

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

L.A. “Drew” Brennan for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Education presented
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A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Experience of Reflection by Older Adults in Adventure-
based Experiential Education

Abstract approved: _____

George H. Copa

This phenomenological inquiry explored dimensions of reflection for older adults in a developmental oriented adventure education experience. Data were gathered from emergent interviews with four individuals while participating in a multi-day, self-contained experiential education program conducted in a rugged environment, and led by a Navajo leader. Two principle research questions guided the design of this study: (a) *What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adult participants of adventure education?*, and (b) *How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development?*

Analysis of data yielded three central themes, with ten sub-themes nested within the central themes. Theme one, connecting to personal values, contained seven supporting sub-themes: (a) You know these people are not poor, (b) we could all live a lot simpler, (c) I just love Willow to death, (d) we’ve given them a bad hand, (e) she is still grieving, (e) here I can just be me, and (f) connecting through story. Theme two, time orientation, contained three supporting sub-themes: (a) The here and now, (b) looking forward, and (c) looking back. Theme three, health, captured participants reflection that focused on mental and physical health.

Emerging from these thematic descriptions were five observations that demonstrated how reflection in adventure education supported the learning and higher development of the study's older adults: (a) Participants engaged in a process of reconsidering their values, (b) participant reflection process resembled reminiscence and life review, (c) participants enjoyed an authentic experience, (d) participants made connections to others through story, and (e) participant intellectual development was enriched through reflection.

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A Phenomenological Inquiry into the Experience of Reflection
by Older Adults in Adventure-based Experiential Education

by
L. A. "Drew" Brennan

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

L.A. "Drew" Brennan, Author

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter 1: Research Focus And Significance.....	1
Background.....	4
Focus of the Study.....	5
Organization of the Dissertation.....	5
Summary.....	6
Chapter 2: Review Of Related Literature.....	8
Adventure Education.....	9
Definitions of Terms in Adventure Education.....	9
Historical Context of Adventure Education.....	22
Philosophical Roots of Adventure Education.....	21
Learning in Adventure Education.....	26
Therapeutic Adventure.....	27
Older Adults.....	28
Older Adult Learning in Adventure Education.....	30
Reflection in Experiential Education.....	33
Definitions and Perspectives of Reflection.....	33
Categories of Reflection in the Literature.....	34
Philosophical Literature Informing Reflection in Adventure Education.....	37
Other Contributions to Theory of Reflection.....	45
Summary.....	52

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Chapter Three: Design of The Study.....	55
The Phenomenological Approach.....	56
Researcher’s Perspective.....	59
Constructivism.....	59
Philosophy of Experiential Education.....	59
Researcher Views.....	61
Selecting an Adventure Education Experience.....	64
Selecting Study Participants.....	66
Age.....	67
Number of Participants.....	67
Data Collection.....	69
Data Analysis.....	71
Strategies for Ensuring Soundness.....	72
Member Checking.....	73
Researcher Reflexivity.....	73
Peer Debriefing.....	74
Thick and Rich Description.....	74
Ethical Considerations.....	75
Summary.....	76
Chapter Four: Presentation Of Context.....	77
Adventure Education Experience.....	77
Adventure Education Program.....	79

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Profiles of Participants.....	82
Victoria.....	82
Eric.....	83
Kelly.....	83
Paula.....	84
Me.....	84
Summary.....	85
Chapter Five: Older Adult Reflection.....	87
Experience of Reflection by Older Adults in Adventure Education.....	87
Theme One: Connecting to Personal Values.....	88
Theme Two: Time Orientation.....	101
Theme Three: Health.....	108
Summary.....	111
Learning and Higher Development of Older Adults Through Reflection in Adventure Education.....	114
Observation One: Participants Engaged in a Process of Reconsidering their Values.....	115
Observation Two: Participant Reflection Process Resembled Reminiscence and Life Review.....	117
Observation Three: Participants Enjoyed an Authentic Experience.....	121
Observation Four: Participants Made Connections to Others Through Story.....	122
Observation Five: Participant Intellectual Development Was Enriched Through Reflection.....	125

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

	<u>Page</u>
Summary.....	127
Chapter Six: Researcher’s Reflection.....	130
Research Soundness and Quality.....	130
Implications for Future Research.....	134
Implications for Policy and Practice.....	137
Concluding Thoughts.....	140
REFERENCES.....	144
APPENDICES.....	155
Appendix A: Letter of Consent	156
Appendix B: Member Checking Letter I.....	160
Appendix C: Member Checking Letter II.....	163
Appendix D: Company Brochure Program Description And Itinerary.....	166
Appendix E: Pictures.....	170
Appendix F: Maps of the Area.....	176

LIST OF TABLES

<u>Table</u>		<u>Page</u>
1.	Major Philosophical Contributions to Adventure Education.....	23
2.	Experiential Learning Theories Draw Upon Reflection.....	48
3.	Valuable Components of a Definition of Reflection.....	50
4.	Influences of Dewey, Mezirow and Kolb.....	52
5.	Summary of Theme One: Connecting to Personal Values.....	111
6.	Summary of Theme Two: Orientation to Time.....	112

What is above knows what is below; but
what is below does not know what is above.
One climbs,
one sees,
one descends.
One sees no longer, but one has seen.
There is an art of conducting oneself in the
lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up.
(From Rene Dumal, Mount Analogue)

For Luke

Chapter 1: Research Focus and Significance

It could be said that adventure education was established with the training of merchant seamen in the North Atlantic during World War II, yet it seems that a large share of what is understood about the process of learning in adventure education in the United States has come about from work with adolescents. Since the 1960's when Josh Miner helped bring Outward Bound to the United States, young people have remained a mainstay for adventure education in North America. This age-related historical picture of adventure education is likely to have emerged due to simple social and economic forces. However, a shift is underway within society and experiential education that will require changes to be made in the design and delivery of adventure education programs in the United States.

There are several distinct clues that tell a story about the new picture that is surfacing in experiential education. These clues about the future in education are observations that I have gathered from researchers in gerontology and experiential education, from the “educational consumer marketplace,” and from projections made by the United States (U.S.) Census Bureau. These signs of change are shared here as a way of telling a story and building a preliminary rationale for conducting research about older adults within adventure education.

The most provocative signs pointing to imminent change in the American educational milieu come from the field of gerontology, where a long reported social phenomena referred to by some as an “age wave” (Dychtwald, 1999, p. 57) is expected to wash ashore. In the likeness of a surging mass of water, the aging baby boom generation is expected to flood and upset current commercial and social patterns. To illustrate, Dychtwald (1999) likened the baby boomers' movement into older adulthood to “a pig passing through a python” (p. 68). Baby boomers—who are just now entering older adulthood—represent a group of people that have had an overpowering effect on most every issue that has concerned them along the course of

their generations' path. Dychtwald (1999) contended that not only had this group been transformed by life stages, but that this group had transformed life stages themselves, as they reached them (p. 70). By progressing through a constricted, ill-equipped social corridor, boomers' unique needs and habits have dramatically reshaped trends and values in the United States, routinely effecting social, political, and marketplace themes of their time (Dychtwald, 1999). This generation is expected to continue to revolutionize healthcare, technology, financial services, housing/transportation, death/dying, and work/leisure (p. 70). The idea of the age-wave supports the fundamental premise that older adults as a growing segment of American society will begin to exert unique needs on the educational system in this country.

To extend the case made by Dychtwald's (1999) assertions, consider the statistics presented by the US Census Bureau. According to a report released in 1997, 24.6% of the US public will be 65 years or older in 2025 (www.census.gov/ipc/prod/ageame.pdf). This represents nearly an 87% increase in the same figure from 1988, when older adults in the US population accounted for only 16% of the population. Despite figures such as these, the US Census Bureau reports that population aging has not been a prominent discussion point in the United States.

A third clue indicating a change in the educational needs and interests of older Americans can be found in the "educational consumer marketplace," and the popularity of programs like Elderhostel's new *Road Scholar* program. Headquartered in Massachusetts, Elderhostel has been in business since 1975 and considers itself "America's first, and the world's largest, education and travel organization" (<http://www.elderhostel.org/about/history.asp>), and offers educational programs for individuals over 50 years of age. Within the past two years, Elderhostel responded to market trends by creating Road Scholar, a program "to serve the burgeoning new generation of independent, active, culturally inquisitive travelers," by "specializing in study-travel

adventures...with an emphasis on experiential learning, small groups, and more freedom for independent exploration” (http://www.elderhostel.org/about/newsmedia_default.asp). The success of business efforts reported by new programs like *Road Scholar* suggests that older adults do in fact have unique, unmet educational needs. To assist in further capturing the nuance of this marketplace trend, consider Sugerma’s (2000) study that surveyed 179 programs, and reported a strong increase in the popularity of adventure education programs serving participants over 50 years of age.

Lastly, consider those clues that emerge from within research and scholarship. Researchers of experiential education explored the motivation behind adult participation in adventure programs (Sugerma, 2001), discussed how to best facilitate learning for older adults in experiential education (Garvey and Garvey, 1997), and reported how adventure education programs that serve older adults conduct their practice (Sugerma, 1989). Garvey and Garvey (1997) responded to this shifting social landscape, and reported on a current lack of understanding among experiential educators and adventure educators about the educational needs of older adults, and made a call for individuals and organizations to prepare for this changing demographic. About the same time, Dychtwald (1999) surveyed a group of older American adults, and noted a sharp increase in the physical and financial health of older adults, a generalized postponement of physical aging, and an increased desire to purchase enjoyable and satisfying experiences.

One basic conclusion that these sources help to inform is that baby boomers will be increasingly seeking out experiential education and adventure education programs, and there is work that needs to be done to prepare for this eventuality. This chapter now considers in more detail the nature of the research that was conducted in order to bring forth greater understanding and knowledge about older adult learning and their experience with adventure education.

Background

The purpose of this study was to deepen an understanding of the older adult's experience of reflection in adventure education. While a fuller description of adventure education and its historical and philosophical roots are forthcoming, it is helpful to reveal that adventure education is a type of education that frequently borrows from a philosophy of experiential education, and takes place much of the time in the outdoors. At the heart of adventure education frequently lies generalized goals to increase personal or interpersonal effectiveness. This focus on personal dimensions of learning borrows from a constructivist approach to education (Association for Experiential Education, 2005), and helps to make up a core component of a philosophy of experiential education. While much of the theory related to these aspects of learning will be revealed in the literature review, it is helpful to point out here that one of the core components of experiential education is the active reflection in which the learner engages.

Reflecting upon experience was found to significantly enhance learning in educational environments (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985; Caine & Caine, 1994; Knapp, 1993, Nadler & Luckner, 1997). An evolution of numerous generations of facilitation techniques commonly used in experiential education settings (Priest & Gass, 1997, p. 178) chronicled the steady attention paid by practitioners and researchers toward the improvement of the learning environment in adventure education and experiential education.

Furthermore, as it relates to the background of reflection in experiential education, Allison and Pomeroy (2000) and McKenzie (2003) both emphasized the growing need to explore aspects of the learner's experience that have remained largely theoretical--especially in regard to reflection and the debriefing of experiences (Brown, 2002; Hovelnyck, 2000, 1999). Allison and Pomeroy (2000) in particular pointed to the imbalance in the experiential education literature between interpretive studies that strived to explore the meaning and

experience of experiential education, and outcome studies which, in part have attempted to answer questions like “does this work?”

A clearer understanding of what reflection in adventure-based learning is like for older adults is needed. In addition, a better picture of how adventure education might support the development of older adults would be helpful for researchers and practitioners alike.

Focus of the Study

The focus of this inquiry was articulated in the form of two questions:

1. What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adults in adventure education?
2. How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development?

By focusing on the experience of a group of older adults engaged in adventure education setting, my aim was to further open and expand what is known about the phenomenon of reflection within adventure education. Additionally, by focusing on older adult learning in experiential education, it was hoped that this research would help advance knowledge of how older adults learn in the adventure education milieu.

Organization of the Dissertation

This chapter laid out the need to conduct research which explores the experience of learning for older adults in adventure education. The rationale for conducting this research is extended in Chapter 2, where a thorough review of literature considers adventure education, it’s contemporary meaning and historical significance, the philosophical roots of experiential education, and explores research on older adults in adventure education. Further need for research on the phenomena of reflection is substantiated in the second part of the literature

review where various philosophical views on reflection are discussed. In Chapter 3, I have provided an explanation of the method chosen for this inquiry, and in line with this methodology, continue with a discussion of my perspective as a researcher. Chapter 4 moves toward a detailed, contextual account of the adventure education experience that was studied, and provides a profile of each of the research participants. At the heart of the dissertation sits Chapter 5, a lengthy chapter which points to areas of discovery surrounding the two main research questions. Consistent with interpretive research designs, Chapter 5 blends the presentation of finding with a discussion of the related literature. Lastly, after reiterating key observations made in the study, Chapter 6 takes a broad look at the research and considers implications for practitioners and policy maker, as well as exploring implications for further study.

Summary

The basic case for conducting research with older adults in experiential education has been made by pointing to trends among a growing older adult population, as well as trends among providers of experiential education across the United States. The case for conducting research in this area was also chronicled by researchers who have acknowledged the need to explore the essential experience of adventure education.

The study is significant to the field of experiential education and adventure education because of the manner in which it contributes to a gap in understanding about the *lived experience* of reflection for older adults in adventure education. This study is valuable also because it helps to round out the existing base of knowledge that informs the processes of experiential education. Lastly, researchers and practitioners of experiential education and gerontology will benefit from this study which explored in greater detail the learning experience of older adults. The overall aim of this research was to contribute to the improved

practice of adventure education, and has proceeded to do so by asking two fundamental research questions: 1) What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adults in the experience of adventure education?; and 2) How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development?

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

A review of the related literature was conducted in order to better understand the theoretical and historical context of this research within adventure education, and to situate the study within a philosophy of experiential education. One way to think about the related literature is to organize it into two main topic areas: (a) Adventure education, and (b) reflection in experiential education. For organizational purposes, the topic of older adult learning was subsumed in the section on adventure education. My rationale for approaching older adult learning from within the adventure education construct was based on three aims: (a) To establish a clear hierarchy of importance; (b) to accurately reflect my specialization in experiential learning; and (c) the need to efficiently organize an abbreviated research record of older adults in adventure-based experiential education. I am confident that considering older adults from within the construct of adventure education was an efficient and forthright strategy—one that resulted in a more credible and trustworthy study.

The first major section of the literature review, the adventure education section, defines and explores terms (i.e., outdoor education, experiential education, adventure education), discusses the historical context of adventure education and the philosophical roots of experiential education, and reviews the literature on learning in adventure education and older adults.

The role of reflection in experiential education is addressed in the second half of the literature review, and is presented in order to bring greater understanding to an elusive concept. This section includes a discussion on definitions of reflection and the philosophy of reflection. Special consideration is given to the contributions made by Dewey (1933), Kolb (1984), and Mezirow (1991) to the area of reflection. This closing section also acknowledges other contributors to the theory of reflection in experiential education.

Adventure Education

Adventure education was used as one of the major organizing constructs in this study. By concentrating this study on *developmental* oriented adventure education, a more focused analysis of this particular expression of experiential education was made possible. My focus on developmental-oriented adventure education (explained in adventure education subsection), excluded a review of literature directly related to *recreational* or *therapeutic* expressions of experiential education.

Definitions of Terms in Adventure Education

My review of literature in the area of adventure education was immediately confronted by contradiction and paradox among the related areas of outdoor education, experiential education, and adventure education. I found agreement with Hamilton (1992) and Itin (1997) who discovered that inconsistency in language regarding *experiential learning*, *experience as learning*, and *experience* has led to considerable confusion among readers and practitioners alike. With this in mind, a review of various perspectives on the definition of the terms *outdoor education*, *experiential education*, *adventure education*, *learning*, and *experience* is presented first in this section of the review of literature.

Outdoor education. As the popularity and focus of outdoor education has grown, the definition of “outdoor education” has been transformed. In 1975, Great Britain’s Department of Education and Science (DES) convened the seminal Dartington Conference and the following activity-based definition of outdoor education was developed: “Outdoor education is used to refer to those activities concerned with living, moving and learning in the outdoors....This will include survival, residential experiences, and a variety of activities, both

physical and concerned with observing the environment” (DES, in Hodges and Putnam, 1993, p. 9). Eleven years later, Priest’s (Adkins & Simmons, 2002) learning-type definition was presented as “an experiential process of learning by doing, which takes place primarily through exposure to the out-of-doors” (p. 1). Following this definition, Hammerman, Hammerman and Hammerman’s (Adkins & Simmons, 2002) broader context-oriented definition of “outdoor education” was developed: “outdoor education is education which takes place in the out of doors” (p. 1). Hammerman, Hammerman, and Hammerman’s definition of “outdoor education” assumed no relationship to experiential learning, and served to provide awareness that the outdoors is a *context* for learning. Outdoor education no longer referred to activities or a specific type of learning, but rather evolved in a way that referred to a *context* in which learning occurred (Adkins & Simmons, p. 1). For the purposes of this study, the term “outdoor education” will be used to refer to a context of learning.

Experiential education. The term “experiential education” also has a confusing definition (Itin, 1997). A contemporary definition for experiential education offered by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE)(2002) suggested that “experiential education is a process or method that can be used to teach...this process can take place in any location and does not require the learner to be outdoors as in the definition of outdoor education” (p. 1). Furthermore, this definition of experiential education was supported by the explication of 12 learning principles (AEE, 2004), three of which were directly related to learning: (a) Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis; (b) the results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning; and (c) opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values. Adkins and Simmons (2002) in a similar

manner, described “experiential education” as “a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill, and value from direct experiences” (p. 1).

During a conference recently (AEE, 2003), I heard Dr. Christian Itin, a researcher and former president of the Association for Experiential Education, suggest another way of viewing the classification of experiential education:

[T]here appears to be an attempt to indicate we have a "field" of experiential education. Is experiential education like the term medicine, with different specializations, or is it more like health with different professions, conceptualizations, and modes of practice linked by a common philosophy of purpose? Is adventure-based practice a specialization within experiential education or is it a different method of practice linked to other modes of activity and experiential practice by a common philosophy? (Itin, 2003)

Earlier, Itin (1997) pointed out that the terms “experiential education” and “experiential learning” seemed to be used interchangeably, which he contended was confusing to students, readers, and practitioners alike:

Confusion is common because these terms are frequently used to describe many different teaching strategies, including: field work experiences, internships, previous work experience, outdoor education, adventure education, vocational education, lab work, simulations and games. (Itin, 1997, p. 7)

For the purpose of my research study, I relied on a meaning of experiential education that resembled the process of learning defined by the philosophical underpinnings iterated by the AEE, and included the previously articulated principles: (a) Experiential learning occurs when carefully chosen experiences are supported by reflection, critical analysis, and synthesis; (b) the results of the learning are personal and form the basis for future experience and learning; and (c) opportunities are nurtured for learners and educators to explore and examine their own values. This definition was chosen because it is most consistent with my views of the educational process, and is the basis for my perspective as a researcher. More will be shared about my views, and my bias, in the following chapter. For a fuller explication of the principles of experiential education consult Appendix A.

Adventure education. The literature within the area of adventure programming was also clouded by an ongoing evolution of terminology. Hirsch (1999) pointed out that the relationship shared between adventure programming and outdoor education was not fixed, and remained very dependent on individual perspective. To illustrate the multiple perspectives that inform a description of adventure education, Hirsch insisted that an environmental educator, for example, can easily argue for environmental education as the umbrella category under which outdoor education and adventure education fall (1999). To demonstrate the evolution of the meaning of adventure education over the past couple decades, she cited a litany of names for adventure education: “high-adventure leisure pursuits,” “high-risk activities,” “high adventure outdoor pursuits,” “outdoor adventure pursuits,” and “risk recreation” (p. 14).

There was broad agreement in the literature that adventure-based experiential education was a philosophy of education in North America that had the American Outward Bound Process at its base (Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997; Hopkins & Putnam, 1993; Priest, 1986; Richards, 1992; Wurdinger, 1992). Personal growth and group development was broadly identified to be the main focus of adventure education programs (Hirsch, 1999; Priest 1986; Rogers & Putnam, 1993).

In an effort to bring further definition to the term adventure education, Hirsch (1999) developed three main types of adventure programming as a framework. These three categories included *recreation*, *development/education*, and *therapeutic*. Hirsch clarified the developmental/adventure education classification as follows:

Developmental adventure is a type of adventure education where these (personal growth and group development) outcomes are central and where their centrality dictates the knowledge, procedures, and the value base from which leaders in these programs operate. In other words, when I design and deliver a program that fits into this category, I am applying different understandings, using different procedures, and conveying different values than when my colleagues design and deliver recreation or therapeutic adventure programs. (p. 14)

Priest (1999) suggested that the defining aspects of the three categories within adventure programming (i.e., recreation, education/training, and therapeutic) were rooted in the primary objective of the educational experience. Generally speaking, the objective for the client of adventure recreation, was *fun*, the objective of a developmental or educational adventure program was *awareness*, and clients of therapeutic adventure programs were seeking “change.”

Hirsch (1999) succinctly captured the tendency for adventure education to defy concrete definition in literature in adventure education and experiential education:

Now, having said that, I need to stress the idea that we are *all* (italics added for emphasis) doing adventure education; therefore, there will be universals, and a good deal of overlap, because there isn't anything that we do in our field on which we can impose definitive boundaries...Dynamic conceptual boundaries provide structure for our thinking...” . (p. 14)

Hirsch's classification of adventure education into three categories—a refinement of an earlier effort made by Gass, Priest, Ringer, and Gillis (Hirsch, 1999, p. 14)—was an invaluable organizational tool for me in the review of literature.

Richards (1992) advanced that adventure-based experiential education was a subset of experiential education, and proposed a model of adventure based experiential learning with four phases: separation, encounter, return, and reincorporation (p. 158). Wurdinger (1994), however, maintained that adventure education was not necessarily a subset of experiential education. Wurdinger's (1994) argument suggested that adventure educators frequently employed teaching strategies that were much more “traditional” than they were “experiential” in nature, and thereby provided the theoretical information first and then the opportunity to engage in the practice (p. 25).

In 1990, Miles and Priest offered the following definition of adventure education:

Adventure education involves the purposeful planning and implementation of educational processes that involve risk in some way. The risk may be physical, as in a

trip in a mountain wilderness where people may be caught in storms, may become lost or may be injured by falling rocks. It may be social, as in asking someone to expose their fear of speaking before groups or otherwise risk social judgment. The risk may be spiritual, as in placing the learner in a situation where he or she must confront the self or perhaps the meaning of life and death. *The defining characteristic of adventure education is that a conscious and overt goal of the adventure is to expand the self, to learn and grow and progress toward the realization of human potential* (italics added for emphasis). (p. 1)

According to Miles and Priest (1990), the purpose of adventure education was to bring about an awareness for positive change in interpersonal (i.e., communication, cooperation, trust, conflict resolution, problem solving) and intrapersonal relationships (i.e., self-concept, spirituality, confidence and self-efficacy). Priest (1999) wrote of the field: “Adventure programming is the deliberate use of adventurous experiences to create learning in individuals or groups that result in change for society and communities” (p. 113).

Nadler and Luckner’s (1997) adventure learning model helped to bring further definition to adventure education. Nadler and Luckner adapted original work from Walsh and Golins (1976) to better represent nine ingredients that collectively contribute to the adventure learning environment: (a) the individual, (b) disequilibrium, (c) a novel setting, (d) a cooperative environment, (e) unique problem-solving situations, (f) feelings of accomplishment, (g) processing the experience (reflection), (h) generalization, and (i) transfer. Each of the ingredients was representative of component parts of the Outward Bound experience that is borrowed by adventure learning programs. This framework was helpful to me in bringing a succinct overview of an Outward Bound-style educational experience.

Hattie, Marsh, Neill, and Richards (1997) outlined what the common components of adventure programs were in their seminal meta-analysis of 96 adventure education studies. In their research, common components of adventure education programs were stated as: (a) wilderness or backcountry settings; (b) a small group, usually less than 16; (c) assignment of a variety of mentally and or physically challenging objectives; (d) frequent and intense

interactions that usually involve group problem solving and decision making; (e) a non-intrusive, trained leader; and (f) a duration of two to four weeks (p. 44).

Wurdinger (1992) described the three fundamental tenets on which adventure education is built as being: (a) inductive learning where participation leads to generation of theory (This is opposed to the more common form of deductive learning where theory precedes participation); (b) participants develop a willingness to take risks, and there are virtues that are associated with taking risk; and (c) building moral character.

Hovelynck (2000) demonstrated the complex nature of defining the practice of experiential education and the philosophy associated with it. Hovelynck strongly articulated a need to distinguish between forms of active learning that had a didactic style of teaching (understood to resemble Freire's (1993) "banking style" of teaching) as their basis and experiential-based adventure education, where experience was used to teach, in a manner that was reflective of the philosophy of experiential education.

