

A tale of three journals: A study of papers published in AJOE, JAEOL and JEE between 1998 and 2007.

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Abstract

We provide an analysis of refereed papers published in the Australian Journal of Outdoor Education, the Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, and the Journal of Experiential Education over the last decade. We developed a framework to classify the papers in terms of the authors' affiliations, the type of papers published, the context they address, and the foci of the papers. Authors from the US published most extensively across all three journals followed by authors from Australia, UK, Canada, and New Zealand; the JAEOL had the most balanced mix of author nationalities. All three journals demonstrated a trend towards a higher proportion of research-based papers. Suggestions for the continued development of the emerging research culture are provided. We conclude by offering a table identifying potential areas for future research.

Introduction

This paper provides an analysis of the refereed publications in three scholarly journals in the related fields of outdoor education, adventure education, and experiential education. The three journals are the Australian Journal of Outdoor Education (AJOE), the Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning (JAEOL), and the Journal of Experiential Education (JEE). We analyse the refereed publications published in each journal between 1998 and 2007, 343 papers in total, before concluding with a section reflecting on the similarities, differences and future challenges for the three journals. This choice to analyse papers published between 1998 to 2007 was pragmatic because AJOE and JAEOL have only published refereed papers since 1998 and 2000 respectively whereas the JEE has published refereed papers since 1978.

We are not aware of any previous attempts to conduct such a broad analysis of the refereed journal publications in the overlapping but distinct fields of outdoor education, adventure education, and experiential education. There have been several reviews of research conducted in these fields but the foci of these reviews have been quite different to the focus of this paper. Ewert (1987) selectively reviewed research in outdoor adventure recreation in order to provide both a historical overview of past research and some suggestions for future research. Ewert's purpose was to "suggest ways to enhance the effectiveness of research in outdoor adventure" (p. 25) in order

to create more meaningful findings. More recently, Rickinson et al. (2004) conducted a critical examination of 150 published research accounts on outdoor learning between 1993 and 2003. This review, motivated in part by the desire for educational practice and policy to become more evidence based, was commissioned by the Field Studies Council and conducted through the National Foundation for Educational Research in the UK. The specific aims of the review were to establish what was known about young people's experience of outdoor learning, the impact of that learning, the factors that impede and facilitate their learning, and the factors that impede and facilitate the provision of outdoor learning. In their final report, Rickinson et al. made a range of recommendations for future practice, policy and research, but the strength of these recommendations is compromised because, for reasons which remain unclear, they omitted to include numerous research papers (which met their stated research criteria) in the review (for example, no papers from JAEOL were included). We speculate that the focus of the papers and the recommendations were influenced by the funding body (the Field Studies Council) who are concerned with environmental issues and education – thus their report should be seen in this light.

The purpose of this review of refereed papers across the three journals is to provide an overview of the peer reviewed research that has been published in the last decade in order to reveal strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and what we perceive to be blind

spots. Hence, this review describes and explores general trends in the papers published within and across the three journals. No attempt has been made to assess the quality of the papers published in the three journals as this was beyond the scope of this study. We have also chosen to take a constructivist approach to this review (Mertens, 2005) and we use the data collected to describe and interpret phenomena rather than attempting to prove causal links or demonstrate correlations between variables. Before we describe the methodology and methods of our review we provide a short history of each journal.

The journals' purposes and histories

The Australian Journal of Outdoor Education

The purposes of AJOE include providing a balanced and in-depth investigation of outdoor education practices and theories in a variety of educational and recreational contexts, enhancing understanding of outdoor education and recreation issues, examining and applying research and providing a forum for outdoor education and outdoor recreation professionals to exchange and discuss ideas and practices (Outdoor Council of Australia, 2008). The AJOE was first published in 1995 with a strong practitioner focus (Neill & Gray, 2001), and it was not until 1998 that it became a peer-reviewed journal. In the ensuing decade the journal has published 106 refereed papers across 18 issues. Recent editors have included Tonia Gray (1998-2002), James Neill (2002-2003), Glyn Thomas and Almut Beringer (2004), and Thomas (2005-2008). Currently, the journal publishes two issues per year and has a five member editorial board from Australia and New Zealand, and 16 other regular reviewers from Australia, New Zealand, North America, and the UK who participate in the double-blind peer review process.

The Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning

In 1999, the UK based Association for Outdoor Learning (renamed the Institute for Outdoor Learning in 2001) launched the JAEOL. The purpose of the JAEOL is "to promote dialogue, research, thinking, understanding, teaching and practice in the broad field of adventure education and outdoor learning" (Allison & Richards, 2000, p. 86). Pete Allison and Kaye Richards started as co-editors in 2000, after which Pete Allison became the sole editor in 2001. In 2002, JAEOL moved to publish two issues per year as a result of an increase in submissions from authors outside the UK and Europe. In 2005 the editorial team of Linda Allin, Barbara Humberstone and Nicola Tucker were appointed and in 2006 JAEOL was acquired by Taylor and Francis publishers. Currently, the Editorial Advisory Board consists of nine UK residents and the pool of reviewers currently involves approximately

30 professionals from around the world who provide their expertise in the double-blind peer reviewed process.

