Slow pedagogy and placing education in post-traditional outdoor education.

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Abstract

Time, and our experiences of it, warrants attention in 'place' pedagogies in outdoor education. Place typically involves the experience of a geographical location, a locale for *interacting* socially and/or with nature, and the subjective meanings we attach over time to the experience. Place, however, cannot be severed from the concept and practice of time, as seems to be occurring in the discourse of outdoor education. The way outdoor educators carefully conceive of, plan for, manage and pedagogically practice time may, in our view, positively facilitate an introductory 'sense' of place. We illustrate the under-theorised relationship of time and place in outdoor and experiential education via a case study of a semester-long undergraduate unit, *Experiencing the Australian Landscape*. It reflexively describes how two *post-traditional* outdoor educators working in the higher education sector have assisted pre-service experiential and outdoor educators to sense, explore, conceptualise and examine how 'slow' time is important in 'placing' education in nature.

Look up at the mountain I have to climb,
Oh yeah, to reach there...
I creep through the valleys,
And I grope through the woods,
Cause I know when I find it...,
Miles from nowhere, guess I'll take my time,
oh, yeah, to reach there.

Cat Stevens, from *Tea for the Tillerman*, Island Records, 1970

It's time?

The recent interest in the term 'place' in outdoor education is welcome because it potentially marks an important shift in the nature and scope of outdoor education and refocussing of its pedagogical efforts in experiential education. Place, however, is an increasingly popular concept whose ambiguous use in outdoor, environmental and experiential education is exacerbated by a silence about the equally important question of time, and its connections with the concepts of place and space. At best, time in the discourse of outdoor education is only implied; its invisibility in relation to the possibility of place needs to be rectified. Hence, a 'slow pedagogy' in 'placing' education.

Traditionally, mainstream or *modern* outdoor education has focussed on certain outdoor activities and pursuits, preoccupied itself with notions of adventure and challenge, touched on the paradox of risk and safety, and emphasised the human, or anthropocentric, benefits of personal and social development by being immersed in the outdoors. Outdoor educators have made numerous claims, often anecdotal, about the value, attractiveness or efficacy of trips, journeys and, even, expeditions, all of which are versions of experiential learning 'in the bush,' 'on the river,' 'down the slope,' or 'up the face.' Suggested by this type of phrasing are geographies of activities that may, or may not, have some sense of place. Time is only hinted at and, typically, according to the linear and progressive duration of the activity or experience and, if so, jeopardizes the pedagogical possibilities of place or, more modestly, a sense of place or, more grandly, place attachment. For example, the pursuit of a successful climb or river paddle often involves the achieving of numerical grades that quantify 'nature.' The successful completion of a bushwalk is often couched in terms of number of days and kilometres walked, with elevation gained and lost. Or, in many activities, completing a trip ranked as 'novice' or 'advanced' against which competence, skill and standards are qualitatively measured. There is an ethos and culture of most outdoor activities (Payne, 1994).

Pedagogies of outdoor leadership and instruction normally introduce and emphasise particular technical skills (moves, holds, strokes, balance, strength, dexterity, placement and equipment selection, rope handling and safety skills, to name a few). In turn this type of technical construction of the outdoor experience needs sticky shoes, for example, as advanced skills are pursued, attained and the challenge/risk demands of nature, increasingly objectified and instrumentalized, are confronted. This pattern of the interface of competence, equipment and technological demands exists across most of the outdoor activities commonly 'programmed' for in outdoor education. Objectified nature and its instrumentalized spaces tend to be 'passed through' or 'over' as distinct from 'paused' or 'dwelled' in.

Despite worthwhile notions of journey and expedition, the ways in which time (and its natures) is experienced in 'short' and 'long' trips is rarely examined for the potentially rich ways it shapes the 'experience' of the outdoors, wilderness or nature. The possibility of a sense of place, immersion in nature's spaces, or some 'attachment' to it/them is, immediately compromised. The (potential) 'power of the proximal,' or spatiality and geographies of movement in the outdoors are, we believe, undermined by the absence of the consideration and examination of time – knowingly or unknowingly. The problem with which we are concerned, then, as practitioners and theorists is the persistence of the traditional dominant logic of modern outdoor education. Our reflexive effort here is to contribute to those important discussions about the possibility of place pedagogies. Part of that contribution is to adopt a critical stance to how that dominant, modern cultural logic is embedded in a range of sources and, therefore, *traditions* in outdoor education. But those traditions are, increasingly, ensnared in the 'fast.' Hence, our 'post-traditional' case-study offering here of a slow pedagogy we have practiced over the past three years – where, following Cat Steven's lyrics, our journey has been creeping, groping, finding and, quite simply, taking time to pause, explore, discover what a slow pedagogy is, and can potentially offer those emerging discussions of place. Here, in outlining a case study we only introduce theory, philosophy and critique in a minimalist manner, where necessary.

An all-too-brief historical explanation might be helpful in partially establishing the modern contexts of outdoor education (Cook, 1999) we *post-traditionally* seek to *re-place*. Nationally, and internationally, modern outdoor education in Europe, North America and Australia evolved unevenly over time and in different social circumstances, histories, land and seascapes, climates and cultural milieux. Arguably, there are some common characteristics of outdoor education practices, particularly the repertoire of activities, that signal how the identity of outdoor education has been constructed. Their sources can be traced to the imperial/colonial need to claim, conquer or control new lands and territories, the combination of World War 1 and 2 military training regimes, the privileging of an activity-basis to travelling and surviving in the outdoors, the rise of scouting and private school camps aimed at socialising particular forms of ruggedness, independence, spirit or character-building, a preoccupation with the testing of the self through an outward boundedness, and the influences of, for example, the Snowy River hydro-electric scheme, Olympic Games and rise of technologies. And, of course, the fear of non-safety is a constant. These common features of outdoor education are, essentially, anthropocentric in their focus on the self and/or, for example, king, queen and national pride, taming of the wild and civilizing of the 'other.' More recently, it may be argued, the ways in which outdoor recreations and, inevitably, outdoor education are undergoing some differentiation is also a product of the impacts of increasing middle-class affluence and social hierarchies, technological developments in highly sophisticated outdoor 'hardware,' media representations of 'nature' and cultural images of what it is like to be in nature. For example, Steve Irwin and his tragic death, and ensuing debate about his legacy. Effectively, the 'great outdoors,' nature and its popularised surrogate in North America and Australia of the wilderness is often a lofty (Bourdieu, 1984) and privileged escape (Beck, 1995), or mirror of our own unfulfilled desires (Cronon, 1996). A further conversion is occurring in the staple diet of activities to 'extreme' and competitive sports of 'speed' where corporate sponsors, hefty rewards and trophies are now a constant lure for a new type of outdoor 'elite.' Outdoor/adventure recreation, as postmodern sport, is accelerating with strong signs of being emulated in outdoor education.

