

# Chapter

# 2

## Outdoor Adventure: A Literature Review



## 2.1 Preamble

In today's contemporary life there is a proliferating field of outdoor adventure defined in many ways. Programs like rope courses (Davis, Ray & Sayles 1995), rock-climbing, canoeing, backpacking, winter camping, kayaking, and cross-country skiing (Ongena 1982), sail training (Allison, McCulloch, McLaughlin, Edwards & Tett 2007), and wilderness adventure (Leeuwin II 2002; Finkelstein 2005; Lister 2006) are all associated with it. It can also be understood from many perspectives such as education (Bucknell & Mannion (2006), therapy (Lee 1992), recreational (Driver, Douglass & Loomis 1999), developmental (Krumpe 1988), or even a combination (Moore & Russell 2002). As the English Outdoor Council (2010) say:

*Outdoor education, training and recreation involve both young people and adults in a wide range of experiences, including adventurous activities on land and water... (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

Given this study is directed toward the Leeuwin II tall ship outdoor adventure program, what is meant by outdoor adventure in this book refers to any adventure program that takes young people away from their normal environment to wilderness settings. These programs usually place them in small groups where together they have to employ problem solving or otherwise creative methods to deal with the environment around them and the task at hand (Hattie et al 1997). They take on the responsibility of interpreting and manipulating novel stimuli they encounter. The actions they take to adjust or cope with their new surroundings 'are made salient and provide learning opportunities' (Hans 2000, p. 34). It is an 'approach or a methodology by which challenging activities and the natural environment provide a field for their personal and social development (Gair 1997); there is an underlying sentiment that 'the gymnasium, athletic track

and swimming pools are ameliorators of today's synthetic living, but they are not the same as rocks, trees and rivers (Arnold 1970).

A belief in and value of this outdoor adventure is supported by antidote and rhetoric throughout history. Literature dating back to ancient times for example, by Plato (427 BCE – 347 BCE) portrays an image of an adventurer who leaves behind the comforts of home, loved ones, and civilization to go out into the unknown, seeking to push back the physical and geographical frontiers of her/his existence, and in the process probing the monsters and myths of her/his own psychological and mental being. Similarly, Aristotle (384 BCE – 322 BCE) believed that 'the wise use of leisure, not as an end in itself, but as a means of stimulating thought, creates an attitude of developing a philosophy for living' (Hopkins 1993, p. 38). However, the root of modern day adventure is more often traced back to the establishment of Outward Bound in Britain by Kurt Hahn (1886–1974). Hahn's program was designed in the early 1940s to better prepare sailors for the experience of war. The one-month long program exposed them to activities such as athletics, small boat training, orienteering and rescue training, and an expedition at sea with the intent to improve adaptability and flexibility, strengthen moral character, and build upon endurance and strength (Hahn 1957). His approach was both experience-centered and value-centered underlying the importance of learning by doing and the development of character and maturity (West & Crompton 2001). They were rugged challenges intended to help the young recruits develop the internal fortitude and confidence necessary to survive harsh physical challenges (Flurie 2003). For Hahn believed that through achievement, they would learn they possessed "far more than they knew" and they then would begin to rely on themselves (Outward Bound 2002).

Having moved far beyond its roots as a survival school in wartime Great Britain, Outward Bound – and other adventure programs – have now created

sophisticated adventure based educational programs that use wilderness experiences to stimulate personal growth. The aim is for young people to accomplish tasks they once thought impossible, to learn to expect more of themselves. The belief is that physical activities psychologically allow them to recognise and understand their own strengths, weaknesses and resources and thus find the means to master the difficult and unfamiliar in other environments. Rather than overt competition being emphasised, ‘the focus is on competition within the individual and cooperation among the group members to achieve greater personal goals’ (Hattie et al 1997, p. 45). But perhaps most relevant to this study is the belief that the ‘limits to their own potential for personal growth are mostly imagined and self-imposed’ (Miles & Priest 1999, p. 4). Or as Wilfred Noyce (1917-1962) says:

*We extend our horizon, we expand our being, we revel in a mastery of ourselves which gives an impression, mainly illusory, that we are masters of our world (Hopkins 1993, p. 3).*

This chapter reviews the literature on the field of outdoor adventure – it is a topical area that draws interest from many particularly as it relates to young people. Much of what is written until recently reflects rhetoric on the impacts of adventure on them (Hattie et al 1997). But an increased trend toward research published in scientific journals (Moore & Russell 2002), now identifies and boasts several hundred articles and roughly thirty books written about the nature of this on participants’ personal and social development, and approximately two hundred and fifty studies that directly investigate the effects of outdoor adventure (Neill 2007a). This includes the consideration of the impact of the experience being transferred to the young person’s home environment and everyday life (Davis et al 1995; Pommier & Witt 1995; Garst, Scheider & Baker 2001; Moore & Russell 2002). Also caught up in the discourse is Van Gennep’s (1960) idea of

a 'rite of passage model and its stages of preliminal rights - separation, liminal rights - transition, and postliminal rights - reincorporation and Victor Turner's (1969) idea of liminality and communitas. More recently, attention is given to understanding why and how these program outcomes are achieved (McKenzie 2000; Hans 2000; Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004; Paisley, Furnam, Sibthorp & Gookin 2008 & more). Thus, given the vast quantity of adventure literature, this review presents many challenges. To accommodate this, the following discussion is organised into two broad headings, first is the developmental outcomes and second ideas relating to why and how these adventure programs work. The discussion reflects both rhetoric and empirical research; it includes a mixture of supportive key quotes with scientific rigor.

## **2.2 Developmental Outcomes**

It was in the 1950s when the efforts to 'identify the extent and impact of adventure-based activities upon the individual' were first witnessed (Ewert 1987). This includes investigation into schools using survival-training programs in their curricula (Schraer 1954) and therapeutic benefits of outdoor camping (Morse 1957). In the 1960s, the social benefits of outdoor adventure also made their appearance. Kelly and Baer's (1968, 1969, 1971) founding work for instance provides some initial and relatively conclusive evidence that adventure-based activities can produce socially desirable benefits like reduced recidivism rates. Other work by Moses (1968) and Moses and Peeterson (1970) also provide additional support for these positive effects of participation in adventure-based survival courses with demonstrated improvements in eligibility for academic readmission for example. However, it is during the 1960s when the first long line of research efforts on benefits to the individual really appeared. For example, Clifford and Clifford (1967) included many noteworthy studies such as those by

Adams 1970; Smith 1971; Wetmore 1972; Heaps and Thorstenson 1974; Nye 1976; George 1978; Stogner 1978; Black 1983. The most prolific effort has been in the area of improving self-concept, followed by self-actualisation (Vander Wilt and Klocke 1971; Young and Crandall 1984), modification of levels of fear (Ewert 1986) and self-efficacy (McGowan 1986). Further to this, substantial research efforts have been made linking outdoor adventure with goals such as enhanced self-concept, improved social attitudes and behaviour, improved physical health or reduced emotional problems (Barcus and Bergeson 1972; Wright 1983; Smith 1982, 1985; Robb & Ewert 1987).

