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**Leadership and Outdoor Education:
An Exploration of the Connections between Two Interrelated Fields**

By

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Introduction

"I can shut my eyes now, dismiss all that has happened in thirty-five years and recapture the silence of Loon Lake. We were two middle-aged women travelling for pleasure, disheveled and unwashed, with tired feet and tired bodies, but I think as we stood on the shores of the lake, gazing down at the reflected mountains, listening to the silence that was almost audible, we must have experienced what the Saints describe as ecstasy."

- Lady Clara Coulton Vyvyan, 1961¹

In 1926, Clara and her friend Gwen Dorian Smith left their homes in Britain and embarked upon a canoe trip, paddling rivers from the Arctic Ocean to the Yukon basin. Thirty-five years later, she wrote the story of this trip, from which the above quote comes. In one sentence, Clara's captures the amazing power that nature has to transcend both time and space. Although it has been years since she stood on the shores of the lake, shutting her eyes brings it all back, the sense of calm, the experience of ecstasy. In their book *Gifts of the Wild: A Woman's Book of Adventure*, Conlon et al write about the "transformative power of wild places" that can help us "find new meaning in our lives through nature's untamed and unshakeable rhythms."² Indeed nature has the ability to both harm the body and heal the spirit, weaken the individual and unite the group, alleviate the stress and invigorate the senses.

The outdoors is an important medium for learning lessons about oneself and the surrounding world. Many of these lessons revolve around the concept of leadership, whether leadership of the self during a solo trip, a collection of friends during a weekend camping trip, or a group of teen-agers during an outdoor education trip. Much literature has been written on the subject of outdoor leadership. However, to date there exists no in-depth analysis of outdoor leadership in light of the academic discipline of leadership studies. Therefore, the goal of this research project is to make connections between leadership studies and outdoor education, with the notion that ideas from leadership studies might lead to a better understanding of outdoor education and ideas from outdoor education might lead to a better understanding of leadership studies. The tangible outcome of this research project will be a course entitled Leadership and Outdoor Education. The course, designed as a capstone experience for Leadership Studies majors at the Jepson School of Leadership Studies, will *not* serve as a training venue for potential outdoor leaders, but rather encourage students to examine and critique the field of outdoor education through the lens of leadership studies. The ideas explored in this paper are meant to

provide an intellectual framework for the Leadership and Outdoor Education course, as opposed to a finalized, detailed course syllabus. Potential instructors are on their own to fill in the details relating to course assignments. However, the ideas presented in this paper illustrate the major concepts that such a course should include.

The Need for a Leadership and Outdoor Education Course

In order to understand why there is a need for a Leadership and Outdoor Education course, it is important to understand two factors: how the field of outdoor education developed and why it is important that Jepson start exploring it. For years, countless individuals, solo or in groups, have taken advantage of the learning potential of spending time in nature. Many people spend their time in nature informally, such as weekend camping trips or family walks in the woods. In other words, they are engaging in outdoor recreation. Recreation, which comes from the Latin *recreare* meaning to create anew, is defined as the renewal of strength or spirit, reinvigoration, or rebirth.³ In recent decades, however, the outdoors has gained another function in addition to that of providing informal recreation opportunities. It now serves as the medium for more formal, i.e., planned, learning experiences. Today, the concept of the outdoor classroom refers to more than nature's ability to teach students about the ecosystem. Today, all types of people, both old and young, successful corporate-types and "at-risk" teens, recovering anorexics and rugged adventurers, are venturing into nature to learn about concepts such as leadership, teamwork, trust, and self-confidence. A variety of programs are providing these experiences, from internationally-known adventure programs such as Outward Bound (founded in the 1940s and considered the first formal outdoor education program⁴) to corporate development programs like Richmond's Challenge Discovery, to therapeutic adventure programs such as Santa Fe's Mountain Center.⁵ All of these programs support the idea that learning happens just as readily in outdoor settings as in traditional classroom ones.

Whether or not they claim to promote leadership training or development, many outdoor programs refer to the concept of leadership. Most programs are lead or facilitated by someone who has had some sort of leadership training. Indeed there are even textbooks designed

specifically to teach students about effective outdoor leadership. No matter what the opinion of leadership studies scholars on the issue (and the fact that leadership studies literature says virtually nothing about the topic may be an indicator that scholars do not see it as worthy of academic study), the fields of outdoor education and leadership studies are unchangeably linked in the minds of both leaders and participants in outdoor education.

The Jepson School of Leadership Studies is the nation's first undergraduate school of its kind and strives to remain on the "cutting edge" in regards to the field of leadership studies. The school's curriculum "seeks to develop in each student a base of knowledge that provides the conceptual tools that support the exercise of leadership in a variety of settings."⁶ In keeping with this curricular objective and the goal of the Jepson School to remain on the cutting edge of leadership studies, it is time that Jepson investigate the field of outdoor education. If the Jepson School considers itself a forerunner in the field of leadership, it needs to stay abreast of *all* fields relating to leadership education (or at least as many as feasibly possible), especially ones that claims such strong ties to leadership as the field of outdoor education. Based upon the existing though unexplored links between leadership studies and outdoor education, this project seeks to start a much needed conversation within the Jepson School about the potential benefits of exploring the two fields together.

Methodology

Although a "traditional" research project, the questions that this exploration of leadership studies and outdoor education seeks to answer are by no means traditional. This project was born out of a desire to fuse two fields: leadership studies and outdoor education, under the premise that findings in leadership studies might help us to better understand outdoor education. The questions that drove this research are: What are the areas of overlap between leadership studies and outdoor education? How does the concept of outdoor leadership, as portrayed in various texts on the subject, relate to concepts of leadership proposed by various leadership scholars studied within Jepson? How do the dimensions of outdoor education relate to fundamental components of the Jepson curriculum, such as experiential learning, ethics, followership, group processes, individual change, empowerment, and servant leadership? What are the challenges of

outdoor leadership today and how do these relate to challenges in the broader field of leadership studies?

In order to explore these questions, relevant literature in the fields of leadership studies and outdoor education is carefully and systematically examined. The literature includes outdoor leadership textbooks, which provide summaries of various dimensions of outdoor education. It also includes books containing collections of articles on a variety of outdoor education topics. Finally, journal articles on experiential education, outdoor leadership and outdoor adventure provide important information as well, including personal testimonies about the benefits of outdoor education. Magazine articles and research studies provide critiques of the field of outdoor education and outdoor leadership training. Course syllabi for existing outdoor leadership courses offered at various colleges and universities provide valuable information, especially in relation to the gaps that exist.

After reading a variety of texts on outdoor leadership, similar themes start emerging. For example, many texts refer to the importance of leaders in outdoor settings, but say nothing about the roles of followers and situation. Clearly, some of the ideas central to leadership studies and explored within Jepsen are missing. In order to analyze the aforementioned outdoor leadership sources, thereby identifying concrete gaps in outdoor leadership literature (such as the above example), a variety of leadership studies texts are used. The texts are from Jepsen courses and include sources on ethics, leadership theories, followership, group processes, empowerment and servant leadership. These sources help to clarify leadership studies concepts when drawing connections between the two fields. They are especially useful in terms of identifying leadership studies concepts that can add depth and further validity to the field of outdoor leadership. The majority of analysis is a result of comparing the central concepts within leadership studies and outdoor education literature. Based on the similarities and differences within these texts, conclusions are drawn.

Literature Review

A cursory survey of literature in the field of outdoor leadership indicates a gold-mine of

information. There are countless books and articles that claim to discuss outdoor leadership. Yet closer analysis reveals fool's gold. While many texts and articles on the outdoors actually contain the word "leadership" in their title, few offer in-depth analyses of outdoor leadership in light of the academic discipline of leadership studies. Most literature, for example, addresses neither the spectrum of leadership challenges in the outdoors, nor the interactions of leader, followers, and situation within the leadership process, nor the transfer of information learned in the outdoors to indoor settings.

Much of the literature in outdoor leadership rests upon the assumption that skills gained during outdoor education programs are both transferable and relevant to everyday life. Priest and Gass's textbook, *Effective Leadership in Outdoor Programming*⁷, is an example of this. Although the textbook provides one of the most thoroughly descriptive pictures of the field of outdoor leadership, including a chapter on the importance of flexible leadership styles, it offers no critical analysis of outdoor programming. In other words, it says nothing negative about outdoor education, such as the idea that skills learned in the outdoors are not easily transferable to indoor settings.

As with Priest and Gass's text, most literature on outdoor leadership is written with the assumption that transfer of learning *will* occur in outdoor education programs, as long as facilitators follow guidelines, such as creating group objectives and including debriefing sessions. However, such assumptions have proved wrong in various studies. A study of six companies that sent 1,200 employees to outdoor experiential training programs found that "it's the process, not the setting, that facilitates the behavior changes."⁸ In other words, the process of working together as a group facilitated behavior changes in the individuals, as opposed to being in the outdoors. Articles such as this one, while they do provide critiques of outdoor adventure programs, lack sufficient depth and links to leadership. They do not provide any substantive explanations as to why the outdoor environment is not particularly effective in creating behavior changes in participants. They do not suggest ways to improve such programs. They do not discuss the role that leadership plays in any of these programs.