Given this *globalising* trajectory and, inevitably, what can be referred to as a likely *postmodern* horizon, the field of outdoor education is, not surprisingly, now confronted with the even more urgent 'skilling up' need for 'qualified' leaders, instructors and facilitators. These qualifications must satisfy training purposes, administration of professional organisations, centralised management of certificates and graded control of credentials, adherence to risk management procedures while responding pre-emptively to the increasing fear of litigation and pre-requisite of bombproof safety. This skilful, hierarchical credentialing of leaders occurs in the broader cultural and social contexts of an all-embracing and seductive consumerism where merely 'being' in the outdoors voraciously follows a range of fashions in gear, clothing and even the preferred sites of outdoor education and adventure recreation. In schools, the overcrowded curriculum is squeezing outdoor education on to the periphery. This time(table) famine exerts greater constraints on what is possible and has the indirect consequence of elevating the importance of the activity basis of outdoor education critiqued above. A vicious cycle seems to be occurring where school-based outdoor education is a reflection of the faster cultural and technological phenomena. It becomes increasingly difficult to confidently make the claim that outdoor education is an 'alternative' beyond the fact that some of it occurs in the outdoors.

Consequently, nature and the nature of the outdoor education experience are, we believe, up for grabs. So, the mention of place, and place pedagogy, in the absence of questions about time and timing invites a level of intrigue given this fast evolution of the field. It is against this backdrop of the fast, often invisible, and still anthropocentric notions and practices of outdoor education that we sense it is timely to rethink and perhaps 'retraditionalise' (Beck, Giddens & Lash,

1994) many of the assumptions that lie dormant in modern outdoor education. Will an outdoor education of place be a cliché, and be no more than a faddish 'intellectual breeze' in educational theory that John Dewey (1988/1938) warned against. There are already numerous popularisations of the place concept, like Starbuck's 'third-place.' And, given other key ideas in outdoor education, will place emerge as a quasi-religious like phenomena similar to the objectification and consumption of meta, flow, and peak experiences that Zygmunt Bauman (1997) has more recently commented about?

These questions about the popularisation of the place concept are perplexing. If the notion of place pedagogy is not to be yet another fad, it remains unclear to us, as critically realist outdoor educators, how the idea of place is or should be conceptualised and what that conceptualisation includes and excludes either before, during or after its pedagogical practice. There are worrying silences in outdoor education about the question of time in the conceptualisation of place and its pedagogies. As critically reflective academic practitioners, we remain deeply concerned about the persistent gaps in outdoor education of rhetoric – reality, theory-practice, mind-body and discourse-grounds.

Thus, with place now partially in the intellectual breeze, accompanied by the above all-too-brief critique of the traditions of modern and now postmodern outdoor education, we proceed to what we feel might be a worthwhile alternative and post-traditional version of outdoor education. It can best be characterised as a slow pedagogy because, while we are intrigued by the possibility of place pedagogies in outdoor education, we make every effort to give equal treatment to the question of time. By way of introduction, for us post-traditional means after the 'hold' of certain traditions that sustain a 'dead hand' grip on the practices of, in this instance, outdoor education. This grip of tradition becomes routine' or ritual and, in so doing, reinforces an uncritical acceptance of a rite of passage to the future horizon of outdoor education. A further illustration that begins to reveal the spatio-temporal dimensions of outdoor movement experiences or, more broadly, geographies of outdoor recreation. Activities like river kayaking and cross country skiing are examples of traditions being imported from other geographical and cultural sources into Australia's alien, or other, dry, hot climate where fast flowing rivers and lengthy snow covers are relatively scarce. The constant repertoire, or species of outdoor activities still privileged in Australia lack harmony with their wet, colder, cultural and geographical counterparts in Europe and North America. And, frankly, call into question what sort of social construction of human-environment, culture-nature relations are pedagogically being enacted (Payne, 2003). Like Lugg (2004), we asked, are those activity traditions and subsequent pedagogical and geographical/cultural assumptions a 'benign form of introduced species?'

Meanwhile, despite the vast majority of Australians living on or near the sea, coastal and marine outdoor experiences are at the 'edge' (Drew, 1994; Huntsman, 2001; Sutton, 1985; Winton, 2008) and remain conceptually and practically on the margins of the field's discourses, body of knowledge and experiential wisdom. Moreover, Australians have a climate highly conducive to aquatic activities/marine/coastal experiences. Taking learners inland to the 'bush' and the mountains does, indeed, retain a colonial type mentality (Adams & Mulligan, 2003; Harper, 2007) and, for those critically disposed to the discourse of outdoor education, demonstrates a particular logic and expectation of practice (and experiential education). As such, with all the travel to and from and gear required for such traditional 'in land' pursuits, the possibility of placing locally and power of the proximal is put 'at risk.' As is any serious case for an environmental ethics and/or ecopolitics. Post-traditional, for us, is transformational of dead hand practices and, potentially, provides an opportunity for something more 'wild,' edgy and other (Griffiths, 2004, 2006).

Throughout this text, therefore, metaphors like fast, accelerated, take-away and McOutdoors are used in an exaggerated manner to characterise meanings contrasting with our 'transformative' reference to slow, wild, elemental and post-traditional. Slow, and placing slow locally, also entails a radical shift in the dominant language and metaphorical status of outdoor education. Our use of slow resonates practically and conceptually with Carlo Petrini's 'Slow Food Movement' protest against the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in the early 1980s in the Piazza di Spagna, Rome (Murdoch, 2006). Petrini's movement seeks to reclaim the place of local, seasonal and organic eating experiences. Interestingly, like the universalisation of many of outdoor education's horizons of standard activities in remote environments, it too has spread globally. But the slow movement stresses a non-standardising practice of wild eating that seasonally supports local culture and reflects climate, geographical context and socio-economic circumstance – a practice briefly explained in our following case study of the Bear Gully coastal experiences.

