualization

The concept of UA advances the belief that people's behavior is affected by the amount of anxiety they feel about the future (Hofstede, 2001). When understanding the concept of UA, it is important to note that this concept is different from risk avoidance, primarily because risk avoidance overlooks feelings of anxiety. In highlighting this differentiation, Hofstede (2001) stated that 'anxiety has no object, and uncertainty has no probability attached to it. It is a situation in which anything can happen and one has no idea what' (p. 148). The concept of UA relates to how much uncertainty of the future people in a particular culture can tolerate.

People in high UA countries tend to have a lower tolerance of uncertainty, to look for more clarity and structure in a group or events and to take on known or routine risks (e.g. driving cars) (Hofstede, 2001). These assumptions can be seen in the way students behave in schools. For example, students and teachers in high UA cultures tend to prefer structures within schools and classrooms, as well as to assign or assume designated roles. Teachers are seen as expert, and the students should not voice an opinion opposite to that of their teachers (Hofstede, 2001). In contrast, people in low UA culture tend to have a higher tolerance of uncertainty, to feel more comfortable with ambiguity and chaos, and to take on unknown or novel risks (e.g. moving to a new environment) (Hofstede, 2001). Students and teachers in low UA cultures prefer to have 'open-ended learning situations with vague objectives, broad assignments, and no timetables at all ... [and] they expect to be rewarded for originality' (Hofstede, 2001, p. 162). Spontaneous and creative thoughts seem to be encouraged more in low UA cultures than in high UA cultures.

Application

Although the UA dimension does not equal risk avoidance, people's propensity for risk-taking is addressed in UA, which is an important element in adventure programming. Adventure programming utilizes risk as a central concept when providing active learning experiences (Priest & Gass, 2005). In adventure programming, risk is often categorized into actual or perceived risks. As the gap between perceived risk and actual risk increases, the opportunities as well as intensity of learning increase (Gass, Gillis, & Russell, 2012). The gap between perceived and actual risk can contribute to individual risk perception. In addition, the decision of whether or not to take the risk can be influenced by cultural and societal norms. All of these factors may contribute to the willingness to take an unknown risk. When considering UA dimensions, it might be valuable for the facilitator to frontload the activities that involve risk-taking or to educate groups about the relationship between perceived and actual risk, which may increase participants' willingness to take unknown risks. Generally speaking, participants showing high UA behavior have slightly higher tendencies to participate in the activities that they are used to (e.g. driving cars). However, in adventure programs, most of the activities are unfamiliar to the participants. It often takes more encouragement, frontloading and planning within the group to move the activities forward.

Adventure facilitators have traditionally focused on supporting participants to discover creative and effective ways to solve problems. Facilitators create a goal (or have the participants create their own goals) for participants to accomplish, and at times the process is more important than the goal itself. Toward this end, facilitators provide instruction that often uses supporting inquiry or Socratic (dialectical) processes; questions are posited for individuals to work as a group to solve the problems,

without the answer being directly provided (Priest & Gass, 2005). In doing this, it is assumed that participants are provided with the resources to develop different methods to solve presented problems. Such practices in adventure programming were typically developed in relatively low UA countries, where people tended to have fewer needs in structured activities and instructions.

Although the desire to be given more instructions and clear structure is stressed in high UA cultures, adventure programming is well known for creating the space for students to come up with different/creative solutions. Therefore, it might be important to find a balance between the traditional philosophy of adventure programming and the characteristics of high UA participants. Because people in high UA cultures tend to respond better when there is structure, it is important when facilitating in high UA cultures to emphasize the possibility of utilizing the strengths of their group members instead of looking for detailed instructions from facilitators at the beginning of the program. Clearly stating the expectations for each activity, but not the step-by-step instructions for solving problems, at the beginning of a course may better prepare high UA participants to engage in such unfamiliar processes.

Individualism and Collectivism

Definition and conceptualization

Ind/Col represents two fairly different concepts of people's thinking, feeling, behavior and social norms. Generally speaking, collectivism tends to see the group as a unit, seeing the values and needs of the group as more important than the individuals. Individualism tends to see each person as a unit, and sees the needs and values of an individual as more important than the group (Forbes, Collinworth, Zhao, Kohlman, & LeClaire, 2011; Hofstede, 2001). People in collectivist cultures tend to see themselves as others see them (e.g. 'My classmates think that I am a good person') (Triandis, 2001). This might have potential influence on how people in different cultures are motivated in learning. Students from collectivist backgrounds might have more 'motives that are social or that have the other as referent' (Markus & Kitayama, 1991, p. 240). Harrison et al. (2000) suggested that people in collectivist culture tend to have a harder time adjusting to frequent changes in workgroups. This could impact the ability of groups with a collectivist culture to successfully interact and work with an unfamiliar facilitator.

