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Sustainable Adventure? The Necessary "Transitioning" of Outdoor Adventure Education

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Abstract: I was slow in coming to see the desperate need of sustainability education, in part because of a missed opportunity in my field of outdoor adventure education (OAE). Although a burgeoning set of scholars agree that OAE is strategically placed to educate for sustainability, little change within our discipline has occurred. To encourage the transition, this paper has four central aims. First, I contextualize the implications at stake by summarizing recent scientific predictions around climate change. Second, I differentiate sustainable OAE into the *sustainability of* OAE (e.g., its practices, footprint size, etc.) and OAE *for sustainability* (e.g., curricula that promotes education about sustainability), noting that despite long-standing petitions to address both, progress has been made in neither. Third, I celebrate, with others, the inherent potential that OAE has to promote sustainability through its educating in natural environs, within living/learning communities, which utilize physical/sensory, affective and intellectual ways of knowing that inspire critical impulses. Fourth, I outline the central changes that need to occur in order to create sustainable OAE. The foremost change needed is for OAE programs to curricularly commit to promoting a sustainability worldview, including values, knowledge, dispositions, and agency related to environmental, social, and economic justice. However, change of this depth will require a revision of OAE course offerings that allow for multiple and prolonged participant engagement over time. Such engagement, then, necessitates that OAE shift its emphasis from remote and sublime landscapes, to programs that not only connect participants to the places in which they reside, but cultivate a care and affection for them. This appreciation can be created through a combination of adventurous learning and microadventures. In sum, "local landscapes, far more often, as a way of life" encapsulate the changes OAE might make in contribution to the global need of sustainability.

Keywords: outdoor education, adventure education, environmental education, sustainability education, place-based education, ethics

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> "If it is accepted that planetary systems are in crisis, then this crisis should be the unequivocal focus for educators." (Potter in Straker et al., 2017, p. 106).

INTRODUCTION

Coming to see the desperate need for sustainability education has taken me far too long. A missed opportunity within outdoor adventure education (OAE), the discipline in which I teach and practice, is a primary reason for this delay. For, the connection between OAE and issues of sustainability ought to be clear and direct. This paper is an effort to articulate this connection and propose how OAE might "transition" towards sustainable practice. I achieve this aim through a theoretical and conceptual inquiry that might best be described as action research (see McNiff, 2017, pp. 17–19) and autoethnography (see Stacy, Tony, and Carolyn, 2016, p. 22). Action research because the findings are informed by curricular changes and "experiments" made within my practice as a professor of OAE. Autoethnography because the theoretical & philosophical underpinnings of the argument evolved in an effort to "write myself" to clarity and articulate a morally consistent mission for outdoor adventure educators teaching in this time of socio-ecological crisis. By way of these methodological tools, I wish to make four central points, which create the macrostructure of the paper: the planet is in peril; current OAE models are largely unsustainable; OAE is strategically poised to become a means for sustainability education; but the path towards sustainability will require philosophical, pedagogical, curricular and logistical changes within OAE practice.

Before advancing further, however, I must clarify my audience. In the sea of terms (e.g., adventure education, outdoor education, environmental education,) used to describe education that occurs in the out-of-doors, Ewert and Sibthorp (2014, pp. 5–6), in *Outdoor Adventure Education: Foundations, Theory, and Research,* highlight the distinctives most often associated with OAE: risk; uncertain outcomes; flow states; wholistic engagement; physical skills; inter/intrapersonal relationships; a journey; and wild settings. Programs utilizing some form of OAE are broad and varied including: Scouts, summer camps, college orientation programs, academic majors, and expeditionary organizations like Outdoor Bound and NOLS (Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014, p. 154). While this paper targets OAE[1] as an audience, its content will be useful to its disciplinary relatives.

A PLANET IN PERIL

That we are in a planet-wide socio-environmental crisis hardly needs defending, thus I will briefly mention two publications, both heavily researched, to convey our imminent danger. The first is the UN's Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change's 2018 report (IPCC, 2018), which comprised nearly three years of work by 130 scholars who synthesized over 6,000 scientific references. The report confirms that anthropogenic activity has already raised the global

temperature by 1°C, but also predicts that if current activity continues, an increase to 1.5°C between 2030–2052 is likely. While the increase may seem small, the forecasted consequences for this difference are sobering. In sum, the flooding, fires, storms and desertification that already seem so threatening, are predicted to soon become far worse. The report continues, warning that risks to health, livelihoods, food security, water supply, and economic growth are all projected to increase.

The second source I employ to convey the ecological crises we currently face is an editorial published in Oxford's *Bioscience.* Authors Ripple, Wolf, Newsome, Barnard, and Moomaw (2020) state boldly:

> **Scientists have a moral obligation** to clearly warn humanity of any catastrophic threat and to "tell it like it is." On the basis of this obligation and the graphical indicators presented below, we declare, with more than 11,000 scientist signatories from around the world, clearly and unequivocally that planet Earth is facing a climate emergency (emphasis in original) (p. 8).