There was broad consensus in the literature that definitions of adventure education must include an element of personal growth. In fact, a point was made in the British literature that adventure programming had strayed too far from this core principle. Higgins (1996), Loynes (1996), and Bowles (1995) suggested that the defining aspects of "adventure" as a means of personal and social development of young people has been under attack. These British authors suggested that professionalization and institutional beauracracy have been eroding the essential definition of how adventure (education) is defined. Bowles (1995) argued:

Adventure and therefore adventure education has certain key ingredients-we may call them essences. Our essences seem to be tied to the following themes and mores: Action, Uncertainty, Extra ordinary, Arousal, Movement, Challenge and Exploration... Therefore a professionalization process needs to be in harmony with such essences if our subject is to be true with itself..." (p. 15)

Bowles (1995) pointed out that a movement toward professionalization and standardization had the potential to alter what was understood to be adventure in adventure programs. My interpretation of these authors' sentiments was that they view the efforts to make subjective forms of learning more objective and measurable as destructive and that this practice erodes the core, subjective nature of adventure experience. Bowles (1995), Loynes (1996), and Higgins (1996) seemed to argue on behalf of maintaining the simple and humanistic origins of learning from adventure.

McKenzie's (2003) reconsideration of Walsh and Golin's (1976) model was the most recent addition to contemporary conceptualizations of adventure education. McKenzie challenged the outmoded, individualistic "identity formation" goals that Outward Bound came to be recognized for. In the place of knowing self, an outcome that McKenzie argued has been largely influenced by "malaises of modernity," McKenzie proposed that Outward Bound reconsider their approach to teaching compassion, and instead focus on learning goals that were more squarely focused on connection to others and connection to the environment.

For the purposes of this study, I chose to define adventure education by focusing on its potential for personal development and increased individual awareness. McKenzie's contemporary challenges to adventure education were valued, and served as a source of continued contemplation throughout the study, as I possess similar, emerging views about North American culture.

Furthermore, two of Wurdinger's (1992) tenets of adventure education proved helpful: (a) Participants develop a willingness to take risks in adventure education, and (b) adventure education builds moral character. Lastly, throughout the study, I strove to remain mindful of Wurdinger's (1994) and Hovelynck (2001) caution that adventure education and experiential learning should not be mythologized and transformed into something they are not. The

education that took place within the context of this study appeared to rely on a balance between deductive and inductive learning, and between telling and discovery.

Experiential learning. A search of the literature on the topic of experiential learning yielded a broad range of research conducted across disciplines. For instance, references to Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory occurred in more than 900 studies within the fields of accounting, computer science, law, management, and others (Kolb, 2002). Furthermore, the diffuse nature of this term was revealed by Hamilton (1992) who pointed to subtleties in semantics and language use that have historically lead to considerable confusion with the phrase "experiential learning." In an effort to bring clarity to this term for my study, a detailed unpacking of this term was necessary. In this section, a broader discussion of various aspects of "experiential learning" are followed by a more focused look at experiential learning as it related to uses of the term in my study.

Similar to the manner in which Itin (1997) identified confusion with the term "experiential education," Hamilton (1992) described the tremendous variation found in the literature regarding the words "experience" and "learning." The confusion brought on by this variation is exacerbated by the diverse and differing objectives of two distinct movements, each of which has sought to define a role for experience in adult learning. These movements are the "adult education movement" and the "experiential learning movement" (Hamilton, 1992, p. 264). Hamilton pointed to the source of considerable ambiguity around the term "experience:"

The word experience has multiple meanings. Some are derived from the educational contexts in which they are used and dependent upon a practitioner's particular philosophical, psychological and educational understandings of the term. For some educators, experience refers simply to an educational activity with specific, planned cognitive or affective outcomes. For others, experience is synonymous with life itself. In its most sophisticated conceptualization, it is a complex interrelationship of socio-economic, political and personal forces that has the potential to transform lives. (p. 262)

Hamilton also described the confusion—and the broad range of inferences—that can stem from references to “learning” made in research and literature:

Learning, too, is a concept beset with ambiguities. Mezirow (1991) writes that instrumental learning “has been too commonly taken as the model of all learning” (p. 80). Learning is perceived as a traditional cognitive product such as subject-mastery, knowledge acquisition or attitude change. After this traditional perception of learning as a cognitive product, come affective, perceptual or attitudinal products, such as enhanced interpersonal or reasoning skills, greater self-understanding or self-actualization, as types of learning. All of these products are manifested in observable behavior change....In traditional models emphasis is on the product of learning; in progressive models emphasis is on the process. (p. 263)

Generally, learning by experience referred in the literature to an emerging area of focus for adult educators, and referred in large part to the growing body of research and practice devoted to the continuing education of non-traditional adult learners. Importantly, “Learning by experience,” differed greatly from “experiential education” as this former phrase referred not to a philosophy of education (as experiential education did) but typically it referred to an acknowledgement of one’s learning through life experience. In Great Britain, the University of the Third Age (U3A) has become a movement providing a variety of educational opportunities for older adults by placing education in a new context which relies on different assumptions related to student motivation for learning, style, and method of learning.

Theories of experiential learning ranged from more formal ideas (Kolb, 1984) to relatively straightforward theoretical models (Beard & Wilson, 2002; Coleman, 1976; Gager, 1976; Joplin, 1981; Walsh & Golins, 1982). Kolb’s work, however, was the prominent theory used by researchers and authors to explain experiential learning (Holman, Pavlika, & Thorpe, 1997; Miettinen, 2000). Because Kolb’s ideas served as a steady frame of reference in the literature, I chose to focus on it in this section. Additional contributions

to the area of adventure education by other experiential learning theories and ideas are discussed in the reflection section of this chapter.

A review of the research literature on Kolb's experiential learning theory (KELT) revealed a large, comprehensive reference list. Published by Kolb himself in his *Experiential Learning Theory Bibliography* (Kolb, 2002), 990 references were recorded for the time frame spanning 1971-1999, with the dominant number of references (416) occurring within Education, and 197 occurring within Management, 114 references within Computer Science, 101 in Psychology, and the remaining 162 references occurring within Medicine, Nursing, Accounting, and Law. Importantly, 535 of the above studies were reported in journal articles, and the remaining occurred within dissertations, book chapters, and other materials. Judging by the remarks of the author, there were 643 references included for the years 1999-2002 (Kolb, 2002). The recent upturn in others' research focusing on KELT was logical since Kolb published his more complete work on the topic in 1984.

A search of published KELT research limited to Experiential Education, Outdoor and Adventure Education, Health, Physical Education and Recreation yielded an extremely small group of studies. My search did, however, yield evidence of electronic discussion taking place among researchers in outdoor education about KELT. However, even these electronic postings were anecdotal in nature. Ultimately, my review of the research revealed a distinct absence of empirical research that studied experiential learning theory in adventure education.

While methods used to apply the principles of experiential learning vary widely from setting to setting (i.e., service learning, internships, wilderness adventure, challenge course, adventure therapy, international study), there existed one theoretical constant, according to Wurdinger (1994): in experiential learning, practice *precedes* theory. That is, a well-planned and carefully guided student experience can serve to better prepare the student for a more direct mode of instruction. Wurdinger (1999) reminded the reader that many experiential

learning advocates inappropriately positioned this form of learning opposite what might be termed more traditional methods of classroom teaching (i.e., a strict lecture and note taking style of teaching). Experiential learning was best understood to be a method that was used *in conjunction* with a variety of methods and approaches (Wurdinger, 1994). Wurdinger's work (1992, 1994, 1999) helped to refocus my attention on how student-centered and collaborative approaches in education can be used to effectively augment lecture-style forms of instruction.

In summary, based upon my 20 years of professional experience in various practices of experiential education, I can attest to the extent of ambiguity and confusion that surrounds the language of experiential education and experiential learning. Throughout this study, when referring to “experiential education,” I attempted to speak essentially of it as a philosophy of experiential education—and to view experiential education as modes of instruction that were linked by a common philosophy. In places I referred to “experiential education” as a “field” or a “practice,” but attempted to be explicit when doing so. More of the essence of experiential learning will be revealed in a future section of the literature review, and the value of Kolb's (1984) ideas as a reference point for this study will continue to be revealed. Furthermore, Wurdinger's (1994) succinct reminder that experiential learning occurs when action precedes theory was a valued perspective to me because of the manner in which it placed a dual focus on theory *and* practice, and because of the attention paid to the sequence and ordering of this instructional approach. Secondly, Wurdinger's (1999) thoughts on the topic reminded me that “action” or practice can be understood to be a variety of endeavors—not just physical activity. Finally, the context-based definition (Adkins & Simmons, 2002) of “outdoor education” was taken forward in the presentation of this study. This was a valuable frame of reference because it challenged the assumption that experiential learning occurred simply because it was taking place in the out-of-doors.

Moving forward in an increasingly more focused manner on the literature relevant to the design and interpretation of this study, I next present a review of the historical and philosophical context of adventure education. These sections provide background information to better see the relevance of the overall study, and the value of the findings as it relates to older adults in adventure education.

Historical Context of Adventure Education

Adventure education emerged in the United States in the 1960s as a response to the growing social problems of adolescents. Historically, four organizations were central to bringing adventure education programming to the U.S. during the 1960s and 1970s: Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School, Project Adventure, and the Wilderness Education Association (Attarian, 2001). Generally speaking, these organizations strived to treat the malaise of youth by using wilderness and adventurous activity to enhance self-esteem and to assist in moral and character development.

According to Attarian (2001), the growth of adventure education programming between the 70s and the 90s can be traced to the rise of experience based training and development programs, therapeutic programs, and women centered programs. During the most recent decade, growth in adventure education has been dominated by the rising number of college and university programs that train professional outdoor leaders and by the popularity of wilderness therapy organizations (Attarian, 2001). Other types of programs that have helped to increase the number of adventure education programs include camps, 4-H programs, and university outdoor clubs.

Philosophical Roots of Adventure Education

The most noteworthy philosophical contributions to adventure education can be traced to four individuals: Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, and Hahn (Wurdinger, 1992) and are presented in Table 1. The collective thoughts and ideas of these four men formed the philosophical underpinnings for adventure education. The foundational ideas put forth by these men, Wurdinger (1992) argued, provide a philosophical rationale that presents the merits and value of adventure education for society. Simply, if one wanted to answer, “why adventure education?” one could turn to the contributions made by Plato, Rousseau, Dewey, and Hahn.

According to Hunt (1999), Plato’s Republic can be read as a theory of education, and revealed his thoughts about the most effective means of teaching young people the virtues needed to assume the responsibilities of adulthood (Hunt, 1999). The virtues of wisdom, bravery, temperance, and justice were presented as the backbone of leadership and responsibility, and provided adventure educators with a clear argument for the role of direct experience in education (Hunt, 1999). Arguing on behalf of experience, Hunt suggested that young people’s preparation for adulthood and leadership was best done by being confronted with real life experience (Hunt, p. 116). Furthermore, Plato considered the aim of physical education to not primarily be to enhance physical skills, but that it had a higher educational value. “For Plato, the moral value of exercise and sport far outweighed the physical value” (Plato, 1920, as cited in Hattie et al. 1997, p. 43).

John Dewey’s philosophy of education opposed mainstream thinking during his time, and proposed that thinking itself was an adventure (Hunt, 1999). Dewey was understood by some to be the father of experiential education (born out of his progressive educational ideals), but his notion of the indeterminate situation was the concept that linked him most readily to a rationale for adventure education. Thinking, or inquiry, contained an element of risk and uncertainty. Thought began for a person in an attempt to render an indeterminate situation

determinate. And the work of thinking—of risking—was done in the actual world of a person.

Hunt proposes,

To ask a student to question any aspect of his or her world is to risk many things. The complete security of the settled past is abandoned in favor of an uncertain future opened by inquiry. The exercise of the human imagination is fundamentally an exercise of adventure when it reaches out to an uncertain future. If to think is to inquire, then to think is to risk being wrong. (p. 121)

Table 1. Major Philosophical Contributions to Adventure Education

Major Philosophical Contributions to Adventure Education		
Person	Role	Key Contributions
Plato	Philosopher and thinker (429-347 BCE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Advanced the belief that experience is vital when it comes to the learning process. Midwifery as an analogy to the learning process; (2) Discussed virtues of wisdom, bravery, temperance and justice--presented by some as the backbone of leadership and responsibility (Hunt, 1999). These platonic ideals are used to strengthen the rationale behind adventure education. (Wurdinger, 1992); (3) Proposed that to learn how to act courageously, one must be exposed to risk taking;
Rousseau	Educational and political theorist (1712-1768)	Suggested that physical exercise leads to the development of sound mind, and being pushed physically leads to an ability to overcome the stresses of life (Wurdinger, 1992).
Dewey	Educational philosopher (1859-1952)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Introduced linkage between experience and learning; (2) Believed learning and understanding is dependent upon experience; (3) Argued for education of the whole person, not transmission of facts (Itin, 1997); (4) Suggested growth must be physical and moral, not just intellectual (Kraft, in Priest & Miles, 1990).
Hahn	Educational thinker and founder of educational programs (1886-1974)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) Introduced adventure as a tool to guide moral development of young people; (2) Understood education as a process of developing the citizenship of an individual; (3) Taught values inherent to risk-taking (i.e., courage, sensible self-denial, tenacity, compassion, and enterprising curiosity) (Wurdinger, 1992; Itin, 1997).

Rousseau's contribution to adventure education can be traced to his "stages of man's growth," where the aims of education were uniquely tailored and guided by the developing child (Wurdinger, 1992). Primarily through his work *Emile*, Rousseau delivered his treatise on education whereby the import of experience in education was conveyed. During the period of ages 5-12 years:

The concentration upon books was wrong and (Rousseau) would eliminate books and expose the child to things...experience is his only teacher. He learns through necessity directed by his natural development. The curriculum at this level should consist of natural activities. (Archer, 1964, p. iii)

Rousseau's influence on adventure education was further revealed in his educational philosophy for ages 12-15 years:

We must not try to educate the child through reason; we must not use authority in place of the child's mental efforts, but help him to make his reason the authority; and we must not make the mistake of thinking that reason is the driving power of life. The motivating factors at this level are the desire to learn (curiosity) and the usefulness of knowledge (utility). (Archer, 1964, p.iii)

The curriculum for Rousseau at this level was drawn from Robinson Crusoe and consisted of exercising the intelligence in the world of nature—geography, astronomy, physical sciences, agriculture, manual arts, and crafts. And the stage of 15-20 years: "...This is the period when perception of human relations, appreciation of beauty, the sense of moral and social life, religion, and the higher virtues awaken in the child" (Archer, p. iii).

Kurt Hahn might be understood as the John Dewey of Great Britain (Itin, 1997). Hahn was an innovative, progressive thinker perhaps best known for his contribution to Outward Bound. Over the course of his lifetime, Hahn created three schools and several programs (James, 1980) which were focused on developing righteous, vigilant, and active citizens, who possessed a sense of duty to others and to God (Richards, 1990). Hahn claimed no originality to his work and pointed to a host of sources from which he borrowed his ideas--this list included Plato (Richards, p. 68). In an effort to respond to "declines" or social diseases, Hahn

designed educational programs that emphasized the role of character, service, challenge, and physical endeavor. Outward bound sought to ensure the survival of five qualities proposed by Hahn: (a) an enterprising curiosity; (b) an undefeatable spirit, (c) tenacity of pursuit, (d) readiness for sensible self-denial, and (e) compassion (James, 1980). Kurt Hahn used adventure as a tool to get at the values inherent in taking risks. “He saw it (adventure) as a unique medium which actually allow(ed) people to experience intangible ideas such as courage and compassion” (Wurdinger, 1992, p. 9).

Other roots of adventure education trace back to the indirect philosophical and theoretical contributions made by William James, Sigmund Freud, Jean Piaget, Eric Erickson, Abraham Maslow, Carl Rogers, and Henry David Thoreau. The contributions made by these individuals have helped inform my perspective of experiential education; however, their contributions to adventure education are viewed as secondary.

In summary, the historical and philosophical roots of adventure education are helpful to this study as they provide a contextual framework. That is, the history and philosophy of the practice of adventure education reveal efforts made in the past by educators and philosophers to improve our society. Furthermore, the history of adventure education revealed clues about current thinking and practices of professionals in adventure education and experiential education. The value placed on the development of the whole person (Dewey), and the emphasis placed on physical involvement (Rousseau) and personal values (Hahn) were helpful as I shifted my thinking toward the future of adventure education with older adults.

As I move forward in the review of the literature, it is clear to me that the literature on adventure education as a whole was relatively vacant as it related to the development of the older adult. In order to begin to address the needs of the older adult, I turn to the literature on older adult learning in adventure education.

Learning in Adventure Education

Learning has been identified by educational psychologists as “a change in the individual caused by experience” (Kraft, 1999). Such “change” in the individual due to traditional, in-school learning environments is relatively well researched. Learning and teaching strategies in experiential education settings have also been proven effective in the literature (Boud, 1985; Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Reese, 1993). Learning and achievement in adventure education has historically been demonstrated through various course outcomes (McKenzie, 2003).

Historically, studies in adventure education have been conducted with young people in an Outward Bound setting, and until recently these studies have been made up of mostly “one-off” studies (where previous research designs were replicated with the exception of one changed variable) (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000). Research in adventure education has only recently begun to take advantage of multiple factor studies. McKenzie’s (2003) qualitative study was an example of a recent qualitative design that probed multiple factors in an effort to reveal which course factors made the largest impact on adventure education outcomes.

Learning in adventure education was frequently regarded in the literature in terms of a change in values (character), or emotional growth. From a conceptual standpoint, the technical knowledge gained within the context of adventure education, whether it has been plant identification, geology, anthropological insights about First Nations, or how to set a rappel correctly, has been secondary to the larger personal and interpersonal learning.

According to Kraft (1999), adventure education provided opportunities for learning and change related to critical thinking; problem solving (cognitive learning theory); conditioning and reinforcement (behavioral theory); modeling and imitating (social learning theory); a range of bodily and kinesthetic, personal, and interpersonal learning based activities

(multiple intelligence theory); mental, physical and moral growth (Dewey's progressive education); and active learning that relies on concrete experience (Piaget's developmental theory) (p. 181). The emphasis that was discovered in the literature on character and personal development prompted a cursory reading and review of the therapeutic adventure literature. While therapeutic adventure lay outside of the scope of my research, I viewed the conceptual overlap between therapeutic adventure education and developmental adventure education close enough to briefly review the literature in that area.

Therapeutic Adventure Education

Numerous landmark studies appeared in the literature that served to review therapeutic adventure education research. Achuff's (1997, as cited in Hans, 2000) literature review of wilderness programming cited research that documented a reduction of participant recidivism rates, increasing participant self-esteem, decreasing aggressive behavior and drug use, increasing locus of control, producing feelings of accomplishment and success, improving problem solving and decision making skills, and improving peer relations (p. 36). Several other meta-analyses (Cason, 1993; Cason & Gillis, 1978; Gillis & Thomsen, 1996; Hans, 2000; Hattie, Marsh, Neill, & Richards, 1997) were conducted that contributed to a broader understanding of learning outcomes in adventure programming as it related to therapeutic gains. Hans (2000) suggested that overall, the one construct that was most researched in these studies was self-concept (p. 38).

Hattie et al.'s 1997 meta-analysis aimed at examining the effects of adventure programming on a diverse array of outcomes. Approximately 30 of these 96 studies included a report on changes related to *adult* students. Importantly, however, none of the 30 studies in this analysis included *older* adult subjects. Prior to Hattie et al.'s 1997 study, Cason and Gillis, in 1978, had authored the only other meta-analysis of adventure programs. Interestingly, their

study included an analysis of adventure programs whose students were ages 11 years - college freshmen.

I noted three observations about the research thus far mentioned:

1. There was an absence of research that examined the experience of the learner in adventure education (i.e., describing what something is like for the participant, striving to reveal the lived experience of adventure education)—instead the research appeared to be overwhelmingly outcome based, and focused primarily on testing whether a feature or element of programming worked;
2. Studies that have examined psychological processes of learning in adventure education have been mostly focused on the self-concept of the learner;
3. Much of the research that has been conducted within adventure education focused on the effects of programming for adolescents and young adults, and therefore failed to satisfactorily inform the practice and research of adventure educational with older adults.

The review of literature on learning in adventure education now turns to the subcategory of older adults.

Older Adults

Older adult was defined in several ways in the literature. Within gerontology, adulthood was sub-divided into young-old (65-74 years), old-old (75-84 years), and oldest-old (over 85 years) (Dychtwald, 1999). Elderhostel, the purveyor of educational programs for older adults, makes its courses available for individuals 50 years and older. The Central Oregon Council on Aging (COCA) referred to individuals at age 60 and up as older adults (D. Johnson, personal communication, January 25, 2004). Defining older adulthood by a chronological age was an arbitrary act at COCA, as members participating in this

organization's programs defied most efforts to be classified by age. To this extent, there were 90 year olds who were extremely active and therefore resisted the term senior, and there were those at 50 years who by virtue of physical ailments readily consider themselves senior (personal communication).

The third-age movement that is afoot in Europe, which makes learning available to older adults, avoided age related limitations to their understanding of older adult. Fisher (1993) suggested that, "...others have underscored the importance of viewing older adulthood from the perspective of developmental periods rather than a single time frame or on the basis of chronological age" (p. 97). Levine (2004) commented that any designation or grouping to which men and women were assigned was usually inconsistent and based on the bias of the person doing the classifying. Discrepancies exist, according to Levine, between chronological age and biological age, due to factors that have to do with working conditions, nutrition, stress, substance abuse, and so forth.

Longer life spans have meant that psychologists are currently adjusting parameters for old age (Dychtwald, 1998). He suggested that individuals will be "young" and "middle aged" longer, extending the age at which people will become "old" (p. 86). Part of this movement and redefinition spawned the emergence of a new developmental stage, "middlescence," which spans age 40-60 years (Dychtwald, 1998, p. 88). Middlescence was described in the literature as the postponement of the middle part of life. The markers for a definition of old were understood to be a moving target, and Dychtwald (1998) pointed out that society was very slow to respond to rising longevity. This reluctance was identified as a political and economic resistance to acknowledging the needs of older adults (Dychtwald, 1998, p. 95).

For the purposes of this study, I have primarily organized my study around the broad category of older adults that Elderhostel has adopted as 50 years plus. However, I also carried an awareness that definitions of old age are in the process of being "unhinged from the

obsolete marker of 65” (Dychtwald, 1998, p. 94), and will continually be reset and indexed in the years ahead as the powerful demographic of the baby boomer generation impacts understanding of aging.

The adventure education literature on this growing group of people remains sparse. The general lack of research in this regard helped not only to confirm some of the broader realities of the older adult set forth by Dychtwald (1989, 1999), but this sparseness was also suggestive of the need to advance what was known about older adults and adventure education.

Older Adult Learning in Adventure Education

Ewert’s (1983) work provided some of the initial research in the area of older adults in recreation, revealing in a general way some of the more intrinsic benefits associated with older adult activity in outdoor pursuits. Sugerman’s research with older adults in adventure programs significantly expanded an understanding of trends in programming with this group (2000), and illuminated the motivational factors for older adult participation in adventure programs (2001). Sugerman (1983) also provided the field with a rare descriptive study that offered a detailed field report of a four-day Elderhostel wilderness experience. Sugerman’s (1983) descriptive study was unique to the literature because of its length and its wilderness context. As Sugerman (2000) later noted, developmental-oriented adventure education programs with older adults typically revolved around single-day, non-wilderness experiences. Furthermore, Sugerman’s (1983) field study was helpful because it documented what happened, but did not explore the meaning behind the events, or the experience of the participants.

Blanding (1992) studied the influence of outdoor adventure programs upon older adults’ attitudes toward selected adventure activities. She discovered that attitudinal changes

and perceived behavioral control shifted with respect to rafting/canoeing and hiking in the outdoors. Blanding cited an absence of research studying active older adults. Most research of older adults, according to Blanding, was conducted on homebound or disabled older adults. She also reported that studies which were conducted in outdoor recreation were often conducted with subjects who were approached at trailheads or otherwise using a natural resource area for recreation (Blanding, 1994, p. 62). Blanding's observation that older adult outdoor recreation research typically involved questionnaires and surveys with participants at trailheads further suggested an absence of research that considered the lived experience, or the process, of the participant during the actual experience.