Our limited intention here is to focus on the heart or core of what we believe is missing, absent or lacking in the nascent discussion of place and place pedagogy in the outdoor education discourse. In the following case study of slow pedagogy, we seek to optimally 'presence' the earthy places of otherwise abstract spaces that too often we hastily 'pass through.' We seek to expose the possible depths and values of these places we might dwell in, even temporarily, over times, by

describing and reflecting upon the needed pedagogical conversations of learners' embodied experiences, their rational reflections and their eventual representations as texts. But, importantly, we are equally happy for silences (Sim, 2006) to be maintained by the participants and the authors in the fullest appreciation that the richness of experiences cannot be captured in language or text, so cannot be represented as learning even though, deep down, it is (Payne, 2005b). We are not concerned here with the values and efficacy of longer expeditions, extended stay outdoor programs, and so on, most of which privilege practices out there, somewhere in the field. At the pedagogical heart of a placed education is the 'slowing down' of the times in which we introduce our learners to the notion and practices of place. Importantly, our case study has a dose of reality that is consistent with the limits in most schools of the crowded curriculum and its impact on outdoor education. Our case study includes two x three day camps.

What is the problem with place and time in fast outdoor education?

There are two other problems we see in outdoor education that warrant brief inspection in setting the scene for the case study of a place pedagogy and the critical role of experiential education. These include aspects of the Romantic return to what is now in postmodern times a universalised and abstracted space called 'the wilderness,' and the disembodied learner whose experiences are, invariably, objectified by teachers or facilitators and rapidly converted to the de-briefed learning product or 'outcome.'

The Romantic return to wild nature and the objectified cycles of experiential learning have a long tradition in outdoor education and, in their cultural, symbolic and educational reconstitution by educators, magnify the displacement of learners from the potentials of place experiences. Our critique of these romantic, experiential and adventure legacies centres on how outdoor education often constructs a practice and conjures an image of an elevated version of learning (Bauman, 1997; Bourdieu, 1984; Kraft, 1981).

Peter Hay (2002) argues that Romanticism, "a nineteenth century movement against the values, tastes, ideas of the preceding century," (p. 4) was a reaction to industrial capitalism and its offshoots such as rapid urbanisation and large-scale environmental despoliation. In his critique of Romantic poetry, Bate (2000) has argued that one of the key visions for a return to nature was the small group, small-scale republic of "free men living amidst the untamed forms of nature" (p. 40). This was deemed an ideal state that society should strive towards. But there was something more sublime and metaphysical to strive for in this Platonic-like idealised form of escaping the evils of civilisation for the primitive qualities of nature. When the enlightened Romantic poet or artist walked amidst the elemental forces of sun, wind and rain, s/he experienced the "clearest medium through which God showed His power and excellency" (Nash, 1982, p. 46). In the vast and grand expanses of outdoor places, "one could not help feeling insignificant and being reminded of one's own mortality. ... God was on the mountaintop, in the chasm, in the waterfall, in the thundercloud, in the rainbow, in the sunset" (Cronon, 1996, p. 73).

With God gone missing (for many) in the postmodern world, many now seek in nature, or at least the wilderness version of it, that one-place we of the West can escape to. For it is in wilderness that many encounter a sense of transcendence in the mysterious, unknowable, and the untameable. Wilderness, as a placeless and universalised wild nature, then comes to stand outside of time and space (Gill, 1999). Alternative landscapes and histories are erased, argues Gill (1999), as wilderness becomes hyper-separated, "founded on a logic of otherness... defined by the absence of humanity" (p. 55). The God-like transcendental surrogate of a romantically constructed wilderness provides us with an enduring cultural template of nature as wilderness, as a cathedral type space that in the current climate change of fast and hot techno-consumerism we escape to via outdoor recreations and sports under the guise of the romanticised 'naturalistic fallacy' (Beck, 1995).

Richard Kraft's (1981) editorial in the *Journal of Experiential Education* directly challenged some of the conventional wisdoms in experiential education via his plaintive call for 'action' and 'reflection' in outdoor education. His rarely cited, provocative and prescient comments about 'elevation' and 'distinction' and 'taste,' like Bourdieu, (1984), in modern outdoor education are worth repeating. Kraft declared that John Dewey "...would bridle at the extreme individualism of today's experiential educators, who appear to emphasise the individual, the mystical experience of the mountaintop and the narcissistic pleasures of the wilderness, rather than the arduous task of building a just and democratic order" (Kraft, 1981, p. 6). Nearly three decades later, there remains an ominous silence in (postmodern) outdoor education about the place and unduly elevated status of adventure's distinctive relationship to the universalised sublime of the high temple of wilderness. We make this point because the possibility of place seems more humble, less lofty, more accessible and plausible, local and grounded.

The second way that outdoor education potentially serves as a denial of place is found in the application of models of experiential education in Australia that have been downloaded from the United States and uploaded in what we may refer to as 'glocalised' and, therefore,

abstracted outdoor education practices. We focus here, indicatively only, on Joplin's approach to experience, primarily due to its popularity, and because it reveals particularly interesting assumptions in relation to questions that must be asked about embodiment and learning and, therefore, to the potential denial of place as an embodied, proximal and situated.

Laura Joplin's (1995/1981) 'Experiential Learning Cycle' described a process of leading individuals and groups through challenging activities in a series of predictable stages. In the focus stage the so-called facilitator, yet another intriguing name, focuses the learners' attention on the challenge that predictably lies ahead. During the action stage the learners find themselves in a jeopardy-like situation where they strive to develop new skills, knowledge and approaches to solve the challenge. In the final debriefing stage, "the learning is recognised, articulated, and evaluated" (p. 19). In this process it is the teacher's responsibility to ensure that the actions previously taken are not left to "drift along unquestioned, unrealised, unintegrated, or unorganised" (p. 19).