Clearly, a topic of great interest and with a burgeoning quantity of information presents a significant challenge to effectively synthesize and systematically summarize its empirical findings (Neill 2006). As such, meta-analyses are used by some authors in an attempt to make sense of the considerable variety of developmental outcomes, (for example, Cason & Gillis 1994; Hattie et al 1997; Neill & Richards 1998; Hans 2000; Neill 2006). Hattie et al's (1997) is one of those more commonly referred to. Out of one hundred and fifty-one Australian Outward Bound adventure program samples from ninety-six studies published between the years 1968 - 1994, it identifies forty outcomes that are arranged within six headings: leadership, self-concept, academic, interpersonal, personality, and adventuresomeness. As such, this discussion borrows these categories. However, while they are not considered mutually exclusive, they are useful distinctions and provide a framework that is both flexible and expandable to include other areas for discussion, including resilience and adulthood.

### **2.2.1 Leadership**

Leadership is a common theme associated with adventure-based experiential education programs for example. It is popular as a method of leadership

development among young people in both undergraduate and graduate levels of school in this instance (Flurie 2003). However, understanding what is meant by the term of leadership is not simple; the notion of it invokes a wide variety of responses. Associated with wilderness experiences for example, there is evidence of increased leadership skills (Hobbs & Spencer 2002) that are understood in relation to communication, group dynamics, and character-building (Hobbs & Spencer 2002). Hattie et al (1997) relates it to conscientiousness, decision-making, organisational ability, time management, values, and goals. Arguably, other acquired skills associated with leadership are moral and ethical reason (Smith, Strand & Bunting 2002) based on respect, compassion, responsibility, loyalty, and self-control (Park 2004). It is also, according to Paisley et al (2008), associated with taking on responsibility, initiative, and decision-making roles. The tenets of leadership and outdoor adventure are perhaps well represented by the following words:

*Challenging outdoor experiences promote the development of communication, problem solving and decision making skills which have currency across a range of occupations. They encourage a positive “opting in” and “can do” attitude. Young people’s horizons are broadened, new challenges come to be relished rather than shunned, and perseverance and determination are reinforced. Values and attitudes developed in a context of shared endeavour help to form a sound basis for responsible citizenship (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

Whatever the meaning, much is written about the idea of leadership as, Friese, Pittman and Hendee (1995), Moore and Russell (2002), Bucknell and Mannion (2006), Uhlik 2006; Sibthorp, Paisley and Gookin (2007), and Shooter, Sibthorp and Paisley (2009) indicate. But while outdoor adventure programs have a range of outcomes including leadership, trust, and judgement, adventure also offers a



powerful medium for personal growth and development building in other areas such as self-esteem and self-confidence (Parkin & Blades 2011). This is referred to as ‘self-concept’ and its accompanying perceptions, which is arguably the most commonly cited and discussed feature of adventure outcomes (see for example McDonald & Howe 1989; O’Dea & Abraham 1999; Harris 2000; Garst, Scheider & Baker 2001; Benson 2002).

### **2.2.2 Self Concept**

This theme encompasses many outcomes such as self-esteem and self-perception (Garst et al 2001), self-efficacy relating to personal empowerment and learning relevance (Sibthorp 2003) and a secure sense of self, acquiring coping and communication skills and developing personal responsibility (Neill 2000). It is associated with physical ability/appearance, peer relations, academic, self-efficacy, family, self-understanding, well-being, independence, and confidence (Hattie et al 1997). Indeed, self-confidence is a common outcome repeatedly equated to the concept of self across many studies including one by Gordon, Harcourt-Smith, Hay, and Priest (1995) conducted on the Leeuwin II tall ship where trainees indicated an increased sense of confidence. This is well illustrated also in the experience of “Outward Bound-type” programs that aim to instil a sense of confidence and competence in young adults and teens (Flurie 2003). When referring to the values and benefits of outdoor adventure, the English Outdoor Council state:

*Outdoor activities provide valuable alternative, often non-competitive, avenues for achievement, as well as opportunities to develop independence and self-reliance. Through successfully facing up to the challenges which outdoor activities provide, overcoming fears and apprehensions along the*

*way, young people make major strides in confidence, with implications for all aspects of their development (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

They believe:

*Building self-confidence and self-esteem is fundamental to any young person's development (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

The wide array of interpretations and perspectives surrounding the concept of self continue. It is for example, also associated with increasing an individual's self-understanding and developing personal competencies such as self-sufficiency, self-respect, self-reliance, as well as self-confidence. Yet, another way this term can be understood is in terms other than a narcissistic sense, or one that relates to the real inner being. This gives recognition to the idea of 'difference between love of true self and the self-edification of an image or ideal self' (Pearson 1991, p. 161). What this means is that individuals genuinely feel that they are in control of their actions; it is an idea central to a feeling of autonomy (Pearson 1991). Locus of control described as a personality construct that assesses how people attribute their success and failure outcomes (Hans 2000) or put another way, those who believe their actions determine their future (Baron 2009) is one idea bound to it. Thinking this way, it might be understood as affecting young people's everyday lives:

*A positive attitude to learning is essential if young people are to make the most of their education (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

But given the wide interpretation of the concept of the self, there are some like Hans (2000) who believe it may be too broad to describe the changes evidenced by intervention programs. Nonetheless, the interest in it is reflected in the many studies attempting to understand program efficacy. This is illustrated in the focus on self-perception constructs in outdoor adventure program

evaluation studies for example (Garst et al 2001). Others such as Schoel (1988), Langsner and Anderson (1987), Klint (1990), and Blascovich and Tomaka (1991) include possible benefits associated with youths' outdoor adventure participation to increases in some affective component of the self. Ewert (1983), Neill (2002), McKenzie (2003), Goldenberg, McAvoy and Klenosky (2005) and McCulloch, McLaughlin, Allison, Edwards and Tett (2010) studies generally support the view that adventure programs contribute to positive developmental outcomes such as increased self-confidence, self-efficacy, trust, teamwork, and overall life effectiveness. Friese et al (1995) even go so far as to say they 'support the notion that participation in wilderness experience programs result in positive benefits such as enhanced self-esteem and sense of personal control, and negative results from participation are virtually non-existent'.

Clearly the concept of self is considered from many perspectives and there is little doubt young people develop increased sense of it through their participation in outdoor adventure. The belief and value in it as it relates to their everyday life is reflected in the words of Ongena (1982, p. 72):

*A person moves into a situation and is elementally committed; there is a thrill to the encounter and to the mastery. Having confronted such a situation and met the challenge, people may become more secure in their identity and more confident in themselves. These are some of the things we should be teaching our students, not just mathematics, chemistry, auto mechanics, and the like.*

### **2.2.3 Academic**

But academic achievement is indeed implicated in adventure, too (Friese, Pittman & Hendee 1995; Moore & Russell 2002). There is less attention to it though than leadership and the concept of self as indicated by the shortage of

studies investigating the potential of outdoor adventure to enhance it (Neill 1997). Nonetheless, one study directly addressing academic outcomes is by Marsh and Richards (1988). The study reported large academic and self-concept improvements in students who participated in outdoor adventure programs. Another by Rickinson, Dillon, Teamey, Morris, Choi, Sanders and Benefield's (2004) found that there is a connection between developmental outcomes, but are most evident where the goals of the program targeted specific academic skills. This has implications for environmental education, particularly in a life that is increasingly under the spell of technological advances, where some would argue academic learning and the environment are intrinsically bound. In this way, the target raises awareness of nature and the environment, problem solving, and outdoor skills, (Dicksoan, Gray & Mann 2008). This is an important academic outcome particularly in the future as communities look for the next generation of environmental leaders and activists (Charles et al 2008). Certainly, it is an important and aspired outcome today when considering:

*Our relationship with the environment is a key issue facing tomorrow's citizens (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

Thus, it makes sense that young people will increase their awareness of environmental issues in specifically targeted programs focusing on it. Underlying this belief is a saying that the mountains do not speak for themselves (Dickson et al 2008). However, perhaps they do say something when considering there is a correlation with other outcomes such as, better coping skills, reduced crime, greater curiosity, enhanced cognitive skills, and improved academic outcomes (Charles, Louv 2008). Whatever the view, when reading this, it is evident that outdoor adventure is linked to academic life in many ways:

*Participation in exciting and enjoyable outdoor activities with teachers, youth workers and peers reinforces a positive attitude to education and contributes significantly to the general ethos of a school or youth group. Direct experience out of doors stimulates and reinforces learning across many areas of the curriculum, and the use of the outdoors encourages young people to take greater responsibility for their own learning (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

Clearly, this is consolidated by the comments of this student after returning home from an outdoor adventure program:

*Never have I learned as much as I did. The experiences and knowledge gained couldn't be replicated in a classroom, yet they are helping me to do better at school (Andrews 1999, p. 42).*

#### **2.2.4 Interpersonal Relationships**

Consequently, the idea of self-efficacy, being described as an individual's belief in her/his ability to successfully perform a range of tasks or behaviours can be understood as relating to students' expectations about themselves and their academic learning (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004). Of interest to this is a study by Parle (1986a, 1986b) because it demonstrates how development of interpersonal skills can influence others' academic achievement, too. In the study, two groups of female students, one which chose to participate in an Outward Bound program and one which did not, both reported measures of increased self-efficacy after the group returned. The belief is that there is an interplay and development of outcomes such as leadership, concept of self and interpersonal skills; relationships that overflow to others in their everyday lives, in this case to their school environment that increases academic achievement (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004). What this means is that participation in

outdoor adventure not only contributes to developing intrapersonal skills – associated with the concept of the self, but developing interpersonal ones as well that contribute to promoting social relationships and working in teams (Victorian Outdoor Education Association Journeys 2005). Readily recognised as valuable skills, it is understood as an engagement in meaningful ways across research studies and rhetoric alike (Dickson et al 2008). It is indeed a value echoed by these words:

*Experience in the outdoors provides rich opportunities for personal and social development through carefully structured group work in challenging situations. Trust, care, tolerance and the willingness to give and accept support are all encouraged and anti-social behaviour is challenged. Opportunities are presented to exhibit and develop effective inter-personal behaviour and to work co-operatively and effectively in teams (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

The implication of this is that a person's concept of themselves and their interactions with others promotes effective life development. When considering this in light of academic achievement for example, it highlights the personal expectations of students getting good grades (Becker, Davis & Neal 1990). In fact, their self-expectancy has been found to be significantly related to it (Haynes & Johnson, 1983), and achievement expectancies have been shown to predict subsequent academic performance (House. 1993). While the importance of this in adventure education still warrants additional investigation (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004), the idea that a person believing that they are effective in various major tasks in their lives (Neill, Marsh & Richards 2003) is implicated to increasing their life effectiveness and 'life skills' (Gilchrist, Schinke, & Maxwell 1987). It is certainly an important consideration when:

*Awareness of the needs and contributions of others and the ability to sustain effective relationships, at work and in the family, are vital in today's society (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

The concept is employed in a number of outdoor education program research and evaluation efforts (for example, Stenger 2001; Purdie, Neill & Richards 2002). In Western Australia, adventure-based training programs like those offered by 'Adventure Out' utilise a range of outdoor activities to help people learn about interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships. Their focus is to present a series of carefully structured challenges and as they are overcome, the aim is that participants learn things about themselves. They learn things about their potential capabilities and perceived limitations, self-concept and independence. Further, by working in-groups, they learn about aspects of teamwork such as cooperation, trust, communication, problem solving and leadership. Learning to cope with change and uncertainty and even at times anxiety in adventure, they develop valuable strategies that can be implemented in their everyday living (Adventure Out 2010). Thus, there are further implications beyond school life and academic achievement, including successful participation in the workforce. This is well described by these words:

*Use of the outdoors makes a major contribution to physical and environmental education and enhances many other curriculum areas. It contributes to personal growth and social awareness and develops skills for life and the world of work (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

### **2.2.5 Resilience**

This opens up the discourse to include the notion of resilience; an idea supported by studies such as, Neill and Dias (2001); Pryor, Carpenter and Townsend (2005); and Ungar, Dumond and McDonald (2005) that participation

in outdoor adventure programs specifically enhance young people's resilience. This is a concept understood as building upon their enhancement of the capacity to deal with everyday life (Ewert 1989; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1990; Hunt 1990; Priest 1994). Bound with it are different ideas such as, hardiness (Kobasa, 1979) and resourcefulness (Rosenbaum 1990; Priest & Gass 2005). It is sometimes described as one's capacity for maintenance, recovery or improvement in mental health resulting from life challenges (Ryff, Singer, Dienberg Love & Essex 1998). It is also associated to successful adaptation following exposure to stressful life events (Werner 1989). Some understand it in terms of their psychological resilience or the controlled exposure to challenge contributing to enhancing effectiveness (Neill & Dias 2001). In some ways, it is a concept that relates to Positive self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy (Ungar, Dumond & McDonald 2005); it is thus a concept understood as being wed to concepts of the self also. In essence, to be resilient means:

*Tomorrow's successful citizens will possess the adaptability to cope with a rapidly changing world of work and the responsibility to be an effective member of a community (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

However, resilience is more than bouncing back and coping with everyday life situations when it is understood in terms of a capacity for transformation and change (Lifton 1993). In this way, it implicates transition and is associated with young people's successful one to adulthood. Henderson, Whitaker, Bialeschki, Scanlin and Thurber (2007) for example believe that to become successful adults, young people need to promote positive developmental processes such as mastery, competence, positive identity, belonging, caring, connection, and resilience. Neill and Dias (2001) equate this to a secure sense of self, personal responsibility, coping and communication skills, and resilience.



### **2.2.6 Personality**

Maturity is thus another developmental outcome associated with outdoor adventure. Together with gender identity, achievement motivation, emotional stability, assertiveness and various neuroses such as anxiety, it is considered as a personality trait (Hattie et al 1997). Further associations are of acting out behaviour, locus of control, and depression (Cason & Gillis 1994). What Hattie et al (1997) found was that the effects on personality dimensions are high for assertiveness as well as in the reduction of aggression, for emotional stability, achievement motivation, maturity, internal locus of control, and reduction in neurosis. According to Cason and Gillis' (1994) meta-analysis of outdoor adventure programming with young people, adventure therapy is equally effective with all populations. This includes reviewing and consolidating the data concerning the various aspects of their personalities that the studies claimed were positively affected by the programs.