The Journal of Experiential Education

The JEE is published three times a year by the USA based Association for Experiential Education (AEE). First published in 1978, JEE is one of the first peer-reviewed academic journals to present "scientific and conceptual inquiries into the study and practice of experiential education and its various subfields" (JEE, 2007, p. 89). Past editors include Alan Warner (1989-1992), Chuck Luckmann (1993-1998), Steve Simpson (1998-2000), and Alan Ewert (2000-2005). In 2005, a four-person editorial team took over the helm of JEE: Mary Breunig and Tim O'Connell of Brock University as co-editors, and Brent Cuthbertson and Tom Potter of Lakehead University as associate editors. The journal has two advisory committees, the Editorial Advisory Committee, composed of five members, and, the Journal Advisory Committee, made up of 11 members. Approximately 70 reviewers, with representation from seven countries, serve to provide expertise in the double-blind peer-review process of manuscripts. In 2006 JEE moved to an online method of manuscript submission and peer review called Open Journal Systems (<http://pkp.sfu.ca/?q=ojs>).

Research design

The framework used to analyse the journal publications was chosen because it provides a broad overview of the publications. The aspects of each paper included in the analysis are the authors' affiliation, the type of paper, the context of each paper, and the foci of the paper. Every refereed paper published in the three journals between 1998 and 2007 was analysed and coded according to these four descriptors by one of the authors of this paper. We each coded the papers published in the journal with which we were most closely affiliated. Hence, Thomas coded the AJOE papers and Allison and Potter coded the JAEOL and JEE papers respectively. We were all involved in a cross-checking of the coding completed by the others to enhance the accuracy and consistency of the coding process. In many cases, this coding was conducted by reading the abstract of the paper alone, and this was possible in part because of our familiarity with the papers published in the journals as a result of our current or past involvement in the editorship of the journals. When required, the full text of the papers was consulted in order to classify the papers.

The first descriptor used to classify the papers, author affiliation, provides a summary of the national location of the organisation with which the authors' were affiliated at the time of writing. Hence, the results do not provide a description of the nationality of the authors per se. In the case of multiple authors

from different organisations the affiliation of the first author was used in the coding process. The countries or regions used in the coding process emerged from the data and included: USA, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Europe (not including the UK), Asia/Middle East.

The type of paper descriptor was used to interpret the nature of the scholarly work that contributed to the paper. A framework developed by Mertens (2005) to describe educational research from a social sciences' perspective was adopted to classify papers in which the authors presented findings based on research projects. The paradigms identified by Mertens that were used to categorise the research based papers were post—positivist, constructivist, and transformational. Although the lines of distinction between these paradigms can become blurry, they do typically indicate different research purposes, ontologies, epistemologies, and methodologies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). Paradigms were used to distinguish between the different research reports because they better distinguish the nature of the research than describing the research methods used. We also introduced the research category of action research to classify research papers in which "a personal attempt is made to understand, improve, and reform practice" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000, p. 226). The publications categorised as position papers were typically papers where the authors drew upon the research and writing of others to develop an argument to support a particular position. In contrast, the literature review category was used to code papers in which the authors summarised the published literature on a particular topic without making a particularly strong or clear argument. The research methodology category was used to code papers in which the authors provided discussion about methodological issues rather than their research findings.

The context descriptor was used to classify the target audience for whom the paper was written. In some cases this was explicitly communicated by the authors and at other times we had to infer from the content of the paper. The categories used emerged from the data themselves and included: outdoor leadership, outdoor environmental education, adventure education, experiential education, service learning, outdoor education, outdoor recreation, adventure/wilderness therapy, and expeditions. As much as possible, we did not categorise the papers according to our predetermined definitions of these contexts, but rather we accepted the terms the authors used to describe their intended audience.

The focus descriptor was used to categorise both the primary and secondary foci of each paper. Two descriptors were used for almost all of the papers because it allowed us to better capture the sometimes multiple foci that existed. The categories used within

this descriptor emerged and were refined during the coding process and, although there were some overlaps, the scope of each individual code used is summarized in Table 1.