In another study on the effectiveness of outdoor leadership training versus traditional classroom techniques, Keller and Olson⁹ found that outdoor training demonstrates no significant effectiveness. This study was more helpful than others of its kind because the authors offered

explanations as to *why* outdoor leadership training is no more effective than traditional training. A possible explanation for the presence of explanations and significant ties to leadership in this article as opposed to others, is that it is written by a leadership studies professor at the Jepson School.

Miles and Priest's *Adventure Education*¹⁰, a compilation of articles by a variety of authors, offers a more well-rounded, inclusive look at the field of outdoor education, including articles that are particularly relevant to subjects discussed within Jepson. Hunt's article on "Philosophy of Adventure Education," talks about the importance of philosophy and ethics to outdoor education, including discussions on Plato and Aristotle. This relates directly to issues discussed in Jepson's Ethics and Leadership course. Phipps and Swiderski's article on "The 'Soft' Skills of Outdoor Leadership" examines outdoor leadership using Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership theory. This is an example of a scholarly leadership theory discussed in the History and Theories of Leadership course, being applied to another field. Finally, Gass's article on "Transfer of Learning in Adventure Education," is unique in that it addresses the critical importance of the transfer of learning from outdoor environments to future experiences in different settings. Outdoor education is virtually meaningless, in terms of encouraging positive change within individuals and groups, and lacks much educational value, without the component of transference.

The source that comes the closest to providing scholarly critiques of outdoor education (emphasizing both the positives and negatives of such programs), is *The Journal of Experiential Education*, published by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE), an international organization "committed to the practice and promotion of learning through experience."¹¹ The AEE was created in the mid-seventies in response to the first North American conference addressing the challenges of linking outdoor education to college curricula.¹² The most helpful articles from the journal are several addressing the challenges posed by diverse clientele, including people of color, women, and therapy patients. These articles emphasize the importance of varied approaches and methods for facilitating outdoor adventure programs based on the belief that a "one size fits all" approach just doesn't cut it in outdoor education.

In addition, several journal articles from the *Journal of Experiential Education* provide valuable information on experiential education in general, from which the field of outdoor

education derives. The Priest textbook and Miles compilation provide similar information. John Dewey's classic *Experience and Education*¹³ from 1938 serves as one of the first examples of an intellectual writing about the need for, importance of, and process of experiential education. In addition to being an integral part of outdoor education, experiential education is an integral part of the Jepson School's curriculum.

Unlike literature in the field of outdoor education, leadership studies texts from a variety of Jepson courses provides useful information in regards to various leadership concepts, such as ethics, leadership theories, group processes, and empowerment. However, none of these texts mention the field of outdoor education in their discussions on leadership.

The final category of literature examined for this project were course syllabi for existing outdoor leadership courses taught at the undergraduate level. The syllabi for Outdoor Leadership (UNH)¹⁴ and Wilderness Leadership I and II (Ferrum College)¹⁵, focus on preparing students to become outdoor leaders, as opposed to encouraging them to examine and critique the field of outdoor education through the lens of leadership studies. The same holds true for one of the most comprehensive research studies on collegiate outdoor leadership courses, Green's unpublished doctoral dissertation on "The Content of a College-Level Outdoor Leadership Course For Land-Based Outdoor Pursuits in the Pacific Northwest: A Delphi Consensus."¹⁶ The purpose of Green's study is to "identify topics which might be included in a college-level outdoor leadership course."¹⁷ However, the course is geared toward a very specific clientele, namely, "students who are interested in leading land-based outdoor pursuits in the Pacific."¹⁸ Clearly this leadership course prepares students to be outdoor leaders, as opposed to educating them about outdoor leadership, including the criticisms of the field. In spite of the fact that the course is called an Outdoor Leadership Course, outdoor leadership objectives are ranked seventh on a list of topics to be included, with practical skills such as risk management taking the first spots.¹⁹

The above examples of existing college-level outdoor leadership courses illustrate the gap that this research project attempts to fill. While courses on leadership and outdoor education exist throughout the country, the majority of them focus on preparing students to become outdoor leaders. This is an important topic, deserving of its place in higher education. Yet there is a need for a leadership and outdoor education course that does not prepare students for a specific job in the field, but encourages them to examine the field with a critical eye, in light of the academic

discipline of leadership studies. Although this project does not provide a blueprint for such a course, it examines some of the concepts and issues that should be central components of it.

Analysis: Leadership Studies and Outdoor Education

There are numerous commonalities between leadership studies and outdoor education. Outdoor education has roots in experiential education, which is also an important component of Jepson's leadership studies curriculum. Both fields are grounded in similar philosophical concepts central to their academic validity. Scholars seek to better understand the two fields by applying various leadership theories to them. Exploring the concepts of followership is central for both fields. Understanding group processes is crucial to understanding both disciplines, as is the importance of empowerment. Finally, both areas have links to community service concepts. The purpose of identifying these commonalities is to prove that there are links between the fields and thus fertile ground for exploration. However, the ensuing analysis does not simply focus on the links between leadership studies and outdoor education, but on how the two can mutually benefit from further exploration of these commonalities. In the Analysis Section of the paper, each of the commonalities above is explored in greater depth, with emphasis on the ways that insights from both fields can benefit each other. In addition, each area explored will be a part of the proposed Leadership and Outdoor Education course. At the end of each section, links will be made between the topics discussed and how they relate to the proposed course. These links will be general, since it is not the aim of this project to create a finalized, detailed course syllabus, but rather a working one that provides a framework for the course while leaving potential instructors room to tailor it as they see fit.

Experiential Education: The Root of Outdoor Education

*"...all experience is an arch wherethro' / Gleams that untraveled world whose margin fades /
For ever and for ever when I move"*

- Unknown poet²⁰

Experiential education is the foundation upon which outdoor education is built. In order to understand the purpose of outdoor education and what sets it apart from other forms of learning, it is first necessary to understand the importance of experiential learning. Experiential education can be quite simply defined as “learning by doing with reflection.”²¹ It makes “conscious application of students’ experiences by integrating them into the curriculum.”²² In other words, it validates students’ experiences that occur both in and out of the classroom by drawing them into the learning process. Students are viewed as “valuable resources for their own education, the education of others, and the well-being of the communities in which they are members.”²³ While all life experiences have the potential to be valuable learning experiences, experiential education does not necessarily advocate the inclusion of all of these experiences into the learning process, especially when coupling experiential learning with traditional classroom learning, as in Jepson’s Service Learning course. Rather, specific experiences that “promote the development of student agency, belonging, and competence”²⁴ when coupled with reflection, can add to lessons being taught in the classroom. This differs from many outdoor education programs that are completely experiential in nature, in other words, the majority of learning takes place through hands-on activities in outdoor settings.

Some of the earliest examples of experiential education are found in the field of outdoor education. In order to support their belief of the importance of outdoor education, scholars in the field draw on the works of John Dewey, considered the “parent of modern experiential education.”²⁵ In his 1938 book entitled *Experience and Education*, Dewey writes that “there is an intimate and necessary relationship between the process of actual experience and education.”²⁶ Dewey believes that this relationship should extend into the traditional classroom. When information is learned “in isolation,” he believes that students would have trouble applying the information-learned to real-life situations, writing:

Almost everyone has had occasion to look back upon his [her] school days and wonder what has become of the knowledge he [she] was supposed to have amassed during his [her] years of schooling... These questions cannot be disposed of by saying that the subjects were not actually learned, for they were learned at least sufficiently to enable a pupil to pass examinations in them. One trouble is that the subject-matter in question was learned in isolation; it was put, as it were, in a water-tight compartment. When the question is asked, then, what has become of it, where has it gone to, the right answer is that it is still there in the special compartment in which it was originally stored away. If exactly the same conditions reoccurred as those under which it was acquired, it would also reoccur and be available. But it was so segregated when it was acquired and hence it is so disconnected from the rest of experience that it is not available under the actual conditions of life.²⁷

Dewey's proposed solution to the dilemma of information learned in isolation is that education should be "real: about life itself, not mere preparation for life."²⁸ He believes that far too often sterile curriculums do not encourage students to think critically about the world around them. Yet in spite of the importance that he places on experiences in relation to education, Dewey realizes that all experiences are not educational in value, writing that "any experience is miseducative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience."²⁹ He cited interaction - the ability of an experience to balance conditions of student learning (for example internal and external conditions) so that students gain true potential from it - and continuity - the ability of an experience to positively contribute to future learning - as the principles that affect an experience's educational value.³⁰ Thus Dewey does not support experiential education simply because it was something different and trendy (for in the 1930s such a concept would have met with considerable resistance anyhow), but instead believes that if in and out-of-class experiences are proposed and carried through in such a way as to positively affect students' potential and future learning experiences, students and teachers alike would benefit more fully from the education process.