Not all agree, though, with divided thought on how outdoor adventure effects different populations. Relating to gender for example, there is Ewert (1988), Kelley, Coursey and Selby (1997), Propst and Koesler (1998), and Russell (2003) who show that male and female participants respond differently to adventure program participation. Hattie et al (1997) found that while both positive, the effects on masculinity were larger than the effects on femininity (for example, Smith 1971; Bertolami 1981; & Richards 1987). This outcome is possible when relating it to the time of their analysis as it was a time that reflected a lingering notion of 'making men out of boys' (Hattie et al 1997). But even today, this cannot be ignored; it might very well relate to the outdoor industry in its various manifestations of aspects of contemporary society (Humberstone 2000). For restraints through stereo-typical gender roles, differences in outdoor recreation opportunities for females and males, and

family and peer expectations, access, and physical and environmental factors (Culp 1998) still remain today in some way. Yet there are other contributions to this discourse that find no difference in outcomes between genders (Gass 1990; Rawson & Barnett 1993).

Culp (1998) also understands varying individual outcomes attributed to gender, but extends it to include culture. This positions ethnic identity within the category personality as well; a most relevant consideration in a multi-cultural context such as Australia. There is little attention given to it in adventure literature though. Limited information is available from the few early cases where such background characteristics record no differences relating to ethnic groups (Wetmore 1972; Bacon 1988). This differs from results found in a more recent study by Purdie, Neill and Richards (2002) that found student-learning outcomes varied significantly with individual cultural identities. According to them, 'Most of the gains were made by students who rated themselves as totally Australian, and not by students who expressed somewhat of a lesser affiliation with an Australian identity' (p. 38).

### **2.2.7 Adventuresomeness**

Lastly is the developmental outcome adventuresomeness which similarly appears to have minimal information directly relating to it. One study that refers to it is Henderson et al's (2007). In this study, parent/guardian perceptions of children taking part in outdoor adventure raise outcomes such as leadership, positive values and decision making, positive identity, making friends, spirituality, environmental awareness, social comfort, independence, peer relationships, and adventure/exploration. Adventure/exploration is understood as thinking and physical skills. But Hattie et al (1997) equate adventuresomeness to challenge and flexibility. It might also be thought of as, a have a go attitude, happy to go beyond

comfort zone, healthy risk taking, feeling like you can make a positive contribution, self-reliance, independence, responsibility for actions, setting realistic but challenging targets, speaking with confidence, adaptable, determination, creativity, critical thinker, adapting to new challenges, activity skills, coming up with ideas, appreciation of own strengths and limitations, and expressing ideas and feelings (Key Outcomes of Outdoor Education 2008). Though while there is little written on adventuresomeness, according to this list, it is apparent it is important for many reasons, including understanding young people's sense of agency in an individualised life. For as Miranda and Yerkes (1982, p. 83) assert, "The loss of a free adventurous self has gloomy implications for social and intellectual action."

### **2.2.8 Tying Up the Outcomes**

Clearly, from this discussion, there is a wide array of developmental outcomes evident in regard to developing self-efficacy, personal skills, intellectual flexibility, relationship building and more (Dickson et al 2008). Hattie et al's (1997) six categories from their meta-analysis provided a flexible framework for this discussion to emerge. That is, from categories such as leadership, concept of self, academic, interpersonal, adventuresome, personality and more including resilience and adulthood. What becomes apparent as the discussion unfolds is the overwhelming amount of affirmative research and evaluation findings –reiterating that this is only a slice of information taken from the much larger literature pie! – That supports the notion that these programs have the potential to enact change in participants and groups between a variety of populations and a number of environmental settings (e.g., Hattie et al 1997; Hans 2000).

However, while there is strong argument that young people experience positive outcomes in outdoor adventure, there still remain other considerations

such as their age contributing to this discourse. According to Hattie et al (1997), there are few studies that when referring to young people, explicitly assess the effects of their age, and most of those that did found no significant differences. This means there was too little information in most studies in their meta-analysis to be specific about this. Although they found that some studies provided a range, others a mean and many a brief description like ‘university students’, there was little differentiating information between secondary and university students. There are other views on their outcomes, too, not everyone agrees that outdoor adventure is effective for all young people. For example, one thought is that around the age of fifteen years there is a rather dramatic dip in program effectiveness; from this perspective, the belief is that fifteen year olds are particularly difficult to deal with (Neil 1999). Another report that supports this is Richards’ (1999) Work on the physical self-concept demonstrating that adolescents ‘bottom-out’ at 15 years of age in their perceptions of their physical selves. Other research such as Marsh, Parker and Barnes (1985) found that self-concept is lowest during Year 9. Neill’s (1999) collation of data from over five thousand participants on mainly Outward Bound Australia (OBA) programs using the Life Effectiveness Questionnaire (LEQ) (Neill 2007b) is another report supporting this perspective. It established a view consistent with anecdotes of teachers and instructors. That is, on the whole, the older the student the greater the gain. The consequence of this is that as Neill (1999) suggests, it might be difficult to achieve the typical sorts of changes we expect from outdoor education programs during mid-adolescence. Still there are opinions contrary to this way of thinking; there are those who consider the age of the participant has long been considered key in developmental processes. According to Sibthorp, Paisley and Gookin (2007), young people are those with the highest level of potential to change. Ewert and McAvoy’s (2000) synthesis

of research supports this by recording younger participants more often demonstrating the greatest development in adventure-based programs.

Another point of contention is whether these outcomes endure over any length of time. Differing perceptions of this include Capur and Borsci's (2013) study on a tall ship that found while there are positive short-term effects on the participants' Social and Competence self-concepts, they disappear two months after the end of the project. Harris' (2000) examination of self-concept found the benefits extended up to three months after the program ended. In Garst et al's (2001) study there was indication that self-perception was affected by outdoor adventure experiences. According to them, they found that 'both social acceptance and behavioural conduct increased immediately after the outdoor adventure trip, and that some behavioural conduct impacts may have remained four months after the trip' (Garst et al 2001, p. 48). There are also five meta-analyses by Cason and Gillis (1994), Marsh, Neill and Richards (1997), Marsh (1999), Hans (2000), and Bunting and Donley (2002) that all show education programs have small-moderate impacts on constructs such as self-concept, locus of control, and teamwork that are impressively retained over time (Neill 2008). This juxtaposes Hattie et al's (1997) meta-analysis that found participants experienced gains in the short-term or immediate-term that are followed by 'substantial' gains by the end of the program and beyond. Further, there is more recent evidence that suggests that participants are doing well in regard to sustaining positive personal development on a long-term basis (Neil 2003). Yet while these positive research findings indicate young people experience personal development in many areas through adventure based programs extending over varying time, it is still basically elusive as to how and/or why it all occurs (Sibthorp 2003; Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007).