Together, the aforementioned descriptors allowed us to analyse the papers published across the three journals. To explore changes in general trends during the ten years, we also investigated the differences in the results for the first and second halves of the ten-year period. As in any research endeavour we brought with us biases and notably all three of us have been most involved with research in the constructivist paradigm. We have interpreted and coded the published papers in a way that made sense to us, and despite the steps taken to enhance the trustworthiness of the coding process described earlier, it is possible that other researchers may code the same data differently. Finally, all three of us have been involved in the leadership of one of the three journals, which may be considered a source of bias. Similarly, we all have an interest and a commitment to the development of high quality peer-reviewed work in all three journals and value a balanced development of research in a range of areas of theory and practice. As academics we all have an interest in writing and publications and trust that this interest has influenced the value of the content of this paper in positive ways.

Results

The results of the classification process for each journal will be presented for the full decade (eight years for JAEOL). Furthermore, the results for the first half of the decade (1998-2002, or 2000-2002 for JAEOL) and second half of the decade (2003-2007) are presented for each journal to allow for some comparison of general trends over the ten-year period. The richness of the investigation lies in the large number of categories identified (37). Hence, statistical analyses of the data were not performed given the large number of categories and the small frequency counts within some of the categories. Instead the discussion is descriptive in nature and focuses only on the larger, general trends.

Australian Journal of Outdoor Education

The analysis of the 106 refereed papers published in AJOE between 1998 and 2007 reveals a number of interesting trends and patterns shown in Table 2. The authors of these papers have been predominantly Australian (72%), with UK writers contributing 8%, New Zealand 8%, USA 4%, Canada 4%, and Europe and Asia/Middle East 2% each. Interestingly, the ratio of contributions from international authors to Australian authors has changed recently: prior to 2003 it was 22% and 79% respectively and since 2002 it has been 36% and 64% respectively. It would appear that AJOE is attracting more international authors and

Table 1: Codes used to categorise the primary and secondary foci of papers published in the AJOE, JAEOL, and JEE between 1998-2007.

Codes used	The foci of the papers that the code was used to categorise.
Safety management	Practices/policies and/or accident data to highlight deficiencies, or ways to improve participant safety.
Risk management	Practices/policies and/or accident data in order to reduce the exposure to risk experienced by participants, leaders, or organisations.
Curriculum issues	Curriculum content, design, or review (but not implementation)
Teaching and teacher issues	Implementation of curriculum or other issues to do with teaching or leading across a range of contexts.
Theoretical foundations	Developing the body of knowledge or theory underpinning or informing practice.
Gender, race, social justice issues	Practices/policies/theories concerning gender, race, or other social justice issues.
Special needs	Theories, practices or policies that impact the participation of individuals or groups with special needs, disabilities, or some form of disadvantage.
Environmental/ecological / spiritual/sustainability	Practices, policies, or theories relevant to environmental or ecological issues, spirituality, sustainability, or sustainable development.
Adventure	Practices or theory that particularly focuses on the construct of adventure.
Program design/facilitation	Issues concerning how programs are designed, implemented, or facilitated across any context.
Profession/professional issues	Issues relevant to the development of the profession or professionals in any of the contexts considered.
Outcomes/effects/participant experiences	Outcomes, benefits, effects, consequences or participants' experiences across the range of contexts.
Relationships with nature/self/others	Interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships or the relationships that participants may (or may not) develop with nature or the environment.
Research processes	Research methodology, ontology, epistemology, research methods, data collection/analysis, research ethics, or assessment tools/instruments.

consequently AJOE readers have been exposed to a wider range of international research and practice, particularly from the UK, New Zealand, and North America.

The papers published in AJOE between 1998 and 2007 have been predominantly position papers (45%) although research reports when bundled together account for 49% of the total. Only a small proportion of the papers were classified as literature reviews or research methodology papers (3% each). Focusing on the 52 papers classified as research reports, 19% were classified as research within the positivist paradigm, with papers in the constructivist paradigm accounting for 69%, action research 12%, and no papers being categorised as research in the transformational paradigm. In the last five years the proportion of research-based articles has increased from 40% to 60% compared to the period between 1998 and 2002. This

increase has mirrored the drop in the proportion of position papers from 54% to 36% for the earlier and latter periods respectively.

The contexts represented in the AJOE papers reflect the range of interests in the broader outdoor education field: 18% of the papers focused on generic outdoor leadership, 37% focused on outdoor education, 13% on outdoor environmental education, 16% on adventure/wilderness therapy, and 10% on adventure education. The most common categories used to classify the focus of the papers were program design and facilitation (29%), outcomes, effects, and participant experiences (16%), profession and professional issues (11%), teaching and teaching issues (9%), and relationships with nature, self, and others (8%). Only small differences were evident in the emphasis on the 14 foci categories used when comparing the papers published between 1998-2002 and 2003-2007.

Table 2: Coding categories (and their emphasis expressed as a percentage) for AJOE papers between 1998-2007.