Outdoor education has its foundation in experiential education because it is built on the concept of learning by doing. The majority of outdoor education experiences involve interaction with the natural environment, and thus the learning emphasis for the student 'is placed on relationships concerning people and natural resources.'³¹ This definition of outdoor education, while accurate, does nothing to combat the preconceived notions that many people have about outdoor education, namely that it simply encompasses learning about and having adventures in, the natural environment. While environmental and adventure education *are* the two branches of outdoor education, the field itself has roots in and overlaps with many other fields.³² In many cases, for example, adventures in the natural environment are vehicles for learning about something else, such as team building or group work. Increases in the number of corporate development programs aimed at increasing the effectiveness of employees through activity in the outdoors are an example of this. In other situations, outdoor adventures serve as a means of therapy. Adventure professionals with therapeutic backgrounds use activity in the environment to help people recover from substance abuse problems, depression, eating disorders, and so on.³³

While it is clear that outdoor education today overlaps with fields such as therapy, corporate development, education, and recreation, it is also important to note the disciplines in which the field is rooted, like experiential education.

While it is important that there be an experiential component to the Leadership and Outdoor Education course, the topic of experiential education does not necessarily need to be on the syllabus. The above discussion is relevant because of the emphasis that Jepson and outdoor education place on experiential education. Understanding how experiential education works and why is it important, adds further support to Jepson's claim that purposeful experiences in "real-world settings" challenge students to make connections between theory and practice.³⁴ One component of experiential education that should be a part of the course is John Dewey's philosophy. Dewey is an important figure in the evolution of experiential education, which is related to both leadership studies and outdoor education. In addition, much of his philosophy revolves around questions that are often in the minds of college students, such as, "What happened to everything I was supposed to learn in school?" Students should be introduced to his work, whether in class or through an out-of-class reading assignment.

The Philosophy of Outdoor Education

"How could youths better learn to live than by at once trying the experiment of living?"
-Henry David Thoreau³⁵

The more one knows about the background of outdoor education, the more clearly one sees the connections and overlap between this field and leadership studies. Scholars in both fields identify similar philosophical concepts as crucial to the foundation of their discipline. Before exploring what leadership studies can add to outdoor education in this regard, it is necessary to identify some of the philosophical concepts that the two fields have in common.

The central philosophical concepts behind experiential and outdoor education can be traced to ideas proposed by Plato and Aristotle. In the *Republic*, Plato is concerned with the issue of teaching children the virtues necessary to be leaders in the city-state. In regards to teaching their children about being virtuous warriors, he suggests that parents should "conduct their children to war when they are sturdy, in order that, like the children of other craftsmen, they may

observe the processes of which they must be masters in their maturity.”³⁶ This example is important not because it talks about the making of young warriors (an example that could be seen as the antithesis of ideals espoused by outdoor education), but because it proposes that the best way to learn something is through direct participation. In other words, the point that Plato makes is that “young people could learn lessons about virtue best when impelled into adventurous situations that demanded virtues be exercised.”³⁷ Such is the guiding belief behind many outdoor education programs.

Like his teacher Plato, Aristotle writes about virtues as well, saying that the development of good habits leads to the development of good virtues. In other words, we learn virtues, whether good or bad, by doing them. He writes that just as “men [women] become builders by building...so too we become just by doing just acts.”³⁸ Both Aristotle and Plato believe that hands-on experience and education lead to the development of virtues, which is the central philosophy behind much of outdoor education.³⁹ This illustrates that the principles behind outdoor education were recognized hundreds of years before the first program even started.

William James, a 19th-century philosopher and psychologist, presents a more modern example of the ideas proposed by Aristotle and Plato in his essay “The Moral Equivalent of War.” In this essay, he proposes a war against war. Although he supports the virtues of war, such as risk-taking, he believes that there must be a better way to teach these virtues. His solution: putting young people into adventurous situations using nature as the medium.⁴⁰

It was not until the mid-twentieth century that someone put into practice the philosophical ideals proposed by Plato, Aristotle, and James, namely Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound. As the philosophers ahead of him, Hahn believed in the importance of virtues and that whatever methods are used to teach virtues are mere *means* to the *end*.⁴¹ In other words, outdoor adventure is a *means* to teaching virtues, which are the *ends*. This is an important principle behind outdoor education programs because it takes emphasis away from the actual outdoor activities and places it on lessons learned from the outdoor activities. From the beginning, outdoor adventure programs were not created just so that people could have fun messing about in nature, but to accomplish the loftier goal of teaching people about virtues such as risk-taking and courage.

Philosophical ideas can also be used to explain specific components of outdoor education,

such as the necessary balance between risk and safety, which leads to the virtue of courage. According to Aristotle, the development of a virtue is based upon avoiding two excesses. Thus developing courage - a virtue that many outdoor adventure educators hold dear - means balancing recklessness (too much courage) and cowardice (too little courage).⁴² In order to live out this proposed balance, students of outdoor education must embrace risk and safety, a concept that applies to students in traditional academic settings as well as outdoor ones.⁴³ Students who attempt academic creativity sometimes risk censorship or punishment. Yet often these situations of “adventure” lead to genuine education and growth, whether or not they conform to traditional academic definitions of learning. Students must learn to balance their desire for safety (often in the form of teacher praise and good grades) with the possibility of creative risk and increased learning potential.

The concepts discussed in this section play an integral role in the proposed course. Both leadership studies and outdoor education take into account similar philosophical concepts in order to explain various ethical issues associated with their discipline. As mentioned above, Aristotle’s concept of virtue relates to the idea that outdoor education is a means to teaching about virtue, which is the end. Discussions on virtue and means and ends play a key role in Jepson’s Ethics and Leadership course. Questions about whether or not the means must justify the ends or the ends must justify the means are important ones to ask when examining ethical leadership. Similar questions could be asked in regards to various outdoor education situations.

Although the field of outdoor education already accounts for the importance of philosophical concepts such as the ones mentioned above, they are viewed as the foundation upon which outdoor education is built. Leadership studies, however, views such philosophical concepts and the ethical issues they raise as central to current discussions on leadership. The field of outdoor education can learn from leadership studies in this case. Questions about ethical leadership, and more specifically about means justifying ends and developing virtues, could lead to “better” outdoor leadership. Outdoor education needs to realize the potential of these philosophical concepts to add depth and meaning to their discussions on leadership.

Because this course is being designed as a capstone experience, students will have completed Ethics and Leadership during the previous semester. Philosophical concepts such as the ones mentioned in this section should be relatively fresh in their minds. Thus students will be

well equipped to view outdoor education in light of philosophical concepts, especially in applying some of the ethical debates from the Ethics course, to specific instances of leadership in outdoor settings.

Defining Outdoor Leadership

“Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth.”

–James MacGregor Burns⁴⁴

The concept of outdoor leadership is an integral component of outdoor education. Outdoor education scholars have created definitions of leadership and lists of general qualities necessary to being a successful outdoor leader that appear with surprising similarity in a variety of texts on the subject. Whereas leadership scholars debate the necessity and feasibility of developing a universal definition and set of characteristics for leadership, outdoor education scholars seem to agree with little variation. In their textbook on effective outdoor leadership, Priest and Gass define leadership as “a process of influence” in which group leaders “influence other group members to create, identify, work toward, achieve, and share mutually acceptable goals.”⁴⁵ In his book on recreational leadership, Shivers defines leadership as an ability (potential leaders must have the intellectual awareness to perform in ways that attract others), process (interpersonal relationships develop and certain behavioral changes are brought about), and product (process results in satisfying goals).⁴⁶ More specifically, *outdoor* leadership has been defined as a “continual series of judgements, decisions, actions and evaluations executed by a leader in the interest of maximizing group goals in relation to adventure education pursuits.”⁴⁷ These definitions identify leadership as a process in which leaders move group members toward specific goals.