Joplin (1995/1981) draws an important distinction between experiential learning, where the "debrief may occur within [our emphasis] the individual" (p. 19) and experiential education, where learning must be articulated and made public. This is a crucial point for the possibilities of a slow pedagogy. What then counts as experience, and learning, lies in a de-briefing immediately following the action component of the experience (often *the* activity-basis of outdoor education) is the rapid cognitive processing and accelerated on-site public acknowledgment of it that is made available primarily through talk. Here, we note the limitations of language and linguistic consciousness, as distinct from the embodied meanings, somatic understandings and kinaesthetic feelings of the more enduring experience within and in relation to 'nature' and, potentially, the 'spell of the sensuous' (for example, Abram, 1996). This deeper sensual and 'practical consciousness,' often perceptual, spatial, motile, intuitive, emotive and tacit, precedes, often defies or lacks correlation with the reductionisms of 'discursive consciousness,' talk, voice or language (Giddens, 1984, Archer, 2000, Payne, 2005b). The somewhat formulaic experiential learning cycle spins faster and faster with, we believe, a take-away learning speed that, we sense, may dismay its original author, and Dewey (1988/1938) would worry about in terms of his views about 'growth.' The immediacy of this take-away type of learning experience jeopardizes the meaning-making of the experiencing body and undermines the slow time required for its 'storing,' and memorisation in who and what we are, and our positioning not only in relation to the spatiality of the active, perceiving and sensing body but also towards our future 'becoming' (Grosz, 2004).

The traditional preference in the outdoor education action and debrief cycle all too easily presumes a cognitive, rational and verbal accounting of experience. If so, this overly rational and linguistic representation of experience may devalue and displace the fundamental role of the learner's body. And yet, for example, "my body continually takes me into place. It is at once agent and vehicle, articulator and witness of being-in-place," argues Casey (1993, p. 48). The Australian environmental historian Like Abram's (1996) 'spell of the sensuous,' William Lines (2001) argued that we develop an everyday metaphysics for what we sense is real through our bodily interactions with the world. "I learnt about Australia through my body", he writes, "through what I could sit on, touch, taste, see, breath, smell, and move within. My surroundings gave me my reality. My corporeality incorporated the world's corporeality" (p. 65). That conclusion for outdoor education and experiential education is clearly articulated by Leopold (1987). For Leopold, and for a slow pedagogy in post-traditional outdoor education, "To promote perception is the only truly creative part of recreational engineering" where "recreation is not the outdoors but our reaction to it" (p. 173).

Ironically for a field like outdoor education that valorizes and privileges 'experience,' we must be very careful about how such experiences are disembodied, deconstructed and colonized by the procedures adopted by the 'facilitator' and 'teacher of experience' (Bauman, 1997). If we are even half way correct in our analysis and critique of the relation assumed between action and reflection, we suggest quite strongly that one implication is that the mind – body dualism is being unwittingly reconstituted in the conventional practices in the 'field' and, inevitably, reconstructed as a theory – practice gap in the discourse of outdoor education. Put simply, teachers/facilitators might de-experience, disembody and displace the learners' experiences.

The denials offered to place via particular interpretations and enactments of the traditions of the romantics, experiential learning, and the adventure paradigm, amongst other critiques we could offer, are troubling for a slow pedagogy of place. The question of time and its absence/silence, again, is a constant in the problems described above. Effectively in summary, we suggest via the following metaphors that the places we privilege in outdoor education are vulnerable to various intellectual breezes and undercurrents. There is real potential, we believe, for places to be treated as a new wilderness and, if so, to be universally abstracted and passed through as little more than empty spaces so that they may be colonised by whatever intellectual breeze happens to blow in.

The enigmatic nature of time-place in fast outdoor education

Finally, let us now turn briefly to the question of time(s) in outdoor education practice. Our experience of time is enigmatic, most of all when we are exposed to 'natural' time beyond the everyday social constructs of linear, measurable, predictable time (Payne, 2003). Place pedagogies must be highly sensitive to the way in which time is experienced in dissonant and sometimes contradictory ways. That is, there are different 'layers' of time. Again, metaphors will be used. Broadly speaking, times can be naturally or cosmologically (re)cyclical (like the seasons, tides, menstruation), others linear (like hours and minutes) and others as instantaneous, the digital blip, point or dot. There are, therefore, multiple experiences of times in the postmodern human, social and ecological condition that sit on a continuum of natural, to socially constructed, to technologically mediated. Increasingly, most experiences of time are social constructions imposed on our natural being. But even natural biological cycles are now open to manipulation by technological and chemical means. Nonetheless, time dissonance exists when cyclical, linear and dot time are lived simultaneously and, practically, speaking manifest such dissonance in stress, rush, pressure and accelerating pathological problems associated with what might be termed a time famine. Time-space 'compression,' intensification and collapse are often used phrases in social theory (for example, Giddens, 1984).

The enigmatic and contradictory nature of time is intuitively recognised by many in outdoor education. We often go bush to slow down or escape and to live by nature's diurnal and seasonal rhythms. But, as we have seen above we unwittingly then 'fill up' what we have attempted to slow down. As a fundamental quality of experience requiring pedagogic consideration, time remains under-theorised in experiential education and, therefore, outdoor education. While linear time considerations are often assumed or implied, often in planning in relation to the timing or duration of a trip, or when to start and finish, or to cover a certain distance, there is an absence of discussion about the experiencing of times, let alone any evidence about how enigmatic times, and their experiences, shape or influence learning.

Time is typically understood in a linear, instrumental and functional manner that is mirrored in the programming of outdoor activities whose common pursuit of distance and/or elevation and distinction tends to straightjacket the sensuous experiencing of time in, potentially, a place. Place, however, is often conceived as a selective geographical feature, or route perhaps journey, where particular skills and tools are required to master passage through the environment. Nature is only a space. This hegemony of the activity in its pursuits of routes in the bush, on the rock face, down the river and up the slope might also be implicated invisibly in the gendered, class, ethnic and ability issues widely prevalent in outdoor education. Time and place possibilities in traditional modern and postmodern versions of outdoor education are subjugated by the spatial, topographical and geographical assumptions made about the 'hardness' of the activity and the skills/abilities required to undertake it 'competently' by the teacher of experience. The longer the distance for the walk or climb or paddle, the more that linear and measurable time is needed, exacerbated by the perceived technical difficulty of the activity and the quantification of the risk associated with it (river grades, climbing ratings, etc.). Places are likely to be passed through, even when the term journey is used and, if so, treated as a space, hollowed out of the meaning offered by the place beyond the achievement of the grade, rating or, as Leopold (1987) reminds us, the 'trophy hunter.'