Categories	Total 1998-2007	First 5 years 1998-2002	Last 5 years 2003-2007	% Change between periods
Number of refereed papers	106	56	50	
Author Affiliation*	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Asia/Middle East	2	0	4	+4
Australia	72	79	64	-15
Canada	4	4	4	0
Europe	2	4	0	-4
New Zealand	8	9	8	-1
United Kingdom	8	5	12	+7
United States of America	4	0	8	+8
Type of paper	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Position paper	45	54	36	-18
Literature review	3	4	2	-2
Research report (positivist)	9	9	10	-1
Research report (constructivist)	34	29	40	+11
Research report (transformational)	0	0	0	0
Research report (action research)	6	2	10	+8
Research methodology	3	4	2	-2
Context	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Outdoor Leadership	18	14	22	+8
Outdoor Education	37	32	42	+10
Outdoor Environmental Education	13	9	18	+9
Adventure Education	10	14	6	-8
Adventure/Wilderness Therapy	16	23	8	-15
Experiential Education	0	0	0	0
Service Learning	0	0	0	0
Expeditions	4	4	4	0
Outdoor Recreation	2	4	0	-4
Focus #	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Safety management	4	4	4	0
Risk management	3	3	2	-1
Curriculum issues	5	3	7	+4
Teaching and teacher issues	9	7	10	+3
Theoretical foundations	6	6	7	+1
Gender, race, social justice issues	3	2	3	+1
Special needs	0	0	0	0
Environmental/ecological/spiritual	4	2	7	+5
Adventure	2	0	3	+3
Program design/facilitation	29	32	26	-6
Profession/professional issues	11	12	10	-2
Outcomes/effects/participant exp.	16	21	10	-11
Relationships with nature/self/others	8	6	10	+4
Research processes	1	1	1	0

* Papers with multiple authors from different countries were coded on affiliation of first author.

Primary and secondary foci were allocated for each paper and both of these were included in these tallies.

Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning

There were 70 refereed papers published in JAEOL between 2000 to 2007, and although this is a slightly shorter time frame of analysis used for the other journals, this does not preclude comments on general trends or comparisons between journals. The authors of the papers were predominantly affiliated with institutions from the UK (34%) and the USA (29%) with Australia (13%), Europe (9%), New Zealand (7%), Canada (6%) and Asia/Middle East (3%) making up the balance. When considering the changing trends during the eight year period, we chose to analyse the first three years and last five years to provide a consistent reference point with the other two journals. Bearing in mind the aforementioned caveat regarding statistics, the most notable change in the authors' affiliation has been a reduction in the proportion of papers from authors affiliated with institutions based in the UK, down from 50% between 2000-2002 to 27% from 2003-2007. This reduction is reflected in smaller increases in the percentages of author affiliations from several other countries.

In terms of the types of papers, position papers and literature reviews accounted for 19% and 27% respectively as shown in Table 3. Overall, research reports accounted for 54% of the papers published with the primary contributors being research from within the positivist paradigm (16%) and constructivist paradigm (33%). Only minor variations in the proportions of paper types were apparent across the early and latter periods of analysis. The contexts that featured most heavily in the JAEOL papers were outdoor education (33%), adventure education (21%), outdoor leadership (14%) and adventure wilderness therapy (11%). Again only small changes in the proportion of contexts addressed in the papers seem to be evident between the earlier and latter period. The only exceptions being that papers addressing the outdoor recreation context appear to have reduced from 23% to 4% respectively, whilst papers addressing adventure/wilderness therapy have increased from 5% to 15% respectively. The remaining 9% is distributed across other categories.

The main foci of the papers published in JAEOL were teaching/teacher issues (19%), theoretical foundations (16%), programme design/facilitation (15%), profession/professional issues (14%), and relationships with nature/others/self (11%). Perhaps as noteworthy are the areas that do not appear to be receiving attention such as safety management (1%), risk management (3%), special needs (1%), environmental/ecological/spiritual/sustainability (0%), adventure and research processes (1% each). Changes in the focus of papers pre-2002 and post-2003 were all relatively minor as shown in Table 2.

The Journal of Experiential Education

Between 1998 and 2007 JEE has published 167 refereed papers, the majority (79%) by authors affiliated with organisations based in the USA. Only 8% and 5% are from Canadian and Australian affiliated authors respectively, with just 2% each from Europe, New Zealand and the UK. A comparison of the author affiliations in the first and second halves of the decade reveals similar percentages for author affiliation as shown in Table 4.

Papers published in JEE between 1998 and 2007 have been predominately classified as research reports (54%). Of the papers categorised as research reports within the positivist and constructivist paradigms top the list at 25% and 23% respectively. Position papers also had a strong presence with 29% and literature reviews accounting for a further 15% of the research report papers. A comparison of the earlier half of the decade (1998-2002) with the latter half (2003-2007) shows that the proportion of position papers dropped from 43% to 9%. During the same time periods the percentage of published research reports increased from 42% to 70% respectively. Investigating the changes in specific types of research reports reveals that those based in the positivist paradigm and constructivist paradigm experienced a rise (16% to 36% and 19% to 30% respectively).