During Jepson’s introductory course, Foundations of Leadership, students explore various definitions of leadership and are often encouraged to create their own. As the Jepson curriculum progresses, students spend less time on the actual definition of the word and more time studying the theories, processes, ethical debates, contexts and competencies that inevitably shape one’s conceptualization of leadership. Along the way, students encounter various definitions of the term, often specific to the context they are studying. For example, historical definitions of

leadership (encountered in both History and Theories of Leadership and Leadership in Cultural and Historical Contexts) differ from the types of definitions one might encounter in a course on Conflict Resolution. The type of leadership exercised in Plato's city-state differs greatly from the type exercised in a modern-day conflict resolution setting. Thus it is likely that definitions of leadership reflect these differences in context. The Leadership and Outdoor Education course provides an ideal environment for students to once again take up the discussion on definitions of leadership. The first time that students are asked to reflect upon this issue, they are not yet Leadership Studies majors. The second time, since this course is being designed as a senior capstone experience, they will be at the end of their Jepson School education. Instead of drawing solely upon society's commonly held definitions of leadership and personal experiences, as is often the case when one has not formally studied leadership, students in their senior year will be able to draw upon five semesters worth of leadership coursework, including service learning and an internship, and conversations with professors and peers, both in and out of the Jepson School, and scholars and practitioners in the field. In addition, it would be interesting to compare students' conceptualizations of leadership in the Foundations course, to their conceptualizations during their final semester in Jepson. Such comparisons could provide interesting data (more valid if a group of non-Jepson majors were studied as well) on how a Jepson education affects students' definitions of leadership.

There are several specific questions that are important to address in a discussion on definitions of leadership in regards to outdoor leadership. Why is it that outdoor education scholars seem to have little trouble agreeing on definitions for leadership, while the same topic sparks heated debate within recognized leadership academies? Is there something about *outdoor* education specifically that encourages continuity and relative agreement in regards to conceptualizations of leadership? Should students of leadership studies be skeptical that outdoor education scholars have found *the* definition of leadership? Or can they learn something from their conceptualizations? While there are not necessarily any right answers to these serious questions, they provide fertile ground for exploration, in the form of discussion, debate, group and personal reflection, in the Leadership and Outdoor Education course. Although students should be encouraged to come to their own conclusions in regards to definitions of outdoor leadership and indeed leadership in general, some potential answers should be proposed in order

to start dialogue.

One of the first challenges that could be proposed to students in regards to definitions of leadership in an outdoors context is: What is it about outdoor education, if anything, that lends itself to continuity and agreement in regards to conceptualizations of leadership? In order to help them explore this question, students should read something such as Priest and Gass's section on "Effective Outdoor Leadership." In this section, they propose a model of effective outdoor leadership illustrating one way in which the field can be examined in terms of leadership.⁴⁸ Does the mere fact that they were able to diagram the components of outdoor leadership in such a thorough, yet condensed manner, show a fundamental difference between this field and the broader one of leadership studies? This is a question that students should be encouraged to examine.

While it is important for students to draw their own conclusions, it is also important for the instructor to consider possible explanations ahead of time. These explanations can serve as a sounding board off of which the instructor can bounce her/his own ideas. One possible answer to the question about the definability of leadership in relation to outdoor education is the following: Whereas leadership studies must focus on overarching conceptualizations of leadership that could apply to all leader/follower settings, from the classroom to the boardroom to the locker room, outdoor leadership focuses on leadership in one specific setting. Because the focus of leadership is narrower, more often than not generalizations about leadership will ring true. In their model, Priest and Gass compare components of effective leadership to parts of a wall. "Soft skill" bricks (facilitational, organizational, and instructional skills) are on top of "hard skill" bricks (technical, safety, and environmental skills). "Meta skills" (communication, flexible leadership style, professional ethics, problem solving, decision making, and experience-based judgements) are the mortar holding together the bricks. Finally, the entire wall is built upon a "theoretical foundation" of social psychology, history, and philosophy. The "meta skills" described in the wall relate most closely to the concepts studied in Jepson. Indeed Jepson offers courses in Leadership and Communication, Ethics, Decision-Making, and Critical Thinking (problem solving), as well as encourages discussion on the crucial nature of flexible leadership styles in History and Theories of Leadership. Without these skills, Priest and Gass's "wall" of effective outdoor leadership would crumble. This supports the belief at the Jepson

School that these areas are crucial components of effective leadership. Without competency in these areas, one cannot hope to become a leader or follower who positively affects her/his surroundings.

While Priest and Gass's model provides a comprehensive look at the skills which a *leader* must possess in order to be effective, it says nothing about the followers and situation that are inevitably a part of any leadership experience. Even if a leader possesses every skill recognized in the model, unique characteristics of the followers or situation can undoubtedly affect the overall effectiveness of her/his leadership, such as the follower's maturity or weather conditions. Thus such a model appears to be leader-centric in its focus, especially if one subscribes to Hollander's interactional framework of effective leadership as a function of the complex interactions between the leader, followers, and situation.⁴⁹ Hersey and Blanchard support this idea when they write that "Effectiveness [in regards to leadership] is dependent upon the leader, the followers, and other situational elements."⁵⁰ Does this critique of Priest and Gass's model for effective outdoor leadership render it meaningless? On the contrary; their model is especially thorough in regards to the skills that effective outdoor leaders must develop. Because of this, it could serve as an ideal venue for studying the leader segment of Hollander's Interactional Framework. In their chapter on the interactional nature of leadership, Hughes et al. write that "focusing on the individual leader as a level on analysis" can lead to insights on leadership.⁵¹ For example, looking at a leader's temperament (whether the leader "is generally calm or prone to emotional outbursts"⁵²) can show one a lot about how followers will react to the leader's behavior. Leaders who have "generally calm" dispositions are more likely to get thorough and helpful information from followers. Although Hughes et al. are referring to leadership in an organizational setting, this example can apply to an outdoor setting as well. In fact, the information that passes between leaders and followers during a wilderness trip, for example, can be crucial to the survival of the group. Thus it is important to study how the leader's behavior affects the followers'.

Yet it is important to keep in mind that while Priest and Gass's model addresses the role that leaders play in the leadership process, it says nothing about the roles of followers or situation. A more appropriate label would be the "effective outdoor leader (as opposed to leadership) wall." Thus a possible explanation for the consensus that outdoor education scholars

appear to possess in regards to definitions and models of outdoor leadership, is their neglect of *all* components of the leadership situation, i.e., the leader, followers, and situation.

Leadership Theories Applied to Outdoor Leadership

"...after mastering campcraft, the group may need a delegating style of leadership to eat, pack, and move; a participating style of leadership to plan a route; and, in the afternoon, a telling style of leadership to effect a rappel."

-Maurice Phipps⁵³

Flexibility of leadership style is a crucial component of being an effective outdoor leader.⁵⁴ While some leadership theories, such as the Situational Leadership Theory and Contingency Leadership Theory, recognize the importance of flexibility to effective leadership, nowhere is it more evident and necessary than in outdoor settings. Writes Petzoldt - the former director of the National Outdoor Leadership School (a non-profit school recognized as the leader in the fields of wilderness education and outdoor leadership) - in *The Wilderness Handbook*, "The democratic process may be workable under ordinary conditions, but in out-of-doors, when there is a conflict of opinion, an unexpected storm, or an accident, someone must be in authority. If a leader is appointed before the outing he [she] can take such responsibility and delegate to others."⁵⁵

In light of the importance of flexible leadership style to effective outdoor leadership, Hersey and Blanchard's theory of Situational Leadership provides a lens through which to view leadership challenges in the field. The theory proposes a relationship between leader behavior and "particular aspect" of the situation, namely follower readiness, in which leader behavior must change in accordance with follower readiness (the ability and willingness to perform a certain task) in order to maintain follower performance.⁵⁶ Leader behaviors take the form of task and relationship, and various combinations of the two comprise the type of leadership style most effective in a given situation, including: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Petzoldt writes that under ordinary conditions "democratic" leadership is workable (this could be interpreted as a participating or delegating style in the Situational Leadership model), but that someone must be in "authority" during situations of crisis or danger. How does one gain the

ability to judge the most effective leadership style for a given situation? In their discussion on Situational Leadership and its relation to outdoor leadership, Phipps and Swiderski write that such judgement is best learned experientially and through “acceptance of feedback and reflection on experiences.”⁵⁷

Based on the concept that effective leaders should exhibit flexible leadership styles, Priest and Gass developed the Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory (COLT).⁵⁸ While their “wall” model for effective outdoor leadership does not take into account the role that followers and situation play in the leadership process, their theory does. The COLT is based upon the idea that leaders change their leadership style based on favorableness of conditions, which include consequences of the decision, environmental dangers, individual competency, leader proficiency, and group unification.⁵⁹ Based on these conditions, leaders employ autocratic (telling, selling), democratic (testing, consulting), or abdicratic (joining or delegating) decision-making.⁶⁰

In order to more fully understand and critique the COLT, it is helpful to compare and contrast it with some leadership studies theories. Fiedler’s Contingency Model integrates situational factors into the leadership equation based on the premise that leadership style alone is not enough to explain leader effectiveness.⁶¹ Fiedler develops a scale of situational control based on leader-member relations, task structure, and positional power of leader over followers. Depending on the level of control in a situation (low, moderate, or high), different leadership styles are effective: task-motivated (directive) in low and high control situations, and relationship-motivated (participative) in moderate control situations.⁶² While these styles are similar in nature to the three proposed by the COLT, they are not as specific in regards to what they say about leadership style. Task (Fiedler) and autocratic (COLT) styles are similar in that leaders emphasize task accomplishment for the group. However, the COLT goes on to say that autocratic leaders actually make decisions for the group and convince them to follow. Whereas Fiedler’s task-motivated style simply refers to leaders emphasizing task accomplishment. Relationship (Fiedler) and democratic (COLT) styles are similar in that leaders employ a participative style of leadership, working to create an environment where followers are encouraged to take part in the decision-making process. The COLT also proposes the abdicratic style, which is also similar to a relationship-motivated style of leadership.