## 2.3 How and Why Outdoor Adventure Works

*We have discovered an educational black box; we know something works but we don't know why or how (Ewert 1983, p. 27).*

Since Ewert (1983) uttered these words, there have been various attempts to solve the puzzle of how and why the field of adventure works contributing to young people's development (for example, Ewert 1989; Scherl 1990; Hanna 1992; Hattie et al 1997; Klint 1999; Warner 1999; Hans 2000; McKenzie 2000, 2003; Russell 2001; West & Crompton 2001; Sibthorp 2003; Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007; Paisley et al 2008; Shooter, Sibthorp & Paisley 2009) who have contributed to this discourse. However, much of this inquiry is largely theory based rather than empirical research, which means in essence, the black box still lingers today (Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007). There are those like McKenzie (2000) who suggests several categories as to why and how adventure works. For instance, she identifies the physical environment, activities, the instructor, processing, the group, and the participants. Others like Martin and Leberman (2005) found it was the physical activities, the instructors, the group, reviews, and the solo that are the critical components of their learning. Following their example and to give order to the various reasons, different themes and supportive quotes frame the following discussion.

### 2.3.1 Physical Environment: The Wilderness

*The mountains and forests were so invigorating, I feel real in the outdoors (McKenzie 2003, p. 13).*

Given the focus in this book is on the wilderness, it is logical to consider the physical environment first as contributing to young people's personal development. This is what wilderness programs are designed for, to promote

personal growth, leadership, and education through outdoor living; clearly, from the previous discussion the belief is that wilderness adventure influences the outcomes of participants (Walsh and Golins 1976). However, while there are complex philosophical discussions about this with many agreeing that it acts as a change agent, there is no agreed upon inclusive model that exists to truly identify and describe those factors that may cause it (Russell & Farnum 2004). Perhaps it is because in some way the mountains provide a learning opportunity to connect with them through physical, emotional and spiritual wellbeing that is enhanced when young people spend more time outdoors in nature (Dickson et al 2008). One way this can be understood is whereby the unfamiliarity of the wilderness creates a sense of the unknown, a constructive level of anxiety, and a perception of risk (Nadler 1993). Inevitably, a part of the wilderness environment, young people's perceptions of risk can then be understood in terms of their perceptions to the challenges that evoke their attitudes and responses (Bauman 2005) to gain or triumph over it. The idea is that the wilderness setting encourages personal growth through the trials and conflicts encountered on a day's journey through it; they are very rich experiences that can magnify emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental awareness. In this way, the 'mountains are speaking for themselves' and as such, can be understood as extraordinary teachers (Dixon et al 2008). The lessons they provide might be described this way:

*Active learning and adventure outdoors introduces young people to the environment in a way which develops understanding appreciation, awe, wonder and respect. It fosters sensitivity to the environment, helps young people to see themselves in a global context and helps to develop citizens with an awareness of the need for sustainable use of the world's natural resources (English Outdoor Council 2010).*

Or it might be understood like this:

*Communing with animals, mountains, waters, and trees puts people in touch with their essential selves, that part of oneself that is part of everything. Hearing the voice of Nature helps us to hear our 'inner voice' (Lertzman 2002, p. 36).*

### **2.3.2 Wilderness as Contrast**

This introduces the idea that being removed from civilization the wilderness environment may create experiences and emotions that can alleviate some of the stress caused by the increasingly technological and urban culture of contemporary society (Greenway 1995). In this way the mountains can be considered without handrails and the wilderness without cell phones, too (Krakoff 2003)! What becomes apparent is a contrast that clearly has great significance today in young people's lives, particularly when understanding virtual reality applications such as video games and Multi-user games on the Internet have potential to alter their actual experience (Anderson 2002). In a world that in many ways marches along with the beat of a technological drum, it is something that cannot be dismissed; as technological development increasingly encroaches on young people's lives, it is predicted in the future, it will blur their distinction between offline and online. It is even believed that someone born from the year 2000 her or his world will always be wireless (Floridi 2007). Recognising this distinction between technology at home and the wilderness is one young female participant of an Outward Bound trip who says:

*Civilization has too many advantages and too many artificial things that we put in place to build barriers between people. But the wilderness just strips that all away (McKenzie 2003, p. 13).*



### 2.3.3 Participant Processing

Thus, being separated from their everyday lives creates a contrast for them that can be understood to contribute to their personal development. In essence, this means they are able to ‘gain new perspectives on the familiar environments from which they came’ (McKenzie 2000, p. 20). As such, the idea of participant processing becomes part of this discourse. Not much is understood about processing (McKenzie 2000), but it is important as it is suggested that individual perceptions contribute most to their development (Conrad & Hedin 1982). As a newfound inner resource that has potential to be generalised to elsewhere in their lives (Adams & Sveen 2000), this is particularly important. As Adams and Sveen (2000, p. 29) put it:

*A newfound awareness of self, developed through experience, is an ongoing process that encourages one back to the uncharted territory to begin the change process afresh.*

Participant ordering and sorting information being internalised as meaning from their outdoor adventure experience is thus a reason why processing is also considered as part of why and how adventure works. It includes sustaining changes over time and continues to grow (Bell 2003). As these words of this female participant convey:

*Trying and then succeeding made me realise it's all about mental attitude. We can do so much if we believe we can or even if we just try anyway (McKenzie 2003, p. 14).*

### 2.3.4 The Solo

Subsequently, part of why and how adventure is understood to work emanates from their self-awareness and self-reflection; this has potential to

occur in many ways as well as being a part of the wilderness, and away from their everyday lives. This can range from being alone, a part of a group, the challenges overcome, the perception of risk, relationships with others, and more. Understanding them being alone in the wilderness, for example, as an eighteen-year-old female graduate explains:

*Sitting in the solo... I wrote letters to my parents and to the people I thought I'd hurt in my life... When you're all alone you are forced to think a little more and think a little harder about things (McKenzie 2003, p. 13).*

Or as a nineteen-year-old, male student explains:

*The strongest positive impact on me was that I had to do many things on my own, and I will be able to take those memories home with me to do many things at home on my own that I haven't done before (McKenzie 2003, p. 14).*

### **2.3.5 The Group**

But the idea of doing things on their own can also be understood in other ways. For example, in adventure programs, they are usually placed in a group of people whom they've never met before and, chances are, will never meet again. Thus, the idea is that their interactions are a new experience as part of their processing and there are several ways of thinking about this that can contribute to outcomes (Walsh & Golins 1976; Conrad & Hedin 1981; Hopkins 1993; Witman 1995). In this situation, they have opportunity to try out new ways of thinking and behaving with others without the hindrance of previous expectations from accompanying schoolteachers and/or classmates (Neill 1999). This might include learning effective behaviours through imitation and observing each other in action (Bandura 1969). It is also possible that the dynamics and size of the group they are part of influences their outcomes (Priest & Gass 2005)

or the interaction of them within their group (Thomas 1990; Pintrich & Schunk 1996). In addition, a group also implies working together as a team, interacting with other group members, and the attitudes of other group members, relying on other group members, taking care of each other, and trying new behaviours (McKenzie 2003). Being a part of a group might have implications as this participant says:

*The course definitely... got me a little more sensitive about people and my surroundings. It taught me... to look at people to make sure that everything's okay or if they can be helped (McKenzie 2003, p. 14).*

Yet working in groups has another implication in that it can foster a close sense of community; a connection that can be experienced by people who were once strangers (Neill & Richards 1998). Indeed, a recent study by Anderson et al (2010) found that college students who participated in outdoor pursuit trips experienced a significant increase in their sense of community. The belief is that a healthy sense of community fosters a sense of connectedness and belonging that is essential for the healing and development of individuals (Lertzman 2002) and contributes to how and why adventure works. It can also be understood as another contrast contributing to it, particularly when young people live in a dominant social and economic order that undermines community solidarity, discourages the establishment of community, and promotes individualism (Tesoriero 2010).