Thousands of additional scientists have signed the document post-publication. Using a series of "graphical vital signs" to show changes in climate over the last 40 years as well as changes in human-activities that can cause increased greenhouse gases (GHG), the scientists conclude that the climate crisis "is closely linked to excessive consumption of the wealthy lifestyle" (Ripple *et al*., 2020, p. 8). The authors note that predictions are more imminent and severe than most scientists anticipated. Of particular concern are the irreversible tipping points that trigger natural reinforcing feedback loops (e.g. raising marine temperatures and the increasing devastation of tropical hurricanes), which can lead to catastrophes well beyond our control (p. 9).

As professor Kimberley Nicholas is credited for writing on a protest sign (see www.350.org/science): 1) it's warming; 2) it's us; 3) we're sure; 4) it's bad; but, 5) we can fix it. Regarding this fifth point, both of these cited publications make similar recommendations for a path forward. The IPCC's recommendations center on reducing GHG emissions through projects that address the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals (www.un.org). Ripple *et al.* (2020) also recommend radical reductions in carbon-based energy, but additionally suggest: targeting shorter-lived pollutants like methane and soot; protecting and restoring ecosystems for CO2 sequestration; eating a largely plant-based diet; a reduction in extractive resource management; and population control (p. 11).

Given the magnitude of the crises, their ubiquitous articulation in circles of research and culture, one might expect outdoor adventure educators to be scrambling to address this "wicked" problem. Yet, while a burgeoning sustainability literature exists within OAE, it pales in size to the scale of the problem.

Since "sustainability" is a complex and multi-faceted concept, it is important to identify what the term represents for the purpose of this paper. While sustainability certainly includes the Brundtland Report's "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of

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future generations to meet their own needs" (World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987, p. 42), it points to far more. Beyond meeting the base needs (e.g. food, water, shelter) of all, sustainability strives to meet the far broader goals of flourishing with regard to health, equality, education, meaningful employment, and adequate leisure. These diverse aims can be grouped within three broad domains, conceptualized as nested concentric circles, where the environment supports societies and economic tools and resources make these societies possible.

This brief section outlined the scale of the socio-environmental crises we've created and highlighted the need for global sustainability. As Straker, Potter, and Irwin (2017, p. 106) admonish, all educators should inquire how best to serve society by asking what challenges society is most vulnerably facing. "If it is accepted that planetary systems are in crisis, then this crisis should be the unequivocal focus for educators." (Straker *et al.,* 2017, p. 106). Thus, *sustainable* OAE programs would necessarily address programmatic issues related to economic, social justice, and environmental concerns. However, as the next section will indicate, OAE has been slow to engage these needs.

THE UNSUSTAINABILITY OF THE OAE MODEL

For nearly three decades a minority of outdoor adventure educators have petitioned the discipline to transition towards sustainable practice and curricula (Hill, 2012, p. 15). Ironically, Hill (2012; 2013), writing from Tasmania, complains of the slowness of New Zealand and Australia to adopt a sustainability focus, while Canadian scholar Tom Potter (Straker, Potter and Irwin, 2017, p. 103) celebrates these countries for challenging the dominant discourse in outdoor education, noting that Canadian provinces and territories have only *begun* to discuss such matters. What is slowing this transition? While the final section of this paper will address this question directly, suffice it here to say that OAE's traditional preference for adventure, risk, challenge, and personal development, although admirable in their own right, remain distant, and as facilitated, largely irrelevant to educating for sustainability (see Cachelin, Rose, Dustin, & Shooter, 2011, p. 2; Hill, 2012, pp. 18–19). Unfortunately, despite this burgeoning sustainability and OAE literature, Straker *et al.* (2017, pp. 103–104) claim that the notion remains controversial within the field.

A point of clarification is necessary here. "sustainable OAE" can be taken to mean at least two separate things. First, it can refer to the sustainability of OAE programs (e.g. the size of their carbon footprint): the *sustainability of* OAE. Second, the term can mean OAE that promotes educating for sustainability: OAE *for sustainability*. I am arguing here that sustainable OAE ought to address both these forms.

For instance, several papers list program-relevant areas in which *sustainability of* practices must be scrutinized: transportation to and from sites; base materials and construction processes used to produce and retire the gear we employ; the sourcing, nutritional profile, and menu planning of

food; waste management cycles; etc. (see Cachelin *et al*., 2011, p. 9; Hill, 2012, p. 21; O'Connell *et al.*, 2005, p. 83). Similarly, VanHorn (2007) petitions OAE programs to conduct sustainability assessments that evaluate programmatic use of gear, food, and location. Further sustainability-sensitive recommendations can be found in the expedition planning chapter of Martin, Breunig, Wagstaff, and Goldenberg (2017, pp. 313–337).