On the other hand, people in individualist cultures tend to see themselves as personal selves (e.g. 'I am a nice person') (Triandis, 2001). Students from an individualistic culture might be more motivated by their internal needs and able to withstand undue social pressure (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). In addition, there is evidence which suggests that members of individualistic cultures can adjust more easily to frequent changes in workgroups than members of collectivist cultures (Harrison et al., 2000).

Application

Culturally-based effects of motivation and the ability to adapt to changes in leadership may be important considerations for adventure facilitators. The fundamental differences between individualistic and collectivist self-construal suggests that creating a safe learning environment within a collectivist culture might take longer to accomplish because the facilitator may not be immediately identified as trustworthy. In addition, in collectivist cultures, people tend to absorb others' opinions before they share their own in order to fit into the group. For example, once an idea or an opinion is voiced during debriefing, other participants tend to merely restate the opinion in a different way. In practice, Miller (1996) found while facilitating experiential education in Japan that it was difficult for Japanese participants to use 'I think' statements when debriefing group activities. This might be due to the expectations to be receptive of others' opinions and more restrained with one's own needs or desire (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Hence, participants in collectivist cultures may have tendencies to look for acceptable behavior and possibly even the right answer in order to either please authority figures and/or maintain harmony within the group (Jung, Bass, & Sosik, 1995).

For adventure facilitators working in collectivist communities, adaptations may be needed in order to support this paradigm while also supporting group and personal growth. For instance, a team-building program could educate participants on the importance of individual ideas within a larger system; sharing their point of view may help the group move forward, so long as the power structure of the system they operate within (i.e. place of employment, family system or educational environment) supports such learning. Because the behavior might be different to collectivist individuals in a large group setting, allowing more time to process may be very helpful. In these settings, it might be more beneficial to incorporate paired sharing instead of debriefing in the big group. Similarly, participants could write down their thoughts on paper, exchange them with others and then anonymously share in a big group to allow for different voices without direct ownership or judgment.

Masculinity and Femininity

Definition and conceptualization

The Masculinity Index (MAS) is used to measure differences between genders (Hofstede, 2001). Gender roles are more clearly distinct in high MAS countries than in low MAS countries. In other words, in high MAS countries, men and women have more divided social roles (Hofstede, 2001). In high MAS cultures, people tend to accept that 'men should be tough and take care of performance; women should be tender and take care of relationships' (Hofstede, 2001, p. 299). For example, men from high MAS cultures tend to claim that they are more competitive than women (Hofstede, 2001). MAS dimensions also have influence in school settings because, in high MAS cultures, students expect teachers to hold most of the knowledge. Teachers are not expected to be fair, and student performance is regularly rewarded (Hofstede, 2001). This belief structure leads to substantial academic pressure and an environment in which failure is socially and culturally unacceptable (Hofstede, 2001).

Application

While there has been considerable work promoting awareness of women's roles in outdoor education (Loeffler, 1997; Morse, 1997; Warren & Association for Experiential Education, 1996; Warren & Rheingold, 1996), the concept of masculinity and femininity that Hofstede (2001) examined differs from the studies (e.g., Warren, 1985; Warren & Rheingold, 1996) that investigate gender equality in adventure education. The conversation about gender equity in adventure education is important and valuable. However, Hofstede sees MAS as a descriptor of cultural characteristics, but he does not necessarily see it as a part of social justice issues that need to be addressed. The strong gender stereotypes embedded in high MAS cultures are important to consider when developing adventure programs for such groups. For example, when working with high MAS populations, ensuring both genders are provided equal opportunity to safely share their thoughts is important; however, equal opportunity does not mean simply sharing the same amount of airtime, but rather using different facilitation techniques to allow both parties to express their opinions. This needs to be carefully designed because in some cultures women might not usually have a chance to voice their opinions when there are males present in a group. Hence, anonymously sharing opinions within a group, or even deciding to conduct same-sex programming, might be appropriate.