Although some of the leadership styles proposed by the two theories are similar, the

aspects of the leadership situation that the theories focus on are different. The COLT focuses on the decision-making aspect of leadership, while the Contingency Model focuses on leadership situations in general. Because of this, the COLT is actually more similar to Vroom and Yetton's Normative Decision Theory than to other leadership theories within the field of leadership studies.⁶³ In their model, Vroom and Yetton identify three types of decision-making styles: autocratic, consultative, and group. The definitions of these styles match up word-for-word with the COLT's definitions of autocratic, democratic, and abdicratic decision-making. According to both models, leader should choose their decision-making style based on situational conditions. The actual conditions addressed, however, vary between the two models. While Vroom and Yetton's model mentions followers support for the decision and amount of decision-relevant information available to the leader, the COLT refers to the competencies of the group and leader, as well as environmental conditions. Clearly this difference is due to the broad leadership focus of Vroom and Yetton's model and the specific focus (outdoor leadership) of the COLT. Based on this analysis, it seems that a more appropriate name for the Conditional Outdoor Leadership Theory, would be the Conditional Outdoor Decision-Making Theory.

The Path Goal Theory is another leadership studies theory that can be compared to the COLT.⁶⁴ As mentioned above, the COLT focuses on the decision-making aspect of leadership. The Path Goal Theory, on the other hand, "is not concerned with decisions at all, and might be more properly thought of as a theory of supervision under conditions where the supervisor has high clarity and follower support."⁶⁵ Clearly, this type of theory does not apply well to outdoor leadership situations where high clarity and follower support are often based on consequences of the decision, environmental dangers, individual competency, leader proficiency, and group unification. In other words, components of the situation that are often uncontrollable. The general concept behind the Path Goal Theory, however, that the "leader helps to clarify the *path* to the *goal* for the subordinates"⁶⁶ is applicable to outdoor leadership situations. The image of a leader blazing a path for her/his followers in order that they might reach the end of their journey is sometimes an appropriate one. However, it is also important that followers learn how to clarify their own paths, albeit with guidance from their leader.

What do these conceptualizations of outdoor leadership teach students of leadership studies? They allow them to compare overarching leadership theories to specific ones that

address one field of leadership, and thus observe similarities and differences between the two. This can help members of both fields develop more comprehensive theories. They also serve as mechanisms for testing leadership studies theories by providing case studies in which the interactional elements of leader, followers, and situation can be studied. Students in the course can apply various leadership studies theories to actual outdoor leadership situations in order to test the applicability of the theories. While comparisons between the COLT and theories such as the Contingency Model and Path Goal provide a good starting point, students should not be limited to these conceptualizations. Because this is a capstone course, students will be familiar with various leadership studies theories. Although they may not remember specific details of theories (History and Theories of Leadership is taken during the fall of junior year), this component of the course will be a good refresher. Each student, alone or in groups, could analyze a different leadership studies theory in light of what it adds to outdoor leadership concepts. How do leadership studies theories hold up when applied to specific leadership fields?

Finally, studying conceptualizations of outdoor leadership shows the widespread influence of leadership theories. Chances are, Fiedler did not think about the ways that his Contingency Model specifically relates to outdoor education, and yet it provides a valuable lens through which to view the field. Likewise, Vroom and Yetton probably did not consider situations of outdoor leadership when creating their decision-making model, and yet it applies to such situations. Their applicability to leadership in specific settings contributes to their overall validity.

Followership Concepts within Outdoor Education

“...followership dominates our lives and organizations, but not our thinking, because our preconception with leadership keeps us from considering the nature and importance of the follower.”

-Robert E. Kelley⁶⁷

According to James MacGregor Burns, transforming leadership occurs when “leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality.”⁶⁸ Central to this view of leadership, is the notion that both leaders *and* followers have the ability to influence each other in

positive and life-changing ways. Nowhere in the outdoor leadership literature, does it mention the potentiality of followers to bring about such changes in their leader, another indication that existing outdoor leadership literature is leader-centric in its approach. The subject index in Priest and Gass's 1997 textbook on *Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming*, for example, contains no references to the term follower or group member, but seventeen references to the terms leader and leadership. Compare this to Wren's *The Leader's Companion* written two years earlier, which contains twenty-one references to the term follower. Numbers aside, discussions about followers and followership play a much more central role in leadership studies literature than in outdoor leadership literature.

Robert E. Kelley's work on followers and followership, especially his diagram of Five Followership Patterns, provides another interesting lens through which to view the importance of followers in the leadership process.⁶⁹ Kelley believes that effective followership is crucial to effective leadership. The level of commitment, maturity, energy, preparation, and so on, of both the leader *and* followers impacts the experience for all involved. Kelley defines five patterns into which followers tend to fall, from dependent, passive followers to independent active ones. The most effective followers are those who "think for themselves and carry out their duties and assignments with energy and assertiveness...they are risk-takers, self-starters and independent thinkers"⁷⁰ These are all qualities that make an ideal follower on an outdoor adventure program.

Kelley also lists four steps for "cultivating" effective followers, including redefining followership and leadership, honing followership skills, giving performance feedback and evaluation, and creating organizational structures that encourage followership.⁷¹ When viewed in light of outdoor leadership, each of these steps is both possible and desirous in regards to creating more effective followers. Students in the Leadership and Outdoor Education course could discuss possible ways to implement some of these steps into outdoor education programs. This would be a practical way to encourage reflection and action regarding the importance of followers to the leadership process, a reflection and action that is currently missing.

In order to further illustrate the importance of followers and followership in the outdoor leadership process, students in the course could share personal stories about group situations in which the followers play an equally, or more important, role than the leader. In a reflection paper, students could present and analyze the example in light of one of the aforementioned

leadership theories. In addition, guest speakers could share similar stories. Such narratives, along with discussions of follower-to-leader influences in the leadership relationship, would add a meaningful and useful perspective to outdoor leadership studies that it is currently lacking.

The Role of Group Development in Outdoor Education

"The outdoor adventure activity is the epitome of the dynamic small group. Knowledge of how and why groups function and dysfunction is basic to environmental behavior, personal growth, safety, and...technical motor skills."

-R. J. Rogers⁷²

Another important lens through which to view outdoor leadership is that of group development and dynamics, a central component of both outdoor education and leadership studies. Tuckman and Jensen's model of group development provides a good starting place for a discussion on group processes because it plays a central role in both outdoor leadership *and* leadership studies. The model's widely-accepted nature is no doubt a result of its easy to understand nature and applicability to a wide variety of group situations, from group interactions in the business world, to ones in outdoor adventure programs. The model is based upon five stages of group development: forming, storming, norming, performing, and adjourning.⁷³ The stages in this model are directly applicable to the stages of development through which a typical outdoor adventure group moves. The forming stage is characterized by group members getting to know one another and dealing with accompanying feelings of discomfort. Storming is characterized by increased feelings of comfort as group members begin to assert their individuality and needs; friction and disagreement can result. In the norming stage, a greater sense of order permeates as ground rules are established. This leads to the performing stage, where the group gets the tasks done with mutual support. In the final stage, adjourning, closure is provided.

According to Priest and Gass, the stages of group development are important because they affect the type of leadership that a group leader should exercise.⁷⁴ The leadership style depends on the leader's concern for the task and relationship dimensions of the situation at-hand.⁷⁵ For example, during the forming stage leaders should have a high task concern and low

relationship concern. This is because the focus is often on clarifying group goals and expectations. During the next phase, storming, leaders should still maintain a high task concern, but this is coupled with a high relationship concern. People in the group are “testing the waters” in terms of their relationships with one another, which is important in terms of building group cohesion.