Regarding *for sustainability* practices, Hill (2012, p. 25) fears that many outdoor educators fall into the trap of thinking they are addressing issues of sustainability, simply because they're offering outdoor experiences and emphasizing low-impact practices (e.g. Leave No Trace). This fear seems valid as even within the handful of articles I found addressing OAE and sustainability, few curricular specifics were offered. What appears to be needed is a comprehensive approach to sustainability education that targets the requisite values, knowledge, dispositions, and agency (what Nolet (2016, pp. 61–81) calls a "sustainability worldview," discussed later) needed for participants to continue their journey towards sustainable living post-program. Some curricular elements of this approach are outlined in the fourth section of this paper.

This short section bemoans OAE's slowness in adopting a sustainability focus. Suggestions from the literature are made regarding ways in which OAE programs might analyze the *sustainability of* their organizations. By contrast, the means through which OAE programs might educate *for sustainability* are largely absent in the literature, but will be addressed in the final section of the paper. When one considers the potential of OAE to address these two senses of sustainability, discussed next, its near silence on the matter is both surprising and troublesome.

THE POTENTIAL OF SUSTAINABLE OAE

This slowness and resistance to adopt sustainable practices and curricula is tragic given the seemingly organic potential of OAE to address these values. Hill (2013, p. 19; see also 2012, pp. 15–16) claims that since OAE facilitates experiences in natural spaces, it is an obvious means of connecting people to a "place," and thereby addressing sustainability within their programs. Place-based educator, David Sobel (2008), believes that such contact with a place is an essential waypoint on a path to advocacy: being amongst trees, "talking to trees and hiding in trees precedes saving trees" (p. 19). Since outdoor learning offers physical/sensory, intellectual and affective ways of knowing the planet (Beames, Higgins, & Nicol, 2012, p. 32), Cachelin *et al.* (2011) believe outdoor educators "have unique opportunities to make sustainability comprehensive, accessible, and relevant" (p. 1). For similar reasons, Wattchow & Brown (2011), in *A Pedagogy of Place: Outdoor Education for a Changing World,* claim that outdoor educators are strategically placed to help transition the populace to the inevitable changes we must make as a result of the environmental challenges we've created. For example, Cachelin *et al.* (2011) suggest that outdoor programs heighten students' awareness of "what they eat, what they don't eat, what and where they excrete, what they carry, and where they sleep" (p. 17). They continue, stating that this "visceral awareness provides an experiential lesson in energy flows and material cycles in ways that indoor classrooms often cannot" (p. 17). O'Connell *et al.* (2005) summarize

these sentiments succinctly: "it has been well documented in the literature that personal experiences in natural places are often associated with environmental sensitivity and responsible environmental action" (p. 86).

While the above reasons celebrate the embodied learning that can transpire through OAE's embeddedness in the natural world, OAE similarly stirs cognitive rumination on one's place within the planet. For example, outdoor adventures have been heralded as experiences that promote reflection and leave participants more open to change. By way of illustration, Rawles (2013, p. 157) observes how the simple rhythms of outdoor travel and living challenge the excesses of our lives "back home." Comparably, Drasdo (1998), a philosopher and long-term OAE practitioner, routinely sees participants discover that the natural world is a "theatre for contemplation," which "inspires critical impulses (stemming from the individual's sense of conflict with society and provoking in him [*sic*] the idea that the structure of society might be improved)" (p. 18). He continues, stating that wild landscapes create "a sanctuary or a neutral country from which we can look back at the state and society" and "ourselves" more objectively (p. 18). These authors seem to be describing what Andrews (1999), drawing on the work of Victor Turner, calls the liminal space of expeditionary travel. Referencing the effects of these peregrinations, Andrews (1999) asserts that the result is often "noticeably altered behaviours and dispositions" towards "the latter part of the expedition and in the participants' lives when they return to their regular surroundings" (p. 36). I resonate with these scholars as my own experience with students reveals the power of self-propelled outdoor journeys as a means to value clarification and conscientious living. In short, the critical and contemplative space created through OAE programming provides a fertile environment for sustainability education.

Remembering the planetary crises we've created and Straker *et al's* (2017, p. 106) admonition that these crises "should be the unequivocal focus for" outdoor educators, this section celebrates the potential of OAE to educate for sustainability. As the previous section alluded, however, the means of such education have yet to be articulated within OAE. The next section therefore offers some of the means necessary to providing sustainable OAE.

"TRANSITIONING" TO SUSTAINABLE OAE

This longer section identifies the central changes that need to occur in order to create sustainable OAE (i.e. the *sustainability of* OAE and an OAE *for sustainability*). The changes are varied (philosophical, curricular, logistical, pedagogical), but interrelated. With the exception of the first subsection, Philosophy and Ethics, the suggestions here are ordered by intuitive argument and are not placed to imply priority or a tiered importance.

