ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Self and Place: Journeys in the Land

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Abstract

One's sense of place relates closely to one's sense of self—a self inextricably linked and emergent within one's context. Contemporary lifestyles have altered human-to-environment relationships, including significant reductions in direct contact with wild nature, displacement of people from place, and shifts in our social and psychological well-being. These changes have diminished our sense of place and subsequently draw into question the strength and quality of our sense of self, especially in relationship to the natural world. The practice of "journeying" will be shared as an approach to facilitate personal growth, a reconnection to nature, and to evoke deeper meaning-making in change processes. Raffan's (1993) identification of the "types of knowledge invoked by the land" clarifies the role of therapeutic and educational processes designed to address this divergence. An Australian bush adventure therapy program case study illustrates the typologies of place knowledge, and examples of journeying across learning and therapeutic domains are provided.

Introduction

> *All identities are a fluid amalgam of memories of places and origins, constructed by and through figments and nuances, journeys and rests, of movements between.* (McDowell, 1999, p. 215)

McDowell suggests that we are who we are in relation to space, place, culture, and context. Knowing oneself fully then requires journeys into and through the context that defines us. A conceptual argument is presented that journeys provide opportunities to develop a greater sense of place, a subsequently stronger sense of self, which may then contribute positively to one's personal attitudes and behaviors related to one's own health and well-being. First, concepts of self and place will be defined and explored, as they are prone to diverse interpretation across academic disciplines. Next, journeys will be described in theory and practice to provide the context within which Raffan's land-based knowledge types—experiential, toponymic, numinous, and narrative—will be discussed as processes within an Australian bush adventure therapy program.

The Integrated Self (in Nature)

A foundational tenet inherent in this paper is a re-conception of the "self," away from dominant Western notions of the humanist self—the self as separate, autonomous, discrete—and instead toward an understanding of the self as inextricably linked and emergent within the particular biophysical and social contexts it is embedded. Ecologically, all living entities are interconnected in an intricate web of relationships: each a complete system in its own right yet also open and in constant exchange with other systems in which it is a part (Laszlo, 1996). Simply, living systems maintain relative separateness by being open to exchanges with other living systems. We are not separate skin-encapsulated beings but rather profoundly interwoven and dependent on our biophysical surroundings. This is similar to Naess's (1987) idea of the "ecological self," which moves beyond narrow conceptions of the self to include all things we identify with, such as our home, our immediate environment, and the care for larger systems such as forests, bioregions, and the planet. AU1

The increasing amount of literature documenting the significance of contact with nature emphasizes the need to remain integrated within the environment rather than separate from it. Current realities include Australia and other Western nations being more than 80% urbanized and spending, on average, more than 80% of our days indoors. A recent review of research shared the health and healing benefits of being in contact with nature (Maller et al., 2008). These included

- physiological benefits (e.g., improved brain and nervous system function),
- improves recovery from mental fatigue and restores concentration,

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- increases healing for patients previously not responding to treatment,
- enhances positive outlook on life, social and community connectedness,
- improves ability to cope with and recover from stress, illness, and injury,
- increases productivity and concentration,
- knowing nature exists is important to people (p. 75).

We will use a number of related constructs to illustrate these points, which require defining to ensure clarity of our usage of them; they also interplay in one's interpretations and applications of the ideas presented. The author's perspectives are biased by our combined experiences working with outdoor and adventure programs, in nature and wilderness contexts, and across educational and therapeutic domains. The context, including social, economic, and political forces, will affect the work, and it is noted here that these terms are often used interchangeably. Our intent is to remain conceptually broad, instigate dialogue on these ideas, and provide enough clarity in our use of such terms as "place" and "journey" to encapsulate our perceptions.