Phipps also believes that understanding group dynamics leads to better choices of leadership style. With this in mind, he develops the group dynamics teaching model, which proposes that a combination of group and individual maturity, group dynamics, and the situation-at-hand, should determine how leadership decisions are made.⁷⁶ He believes that the maturity of a group is influenced positively or negatively by the internal dynamics of the group. Through his model, he hopes to encourage leaders to reinforce positive behaviors by intervention in appropriate situations. Examples of interventions to promote group maturity include: using team-building exercises, setting aside specific times for mutual feedback, and establishing an open communication climate.⁷⁷

Both Priest, Gass and Phipps emphasize that understanding the stages of group development is helpful because it better enables leaders to exercise the most effective style of leadership. While this is an important concept deserving of its place in discussions of group development, it nonetheless paints a leader-centric picture regarding the importance of learning about groups. This provides rich territory for exploration with the Leadership and Outdoor Education course. Rupert Brown’s book on *Group Processes*, used in the Leading Groups course, contains only one section on leadership in regards to group processes.⁷⁸ This simple example points to the fact that there are many important reasons to understand group development, in addition to how it affects leadership style. It is important that group members themselves understand group development so that they recognize the stages through which they are moving within their group. Realizing that it is normal to experience feelings of discomfort during the forming stage and conflict during the storming stage allows group members to use these and other typical group development experiences to their benefit. In other words, group members may be more likely to air their concerns during the storming stage, for example, if they are aware that this is a useful and necessary part of group development.

There a variety of well known stories about group interactions during outdoor adventure

experiences, including dramatic tales of groups surviving harsh weather conditions thanks to one another's support. Students in the course could analyze a true story of their choice in light of Tuckman and Jensen's model of group development and/or Phipps group dynamics teaching model. Is one model more effective or applicable than the other? Do groups interactions in crisis situations even fit into the models? Such questions will help students gain a deeper understanding for group processes.

The Transfer of Learning in Outdoor Education

"What is of greatest consequence in a person's life is not just the nature and extent of his or her experiences but what has been learned from them".

-N. Cousins, 1981⁷⁹

One of the most notable dimensions of outdoor education is its ability to promote change on an individual level. Countless testimonies from graduates of various outdoor adventure programs support this statement. Writes Gayleen M. Eilers, a patient in a multi-disciplinary treatment program for an eating disorder and depression that includes individual therapy, group, therapy, art therapy, and adventure therapy, "Adventure therapy took me out of the sterile hospital environment and replaced it with the open outdoors where feelings were accepted, the unexpected happened, and success was not measured by the outcome."⁸⁰ Yet as Cousins writes, what a person learns from her/his experiences, is more important than the nature of the experiences themselves. In other words, without processing an experience - thinking and reflecting on it - the experience is virtually meaningless in terms of educational value. In the above example, the time that Eilers spends outdoors is combined with meaningful reflection, as evidenced by this quote, "Following such experiences [on the high ropes course], facilitators then lead the discussion, processing each activity to promote self discovery among the participants about their skills, frustrations, limitations, trust in self and each other, and roles of leadership and followership."⁸¹ Here Eilers describes what Walter and Marks define as processing, which is, "...primarily a discussion of the completed activity [which]...provides detail, order, and meaning to the participants' experiences."⁸² While this component of outdoor programming may be considered "touchy-feely" by some, it is integral to their ability to bring about individual changes, as evidenced in the above example.

While the processing component of outdoor education programs is crucial, Gass, in his article on the "Transfer of Learning in Adventure Education" writes that the "true value or effectiveness of the program lies in how learning experiences during adventure activity will serve the learner in the future."⁸³ He refers to the effect that a particular experience has on future learning experiences as the 'transfer of learning' or simply "transfer."⁸⁴ In their study on the "Advisability of Outdoor Leadership Training," Keller and Olson question the claim that outdoor adventure leadership training programs lead to actual leadership development, writing, "Outdoor leadership training offered no significant improvement over traditional classroom techniques."⁸⁵ One of the explanations offered is that "students encountered problems with transferring knowledge acquired in one setting to another."⁸⁶ They go on to write that attempting to transfer knowledge from outdoor settings to the boardroom, for example, "illustrates a key problem inherent in outdoor leadership training."⁸⁷ Both Gass, Keller and Olson propose that the ability of an outdoor program to serve as a valuable learning experience and promote individual change, is contingent upon the ability of participants to transfer their learning from an outdoor setting to an indoor one. According to Keller and Olson, psychologists believe that learning should occur in settings as similar as possible to the settings in which the new skills will be applied.⁸⁸ If such a statement is true, it has grave implications for the ability of outdoor programs to teach about leadership, indeed to teach students any sort of skills that will later be applicable to their life experiences.

Gass addresses this critique of the transferability of skills learned in the outdoors by proposing three theories that explain how students can link elements from one learning environment to another. The theories range from specific to metaphorical in terms of applicability to future experiences. The first theory, specific transfer, refers to learners taking the habits and associations gained during a previous experience and applying them to a new experience in order to develop new skills. A person might learn about the hand skills of belaying in one experience and apply them to the hand skills of rappelling in another experience. Because these two experiences are relatively similar in nature, the learner uses the actual skills obtained in the first experience when embarking upon the second experience. Unfortunately, the majority of outdoor learning experiences will not apply as directly to future learning experiences as the above example. Corporate executives who participate in a ropes course in order to achieve group

trust and cohesion, will not be able to play on ropes whenever a problem arises in the workplace. Instead, the challenge for them is to apply lessons learned on the ropes course to real-life situations in the workplace. Gass addresses this challenge with the non-specific transfer theory, in which students transfer learning by generalizing common underlying principles in one experience and applying them to new learning situations. For example, a student who develops trust in an initiative game can transfer this trust to peers at school. In the final theory, metaphoric transfer, students must also generalize principles from one learning setting to another. This time, however, the principles are similar, analogous, or metaphorical. For example, a student could apply the principles learned in canoeing to work situations, as the following example illustrates: "There has been a certain jerkiness in the group. It's like the progress of a canoe. When the people on each side paddle in unison, with each person pulling his [her] weight, the canoe goes forward smoothly. If certain people slack, or if there is a lack of coordination, progress becomes jerky. The canoe veers 'from' side to side. Time and energy are wasted."⁸⁹ Gass believes that once educators select the proper transfer of learning theory from the three mentioned above, they can combine this with specific techniques designed to enhance the transfer of learning, such as designing learning objectives and student goals, encouraging experiential student-learning (rather than hampering student-learning by fostering dependence on the instructor), and developing focused processing techniques, such as debriefing.⁹⁰

While these theories sound well-and-good on paper, how feasible are they in real-life situations? In times of crisis in the workplace, are graduates of outdoor adventure programs *really* going to compare their situation to that of a canoe moving downstream? And even if they do, will such comparisons serve any practical function, other than providing pleasant metaphorical images? Such questions are central to the overall success of outdoor adventure programs. Indeed, if the concept of transferring knowledge between completely different environments and situations is not possible, as Keller and Olson suggest, do outdoor adventure programs serve any function other than encouraging fun in nature? Students in the course should be encouraged to struggle with such questions in relation to outdoor leadership and in relation to leadership education in general. Jepson's curriculum is based upon the premise that students will apply what they learn in the classroom to real world settings. The Service Learning course and Internship are attempts at this. Students must transfer skills gained in the classroom, such as

critical thinking or conflict resolution, to work situations that are often very different from classroom ones. If transferring knowledge between completely different environments is not possible, what implications does this have for educating students about leadership while in an academic setting? Is it possible to educate students for and about leadership when the leadership situations they eventually find themselves in differ greatly from the classroom and each another. In order to focus on these issues, students could reflect upon their internship experience or another work experience of their choice and how a specific skill learned in Jepson was or was not transferable. Did they unknowingly use one of Gass's theories of transfer?

When looking at the transferability of experiences in the outdoors to everyday settings, including the ability of participants to apply lessons learned in the outdoors to other settings, it is important to reflect on the role that empowerment plays within the process. Indeed the concept of empowerment is a central component of both leadership studies (in the Jepson School and beyond) *and* outdoor education. Empowerment is a buzz word in the field of leadership studies today. As a result, many organizations talk about empowering employees through various mediums, simply because it is the "in" thing to do. Joanne Ciulla takes issue with this in her article on bogus empowerment, writing, "in many organizations promises of power are bogus," or false.⁹¹ What, then, is real empowerment? Couto writes about empowerment as the confidence, desire, and ability of people to bring about real change.⁹² On a more abstract plane, Ciulla defines authentic empowerment as "a distinct set of moral understandings and commitments between leaders and followers, all based on honesty."⁹³ According to these conceptualizations, is "empowerment" as illustrated in outdoor education really that? Or, does it unintentionally fool students into thinking that they have real power, when in fact they are simply being encouraged to make decisions that will not lead to any sort of change? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to look at two elements of outdoor education programs: the active involvement of students in the decision-making process and the potential for change on an individual and/or group level.