It is also important to recognize gender differences and inequalities can still exist within a low MAS culture, although they are often manifested less conspicuously. For example, in low MAS cultures, participants may make fun of people's appearance when their bodies do not meet the culturally expected characteristics of masculinity or femininity. Targets of such comments may not appear to be bothered by them, or may even join in. However, it is important for facilitators to recognize the systems at play and provide a safe way for different genders to voice their opinions and participate in the program. Establishing group norms to discourage gendered attacks early in

the program, modeling positive behaviors and being ready to process incidents should they occur may be helpful for low MAS groups struggling with gender-related issues. Providing some training in conflict resolution may serve to further support such participants in addressing gender issues safely.

Long-term versus Short-term Orientation

Definition and conceptualization

Hofstede's fifth dimension incorporates eastern scholars' point of view and has been assessed using the LTO, which is based on the Chinese Value Survey, a values-assessment rooted in Confucian ideology. Most of the cultures that have higher LTO scores are gathered in East Asian countries. Western countries scored on the lower side, and developing countries scored the lowest (Hofstede, 2001). This dimension is a relatively new way of explaining the differences between eastern and western thinking (Hofstede, 2001).

Individuals in cultures with higher LTO scores tend to persist longer on a task and view perseverance as a highly valued personality trait, to see leisure time as less important, to view humility as a general human virtue and to perform better in solving well-defined problems (Hofstede, 2001), where the goal is explicitly stated. People in low LTO cultures tend to expect quick results, to see leisure as an important activity, to view humility as more of a feminine virtue and to believe that solving well-defined problems might not be their strength (Hofstede, 2001). Biggs (1996) postulated that one-on-one time with teachers was of greater importance to students in cultures of Confucian heritage—high LTO—(e.g. China, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore) compared with those from western cultures. Niehoff et al. (2001) indicated that students in high LTO cultures tended to look at learning as a long-term goal and an intrinsically driven process. High LTO cultures have been shown to be more likely to focus on theoretical, research-based knowledge, whereas low LTO students tend to focus more on application of the learning (Auyeung & Sands, 1996). In addition, Hofstede (2001) suggested that the ways of thinking in high LTO cultures tend to be better suited to well-defined problem-solving, such as in mathematics and science, but not in situations involving creative approaches to addressing problems.

Application

Based on Biggs' (1996) findings and characteristics listed by Hofstede (2001), it may be important for the facilitator to provide more one-on-one assistance or to ask questions of their cohort privately, instead of sharing information or asking questions in a larger group context. In addition, processing techniques in adventure programs have traditionally been based on a guided teaching style (Priest & Gass, 2005). In high LTO groups it may be useful for facilitators to consider employing more structured processing techniques and provide more defined problem-solving activities, which may lead to opportunities for one-on-one discussions.

Students from high LTO culture tend to learn from more abstract content, which suggests that it may be helpful to rethink theories and processes that many adventure educators employ in their design of curriculum. One example would be to rearrange Kolb's (1984) experiential learning cycle when designing a program from the sequence of '(1) concrete experience, (2) observations and reflection, (3) formation of abstract concepts and generalizations, and (4) testing implication of concept in new situation' (Kolb, 1984, p. 21) to (1) abstract concepts, (2) concrete experiences, (3) observation and reflection on the experiences and (4) testing implication of concept in new situation and generalizations. Starting with a conceptual discussion might better prepare participants to transfer learning from adventure activities to their daily lives. This is only one example of a particular theory that is used in the field. It is important for adventure educators to look into different theories and/or process models to make similar modifications to fit within the context in which they are working. As Kurka (2012) argues '... experience does not happen in isolation of

context, but is influenced by things such as socio-cultural factors which can shape one's perception of the experience and therefore on learning outcomes' (p. 14). Therefore, it might be worth re-thinking theories behind adventure educators' practices to address the needs of participants within a cultural context.

Practice implications

Based on Hofstede's five dimensions, we have suggested some cultural norms that are different from traditional, western adventure programming approaches. The dimensions are helpful in terms of providing an overall guideline for facilitators to assess the group dynamics to design programs that can better be received by people from different cultures. However, as McSweeney (2002) pointed out, Hofstede's findings do not address all aspects of complex human behaviors. This model provides us with a framework from which to assess human behaviors, but it has its own limitations that include an overgeneralization of culture based solely on national divisions (Jones, 2007). This can create false distinctions between the various dimensions; however, we recognize that there are no clear-cut distinctions (either/or) between dimensions, and individuals can lie on the continuum between each dimension. In addition, these dimensions correlate with each other. For example, there appears to be a strong negative correlation between PD and Ind/Col, meaning countries with high PD scores tend to lean toward a more collectivist culture (low IDV scores), and vice versa (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Despite the criticisms of this model, Jones (2007) believes there is more evidence to support Hofstede's work than evidence against it. However, due to the complexity of individuals and groups, we offer Hofstede's model as only one part of the larger considerations that facilitators need to make in order to be successful in meeting the needs of the group. We warn against the overgeneralization of this model to all people within a culture; however, we support its use as one way to guide facilitation choices.