Definitions

Journey

Journeys, as discussed herein, do not cover the wide range of philosophical and practical terrain the term may present to readers. However, whether mythological, historical, or metaphysical, journeys generally comprise an individual or group traveling from one place to another. A journey may be simple by definition but easily complicated by factors of distance, topography, intention, difficulty, and so on. In Australia, cultural practices of "being on the land," "going walkabout," or being "out bush" carry implications of independence and isolation, yet they are also representative of interdependence and community (Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). While journeys are wide-ranging conceptually, we also recognize they often are indicative of transitions and change.

Sense of place

Sense of place is a term to express one's relationship with place. The term has physical, social, emotional, and philosophical applications. Social geographers Carter, Dyer, and Sharma (2007) suggest that "structural forces shape sense of place, rendering the specifics of each place-meaning open to contestation by alternative voices within class, gender, or race divisions at any locality" (p. 755). Sense of place is the broadest human conceptualization of place and can be defined inclusive of place identity and place attachment (Kyle & Chick, 2007).

Place identity

Place identity describes the thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and associated actions and behaviors relative to place (Altman & Low, 1992) including "what is seen" and the "way it is seen" (Creswell, AU2 2005). "Place identity is subjected to an imposed, created and manufactured place construction while sense of place remains personal, found and grounded in the lived experiences of many residents" (Carter et al., 2007, p. 756). For example, when you hear the name Uluru (briefly anglicized as *Ayres Rock*) or *the Great Barrier Reef,* you can easily identify with national parks, conservationist practices, and historical, cultural, and geographic facts. Place identity, in this case, is more cultural historical knowledge and less subjective interpretations of other place constructs (Stewart, 2006).

Place attachment

Place attachment is the quality of bonding of humans to place; primarily the affective connection to place (Altman & Low, 1992; Jorgenson & Stedman, 2001). Attachment to place can be expressed on a spectrum from revulsion to endearment; that is, "how attached" one feels toward a particular place. Our experience of a place can change through the accumulation of time and memories, which increase our knowledge, history, and understanding of being within that place. Homesickness and national pride are both manifestations of place attachment.

Sacred places

Sacred places are archetypal, culturally relevant, and often places of ritual and ceremony (Campbell, 1974). Whether chosen for aesthetic quality, geographic uniqueness, or a play of forces we no longer understand (e.g., "power spots"), these places tend to generate a sense of awe, calm, or provide the opportunities for heightened experience (Swan, 1990). Human-built structures have been constructed as "amplifiers of the energies that were there in the first place" (Swan, 1990, p. 37). Many sacred places maintained through oral history and lacking structures, especially of indigenous peoples, have been destroyed in the name of "progress" and our collective ignorance. Attending to traditional sacred places is a responsibility that still motivates many indigenous Australian elders, for example, to walk their remaining lands and tribal boundaries (Benterrak et al., 1984; Sveiby & Skuthorpe, 2006). The human desire to experience sacred places is also perhaps one of the oldest reasons for partaking on extended journeys away from one's community (e.g.,

pilgrimages). Tacey's (1995) call for the redevelopment of sacred places within the Australian landscape suggests the need to reconfigure people's understanding of their connections to their environment.

Special places

Often identified in the literature as meaningful childhood play spaces, special places are those with which individuals have bonded, contain meaningful narratives, and are their own creations (Sobel, 1990). Special places elicit images of unique or extraordinary significance. They are espoused in child development literature as valuable places in the maturity of one's sense of self and relationship to the environment. A "special place" is often identified from memory. It is included in this paper, similarly to sacred places, as *special* and *sacred* place identification may be conferred for personal or collective significance.