The context of the papers published in JEE reflects the diversity of experiential education. For example, 8% of papers focused on generic outdoor leadership, 5% on outdoor education, 23% on adventure education, 27% on experiential education, 17% on service learning, and 14% on adventure/wilderness therapy. Interesting variations in the contexts from 1998-2002 and 2003-2007 include a decrease in publications on experiential education (32% to 20%) and increases in adventure education (20% to 29%) and service learning (11% to 26%).

Table 4 presents the complete range of categories used to classify the focus of papers published in JEE; the most common ones were: outcomes, effects, and participant experiences (20%); teaching and teacher issues (16%); curriculum issues (13%); and relationships with nature, others, and self (10%). Comparing categories published in JEE between 1998-2002 and 2003-2007 only reveals small fluctuations except for outcomes, effects, and participant experiences which rose from 11% to 32%, and teaching and teacher issues which decreased from 21% to 9%.

Table 3: Coding categories (and their emphasis expressed as a percentage) for JAEOL papers between 2000-2007.

Categories	Total 2000 [^] -2007	First 3 years 2000 [^] -2002	Last 5 years 2003-2007	% Change between periods
Refereed papers	70	22	48	
Author Affiliation*	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Asia/Middle East	3	5	2	-3
Australia	13	9	15	+6
Canada	6	0	8	+8
Europe	9	9	8	-1
New Zealand	7	5	8	+3
United Kingdom	34	50	27	-23
United States of America	29	23	31	+8
Type of paper	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Position paper	19	18	19	+1
Literature review	27	27	27	0
Research report (positivist)	16	18	15	-3
Research report (constructivist)	33	27	35	+8
Research report (transformational)	1	0	2	+2
Research report (action research)	4	9	2	-7
Research methodology	0	0	0	0
Context	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Outdoor Leadership	14	14	15	-1
Outdoor Education	33	32	33	+1
Outdoor Environmental Education	6	9	4	-5
Adventure Education	21	18	23	+5
Adventure/Wilderness Therapy	11	5	15	+10
Experiential Education	0	0	0	0
Service Learning	0	0	0	0
Expeditions	4	0	6	+6
Outdoor Recreation	10	23	4	-19
Focus #	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Safety management	1	2	1	-1
Risk management	3	0	4	+4
Curriculum issues	4	0	5	+5
Teaching and teacher issues	19	21	18	-3
Theoretical foundations	16	16	16	0
Gender, race, social justice issues	5	5	5	0
Special needs	1	2	0	-2
Environmental/ecological/spiritual	0	0	0	0
Adventure	1	2	0	-2
Program design/facilitation	15	16	14	-2
Profession/professional issues	14	16	13	-3
Outcomes/effects/participant exp.	9	5	11	+6
Relationships with nature/self/others	11	14	10	-4
Research processes	1	0	1	+1

* Papers with multiple authors from different countries were coded on affiliation of first author.

Primary and secondary foci were allocated for each paper and both of these were included in these tallies.

[^] JAEOL started in 2000, hence the different time periods.

Table 4: Coding categories (and their emphasis expressed as a percentage) for all JEE papers between 1998-2007.

Categories	Total 1998-2007	First 5 years of period 1998-2002	Last 5 years of period 2003-2007	% Change between periods
Refereed papers	167	97	70	
Author Affiliation*	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Asia / Middle East	1	0	1	+1
Australia	5	4	7	+3
Canada	8	7	10	+3
Europe	2	2	1	-1
New Zealand	2	2	3	+1
United Kingdom	2	2	3	+1
United States of America	79	82	74	-8
Type of paper	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Position paper	29	43	9	-32
Literature review	15	13	17	+4
Research report (positivist)	25	16	36	+20
Research report (constructivist)	23	19	30	+11
Research report (transformational)	2	1	3	+2
Research report (action research)	4	6	1	-5
Research methodology	2	1	4	+3
Context	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Outdoor Leadership	8	11	3	-7
Outdoor Education	5	2	10	+8
Outdoor Environmental Education	4	5	1	-4
Adventure Education	23	20	29	+9
Adventure / Wilderness Therapy	14	16	10	-6
Experiential Education	27	32	20	-12
Service Learning	17	11	26	+15
Expeditions	1	1	0	-1
Outdoor Recreation	1	1	1	0
Focus #	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	
Safety management	2	3	0	-3
Risk management	2	3	2	-1
Curriculum issues	13	15	11	-4
Teaching and teacher issues	16	21	9	-12
Theoretical foundations	5	7	3	-4
Gender, race, social justice issues	3	4	1	-3
Special needs	6	4	8	+4
Environmental/ecological/spiritual	4	5	3	-2
Adventure	2	3	1	-2
Program design/facilitation	8	5	13	+8
Profession/professional issues	6	7	5	-2
Outcomes/effects/participant exp.	20	11	32	+21
Relationships with nature/self/others	10	10	10	0
Research processes	4	3	5	+2

* Papers with multiple authors from different countries were coded on affiliation of first author.