According to Priest and Gass, in order to create "lasting and transferable changes," outdoor education programs must empower students.⁹⁴ Power must be placed in the hands of the students themselves. This can be done through "challenge by choice" and the "full value contract."⁹⁵ Challenge by choice increases student empowerment by emphasizing that the learner

(or follower), not the leader, controls a major part of the adventure experience, namely the level of risk, challenge, and competence. Full value contract means that participants must agree not to discount themselves before beginning an adventure experience. In other words, students cannot discount themselves before beginning an adventure because they are unmotivated, or for fear that they will fail.⁹⁶ According to these policies, students play an integral role in the decision-making part of successful outdoor programs. In fact, a large part of the success of such programs rests on the level of risk, challenge, competence, and motivation that students demonstrate. If students take up on the challenge, it can lead to “lasting and transferable change.”⁹⁷

In both outdoor education and leadership studies, there is a large emphasis on what followers, or students, gain from an experience on an individual level. Learning activities are structured so that students are often directly responsible for their own learning. The challenge by choice policy in outdoor education programs illustrates this principal, while the emphasis on group work and student-facilitated classroom experiences illustrates it in Jepson. The focus on empowerment in both fields leads to higher stakes: there are increased opportunities for learning, coupled with the increased potential for experiences of self-confidence or self-disappointment. In other words, no matter what the outcome, students who are made responsible for their own learning, if only in part, may learn more in a holistic sense (including their thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, and spiritual components) than students who are products of traditional classrooms experiences.⁹⁸ These increased opportunities for holistic learning can lead to increased feelings of self-confidence, as exemplified in another narrative by Gayleen Eilers, adventure therapy client:

*As I sat on the platform [atop a 40 foot pole], I thought about the next step. Jump off the platform and let the cable carry me as I sipped along, far, far down the cable. I felt scared of letting go, of giving up the security of the platform. Could I trust it would work? I had to take the risk. I jumped off the platform and flew along the line. What freedom! What relief to not worry about the outcome! I let the cable carry me, I enjoyed the journey. ... I took the leap of faith into the unknown. It was safe.*⁹⁹

When students are made responsible for their own learning, there is also increased potential for experiences of self-disappointment. For example, a student may realize that by refusing to take part in an outdoor initiative, she/he let down the rest of her/his group, thereby negatively affecting their experiences as well as her/his own.

Students in the course should examine the potential failures and successes of emphasizing

empowerment in fields such as outdoor education and leadership studies. Because of the emphasis on followership within the Jepson School, the concept of empowerment tends to become glamorized. Instead of discussing its pros *and* cons, when it may be beneficial and when it is not, students focus on its positive aspects. Because they are seniors, these students will soon take on leadership roles in places outside of Jepson, many of which may be unfamiliar with the practice of (though not necessarily theory of) empowerment. In order to explore this issue, students could examine leadership in outdoor education settings. Real-life examples, such as the one mentioned above, could serve as important learning tools for assessing some of the potential values and pitfalls of empowerment, as well as its likeliness to increase transferability of skills and ideas learned in the outdoors. Such a discussion should not be approached as an empowerment bashing session, but rather as an opportunity to explore both sides of an issue.

Diversity in Outdoor Education

“The 20th century has witnessed a progressive, if halting, movement toward equality and justice in America and elsewhere in the world. While adventure education is but a small piece of the social fabric, it has demonstrated its ability to play a significant role in this social evolution.”
-John Miles¹⁰⁰

While it is important to address the ways that outdoor education programs affect individuals, it is equally important to explore the ways that they affect groups of people. Groups in this case refers to the groups that society so often lumps people into depending on race, gender, and class. Within each of these “groups,” there are sub-groups with their own distinct set of issues in regards to outdoor education. Racial minorities, girls and women, and economically-disadvantaged students, are groups in need of special attention within the field of outdoor education because of the field’s white, male, class privileged roots.¹⁰¹ Although the field continues to move away from these roots, outdoor leaders must be especially “conscious of the how their methods can advance or impede social justice.”¹⁰²

In her article on the importance of race, gender, and class sensitivity in outdoor education, Warren writes about several traps that outdoor leaders can fall into by employing teaching methods without critically examining them. The “one-size fits all” method leads to the

incorrect belief that generic models of outdoor education work for everyone. For example, the popular stress challenge model (the more stress one is under, the better she/he will perform), may be inappropriate for female incest survivors and “at-risk” youth, because of instinctive, counterproductive responses these people may have to stressful situations.¹⁰³ The rote method refers to the problem of stagnation, the misconception that “tired and true” methods are often the most successful. Instead, facilitators should constantly be aware of the different qualities and needs of their groups and create made-to-order programs. Facilitators also must be aware of the social and cultural backgrounds of their participants. For example, students of color often seek out others who are like them in the initial stages of group development. A facilitator unfamiliar with this pattern may try to break up a group of students who appear too exclusive, when in reality their exclusivity is one stage of development, the forming stage.¹⁰⁴ In this stage, group members get to know one another and deal with feelings of discomfort. Understanding stages of group development and how they play out in real life situation such as the above, adds to an outdoor leader’s effectiveness. Finally, facilitators should consider group goals before choosing group experiences. In this way, they can avoid the trap of planning activities that may alienate students with different norms and expectations.¹⁰⁵

In another article on “Women’s Outdoor Adventures,” Warren explores myths specific to women in the outdoors.¹⁰⁶ For example, the “myth of accessibility” is centered on the misconception that outdoor experiences are widely available to women.¹⁰⁷ In reality, women’s economic inequality (women on average make less than men and therefore are less likely to spend their money on outdoor adventures) and social conditioning (deciding between the needs of their children, for example, and their desire for adventure) limit their access to the outdoors. By identifying such myths, Warren hopes to change outdoor adventure programs’ unresponsive nature to women’s needs in the wilderness. Although outdoor education programs do not intentionally ignore women’s needs, this unintentional ignorance nevertheless stops women from pursuing meaningful outdoor challenges at certain stages.¹⁰⁸ It is important to note that feminists such as Warren are neither advocating anti-male behavior, nor preferential treatment of women in the outdoors. Instead, they are reminding outdoor education leaders and participants that subtle yet damaging beliefs are immersed within many of the traditional principles and methods guiding outdoor education, beliefs that could negatively impact outdoor adventure experiences for

women. This issue is especially important in light of the fact that growing numbers of women are participating in the outdoors.¹⁰⁹

When referring to the increased participation of women in the outdoors, it is important to note that “women of color are under-represented in activities that take place in the outdoors, and we know little about their involvement or lack of involvement in experiential education circles.”¹¹⁰ There are a variety of factors that may create barriers and limit involvement and choices for women of color in relation to participation in outdoor programs, including lack of social support, limited family influence, and feelings of isolation, discomfort and fear.

Issues of race and gender are an important subset of outdoor education, just as they for leadership studies. The recent creation of Jepson’s Leadership in a Diverse Society is an acknowledgment of this. In addition, one of the four general curricular themes that must be addressed in each Jepson course is that of diversity. This is evidenced in various syllabi for Jepson courses. Issues of gender, for example, are explored in the Foundations of Leadership Studies course, as well as Leadership in International Contexts, Leadership in Social Movements, and Leading and Communicating to name a few. Increased recognition of the myriad ways that someone’s gender and skin color (as well as ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, religion and so on) undoubtedly affect her/his life experiences, is an integral component of successful leader/follower and group relationships. Without such recognition, it becomes easier to fall into unintentionally discriminatory patterns of behavior.

Community Service Trends within Outdoor Education

“Whatever one’s code of ethical or religious belief, the notion of service to others is an ideal common to all cultures and civilizations.”

–Terrence M.I. Egan¹¹¹

In his article on “Samaritan leadership,” Egan writes that “the outdoor experiential education movement is moving from a concept of self-development to community development.”¹¹² In order to prove his point, Egan draws on the work of Robert K. Greenleaf, known for his conceptualization of servant leadership. Greenleaf believes that “the purpose of education is to prepare students for life and leadership” and that education should be about

teaching values, one of which is that of service to others.¹¹³ Greenleaf's belief is central to the Jepson School's curriculum. Students are required to not only take the Service Learning course, but also read numerous texts and take part in numerous discussions on the subject. The importance of service to others is also taking on increased significance in the field of outdoor education. Egan credits Alec Dickinson, well-known for developing Voluntary Service Overseas (an organization that recruits high school graduates to spend a year in service to "developing" countries), with blending community service and experiential or adventure education.¹¹⁴

An important trend in relation to Dickinson's conceptualization is that outdoor experiential education programs are developing programs that include a service component. Outward Bound, for example, runs trips to Costa Rica that focus on community service.¹¹⁵ Trips such as these combine both outdoor experiential education and community service. In this way, trip participants have the opportunity to experience personal and group growth, while simultaneously serving the community. The same can be said of the Jepson curriculum. Through courses such as Service Learning and the Internship, students have valuable learning experiences *and* give back to the community.

It is important to note that the coupling of outdoor experiential education and community service is a recent trend within the field of outdoor education. Students in the Leadership and Outdoor Education course will be able to view the importance of this trend in light of what they have learned about servant leadership in their Jepson courses. How important is it that this trend continues within the field of outdoor education? What does the incorporation of servant leadership, in the form of community service, add to the field of outdoor leadership? In order to answer some of these questions, students could create an outdoor education experience that focuses on community service. This type of project could serve as a culmination of ideas gained from the course, and would need to include ideas (gained throughout the semester) that the field of leadership studies adds to traditional outdoor education.