On the other hand, the outdoor place that is not colonized, normalised and naturalized by the linear-like hegemony of a traditional activity, with its various technical demands for skilful performance, is both a location and locale to pause, rest and dwell in. Time as place is elevated in importance rather than subjugated, rendering sense of place and, possibly, place attachment more possible (Creswell, 2004). If so, outdoor education has a critical task that has not been expressed in its own discourse or in the way it anticipates its learners will make meaning of places, most of all if they are to remain advocates of experiential education. What follows now is a case study of a conscious attempt to bring these questions of time and place to planning, enacting and reflexively assessing an outdoor education curriculum. It relates to one unit within an undergraduate degree program taken by students undertaking an education as future outdoor and physical education teachers. The description is partial, aiming to provide the reader with a reasonable impression of the program rather than a full understanding or appreciation of it.

Bear Gully – A case study of a slowly evolving slow pedagogy

Bear Gully is an unremarkable setting on the southern coast of Victoria not far from Wilson's Promontory and edges into Bass Strait. Like many coastal sites, Bear Gully provides numerous educational possibilities. We camp on this coastal edge amongst tea tree and coastal mahogany. Sandy tracks lead through changes in the vegetation and out onto a narrow south-facing beach. The nearby Cape Liptrap provides some shelter from the predominant southeasterly swells and winds coming in from Bass Strait. A dark basalt reef becomes exposed at low tide with numerous rock pools, both large and small. The distant ocean is dotted with the island groups of the Glennies and the Ansers. From nearby the islands the

long rolling horizon of Wilson's Promontory leads to the low line of the Yanakie Isthmus and then a great arc of white sand – Waratah Bay. Eventually the bay gives way to the limestone cliffs and basalt reefs that stretch for a few kilometres from Walkerville South to Cape Liptrap. Nestled in this section of coastline is Bear Gully.

Bear Gully is the nature-place experienced by students in the semester long unit *Experiencing the Australian Landscape*. Yet the unit is much more than the two field trips that visit this small reserve on the southern coast. The unit is taken by students towards the end of their degrees and most are already comfortable in the outdoors, having completed a number of earlier units with various outdoor education themes and fieldwork components. The unit's experiential education slowness included five separate day-long classroom-based seminars and associated readings and assignment work undertaken by the students. We refer to this as the academic learning program (alp). Collectively, the academic (alp) and experiential learning programs (elp) components of the unit form a slow recycling 'conversation' and is our definition of experiential education. For the students, as future educators, this combination provides academic and practical insights into the mind-embodied and embodied-mind qualities of experience or, to put it another way, into an educational philosophy of experience (Dewey, 1988/1938), that we were striving for. The two three-day elp to Bear Gully were pivotal, occurring at the same geographical location but in different seasons. We have run this unit annually for the past three years.

The semester commenced in late February with two scene setting alp seminars conducted prior to the first Bear Gully experience. The timing of the seminars immediately expanded and extended the temporal backgrounds and horizons of the semester-long unit because they dwelled on earlier individual and collective experiences, both prior to and within the unit, to demonstrate to students the layers of experience which we all carry enigmatically and subjectively to future experiences. Initially, we focussed slowly on reclaiming the past by using 'memory-work' (Kaufman et al., 2001) where students reflected on their earlier, often childhood, experiences of significant places. Seminar content was devoted to examining the sorts of assumptions and expectations they had developed in the past about being-in-nature via different experiences and preferred activities. Various readings assigned to students early in the semester acted as probes for students to recall and remember the significance and insignificance of environmental experiences and different ways of doing as knowing. Other readings referenced earlier focussed on the coast as an edge written into Australian cultural sensibilities, where edge connoted the ambivalence and uncertainty of how white Australians historically associated with, and still relate to, the security of the land and the drama of the sea/ocean expanse, and the leisure driven desires of the beach. In short, our task in the early part of the unit was to assist students to a) excavate, identify and describe and b) examine the cultural, social and personal 'baggage' each takes to the outdoors from the past, to the present and, as will be explained shortly, to the Bear Gully experiential learning programs.

The first experiential learning program of three days, a *discovery experience*, occurred in March; the second, a *rediscovery experience*, in May, so that seasonal variation of light, dark, mood, weather and temperature, and so on, could be known as a bodily perceptual, sensory response and act as an embodied and experiential comparison. As with Petrini's slow food resistance movement, we also encouraged students to bring locally grown, seasonally variable organic foods for collective meal preparations/ celebrations. The timing of the trips were planned to coincide with a full moon, for a range of reasons, including intrinsic/aesthetic ones but also, somewhat instrumentally, to experience high tidal contrasts where nature might guide potential exploratory and discovery type experiences of rock-pooling, beach-walking and even the activity of snorkelling.

(i) Coastal discovery experience

Students self selected in an academic learning program seminar into a number of groups (with about eight to ten students in each group). Each group was given a document that introduced the experiential learning possibilities of the fast approaching *discovery experience*. It began by posing three localising questions proposed by Wendell Berry (1987):

> What is here?
>
> What will nature permit us to do here?
>
> What will nature help us do here? (p. 146)

During this first experiential learning program students explored, discovered and lived within the immediate environs of Bear Gully. A blank table was provided in their field trip booklet for the three days which provided some broad time frames for activities, meals and so on. In the rest of the booklet, ten structured experiential sessions of between 1.5 and 2.5 hours each have been developed by the two authors. The experiences (we try to avoid the term activity because of its connotations) are (rock)pooling, (beach)combing, snorkelling, gnome-tracking, dwelling, edging, history, reading, intertidal and maco-micro. These experiences range across a range of disciplines and their approaches – scientific through to imaginary to historical to meditative, from bizarre to standard, from tamed to untamed. Students complete a minimum of seven, but some do more in 'in-between' times. The

majority, but not all, of the activities are undertaken in the subgroups. Students had already been introduced to some similar activities during one of the early seminars. They were used to rehearse what they might encounter at Bear Gully (although the activities were not framed in this way). There was space and time for individual reflection and for whole group discussion.