Primary and secondary foci were allocated for each paper and both of these were included in these tallies.

Discussion: Similarities, differences, and implications

The discussion in this section focuses on the issues of author affiliation, the evidence of an emerging research culture, and the overlapping issues of context, foci and purpose.

Author affiliation

In the ten year period examined in this paper, JAEOL has the broadest range, and most even spread of representation, in terms of the nationality of the organisations with which authors' were affiliated (see Table 5). AJOE and JEE have primarily published papers written by authors affiliated with organisations based in the countries in which those journals are published (72% and 79% respectively). This may be best explained by the fact that most of the subscribers to AJOE and JEE are based in Australia and the USA respectively (94% of AJOE paper subscribers are from Australia and 83% of JEE paper subscribers are from the USA). It is understandable that authors may wish to target audiences using a journal published in their home country. Based on current figures, the JAEOL has the best balance of international authors, however the AJOE has increased its proportion of papers by internationally affiliated authors from 22% (1998-2002) to 41% (2003-2007). It is unclear why the JAEOL has a broader range of authors than the other two journals but it is consistent with one of the journal's aims to publish papers that report on research with a wide international interest.

Achieving recognition as an international journal is only one of the many challenges that editors and advisory boards manage. We recognise a balance must be found between meeting the needs of subscribers, who are perhaps most interested in papers relevant to their local context, with the editors' and advisory board's desires to publish high quality papers from international authors. For example, when the AJOE started publishing refereed publications there was a deliberate decision by the then owner, the Australian Outdoor Education Council, to maintain a predominance of papers written by authors from organisations based in Australia (personal communication, Peter Martin, 10 April, 2008). Recent changes in electronic availability and the increasing number of international subscribers has prompted a revision of this AJOE policy and now papers from international authors are invited and encouraged.

Authors affiliated with organisations in the US have contributed the highest proportion (46%) of the 343 published papers across all three journals. The other countries contributing large proportions include Australia (27%), UK (11%), Canada (6%), and New Zealand (5%). The contributions from European

(non-UK) authors (3%) and Asian authors (1%) are surprisingly low and authors from other areas are not represented at all. It would be beneficial for future research to explore why research from such a large proportion of the world's population (for example, there are no papers from the African or South American continents) are under-represented in the papers published by AJOE, JAEOL and JEE. The explanation may simply be related to the peer-reviewed process which, it might be argued, favours authors from English speaking nations. Alternatively, it may indicate, more seriously, that the journals are not attracting submissions from these countries or that research into outdoor/adventure/experiential education research is not strong outside of the US, Australia, UK, Canada, and New Zealand. A further explanation might be found by comparing the higher education systems and the requirements of academics working in them. In the UK, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia there is an expectation that the majority of academics will publish in peer reviewed journals. This may not be the case in other countries, which could explain the imbalance of contributing authors.

An emerging research culture

All three journals have demonstrated a shift towards a higher proportion of empirical research-based papers and a reduction in position papers. Combining the statistics for all three journals, the proportion of research-based papers has increased from 43% for the years between 1998 and 2002 to 63% between 2003 and 2007. The proportion of position papers has correspondingly decreased from 43% to 20% for the same period. To be clear, we recognise and support the value of philosophical inquiry as it can make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge by providing a new perspective or by synthesising what has previously been unsynthesised (Day, 2007). It is certainly not our intent that research be understood and narrowly conceptualised only as empirical study to the exclusion of rigorous philosophical inquiry (see Allison, 2006) and we acknowledge the potential role of position papers to clarify issues or provoke debate (Day, 2007).

Many of the issues explored in this paper are important as previous criticisms have suggested that the literature in the fields of outdoor education, experiential learning and adventure education is fragmented, disparate, weak, easily criticised and in need of alternative approaches (Allison, 2007; Allison & Pomeroy, 2000; Rea, 2008; Roberts, 2008). In our opinion, the continued development of the emerging research culture demonstrated in the publications in the three journals studied in this paper can be enhanced to address these criticisms in a number of ways. First, we hope to see a growing emphasis on high quality papers based on sound research, with clear purposes and appropriate methodologies. This is

Table 5: Coding categories (and their emphasis expressed as a percentage) for all three journals between 1998-2007.