Pohl, Borrie, and Patterson's (2000) research pointed to the potential for developmental adventure education programs to contribute to valuable shifts in perspective. Interviews with 24 women revealed that wilderness recreation can influence women's lives in the forms of "self-sufficiency, a "shift in perspective," "connection to others," and "mental clarity" (p. 1). While the wilderness context of this research was unique and helped to describe the potential for the experience to transform the lives of participants, it was suggestive of the missing literature that Sugerman (2001) alluded to when she reported that much of the data gathered on older adults in adventure settings was gathered from *recreational* settings (p. 30)—rather than educational settings.

A detailed review of the literature of older adults in adventure education revealed limitations of the literature in this regard. The dearth of adventure education studies involving older adults was of primary concern. The absence of studies that explored the experience of the learner, and the incidence of studies that restricted themselves to single-day, recreational activities were viewed as limitations to the existing base of literature. Because of the scarcity of focused research, my study's review of the literature required me to cast a broad net, drawing in research from a range of related settings and types of programs. Before moving

toward a review of the literature on reflection in adventure education, following is a summary of research in the more specific domain of older adults in adventure education.

In an effort to synthesize the learning that has occurred for me by way of reviewing previous research, the following summary proceeds by chronicling a number of observations that directly relate to my study:

- No research was discovered that examined the experience of the older adult participant in a developmental-oriented adventure education programs;
- Very little research in adventure education focused on older adults;
- Very little research considered the experience of the learner;
- Studies that examined the process of learning in adventure education have mostly considered facets of self-concept formation;
- Old-age as a construct was a moving target for researchers in adventure education. Individual perspectives on aging and advancing technology made it difficult to arrive definitively at a meaning of “old age.” The working definition of older adults for this study adopted a primary age of 50 years, but recognizes that gerontologists use 65-74 years of age to mark “young old age;”
- Research has been conducted on: the *events* of an older adult wilderness trip, on the *motivation* of older adult adventure education participants, *recreational benefits* to older adult participants, attitude changes of older adult participants of recreation programs, and increases in connection with others and enhanced mental clarity.

The literature review now shifts attention toward the second major section: reflection in adventure education. The section on reflection yielded greater insight about experiential learning.

Reflection in Experiential Education

The act of reflecting on experience as an essential component of learning has been a topic of interest for numerous educational thinkers and philosophers. Within this major section

four clarifying tasks were undertaken in order to bring about a fuller understanding of reflection:

1. Review definitions and perspectives of reflection;
2. Briefly discuss the three research categories of reflection that were observed in the literature;
3. Review selected philosophical literature describing the concept of reflection in adventure education; and
4. Consider contributions made to the area of reflection by numerous scholars in the broader area of experiential learning.

Definitions and Perspectives of Reflection

Reflection as a concept in education is complex and abstract (Atkins & Murphy, 1993) and is as ambiguous as the terms outdoor education, experiential education, and experiential learning. While Atkins and Murphy (1993) found a lack of definition and a lack of clarity in their literature review on reflection, Knapp (1993) was more conclusive in his determination that there is broad agreement on definitions. A few definitions found in the literature were as follows:

- ...the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective.” (Boyd & Fales, 1983, p. 4)
- ...reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations. (Boud, Keogh & Walker, 1985, p. 1)
- Reflection is a process of transformation of the indeterminate “raw material” of our experiences...into determinate products (understandings, commitment, actions), a transformation effected by our determinate labour (our thinking about the relationship between thought and action, and the relationship between individual and society), using determinate means of production (communication, decision making, and action). (Kemmis, in Knapp, 1993, p. 16)

Knapp (1993) pointed out how broadly represented the term was in the literature, and by doing so offered an appreciation for the complexity associated with the breadth of meaning for reflection:

The idea of reflection has carried many synonyms in the educational literature. Some of these other words are: debriefing, processing, active processing, critiquing, closure, elaboration, bridging, reviewing, thinking about thinking (meta cognition), critical thinking, facilitating, analyzing, publishing, generalizing, teaching for transfer, evaluating, interviewing, inquiry, design, and consideration. (p. 17)

For the purposes of my study, I strove to develop a fuller working understanding of reflection. This was accomplished in part with an amalgam of ideas authored by three authors. First, I borrowed from Boud, Keogh and Walker's (1995) previously expressed idea of reflection: "reflection in the context of learning is a generic term for those intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations" (p. 1). Second, I worked with Caine and Caine's (1994) three-part definition of reflection, which incorporated: (a) thinking about the educative feedback given to the individual from others, (b) unassisted self-observation, and (c) "an ability to think about one's thinking, feeling, and behavior (metacognition) in relationship to making deep personal changes in one's person" (p. 160). I also relied on Caine and Caine's (1994) ideas about the nonanalytical form of reflection they referred to as "contemplation" (p. 160). Lastly, I worked with the social-action idea of reflection that Mezirow (1991) provided, which suggested that inherent to reflection was a process of interpreting an experience by judging its effect on the authenticity or truthfulness of our ideas (p. 11). Mezirow also brought focus to the literature review on reflection with interesting thoughts regarding "mindfulness" as a related activity to reflection. More will be said about Mezirow's ideas in a future section.

Categories of Reflection in the Literature

The notion of reflection in education was contained in three categories in the educational literature: (a) Research that strove to examine the practice of reflection on behalf of healthcare professionals (Greenwood, 1993; Jarvis, 1992; McCaugherty, 1991; Powell, 1989). This research examined approaches to using theoretical models of reflection (i.e., Schon's (1983) reflection-in-action) in the training and development of professionals in their practice; (b) Research that studied communication and interaction dynamics in adventure education (Brown, 2002; Priest & Naismith, 1993); and (c) anecdotal works which served to foster an informal understanding about the theoretical mechanics of reflection.

This last category was the most helpful because it pertained the most to my study of the lived experience of learner reflection in experiential education. This anecdotal literature explored reflection in learning (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985; Sugerman et al., 2000); how to promote reflection in conjunction with values education (Maher, 2003); and discussed participant reflection of experience using writing (Walker, 1985).

I included in this third and last category of research on reflection, my study of a set of late-life activities termed life review and reminiscence. This subset of reflection literature on life review and reminiscence grew in importance during data collection, as my experience in the field revealed to me that my older adult participants appeared to participate in a story-like style of reflection that resembled life review and reminiscence.

While not all researchers agree on defining aspects of life review and reminiscence (i.e., benefits of life review, who is prone to conduct life review, health concerns related to life review, precipitating events of life review), these processes are treated in this dissertation to be more or less interchangeable. Life review and reminiscence were characterized and understood in this dissertation with the help of the following points:

1. "Life review is the relatively systematic reflection upon one's life and personal history--the story of life's twists and turns, ups and downs, successes and failures" (Haight, 2001, p. 3). Erikson (1982) saw life review as a process that

brings individuals closer to integrity, the final psychosocial stage of wisdom and peace (Haight, 2001). "Life review has been described as a soul-searching or meaning-making process through which individuals learn to evaluate, integrate, and accept life as it has been lived." (Haight, 2001, p. 3)

2. Reflection is an attempt to integrate past life experiences such that one feels his or her life has meaning. It is largely assumed (perhaps mistakenly) that the process of life review is universal, that it can be done as an individual or with a group, and that life review leads to positive outcomes. (Merriam, 1993)
3. Life review involved the construction, explanation, and evaluation of life histories, and is proposed by some (Butler, 1973; Staudinger, 1989) as a positive and enhancing process that built toward stability and growth in later life. (Staudinger, 1989)
4. "The life review process has a season, which is frequently, though not necessarily, old age. In old age, people often show a readiness and an eagerness to share, often precipitated by the development of trust." (Haight, 2001, p. 2)
5. "Reminiscence came to be a guided and structured form of self-exploration, a means to explaining and reviewing a life, through personal accounting" (Bornat, 1994, p. 3). Reminiscence referred to a non-facilitated form of looking back at life experience.
6. Reminiscence and life review were both equated to the act of retrospection, and found to be effective in increasing health and wellness of a geriatric study group. (Kiernat, 1979, in Haight, 1991)

Haight, Nomura, and Nomura (2000, as cited in Haight, 2001) discovered that men and women conducted life reviews differently, with women disclosing more personal thoughts and feelings and men sharing their thoughts about their lifetime of work, and dropping out of the life review process more often. The authors found that men struggled to conduct a life review. Men's tendency to disclose fewer personal thoughts and feelings, to talk mostly about a lifetime of work, and their proclivity to drop out of the process more often than women is supported in other research (Haight et al., 2000). Haight et al. (2000) cited literature on intimacy (Monroe, Baker, & Roll, 1997) that supported their findings on gender differences in life review process. This area of research was important to discuss at this time because the work on life review and reminiscence was the strongest link that could be found between older adult learning and reflection. Furthermore, reading in the area of reminiscence and life review

seemed to prepare me for what I might discover in my research. Lastly, Haight's (2001) research provided a cautionary note to practitioners and researchers working with older adults in adventure education settings. She reported:

Although our experiences with older adults and life review have been overwhelmingly positive, the effects of such personal disclosures also may have negative consequences—for example, when people have second thoughts about what they have shared and wish they had not done so. This self-doubt is similar to buyer's remorse, when one eagerly makes a purchase and then regrets it. With buyer's remorse, purchases can be returned. Personal disclosures, however, come with no such return policy. Remorse over the revelation of personal information most often occurs in the absence of mutual trust and support in the interpersonal exchange of life review. (p. 3)

Life review (Butler, 1963; Haight, 2001; Merriam, 1993; Staudinger, 1989) and reminiscence (Bornat, 1994; Coleman, 1994; Haight, 1991) are similar in nature and serve as a form of review of past life experience. Interestingly, these activities do not appear in the recreation or experiential education literature.

Philosophical Literature Informing Reflection in Adventure Education

The third task within this section was to further define reflection in adventure education by distilling important and relevant philosophical points made in the literature on reflection. After examining much of the literature on reflection, and considering its relevance to my study of older adults in adventure education, I located three authors whose scholarship has guided my thinking the greatest. John Dewey was selected because of his fundamental contributions to experiential education. Jack Mezirow's ideas were considered in this light because of the influence his work has had on adult learning theory. And lastly, David Kolb's work was highlighted in this section because of the core contributions he has made to experiential learning theory.

John Dewey.

John Dewey (1933) has been recognized by many as establishing significant linkages between experience and reflection. Dewey helped to introduce what would later be one of the core principles of experiential education: that experience and reflection occur in an opposite manner from what might be termed *the scientific method*. In more traditional science, deductive reasoning is used, which historically places the development of a hypothesis in front of the experience. Dewey (1933) described reflection as an “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 3).

Dewey proposed, as part of his model on reflective thought and action, that experience is primary and reflective activity is secondary (Miettinen, 2000, p. 65). In other words, Dewey placed reflection (thinking and theorizing) after an experience in his timeline of events for learning. For Dewey (1933), thinking and reflective thought came about as the result of a failed experience—an adopted habit or practice that no longer served the individual and which demanded a different resolution. Dewey wrote, “The origin of thinking is doubt, confusion, perplexity” (1933, p. 21). And, “Reflective thought is guided by the search for resolution” (p. 21).

In my critique of Kolb’s (1984) theory of experiential learning, I discovered with the help of Miettinen (2001), that Dewey’s idea of reflection had perhaps been distorted and molded by Kolb into its own distinct stage of learning in effort to author his theory. Dewey’s (1933) ideas about reflection, as described in *How We Think*, suggested that reflection is not a separate and distinct stage apart from experience or thought. Rather, thinking *is* reflection (Dewey, 1933, p. 107). Dewey held that our understanding of something comes about via direct relationship and experience with that object. “Reflective thought is encouraged by direct experience. Persons do not just think at large, nor do ideas arise out of nothing...” (1933, p. 99). For Dewey, reflection was a formalized thinking process, and contained none of the

nonanalytical features to which Mezirow and others referred. Reflection for Dewey was part of science and entailed proving or disproving a hypothesis (Dewey, 1968).

His “Five Phases of Reflective Thought” are illustrated here in order to describe his contributions to the topic:

1. Suggestions—in which the mind leaps forward to a possible solution.
2. Intellectualization—of the difficulty or perplexity that has been felt (directly experienced).
3. Guiding idea/ the hypothesis—to initiate and guide observation and other operations in collection of factual material.
4. Reasoning or elaboration—of the idea or supposition as an idea.
5. Testing the hypothesis—by overt or imaginative action. (Dewey, 1933, p. 107)

Dewey considered his phases of reflective thought to operate free of any sequence or rules, including the suggestion that some steps may be absent and others may be passed over hurriedly.

Dewey’s concept of reflection, however, extended beyond the notion of problem solving and included to a large extent a way of thinking and being. The outcome of thinking—the result of reflective activity—for the individual, according to Dewey, included a shift in values. He wrote: “vital inference always leaves one who thinks with a world that is experienced as different in some respect, for some object in it has gained in clarity and orderly arrangement...genuine thinking winds up, in short, with an appreciation of new values” (p. 100).

Perhaps what was most useful in focusing my thinking on Dewey’s ideas was his idea that reflection—or thinking—comes about as a result of a perplexing situation, and that it flows naturally as a part of the thinking process for the individual. Seeing reflection in this light allowed me to consider the reflection of older adults as an event that occurs independent

of facilitation. Lastly, Dewey's belief that reflection on experience sets the learner up for a possible shift in values was helpful in the process of making meaning of my study. With the help of Miettinen (2000), I was able to free the act of reflection from a mechanistic and analytical process. What remained equally questionable and interesting was Dewey's belief that reflection must be initiated by doubt, confusion, or a perplexing problem of some kind. These are all valuable ideas that I returned to throughout my study.

Jack Mezirow.

The meaning of reflection and reflective learning gained came into sharper focus for me with consideration of the work of Mezirow (1991). Mezirow suggested that there was an "egregious disregard for the function of reflection" (p. 99). The tenets held by Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory offered my study's review of literature a valuable frame of reference through which older adult learning and reflection in adventure education could be studied and interpreted.

Transformative learning theory advanced the key idea that reflective learning is an uncommon practice for adults, as it requires learners to willfully reassess the existing schemas upon which their thinking and action is predicated (Mezirow, 1991). I suggest *willfully*, because as Mezirow pointed out, social processes do not readily invite a conscious reexamination of our schemas—or established sets of beliefs. I view this as an uncommon practice among adults in modern life because it requires a degree of self-examination—or as Mezirow put it, it means reconsidering how an experience might inform previously held truths or beliefs. This act of reconsidering previously held truths is a fundamental component of transformative learning theory, and remained an important thing for me to consider throughout my study.

Similar to Dewey (1933), Mezirow (1933) believed that reflective learning should be one of the primary goals of adult education. One part of Mezirow's (1933) theory mirrored Freire's (1989) notion of praxis in that his idea of reflection incorporated the element of a social call to action. Mezirow argued that educational experiences must encourage the adult learner to critique their own perspective via a process of reflection.

Dewey's work on reflection is one of the primary cornerstones for the foundation of Mezirow's (1933) transformative learning theory. Mezirow acknowledged Dewey's definition of reflection as: "an active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusion to which it tends" (Dewey, as cited in Mezirow, 1991, p. 100). Mezirow (1991) expanded this idea of Dewey's by suggesting that reflection is the validation of prior learning: "We seek validation when, in the process of interpreting an experience, we find reason to question the truth, appropriateness, or authenticity of either a newly expressed or implied idea or one acquired through prior learning" (p. 11).

Mezirow (1991) defined reflection as "the intentional reassessment of prior learning to reestablish its validity by identifying and correcting distortions in its content, process, or premises" (p. 15). This validation of prior learning, according to Mezirow, comes in the form of one of three types of reflection: content reflection, process reflection, or premise reflection. Content reflection involved an awareness of our experience and a critique of *what* we are perceiving, thinking, feeling and acting upon. Process reflection involved both an awareness of our experience and a critique of *how* we are perceiving, thinking, feeling, and acting. And premise reflection included a critique of *why* we have perceived, thought, felt, or acted in such a manner.

The occasion upon which adults' learning experiences require them to critique aspects of their prior learning (i.e., to reevaluate the basis of their action), and therefore to question the

truth, appropriateness, or authenticity of that learning is rare according to Mezirow (1933). Socialization processes tend to firmly establish an individual's schemas, making it difficult for adults to reexamine these "meaning perspectives"(p. 13).

Mezirow (1933) argued that not a lot of thinking and learning was reflective in nature for adults. Much of the time, according to Mezirow, when attempting to solve problems, adults participated in one of two types of problem solving: non-reflective action or reflective action. The category of non-reflective action included habitual and thoughtful action. Habitual action falls outside of focal awareness and included actions like cooking a meal, while thoughtful action required an individual to actively access previous learning like when having a conversation in a foreign language, but it does not require—or encourage—"appraisal" of the previous learning (p. 107).

The second means by which adult learners solve problems was by utilizing what was understood as thoughtful action, or "mindfulness." Mindfulness was a term that Mezirow (1933) borrowed from Langer (p. 114). Mezirow described Langer's "mindfulness" as a process or state of being that was characterized by:

- Awareness of content and multiple perspectives.
- Being more likely to be (aware) and have accurate perceptions when attending to the unfamiliar and the deviant, than when attending to the familiar.
- Welcoming new information, involving oneself in more than one view and focusing on process before outcomes, control over context, and creation of new categories.
- Valuing a process-oriented education—while mindlessness is associated with goal-oriented education (p. 115).

The concept of mindfulness (i.e., thoughtful action, or reflective action) added a rich theoretical dimension to the study, and offered an explanation of the process of thinking and learning for older adults that others in the literature had not. Mindfulness, or reflective action,

due to the inherent demands it places on the learner to perform unhabituated and novel acts and the joint focus on process and content, shared exciting linkages to adventure education. By its very description, mindfulness, when viewed as Mezirow did (as a successful way to pursue problem solving), helped me to identify the possible role adventure education played with older adult learning.

Mezirow's concept of mindfulness was valuable to my study because of a number of related links that exist between this particular form of reflection and the type of reflection and thinking that is commonly associated with adventure education. Toward this end, adventure education can be said to operate in the here and now, and because it values a balanced focus between process-oriented education (i.e., development of meta skills and awareness) and content-oriented education (i.e., technical skill development), mindfulness can be viewed as a form of reflection that supports these characterizations.

The relevance of this concept to my study was partially reflected in Langer's (1989) claim that "among the aged, mindfulness is significantly related to greater activity, independence, confidence, alertness, vigor, sociability, and length of life" (as cited in Mezirow, 1991, p. 116). Mindfulness emerged as a core conceptual component of older adult reflection in adventure education, and will be revisited in Chapters 5.

On a broader note, Mezirow's (1991) three different types of reflection provided depth to the relatively intangible act of reflection. Transformative learning theory makes way for the learner to engage in a multimodal means of reflection. That is, transformative learning theory accounts for the variety of levels and ways of thinking and relating to thought. Content reflection, process reflection, and critical reflection provided learners an opportunity to examine the what, how, and why of their learning. Moreover, transformative learning theory incorporated the affective side of thinking and reflecting by acknowledging the presence and role of feelings in the process of shaping adult schemas and meaning perspectives.

In summarizing the parts of Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory that guided my thinking, there were numerous aspects that deserved emphasis. I found great value in the parallel nature of Mezirow's transformational learning theory and a philosophy of experiential education (Appendix A). Nowhere else in the literature on reflection did I encounter the kind of similarity that exists between Mezirow's ideas about adult problem solving and reflective thought, and adventure based experiential learning. These two sets of ideas appeared to possess considerable agreement between them as it related to the value of: reflection in learning, the process dimensions of learning, metacognition in learning, personal awareness and potential for change in the learner, and reflective learning.

In addition, Mezirow's idea that learning and reflection for adults was grounded in an internal response to experience, which lead to awareness and possible change among individuals, was key for me in helping to develop the idea that adult learning and reflection in adventure education could be a dynamic process relevant to adult development.

Lastly, Mezirow's "mindfulness" added to the discussion about the experience of reflection for older adults in an adventure education setting. With the help of Mezirow (1991) and Langer (as cited in Mezirow, 1991), mindfulness supported the picture of the older adult learner engaged in an active and alert manner, learning new things, being exposed to diverse ideas and perspectives, and poised to challenge old ideas that they possessed.

David Kolb.

Despite coming under heavy scrutiny from Mezirow (1991) for his treatment of reflection as a dialectical opposite, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory remains an important building block for contemporary researchers and practitioners across many disciplines (Brennan, 2003). Due to its prominence in the construction of many other learning

theories, it was imperative to consider Kolb's writing when reviewing the literature on the reflective process in learning.

Kolb (1984) was recognized in the literature for his synthesis of a number of others' theories, including Dewey's theory of reflective thought in action and Lewin's feedback cycle. Kolb's work was among the most frequently referenced where teaching and learning in experiential learning settings was considered (Holman, 1997).

Essentially, Kolb (1984) maintained that reflection existed as a distinct process that operated as part of a four-stage cycle. The four stages, concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation, were set on two intersecting axes that served to explain the dynamic link between grasping and transforming experience. Kolb (1984) defined learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (1984, p. 5). While Kolb said very little about how reflection occurred for the learner, reflection existed, according to experiential learning theory, as one of the key processes that helped transform experience.

In response to Kolb's work, Holman and Pavlica (1997) argued that reflection was part of "experience"—not a separate and primary device giving meaning to pure experience (p. 142). Dewey's (1933) writing on the topic supported Holman and Pavlica's assertion and suggested that reflection is not separate, but is intrinsic to experience (Miettinen, 2001).

Other Contributions to Theory of Reflection

Sugerman, Doherty, Garvey, and Gass (2000) have contributed to an understanding of reflection by synthesizing their review of the reflection literature and proposing that reflection was made up of three key steps: (1) reorganizing perceptions, (2) forming new relationships, and (3) influencing future thoughts and actions (p. 1). These steps were informed by themes inherent to several definitions that they consulted in the literature on reflection. Sugerman et

al. (2000) suggested that the outcome of these three steps is the process of making meaning, or learning, and suggested that such an outcome is inherent to a definition of reflection.

Previously, Atkins and Murphy's (1993) research on reflection helped to build consensus that in fact, a changed perspective was among one of the key outcomes of reflective learning. Atkins and Murphy (1993) authored a condensed view of the learning process after reviewing the topic of reflection and suggested that the reflective learning process can be broken into three integrated stages, beginning with: (a) an awareness of uncomfortable feelings and thoughts, (b) critical analysis of feelings and knowledge, and (c) development of a new perspective. In their synthesis of the reflection literature, Atkins and Murphy distilled the skills required of the reflexive learner. The skills included self-awareness, description (essentially, salient memory of experience), critical analysis (examining situation and challenging assumptions), synthesis (solving problems by combining new knowledge with old knowledge), and evaluation (making judgments about the value). The sum of these processes—which place centrality on critical analysis, and the challenging of assumptions—can ultimately lead the learner to a new perspective of self and/or the world.

Caine and Caine's (1994) contribution to my knowledge of reflection as a mechanism in learning was located within the context of their work on active learning. Their highly cited text, *Making Connections: Teaching and the Human Brain*, helped to cast reflection as a 3-step process: (a) reflection on feedback from others, (b) reflection without assistance, and (c) personal awareness of deep meaning (p. 158). In this highly cited work, Caine and Caine theorized that individuals used "active processing" to make sense of experience and draw meaning from events nearly constantly. This process was both conscious and unconscious. Bacon (1980) called this process the transderivational search, whereby an individual unconsciously scanned her or his bank of past experiences in order to make sense of an event that was unfolding in the present.

Contrary to a theory of learning understood as the Outward Bound Process, proposed by Walsh and Golins (1976) and later reconceptualized by McKenzie (2003), Caine and Caine theorized that in order for reflection and learning to occur, learners needed to be relieved of “threat” (1994, p. 80). While Caine and Caine highlighted the benefits of a stress free environment that were conducive to learner openness and aliveness essential to making new connections, common knowledge in adventure education suggested that a modicum of stress promoted learning.

Not only did Caine and Caine’s (1994) thinking about relieving the individual of “threat” in order to promote reflection and learning break from current knowledge in adventure education, but their theory also freed reflection from a mechanistic step in a broader learning process, and viewed reflection as a nearly continual process. In this way, Caine and Caine’s ideas broke from Kolb’s theory of experiential learning.

While the major work of Dewey, Mezirow, and Kolb illuminated the general nature of reflection as a phenomenon in learning, more specific references to reflection in adventure education were made by others (Barrett & Greenaway, 1995; Hopkins & Putnam, 1993; Nadler & Luckner, 1997; Wurdinger, 1997). The contributions that were helpful to my thinking in the context of reflection in adventure education emerged from the work of Coleman (1976), Gager (1982), Hovelynck (2001), Joplin (1981), McKenzie (2003), Pfeiffer and Jones (1980), and Walsh and Golins (1976). For the most part, these contributions helped contribute to a historical base of knowledge focusing on reflection in adventure education. A summary of these contributions is represented in Table 3.