A Sustainability Worldview: Philosophy and Ethics in OAE Curricula

The ancients used a phrase, *actio sequitur esse* (action follows being) to emphasize the importance of wrestling with the imponderable questions of existence: where we are, how we came to be here, and why we're here. For, it is the answers to (or more likely thoughtful

speculation on) these questions that, to a large degree, determines how we believe we ought to live. Not taking time to contemplate these questions risks others (e.g. culture and society) supplying answers for us (e.g. wealth, security, prestige).

While it is beyond the scope of most OAE programs to offer answers to these existential questions, the point is well made. Too many efforts to educate for sustainability focus on techniques (*actio*) before (if at all) providing a philosophical structure (*esse*) that supports such action (Hill, 2012, p. 19). This regrettable reversal is compounded by a tendency within experiential education, the philosophy of education that undergirds OAE programming, to reduce education done experientially to bodily, hands-on learning by doing, rather than the far broader vision that education, *qua* education, has traditionally embodied. Namely, addressing issues of ontological, epistemological, and ethical pertinence (Roberts, 2012, pp. 4–8). Thus, *educating* for sustainability must necessarily involve a philosophical structure to support responsible action.

Nolet's (2016) insistence on the educational primacy of cultivating a "sustainability worldview" addresses the aforementioned philosophical need. Pedagogically, the educational promotion of a sustainability worldview works to provide a "positive, life affirming, future oriented, and solutions focused" approach (Nolet, 2016, p. 63). Nolet (2016) describes a sustainability worldview as "a holistic phenomenon that involves a combination of values, knowledge, dispositions, and agency" (p. 64), each of which I will discuss in turn. Through this discussion, I am inviting OAE programs to consider how they could promote sustainability-based values, knowledge, dispositions, and agency through their curricular offerings.

Values

Our values indicate what is important to us, and in this capacity inform our decision making. Aristotle (Trans., 1999) explains this mechanism, in his book-length treatise on character ethics, where he describes the process by which virtue, and thus character, is developed. Germane to the discussion here, the process begins with wishing, wanting, and desiring good ends (see Book III, Chapter 4). What we value and desire directly affect how we morally perceive the circumstances we experience. For example, if we wish to decrease our carbon imprint, we will perceive circumstances relevant to this desire as morally salient (e.g. when rationing for an expedition) and more consciously deliberate the virtuous course of action.

Since values are personal and often linked to controversial sources such as religious or spiritual beliefs, educators are often loath to engage them. To be clear, I am not advocating for an indoctrinatory process here. I am recommending that educators respectfully facilitate reflective discussion that aids students in clarifying their current values, examining the sources of those values, and assessing the values' relevance to the scientifically uncontroversial need for sustainable living (Paulus, 2016, p. 120). As noted above in the "Potential of Sustainable OAE" section, OAE seems particularly well-suited to this critical introspection.

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Regarding a sustainability related values source, Nolet (2016, pp. 64–65) suggests starting with the *Earth Charter* (www.earthcharter.org), a written work, created through multi-national representation, and intended for use as "an ethical framework for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century" (The Charter, n.d.). Central values within this document include: respecting life in all its diversity; understanding life as occurring within communities that need compassion, care and love for their survival; eradicating poverty; affirming gender equality; and promoting a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.

OAE instructors might ask how such values could be seamlessly offered for consideration within their programs. Of course, values don't occur in a vacuum, and the second domain of the sustainability worldview, knowledge, will help to inform a set of values consistent with the goals of sustainable living.

Knowledge

To ensure that the above sustainable values are well-substantiated, they must be contextualized by facts, concepts, and principles. Orr (2004, p. 14) provides a helpful list including: the laws of thermodynamics; basic principles of ecology; carrying capacity; appropriate scale; steady-state economics; and environmental ethics. In the intervening time since Orr wrote, we might include the provocative notion of the Anthropocene, and the anthropogenically caused great acceleration (e.g. population growth; income disparity; atmospheric GHG; damming of rivers; flooding events; water use; fertilizer consumption; fishery depletion; extinction rates; loss of rain forest; international tourism). Other important concepts include ecological thresholds and the planetary boundaries we've set to maintain conservatively safe standards that would prevent us from crossing said thresholds.

In response to the above paragraph, one might well ask is (mere) knowledge enough? The conundrum of *knowing* what needs to be done but *doing otherwise* is a problem that has troubled thinkers since the time of Socrates (Plato, Tran., 1977, *Protagoras* 352–358). An answer may be that not all knowledge motivates equally. Meyer and Land (2006, pp. 3–18) coined the term "threshold concepts" to signify concepts that can lead to profound changes of understanding, changes that seemingly require the learner to respond. Threshold concepts are irreversible in that once learned they are difficult to forget. They are also transformative, because once encountered, a threshold concept fundamentally changes one's thinking on the subject. Lastly, they are integrative since they reveal the interrelated structure of life on earth.