Journeys: Fostering Sense of Place

The journey we are embarked upon is one of self-discovery and the land through which we are traveling has a psychological and spiritual dimension that no ordinary map would show. (Lindfield, 1986)

Journeys are a core practice of bush adventure therapy practice. Located in the same genre of therapeutic approaches as ecotherapy, wilderness therapy, and adventure therapy, bush adventure therapy is distinctly Australian and purports this by its culturally and regionally relevant inclusion of "bush" in its title[1]. Much of adventure therapy practice has been traditionally guided by outdoor education philosophies and pedagogies that frame the journey, or expedition, in the contexts of challenge and risk: a "conquering" orientation, while fulfilling particular educational, developmental or therapeutic outcomes (Gass et al., 2012). This approach consistently undermines the full potential of "journey" as a discovery of place and the development of self in place. Historically, both outdoor education and adventure therapy have espoused their capacity to facilitate personal growth and development (Harper & Scott, 2006; Hattie et al., 1997; Neill, 2003). More recent theoretical explorations in allied fields include ecopsychological perspectives: a movement toward more integral understandings and practice of human-nature connections and psychological well-being (see Norton, 2009; Taylor et al., 2010).

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[1]See the Australian Association of Bush Adventure Therapy at www.aabat .org.au for an overview of practice, programs, and definitions.

The case study shared in this paper is from research of an Australian organization renowned for their appreciation and application of journeying as a powerful medium to facilitate growth and change processes. The professional team of facilitators has combined educational and therapeutic tools and processes within an extended journey where developing connections to the natural environment is central (Pryor et al., 2005). The place-based and journey-orientation of this outdoor therapeutic program is increasingly more common across international practitioners as evidenced in current literature (Pryor et al., 2012; Richards et al., 2011). While programs are designed and delivered to a broad spectrum of client groups, the primary group served in adventure therapy internationally is youth.

Within a broad conceptual realm of journeying, we encourage educators, therapists, community workers, and other facilitators to design and apply "journeying" as they deem appropriate for the populations they engage. It is critical, dependent on one's field of practice, to orient these ideas to fit within the mandates, ethical guidelines, and logistical capacities of their organizations or to partner with complimentary organizations and service providers (e.g., therapist and treatment groups with outdoor education programs). This approach provides a confluence of skills, knowledge, and abilities, and increases the professionalism of journeying practice.

Types of Knowledge Invoked by Places

In seeking a deeper understanding of place experiences, Raffan (1993) reported on his study of people's attachment to place. With "land as teacher," he identified four distinct indigenous ways of knowing place: (1) experiential, through lived personal experiences of place; (2) toponymic, or by place name; (3) numinous, or by spiritual connection to place; and (4) narrative, through stories shared about place. Raffan proposed that "sense of place, in varying degrees, constitutes an existential definition of self," and his typology offers guidance in designing place-based experiences to meet particular needs of individuals or groups in developing a sense of place (p. 45). More recent exploration of land-based education in indigenous communities found aboriginal peoples actively engaged in outdoor programs not because they were disconnected from the ideas of place, but rather, they have been driven from the lived experience of being "on the land" due to Western cultural dominance, assimilation, and modernization (Takano, 2009).

Types of knowledge invoked by "place" as articulated by Raffan (1993) provide a curriculum framework to reach desired educational and therapeutic outcomes. Table 1 provides further clarity with definitions and examples. Excerpts from a case study of an Australian

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Table 1. Raffan's (1993) Experience of Place: Types of Knowledge Invoked by the Land		
KNOWLEDGE TYPE	**DEFINITION**	**EXAMPLE FOR HEALTH PROMOTION**
Experiential	Personal experience of being on the land; the collective insights, feeling, and attitudes about one's lived experience	A person with an anxiety disorder is introduced to a local nature reserve. Enjoying his experience of place, and recognizing its value, he begins to share this place on weekend walks with his family and friends.
Toponymic	The process of naming; learning place names and identification of species and land formations	A new immigrant, encouraged to spend an afternoon at a local interpretative center, discovers many local species similar to those in her home land and recognizes familiarity in species names.
Numinous	A spiritual bond, recognizing divine presence or the feelings of being a part of something greater/larger than self	A child walking with his counselor is attracted to an alcove of trees near a stream in which he feels safe and at peace. Spending time here takes on an unarticulated spiritual quality where the child and counselor enjoy talking.
Narrative	The [his]stories of place; tales, legends, and historical and contemporary articulations of place	Learning of indigenous peoples' and early European settlers' use of a nearby woodland trail, a teacher takes a group of at-risk youth on walks there, co-creating a metaphor of change over time

bush adventure therapy program will be described utilizing this typology.