In addition to these highly cited and key works that integrated reflection into their theories of learning, there were others that helped to inform my views about reflection in adventure education. Boud, Keough, and Walker’s (1985) three-stage model of reflection accounted for basic processes and mechanisms essential to reflection. Boud et al. (1985)

suggested that there were three essential steps involved in reflecting upon experience: (a) Returning to experience, (b) attending to feelings, and (c) reevaluating experience.

Table 2. Experiential Learning Theories Draw Upon Reflection

Coleman’s (1976) information assimilation model	Coleman’s ideas about experiential learning can be considered as a building block for understanding experiential learning and reiterated the value and role of reflection in learning. Coleman identified four steps in experiential learning: (1) “Carrying out an action and seeing the effects of this action”; (2) “understanding these effects in a particular instance” to an extent that if the same thing were to happen again the learner would know what to expect; (3) generalization, or “the ability to see the connection between actions and events”; and (4) action, or “application through action in a new circumstance”. One can sense the presence of reflection throughout the last two steps.
Gager’s (1982) experiential learning process flow	Gager articulated how experience can be utilized for learning. Reflection existed as a necessary component of adventure-based education, and was depicted in his experiential learning process flow: (1) Learner is placed in a “demanding reality context,” (2) which necessitated the mastery of new, applied skills, followed immediately by, (3) responsible, challenging action coupled with, (4) opportunity for critical analysis and reflection.
Hovelynck’s (2001) practice-theory	Hovelynck’s 3-stage practice-theory model explained experiential learning in the context of facilitating Outward Bound groups: (1) Recognizing (initial awareness of behavior), (2) acknowledging (participants “owning up” to their share in learning events), and (3) reconnoitering (explore alternatives and generate new possibilities for action).
Jarvis’s (1987) model of experiential learning	Jarvis’s model proposed that a person’s experience resulted in: (1) Reflective learning (contemplation, problem solving, or active experimentation); (2) nonreflective learning (absorbing information, unconsciously internalizing new understandings, or mechanically practicing new skills); or (3) nonlearning (rejecting learning, too preoccupied to learn, or just acting mechanically) (Fenwick, 2001).
McKenzie’s (2003) alternative model of student learning	McKenzie built on Walsh and Golins’ (1976) model to incorporate: (1) The importance of service as a means of teaching compassion; (2) instructors as a component of student learning; and, (3) the inclusion of reflection as an explicitly cognitive or sensory way of coming to know for the student. McKenzie argued for less individualistic identity formation-goals within Outward Bound, and proposed a more outward focus on student learning.
Pfeiffer and Jones’s (1980) experiential learning	Pfeiffer and Jones expanded on the work of Dewey (1938) and authored a 5-stage approach: (1) Experiencing, (2) publishing (sharing reactions and observations), (3) processing (discussing themes and patterns), (4) generalizing (inferring broad ideas about how the world outside of the activity works), and (5) applying (integrating learning into future behavior).

process	
Walsh and Golins (1976) model of the Outward Bound process	Walsh and Golins' seven stage model began with: (1) A learner, who is placed into a, (2) prescribed physical environment, and into a, (3) prescribed social environment, then given a, (4) characteristic set of problem solving tasks, thereby creating a, (5) state of adaptive dissonance, which leads to, (6) mastery or competence, which leads to, (7) reorganization of the meaning and direction of the experience (Priest & Gass, 1997).

Through these steps, the authors highlighted the importance of attending to numerous aspects that enhanced outcomes of reflection (i.e., association, integration, validation, and appropriation). Among Boud et al.'s (1985) significant contribution was their acknowledgement of the role of affect and feelings in the process of reflection and learning from experience. Lastly, Maher's (2003a, 2003b) use of questions and writing, within the context of the "Cognitive-Experiential Tri-cycle" model, has been used to support reflection, leading to deeper connections between beliefs, values, and experience.

In summary, the topic of learner reflection was presented in the literature as a relatively elusive topic. Within experiential education, reflection was a common cornerstone to theories and practices of learning (see Table 3). Numerous key points were presented by a variety of authors that proved especially helpful throughout my study as I continued to explore the experience of reflection for older adults (see Table 4).

One of the more helpful and relevant categories of literature on reflection in experiential education explored the mechanics of learner reflection. This grouping of literature offered a window into *life review* and *reminiscence*—phenomena in older adult life which are contemplative in nature and provided clues into the guided and self-initiated approaches to older adult reflection and thinking about the meaning of life. Generally speaking, life review and reminiscence can be described as internal "processes that bring individuals closer to integrity—the final psycho-social stage of wisdom and peace" (Haight, 2001, p. 3).

Reminiscence was found to improve the health and wellness of a geriatric study group (Haight, 1991). There was also found to be striking differences in the way men and women conduct life reviews—with men being highly mechanistic, talking mostly of a lifetime of work, and tending to drop out of life review more frequently than women (Haight, 1991).

Table 3. Valuable Components to a Definition of Reflection

Author(s)	Key Ideas Contributing to Knowledge of Reflection
Boud, Keogh, and Walker (1995)	“Intellectual and affective activities in which individuals engage to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations” (p. 1).
Caine and Caine (1994)	Reflection includes: a) Thinking about feedback, b) unassisted self-observation, c) ability to think about one’s thinking, and d) the notion of “contemplation” (p. 160).
Haight (2000, 2001)	Life review serves as a reflection upon one’s personal history, and is an effort to make sense of the past and accept it. Life review was an old adulthood event and found to increase health and wellness of older adults. In older adulthood people possess an eagerness to share (reflect)—often precipitated by trust. Men and women were said to conduct life review differently.
Merriam (1993)	Life review was an attempt to integrate past life experiences such that one feels her or his life has meaning.
Mezirow (1991)	Transformative learning theory proposed that adults learned by being engaged in a willful examination of existing beliefs and perspectives. This reflective learning was proposed as a rare type of learning because of the conscious examination of schemas that it required of the learner. “...a process of interpreting an experience by judging its effect on the authenticity or truthfulness of our ideas” (p. 11). Mindfulness, or thoughtful action, informs reflection by bringing to it a variety of qualities: an awareness of diverse perspectives, a welcoming of new information, a focus on process over content, and an interest in reorganizing one’s perspective—or schema.

In considering the reflection of older adults, Merriam and Caffarella (1999) described one aspect of older adult reflection when they wrote: “...older adults have closets and bags

full of pictures, souvenirs, and notes that comprise a potential for learning tossed aside by a culture not suited for reflection...” (p. 53). This perspective echoed insights shared by Roberson (2002) and was similar to unpublished raw data of mine that was gleaned from a case study conducted in 2003 of an older adult international traveler. In these instances, older adults had what appeared to be treasure boxes from times in their lives that remained sealed. Roberson’s (2001, 2002) work indirectly underscored Merriam and Caffarella’s (1999) finding that older adults are not encouraged to reflect because of a lack of cultural support. Roberson (2002) studied older adult international travelers and generated impactful questions regarding the potential for international travel to change the perspective of its older adult participants.

Knapp (1983) helped to clearly illustrate the many different forms reflection took in the literature. Dewey’s foundational ideas on reflection helped to illustrate how reflection occurred both as a problem solving activity, when habit gets interrupted, and reflection as a way of being. Meanwhile, Mezirow’s (1991) work offered my study significant social relevance, as his thinking on reflection focused on the role of experience as a precursor to learning which lead to critically reshaping an individual’s map, or frame of reference—the value of which is reiterated in Table 4.

Also in this section featuring reflection in experiential education, the contributions of John Dewey, David Kolb, and Jack Mezirow were presented. A chart that summarizes their contributions to my thinking on the subject is presented in Table 5.

Importantly, my review of the literature on reflection revealed few studies that came close to examining the inner, lived experience of reflection for the outdoor education participant. Davidson (2001) explored the merits of qualitative research as a method for studying wilderness education of a cadre of boys, and Segal (1988) studied the phenomenology of wilderness experience and discovered the felt experience of numerous adults’ wilderness solos. In her mixed methods approach, McKenzie (2003) suggested that

through solo-time reflection, Outward Bound students “come to know” (Bai, 2001, in McKenzie, 2003, p. 21) through their senses in a way that appeared to supersede traditional cognitive forms of reflection. Additional authors, whose ideas are presented in Table 3, also helped me to value the rich tradition of reflection in experiential education.

Table 4. Influences of Dewey, Kolb, and Mezirow.

<i>John Dewey</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenged traditional ideas of science by valuing the direct experience enjoyed by learners. • Placed reflection after experience, thereby upending the deductive aspects of science. • Identified the learner’s experience as part of the act of thinking, and placed reflection opposite these actions.
<i>Jack Mezirow</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social action component of reflection includes an appraisal component of the previous learning. • Transformational learning theory revealed a multi-modal means of reflection available for adults: content reflection, process reflection and critical reflection.
<i>David Kolb</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contrary to Dewey, Kolb viewed reflection as a distinct process, apart from other processes in his four-stage learning cycle. • Extended the work of Kurt Lewin to help elaborate the workings of “feedback” as a learning mechanism in experiential learning. • Defined learning as the process of creating knowledge by transforming experience. • Said very little about how reflection occurs for the learner in his learning cycle.

While it is frequently discussed in the literature, reflection remained an infrequent primary construct in the body of experiential education research. Moreover, there is an absence of research that has examined the experience of reflection for the participant in adventure education. This gap was alarming, since the method behind experiential education has relied directly upon reflection in order to help experiences in adventure education become educative and beneficial to the learner.

Summary

Much of the literature that has informed this study has elements of ambiguity and potential confusion. Given this context, the meaning of key concepts was explored and definitions were proposed for use in the study. The concepts defined included outdoor education, adventure education, experiential education, experiential learning, older adult age, and reflection in learning.

Next, the review of the literature provided in this chapter established the state of knowledge in regards to the two research questions posed for the study. These two questions were: (a) What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adults in adventure education?; and (b) How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development? The review of research related to adventure education was organized to address the historical and philosophical origins of adventure education, and intended to convey the commonly held rationale for adventure programming.

Research on older adult learners in adventure education was scarce. The baby boom generation, soon to be identified as older adults, was identified as a group of people that is sure to reshape the manner in which services to older adults are made available (Dychtwald, 1999). It was shown that this growth will likely result in greater research in the area of older adults in adventure education. Sugerman (2001, 2000, 1989, 1983), Garvey and Garvey (1997), and Roberson (2000, 2001) have conducted a significant share of the most current work in this regard. Research on older adult reflection and their metacognition in adventure programming remained unclear, and questions remain unanswered regarding how reflection occurs for the older adult learner in an experiential learning environment. It was concluded that a study of the lived experience of reflection would be a logical and valuable contribution to the research on adventure education for older adults.

Conducting research within the developmental orientation of adventure education makes sense from a number of perspectives. First, a need to know more about the experience of older adult learners in adventure education has been established by researchers. Dychtwald's (1999) "agewave" appeared to be a reliable predictor of a developing trend in society, whereby it was expressed that the aging baby boomer generation will exert new demands on social structures. Furthermore, Sugerman (2000) and Garvey and Garvey (1997) contributed to a growing awareness of the knowledge that appeared to be missing within experiential education as it related to older adult learners. Lastly, moving forward with research in this area also made sense as explored from the practitioner's perspective. Related to the documented absence of theory, there is a growing need on behalf of practicing professionals for a finer understanding of older clients and students' learning. Having conducted a review of the influential literature in the area of adventure education, reflection, and older adult learning in adventure education, the next chapter will describe the study's design.

Chapter 3: Design of the Study

This study aimed toward gaining a deeper, working knowledge about older adults' experience of reflection, as a phenomenon within adventure education. Specifically, I was interested in learning about older adult experience of reflection in terms of: (a) What themes emerged as a part of older adults' reflection, and (b) how adventure education supported (or did not support) older adults' higher development. This study was designed to capture and analyze lived experience of reflection in adventure education for a small group of older adults. To best engage in this process of data collection, interpretation, and analysis, I turned to the use of a qualitative methodology—that of phenomenology. The following section orients the reader toward the philosophy of phenomenology, and offers an explanation both of my perspective as a researcher and an explanation of how I went about conducting the study.

Chapter One and Two demonstrated a need to extend not only what is currently understood about the participant's experience of adventure based education, but these chapters also revealed a gap in the knowledge base as it related to older adult engagement in adventure education. Phenomenology was well situated to contribute in this inquiry because of its strength in helping to develop an understanding of the meaning that individuals construct from events (Bogdan and Biklen, 1998). Phenomenology maintains that reality is constructed by individual perspectives, and it is this interpretation of reality that my study set out to portray.

Barrett and Greenaway (1995) suggested that future research about adventure programming was best pursued using “humanistic and qualitative approaches,” and pointed to the existing bulk of research on adventure education that was conducted in what they termed the “scientific research paradigm” (p. 52). These authors pointed out the inherent problems in this imbalance, maintaining that objectivist approaches not only failed to account for the

subjective nature of adventure experience, but they had not been effective in contributing to an understanding about the experience or the process of the participant (p. 53). Alison and Pomeroy (2001) supported this view and called for research examining and documenting the process of the individual's experience in outdoor adventure. Qualitative research methods, which includes phenomenology, were also demonstrated by Davidson (2001) to be "indispensable" in exploring the meaning young people ascribe to adventure based learning. Davidson (2001) argued the overall merits of qualitative methods as a powerful tool in exploring the subjective dimensions of the adventure education experience.

The Phenomenological Approach

Phenomenology is shaped by Heidegger's concepts of *Erkennen* and *Verstehen*, which relate to two forms of knowledge. Van Manen (1977) revealed the significance of these words and their relationship to phenomenology:

The word *Erkennen* refers to the traditional sense of theoretical-practical knowledge as it is used in empirical-analytical science. Heidegger employs a special use of the term "moods" to clarify the idea of knowledge that is capable of grasping the world—our personal world or the world of cultural experience. Heidegger's concept of understanding, *Verstehen*, is closely bound to the concepts of "world" and of "disclosure" or "unconcealment." Disclosures of human lifeworlds are instances of knowledge as understanding. Such disclosures are accomplished by means of a hermeneutic-phenomenological method. (p. 215)

Heidegger's "lifeworld" underscored the importance placed on the inner experience of the person.

Phenomenological analysis and interpretation of the lifeworlds of others requires keen observation, and as Stake (1995) suggested, it requires an empathic, responsible, and artful description of ordinary life. This analysis is accomplished only after thoughtfully "bracketing" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 192) one's assumptions, perceptions, and thoughts relevant to the phenomena under study. Quality research relies on researchers to effectively bracket their

experience—a preliminary stage of phenomenological research that Husserl called *epoche* (Creswell, 1998). During epoche, the phenomenological researcher's task is to account for her/his perception, values, and beliefs—their experience—concerning the phenomena. This process makes room for the research participant's subjective experience to come forth. "The attempt," Van Manen (1990) suggests "is to self-reflectively explicate assumptions, grounds, axioms, preferences, and points of view..." (p. 216)

In order to philosophically justify credible reporting of other's subjective experience, phenomenologists draw distinctions between studies that attempt to explore the natural sciences and those that attempt to study human science. Van Manen (1990) illustrated how "for Dilthey the proper subject matter for Geisteswissenschaften is the human world characterized by Geist—thoughts, consciousness, values, feelings, emotions, actions, and purposes, which find their objectifications in languages, beliefs, arts and institutions" (p. 3):

The preferred method for natural science, since Galileo, has been detached observation, controlled experiment, and mathematical or quantitative measurement. And when the natural science method has been applied to the behavior social sciences, it has retained procedures of experimentation and quantitative analysis. In contrast, the preferred method for human science involves description, interpretation, and self-reflective or critical analysis. We explain nature, but human life we must understand. (p. 4)

Creswell (1998) briefly illustrated four beliefs held by phenomenologists:

1. Phenomenology is a return to the traditional tasks of philosophy. Scientism has eclipsed the value and importance of the Greek tradition of philosophy as a search for wisdom.
2. Phenomenology is a philosophy without presuppositions. "Phenomenology's approach is to suspend all judgments about what is real—the *natural attitude*—until they are founded on a more certain basis" (p. 53).
3. Phenomenology values an intentionality of consciousness. Reality, and knowledge of an object or phenomenon, is dependent on one's consciousness of

that object. Creswell (1998) noted how this was a break from Cartesian subject-object duality (p. 53).

4. The refusal of the subject-object dichotomy. This is an extension of the intentionality of consciousness, as described above, and underscores how reality of an object is only perceived within the meaning of the experience of an individual (p. 53).

Phenomenology proposes to advance understanding of a topic by gaining insights into the actual experience of the phenomenon under study. This tradition of research is similar to other forms of interpretive research (i.e., narrative, ethnography, case study, and grounded theory) because of the emphasis—and value—that is placed upon the perspective of the participant. Within phenomenology, the notion of truth is accounted for by acknowledging the lived experience of the research participants. In other words, truth and reality are grounded in the life of each individual participant (Segal, 1998).

Phenomenological investigation is rooted in the philosophy of Husserl (Patton, 1990). There are at least two assumptions that guide this method. First, it is important that the phenomenological researcher does not assume to know the meaning one's research participants attach to things (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998). Second, perception and experience of a phenomenon play a vital role in helping the phenomenological researcher to come to know (Patton, 1990). In this regard, affect is tied to the cognitive dimension of thinking within the phenomenological tradition (Iozzi, 1989).

The process of making meaning (i.e., analysis of data) is ongoing and emergent in phenomenological research, and takes place simultaneously with data collection. Frequently, researchers adopting the phenomenological approach enter into the field *a priori*, without preconceived notions of what they will find. In fact, Van Manen (1990) argued that phenomenology should attempt to conduct research “without fixed procedures, techniques and

concepts” (p. 29). For my purposes, I chose to enter the field having conducted a literature review and with an articulated, but flexible, plan in hand for how I would come to an understanding of the phenomenon of reflection for my older adult research participants.

Researcher's Perspective

Within the phenomenological tradition, acknowledging the researcher's perspective is an essential part of the research process. Unlike more traditional methods, the researcher within this and most other qualitative approaches does not attempt to erase themselves from the reality context. Instead, the researcher's life and experience—their reality—is accounted for and viewed as an essential part of discovering what is happening with the phenomenon under study. Specifically, this section describes facets of my research perspective, and accounts for my views as a researcher.

Constructivism

Congruent with the philosophy of a phenomenological design, my study turns toward a presentation of my current research perspective—though even this I consider to be fluid and in a place of flux. Throughout my studies at Oregon State University's College of Education, I relied strongly on a constructivist's perspective to help guide and define my epistemological views (i.e., how I view the process of knowledge construction) and my ontological beliefs (i.e., how I understand reality to be represented). Considered a postmodern educational theory, constructivism rests upon a conviction that learning occurs in an active, hands-on manner that places a focus on the student's perspective and her or his readiness to learn.

Interestingly, my views about constructivism have come under scrutiny since the inception of this research. Numerous writings (Bowers, 2001, 2003, 2005; Orr, 1994) and lectures (Bowers, 2003b) have lead to thinking about world views and educational approaches

suiting for the challenges that our planet is faced with (i.e., marketplace globalization and the erosion of cultural and biological diversity; overpopulation and increased pressure on health, food, and water sources). A fuller description of my evolving perspective is beyond the scope of this study. However, the process of reflecting about my epistemology has been reminiscent of Mezirow's (1991) problem solving mode described in Chapter Two as mindfulness, or thoughtful action. My thinking has encouraged me to reconsider my previously established perspective, and has deepened my concern for the environment and fueled a generalized concern about the "alienated" (Unsoeld, 1978) way of life, about a "commodified" (Fenwick, 2001; Giroux, 1999) approach to education, and has prompted me to reconsider some of my basic educational views.

Philosophy of Experiential Education

Just as constructivism describes my essential epistemological framework, the philosophy of experiential education as set forth by the Association for Experiential Education (AEE) (2005), assisted me in organizing my thinking about education. This particular philosophy of experiential education is practiced as an extension of constructivism. Among other characteristics (see Appendix A), the AEE's philosophy of experiential education (2004) is comprised of numerous core beliefs that include:

- An explicit valuing of an authentic learning experience, whereby much of the content and process of learning presents itself through a learner's engagement with the world (AEE, 2004). This core belief extends intrinsic, humanistic value to the learner and the learner's experience, and acknowledges the worthiness of process as an endpoint.
- Shared power between individuals in the educational environment (i.e., between student-teacher).

- A belief that learning is supported by a spirit of collaboration (AEE, 2004), group problem solving, and a shared focus between relationship and task completion.
- An investment in personal awareness or change (i.e., of attitudes, skills, or knowledge). Underpinning this core belief is a value statement about humility and a self-effacing attitude on behalf of the teacher.
- A mutually shared interest in advancing personal learning by the learner and the teacher or leader (AEE, 2005). Beneath this core belief is a reiteration of the belief about shared power. The teacher believes that he or she is in a position to learn when in the company of students.

Not only were these philosophical points central to the organization of my thinking for this study, but they have also shaped my views about possible roles educators may play in the process of facilitating learning, and in many cases have helped orient me to a way of being in the world that makes sense. These core beliefs also reiterate my epistemological views, and the spirit in which I conducted myself as a researcher throughout this study.

Researcher Views

This section proceeds now with a more direct accounting of my views as a researcher. As this study pointed to earlier, disclosing and working with internal perspectives is an inherent component of the phenomenological tradition. Such disclosure acknowledges a reality that unfolds subjectively through the eyes of the researcher. My first and perhaps most obvious orientation relates to my age and relative lack of life experience (relative to my older adult participants). I have not had first hand experience as an older adult learner. In 25 years, I will reach the outer parameters of what some refer to as “young-old” age. Only now am I beginning to acquire a few of the basic life experiences shared by many young-old adults. I do

not have grandchildren. I do not have a lifetime of work to reflect upon. I have yet to do my life's work. I have not had to cope with death, dying, or extraordinary health concerns. And only now am I acquiring knowledge of what it is like to look back upon a life lived.

My life has been steadily influenced by a relationship with the natural world. I possess a lifetime of rich experience in the outdoors. Beginning early in high school and continuing steadily throughout the proceeding 20 years, I gained exposure to leading groups in a range of outdoor and adventure education programs, including those with recreational, educational, developmental, and therapeutic orientations.

Throughout my professional and personal life, I have gained a level of comfort in the outdoors and have derived a degree of pleasure from facing the physical and emotional challenges associated with group outdoor travel and living (i.e., inclement weather, hunger, fatigue, soreness, anxiety, fear, loneliness, personality conflicts with group members, traveling through terrain in difficult conditions such as deep snow, high waves, high wind, heat and cold). This frame of reference is not uncommon among those who have professional experience in adventure education, but nevertheless this filter was important to be aware of as I lived, learned, and conducted research beside a group of people in the outdoors.

My professional work in counseling and human development environments has strongly affected my perspective as researcher. This work has yielded an expectation that others will engage in their development and education. My work in outdoor education and wilderness environments has yielded me with a value for the manner in which the wilderness experience teaches. As Unsoeld (1977, 1978) stated in so many occasions during his lifetime, "the wilderness reminds us that we are not alone in the world; we go there because it prepares us to return to the city where we can make a difference" (1978, track 2).

I also possess a complex set of concerns that share a relationship between epistemology, survival of our species, and justice within research. Similar to an earlier

expression of my changing views on constructivism, this bias is important to acknowledge but has no other home in this study but here amidst an inventory of my influencing *filters*. Briefly, this multi-dimensional concern is a nagging, growing dread I possess for the manner in which the earth and its secrets continue to be squeezed out on behalf of its human inhabitants. Once considered an extreme view, perhaps, this concern is relevant here because I fear that I have not responded intelligently to this thinking in terms of my research focus or research design. This thinking is relevant here because it effects, among other things, the way that I position myself in relationship to those individuals that I am conducting a study about, and the data that I recover.

At another level, the generalized concern I experienced while conducting this research was reflected in the trepidation I experienced regarding the act of *othering* (understood as a behavior or position that traditionally objectifies those that in the traditional sense are *the researched*). These fears struck me as possibly elitist, superficial, academic, and far removed from daily life. Yet, simultaneously these sensitivities may be prescriptive for advancing a more humane way of living in modern life, where compassion seems to be lacking. I continue to reflect on these concerns in my ongoing process as researcher and educator.

In summary of my perspective, I recognize how the cumulative effects of my approach (i.e., beliefs about education, personal values and ideals, orientation) may have had both a constructive and a destructive influence on my ability to contribute in an intelligent, helpful, and moral way to the area of experiential education. I am hopeful that the endorsement of a philosophy of experiential education and core tenets of constructivism has resulted in sound and ethical research.