### **2.3.6 Activities: Challenge and Risk**

The activities young people participate in while out in the wilderness are also considered as why and how adventure works (Capur & Borsci 2013). This builds on the belief in the unique relationship between the wilderness and human interaction to include programmatic activities that require creativity not

quite like other activities (Krakoff 2003). In essence, the activities associated with adventure programs are intended to create a challenge. This in turn contributes to creating a constructed level of anxiety with the intent to achieve success or master the skills associated with these activities to overcome this state (Walsh & Golins 1976). As such, it is suggested that the combination of challenge, mastery, and success contributes to personal growth (for example, Conrad & Hedin 1981; Iso-Ahola & Graefe 1988; Dyson 1995; Witman 1995). When relating this to developing resilience for example, it is often understood as analogous to the immunisation process (Rutter, 1993). Put simply this occurs because, as Neill and Dias (2001, p. 36) explain:

*Just as immunity to infections is gained through the controlled exposure to a pathogen (rather than avoiding it), so too successful encountering of difficult challenges experienced as part of an outdoor adventure program can provide a form of psychological inoculation.*

However, there are a myriad of considerations to be included when discussing activities and challenge. One perspective is that it is understood as an empowering process that successfully transfers responsibility to participants (Hyde-Hills 1998). But not only does the discourse include the idea of success, the idea of failure is also included. Underpinning this thought is the understanding that by honing one's capabilities to exercise better control over events, the difficulties can provide opportunities to learn how to turn failure into success (Bandura 1997). In this way, a perception of risk also becomes relevant and contributes to personal growth. As Bauman (2005, p. 77) says, "there is no risk without at least a residual fear of harm or defeat." Indeed, the idea of risk is central to adventure when understanding that "without risk, there would be no genuine adventure." (James 1980, p. 20).

Moreover, with the idea of risk, the length of a program or exposure to it becomes relevant too; in order to overcome the challenges enough time to do this is required. According to previous research on the duration of adventure programs, there is support indicating that longer programs that are more substantial work better as they lead to greater growth in participants (Cason & Gillis 1994; Hattie et al 1997; Russell 2003; Rickinson et al (2004). Further, when considering as Bertrand Russell does, that “A life without adventure is likely to be unsatisfying, but a life in which adventure is allowed to take whatever form it will, is likely to be short” (cited in Parkin & Blake 2011), also directs attention to the role of the instructor as a vital part in this. For as James (1980) asserts, it is the skilled instructors who are taking their students safely through adventurous activities.

### **2.3.7 The Instructor**

Thus, in the wilderness one of the instructor’s roles is to manage environmental challenges and competence levels in order to achieve a balance between safety and risk. The management of risks and hazards is essential for they have potential to lead to negative consequences such as injuries, psychological incidents and even fatalities. Clearly, this draws on instructor skills; they need to ensure not too much emphasis is on safety that will remove the excitement and challenge that was possibly the attraction in the first place (Dickson 2000). It is also important that the level of perceived risk and challenge are set accordingly because there is also risk in inaction (Giddens 1990). This is one of the consequences of challenge being set beyond actual ability, it can create inertia, low confidence, and low self-esteem (Sennett 1998). In fact, some believe that the interrelationship between perceived risk and competence is one of the key elements that define outdoor adventure activities and decision-making (Boyes & O’Hare 2003).

Yet an instructor's role spans beyond ensuring this balance, as McKenzie (2003) indicates. She found aspects of the instructors that play a part in determining course outcomes as including; their expectations, being a role model, providing feedback, their competence, and presenters of curriculum. This also includes relationships between them and participants. Indeed, relationships are portrayed as a core reason why and how and why adventure works for many reasons; one of which is that a rapport between instructor and participant needs to be based on trust, reciprocity and/or respect due to the real and perceived risk involved in the activities. The importance of these relationships is reflected by others like O'Brien (1990) who found that the quality of their relationship between them and students who participate in an outdoor adventure is a significant predictor of how students felt about themselves after the course and whether they felt the course would help them in their everyday life (Sibthorp 2003). Others cite relationships between them as critical components (for example, Bocarro & Witt 2003; Raiola 2003). This support is also evidenced in another study by O'Brien (1990) where 250 youth participating in ten-day wilderness therapy courses identified the quality of the relationship between them as being related to their perception of program performance (Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007).

Other ways instructors are understood to contribute to why and how adventure works include them devising strategies to counter the disengagement processes and psychological discounting that are classic to how individuals attempt to cope with stereotype threat (Dillon et al 2006, p. 39). Essentially, this means they are in a position to create an environment conducive to identities being set free. In relation to gender for example, in the wilderness femininity and masculinity are not necessarily bipolar measures and adventure programs can have an androgynous influence' (Hattie et al 1997, p. 84). Research shows that females who combine their repertoire of characteristics and skills with

traditionally masculine traits such as being autonomous and independent are more resilient or have the capacity to bounce back and overcome adversity. The same goes for boys, that is, combining traditionally feminine traits with their masculine traits makes for greater resilience in them (Garbarino 2006). In other words, females and males have ‘the freedom to step out of gender role stereotypes’ (McClintock 1996, p. 18). Similarly, in the wilderness, this is also true as they can leave behind other stereotypical threats that for example might be associated with their identities from their everyday life (Dillon, Rickinson, Teamey, Morris, Young Choi, Sanders & Benefield’s 2006). Clearly, there are different ways in which the instructor can be considered as part of why and how adventure works, and investigation into it continues (Schumann, Paisley, Sibthorp & Gookin 2009). The words of this male participant certainly give further insight into different aspects of their participation in it:

*My [instructors] made me think about things that I never have before. They were both inspirational – what they did and what they’ve done (McKenzie 2003, p. 14).*

### **2.3.8 Tradition in the Twenty-First Century**

Still there is another way that adventure is understood as to why and how it works. This stems from a contrast today that recognises the relevance for many young people whose contemporary lives lack tradition in many respects (Neill & Dias 2001). Not only is the breakdown of traditional rites of passage and rituals for non-western cultures like those experienced by the Indigenous people’s of Australia, there is recognition that western religious and/or secular examples like a confirmation/bar mitzvah, high school graduation, or wedding ceremony that might result in a shift of social status, do not rarely invoke the intense transitional experience of being revitalised or what Turner (1992) de-

scribes as, “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed” (Turner 1992, pp. 48 – 49). In essence, these events have in some way lost their deeper connection to the patterns of our lives, to the significance of the transition, and to the larger social context. They have lost their genuine and original meaning (May 1996) and have often become empty rituals accomplished by going through the motions to please someone else (Davis 2003). Hence, in western culture there is apparent lack of meaningful ways of marking transitions. As such, if a dozen people were asked when a young person becomes an adult it is likely to produce a dozen different answers. As Davis (2003) wonders, it may be when you vote, get your driver’s license, become financially independent, live on your own, get drunk (legally or illegally), get arrested, have intercourse, get pregnant or father a child; “Licensed, laid, loaded, and locked up”— not necessarily in that order as he says is the program for too many young people today.