Leadership and Outdoor Education Course Objectives

Since the purpose of this project is to propose an intellectual framework for the Leadership and Outdoor Education course, it would be helpful to propose learning objectives for the course based on the material discussed within this paper. Although links to the course are made throughout the paper, identifying specific learning objectives serves as a way to summarize the important concepts of the course. Course instructors can change specific objectives without harming the overall spirit of the course.

◆ **Pull together knowledge gained from the entire Jepson curriculum**

Because this is a senior capstone course, a primary focus is the student's ability to draw upon learning from the entire Jepson curriculum. Students in the course have completed all Jepson core courses, as well as the experiential components of the curriculum, and all of the required competency and context courses (or be in the process of doing so). In addition, students have attended various speakers brought to campus by the Jepson School. Students are expected to draw upon all of these learning experiences throughout the course. This is made easier by the fact that a majority of the subjects covered throughout the Jepson curriculum will be re-examined in regards to outdoor leadership. In this way, the course serves as fitting culmination of their three years in Jepson.

◆ **Critique a specific field of leadership (outdoor) through the academic lens of leadership studies**

One of the central premises of this course is that students must apply information learned in a variety of leadership studies courses to the field of outdoor leadership. In other words, they must view outdoor leadership through the lens of leadership studies. Scholars, texts, concepts and discussions from the students' previous five semesters in the Jepson School play a key role in their ability to successfully examine the field of outdoor leadership. Based on concepts learned in Jepson, what is missing from the field? What can insights from leadership studies add to the field? That fact that students must draw upon what they have learned throughout their time in Jepson and apply it to another field, makes this an ideal capstone experience. It will force them to reflect on what they have learned, how their ideas about leadership have changed, and how these can help one to view another field more fully.

◆ **Understand and critique the ethical and moral foundations of outdoor education**

Students should be familiar with the philosophical foundations upon which outdoor education is built. They should be able to draw comparisons between these philosophical concepts and those discussed in the Ethics and Leadership course. Discussions on ethics and morality play a central role within the field of leadership studies today. What could such discussions add to the field of outdoor leadership?

◆ **Gain an understanding of outdoor leadership through analysis of various definitions, conceptualizations, and theories**

Outdoor leadership scholars present very definite conceptualizations of leadership. How do these conceptualizations differ from ones discussed in Jepson? Is anything missing from them? Students should view these conceptualizations in terms of the interactional framework of leader, followers, and situation. Outdoor leadership scholars propose theories of leadership. How do these theories compare and contrast with ones proposed by leadership studies scholars? Students should compare specific theories within both fields. This will force them to draw on knowledge from the History and Theories of Leadership course in a substantive manner.

◆ **Explore the role of followers, followership, and empowerment within outdoor leadership**

Students will draw upon the work of leadership studies scholars such as Burns and Kelley in order to analyze the field of outdoor leadership in terms of followership. What can the ideas of such scholars add to the field? Why is it important to look at the roles of followers within outdoor education? Are there specific challenges that followers face within this field? How does outdoor education empower people? What are the pros and cons of such empowerment?

◆ **Understand the importance of group processes in outdoor education**

Drawing upon concepts studied in Leading Groups, students will examine the importance of groups within outdoor leadership. Why is it important to understand something about group development when studying or engaging in outdoor education?

◆ **Consider diverse needs of clientele within the field of leadership education**

Students should be familiar with the idea that outdoor leaders must always take into account the needs of their followers. A group of both African American women, for example, has different needs than a group of Caucasian teen-age boys. Students are expected to draw upon texts and discussions from throughout their Jepson career on the challenges that diversity in

leadership poses.

While individual course instructors can change some of the course objectives or add others without drastically altering the focus of the course, the first objective, that of pulling together knowledge gained during the Jepson education, must remain a focus of the course as long as it is a senior capstone experience. The fact that there is such overlap between the two fields means that integrating components from a variety of Jepson courses is relatively easy. However, students must critically apply these concepts to their study of outdoor education in such a way as to increase their understanding of both fields.

Conclusion

"You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again - so why bother in the first place? Just this; what is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees, one descends; one no longer sees, but one has seen."

—Rene Daumal¹¹⁶

For a field that is not currently represented in the Jepson School curriculum, there is much overlap between the concepts comprising leadership studies and outdoor. Both fields are grounded in experiential education and similar philosophical concepts, analyzed using similar leadership theories, focused on individual and group development, concerned with the challenges of diversity in leadership, and aware of the importance of servant leadership through community service. That these two fields share such similarities, while interesting, does not add significantly to either field. Yet when viewed in light of what they can add to each other, the mutual exploration of outdoor education and leadership studies takes on academic significance worthy of study within the Jepson School. The intellectual framework for the Leadership in Outdoor Education course proposed in this paper, provides a tangible way for Jepson to include this increasingly-important topic in its conversations on leadership.

While this paper and resulting course focus more specifically on how insights from leadership studies can lead to a greater understanding of outdoor education, starting a conversation on outdoor education will also benefit the Jepson School, specifically the students within it. Because students in the course are seniors, they will be able to view outdoor education

in light of insights gained throughout their entire Jepson career. In this sense, the course serves as an ideal culmination of their leadership studies education, as it will enable them to apply insights from the core courses, including Service Learning, as well as over-riding themes discussed within Jepson, such as followership and servant leadership. One way to view the course is as a semester-long case study. The subject of the study is outdoor education, and students are required to analyze it in light of what they have learned through their leadership studies education.

Students in the Leadership and Outdoor Education course will also gain exposure to an up-and-coming field that relates directly to their major. Although the course revolves around academic exploration of the field of outdoor education, it is possible that some students may develop an interest and/or passion for the field as a result. Because they are seniors, students may feel inspired to pursue this interest after graduation. While this course is not meant to push students down a specific career path, it could provide an additional outlet for seniors to explore in regards to life after college, one that is directly related to their major.

The inclusion of outdoor education into the Jepson curriculum also has potential benefits for the school itself. The Jepson School could establish a formal partnership with a local outdoor adventure organization, such as Challenge Discovery or Peak Experiences. Together the two could explore ways to add to each other's development. The Leadership in Outdoor Education course would be an ideal group to start this partnership. Conversing with people from an actual outdoor adventure program would add to the students' overall understanding of the field, as well as encourage dialogue about what an academic leadership studies perspective can add to outdoor education. Jepson could further the relationship with an outdoor adventure organization by offering its students opportunities to attend an outdoor adventure program. Each fall, for example, the new class of Jepson majors could attend a day-long outdoor adventure experience (such as the one provided by Challenge Discovery for the Leading Groups class) in order to introduce the students to one another in an informal, fun, yet educational setting.

Another opportunity for collaboration is for the students in the Leadership and Outdoor Education course to create an outdoor education experience, in conjunction with the outdoor adventure organization, for their fellow seniors. Such an experience would serve as a practical way for students to use what they have learned in the course, as well as serve as a final group experience for the senior class. Before embarking upon either of these plans, it is first necessary

for the Jepson School to discuss funding. The Jepson School should not shy away from such opportunities because of financial concerns. Depending on what the school has to offer their outdoor adventure program “partner,” it might be possible to reduce some costs.

While this exploration of outdoor education and leadership studies has the potential to add significantly to the Jepson School in some very tangible ways, it also contributes to the overall field of leadership studies by exemplifying the field’s interdisciplinary nature. If outdoor education, a topic that has received little attention to date in the field of leadership studies, relates so well to the field, there are undoubtedly countless other topics that could benefit from a leadership studies analysis. Leadership studies is truly an interdisciplinary field and Jepson’s leadership studies major is truly an interdisciplinary major. The more fields that leadership studies scholars and students are able to explore in light of leadership studies, the stronger the discipline of leadership studies will become. In addition, leadership studies insights will contribute positively to other fields, as exemplified in this project, thus furthering those fields as well.

In his article on the “The Essence of Adventure,” Quinn writes that humans yearn for adventure because they are, “inevitably drawn back to the desire for the hidden, the inexplicable human urge to experience that which is just out of range of prior background, to supplement insight with experience previously unknown.”¹⁷ This exploration of outdoor education in light of the academic discipline of leadership studies illustrates such an adventure. It strives to answer the question: How do “insights” from leadership studies contribute to “previously unknown” (or unexplored) concepts of outdoor education? Although leadership studies and outdoor education share many similarities, this project represents the first substantive attempt to explore the fields together, in light of how they can benefit one another. It provides an introduction to the simultaneous exploration of both fields, as well as a framework for further study in the form of the Leadership and Outdoor Education course. Whether or not the adventure continues depends on the willingness of members of the Jepson School community to continue the journey.

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