Selecting an Adventure Education Experience

Chapter Four will provide the reader with an in-depth narrative about the specific adventure education experience that was selected for my study. This section describes the criteria that I used to determine the best adventure education experience, and reports on the issues that emerged in selecting the precise experience.

The criteria I developed for selecting an appropriate adventure education experience for my research included the following points:

1. The adventure education experience must have been provided by an organization that demonstrated a high degree of continuity. That is, the experience must have been provided by a self-contained organization—providing all related services from within their organization—not subcontracting components like nature interpretation, technical river guiding.
2. The experience must have had developmental-oriented adventure education (as described by Hirsch, 1999) as its core program focus.
3. The experience must have taken the form of an expedition. Expedition was defined here as a small group's participation in self-contained, self-propelled travel through a wilderness-like environment for several days.
4. The experience must have focused on serving older adults.

The rationale for the experience selection criteria included three major considerations. First, the experience had to be operated by a self-contained organization because I wanted to minimize the effects that might be created by this lack of continuity. My professional experience suggested that a developmental adventure education program that strove to accomplish goals associated with human development could not be easily accomplished by subcontracting components of the experience (i.e., the technical aspect of the adventure

experience). The occasional entrance and exit of various leaders in a group can lead to complications and confusion for group members, thereby negatively effecting the learning environment. Therefore, I strove to locate a program where the leader of the experience would lead many of the dimensions of the program.

Second, the importance of locating an adventure education experience that conducted *developmental* oriented adventure education programs was essential to the research study primarily because of the significantly different foci that can sometimes be associated with recreational, developmental, and therapeutic programs. In my experience, recreational programs which have a primary focus on *fun* do not overtly program for reflective learning. Furthermore, in recreational programs, debriefing and reviewing learning are more likely to focus on acquisition of technical skills, but not necessarily on inner experience.

Third, the rationale for locating an experience that occurred within an expedition-format was based on my interest in studying the experience of reflection in adventure education in a setting where participant distraction was minimized—where there was a resulting focus on the place, on the group, and on the overall process.

Interestingly, a search for the precise experience proved very challenging. I discovered few places in the United States and Western Canada that offered programs meeting these criteria. With the support of Elderhostel, a search was conducted of Elderhostel's administrative directory and only two programs in the Western United States were suitable (the feasibility of programs was also influenced to a small degree by conflicting schedules). Many of the more likely sites that met preliminary requirements ultimately fell short of meeting all criteria for a number of reasons, including a tendency to lodge their participants in individual motel rooms or cabins at the end of the day. As stated previously in requirement number three (expedition format), it was my belief that this particular programming nuance would prevent a certain kind of group cohesion from forming, and would prohibit a helpful

element of group formation that I thought was essential to a traditional group adventure education experience. Many programs that offered active outdoor educational programming for older adults seemed to provide experiences that allowed lodging accommodations for participants. These types of accommodations typically included cabins, motels, and other locations where guests would rest apart from other members of an experience. After living with older adults on this study, I gained a more personal understanding about this group's preference for comfort at the end of the day. Data collection challenges arose, I believe, due to the rigor of living and traveling outdoors with an older population. These are important considerations for future research.

Selecting Study Participants

Selection criteria for my study were purposeful. I wanted older adult participants that were enrolled in an adventure education program that had met the requirements I previously set forth. Previous studies (Roberson, 2002; Sugerman, 2000) suggested that participants of older adult active learning programs were frequently affluent, well-educated single women who had participated in outdoor activities previously in their life. Therefore, I anticipated working with a similar make up of participants in my study.

As part of the participant selection process, individuals who were registered for the trip received a letter in the mail from me that provided an introduction to the study and invited them to participate in research. Shortly after mailing out the letter, I contacted each participant by telephone and talked with them about the study. On the whole, I experienced an enthusiastic response to my interest in having recorded conversations with them—and collected signed letters of consent upon meeting them face-to-face at the beginning of our experience.

My selection of study participants was made easier by the fact that I would choose participants from within a prefabricated group who had signed up months earlier to participate in an experience. In this way, previously established *experience*-criteria worked in conjunction with *participant*-criteria to yield a suitable group of research participants. Among the most important criteria that I established for choosing research participants were age and number of participants.

Age

Age-related parameters for participation in my study were 50 years and older. The rationale for permitting a loose range of ages was based partly upon Sugerman's (2000, 2001) practice of including 50 year olds in older adult studies (Sugerman, 2000, 2001), and also upon the current age requirements identified by Elderhostel's Active Adult programs. As I headed into the field, I was prepared to use participant age as a tool for narrowing the number of research participants, if the group numbers made this winnowing necessary. If placed in such a position, I was most interested in working with young-old adults (65-74 years).

Number of Participants

As Hattie et al. (1997) revealed, the typical group size in adventure education programming is 8-16 individuals. Consistent with appropriate standards within phenomenological inquiry (Creswell, 1998), I set forth in my research proposal a desire to work with anywhere from 4-6 older adults as research participants. I planned to choose these participants from within an established group, once I saw how many people were registered for a selected program. Since qualitative research serves largely as a tool to describe phenomena, researchers typically gather large amounts of information about a smaller group of people in order to discover the deeper patterns and recurring concepts that are embedded in

behavior or experience. Large group sizes are typically reserved for hypothesis testing and deductive research that attempts to generalize to a broad population (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999). This rationale helped guide my thinking as I designed my study step by step.

Ultimately, my study included four older adults with ages 77 years, 72 years, 75 years and 57 years—both age and participant number falling inside the parameters of my research design. The process by which participant numbers declined, and the challenges this smaller group size represented for me in terms of data quality will be described in a subsequent part of this section.

After traveling two full days to meet my group and my contact person, I was reminded of what I was told prior to leaving for the field: “once you enter the field anything can happen.” Minutes before the program started (in fact, 30 minutes after the published start time), I was notified by the program administrator that two of my research participants had a sudden family emergency occur the evening before and would not be present for the program. This required me to think on my feet, demanding an almost instantaneous decision about whether to proceed with the research or not. Since my original proposal for research accommodated a group size between four and six members, I felt it was acceptable to proceed, and off I went into the field.

As a young researcher, I discovered over the ensuing months just how my small study group would generate challenges related to the *amount* and *depth* of data. For sure, the depth of the data was the greatest challenge presented to this study. It required me as researcher to work carefully with the data, and not to overlook the value of data segments. In this way, the atrophying group size contributed to the challenges faced by this study. When in the beginning of data analysis, as I was making sense of the data, I was comforted by a professor who reminded me that one of the greatest contributors to educational theory, Jean Piaget, conducted groundbreaking research with a sample size of one or two.

Data Collection

My study made use of several sources of data collection. Individual and group interviews were conducted, field notes were recorded, and observations were recorded in my research journal. In order to acknowledge and record the interior aspects of my reality as researcher, I also recorded my thoughts prior to going into the field in a process understood as bracketing.

The central data source was individual interviews. Consistent with the flexible research approach adopted for this study, interview questions emerged in a fluid way based on my overall research questions and from the ongoing synthesis and interpretation that pervaded my thinking while in the field. Making my way through the interview process was a learning experience, and I found myself guided instinctively by an understanding recognized by Stake (1995):

...there is a difference in searching for causes versus searching for happenings. Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists. (p. 37)

A surprising amount of my energy went toward developing rapport and trust with research participants in the interview process. Reflection on the data collection process revealed that my interviews seemed to “mirror a conversation with a purpose” (Kahn & Cannell, 1957, in Marshall & Rossman, 1999). My internal thought process during interviews included an ongoing analysis of what I thought I was seeing and hearing in the behavior and words of my participants. In this pursuit of thick descriptions of the experience of older adults, I encountered several distinct challenges.

The issue of making time for interviews emerged as the primary challenge during the data collection phase of the study. Excerpts from my field notes chronicle the challenging situation I found myself in once data gathering in the field had commenced:

We remain camped at the [omit] Clan's [omit] campsite along the de Chelly Wash tonight, on our second night. A 10-mile hike to Spider Rock in the hot sun facilitated an earlier bedtime tonight following dinner...the hiking proved taxing for most which led to folks retiring to their tents earlier than last night. This has made interviewing somewhat difficult. (Field note, Day 2)

I have noted a distinct difficulty in this program to find an appropriate time for interviews. Mornings thus far have not lent themselves easily to interviews due to the brief amount of personal time allotted to individuals before the group begins the daily all-day hike. Evenings on the other hand have seemed like valuable time for folks to wash, recuperate, and rest. (Field note, Day 3)

This challenge had three parts. First, the issue of participant fatigue, created by a combination of high temperatures in the canyon and daily exertion, limited what participants appeared interested and willing to attend to. The second challenge associated with data gathering involved the challenge of conducting interviews while hiking during the day. Typically, over the course of each day's hiking activity, breaks were enjoyed as a group and our guide wisely used this time to talk and deliver the finer "lecturettes" that served collectively to provide participants with the bulk of information and stories about life in the canyon. Where I sensed that I could get away with it, I took from the curriculum during the day, and did my best to find a comfortable place in a moment's notice in the shade, and out of the wind where recording could effectively be done. The third, and lesser of the three related challenges that contributed to data gathering conflicts, was the issue of shoehorning interviews into a prefabricated program-schedule that attempted to hold, however loosely, to an expectation that clients would get out and see, hear, and experience their surroundings.

All three of these challenges to data collection required me—as a novice phenomenologist alone in the field—to make continuous judgment calls about when to push and when to back off, as it regarded data collection. Beginning with the judgment call at the outset of the program, and continuing through the heart of the program when I continually balanced participant needs and researcher needs, I relied on my intuition to guide me in

making decisions. More will be said in Chapter Six about insights I have gained about the process of interviewing and my development as a researcher.

Data Analysis

In the phenomenological tradition, data analysis is an ongoing effort and begins once one sets foot in the research setting—and continues throughout data collection. Throughout the formal data collection stage, I tape-recorded my interviews with an analog tape recorder using separate tapes—with each participant's set of interviews being logged on independent tapes. I labeled completed tapes with pseudo names and once back home proceeded to manually transcribe each tape as an independent file, titled by pseudo name. These audio tapes were kept in my file cabinet along with a diskette containing the original documents (my hard drive on computer was cleaned of any revealing participant-data). After each of the interviews was transcribed, I printed each one and began a more formal analysis.

This more formal, detailed analysis of the interviews required numerous passes through the documents, reading, assigning broad themes and checking for fit. This process of assigning themes was laborious, lonely, and chaotic. To help bring order to this process, I found myself relying on different colored highlighters to connote different possible themes. I used over-sized paper to sketch and map out possible linkages. Once patterns were discovered in the interviews, I began the process of cutting the data segments out of the documents with scissors and literally placing them in discreet thematic piles. From this process emerged the sub-themes that make up Chapter Five.

As I pointed out in Chapter One, I responded to the research questions by first taking a look at the broader themes and sub-themes that emerged. A concise and thoughtful reporting of these themes laid the foundation for responding to research question number one. As I wrote, I encountered just how, within the phenomenological tradition, the writing and analysis

stages blend together. The more I wrote, the better I understood the data and could identify relationships and patterns. In this sense, phenomenology undertakes writing as inquiry. Almost immediately, upon data analysis, there was considerable reading I needed to do in order to relate themes back to the literature on older adults.

The writing and analysis stage of the research required me to bring my experience as researcher into focus along side the participants' experience. This was among the more complex and difficult processes I encountered in the data analysis portion of the study. In part, it was the weight of the responsibility of getting it right that made this process difficult for me. The analysis of data continued throughout the writing and rewriting of my dissertation, yielding finer and finer connections as I got closer to a final version.

Strategies for Ensuring Soundness

Among perhaps the greatest of threats to the overall integrity of a qualitative researcher's work is its vulnerability to what is traditionally understood as validity. This study borrowed from Creswell and Miller's (2000) practical definition of validity as a measure of "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them" (p.125). Consistent with a constructivist's perspective and outlook of reality (i.e., fluid, pluralistic, contextualized, and interpretive), I strove for soundness of my research that would stand up to challenges that Creswell and Miller (2000) referred to as *trustworthiness* and *authenticity*. Trustworthiness refers generally to notions of credibility and confirmability, while authenticity responds to issues of fairness and whether or not a work leads to an understanding of a construction of others (Creswell & Miller, 2000). The four key mechanisms that I employed to increase the trustworthiness and the authenticity of my research were: (a) Member checking; (b) researcher reflexivity; (c) peer debriefing; and (d) thick and rich description. There is general agreement in the literature for the appropriateness

of employing these tactics for assuring the soundness of a qualitative study (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998; Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999).

Member Checking

Member checking includes taking the data to the participants and having them read and confirm that what is being reported is representative of their viewpoints. Lincoln and Guba (in Creswell and Miller, 2000) suggested that member checks are “the most crucial technique for establishing credibility” (p. 127). In my member checking strategy, I offered participants opportunities to react to multiple dimensions of the research at different times. I was particularly interested in getting participant feedback about the general transcriptions of taped interviews (which is understood by some qualitative researchers as an interpretive construct not to be overlooked); the presentation of context, which included a description of each participant; feedback about organization of the themes; and whether or not what I had presented was realistic and accurate.

Researcher Reflexivity

Researcher reflexivity is a procedure that calls for researchers to self-disclose assumptions, beliefs and biases. By accounting for my own personal beliefs and values that influenced my interpretations early in my study, I have allowed readers of my research to understand my position and my bias. This process contributed to the overall trustworthiness and the authenticity of my work. The phase of research that I conducted known as “bracketing,” contributed to this acknowledgement of researcher bias.

Peer Debriefing

Peer debriefing was conducted by Dr. Copa throughout the study, and his candid and thorough feedback to my writing and analysis supported a more thoughtful and complete interpretation of the data. Typically, according to Creswell and Miller (2000), peer debriefing is conducted by someone who is external to the study. I am confident that the routine debriefing that was done with Dr. Copa at the various stages of study, contributed to the soundness. Throughout this consultation process, Dr. Copa offered a steady spirit of support blended with professional accountability.

Thick and Rich Description

The last procedure I employed to bring soundness and credibility to the study was to work toward producing a thick and rich description of the study. This was done by describing “the setting, the participants, and the themes of qualitative study in detail” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). One clue that a thick description of the study has been provided is “if the writing provides for the reader a sense that they have experienced or could experience the events being described in the study” (Creswell & Miller, 2000, p. 125). I attempted to provide a thorough and artful job of extending descriptions that give the reader a good feel of what occurred as part of the program.

Lastly, I remain confident that the study will meet with Gall, Gall and Borg’s (1999) similar criteria for credibility: (a) *truthfulness* (faithful representation of the phenomena); (b) *usefulness* (provides for liberation or empowerment of the research participant) of the report; and, (c) *a strong chain of evidence* (clear, meaningful links to data and insights). There is unyielding hope on my part that research of this nature will encourage and give direction to the education of older adults in experiential education. Because of challenges associated with research participant numbers, and challenges I was faced with in terms of conducting

interviews, I consistently felt that a stronger chain of evidence (i.e., more data) would have been useful.

Ethical Considerations

Consistent with ethics guidelines prescribed by the Oregon State University's Human Subjects Policy, the safety and welfare of my participants remained a priority throughout the study. More specifically, the three essential ethical principles of beneficence, justice, and respect for persons, as identified in the Belmont Report (National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research, 1979), served as the backbone of the protocol I followed.

By attending to the issue of *beneficence* as a researcher, I ensured that I was maximizing the benefit of my participants' involvement in the research. Within the letter of consent (see Appendix A) that I provided my participants, I pointed out that the process of interviewing (and inherent process of reflection) may contribute to the generalized learning goals set forth by the educational program. Furthermore, in line with the ethical principle of beneficence, I strove to minimize the risk of harm that came with participating in the study by using pseudonyms in my writing to protect the privacy and confidentiality of my research participants.

Ethical treatment of my research participants was assured by my ongoing efforts to view others as ends in themselves, rather than a means to my ends. Efforts to treat my research participants as autonomous individuals—capable of making their own decisions and choices—were supported easily within the phenomenological framework of this study. By being immersed in the outdoor experience side-by-side with research participants, my good will and the goals I held as a researcher were easily conveyed.

Summary

This study approached inquiry from a phenomenological tradition and was designed to explore the experience of reflection for older adults who voluntarily participated in a multi-day educational program in a wilderness-like setting. A high-quality adventure education experience was studied within the context of an outdoor trip for older adults in Canyon de Chelly National Monument, located in Northeastern Arizona. Four individuals ranging in ages from 57 to 79 years of age participated in research that began with a 6-day backpacking trip led by a Navajo guide.

The primary data source for this study was open-ended semi-structured interviews conducted over the course of the outdoor trip. Consistent with defining aspects of phenomenology, analysis of the data began immediately upon meeting the participants and continued throughout the writing up of the research. Printed transcripts of audio taped interviews yielded data segments, which were utilized in thematic analysis. The messy and confounding process of thematic analysis involved multiple passes through the data, seeking relationships among the varied segments.

Consistent efforts were made to yield a sound and credible study, including writing thick and rich descriptions, conducting member checks, relying on researcher reflexivity, and peer debriefing. Included in these efforts, was a consistent conscientiousness toward the welfare of each research participant involved. Overall, the design of the study was supportive of a sound and credible descriptive analysis of the phenomenon of reflection of older adults in adventure education.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Context

Background information regarding the adventure education experience and profiles of each research participant are provided in this section as contextual clues that will lead to a fuller understanding of the data that is presented in Chapter 5. Specifically, this chapter proceeds by sharing information about the *adventure education experience*, the *adventure education program* (referring to the commercial outfitter that marketed the program my participants were a part of), and *profiles of participants*.

Before proceeding, it is essential that I clarify that while information and learning about Navajo culture is of immense personal interest and value to me, I possess no academic expertise in the cultural history of indigenous peoples. A similar caveat is offered regarding my academic and professional experience with gerontology. My professional expertise is focused on adventure education and conceptual issues surrounding experiential learning and processing learning experiences.

Adventure Education Experience

My research was conducted in the month of May in Canyon de Chelly, located near Chinle, Arizona, situated in the Northeastern corner of the state of Arizona on the Navajo Indian Reservation (see map in Appendix E). Canyon de Chelly is visited by thousands of people each year who come to participate in learning about the ancestral Pueblo culture that once occupied the canyon, and to experience the beauty that is found in this remote environment. Canyon de Chelly National Monument was established in 1931 by the United States government. People have lived in the network of canyons for over 5,000 years—long before national monument designation occurred, and longer than most other locations on the

Colorado Plateau—the broad geographical area encompassing much of the American Southwest (Grahame & Sisk, 2002)

While visitors to this place may have traveled expressly to Canyon de Chelly to learn about the Anasazi (the people that vanished sometime around 1400) and to see the countless archeological sites, it strikes me that the lives of some tourists are enriched by the subtle and welcome effects of Navajo teachings and the cultural experience that can accompany tours and site seeing.

The desert environment at the rim of Canyon de Chelly in May is arid, hot, and windy. At an elevation of 5,000 to 6,000 feet, the Canyon de Chelly area is characterized by extremes of temperature and very low humidity. Temperatures in the canyon can range between 105 degrees Fahrenheit in summer to minus 30 degrees Fahrenheit in winter (American Parks, 2005). The average annual rainfall is about 9.6 inches. Pinion pines, juniper, and sagebrush are abundant. One can see for miles upon the rim. The Chuska Mountains and the Lukachukai Mountains are distant landmarks.

Leaving the rim and descending to the canyon floor 1,000 feet below, the visitor is introduced to an environment that is kept considerably cooler by the towering canyon walls and groves of willow, tamarisk, and cottonwoods. Canyon wrens, ravens, vultures, bald eagles, and woodpeckers fill the sky and an assortment of animals including black bear, porcupine, raccoons, ring-tailed cats, and coyotes can be spotted throughout the area. The sheep, horses, cattle, and occasional llama that roam the bottomlands are a constant reminder of the Navajo families that call this place home today. According to our Navajo guide, about 40 families live in the canyon, herding livestock and attempting to work the land on a seasonal basis. Traveling in the canyon (the national monument covers nearly 84,000 acres) must be done with a paid Navajo guide, and is conducted almost exclusively on jeep trails or hiking trails.

The ruins and rock art are the key attractions to this historical place. Among the prehistoric archeological sites in the Southwest United States, Canyon de Chelly has gained notoriety for its vast collection of cliff dwellings, constructed approximately between the dates of 300-900 AD. For reasons that remain unclear, the Anasazi built elaborate home sites high upon cliff ledges, many times with access made possible only by smallish steps cut out of the rock—referred to by some as moki steps. Abandoned home sites throughout the canyon's corridors exist in various states of preservation, and range anywhere in size and grandeur from a mere pile of worked stone, pottery shards, and faded petroglyphs to three story buildings, replete with whitewashed walls and restored kiva (a subterranean ceremonial room).

Part of the enjoyment of traveling in this area comes from the wonder that develops after allowing one's imagination to cruise through and among the rocks and canyon walls, while learning about this near-mythical society. On one day-hike during our program, several of us were kept in awe for several minutes when, with the help of my binoculars, we identified one set of ruins that was nestled inside a series of cave-like pockets high on a cliff wall, nearly 800 feet off the canyon floor. It is estimated that less than 1% of the monument's visitors hike through the canyon system with guides (K. Johnson, personal communication).

As a paying participant, I received the benefit of being led by a Navajo woman, who's hiking tours, demonstrations, and lecturettes were studded with story after story. In our program, leader and participant stories accompanied trail-hiking, evening fires, and mealtime, helping to contribute to the depth and richness of the experience.

Adventure Education Program

Moki Treks is a for-profit organization and was founded in 1995 to provide adults with memorable experiences with traditional cultures in scenic wilderness settings. Moki

Treks's program areas include the Four Corners region of the Southwest United States, Montana's Missouri River, and Australia's Outback. In 2004, shortly after I gathered the data for my study, the organization earned a distinguished World Legacy Award, which recognizes excellence in environmental, social, and cultural travel. This award was given to 12 programs around the world and was sponsored by Conservation International and National Geographic Traveler.

Moki Treks programs rest solidly on the idea that native guides will lead groups through experiences that teach and demonstrate. Moki Treks employees serve as camp hosts, providing food and in-camp support. Programs primarily occur within the context of a canoeing or hiking mode of travel.

The Canyon de Chelly trip, on which I was a participant, took place over the course of six days and included a group camping experience within Canyon de Chelly proper, with day hikes planned into various portions of the canyon. Evening time was typically set aside for a planned presentation such as a weaving demonstration, a Navajo cooking lesson, or a talk about Navajo astronomy. Our Navajo guides Willow and Jimmy used hiking time to tell the group many stories about the land, their families, creation stories, and Navajo philosophy (all of which, I am learning, fail to fall discretely into separate categories).

Our group's experience in the canyon developed a flow that typically included waking up at 7:00 am with coffee and breakfast, and hiking by 8:30 am. We frequently ate a simple lunch on the trail. Our hikes included walks to the infamous White House Ruin, legendary Spider Rock, and lesser-known, spectacular side canyons. On several occasions our day included two day-hikes with time for lunch at mid-day. The tempo of the day would shift at evening time, when the Moki Treks guides would prepare dinner, and participants would seek—perhaps for the first time during the day—some rest and relaxation of their own design. Some would repair to their tent for light reading out of the group library, or a nap under a

cottonwood tree. Others might be found bathing in the nearby waters of de Chelly Wash or having appetizers and talking at a camp table. On this particular Moki Treks trip, all of our camping was done at a single base-camp, which occurred in part due to Navajo land-use agreements.

The leadership and guiding by the Navajo hosts was conducted by way of sharing and story telling. I listened to another participant share her observation (and apparent frustration) at the outset of the trip that the leadership was very different from other forms of leadership that she had experienced in experientially-designed programs, in that she did not feel outwardly encouraged to reciprocate in the story telling and personal sharing. Much of the time it seemed that the Navajo leader(s) did not promote questioning and dialogue as part of their teaching. Yet, unsolicited participant discussion occurred almost always followed presentations and stories.

Like any outdoor trip, there were numerous moments that helped set the tone of our experience, and further defined the context of our group living experience. I remain moved by the manner in which our program began with a Navajo prayer and a round of introductions while seated in the cool sanctity of an old Navajo Hogan.

Our entrance into the canyon was made via a lesser-known trail that was cut out of the rock and maintained by elders in Willow's family for several generations. "This is a trail I walked each morning on the way to catch the school bus, when I was a young girl," Willow informed us, as we carefully descended the 800 feet past a ruin.