Categories	AJOE 1998-2007	JAEOL 2000 [^] -2007	JEE 1998-2007	All 3 journals combined.
Refereed papers	106	70	167	343
Author Affiliation*	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)
Asia/Middle East	2	3	1	1
Australia	72	13	5	27
Canada	4	6	8	6
Europe	2	9	2	3
New Zealand	8	7	2	5
United Kingdom	8	34	2	11
United States of America	4	29	79	46
Type of paper	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)
Position paper	45	19	29	32
Literature review	3	27	15	14
Research report (positivist)	9	16	25	18
Research report (constructivist)	34	33	23	29
Research report (transformational)	0	1	2	1
Research report (action research)	6	4	4	5
Research methodology	3	0	2	2
Context	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)
Outdoor Leadership	18	14	8	12
Outdoor Education	37	33	5	21
Outdoor Environmental Education	13	6	4	7
Adventure Education	10	21	23	19
Adventure/Wilderness Therapy	16	11	14	14
Experiential Education	0	0	27	13
Service Learning	0	0	17	8
Expeditions	4	4	1	2
Outdoor Recreation	2	10	1	3
Focus #	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)	(% of total)
Safety management	4	1	2	3
Risk management	3	3	2	3
Curriculum issues	5	4	13	9
Teaching and teacher issues	9	19	16	14
Theoretical foundations	6	16	5	8
Gender, race, social justice issues	3	5	3	3
Special needs	0	1	6	3
Environmental/ecological/spiritual	4	0	4	3
Adventure	2	1	2	2
Program design/facilitation	29	15	8	16
Profession/professional issues	11	14	6	9
Outcomes/effects/participant exp.	16	9	20	16
Relationships with nature/self/others	8	11	10	10
Research processes	1	1	4	2

* Papers with multiple authors were coded on the affiliation of the first author.

Primary and secondary foci were allocated for each paper and both of these were included in these tallies.

[^] JAEOL started in 2000, hence the different time period.

consistent with Klinger, Scanlon, and Pressley's (2005) observation that quality publications are typically "part of a coherent, sustained research program" (p. 14). In a similar vein, in the field of physical education teacher education, O'Sullivan (2007) has urged a "less-is-more approach" (p. 256) to research, indicating that it is unhelpful for researchers to 'milk' (or mine) data for multiple publications when it may be more helpful to have fewer articles and a better sense of the larger focus of the work.

Secondly, we hope that there will be stronger threads of discussion within and between the three journals. It is disheartening for editors to receive submissions that ignore other authors' contributions on the same topic in previous issues of the same journal. When an author publishes in a journal, they are joining an on-going conversation; it is simply good practice to acknowledge and build upon what has been said in conversations previously (Day, 2007). To enhance the quality of the three journals we encourage authors to heed the advice of Klinger et al. (2005) and make their submissions part of an ongoing professional dialogue based on thorough, current reviews of the literature.

Thirdly, authors can draw on literature from outside the immediate fields of outdoor and experiential learning – this requires a grasp of other fields that goes beyond selective use of literature that supports a specific argument. It may be beneficial for authors to publish in other journals and to encourage authors from other fields to publish in the three journals that this paper focuses on. This cross-pollination has rich potential to improve understanding and quality as well as providing some opportunities for readers to be challenged by some different perspectives. Fourthly, some authors may want to explore issues by considering both sides of an argument and in doing so may find that their work is more stimulating, better received, and more helpful for a range of readers from different backgrounds.

In the process of completing the analysis offered in this paper, and through our involvement with the journals analysed, we have developed a greater awareness of some issues that we believe are critical for researchers and publishers to pay attention to. In terms of coherence we were struck by the disparate nature of some research and the noncumulative development of literature. Much of the literature left us wondering 'so what?' and it did not necessarily stimulate our own thoughts, practices or understanding of the topic. We came to refer to papers that fall into this category as white noise papers. A great deal of research seems to be guided by author/self interest and in need of considerable conceptual development. A cynical observer might suggest that much of the work is for the purpose of gaining higher degrees or promotion rather than a genuine desire to contribute to an emerging body of knowledge and/or to influence policy and/or

practice. These comments may raise contentious and complex issues which space does not permit further exploration of at this time but, nonetheless, ones we see as being of value for further exploration.

Questions regarding further work and how research energy might be most fruitfully directed are complex but can be considered with regard to process (methodology) and output. Inevitably, these comments are based on our perspectives and opinions, but these views have been formed through our experiences as editors and our knowledge of the reviewing process and what has, and has not, been published in the journals at different times. We believe that in order to further develop practice and better influence policy, more philosophical inquiry (such as curriculum theorising) will be beneficial. Proponents of evidenced based practice will no doubt be keen to point out that evidence is all that policy makers are interested in. However, the whole idea of evidence based practice in education is fiercely contested territory (Biesta, 2007; Pring, 2004) and our observations and experiences indicate that merely undertaking more and more empirical work is unlikely to influence policy or, arguably, practice (Hodkinson & Smith, 2004). Of course, further empirical work will also be beneficial when well conceptualised and undertaken in appropriate ways.