No doubt many of the concepts and principles mentioned above have acted as threshold concepts for myself and others. While the degree of detail delivered will differ depending on the age group of the population an OAE program is serving, sustainably minded organizations will begin to integrate these concepts into their general curricula.

Despite its importance, knowledge, to answer Socrates' question, is not enough, and the latter two domains of the sustainability worldview focus on the application of this knowledge.

Dispositions

Dispositions are established character traits where we've cultivated the discipline to act consistently with our reason within a specific domain of behaviour or thinking (e.g. practicing self-restraint). For Aristotle, our dispositions represent our established virtues (II 6§15), and our character is the sum of our virtues and vices *over a lifetime* (I 10§11). From an Aristotelian perspective, cultivating virtue(s) is thus a prolonged and assiduous process, and not likely to occur within the brief programming typical of most OAE offerings (see Author (in press) for a detailed account of these claims). However, programs can contribute to sustainability-relevant dispositions within their participants by promoting Aristotelian conditions of virtue: reflection, providing opportunities for moral practice, and modelling through community how we might share in a moral life together (Sherman, 1991).

Regarding what virtues/dispositions sustainable OAE programs might wish to emphasize, Throop (2016) has suggested the following "virtue clusters": frugality virtues (e.g. thrift, efficiency, waste aversion); adaptive virtues (e.g. flexibility, courage, hopefulness, creativity, self-control, self-sacrifice; and generosity); humility virtues (e.g. gratitude, respect, open-mindedness, curiosity); and collaborative virtues (e.g. listening, sensitivity, compromise, tolerance, graciousness, care, and empathy).

Thus, sustainable OAE programs will look to promote dispositions relevant to sustainable living. Once chosen, these virtues can be emphasized by facilitating reflection on them, offering opportunities to practice them, and by modelling them within the learning community. In this way, participants are encouraged to use their agency to actively promote the dispositions within themselves both during and after the program.

Agency

Agency, Nolet's (2016) fourth component of a sustainability worldview, "refers to an individual's ability to make choices and to act effectively so as to bring about a desired effect" (p. 66). This description will remind educators of Bandura's (1977) notion of self-efficacy, a belief in one's capacity to produce a desired result. Bandura (1977) claimed that self-efficacy is developed through learning experiences that are met with success, the positive social modeling of others' success, encouragement through affirming social persuasion, and the cultivation of resilience made more likely through optimal physical and emotional well-being.

Like dispositions above, agency, expressed through self-efficacy, requires a prolonged period for its development. Cultivating agency for sustainability will require a prolonged relationship with a participant. Time enough, as Bandura's model suggests: to shepherd the student through a variety of successful projects (e.g. initiating a home compost system or volunteering afterschool as an ESL tutor for recent immigrants); to mentor participants through the "argument" of living one's sustainable life in front of them; to be a long-term presence within participants' lives,

affirming their sustainable efforts, supporting them in their failures, and encouraging them to try again; and to model and help them create physically and emotionally sustainable patterns for living.

Although OAE programs can certainly contribute to participants' efficacy, the brevity typical of most outdoor courses limits their potential for lasting impact (Brown, 2010). This problem of program duration calls into question the one-off nature of most OAE offerings. For OAE to achieve its potential in educating for sustainability, a significant structural re-envisioning must occur.

Time for Change

Citing Bandura's social learning theory (see above), Prince (2017) understands mentoring and role modelling as educationally essential to the adoption of sustainable thinking and behavior. Being a role model inspires others to live thusly (Prince, 2017, pp. 162–163). Such participant impact, however, will require "an extended, long-lasting and shared relationship with support, and qualities such as empathy, confidence, patience, and tolerance" (Prince 2017 p. 163). To put it plainly, sustainable human behavior is largely transmitted through prolonged relationships with role models, which precludes the vast majority of one-off OAE programming. The powerful but limited and often short-lived influence of OAE programs has been a recognized problem at least since Hahn, the co-founder of Outward Bound, raised it in 1960 (p. 10).

The yet to be solved challenge, then, is to find means of offering OAE in a prolonged format. Urban Outward Bound centers (e.g. New York, Omaha, Philadelphia, Toronto, Vancouver) hold potential, but many of the programs appear short in duration. Of greater promise is the insinuation of outdoor education into K–12 curriculum in multiple countries: Australia, New Zealand, the UK, and many provinces in Canada. Here, formal educators could have exposure to students over multiple year-length periods, while facilitating the sustainable OAE described within this paper. This change would require a combination of traditional teachers becoming trained in sustainable OAE and OAE working its way into our public school systems—both challenging prospects, but essential, in my estimation, if OAE wishes to make lasting sustainable change.