Other experiences that remain salient—but far from inclusive as far as a catalogue of events is considered—include the rug weaving demonstration that Willow offered us inside her family's canyon Hogan. Dressed in a beautiful, black blouse and long skirt, Willow shared her weaving with us. Throughout the demonstration, she revealed some of the mechanics of weaving, but more importantly, she shared the stories of watching her mother and

grandmother weave the family's sheep wool into classic and legendary patterns. From behind us watched her adult daughter, looking on with what I imagined to be a mix of reverence and melancholy. When I asked her daughter, if she weaves, she said she had not learned how. This young woman shared briefly with the group that her more contemporary lifestyle had not lent itself to learning the craft. Watching Willow work with individual strands of dyed wool across the face of this expansive three foot by five foot rug demonstrated the temperament and the contemplative-like qualities that weaving requires of a person. When we were complete, one member of our group quietly offered Willow a cash deposit for the work in progress.

Profiles of Participants

All names of participants included in this section are pseudonyms. Participants included four older adults (three women and one man) ranging in age from early 50's to late 70's. Individuals in my participant group had a common affiliation to an outing club in a nearby state.

Victoria

Victoria was a 77-year old married woman from Northern California who was intelligent, outspoken, and gregarious. She had two middle-aged daughters. She reported that a tremendous amount of her time was spent as a volunteer for a social service agency as a trainer and developer. Victoria placed great value on experiences in the outdoors. Three to four years ago Victoria was on a cross-country bicycle trip and met a woman from the Rockies who has since become an outdoor traveling companion—and they shared this trip together.

Victoria was eager to share; seemed to enjoy conversation; wore the wisdom of her years with confidence and authority. Our conversation on the trail was made up of similar curiosities and the topics of our wondering overlap. I found myself wanting to know more

about Victoria--and I sensed the same was true for her. On one evening she viewed the pictures of my family I had brought along with interest and delight. She enjoyed this same curiosity and interest with most on our trip.

On several occasions Victoria was very candid with her reactions and statements regarding me and my research. At one point Victoria shared, "you may think you are a scientist, Drew"....and on another occasion she had questions regarding the open-ended (and nontraditional) nature of my inquiry, and a favorable dialogue followed.

Eric

Eric was an active and intelligent 67 year-old retired engineer residing in the intermountain West. I experienced Eric as a methodical, practical, and thoughtful man. Eric reported that he joined the group in Canyon de Chelly because his wife thought it might be a good idea to "get out of town and do something." He shared that he subscribes to an "embarrassingly vast collection" of news periodicals and monthly publications. Staying current and being an informed citizen was of paramount importance to this man. Eric reported that he remains extremely active, physically and mentally. He actively participated in two weekly hiking groups. His fitness, agility, and sure footedness were revealed to me during a hike up to an alcove and an accompanying ruin that looked out over the canyon. For Eric, keeping his mind and body fit were of primary importance. I enjoyed conversation with Eric during our trip about topics such as the economy, globalization, politics, history of the Navajo people, and the current environmental and energy crises.

Kelly

Kelly was 57 years old and is a single professional woman who lives in the intermountain West. She had a number of grown children, and reported to have been active in

hiking clubs in the past. She reported that she enjoyed seeking out unique opportunities to learn; and is hopeful to regain the outdoor activity level she has previously enjoyed. She was a private person, and preferred one on one interaction with me. Kelly expressed that she did not participate in this trip in order to get to know anybody- she enrolled in the course as a reprieve from her clients back home. Kelly was comfortable spending time alone in Canyon de Chelly, and on two occasions chose to hang back from hikes to relax and sit quietly, enjoying the solitude.

Paula

Paula was a very active woman, approaching 79 years of age. This woman was very confident in the outdoors and carried herself with a sense of grace and style through the desert environment. I wasn't with Paula long before her appreciation for the natural world became evident. She was a balanced outdoors person, equally capable of hiking quickly with intent or willing to stop trailside to express wonderment at a blooming cactus. She was a widow, and lived in close proximity to her daughter. I experienced Paula as a private person, as she thoughtfully shared select portions her life. Paula has seen much of the West and the Southwest. She was modest about her lifetime of experience in outdoor travel; and shared privately with me her views and judgments of the trip, of the condition of the canyon, and of the program in general.

Me

Consistent with the methodology associated with phenomenological inquiry, it is necessary to consider the profile of the researcher, since interpretations of participant experience emerge from a filter that is made up of my preferences as participant-researcher. In

addition to the personal disclosure provided in Chapter 3, I offer additional information about myself in an effort to strengthen my interpretations.

My experience in Canyon de Chelly as participant-researcher was made up of alternating roles and perspectives. For me, the canyon alternated between a sacred place, elevated in importance by witnessing a life-record (pictographs, petroglyphs and ruins), and a desperate place, as experienced by the history of struggle and torment—a history that is told in so many ways at Canyon de Chelly.

My dual roles as participant and observer/researcher were managed by actively approaching lessons and opportunities for dialogue with the eyes of the learner—not with airs of an erudite doctoral student. I found the process to be extremely difficult. I became aware of participants' lack of clarity about the phenomenon of reflection I had come to study, and simultaneously I experienced participants' lack of clarity about the nontraditional form of inquiry I relied upon to conduct research. For instance, it dawned on me after fielding a couple of questions about my *hypotheses* and my research, that my older adult participants were very unfamiliar about newer approaches to asking and answering questions in the social sciences. I have come to believe that somewhere between their confusion (and suspicion) about method, question, and epistemology, and my unobtrusive and humble stance as participant-observer in the program (as opposed to the overt “expert”), they experienced a small degree of disorientation. The group dialogue appeared to be the most helpful in this regard, as I was able to communicate one idea to all, and leverage one person's clear understanding of the phenomenon being studied to benefit the others.

Summary

This chapter presented background information on my study's adventure education experience, the program, and profiles of participants and myself as researcher and participant.

By setting this context in place, my interpretations of data should be clearer, and easier to understand.

Information was gleaned about older adult reflection in adventure education within the context of a multi-day, self-contained, high-quality, outdoor program with four voluntary participants. Programs of the kind in which I participated in at Moki Treks were relatively rare. I found few multi-day, adventure-based, experiential education programs set in remote wilderness-like locations for older adults in 2003. Participants in this trip included 3 women and 1 man—ages 57 to 79 years. Each was Caucasian and held at least a college degree. Each of the participants had enjoyed the outdoors throughout their lives and previously belonged to an outing club.

Chapter 5: Older Adult Reflection

This chapter presents the findings of an analysis of data related to the two research questions stated in Chapter 1: (a) What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adult participants of adventure education?; and (b) How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development? This chapter proceeds by integrating a presentation of findings with a robust discussion that relates these findings to relevant literature. I found that the non-linear and overlapping characterizations of the data collection and analysis stages of this study also described my experience in writing the dissertation. After trial and error, I found that the overall presentation of the study was best supported with this integrated approach. Moving ahead in this manner reserved Chapter 6 as a vehicle to discuss implications for researchers and practitioners, and to share remarks.

Experience of Reflection by Older Adults in Adventure Education

As described earlier in the study, the qualitative research approach known as phenomenology guided my inquiry. Phenomenology has as one of its primary goals to express the essence or the defining characteristics of a phenomenon. At its most basic level, the first research question of the study focused on the essence of the experience of reflection for older adults in adventure education. Themes are often times used to describe the structure of human experience in phenomenology. Themes are a simplified way of fixing examples of lived experience so that basic questions can be asked, like, “What is going on here?” “What is this an example of?” (Van Manen, 1990, p. 87). The themes presented in this section provide an opening, and give shape to the studied phenomena by revealing the depth of participant experience regarding the meaning of reflection.

Three broad themes emerged from interviews and observation: (a) connecting to personal values; (b) time orientation; and (c) health of older adults. Thematic organization of data was completed through a multi-layered process of identifying patterns and interrelated ways of codifying and grouping data. An exploration of these themes and their respective sub-themes was used to more fully describe participants' encounter with adventure education.

The themes and their respective sub-themes supported a developmental perspective of older adults highlighted by others (Chandler & Holliday, 1990; Friedan, 1993; Levine, 2004; Staudinger, 1989; Wolf, 1997/1987), and helped recast popular notions of aging as a time of development and growth, rather than a period of decline and deterioration. Ultimately, my findings supported an emerging picture of these older adults as a capable, intelligent, compassionate, and acutely aware group of people who had a tendency to reflect via story.

To reiterate, the first section of this chapter presents and discusses three major themes relating to the first research question. The remaining research question is addressed in the chapter's second major section, and is answered by extending the analysis already begun as a part of the first question.

Theme One: Connecting To Personal Values

The first major theme, *Connecting To Personal Values*, featured seven sub-themes. The first six sub-themes were labeled in the emic perspective, my participant's language, and included: (a) You know these people are not poor; (b) we could all live a lot simpler; (c) I just love Willow to death; (4) we've given them a bad hand; (5) she is still grieving; (6) here I can just be me. The seventh sub-theme is "connecting through story", and was set apart from the others because of its etic perspective, or outsider's perspective.

Through the main theme of connecting to personal values, I witnessed the part of the participants' adventure experience that was tied to personal ideals—to those beliefs that participants held as fundamentally important. The six sub-themes follow:

You know, these people are not poor.

This first sub-theme captured a humanistic quality about the reflection that occurred throughout the trip. Specifically, participants revealed how dimensions of richness and definitions of success were a common part of their reflection. In my conversation with Kelly, midway through the trip, I asked, "I am wondering if you can tell me initially what it is that you find yourself learning since you've been down here." She shared:

Yesterday I learned a lot when I stayed in camp, because I set in a chair where I could see across the [jeep] road to where John was building a shelter...[a]nd I realized how rich these people are. People think you're poor if you don't make a certain number of American dollars, or if you don't have a VCR, or electricity, or that sort of thing. And there are so many people today locked up in buildings doing jobs that they hate and here are these guys with their shirts off... John gets his sleeping bag out, and he puts it on this little frame structure and he takes a nap under the tree. And I kind of dozed in my chair, and I said "you know, these people are not poor." (Kelly)

While wrapping up the conversation I quipped,

Well, I am interested in a future interview exploring a little bit more about your process of making meaning of this experience. I'm interested in what you do with this experience.

Kelly's response to this interest on my part revealed a dimension of personal values that later became more evident to me:

I think it (the experience) really effects our value system, because it helps us to see that our materialism is not as meaningful as we think it is. We think in our society that we cannot live without our cable TV, or we cannot live without a car that works every time we turn the key, or we have to have air conditioning because it's over 72 degrees or something. Coming back to this, just like with Outward Bound, you start learning what is really needed, and what luxury is, and what you don't really need to live with.

Kelly's reflection demonstrated her apparent encounter with her personal values as she sat in the shade and experienced life in the canyon.

We could all live a lot simpler.

Kelly's previous insights about the nature of materialism were mirrored in a comment made by Paula one day when she was relating Navajo life to her experience. Paula shared with me the following sentiment one afternoon: "It (the experience of the Navajo culture) makes me realize that our society—starting with my family—and all the junk they had to have to be entertained ... So we could all live a lot simpler than we do."

Kelly's thinking about the meaning of richness, and Paula's insight about materialism demonstrated a possible link between their adventure education experience and their core beliefs about materialism and definitions of richness. It seemed to me that the participants were engaged in a process of thinking about their views on what it meant to live in light of this Navajo perspective.

I just love Willow to death.

Participant encounters with values demonstrated an affective and felt-experience with their learning:

I expected to learn it on a factual scale, on an intellectual scale, you know, accountant's-statistics scale. It's really turned out to be totally different. I just (participant choking up here) love Willow to death. I just really feel the history of her people, rather than know it. It is amazing that any of these people survived the horrible hardships that were imposed on them. The experience was totally the opposite of what I thought it was going to be. (Kelly)

In this instance, Kelly expressed surprise about the nature of her educational experience, and revealed how she came to "love" the guide, and came to "feel" the history of the Navajo, as opposed to merely coming to "know it." This excerpt described the passion and realness of the learning, and pointed toward a type of learning that Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) referred to as "procedural knowledge" (p. 100), which comes about through "connected knowing" (p. 112). Connected knowing "builds on the conviction that trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than pronouncements of authorities" (p.

113). Kelly's connected knowing came about through a personal experience of others, and the object of knowledge—born in part by a communal living experience in the outdoors.

While Kelly's comments pointed to feelings focused on relationship, another participant reported powerful feelings associated with learning about cultural history of the area. Eric and I talked about the guilt, remorse, and personal struggle he encountered while driving to Chinle, Arizona to meet up with the Moki Treks program:

Eric: Here we drive through Durango--beautiful country. We get to Cortez; still beautiful country. We get out of Cortez, maybe 30 or 40 miles and all of a sudden we are in an area where there is almost nothing growing and things are really barren--that's where the reservation starts. I cannot help but feel pangs of guilt. Although I was not the person responsible for doing that--but as a member of the settlers and the people that were responsible for pushing the Indians into those circumstances--I feel a guilt. And I go to Sedona and I don't see Indians much in Sedona. I go to Flagstaff--not too many Indians there--This is the high-rent district. And you go to Kayenta, and the sand is blowing and not much growing there--that is the Indian domain. So maybe I shouldn't worry about that, maybe I should just enjoy the beauty of the canyon here and go home.

Drew: It's curious--about how to handle [that], about what to do with that.

Eric: Yes. It's a difficult issue.

Later in my dialogue with Eric while he wrestled with how to handle the feelings of guilt, his thought gave way to what appeared to be validation of empathic feelings that he possessed for these people. Eric spoke:

I cannot help but wonder what my attitude would be if I was of Native American heritage. Would I be extremely bitter toward all white people? I'm not sure. I don't know—and we'll never know. Because you cannot know how you would feel in a situation until you are in that situation. I find that the attitude of all the people—certainly our guides—are sincerely nice and friendly people. They like us—and I hope they do. And the people in the stores that I ran into, and a couple of the places we stopped at on the way down that were Native American I found to be genuinely friendly. I think I might be very hostile [if he were Native American]. Maybe I would be a bitter person.

The empathic position that Eric struck here, and the supportive feelings I heard from Kelly and others elsewhere in the data, strengthened the idea that these older adults' reflection served their “connected knowing” (Belenky et al, 1986, p.112)—an alternative way of

discovering one's truth by making an empathic, caring connection to knowledge (Belenky et al).

Not all dialogue about participant's personal values was characterized by a positive tone, however. Paula revealed how she found herself in a generalized sense of conflict, and mildly frustrated with Native American values. Our discussion follows:

Drew: What has it been like for you as you've been walking? Has it been a struggle to be thinking about their (Navajo) future?

Paula: I haven't really thought...oh, a little bit of their future, that it's going to go, that their way of life is going to go. But, I think my struggle has been more that we've all been indoctrinated for years now to not throw trash out of the car window, and I know as long as I've been hiking—I'll say 40 years as a rough guess—we've picked up trash on the trail. Somebody drops a gum wrapper, we pick it up.

Paula: My experience is that we're all conscious of that, and I think what bothers me is why don't [they] rake up all this! (shaking her head, pointing to the ground).

This exchange with Paula came as part of a conversation she and I had while sitting alone under a cottonwood tree in the heat of the afternoon. Scattered around us at our camp—property of our guide's family—was cow and sheep dung, portions of fallen trees and leaves, and occasional pieces of garbage. Paula was not shy with me about the value she placed upon tidiness and neatness. While Paula was guarded in her outward criticism in this regard, this exchange demonstrated how this particular adventure education experience, in this context, provoked thought along personal and cultural boundaries. In this instance one might imagine the potential for a transformational dialogue with someone who has possessed certain views for years. The conflict over competing value systems that Kelly confronted amidst the dung piles of our camp might be the problem that Dewey (1933, p. 3) referred to in his discussion on reflection in learning. He suggested that the learner needed to be provoked, upset, or besieged by some sort of natural problem in order for genuine reflection to occur. This theme served to highlight the love, guilt, and frustration that accompanied reflection.

We've given them a bad hand.

Analysis of data suggested a 4th sub-theme associated with participants' process of making connection to personal values. The sub-theme of "given them a bad hand" reiterated the feelings that were stirred, and specifically touched upon the empathy and compassion associated with older adult reflection. Consider the conversation Eric initiated with me regarding his concern for the plight of the Native American:

We somehow need to provide better opportunities I think for the Native Americans to help themselves, because we've kind of given them a bad hand in terms of the landscape. This (Canyon de Chelly) is kind of a notable exception, because it is so beautiful and has some agriculture—and certainly some economic value in terms of tourism and scenery—but I tried to reflect on (the question) what can we do? But I don't have an answer.

This sub-theme underscored the predominant caring attitude with which older adults approached their adventure experience.

She is still grieving.

The theme of fostering connection was enhanced by a 5th sub-theme that reflected a style of connecting. Victoria's interest in relating to others was touched through the teaching provided by our Navajo elder. The prominence of older adult participants' connected relationship with others was projected by Victoria in the following quote:

It is her constant reference to the fact that she is still grieving...it is the expression of caring and concern for her parents who are in a rest home, the assumption of responsibility for children, and the feeling of that responsibility. The feeling of connectedness; it's the understanding of family relationships and by extension the relationship to the land and the place.

This quote reflected how Victoria used less traditional means to learn. It might be said that it was through her connection to another that she came to know. Not only were Victoria's words a reminder of the psychological and personal benefits associated with experiential education, but her quote suggested connections between adventure education and emerging ways of thinking about older adult learning and development.

Here I can just be me.

Participant reflection about their learning experience captured an apparent desire for being authentic, or real, and connecting to others in a basic way. This fundamental way of being permeated much of the data. Kelly's quote demonstrated the essential nature of this sub-theme:

Drew: I am wondering if any of you can comment on how the conversations that take place (here) are different for you than elsewhere. How might you set these conversations apart?

Kelly: I know my conversations at work are 180 degrees different because at work (I am) totally surface level. (The conversations) are totally friendly but not familiar. And I have to be more of a chameleon at work. Republicans come in, democrats come in, people from my church come in, people that are atheists come in, and I don't agree or disagree with anybody. I have to stay on a business level- a certain plane- and not agree or disagree. It is a real artificial reality. Real artificial. *Here I can just be me.* [italics added for emphasis].

Later, Kelly reiterated, "Here, I can just talk, not talk. If I say something it's for real. It's not just to, you know, say something non-committal." Other participants around the circle offered their responses:

- I think sometimes you are more open to people under (this) set of circumstances than you are with people in your immediate circle of friends. (Eric)
- You have permission to be much more open. (Paula)
- You know when they relaxed enough and the jokes started coming, and the little bit of change in the atmosphere and....that's a lot of fun. (Victoria)

The experience of reflection for the cadre of older adults in this study suggested that the overall experience invited connection to each other by way of fun and authentic openness among participants. Looking beyond the quality of the open environment that was created, there appeared to be an overt interest on behalf of participants in building personal connection and a more intimate understanding of others:

If you look at what I'm learning, or how I'm learning or whatever, my interest is people—past and present. Just thinking about enjoyment, learning about individuals,

learning about you, learning about David, who has such an interesting background and I observe him and his behaviors in this camp and have made some observations. And Neil, I'm finding out about Neil, and you. I'm finding more about Willow. It's through questioning her that I'm learning about her; rather than what she is saying, you know telling us. It is having the opportunity to question her. (Victoria)

This interest in connecting to others was supported elsewhere in the study by others, as well. In previously explored data segments, one witnessed the nature of this connection:

- I just (participant choking up here) love “W” to death. I just really feel the history of her people, rather than know it. (Kelly)
- In this setting I've been able to see Willow and her family as human beings, as part of our population. (Victoria)
- It's really sad when you're on an excursion like this—I've been on a whole bunch of them—tomorrow at noon we'll never see each other again. And that is tough sometimes. You really grow to enjoy, love, and appreciate people and its just gone. That is always a little sad to me. (Paula)

In an interview toward the end of the experience, Victoria conveyed to me what appeared to be one of her ultimate ideals, and the value of experiences like this one:

“Experiences enrich my life, and so, that enrichment I carry with me to add to the pot. All the relationships, (including) the understanding of Willow and her relationships--this reconfirms my faith in human beings.”

While findings regarding connection by this study's older adult participants were not likely to surprise researchers of experiential education, this information was helpful in extending an understanding about this group's experience. Also, based on years of experience, it appeared to me that some of the qualities of reflection for older adults (i.e., intensity, desire, sincerity) sat in contrast to what I observed to be the manner in which adolescents frequently appeared to operate in this learning environment (i.e., indifference, resistance to reflection, outright hostility toward processing on the inner experience).

Connecting through story.

A macro perspective of my study yielded awareness that *story* in this adventure education study—a process that resembled life-review—served the participants by giving them a vehicle for reflection and sharing. While some sub-themes offered insight into *what* happened in the reflection, connecting through story contextualized this research by helping to describe *how* this particular phenomenon occurred in adventure education.

Throughout the entirety of the program in Canyon de Chelly, participants made steady reference in interviews and trailside conversation to other times in their life. Victoria and Kelly found frequent opportunities to revisit times of their childhood. When I inquired in a generalized way with Victoria about her previous life experience with adventure education she offered,

Victoria: I grew up the last of 5 children with a 5 year span to the next one, so I grew up alone on a ranch. I had a horse. My father who was divorced from my mother also lived on the ranch. I was left to my own devices with no direction, basically. I filled my time.

Victoria continued,

Victoria: So it's coming from that background of being off by myself, and nobody ever knew where I was. My brothers taught me to drive a car when I was seven because I could drive it down to turn off the pump and they did not want to...

Victoria's response to my question about her previous experience with adventure education evolved during this session, soon encompassing her experience as a mother trying to raise independent and self-sufficient girls and her career as a trainer and leader for a multi-national, non-profit health agency. I interrupted:

Drew: It is great to start hearing your stories. Here we are with Johnnie and Willow (Navajo guides), and it seems that one of the cruxes of preserving this culture is to hear the stories of our elders. It is delightful to hear your stories. I'm looking forward to hearing more of them.

To this, Victoria responded, "We don't pass on our stories."

Numerous researchers (Haight, 2001; Roberson, 2002; Wolf, 1997) have documented the paucity of opportunities for older adults to pass on their stories. This information was helpful to consider when considering the contrasting abundance of storytelling that took place on the Canyon de Chelly outing. Older adults seemed very interested in telling parts of their life story when talking casually on the trail and while conducting recorded interviews.

In an effort to explore the benefits associated with this emerging phenomenon of telling stories, I talked with Kelly:

Drew: What is the value of having an experience that brings you back to these (earlier) times in your life?

Kelly: I think it is more of an affirmation that it's okay. Sometimes when you grow up in a kind of poverty...we were ranchers, so we had a lot of meat and food. But we were cash...we didn't have any cash. So things like getting new clothes and shoes were kind of iffy at times, and we didn't have checking accounts or anything. And my Daddy only went to the eighth grade, and my Mother did what was high school back then. But a lot of times people look back on their childhood, or someone else's childhood and they say, "that was wrong, or inappropriate..."

Drew: You say this experience helps you arrive at this affirmation that "it's okay." Can you tell me what you mean by "it's okay?"

Kelly: When I went to college I was the first person in my family that ever went to college, and a lot of people would say...What I have learned in life is that it's not where you are today, it is how far you had to go to get there. You know a lot of people if they were in my place—self employed and making only the little amount of money that I do right now—they would consider themselves a failure because maybe they were a Rockefeller or a Carnegie or somebody like that you see.

Kelly shared—through story—her experience of accepting and affirming some of her life's events in a way that was similar to how Haight (2001) described life review.

Exchanges like this one with Kelly were frequent, and hers and others' stories were shared in abundance. While listening to the stories in the field, and prior to gaining some perspective on what was unfolding, I was confused and uncertain of the stories—and their significance to this study. Much later, after returning home and learning about story in the gerontology literature, I realized that I had observed incidents of reminiscence and life story.

Naturally, story not only occurred in the context of interviews with me, but was also observed as a phenomena occurring between participants, where participants were telling each other the stories of their life:

So I really liked hearing Johnnie tell us about playing cowboys and Indians when they were herding sheep. Now, understand that I have been in almost an identical situation...what it brought me is recognizing that, hey, not that we are brothers—we have vastly different cultures—but that kids are kids. (Victoria)

And:

Stories are relative to this environment. At an Elderhostel in Denver, I would not have the stories to tell. You know, it's like two pilots getting together, two geologists getting together, whatever. I can relate to what Willow says. I lived the same kind of life, but on a different plane. The environment certainly was not as austere as hers, but similar. I had brothers, I herded sheep. (Victoria)

In the first quote above I further interpreted Victoria's comment to be evidence of her connection to a man from a different culture through hearing his story. In this space it appeared that Victoria connected to Johnnie—a person of a different race, economic class, and gender—with assistance of his universal story of growing up playing games. Their mutual reflection upon earlier times in life appeared to unite—even momentarily—individuals with different cultural backgrounds.

As Victoria suggested, older adults learn about each other through their stories. Victoria insisted, "it's how you learn about people...they (stories) are revealing."