The groups made choices about their experiential learning programs. What "experiencing" (Hovelynck, 2001, p. 8) in activities were they planning to do, but with an openness for spontaneity and, in what sequence? Would they need to work around the tides for activities like rock pooling and beach combing? When would they program more physical activities like exploring the underwater place via snorkelling and more passive activities like reading a story book whose setting was the southern coast.

Each group formulated and experienced a unique program. There was no pre-conceived optimal sequence of experiences. We were in constant contact participating with the students and using the teachable moment, if appropriate or applicable. Here are two examples from the program. In the first, *The Beachcomber* (see Figure 1), Brian accompanied the students, and he reflects upon the students' responses.

Brian: This activity commences as a fairly typical natural history type investigation of mainly local marine life forms. Typically students collect examples of a range of items commonly found on the (Bear Gully) beach: dried seaweeds, the shells of various molluscs, gastropods and bivalves, the remains a different species of crabs, cuttle shells, a dried starfish, a bluebottle float and so on. Occasionally something less common will turn up like the swim bladder of a globe fish, or the tiny sea-washed femur of a shorebird. Each item can be examined individually and as students share their findings and conclusions they begin to

The Beachcomber

> *Beachcombing is the fascinating pastime of sifting through the ever-changing collection of natural marine debris washed up on the shore. Many marine organisms were first identified when they were discovered as beach-washed specimens. Because the marine environment is still not well known, the beach-washed remains of organisms still provide tantalising clues to life below the waves. (Australia's Southern Shores, Harry Breidahl, 1997, p. 95)*

This activity will take about two hours (plus walking time to and from camp). Remember your hat, sun block, sunglasses, drink bottle and old runners. Take Harry Breidahl's 'Australia's Southern Shores with you!

Think about the best time to go for a beachcombing walk (High tide or low tide? Early in the day or late in the day? Before or after a storm?).

Although the winter months are often more rewarding for beach combing there are many things that we might find if we practice our observations skills, walk slowly, traverse the littoral zone carefully, and are prepared to be patient.

Collect some of your finds from your beachcombing walk and find a sheltered, comfortable place to look at them closely (we can return them to the beach later). Compare what you have found with other students.

Sketch or describe a few of the finds in your journal. Annotate the sketches with notes in answer to the questions below.

- *Can you establish what it is?*
- *Where has it come from? Is it from Bear Gully or outside?*
- *If it was once living (flora or fauna) what can you find out about it from looking at it and the surrounding environment? What can you find out from other sources (members of the group, guide books and so on)?*
- *What does each thing tell us about our coastal place?*

Figure 1. *The Beachcomber* activity.

collectively piece together a 'beginner's' knowledge of the local ecology. If an activity such as beachcombing is taken early in the program students often struggle with the attention to detail that the activity calls for. An activity like rock pooling poses sometimes unfamiliar challenges, such as patience and stillness, to a level they did not anticipate in an outdoor program.

The slower experience of beachcombing, however, worked on many levels or layers. Students encountered these life forms again in the other activities (underwater and alive whilst rock pooling or snorkelling). In the first two seminars students were introduced to different ways of examining natural things; scientifically, aesthetically, historically, and so on. As they observed, sketched and wrote about their beachcombing finds, often relying upon Harry Breidahl's (1997) nature guide to the southern shores of Australia, they became aware that they were practicing a kind of natural science, in much the same way that it has been practiced for centuries.

Towards the end of the session I handed around a couple of small rocks. The small, dark pieces of basalt have had their sharp edges blunted by the action of the waves and the abrasion of the sand. The rocks had white, paper-thin quartz seams running through them. This led me to an on-the-spot factual story-telling about the geological origins of the area. The facts served as an extension of the scientific perspective they had been working with but, more importantly, reintroduced the overlay to the learning experience of nature's geological time. I drew some large pictures with a stick in the wet sand close to the water's edge. I described the geological development of the Wilson's Promontory while they gazed at that distant landform cued by my specific reference to the basalt lava flows of Bear Gully. Students reflected on how the regional and local geology provided the crucial ecological niche for almost all the beach combing finds they had been examining. Many moved perceptually, sensorily and intellectually from examining individual objects to an interpretation of changing geological, biological and ecological relations over time and space, but within a place – Bear Gully.

Phil led a gnome-tracking experience (see Figure 2), aimed at complementing but disturbing the kind of scientific certainty and rationality that students are most comfortable with and which, on the surface of things, was endorsed in the previous activity.

Phil: Gnome tracking (Payne, 2006) is an absurd proposition – but only for non-believers and sceptics. Here, our gnome tracking experience demanded massive risk and adventure in, effectively, the play-like suspension of much of the socially-constructed belief participants brought to the two-hour experience, noting the links to the earlier seminar where the question of 'what cultural baggage are you bringing with you?' was raised. The Gnome tracking session was conducted in a secret spot in the heavily wooded dunes not more than five minutes from the campsite, very near a creek emptying a further 50 metres down into the sea.

The Secret World of the Bear Gully Gnomes

Arrange a time to meet up with your guide (Phil) to take you on a mystical journey of exploration, searching and, hopefully, discovery of the Bear Gully Gnome community.

All other details will be revealed on the journey.

Figure 2. *The Secret World of Bear Gully Gnomes* activity.

If this experience had objectives they would be to re-invoke a movement-oriented, physically imagined discovery of a small geographical area through an altered state of perceptual and sensory entry-point to exploring this gnome-habitat. The deeper, but unspoken, objective was to excite and engage a real embodied / experiential (rather than textual / discursive) de and reconstruction of conventional practices in outdoor education designed to, or rhetorically claiming, to teach nature relations. In so doing, the embodied deconstruction and imaginatively suspended reconstruction of body-nature-mind relations afforded by gnoming contrasted sharply with the conventional practices of relying on traditional outdoor activities. Put differently, the two Bear Gully visits provide for a phenomenological de and reconstruction of the major assumptions and representations of the thing called outdoor education (Payne & Wattchow, in press).

There was no beginning and end, or predictable time imprisoned, to the gnome-tracking experience. On arrival at Bear Gully, we had already begun to drop numerous hints about a range of environmental features that would become clear during the story telling and gnome tracking experience, and after it, including the 'return' on the second trip. Informal spontaneous chats occurred at camp time and, in some instances, in seminar-break-time at the University.