I've used the word "transition" intentionally within the title of the paper (and this section). For, what is needed, if we are to survive our current crises, is a transition to more sustainable ways of living. The Transition Network (www.transitionnetwork.org) is an organization providing resources to help communities take on these global crises by starting at a local level and addressing the economic, social, and environmental problems they face. This paper affirms the ways that OAE might contribute to this transition towards a just and resilient community. However, as noted earlier, while many scholars celebrate OAE's *potential* to promote a transition to sustainable living, its preference to educate in remote and sublime landscapes pulls

participants from their localities and distances the programs' relevance to "life after the expedition."

From Remote and Sublime to Locally Place-based

The Romantic movement's reverence for the sublime has had an unrecognized, but profound, influence on OAE's site location preferences (Roberts, 2018, pp. 21–22). The eighteenth century marked a shift towards more positive conceptions of wilderness (Nash, 2001, pp. 45–47). Natural settings were thought to be closer to God's original creation, and therefore to be a means to transcendence and moral purity. As a result, strong partiality was given to remote wilderness, awe-inspiring landscapes, and areas "untrammelled" by humans. Since these locations were often far afield from population centers, the notion of a journey became central to the idea of transformation (Roberts 2018, p. 23). Much of OAE, and the expeditioning tradition in particular, have, it would seem unknowingly, accepted these tenets of the Romantic movement. My purpose here is not to affirm or refute the proclivities of the Romantic Movement's perception of wilderness (for others who have done so, see Cronon, 1996; Roberts, 2012, pp. 27–47, 2018), but to point out the implications that come with an adoption of its values.

Most obviously, as Rawles (2013) observes in a chapter addressing outdoor travel and climate change, our ecological crisis raises "difficult questions for all modern societies in which adventure is valued" (p. 147). For, from a safe and equitable usage per person perspective, one single five-hour flight (e.g. across the US, Canada, or the Atlantic) uses one's annual allotment of carbon (Rawles, 2013, p. 148). Therefore, when one thinks of OAE's predilection for remote locations, one realizes the amount of carbon spent. Taking only one example, The National Outdoor Leadership School boasts of educating 320 000 students, primarily in wilderness areas, between 1995 and 2018 (NOLS, 2018). To support this point, I once had a student, presenting on "Urban OAE," juxtapose major population centers and prominent OAE program headquarters on a map to highlight the travel required to access these locations. Given the travel required for most of us to access remote and sublime landscapes, should not OAE begin transitioning more of its practice to local environs?

More perniciously, though, by emphasizing the remote over the local, I fear that OAE has unintentionally communicated that wildness, inspiration, and beauty—all fundamental human needs—cannot be found where one lives. Too often, we are teaching that adventure requires remote Wilderness and that beauty is a scarce commodity concentrated in protected lands. Worse, by narrowly associating beauty with the sublime, we have skewed students' aesthetic bias in ways that make it difficult to appreciate the less dramatic, but easily found, beauty where we live.

What appears to be needed is an adoption of "slow pedagogy" (Payne & Wattchow, 2008), an approach to educating that intentionally connects students to a place, which can lead to a relationship with, even love for, their locality (Hill, 2012, p. 28). Gruenewald and Smith (2008)

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corroborate these authors, affirming that local place-based models can be a powerful means to promote sustainable knowledge, skills and dispositions. For an example of how an outdoor educator might approach this form of close-to-home education, see Wattchow and Brown's (2011, pp. 123–143) book, *A pedagogy of place: Outdoor education for a changing world*.

Hopefully, the reader sees how these solutions are beginning to overlap. By transitioning OAE programs to more local landscapes, these OAE programs become a more lasting part of the communities they serve. This prolonged commitment allows for deeper, longer-lasting participant relationships that foster the dispositions, self-efficacy and agency necessary to bring about sustainable change.

I anticipate outdoor *adventure* educators resisting this model, however. They might complain, "This sounds more like Environmental Education!" Or, "Where's the adventure piece?" The next section addresses these fair questions.

(Micro) Adventure of a Different Kind

Rawles (2013, pp. 149–151) rhetorically asks if climate change sounds the death knell of adventurous activity, replying that it depends how you define adventure. Beames and Brown (2016, pp. 48–49) challenge the way we have defined adventure within OAE. They believe we have confused adventure with physical risk. Comparably, Bell (2017), who celebrates the aims of traditional OAE (e.g. physical strength, discipline, service, equality, the moral good), laments that this preoccupation with risk-taking activities has resulted in a "self-reflexive, neoliberal, individualised adventurer …. willing to collude in the calculation of consequences … in which risk-taking is consumed for status" (pp. 1–2). While acknowledging that this risk-oriented approach to OAE has its own positive outcomes, Hill (2012, p. 19) is concerned that they are distant to the purposes and needs of educating for sustainability.

In lieu of physical risk, Beames and Brown (2016) propose meeting the far deeper needs of the participant through *Adventurous Learning* that stresses: authenticity, agency, uncertainty and mastery. They argue that these four traits lend themselves to place-based education, and thus I infer, provide a means of *adventurous* education for sustainability.