Journeying as Practice

The Outdoor Experience (TOE) program has been utilizing journeys with young people for more than 25 years, deliberately structuring experiences that foster a deeper understanding of the Australian bush and how strengthening human connections to place can improve their health and well-being.

> *Mission statement*
> Through the intentional use of relationships, adventure, and contact with nature and the bush, TOE assists young people struggling with difficult life circumstances, including those experiencing or at risk of experiencing problematic drug and/or alcohol use, with health and well-being experiences, social skills and social connection, and life skills.

It is the intentional embedding of activities into the landscape during the 6-week program that highlights the significance of this case study. A range of processes are utilized by the program facilitators to maximize young people's opportunities to engage more deeply with the natural surroundings. Providing experiences that can lead to development of a sense of place, an understanding of sacred spaces, as well as skills in developing relationships with other people in the journey process, has lead to long-term sustainability of this program's success in supporting change in young people's lives.

Some of these processes will now be discussed within the framework of Raffan's "types of knowledge invoked by the land." Quotes from staff and young people participating in TOE journeys provide insight into the lived experience of the bush adventure therapy program[2].

Experiential. In the first 2 weeks, initial contact with nature can be as simple as sitting on the ground and encountering dust, grass, and ants, or walking in urban parks and gardens. A day caving in wet, tightly enclosed spaces is also included so that there is full contact and total immersion of the body into place and social context before individuals agree to participate in the extended journey.

> Caving is a really [good] group thing to do—if one gets stuck we all get stuck, it constricts the whole body—brings up issues! A quick way to get in deep—has strong results. Paddling is too easy whereas everyone in caves is challenged—really dirty in touch and absorbed in space—part of the cave and part of the rock. (Lauren, staff)

Rafting 80 km along the Snowy River, walking 70 km along the ridges near the Victorian Alpine Way, or walking 85 km along the coast from Eden to Mallacoota are common journeys that are selected

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based on the season and the abilities and attributes of those participating. The actual distance traveled is not as important as the sense of achievement of a goal that was significant and the extended length of time within a landscape or place that can nurture, challenge, and inspire. For young people, the activity of the journey is generally what attracts them to these programs—however, it is often the peace, calmness, or freedom of the natural places that resonates in their memories.

> We felt free; we felt at one with ourselves, to set the experience off we decided to roll down the sand hill, without shame, without regret…We set off with a cup and trangia in our hands. Like bullets, we fly through, laughing like life has never been better, which in my life, I don't think it ever has. (Jade, participant)

Toponymic. Map-reading activities will often highlight the divided history of the land between traditional indigenous names and more recent colonial explorations. While many indigenous names refer to the food or plants accessible in the region, appearance of natural features, or spiritual significance, many names selected by explorers recognize important people, country of origin, or indicate the explorers' state of mind rather than relate to the place itself. Mount Despair, Mount Disappointment, Hells Window, Mount Howitt, or Razorback are just a few peaks along the Alpine Way in northern Victoria.

Place identity can be developed through multiple understandings of place. During journeys with young people, the naming process takes on another dimension as many of the places that take on significance to them are collectively named and referred to by these names within the journey. Generally, the participants are more interested in the stories of the lands' formation or why the trees they sit under only grow in certain conditions. If no one knows the scientific or historic rationale, then imagination frequently takes over, and the experience of metaphor or meaning making becomes part of the journey process, generating with it personal reflections that can further enhance the internal journey. "I never knew that the sun and the moon were in the sky at the same time. I didn't know that. I probably knew it but I never took the time" (Nigel, participant). A few moments later he added, "I guess I've looked at the ground most of my life."