As might be expected, believing and non-believing resulted. Irrespective, over the extended time of the semester and according to the place of Bear Gully and the spaces and times between seminars, trips, readings, discussions, sketch books, and assignments, the two objectives listed above were slowly satisfied. Even some disbelievers felt gnome-tracking provided a useful pedagogical strategy – but could only be used with children. For many, but not all, the gnome-tracking created an emotional sense of make-believe attachment

that only one student had ever experienced before. At another level, this imaginatively embodied experience attracts considerable risk, challenge and adventure in a non-normal 'untimely' and wild manner (Griffiths, 2004, 2006) unlike the normal discursively/textually proclaimed forms that dominate in outdoor education theory and practice. In addition, gnoming is an 'activity' that experientially is free of fear, equipment and the costs of safety. Credentialled/qualified leaders are not needed, only a playful mind and creative pedagogy.

At and after Bear Gully, considerable student-centred time was allowed for reflection, which at times was guided by questions, verbal and written, on the activity outlines and at other times not. Additionally, and importantly in our view, a further step was taken beyond the initial opportunities of reflection for learners to deliberately experiment with a range of ways of representing the experience(s). This was mainly done by using a high quality spiral bound artists field sketchbook as a journal and invitations to write both prose and poem, to sketch and paint, to illustrate and annotate, and so on. Gradually, throughout the semester, students' journals became filled with 'experiential data' (van Manen, 1997). The journals were drawn upon again and again in later journal entries, discussions and assignment work.

(ii) Coastal and cultural rediscovery experience: A Bear Gully conference

Between the two experiential learning programs the students participated in an all day seminar that introduced some theory to the reflections on the discovery experience. The seminar reviewed the unit to that point, including the first field trip, introduced new topics on sense of place, sense of time, and began the process of preparing for the return trip to Bear Gully, with their added role and responsibilities for its organisation and conduct.

The second field trip was conceived of as a kind of in-the-field conference, an attempt to further dissolve the perceived boundaries of indoor-outdoor, mind-body, and theory-practice dualisms and divides. Students, now as conference delegates, were paired in the seminar and were asked to plan a session that demonstrates an experiential approach to rediscovering Bear Gully – given the seasonal variations in how the place might be re-experienced. By the end of the seminar students submitted an abstract of a proposal, which was later sorted by staff into a conference program. It was distributed upon arrival at Bear Gully. Most abstracts were short pieces of prose. But one pair of student delegates submitted an intriguing abstract that was simply a pencil sketch of a scene with a large '?' separating trees, campfire and a 'primitive' looking man on one side, and on the other a briefcase carrying, suited man with tall buildings and a paved road in the distance.

In keeping with the structure of a conference, multiple sessions ran simultaneously over a 1-2 hour period. Student delegates signed up for any of those sessions that appealed to them when they were not themselves involved in teaching or facilitating. 'Free' times were optional. Staff coordinated the conference, bringing the whole group together at key moments, arranged additional evening activities and so on. But the integrity of the conference relied very much on the work that students had put into the sessions that they ran and a commitment to participate wholeheartedly throughout. The sessions conducted by students took on a variety of forms and content areas. One example promoted continuity (of time) from the first trip.

> ***Tsunami Appeal: Wanted, a special person.***
> *An enchanting look at life after the tsunami for the gnome community. We need a group of imaginative volunteers to assist in rebuilding the magical town and giving something back to a community in need.*

Another involved a beach-walk to a local heritage area that introduced them to the European cultural history of the surrounding country.

> ***Revealing our past whilst broadening our perspective.***
> *As a way of exploring beyond simply what the eye can see from the campground at Bear Gully, an exploration of the wider area will take place. We will venture approximately four kilometres north of Bear Gully and explore the lime kilns around the Walkerville area. Whilst taking time to venture along the Limeburner's Walk, you will piece together your own historical narrative of the area, the people and the past.*

Other student-delegate sessions included nature studies of the local flora, bush art and craft sessions, role playing debates for imaginary marina development projects that might threaten Bear Gully, history on the indigenous Bratualung people, an aboriginal plant trail, and so on. In keeping with Dewey (1988/1938) the final reflective assignment required students to consider and discuss the 'educative' and 'mis-educative' qualities of their experiences across the unit, but in particular between the two styles of field trips. Students were reminded that this kind of memory-work required them to go back to their journals again, not only as source of experiential data, but to also think carefully about the limitations and opportunities that would inevitably be a part of how they chose to represent their experiences and conclusions. Again,

most submitted prosaic, academic style papers. Some included poetic responses and one submitted a large artwork.

Obviously it is not possible here to convey the full experience of the students in the program. We have endeavoured to provide some examples that indicate the theoretical-practical, mind-body, I-world, class-field nexus we are striving to model and clarify for students. Broadly speaking the unit progressed following this sequence: memory work ==> theorisation ==> discovery experience ==> reflection ==> representation of experience ==> re-theorisation ==> re-discovery experience ==> reflection ==> representation of experience ==> re-theorisation ==> memory work.

This recyclical notion of experiential education was, naturally, disrupted many times, and it was never preconceived as a kind of template or pedagogic formula. And it is equally important to see Bear Gully's presence in all of these stages, as anticipated, lived, reflected upon, and so on. If this represents a pedagogic sequence, or cycle, then it is a rough one with a few dents and deviations in it. But, based on our experience, it is one we will persist with in future years and hope to continue to refine in partnership with the next generation of students, and with Bear Gully.

Is it past time? Post-traditionalising outdoor education

What is this life if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

No time to stand beneath the boughs,
And stare as long as sheep and cows.

No time to see, when woods we pass,
Where squirrels hide their nuts in grass.

No time to see in broad daylight,
Streams full of stars, like skies at night.

No time to turn at Beauty's glance,
And watch her feet, how they dance.

No time to wait 'till her mouth can
Enrich that smile her eyes began.

A poor life this if, full of care,
We have no time to stand and stare.