An interesting component of the connecting through story sub-theme emerged with Eric, the single male research participant. Eric reflected frequently about his current life at home and shared in a humble way with the group about his lifelong experience in the outdoors. Eric shared his history of activity in the outdoors, in a factual, journalistic fashion. Interestingly, Eric did not associate freely about his earlier childhood experiences to the extent that Victoria and Kelly did. This preliminary observation appeared to be consistent with research regarding differences between men and women and their approach to conducting life

reviews (Haight, 2001). My observation of Eric's process lent preliminary support to Haight's (2001) finding that in their reflection on life, men focused primarily on what they have *done* in their life, and infrequently upon what their experiences have been like. Haight (2001) noted that men "take much longer to disclose their feelings in the life review and they drop out of the process more often," (p. 3); "do not develop intimacy as quickly [in life review] or as often" (p. 4). Haight (2001) summarized to this effect:

the gender difference in the life review process is reflected in the literature on intimacy. Monroe, Baker, and Roll (1997) reported that men disclose less, have fewer close relationships, and are viewed by their wives as low in ratings of intimacy. (p. 4)

Interestingly, while Eric did in large part resemble the rational, objective storyteller depicted above, he appeared at other times more affectively engaged, as was noted by his guilt and empathy surrounding reservation life. In this way, Eric's reflection and his subjective experience contradicted the generalizations made by Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1985) on behalf of women's and men's expression of their experience.

In reviewing the sub-theme of connecting through story, it was compelling to observe older adults reviewing and telling stories about their past in the context of an adventure education experience. In addition to witnessing the stories themselves, this study suggested that there was a level of connection—or bridge building—that was done between people from different cultures and backgrounds.

The theme of Connecting to Personal Values was presented in this section, and offered a rich description of the experience of reflection as it occurred along seven sub-themes. While the inherent value or benefit of these major themes for the older adult learner will be explored in more depth as part of the second research question later in this chapter, these sub-themes shared links to literature in gerontology and education that helped to bridge my work to existing theory about aging. Most notably, the experience of story that was portrayed as part of the theme of connecting to personal values shared strong ties to the

process of reminiscence and life review. As was suggested earlier, research on life review and reminiscence suggested a process that brought individuals closer to integrity, the final psychosocial stage of wisdom and peace (Haight, 2001). Some understand this process to be an inherent part of making meaning of life in old age (Merriam, 1993).

The theme of connecting to personal values also revealed an experience that confronted participants with reflection about materialism, richness, and simpler living. Participant thinking and reflection was observed as an emotional event, but also characterized by fun and authenticity on behalf of participants.

As a last summative discussion point regarding this first theme, it is important to note the emergence of the moral development of older adults. Descriptions offered in this section of the study revealed a group of older adults who were reconsidering personal values, and doing so in the context of connecting to others in a passionate, authentic manner. While more will be said of these findings as part of question two, this picture is reminiscent of findings that came of a 2002 study on wisdom in later life, whereby researchers located the possessing of compassionate relationships and moral values as part of 6 essential components of wisdom in older adulthood (Montgomery, Barber & McKee, 2002).

Theme Two: Time Orientation

In an effort to further unpack and illuminate the essence of reflection for older adults in adventure education, a second major theme that described the phenomena of reflection is presented with its three sub-themes: “the here and now,” “looking ahead,” and “looking back.” Time Orientation suggested conceptual bridges between the experience of my participants and the theoretical literature in adventure education and the literature in gerontology. Descriptions herein revealed a reflection process that underscored the importance of simplicity; they reframed and cast new light on one individual’s relationship to risk taking; they accounted for

participants' thinking and consideration of future generations and their legacy; and lastly, these time oriented thematic descriptions revealed a process that connected past generations to the public world in a story-telling-like way, and in doing so these time oriented descriptions of reflection advanced the idea that reflection for these participants was an emancipatory practice that called upon their wisdom as elders, and wardens of culture.

The here and now.

The experience of reflection for older adults placed a marked emphasis on the value of the present moment—what I termed *the here and now*. The *here and now* sub-theme emerged from the data in some cases in the emic perspective, whereby participants referred directly to the *here and now*, or in other words, the present moment. In the following interview segment Eric spoke about the value of the present:

Drew: So in what way does this program meet your needs at this place in your life?

Eric: I just enjoy it. I guess it's nice to be able to get away from the news ...I don't know what the market did today and I don't really worry much about it.

Drew: It's kind of a retreat from the onslaught.

Eric: Oh, very much so. Because the things that I worry about here is keeping the sand out of the tent and making sure I have enough sun screen on, and issues that are very solvable.

Questions of this nature were asked in an effort to explore the developmental benefits that were related to the second research question. In this exchange, Eric revealed to me the importance of experiences like this one, and the value of having only to worry about concrete concerns, and “issues that are very solvable” in the moment. In this way, the *here and now* appeared to offer Eric a healthy break from the demands of the world back home. More will be said in this section about a trend I observed in regard to participants being worried or concerned—as Eric had mentioned--about the future.

Other participants also emphasized the importance of being in a simplified environment that placed a premium on concrete, present experiences:

Here the attention is focused. You don't have the distractions of what you have to do next in your life and your everyday duties and what have you. All you have to do to be here is to be here and do what we do. It gives us freedom to have our conversations and to exchange ideas and thoughts and to be part of a community for a very short period of time. (Victoria)

A desire for simplicity, and an interest in focusing on the here and now, was recognized in an excerpt from a conversation with Kelly. Her preference for operating in the here-and-now—and thinking about things that were right in front of her in a very concrete manner—was conveyed in the quote below:

All that happened was the first weekend in November when I got back from a convention in Dallas, and a lady from the [omit] Club says, "Bonny is looking for you." And Bonny says, "I got a permit to do Canyon de Chelly in May, do you want to do it?" I said, "Fine, let's go." That is pretty much all the planning I did. I had no objectives when I came out here. I had no expectations. I didn't plan on learning anything or not learning anything. I was just planning on taking it one day at a time. (Kelly)

A similar preference for the here and now was noted in an exchange with Victoria when she told me, "It is interesting to me because it's (living and learning in the canyon with others) fun. I enjoy the whole process. And I like processes. I enjoy more and more the here and the now" (Victoria).

In Kelly's instance, she was a hard working professional who was attracted to the concreteness and the simplicity this program offered. This fact was revealed later to me when she told me that the only way that she was going to get "relief from her clients" was to leave the state on a program of this nature. So for Kelly, the here and now allowed her relief from being mentally and physically taxed by her work at home.

The concept of the here and now operated as one of the theoretical underpinnings of adventure education and adventure therapy. The essential nature of this idea, as briefly explained by Yalom (1995), helped to account for the potency of working with groups in a

wilderness living context, and helped to ground the here-and-now perspective of participants in the study. Yalom wrote:

The first tier is the *experiencing* one: the members live in the here-and-now; they develop strong feelings toward the other group members, the therapist, and the group. These here-and-now feelings become the major discourse of the group. The thrust is ahistoric: the immediate events in the meeting take precedence over events both in the current outside life and in the distant past of the members. (1995, p. 129)

While largely observed as a term in clinical psychology literature, the notion of the here-and-now was very much the glue of the wilderness experience, and helped to bring meaning and power to the experience. The here and now brought immediacy and relevance to reflection that occurred in the adventure education of these individuals; for, it was through the concrete experiencing of an event that provided the context and precursor for a dialogue about the past or the future.

A conversation with Eric suggested to me how very different the here and now was for him than for younger people, when he responded to an observation I had of him one evening. In this data segment, we were conducting a group interview and I mentioned Eric's climbing ability:

Drew: When we climbed up to the alcove today above the window, I couldn't believe what I was seeing. You were like a ballerina walking over to the [archeological site]...it was a little dicey...we were looking at each other saying 'I don't know (pause) it's a little (scarey).' There were just these little mokey steps and it was very amazing watching you, Eric, scurry across the sandstone at the angle that it was sitting on.

Eric: Though at my age you have less to lose! (laughing).

This was a very unique response that caught me by surprise, and was a gem in the sea of data that I collected. However flip Eric's comments might have been, his idea of having "less to lose" as a rationale for his risk taking, was helpful in bringing further depth to the meaning behind living in the here and now for older adults. It also helped to add to what I know about the experience of older adults in adventure education. This sub-theme described an apparent

willingness to experience new things and literally go to places that they had not been because of their perspective on time—they had less to lose and more to gain.

Not to be overlooked, my study participants' present-focused reflection also enjoyed linkages to the gerontology literature, and specifically to the literature on wisdom.

Geotranscendence was understood in the literature as a spontaneous process that occurs for some older adults whereby individuals undergo a spontaneous transformation characterized by, among other things: (a) A deep appreciation for the present, (b) a finer connection to past and future generations; and (c) an increased interiority—or a turning inward in a contemplative way (Levinson, et al., 2005). Geotranscendence was a construct closely related to transcendence, which was understood generally as an innate desire to discover meaning.

The concepts of transcendence and geotranscendence will be revisited in future sections of the study, helping to build a fuller understanding of what it means for older adults to do reflection within the context of adventure education.

Looking forward.

The looking forward sub-theme included a generalized concern related to the future of peoples, of place, and of a legacy. When I asked the questions, “What do you see as your task right now in your life?” the responses included:

- I think at this stage in my life like so many other people reaching their 60s pretty soon, we start thinking about leaving a legacy. In our earlier days we were busy trying to earn a living. Trying to raise a family. Well, now we've done all that. So now we're saying, “what are we going to leave behind?” (choking up here) (Kelly)
- I'm trying to get my life better organized so that if I predecease my son, [omit], who lives in the [omit]-area with me, is that it will be organized. (Kelly)
- I have grandkids in town and I enjoy them. They enjoy me. We do a lot of fun things together. And I volunteer at a couple of places—particularly, The Nature Conservancy and also for County Parks Organization. I lead school hikes; it's a wetlands area, and they have organized school activities, and they need decent

leaders to help with the hikes and I do that. I feel it is very worthwhile because these are the kids that will be voting someday and I would like to instill a bit of an appreciation of the value of open space; of the value of a decent habitat for the animals that we have and for the plants. The area where I live in [omit] is a fast growing area and lots of areas get eaten up for parking lots and houses and roads. (Eric)

These questions were asked in an effort to understand the context of their current thinking—to help establish a connection between the content of their reflection and their needs as older adults, and the nature of the adventure experience. Each of these quotes fixed participant thinking and reflection in a future orientation. By thinking about one’s kids, grandkids and family, my older adults were referring to their legacy, and as Kelly stated, what they will be leaving behind in the future. The future focus of their thinking carried an existential quality to it, and as a phenomenological researcher taking steady note of my own lived experience, I genuinely felt the weight behind these sentiments that pointed to concerns for their legacy.

An outright concern for the future—or *worrying* as Eric put it--was very much a part of the looking forward theme as well. The gerontology literature was not at a loss when discussing clinical issues associated with old adult worrying, and much of the reference to “worrying” appeared to pathologize older adults. Pathologic worrying did not appear to be what I observed in the field, and therefore the literature on worrying was left out of the discussion here. Consider, however, these examples of Eric’s tendency to worry and show concern for the future

- This is something that clearly I wonder: What their (Navajo) future situation is. I wonder what the future of this canyon is. (Eric)
- I cannot help but wonder about their situation because of the really severe problems that they have making a living of it. (Eric)

And Eric, later:

- Well you know, you mentioned specifically that Johnnie and Willow are our Navajo guides and maybe I should just enjoy it without worrying about tomorrow, but clearly there are social issues involved with this area, with the Navajo people.

An earlier shared quote from Eric was identified that also helped to further describe this non-clinical phenomenon:

Maybe I shouldn't... maybe I focus on the negative. My wife tends to say that I do. But, here we drive through Durango—beautiful country. We get to Cortez, still beautiful country. We get out of Cortez, maybe 30 or 40 miles and all of a sudden we are in an area where there is almost nothing growing and things are really barren—that's where the reservation starts. I cannot help but feel pangs of guilt. Although I was not the person responsible for doing that, but as a member of the settlers and the people that were responsible for pushing the Indians into those circumstances, I feel a guilt. And I go to Sedona, and I don't see Indians much in Sedona. I go to Flagstaff, not too many Indians there. This is the high-rent district. And you go to Kayenta, and the sand is blowing and not much growing there. That is the Indian domain. So maybe I shouldn't worry about that, maybe I should just enjoy the beauty of the canyon here and go home.

Looking back.

Looking back was recognized as a clear and unambiguous theme—and accounted for the consistent personal story telling—or looking back--that was a part of this group's experience. In this respect, looking back was defined simply by the many accounts of life history and the pronounced telling of life stories that took place during the program.

Looking back as a dimension of time in the reflection of older adults was also linked to the literature in gerontology. It was suggested that reflection—whose etymology is located in the word “*reflectare*,” to look back—served older adults by giving passing generations a means of “illuminating the public world” in order to ensure its survival. This emancipatory practice was further illuminated by Coleman (1994):

Reminiscence (reflection by older adults) makes sense only if we believe that our memories form a continuous chain from the past into the future, from one generation to the next. Without the idea of generations we would be lost. We would live in a limbo of time made up only of passing scenes. We are mistaken in thinking that people remember only for the sake of the past, when in fact old people live and remember for the sake of the future. (p. 19)

Guttman (1997) wrote of the manner in which many traditional cultures have relied on elders' reflection of the past to ensure effective transfer of core cultural values: “Old men help to

provide young men with the powerful meanings that they require in exchange for giving up the temptations of barbarism and random procreation in favour of civility and fatherhood” (p. 13). Guttman (1997) argued that the recovery of culture in western societies and the recovery of elderhood go hand in hand. These apparent linkages helped advance a preliminary exploration of how older adulthood practices, such as the varieties of reflection, served as an emancipatory practice, connecting older adults to such things as survival of culture. In this way, older adult purpose and meaning can be restored, rejuvenated, and given meaning.

Gerontology literature was also helpful in relating the looking back theme to the development of wisdom. Time was identified in the literature as a central component in older adults’ conception of wisdom (Montgomery, et al. 2002), whereby researchers identified time as “the landscape of wisdom” (p. 150). Montgomery, et al (2002) suggested that reflections about wisdom, whereby personal meaning of participants’ lifetime of choices, was expressed from within the perspective of time. This literature helped to situate my participants’ experience of reflection as an encounter with wisdom.

Further study of the literature on older adults and time yielded a preliminary appreciation for the role older adults play in the preservation of culture. The looking back sub-theme, aside from capturing the story-telling characteristic of reflection, described an emancipatory practice that casts older adults as “wardens of culture” (Guttman, 1997), whose reflection preserved society through their telling of the past. By relating this act of reflection in adventure education to the preservation of culture, a valuable and overlooked role appeared for older adults. In this way, older adult story telling was elevated to an essential act—one that rightly preserved the honor that other cultures and traditions have rightly reserved for their elders.

Theme Three: Health

The last theme of health supported a view of older adults being in a time of development and growth, rather than degeneration. Continued linkages were established to literature in gerontology and wisdom.

When reviewing data segments, an immediate discovery was made about older adult reflection. When speaking about their life and experience in Canyon de Chelly, older adults talked consistently of their mental health (and to some extent about aspects of their physical development).

Eric spoke often about his interest in staying mentally sharp and keeping on top of current affairs, and he was frequently observed throughout the duration of the trip initiating lively discussions across a range of intellectual topics with most of the trip's participants and leaders. A series of quotes collected from Eric's interviews helped to illustrate his dominant interest in staying intellectually sharp:

- Well, I guess I make a big effort to stay on top of world events. I retired four years ago and I make a strong effort to read a lot; partly financial publications, but mainly just news publications. I take more magazines than anyone would ever imagine, and pretty much read them.
- I have what I call my geriatric hiking group which I guess I am the leader of. And they are kind of a diverse bunch of people. We have a pharmacist, we have a couple of engineers, and they are generally people that have a strong academic background, and a pretty good feel for historical events and also what's going on in the world. So, I kind of feel compelled to keep myself current and educated so I can participate intelligently in our attempt to solve the world's problems.
- I like to keep myself informed so that I can make intelligent contributions to what I think is an interesting conversational group.

To be clear, I asked, "So, your preoccupation at this time of your life is fitness—both mental and physical?" To this he responded, "Well, yes, that would be fair." These questions were posed to Eric in order to get a better description of his life and his day-to-day focus. Part of

getting to know Eric, and appreciating his perspective, meant inquiring about his involvement in the outdoors and about his general interests.

It was assumed that the varied learning opportunities available to Eric in Canyon de Chelly met his interests and allowed him to maintain his mental growth edge. Elements of others' reflection revealed how their mental development was encouraged in this setting. In a conversation with Victoria, I asked, "How does your age, and more importantly your life experience, contribute to your learning here? That is, "How is it (age) significant for you in terms of learning?"

Victoria: For me, I don't look at Willow any differently than myself. She is a woman in the ballpark of my age. Younger, but she has faced hardships. I can relate to those. I think I've gotten wiser as I've gotten older.

Drew: That is kind of a stereotype. But you are saying that it's true in your case.

Victoria: I think it is. I can tell you that I've heard it said: "older people are wiser;" and I'm thinking, "gee, I am." (laughing). I know so much. I would be such a good mother now (laughing). I know so much. I just know better, I can see, see things I couldn't see before, and so...

Victoria's intellectual acuity and sense of seeing things that she couldn't see before was found elsewhere in the literature. McKee and Barber (1990) suggested that one facet of wisdom for older adults was the ability to "see through illusion" and beyond the "many tricks of the mind" in order to see more clearly their truth (p.151). Victoria's comments about feeling like she knew more in this regard helped to establish connections between development of older adult wisdom and the phenomenon of reflection in older adulthood. Through Victoria's account of her developed mind (i.e., mental health), I witnessed her development.

Additionally, the manner in which Victoria equated learning in old age with "facing hardships," and "being a good mother now" because she "knows so much" referred to a dimension of older adult intelligence described as the "fundamental pragmatics of life" (Baltes and Smith, 1990; Staudinger, 1989). The idea of the "fundamental pragmatics of life" helped

to establish wisdom as a defining aspect of older adult intelligence. Baltes and Smith (1990) defined wisdom as “an expert knowledge system in the domain, fundamental life pragmatics (e.g., life planning, life management, life review)” (p. 95). These “fundamental pragmatics of life” (p. 87) involved knowledge and judgment about the “course, variations, conditions, conduct, and meaning of life” (p. 85) which helped, according to Baltes and Smith (1990), to substantiate it as an emerging element of intelligence.

Elsewhere, in Sternberg’s (1990) review of literature on wisdom, wisdom was conceived as an “alternative cognitive process” (p. 28), a “virtue” (p. 32), and a “good, valued way of being” (p. 28). Conceptual links to theory were entertained that invited a bridging between these participant’s experience of reflection, perspectives about mental health (and general cognitive functioning), and an emerging understanding of wisdom and older adult cognitive development.

Health was identified as a tertiary theme within the data of the study. It was a pronounced, but simple aspect of older adult reflection that featured a consistent interest in maintaining intellectual acuity and physical fitness. Literature in gerontology helped to situate the act of reflection as an act that conceptually lead to wisdom in later life.

Summary

In an effort to bring closure to the first research question, I moved forward with a summary and discussion of each of the three major themes: *Connecting to Values, Orientation to Time, and Health*.

With the support of seven sub-themes (see Table 5), *Connecting to Personal Values* described the reflection for older adults in my study as being about the use of story telling to connect to personal values that surrounded materialism and treatment of others, and connecting to other individuals.

Table 5. Summary of Theme One: Connecting to Personal Values

Sub-theme	Thematic Excerpt
<i>You know these people are not poor</i>	“I think it really effects our values system, because it helps us see that our materialism is not as meaningful as we think it is.”
<i>We could all live a lot simpler</i>	“It makes me realize that our society—starting with my family—and all the junk they had to have to be all entertained...so we could all live a lot simpler than we do.”
<i>I just love Willow to death</i>	“I expected to learn it on a factual scale—you know, accountant’s-statistics scale. It’s really truned out to be totally different. I just love Willow to death. I just really feel the history of her people, rather than know it.”
<i>We’ve given them a bad hand</i>	“We somehow need to provide better opportunities I think for the Native American to help themselves, because we’ve kind of given them a bad hand in terms of the landscape...I tried to reflect on ‘what can we do?’ but I don’t have an answer.”
<i>She is still Grieving</i>	“It is her constant reference to the fact that she is still grieving...it is the expression of caring and concern for her parents who are in a rest home, the assumption of responsibility for children, and the feeling of that responsibility. The feeling of connectedness...” “...the relationship to the land and to the place...”
<i>Here I can just be me</i>	“Here I can just talk, or not talk. If I say something it’s for real.”
<i>Connecting through story</i>	“So I really liked hearing Johnnie tell us about playing Cowboys and Indians when they were herding sheep. Now, understand that I have been in almost an identical situation...” “...what it brought me is recognizing that hey, not that we are brothers--we have vastly different cultures—but that kids are kids.”

This dominant theme highlighted the feelings that were part of reflecting and learning in this study. Lastly, this theme helped to portray older adult reflection as including compassion and empathy.

Central to the second major theme of Orientation to Time were the sub-themes of *The Here and Now, Looking Ahead, and Looking Back* (see Table 6). Collectively, these time-related characterizations of reflection portrayed a developmental, and constructive view of aging. More specifically, reflection was tied to the literature on wisdom such that the practice of reflecting and telling stories were identified as a valued emancipatory practice that

preserved culture. A succinct review of the key focus points imbedded in this major theme can be found in Table 6.

Table 6. Summary of Theme Two: Orientation to Time

Sub-theme	Focus
<i>Here and now</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed value on focusing on concrete solvable issues, and a time away from the onslaught and worries of modern life in order to be in the present moment. • Revealed a unique perspective on risk-taking, revealed by statements like, “at my age you have less to lose.”
<i>Looking ahead</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Described a concern for the future of peoples (i.e., Navajo people) and of place (i.e., Canyon de Chelly). • Included a focused awareness about an individual’s legacy—who they are leaving behind and what they are leaving behind.
<i>Looking back</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characterized the unique story-telling mode of older adult reflection, featuring their tendency to tell stories about their lives. • Helped typify older adults as “wardens of culture” (Coleman, 1994), whereby their linkage of past and future instilled them with the responsibility of preserving culture by reminding us of where we came from.

Unlike the first theme, which was described using the emic perspective, or participant perspective, this theme was best described from the etic, or outsiders, perspective. An overview of this perspective in Table 6 describes the *focus* of each sub-theme, rather than *excerpts* as in Table 5.

Health emerged as a minor, yet distinct, dimension of the experience of reflection in my study. In the dialogue that occurred on this trip, there was steady conversation about physical health, mental acuity, the efforts taken to stay sharp, and ongoing jokes about the changing nature of aging bodies. It was no surprise to me when the health of participants emerged as a theme in this study. After living with this group for several days, it was apparent

to me that the topic of health made its way into many aspects of our conversations. Later I found this theme emerging from my notes, interview transcripts, and observations.

Lastly, links were established in the gerontology literature between older adult health and older adult wisdom. Life review—which was demonstrated previously as bearing strong resemblances to the story-like reflection of older adults—was equated to the “fundamental pragmatics of life” (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Staudinger, 1989); whereby, knowledge, judgments, and making meaning in life was practiced. Others have suggested that this behavior described wisdom, and therefore defined reflection of older adults as a unique form of intelligence (Sternberg, 1990). To put it simply, older adults’ story-telling—their making meaning of life’s events—embodied a unique form of intelligence, understood as wisdom.

I turn now to musings that were shared around a closing campfire in the canyon the last night of our trip. Some of what was shared seemed to summarize what I later would discover were common dimensions of reflection. As we sat around the embers, Eric chimed in and shared that what he was most going to walk away with was an awe and respect for Willow, our Navajo guide. Victoria suggested that what she most cherished was the opportunity to have “shared experiences.” Ultimately, both Victoria and Eric reiterated their gratefulness for their ability “to be present.” Eric reiterated these values through his appreciation of Willow, when he stated, “she is the matriarch, a real supportive person, she is smart, she thinks ahead, and yet she seems willing to enjoy the present while she is worrying about the future.” Victoria suggested, “it is not only being able to do it but enjoy it and relish it. The enjoyment is so great because it could be stopped at any time. So each moment is savored by us—and we just look at each other and say, ‘all right!’”

Having explored the experience of reflection for older adults, it was time to reflect on and analyze the manner in which participant reflection supported their learning and development.