But in the wilderness:

*The entire trip is the ritual. The essence of ceremony is very strong; it shines through even the simplest ceremonies: a bow to the rising and setting sun, sharing thanks before a meal, passing a stick of smouldering sage in silence. Such a “light-handed” approach encourages every action to take on a ceremonial significance: washing the dishes, carrying a backpack, greeting the others in the morning, taking a shit, shooing a fly (Davis 2003).*

Thus, the wilderness is one “place” where contemporary society may be able to correct some of its perceived ritual bankruptcy (Grimes, 2000; Bell 2003). This is based on traditions that once guided them towards maturity through physical and spiritual developmental challenges. The idea is that in a world where old methods of coping, the old philosophies and religions, which once taught resilience, survival and a sense of being at one with nature are denigrated



and/or destroyed (Brant 1993) might leave them feeling less than sufficient in coping with the impending task of adulthood in the 21st century' (Neill 2000). For in contemporary society, the relevance of tradition might well be described this way:

*The simplest questions of how to be are confusing; one's very identity is up for grabs. Yet, this confusion is an inherent, even necessary, part of the life journey. One must let go in order to move on; death is a pre-requisite for birth (Davis 2003).*

This mirrors the essence of initiation and a rite of passage that can be understood this way in relation to outdoor adventure:

*What we call the beginning is often the end and to make an end is to make a beginning. The end is where we start from ... And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time (Eliot 1971 cited in Andrews 1999, p. 36).*

### **(a) A Rite of Passage**

So when thinking about the adventure experience and personal development as a period of becoming, the discourse of how and why it works includes the idea of tradition and rite of passage (Beames 2004). May (1996) explains how the structure of an Outward Bound course parallels a classic initiation rite of passage that involves separation from family and home, is influenced by a guide or instructor, has group adventure where participants increasingly take responsibility, is a solo experience, there is reflection, ceremony, and then they return back home. As such, the three stage rites of passage model – 'separation', 'transition' and 'reincorporation' defined by Van Gennep (1960) is often transposed over outdoor adventure by some to understand why and how it

works (May 1996; Thompson, Battersby & Lee 1997; Lertzman 2002; Bell 2003; Neill 2003; Thomas 2003).

This model mediates a number of role transitions, but it is the coming-of-age, or the youth to adult transition, that receives the most attention in outdoor adventure (Bell 2003). In this respect, the first stage, 'Separation' is understood where the wilderness contributes to young people's personal development and maturity in a time when they are removed from their community and everyday lives to a special and unfamiliar place (Sibthorp 2003). The idea is that while they are there, they will undergo some sort of transformation. This is the 'transition' stage, also referred to as the liminal phase (Van Gennep 1960; Turner 1969). The third and final stage is the 'reincorporation' phase; the time of reconnection as an adult with their community (Bell 2003).

However in an individualised life, some like Bell (2003) believe this model neglects the importance of community providing incorporation rituals upon the return of the initiates and their new identities as adults. Thus, in contemporary settings there is no universal agreement about rites of passage to adulthood model and outdoor adventure. But given there is empirical evidence that largely supports some changes in personal development outcomes, like social skills and self-confidence being sustained over time, some question if full-blown rites of passage are necessary in this case (Neill (2003). Further, after receiving dozens of letters from former students and engaging in many conversations with them, Andrews (1999) understands wilderness adventure as having lasting impact with many of them looking back on their experience as a personal rite of passage to a new phase of their lives. Indeed, in an individualised society where the onus is placed on the individual, this can be understood in a way they are ready to embrace responsibilities and roles that come with being an adult (Bell

2003). In a way the focus is not only on shifting social status but the emphasis is on personal transformation as initiation or a rite of passage (Turner 1992).

Others like C G Jung (1971) challenge the model, too. The belief is that the first stage “a simple separation is not enough, but drastic ceremonies are required to free a boy from his parents and transfer him into adulthood” (Biasio & Münzer 1980, p. 51). Turner (1992) takes this further to say that the first and last stage merely “detach ritual subjects from their old places in society and return them, inwardly transformed and outwardly changed, to new places” (pp. 48 – 49). What he believes is that the “first and last speak for themselves” (Turner 1992, p. 48). Hence, for him, it is the transitional (or liminal) phase that is most important (Turner 1992, pp. 48 - 49).

### **(b) Liminality and Communitas**

Synonymous with the liminal experience is a place Turner (1969, 1985, 1992) calls *communitas*; it is here he describes young people as being between their usual social roles and norms of thought and behaviour (Turner 1967, p. 93; 1969, p. 95; 1992, p. 132). According to Turner (1969), the liminal experience works because it illuminates precisely the norms, or daily rituals that are so different from those of the social structure that shape our everyday lives. This is a situation between everyday rituals of the ‘normal’ social structure framing ordinary experiences in a manner that confirms and sustains the established social order, and the rituals of liminality framing extraordinary experiences in a manner that offers alternatives to and contrasts that everyday social order (Andrews 1999). What Turner (1979, p. 149) indicates is that:

*Liminars are stripped of status and authority. Removed from a social structure ... and levelled to a homogeneous social state through discipline*

*and ordeal ... Much of what has been bound by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship and communion, or communitas.*

This is aptly described by a young person's experience with an outdoor adventure:

*Out here you hang out with people you'd never hang out with at school. They'd belong to a different clique. Out here, what you wear, how you do in school, whether or not you're into drugs none of that matters. There are no drugs, you all eat the same food, and you all have to wear the same type of clothing for survival (Andrews 1999, p. 38).*

In communitas, there is spontaneous engagement of individuals in an intense experience that is characterised by a sense of “the generic human bond” – “a strong sentiment of human kindness” (Turner 1969, pp. 97 - 116). There is indeed juxtaposition with communitas and community broadly understood but it is more than this when:

*We started to respect and trust one another. Then, after awhile, we started to love one another. And it's unconditional love, I think, in that, I can't explain it, but I found myself loving people who I wouldn't even like and wouldn't choose to spend time with back home (Andrews 1999, p. 38).*

Furthermore:

*On the trip we had to communicate with each other and deal with problems as they arose whereas in 'regular life' it's very easy to ignore problems or conflicts ... On the trip, there was no way that you could avoid a person or ignore conflict. We had to listen to one another and see things from other people's perspectives. I think this led to a greater understanding and allowed us to get closer than you normally get with even your best friends or family. It's that feeling that you've gone through*

*something together and shared such an incredible experience (Andrews 1999, p. 38).*

And:

*We started out as a bunch of separate people with separate lives and separate identities. Over time we became a group with a group identity... (Andrews 1999, p. 38).*

However, the connection experienced is not associated with a loss of individual identity. Rather as Turner (1974, p. 274) says:

*Communitas does not merge identities; it liberates them from conformity to general norms ... representing the desire for a total, unmediated relationship ... a relationship which nevertheless does not submerge one in the other but safeguards their uniqueness in the very act of realizing their commonness.*