Journals for whom?

An analysis of the 343 papers across all three journals indicates that authors have targeted a wide audience (see Table 5). The four contexts targeted by authors in all three of the journals were: outdoor education (21% of all papers), adventure education (19%), adventure/wilderness therapy (14%), and outdoor leadership (12%). Naturally, there are significant overlaps between each of these terms and it is foolish to read too much into any distinctions between these contexts. There were some contexts featured in some journals and not others. Experiential education and service learning were two contexts which featured heavily in the JEE (27% and 17% respectively) but which were not specifically addressed in the JAEOL and AJOE at all. Outdoor environmental education was a prominent context addressed in AJOE papers (13%) but feature less strongly in the JAEOL (6%) and the JEE (4%). In terms of recent shifts or changes in contexts between the first and second halves of the decade studied there were no large differences (more than 15% difference) that would indicate strong shifts in the contexts addressed in papers.

Across all three journals three foci have received large amounts of attention: program design and facilitation (16% of total papers), the outcomes/ effects of participation (16%), and teaching and teacher issues (14%). We were a little surprised that issues such as risk and safety management did not feature more

Table 6: Potential areas for future research.

General area	Specific issues, questions and comments
Health and well being / obesity	Current political climate, the normative nature of health and well being, contributions that different approaches can make, ethical issues, the role of outdoor education/recreation.
Schools and curriculum	Links, challenges, case studies, relationships to theories of education.
Personal and social values	Development of values and education, relationships between personal and social education to espoused philosophies of experiential education.
Youth justice, probations and rehabilitative practices	
Environmental sustainability	Sustainable for who? When? What? Conceptions of sustainability. Paternalistic challenges
Social justice / inclusion	What is just? What does a socially just society look like? Relationship of fields to social issues – methods or philosophies.
Regulation, licensing and legal aspects of practice	
Expeditionary learning	Philosophical understanding and conceptions, leadership, environmental ethics, post expedition adjustment.
Ethical and moral issues	Considerable potential because little work has been undertaken in this area.
Religion and spirituality	Conceptual and empirical work that is cumulative.
Knowledge development	Research methodology, methods, development of partnerships with policy makers and practitioners, more case studies?

prominently (combined 6% of total papers), given the litigious nature of Western society (see Allison & Telford, 2005; Fulbrook, 2005; Gill, 2007) and a perception of increased awareness, discussion and action of such issues. Our opinions on potential foci of future research, in the fields that are of concern to the three journals, has also been developed and informed through this study. The areas that we see as potentially fruitful for exploration are summarised in Table 6. Note that we see these areas as fruitful on the basis that we believe they have potential, in varying degrees, to (a) influence day-to-day practice and improve the experience of participants; (b) influence policy development; and (c) help to build a cumulative, meaningful and credible body of knowledge.

Conclusions: Looking to the future

The journals discussed in this paper are the primary journals for the experiential/outdoor/adventure education fields; we have attempted to provide an analysis of what has been published in these three journals from 1998 to 2007. Compared to more longstanding prestigious journals the AJOE, JAEOL and JEE are niche journals with comparatively

low circulations, and servicing relatively small subscriber bases. The electronic availability of the three journals is a positive development because it expands the readership, provides the convenience of immediate delivery, allows readers to conduct online searches, and provides better access to authors' work in a virtual world (Palmer & Sandler, 2003; Tenopir, 2003). We hope that developments in the foci and intent of the journals in the future do not lag behind the useful developments in communication technology. We believe that the journals contribute to a small but important part of wider education literature. Analysis of the literature has highlighted a range of issues including gaps in methodological approaches and foci of empirical work. This will hopefully help to direct future work. However, we have not investigated the quality of the papers or the wider political issues, which may influence specific development of literature in different parts of the world. These are aspects we will consider in future papers. We have also concentrated on what has been published and limited discussions with regard to what ought to be published and the future development of the fields of outdoor and experiential learning. This is a task for future work.

To their credit, the three journals seem to have found ways to co-exist and thrive alongside each other in a complementary rather than competitive manner. This may be viewed as demonstrating the espoused philosophies associated with outdoor and experiential learning. Recent editors of the three journals have demonstrated a collaborative mindset by agreeing to publish each other's Tables of Contents. The journals also currently share a number of reviewers and advisory panel members. In summary, the perception of the three journals portrayed in this paper suggests that the journals are developing positively in many ways and we encourage the journals to continue to be clear about their charter, their audience, and their potential contribution to the world.

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