In fact, best practices in adventure programming are not limited to one specific model or theory, but the integration of information gained by the facilitator in multiple ways (Priest & Gass, 2005). For example, there are several common assessment tools used by adventure facilitators (Gass & Gillis, 1995; Schoel & Maizell, 2002) to guide programming choices needed due to the risk factors involved with adventure activities. Project Adventure's GRABBSS model is one such example (Schoel & Maizell, 2002). Facilitators take into consideration the Goals of the group, its Readiness for the activities, the current Affect of the group and its members, the current Behavior displayed in the group, the physical limitations or considerations of the group members (Body), the Stage of the group's development, as well as the Setting in which the group occurs. GRABBSS takes into consideration some of the physical needs of group participants, but is limited in its ability to address some of the deeper behaviors of the group. To supplement, Hofstede's dimensions can provide facilitators with an additional tool to help understand a group and its behaviors as well as guide decision-making moving forward. In addition, the use of Hofstede's dimensions may help facilitators in being aware of their own culturally-based understanding of facilitation. Furthermore, adjusting their presentation and debriefing strategies to meet the general expectations of participants, teachers or mentors described by Hofstede's (2001) model may help facilitators better meet the needs of clients from different cultural backgrounds than their own.

For facilitation, the authors suggest that the following questions be asked in order to properly assess a group functioning across Hofstede's five dimensions:

Power Distance dimension:

- (1) What types of settings are students/participants coming from?
- (2) What types of roles are assigned to adults and youth in the group?
- (3) How are adults and/or leaders addressed (i.e. teachers, coaches, facilitators)?

- (4) Are youth encouraged to ask questions? What does this look like?
- (5) Is there an encouragement of different ideas?
- (6) How are different ideas received?

Uncertainty Avoidance dimension:

- (1) Do adults give students autonomy in problem-solving activities?
- (2) How do students respond to an unstructured schedule for the day?
- (3) How do students respond to unfamiliar challenges?
- (4) What types of challenges are students more willing to participate in?

Individualism and Collectivism dimension:

- (1) How likely are students to express different ideas to the group?
- (2) How often do students use 'I' statements versus 'we' statements?
- (3) Does it take a long for students to feel comfortable with facilitator?
- (4) To what level do students want to stand out or be different from their classmates?
- (5) Do students speak up in front of the big group?

Masculinity and Femininity dimension:

- (1) Are there significant/observable role differences between genders?
- (2) What typical roles do women and/or men have in that social context?
- (3) Can the differences between genders be addressed in the program without negative consequences for participants?

Short-term versus Long-term Orientation dimension:

- (1) How much do students expect a quick result in an activity?
- (2) Would one-on-one conversations be more effective compared with big group debriefing?
- (3) Do students learn better when facilitators share the abstract idea before the activity?

Conclusion

This article highlights the importance of understanding cultural differences and offers a new approach to assess participant characteristics within different cultures. Assessing group functioning using Hofstede's five dimensions gives facilitators a basis to adjust their facilitation techniques/ styles to more appropriately meet the needs of the participants and provides a tool to use, in addition to traditional assessment models provided in adventure programming. However, it is important to note that this is only the first step in being culturally competent facilitators. Adventure professionals must examine whether the design and curriculum of adventure programs and facilitators' worldviews impose specific cultural values onto their participants. For example, if facilitators decide to create an environment that encourages students to speak up, they need to clearly understand the purpose of such a request. It might not be the social norm to openly share ideas, and doing so could also alienate participants from others within their culture. It is also possible that teaching participants from other cultures to question authority could cause them significant collateral harm should they transfer this practice to their everyday lives. Questioning authority can often be grounds for termination of employment or social exclusion in different cultures. These are examples of cultural pitfalls that Hofstede's model may help practitioners avoid. Although Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions provide a framework for understanding basic

beliefs and value structures in different cultures, there is little research exploring these dimensions in adventure education, especially in relation to the efficacy of different facilitation techniques across different cultural contexts. Therefore, future research must explore best practices for modifying adventure programming theory and practice to be more culturally sensitive.

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