Numinous. The landscapes and natural places the journey moves within elicit many responses ranging from alienation to awe. Facilitators deliberately seek locations that are known to engender a sense of perspective, where humans can connect to natural spaces and their role in the scheme of things. Mountain peaks with vistas provide scale (I am part of something larger) and far horizons (so many options, the highs and lows of life's journey); beaches with either pounding or gentle waves indicate awe-inspiring demonstrations of power or the simple rhythms of life. The connections made to the natural features or the emerging metaphors are generated by the young people themselves. The facilitator's role is to ensure spaces and times are optimized within the program so these deeper connections with the natural world can be made.

> Nature provided for the space and time to reflect and sort through myself. My energies are replaced, rejuvenated, replenished and influenced by the peace and serenity. I feel the need to respect the Earth and that reminds me of the interconnectedness of life. The grass wouldn't grow without sunshine and rain, cows couldn't live without the grass, our vegies wouldn't grow without them to fertilise our soil and so on. It gives me so much to take back to the city and appreciate what I have there. (Jill, participant)

Narrative. Narratives refer to the stories of places visited, to the stories of change within the young person, and to stories of the groups' experience on the journey. TOE deliberately invites storytelling as a way of embedding understanding of movement and change. During the journey, encouraging moments to reflect and examine meanings for past actions, consequences, and future possibilities are intentional elements of the process. Encouraging an audience to hear and confirm these stories of adventure, achievement, and perseverance are also central to the organization's understanding of effecting change in young people's lives and their broader journey toward health and well-being.

> I am alright being me out here—here is a good place to peel back the layers of stress from the city. You get back to your inner core out here. I haven't felt as much like me as before I was using drugs. I feel like the real me for the first time in years. (Trish, participant)

The narratives developed within natural places are deeper and richer because of the layers of experiencing, naming, and connecting with a place. Place attachment carries all these narratives with it. Narratives are the culmination of all the typologies developed by Raffan, and the stories the young people share reflect the depth of meaning the journey holds for them. Formal and informal processes are utilized to strengthen the narratives told. It is also important to note that connections to place are generated in both accessible locations close to home as well as in more remote environments so the benefits of distant journeys can be remembered through local encounters.

Conclusion

In exploring the links between journeying and individual growth and development, this paper has provided an argument for (a) the utilization of journeys in nature to assist in developing sense of place, (b) that sense of place leads to greater sense of self, and (c) the act of journeying provides a pedagogical opportunity to experience place for a broad range of professionals. By cultivating sense of place through journeying, and carefully encouraging knowledge acquisition of the land via the expressed typology, we reason that an extension of one's identity to include relationships with natural places can occur. Developing a stronger connection with place can diminish experiences of the "existential vacuum" (Frankl, 1959), a world devoid of meaning, and replace them with stories of interconnection, improved health, and individual and collective well-being. "I'm so much more relaxed out here—I don't seem to be paranoid about anything—I mean, I get paranoid, but then I get over it" (Greg, participant).

The theory and practice of journeying by bush adventure therapy programs across Australia have shifted away from formulaic and structured programs advocated by early theorists in outdoor and adventure education and therapy to a more holistic approach emphasized by the following:

- Programs to assist individuals to reconnect with the land, culture, and spirit, integral to enhancing connections for people and their communities;
- Practice where individuals are readied to accept responsibility, make choices, take risks, reflect on their relationship with self, others, and the environment, allowing for healing and growth to occur; and,
- Practitioners who support individuals by encouraging opportunities for transition to occur, within a shared experiential or therapeutic process. (Carpenter & Pryor, 2004, p. 237)

This ecological approach to education and therapy posits that natural places are much more than just context or setting for these programs designed to enhance the health and well-being of young people. Journeys enable the surrounding environment to be the catalyst, the challenge, the inspiration, the solace, and the reward that generates a greater sense of belonging that connects people to place.

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AU1   In text Naess 1987; in references Naess 1973. Please reconcile.

AU2   Creswell 2004 or 2005?

AU3   Carpenter 2008 not found in the text.