Authentic education has strong relevance to the real world, and immediately proves itself useful to everyday life (Beames & Brown, 2016, p. 51). Education with *agency* allows a learner to self-determine their actions based on their own intrinsic interests (p. 64). *Uncertainty* in education pushes against prescriptive learning. We must examine real problems whose solutions are not obvious, the solving of which will require genuine application of the skills and knowledge attained (pp. 74–76). *Mastery* through education is developed by repeated opportunities to practice and apply one's learning. If taught locally, one can easily imagine a variety of sustainability projects that meet these criteria and contribute to the transitioning of a community: a school energy/waste audit; lobbying one's municipal government for greater protective environmental policies; addressing obesity and diabetes epidemics within area schools via

bicycle activism, etc.. Jensen and Schnack (1997) arrive at similar conclusions noting that student-directed learning aimed at specific ecological problems, what they call "action competence," leads to a greater likelihood for long-term positive environmental behavior. In sum, activist-oriented education (see Gallagher and Myers (2016) for a clear approach to political engagement and Kahn (2010) for a more radical pedagogical proposal) is *adventurous* education, and can be used to transition local communities towards more sustainable ends.

"But what of the journey?," resistant outdoor *adventure* educators might ask. Can sustainability-focused, outdoor adventure educators committed to local environs still experience an expedition? Like adventure, it depends on how you define an expedition. Humphrey's (2014) has advanced the idea of microadventures: an adventure taken close to home, typically for a short duration. If it seems a stretch to find adventure frequently near home, we would do well to remember Thoreau (1987, pp. 13–14) who claimed a harmony between the land in a 10-mile radius around one's home and a life expectancy of some 70 years—one could never quite explore it fully. By the same token, Waterman & Waterman (1993, pp. 37–38) petition that wildness is not a species of size, and that unoccupied parcels can be found with ubiquity if one steps off the trail. Similarly, they propose that wildness can be experienced by travelling self-propelled under trying weather. Humphrey's (2014, p. 23) agrees, one need only go out at night for "humdrum" landscape to become wild.

In *A Sense of Wonder*, Carson (1965) argues that unless we begin to care about a place, it is unlikely we'll ever defend it. Yet, as noted above, such a bond is sabotaged when OAE (and culture more broadly) privilege remote and sublime landscapes. Microadventures, however, can be a means of cultivating this sense of wonder for what has previously escaped our notice within the places that we live. Just what these adventures might look like is infinite. Humphrey's website (wwwalastairhumphreys.com) provides a videography of examples and his book (2014) pictorially captures the potential of this style. Rather provocatively, though, some scholars have suggested that certain forms of self-propelled travel (e.g. foot, bike, and canoe) lend themselves to placed-based education, while other more technical activities (e.g. playboating, mountain-biking, and climbing) may struggle more to do so (Beames, 2012; Loynes, 2007, p., 266). Sustainable OAE programs will, then, evaluate the activities they employ, choosing those that best facilitate the slow pedagogy (Payne & Wattchow, 2008) discussed earlier.

A fair critique of the paper thus far might complain that the discussion of sustainability has been limited to the environment, seemingly excluding issues of social justice and economic viability. This next subsection, however, draws the aforementioned emphases of location (local), time (repeated and frequent), and the more broadly understood notion of *adventurous learning* to bear on social and economic injustices that have plagued OAE for decades.

Beyond Carbon…

With few exceptions (O'Connell, 2005, p. 83; Paulus, 2016), the sustainable OAE-related articles I encountered included scarce references to social justice issues within their discussion of

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sustainable programming. In their state of knowledge review of social justice issues in outdoor experiential education, Warren, Roberts, Breunig, and Alvarez (2014) attest to this exclusion, noting the profound need to address: underserved populations and the intersectionality of gender, race, ability, and sexual orientation. Lamenting the slowness of outdoor programs to address these issues, Warren *et al.* (2014, pp. 95, 97) indicate that the greatest success has come from urban adventure programming.

Interestingly, Roberts (2018 p. 28) has proposed microadventures as a viable means to achieve greater diversity and inclusion within OAE. Locating OAE programming within and amongst urban areas can assist in addressing perennial inequities of privileged access and cultural exclusion. For, beyond the colonial and imperialist injustices perpetrated on native peoples through the designation of Wilderness (Cronon, 1996, p. 9), OAE expeditions to remote landscapes requires time, money, and gear (Humphreys, 2014, p. 198), thus resulting in a homogeneous demographic of largely privileged, white participants (Roberts, 2018, p. 25). Mills (2014, p. 60) explains that the proportionally small representation of African Americans in Wilderness areas is, in part, due to limited access to higher education and thus well-paying jobs, which results in less disposable income for travel. Recognizing that we see few "black faces" in "white [natural] spaces," Finney (2014) challenges the notion that African Americans dislike natural settings. In a detailed social, cultural, and historical analysis, Finney (2014) reveals how indentured agricultural labor, received violence in secluded spaces, and inordinate experiences of environmental racism have complicated African American's relationship with the environment and buried a long and beautiful legacy that speaks to a love of the land.