This happens because in *communitas*, “a spontaneously generated relationship between levelled and equal total and individuated human beings”, they are “stripped of structural attributes” (Turner 1974, p. 202); they are in a space of non-identity which provides the potential for personal change (Andrews 1999). Thus, liminal experiences “are felt to belong to one’s ‘authentic self, beyond playacting’” (Turner 1992, pp. 135 - 136). In other words, they can “be themselves - it is frequently said, when they are not acting institutionalised roles” (Turner 1967, p. 101). As this participant explains:

*On the trip I feel more at ease with myself I don't feel that I am being pressured by anyone into being something different than what I am. Without the media and social pressures of “normal” life I find it easier to define who I am and what I stand for (Andrews 1992, p. 39).*

Symbolism is also associated with the fact that the expedition takes place in wilderness, making it a physical as well as a symbolic journey through a region (of both the mind and earth) that is again outside the regular structure of everyday lives. Participants' experience of communitas on a wilderness expedition thus not only involves a sense of community and self, but there are also feelings of connection with the natural environment. Indeed, there is a sense of place as these participants indicate:

*I began to realize that we are animals just like the whales, the caribou, the birds, and the fish. Like them, we are part of the food chain. Rarely do I think of myself as this. I've always bought meat at the A and P and never really thought about where it came from. The process of catching, killing, cleaning, cooking, and eating fish led me to a feeling of appreciation, respect, and connectedness to the rest of life on earth. We are not above, beyond, or apart from the natural world, we are a part of it (Andrews 1992, p. 40).*

And:

*I felt like there was a place for me and that I was as much a part of the earth as the ocean, the whales, and the trees (Andrews 1999, p. 40).*

Also:

*Here I find my sacred space. I know that I'm competent, that I belong. I feel like the whole world has strived to create this place, this situation, specifically for me. I feel love for the whole world. And I guess the bottom line is, I love myself. I feel like I can be anyone and do anything (Andrews 1999, p. 41).*

Clearly, there are many parallels to outdoor adventure and initiation when relating to communitas. For example, risk and challenge experienced synony-

mously with ceremonial and/or ritual significance in *communitas* and outdoor adventure (Hyde-Hills 1998). Other attributes of liminality and *communitas* that can be associated according to Turner (1969, pp. 111 – 112) include as he puts it:

*Reduction of all to the same status level, the wearing of uniform apparel (sometimes for both sexes), sexual continence (or its antithesis, sexual community, both continence and sexual community liquidate marriage and the family, which legitimate structural status), minimization of sex distinctions (all are “equal in the sight of God” or the ancestors), abolition of rank, humility, disregard for personal appearance, unselfishness, total obedience to the prophet or leader, sacred instruction, the maximization of religious, as opposed to secular, attitudes and behaviour, suspension of kinship rights and obligations (all are siblings or comrades of one another regardless of previous secular ties), simplicity of speech and manners, sacred folly, acceptance of pain and suffering (even to the point of undergoing martyrdom), and so forth.*

### **2.3.9 The Participant**

But what of the characteristics of the participant like their age, gender, ethnicity and experience (Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007)? Recognising a young person’s characteristics is also considered by some as why and how adventure works. This could include the reason for their participation (Hattie et al 1997) and participant population (McKenzie 2003). Clearly, participant factors introduce another complexity (Neill 1999) bringing with them varying views.

In relation to the age of the participant, there are questions to be asked like; do they need a certain level of cognitive and personal maturity in order to gain personal development benefits from outdoor education programs? Are they particularly reluctant to make high ratings about themselves at the age of fifteen

that affects their personal development of outdoor adventure? Meanwhile only considering the age of a participant as determining their outcomes neglects other possible contributing factors. This can include the reason why they are participating. Indeed, it is possible for a wide degree of reasons to be given for participation. This is relevant in Australia where young people come from a varied range of socioeconomic backgrounds, cultures and levels of experience, too. Thus, same-age participants might have an expansive range of attitudes, values, and motivations (Manning 1999). In this way as Hattie et al (1997) say, another of the likely moderators of any age effect might possibly be the reasons for participation. It could include many younger people's participation being decided by their school or parents, whereas most adults participate voluntarily therefore they are more likely to be more motivated. Others have noted that the voluntary nature of course enrolment may be an important factor in course outcomes (for example, Herbert 1998). Still other factors might include a student's pre-course expectation in relation to their growth during adventure education courses. The implications are that those who are seeking change and development may enrol in these courses in search of a catalyst for personal growth (Ewert 1988). They might also be deliberately seeking activities that include ones that feature risk (Boyes & O'Hare 2003). Clearly, motivation from whatever perspective is well recognised for involvement in adventure (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi 1999; Miles & Priest 1999; Priest & Gass 2005).

Moreover, a participant's previous similar experience with adventure programs is understood to contribute to their outcomes. This has not been widely investigated although it can be considered as a predetermined participant characteristic that plays a role in the achievement of them. However, while some argue that participant expectations and motivations can directly affect the outcome (e.g. Ewert, 1988), others like Sibthorp (2003) believe that the impacts



of the program are most important when viewed through their interactions with the participants' on-program experiences and perceptions of personal empowerment and learning relevance (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004). In essence what this means is that those 'who felt they played an active role in the decision-making and had responsibility during adventure-based recreation programs also perceived greater developmental benefits from their participation' (Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007, p. 6).

## **2.4 Concluding Remarks**

This review of the literature exposes a dialogue that while it is clear that adventure works, it is still not clear why and how it does. In this regard, there is much to be contemplated. For example, is it the characteristics and background of a participant and/or both the program characteristics making the difference? Or is it that programmatic factors depend on desired participant outcomes? If so, which ones are most related to specific outcomes (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning 2004)? Is it based on an understanding that each course participant comes with different experiences reflective of her/his stage of life and, therefore, it is possible they gain different personal learning from the same experience and each other (Martin, Leberman & Neill 2002)? Perhaps it is the challenge and risk? It might be the instructor? Or is it the contrast between contemporary life and wilderness? Or as tradition ascribes, is it the characteristics of liminality and *communitas* that need be reconstructed? Does this have any relationship to the concepts of *habitus* and *field* being discussed in the next chapter? Is it a combination of all of this that contributes to it? Or is it only parts of the adventure program and not necessarily the total experience that makes the difference (Hattie et al 1997)? Or is it simply as this 15-year-old male student says:

*I think that the aspect which had the most positive impact was the friendships I made here. I was always having fun which kept me motivated and my confidence high (McKenzie 2003, p. 14).*

Indeed, the idea of the experience being fun is also supported by other studies, for example, Smith, Steel and Gidlow (2010).

Hence, while the outcomes associated with outdoor adventure are well recorded, ultimately, research needs to continue investigating these programs to better understand how and why it works. The following chapter proposes a theoretical perspective that contributes a possible way to understand this. In essence, it theorises young people's identity development in an individualised society through their relationships understood between two concepts, habitus and social fields. Not only does this perspective understand young people's personal development in relation to social fields in their everyday lives, it also considers it in relation to social fields removed from it. As such, the perspective implicates young people's participation in outdoor adventure and more specifically trainee's participation on the Leeuwin II tall ship in relation to their identity development in their contemporary lives.