William Henry Davies,

Leisure, no date/publisher

Our introductory comments and slow pedagogy case study will be unsettling for some. Our post-traditional framing and practice stands after, alternative to, even against the dominant adventure activity basis of modern and postmodern approaches to outdoor education. We seek to conceptually promote and empirically describe a placed version of outdoor and experiential education that in its experience (for participants and leaders/teachers) provides a very different and wilder, edgy notion of adventure, risk and challenge. Their substitutes – discovery, exploration, sensual, pausing, dwelling, elemental, imagining, suspending and embodiment – shift the focus on certain activities to the locus and scope of experience as it is shaped by nature's places, time and space and their affordances and constraints or limits. Mindful of Dewey's call for a philosophy of experience and cautious that place is contingent upon the times in which meaning-making bodies dwell in otherwise abstract, breezy empty spaces, we feel a post-traditional theory and practice of slow pedagogy has value in its own right. And, if so, the case study also serves to open up for reinspection the dominant discourses of outdoor education and experiential education, and the hegemony of adventure and wilderness activities. That is, despite its appearance here as a 'text,' our real and lived case study acts as a 'phenomenological deconstruction' (Payne & Wattchow, in press) of the standard discourses of outdoor and experiential education.

Our post-traditional slow pedagogy can be characterised as a multi-layered experience of time(s) 'presenced' in a certain socio-environmental location and locale, or place. The experiential qualities of the place and its natures, rather than outdoor activities, strongly attend to the received lived experiences of our meaning-making bodies (students and teachers alike) and their perceptions and senses of what is afforded in and limited by nature and its numerous places. Our slow pedagogy aimed to minimise those non-neutral, increasingly mediated extensions of, and effects on, our bodies-in-interaction-with-nature via the more instrumental and commodified tooling-up offered by kayaks, spray decks, paddles, karabiners, skis and so on. While such activities also have considerable value, in their own right, their use in action, we believe, all too often pre-configures and pre-determines a highly anthropocentric, technical and linear-like relation of learners with or in the outdoors. The possibility of place is diluted, or diminished.

Slow was always going to be a pedagogical challenge for us, even confrontation, given the personal and cultural baggage we all bring to our experience of nature and the lifeworld. Our real, everyday world is increasingly virtual, imaged, instantaneous and temporary. It cannot be escaped. But by being placed in nature, even temporarily, a wild type of meaning-making becomes available. And, ecopolitically, if so

disposed, that wild placing helps us critically examine those traditional versions of outdoor education that, in turn, are vulnerable to the fast, take away cultural logic an emptied out, fearful space of postmodernity (eg., Bauman, 2006).

Like the many layers of time, place and space touched on in this case study, there are many layers of unpredictable meaning-making available to learners in a slow pedagogy of place. We have addressed some only that, undoubtedly, are indicators of our own interests, histories and concerns. But we are unified about the problem of our increasing displacement and replacement in the abstract world of postmodernity. The chronic abstraction of the self, social and environmental relations, mostly through sophisticated technologies, their fastness and politics of speed (Virilio, 1977), corresponds with the processes of disembodying that self, disembedding from others, replacing Nature with culture and taming the wild.

Experiential, outdoor and environmental education practices are hardly immune to the processes of abstraction, consumption, intensification and individualisation, as we have pointed out elsewhere (Payne, 1994, 2003, 2005a; Wattchow, 2001, 2005). Does this mean that we dismiss the pedagogic potential of outdoor journeys that rely upon particular outdoor activities and technologies? Not at all but this depends upon your views about outdoor education and experiential education. Our interests in this instance are, unabashedly, more ecocentric and, therefore political. But, irrespective of philosophies, ethics and politics of education, it does mean that the activity basis of outdoor journeys or travel needs further pedagogic reconsideration, particularly with regard to the cultural history and trajectory of particular outdoor activities and their deployment in education (Wattchow, 2007). A reconceived 'pedagogy of travel' might look very different to the outdoor adventure of today. Still, that is a discussion for another day.

We have raised some troubling questions about the contemporary practices, embodiments, discourses, and theorisations of outdoor and experiential education. None of us want to think of ourselves as a fast educator, a Starbuck's third-placer, or McOutdoor corporate, fashion-designer of experience, or digitaliser of nature given the intensifying and individualising pressures in education imposed by modernity and postmodernity. Outdoor educators, however, might need to slow down, pause and take a deep breath in contemplating how the staple diet of fast activities and pursuits may be a part of the somewhat elevated answers to distinctive issues that demand considered thinking about the purposes of education and the role of outdoor and experiential education.

Against this sobering risk-horizon and (ecological) problematic of the postmodern human condition, we hope there are some post-traditional glimmers of optimism in how educators can slowly place time in experiential/outdoor education. We anticipate slow pedagogy will, at the very least, enhance meaning-making for students about the many complex layers of embodied, academic, experiential and glocalised learning. And we wish also to excite the very wild, edged or othered ideas and practices of adventure, risk and challenge that stress exploration, discovery, play, silence, pausing and, perhaps, most of all, our socio-ecological *becoming*.

Case studies of practices in outdoor education, normally not generalizable, are invaluable and urgently required in developing the well overdue body of knowledge and practice in experiential education. Although our case study has taken some time and is descriptive there are clear principles and insights for others to consider. However, case studies of reflective *and* critical practices can no longer avoid theory and philosophy; that indeed practices and theory, body and mind, outdoors and indoors cannot remain severed, fragmented or disconnected if the field of experiential and outdoor education is to grow in meaningful ways that attend to its increasingly precarious position in faster education systems.

Slow pedagogy, we believe, is a serious response to Dewey's unheeded call in education for a philosophy of experience – a call made 70 years ago about the primacy of experience and the 'growth' required in fostering a secondary, deep reflection about the organism-environment interaction, and human nature of experience. Moreover, if experiential education is to earn its place in education, evidence and research are urgently required to convince principals and policy makers.

If our thoughts, ideas, practices and recommendations here hold, even partially, slow pedagogy also requires a commitment to different forms and claims on 'truth' via the pre-planning for participant learners of different notions of experience, learning and education in the outdoors, as well as exploration of alternative styles of reflection and forms of representations of experience, such as the poetic, artistic, musical, dramatic, and even the silent. As evidence to the principal, parents, bureaucrat, these alternatives do not replace more rational ways of knowing offered by talk, language, texts, discourse and theories, but stand alongside them as equal and different ways of becoming in Nature's Places, Spaces and Times.

One day at a time
We can learn to leave our fears behind,
One day at a time
We can stare our hopes in the eye,

One day at a time
We can learn to live.

Yusuf Islam, previously Cat Stevens

An Other Cup, Polydor, 2006

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