By bringing the program to the participants, the aforementioned issues of access are mitigated. Paulus (2016) believes that the plurality of perspectives present within diverse and inclusive outdoor education programs creates a fertile setting for learning about sustainability. Confronting others' values, beliefs, and understanding forces us to consider critically our own (Paulus, 2016, pp. 119–120, 124). Such reflection and dialogue can lead to an openness towards others' perspectives, and thereby a transformation in one's own convictions and self-expression. Since OAE is renowned for its ability to create deep and meaningful group interaction, Paulus (2016, p. 122) submits that outdoor education programs are particularly well-suited to facilitate these pluralistic experiences.

In addition to lowering the barriers for access, however, local adventure inevitably pours money, typically spent on travel to remote areas, into the local economy thereby benefiting area businesses (Blue, 2016, pp. 115–126). Such an investments helps communities transition to more sustainable practices (see www.transitionnetwork.org).

This long section has identified the central changes that need to occur in order to create sustainable OAE (i.e. the *sustainability of* OAE and an OAE *for sustainability*). Programmatic cultivation of a sustainability worldview (values, knowledge, dispositions, and agency) is the foremost priority. However, change of this depth will require a revision of course offerings that allow for multiple and prolonged participant engagement over time. Such engagement, then,

necessitates that OAE shift its emphasis from remote and sublime landscapes, to programs that not only connect participants to the places in which they reside, but cultivate their care and affection for them. This sense of wonder and appreciation can be created through a combination of adventurous learning and microadventures. While this shift would undoubtedly encourage environmental preservation, as importantly, it simultaneously lowers barriers of access, thereby promoting more inclusive OAE programming that increases diversity and social justice, while keeping money local to bolster area businesses. Together, these changes help transition our practice towards sustainable OAE.

CONCLUSION: LOCAL LANDSCAPES, FAR MORE OFTEN, AS A WAY OF LIFE

"Local landscapes, far more often, as a way of life" encapsulates the changes I recommend for sustainable OAE. While I'm not proposing that remote expeditioning, and the laudable outcomes it affords, be abolished within OAE, such expenditures are becoming more difficult to justify, and thus require careful consideration and intentional facilitation (see Roberts, 2018, p. 29 on this point).

I am asserting, though, that a far greater emphasis ought to be put on OAE programs that model a way of living sustainably in one's place. As noted, such an endeavor will require OAE to engage more deliberately with philosophical and moral educational curricula in order to encourage a sustainability worldview and the virtues of action that come with it. For, as Orr (2004, pp. 60–63) has long attested, the ecological (and I would add, social) problems we face are ultimately moral ones. Such characterological change, however, occurs slowly and requires prolonged and assiduous commitment. If we are to take advantage of OAE's inherent (occurring in natural environs, within living/learning communities, utilizing physical/sensory, affective and intellectual ways of knowing, which foster critical impulses) potential to educate for sustainability, then we must find a way to prolong and repeat our contact with participants by re-envisioning the way we offer our programs (e.g. through increased participation in K–12 public schools). Of course, becoming a more stable part of a community requires that we invest more of our time there. This investment entails that OAE acknowledge its Romantic notion of Wilderness, name the pernicious implications of this construct (e.g. beauty as a scare commodity found only on protected lands), and search for authentic ways to engage students closer to home. Adventurous learning that engages real socio-ecological problems and the advent of microadventuring are two such means.

Ironically, the pandemic has involuntarily encouraged many of the changes recommended throughout this paper. Although writing from an eco-tourism perspective, Houge Mackenzie and Goodnow (2020, p. 1) observe how COVID-19 has forced us to revisit our "adventure travel philosophies and practices," by exerting unprecedented mobility restriction resulting in creative application of "hyperlocal" adventure. Germane to the purposes here, however, Houge Mackenzie and Goodnow (2020) argue that these forced changes must remain willed changes post-pandemic. They (2020) encourage us to view the pandemic as a teaching moment that

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challenges us to "reimagine adventure" (p. 4). They (2020) admonish us not to see microadventures as some "stop-gap novelty," but as "the heart of post-pandemic adventure" (p. 4). They (2020) herald the "outpouring of reports highlighting people's renewed appreciation for, and engagement with, nearby nature" (p. 5).

There is reason to hope that the forced confinement of the pandemic may soon relent, however, the multiple injustices of unsustainable living will continue unless individuals, organizations, and governments commit to change. I believe that sustainable OAE can make a significant contribution to this change, by implementing the recommendations of this paper, summarized in: local landscapes, far more often, as a way of life.

Notes:

1. For consistency throughout the paper, I thereby make reference to OAE and outdoor adventure educators. In places where I use another moniker (e.g. outdoor education or outdoor educators), I do so to honor the terms used in the publication I am at the time referencing.

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