*Learning and Higher Development of Older Adults
Through Reflection in Adventure Education*

The major remaining section of this chapter responds to research question number two: “How does older adult reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development?” While the previous section’s analysis resulted in an in depth account of what reflection is like for older adult participants, this section takes advantage of these observations and explores how these themes supported learning and higher development of older adults. In responding to the second research question, I sought to explore how reflection in adventure education assists older adults in what has been termed as “successful aging” (Baltes & Baltes, 1990; Rowe & Kahn , 1997). Briefly, Rowe and Kahn (1990) suggested that successful aging was defined by a focus on three key areas of living: (a) Good health, low risk of disease, and disability; (b) high mental and physical functioning; and, (c) active engagement and an active life. These researchers indicated that living an active life, being mentally engaged, and being connected to others was vital to aging successfully. Analysis of research question two proceeded by considering the thematic description of reflection found in response to research question one in relation to descriptions of successful aging. In the analysis, five observations were made about how the experience of reflection can serve older adults in their learning and higher development.

Observation One: Participants Engaged in a Process of Reconsidering Their Values

Through an analysis of the theme Connection to Values, sub-themes like “you know these people are not poor,” “we could all live a lot simpler,” “I just love Willow to death,” “we’ve given them a bad hand,” “she is still grieving,” and “I can just be me” revealed participants reflecting and thinking about dimensions of wealth, simple living, grief and loss, compassion, and empathy. This observation suggested that personal and relevant learning took

place for participants during the adventure education experience, thereby enhancing and contributing to their higher development of participants.

As explained previously in this chapter, Connection to Values was a vital part of the Canyon de Chelly learning experience. Further analysis of this theme suggested that participants were engaged in a process of *reconsidering* their values. In numerous cases, the Canyon de Chelly experience encouraged individuals to think about their views related to treatment of the Navajo people, importance of family, and issues related to quality of life. Specifically, Eric reflected upon the “bad hand” that the United States government had dealt the Navajo in relation to the type of land given to them. Kelly found herself reflecting on the richness that is inherent to simple, natural living—and contrasted this to materialism. Meanwhile, Paula considered her values and stories in relationship to her cultural counterpart—comparing her growing up in the out of doors as a white girl to the stories of Johnnie who grew up doing similar things in the canyon as a Native American boy. This finding revealed older adults actively thinking about and personalizing the information that they encountered to such an extent that they initiated a reconsideration of their previously held values.

Findings related to the reconsideration of values were important because of the support it offered to Roberson’s (2001) emerging idea that adventure travel had the potential to influence older adults’ understanding of themselves and their orientation to the world around them. Roberson (2001) asserted that senior adventure travel had the potential to change what Mezirow’s (1994) transformative learning theory called meaning perspectives.

Furthermore, by having challenged individuals’ values, the Canyon de Chelly experience contributed to higher development and successful aging by providing a rich and active cognitive environment for participants. The Canyon de Chelly program offered older adults the opportunity to think (reflect) and learn about cultural and historical perspectives

associated with Navajo life. By providing older adults with a vibrant mental experience of this nature, reflection inherently met Rowe and Kahn's (1990) standards of successful aging.

My findings also aligned with Belenky et al.'s (1986) idea of a "morality based on care" (p. 102), whereby older adults' reexamination of values were understood as an expression of truth. Belenky et al. (1986) suggested that an individual's morality emerged as part of their expression of "personal truth" (p. 102), "caring" (p. 102), and "empathy" (p. 113). As older adults challenged beliefs and personal values, it was interpreted that their personal truth—or morality—was encouraged. Reflection in adventure education, when viewed through its characterizations of a vehicle for reconsidering values, was linked to successful aging because of the mental engagement and resiliency this activity seemed to engender.

Observation Two: Participant Reflection Process Resembled Reminiscence and Life Review

Learning and higher development of older adult participants while in Canyon de Chelly was enhanced by the story-like reflection process. Life review and reminiscence, as discussed earlier in Chapter 2, emerged in my study as a new dimension in the literature on reflection in experiential education. These phenomena were identified in the literature review to be a productive and healthful means of looking back at a life lived in an effort to bring meaning to experience. Kiernat (in Haight, 1991) found that life review and reminiscence were equivalent to a process of retrospection, and were found to increase health and wellness of a geriatric study population. Haight (2001) suggested that these activities represented a process that brought individuals closer to integrity, Erikson's final psychosocial stage which resulted in wisdom and peace. Merriam (1993) understood this process of life review to be an inherent part of making meaning of life in old age.

Simply stated, Erickson (1982) authored the idea that the task of older adulthood was to successfully resolve a tension of integration. The challenge in older adulthood, theorized

Erikson was to reconcile a conflict of integrity, yielding either wholeness or despair, depending on how successfully one can manage this last developmental task. Erikson used the word *wholeness* to describe the coherent interplay of multiple systems (i.e., soma-body, psyche-mind, ethos-spirit). According to Erikson (1980), if the older adult began to lose interplay between these systems, the person engaged in a crisis defined in part by despair (a loss of hope). Erikson suggested that successful resolution of this final stage yielded a developmental state of wisdom. When I considered the act of knitting experiences and stories together, I began to see the reflexive act of older adults as part of a process that integrated and put things together, and according to Erikson, possibly contributed to resolving the crisis of this developmental stage by yielding greater wholeness.

Second, telling and listening to stories was a part of what Belenky et al (1986) termed “connected knowing.” Connected knowing was a means of learning that was contrasted to a more “objective and tough-minded” (Belenky et al., p. 109) form of learning understood as “separate knowing,” whereby “connected knowing builds on the subjectivist’s conviction that the most trustworthy knowledge comes from personal experience rather than pronouncements of authorities” (Belenky, et al., p. 113). Belenky et. al described my study’s participants it seemed, when they wrote that connected knowing was “working to understand others, and making empathetic, caring connections by listening and sharing stories (p. 122). Belenky et al. (1986) characterized this approach to learning as one that leads to *procedural knowledge* (p. 93). Connected knowing appears to support successful aging as there is a focus on active connection.

Lastly, participants in this study benefited developmentally from reflexive acts of story telling in ways that were consistent with gerontology literature. Staudinger (1989) reported that through a review-like process, older adults’ lives were strengthened as they were provided the opportunity to reconstruct and evaluate life choices. This appeared to be the case

for a number of participants who expressed that their reflection had yielded an opportunity to look back and know that their life made sense. In the following exchange, Kelly had shared with me such a sentiment:

K: It's dry and hot here. And where I came from it was wet and hot. But a lot of the same things. Willow, yesterday afternoon was very tired and she just kind of wanted to take a little nap or something and I was sitting there in a chair and she sat there in a chair and she took her bandana and she just put it over her head, down in front of her face and tied a little knot around her chin, and kind of sat there and dozed off. And it kind of told the world, "look world, I'm here but not really here for a few minutes; I'm going to get a nap for a few minutes." And it keeps the bugs from flying around or something. And for about 30 minutes she just sat there perfectly straight up with this bandana in front of her face. And if you were to do something like that back in the city, people would be calling to have you committed or something; that you were crazy, weird, or something. But I noticed the use of the bandana out here is like when I was growing up. The men used bandanas and handkerchiefs as just a part of their work. On a hike, I wet my bandanas sometimes and wear it tied behind my neck. In a dusty situation in *Outward Bound*, we would take our bandanas out of our pocket and put it on like you see in cowboy movies, around your nose and face. It's a tool, not just something pretty. It's something to keep the dust out of your face or whatever else. And when I was growing up that's what bandanas were used for.

D: So, tell me something. Because I have a similar experience. For you, what is the value of having an experience that more effectively brings you back to these times of your life?

K: I think it's more of an affirmation that it's okay. Sometimes when you grow up in a kind of poverty. We were ranchers so we had a lot of meat and food. But we were cash...we didn't have any cash. So things like getting new clothes and shoes were kind of iffy at times, and we didn't have checking accounts or anything. And my Daddy only went to the eighth grade, and my Mother did what was High School back then. But a lot of times people look back on their own childhood, or someone else's childhood and they say, "that was wrong, or inappropriate," or, "poor poor people, look at how poor they were, and look at those poor children, the government should take over" and tell them how to live and all the rest. They look on it in a negative way as if that experience was negative. When you see that these people get along perfectly fine at that same standard of living or maybe even lower, and that they do thrive in other ways. It's not that it was bad, just different. We might not have had a lot of cash money, but we had steaks on the table every night, because we were ranchers of course. Just like when she makes this shade shelter here, its going to look a little weird—it may look like a shack to some people, but its going to produce shade. And she is going to be getting her afternoon nap out there, while somebody else is going to be fighting a computer all afternoon in a shut up building somewhere.

D: Let me ask you this... You say that this experience helps you arrive at this affirmation that, "it's okay." Can you tell me what you mean by "It's okay"?

K: When I went to college I was the first person in my family that ever went to college, and a lot of people would say... What I have learned in life is that it's not where you are today, it is how far you had to go to get there. You know a lot of people if they were in my place, self employed, making only the little amount of money that I do right now, they would consider themselves a failure because maybe they were a Rockefeller or a Carnegie or somebody like that you see.

D: I understand.

In this way Kelly's experience of reflection served her in affirming that who she was and what she had experienced in life was okay. In the reflection of my participants, there was a process of integrating past and present, yielding a knitting together, as Merriam (1993) reported, in order to make meaning of their life. In a conversation with Victoria one afternoon I listened to a story that appeared to knit her life together in a similar manner:

So, it was that kind of upbringing. Nothing spectacular in preadolescence. Pretty straightforward. Not a lot of imagination, but I had a horse. You know. Very independent of teenagers, group pressure. I had no vision or no direction. I never thought I'd work. I went to college, I thought I was going to be a nurse. Finally, got into anthropology which I really liked. And psychology. Then discovered these people are crazy in psychology. They don't know what they're talking about. So with a useless basic education... I'm not doing any better, I got better. And then I did what was expected of me for many, many years. Meanwhile, went camping, raised the girls, entertained myself vastly with things that I came up with.

The adventure learning and group living experience in Canyon de Chelly gave this group of older adults an opportunity to revisit meaningful times in their life—to participate in reflexive acts that resembled life review. While Haight (1991) identified life review as a structured process that was facilitated, there appeared remarkable similarities between what I observed in the reflection of older adults and descriptions of the processes of life review and reminiscence.

As the following excerpt suggested, Victoria benefited from the reflexive act as it helped the experience of learning and living in Canyon de Chelly become more meaningful:

But one thing that has happened with the talking about this is that it has actually helped me. Since I verbalized what I was thinking it has helped me put them in my permanent memory, and has really made them more meaningful...[S]o, the talking

about those first few days really helped to magnify those good experiences. It is really helpful to look back and talk on some of that.

Reflection for older adults in Canyon de Chelly contributed to the higher development and successful aging of participants by providing them with an opportunity to look back and make sense of life's experiences, to knit together their experiences and affirm choices. The experience revealed a process of active engagement.

Observation Three: Participants Enjoyed an Authentic Experience

Older adult learning and higher development were served in this study by an environment that encouraged an authentic experience, and fostered an appreciation of the present moment. Authenticity was used to describe the *realness* or the *genuineness* of the experience that was expressed by participants.

As the here and now theme helped to demonstrate, participants placed value in the Canyon de Chelly experience because, as Kelly said, "I can choose to be here, or I can choose not to be here." "If I talk, it's for real," Kelly claimed. Eric said, "he could focus on things that were solvable, like sand in my tent." About the authenticity, Paula offered, "You have permission to be much more open." Eric agreed: "I think sometimes you are more open to people under this set of circumstances than you are with people in your own circle of friends."

The value of experiencing authenticity in the context of the educational experience can be traced back to one of the essential components of a developmental adventure education experience: the development of trust among group members. Trust is the glue that holds groups together throughout an adventure learning experience, but it also serves as a catalyst, encouraging participants' honesty and forthrightness. Once individuals' trust has been established in each other, and in the program, the likelihood of an authentic—or real—adventure education experience is multiplied (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004; Rhonke, 1995;

Yalom, 1995). It seemed in this experience that feelings of authenticity—or realness—also helped to encourage participant trust in a self-perpetuating, snowballing fashion. It seemed that participant enjoyment was also increased when they realized that they could be themselves.

Observation Four: Participants Made Connections To Others Through Story

Connecting through story was a finding shared earlier, and suggested that story may have served as a vehicle, or mode, of reflection for older adults. Further analysis of findings revealed that participant connection to other people through these stories contributed to the learning and higher development of participants. The below exchange with Victoria succinctly revealed the value of connecting to others through story:

V: [I]t helps if the story environment is encouraged.

D: Do you think so?

V: Absolutely. It is fun telling stories (interrupted).

D: Tell me more about what you mean by the story environment.

V: That's how you learn about people. (omit) has not told stories. (omit) has. Any time someone tells a story, you learn about them. They are revealing, showing themselves to you from their stories. You know, I've told you stories, because I'm full of stories in this particular environment. If I saw you in Denver, I wouldn't have a whole lot to say. But, here I have stories coming out of my ears that are applicable to this environment.

V: Stories are relative to this environment. At an Elderhostel in Denver, I would not have the stories to tell. You know, it's like two pilots getting together, two geologists getting together, whatever.

D: It's the camping that puts you on the same turf with people that makes room for those stories?

V: Absolutely. I can relate to what Willow says. I lived the same kind of life, but on a different plane. The environment certainly was not as austere as hers, but similar. I had brothers, I herded sheep.

D: Did you ever get fed a raw bird though?! (laughing together).

V: I didn't, but as I said, I got lowered over cliffs to get bird eggs. So, when she hid from her brothers, I can see that.

D: So what experience here has been the richest for you?

V: Experiences enrich my life, and so that enrichment I carry with me to add to the pot, and so all the relationships; the understanding of Winnie and her relationships—that reconfirms my faith in human beings. I take it back and I am further enriched by it. It's fun...Eric...I so admire him. I watch him and he moves easily. He is a gentle, kind, considerate, 100% non-ego person. I have very little interaction with him, yet I totally enjoy him. I admire him and say his wife is a lucky person. It is fun to know someone like him. And Paula, even though we have vastly different backgrounds and opinions, the values are similar...it's great.

V: What is noteworthy is how this environment allows people with pretty different backgrounds to find common ground and enjoy...

Victoria demonstrated her desire to connect to others through story, and clarified the ultimate value of the relationships—connection to others—that are yielded through the sharing of personal story.

Not only did connecting through stories make the learning experience enjoyable for participants, but when considered through the lens of “successful aging,” connection to others through story was viewed as a primary contribution to the higher development of the study's participants. Rowe and Kahn's (1997) successful aging concept identified socio-emotional support as a key element contributing to longevity. Rowe and Kahn found that active engagement and socio-emotional support helped in a broader manner to foster healthy lifestyles. My study recognized the benefits associated with connecting to others through story while paralleling features of successful aging. By connecting to others through stories, participants appeared to access affection, liking and love, and esteem—all of which were recognized to lead to longevity (Rowe and Kahn, 1997).

Haight's (2001) contributions to the study of life review cast further light on the educational and developmental value of connecting to others through story. According to Haight (2001), “The telling and sharing of life stories allows individuals to forge connections

both across memories and with others. The connections formed in memory are the discovery of patterns and meaning in the past that may have been neglected or gone unrecognized” (p.

2). Haight’s (2001) reference to the act of sharing and disclosing personally held thoughts help to establish context and meaning for the sentiments that were shared by Victoria and others.

Haight (2001) wrote:

Sharing one's inner thoughts...in such a manner is an act of intimacy, for both the listener and the teller. Such meaningful disclosures provide a window into another's soul and, in the process of sharing secrets, participants may feel a lifting of burdens and tremendous relief. A person who participates in a successful life review has given away burdens and found new strengths. (p. 2)

In her work with older adults, Haight (2001) suggested, “connections with others enable individuals to feel alive, loved, cared for, and listened to. Through such exchanges, individuals can reclaim their past, while simultaneously shaping and interpreting it in new ways” (p. 1). Extending this idea, Sullivan (as cited in Haight, 2001) wrote:

Healthy social and emotional development occurs when peers can share learning and perspective. The reciprocal teller-listener relationship in life review, which involves the sharing of information, including negative events and private thoughts, is a peer relationship. It is open and caring, not judgmental, as individuals try to meet each other where they are. (p. 2)

Relationships served an important role in the overall learning experience by providing a fun and safe place to learn, to dialogue about present or past experiences, to laugh, and enjoy mutual support with tasks that need to be accomplished around camp. There were moments throughout our six-day experience that transcended more ordinary moments, and in retrospect spoke of the value of relationship. Our guide, Willow’s emphasis on relationship was made evident to me toward the end of our trip while standing silently in a circle of clasped hands at the canyon rim while nearby a couple of ravens circled on the warm afternoon updrafts.

Willow offered a Navajo prayer of thanks and of safekeeping. The prayer and the spontaneous coming together were simple, and as I looked around to members of our party, I noticed eyes

meeting in a way that acknowledged the unique connection that was established between members of the group.

Observation Five: Participant Intellectual Development Was Enriched Through Reflection

Lastly, successful aging of participants in the study was fostered through intellectual development. This final observation focused on the development of the minds of participants—the mental health that is frequently associated with successful aging. This observation draws from a conceptual understanding of what took place in Canyon de Chelly and relates it to the work of others in order to situate the reflection of the study’s participants as a tool for enhancing their intellectual life.

Transcendence was defined by Victor Frankl as “an innate desire to discover meaning in human life” (as cited in Levenson, 2005, p. 128). Reed (1991, as cited in Levenson, 2005) conceptualized transcendence as possessing a growing appreciation for the present, and an expansion of boundaries between self and the world. Furthermore, it has been suggested that “self-transcendence is a developmental process that forms a pathway to wisdom” (Levenson, Aldwin & Cupertino, as cited in Levenson, 2005, p. 128). Transcendence is introduced here because it describes the essence of the intellectual activities of this study’s older adults as they appeared in the thematic findings of research question one. It was proposed that perhaps the telling of story was an intellectualized effort to make meaning—to “discover meaning in human life.”

In conversations with each participant (revealed in findings from question one), life stories explored personal experience and knowledge in the context of learning about Navajo culture. The innate desire to make meaning—or transcendence—exhibited by older adult participants was witnessed in Eric’s reflection about life on the reservation, and in his perplexed wondering about what to do about the injustice. Transcendence was observed in

Victoria's open dialogue with me about her growing up. Affirmation of life choices was shared by Kelly. While watching local residents repair a Hogan, Kelly thought back about her life growing up, and concluded that it was "okay"—implying that her life and the choices she made had been affirmed. In this way, experiential education and adventure education was observed serving in the higher development of older adults by giving participants the space and time to reflect upon life and make meaning of their experience.

The nature of the second research question focused on how reflection--a mental act—contributed to the learning and higher development of older adults. Findings also suggested means by which the higher development of older adults was influenced by the *physical* aspects of the experience. As previous findings revealed, physical health emerged as a theme that described the reflection of participants in this study. While a consideration of how physical aspects of the adventure education experience supported higher development was outside the scope of research question two, the physical nature of adventure education logically appeared to strongly contribute to the successful aging of participants.

In summary, this major section of Chapter 5 answered the second research question, "How does reflection in adventure education support older adult learning and higher development?" Learning and higher development was defined in part with the idea of successful aging, which placed a focus on three key areas of living: (a) Good health, low risk of disease, and disability; (b) high mental and physical functioning; and, (c) active engagement and an active life (Rowe & Kahn, 1990). With the help of thematic descriptions of reflection derived in question one, the study found and reported in this last section on 5 ways that successful aging was promoted by reflection in adventure education. First, the reconsideration of values that participants engaged in impelled older adult participants into personally relevant learning, capturing their attention and imagination such that Rowe and Kahn's criteria of mental functioning and active engagement with life was satisfied. Second,

the story-like process of reviewing past life experience directly satisfied Rowe and Kahn's first criteria, which called for good health. This connection seemed logical considering Kiernat's (in Haight, 1991) findings that life review and related activities increased health and wellness of older adults. Third, this section revealed how reflection in adventure education lead to an authentic and engaged encounter which promoted connection among participants. Lastly, this section demonstrated how the intellectual life of older adults was stimulated and greatly enhanced by reflection-oriented activities. Overall, as Rowe and Kahn's criteria were consulted, it appeared that this adventure education experience captured many of the requirements set forth for successful aging, and helped to represent adventure education as a healthful, life-giving activity for older adults.

Summary

Chapter 5 extended current understanding about older adults' experience of reflection in adventure education by presenting an in-depth description of the reflection of older adults participating in a 6-day adventure education experience. Answers to two major research questions yielded observations that were shared in each of two major sections within the chapter. The research questions were: (a) What themes describe the experience of reflection for older adult participants of adventure education?; and (b) How does older adult reflection in adventure education support the learning and higher development of older adults? Consistent with the overlapping, emergent nature of qualitative inquiry, a report on the findings was blended in this chapter with a discussion of the related literature.

Essentially, the primary question in the study asked to describe themes of reflection. Three major themes and 10 sub-themes worked in tandem to describe the reflection for older adults participating in the study:

- *Theme One: Connecting to Values.* Connecting to values was a prominent organizing theme and revealed multiple dimensions of participants' experience with reflection. This major theme captured participants' engagement with foundational personal values, and represented participants' reflection process which evoked empathy, and feelings of love, guilt, joy, and sadness. This overarching theme revealed participants' experience of connecting to each other as well as their tendency to reflect using story—this was compared to life review and reminiscence. Imbedded within this theme there were 7 sub-themes:

1. *You know these people are not poor*
2. *We could all live a lot simpler*
3. *I just love Willow to death*
4. *We've given them a bad hand*
5. *She is still grieving*
6. *Here I can just be me*
7. *Connecting through story*

- *Theme Two: Time Orientation..* Time orientation presented a description of older adult reflection that: (a) placed value on simplicity, rejuvenation, and renewal; (b) described risk taking in the context of the present moment; (c) described a concern for future generations and peoples; and (d) described older adults' reflexive practice as emancipatory, casting them as "wardens of culture," and playing an integral role in the survival of culture. Imbedded within this theme there were 3 sub-themes:

1. *The Here and Now*
2. *Looking Back*
3. *Looking Ahead*

- *Theme Three: Health.* Health was a third theme that described older adult reflection as focusing on mental and physical health. Reflection was identified in this theme as an alternative element of adult intelligence, and linkages were identified in the gerontology literature that bridged reflection to the practice of life review and reminiscence and the expression of wisdom. With a focus on the intellectual aspects of older adults' reflective practice, this final theme helped to describe aging as a time of development—not degeneration—and a time of seeing personal truth more clearly in such a manner that can conceptually lead to wisdom in later life.

The secondary research question strove to better understand how reflection in adventure education supported learning and higher development. This was done by exploring findings from question one (thematic descriptions) and establishing relationships between the experience of reflection and the essential ingredients of successful aging. When this analysis was complete, five key observations were generated that described how reflection in adventure education supported older adult learning and higher development. These observations included:

- Participants engaged in a process of reconsidering their values.
- Participant reflection process resembled reminiscence and life review.
- Participants enjoyed an authentic experience.
- Participants made connections to others through story.
- Participant intellectual development was enriched through reflection.

In my study, I observed older adults drawn into adventure education experiences in ways that offered them distinct opportunities to connect to others via emotions like love and guilt and feelings of empathy. The presence of these emotions, among other things, suggested a connected knowing and morality of care was practiced. Interview segments that I have

shared reveal how this experience promoted dialogue that focused on some of life's core dimensions: family, relationships, connectedness, faith, caring, and respect.

One of the hallmarks of experiential education is its distinct capacity to foster strong, generative connections between the learner and the learner's environment. As an approach, or a philosophy, experiential education has a tendency to help create meaning (Caine & Caine, 1994), and "generative knowledge" (Knapp, 1993, p. 20), and can lead learners toward authentic connections that eclipse mechanical relationships with the world. My analysis of an experience of older adults in adventure education has extended an understanding about learning and development in experiential education that has an impact for practitioners and researchers alike as will be described in the final chapter of this study report.

Chapter 6: Researcher's Reflection

This last chapter strives to describe the implications of my study for future research as well as for the practice and policy associated with adventure education. Prior to proceeding with a discussion of these implications, I will address the overall soundness and quality of the research methods and findings of my study.

Research Soundness and Quality

When considering issues regarding the quality of research, phenomenologists are typically concerned with one guiding question: “Did I get it right?” (Creswell, 1998). In Chapter Three, I explained the multiple steps I took in an effort to produce high quality research, and to get it right. These strategies included: (a) member checking; (b) researcher reflexivity; (c) peer debriefing; and (d) thick, rich description. While these steps were indeed taken throughout the study, I found myself, at the end of the study, asking if my interpretation was well grounded and supported. This question was best answered by turning to five criteria used by Polkinghorne (in Creswell, 1998, p. 208) to examine the strength of a phenomenological study. This section presents these five questions with an immediate response to the question as it related to my study.

- 1. Did the interviewer influence the contents of the subjects' descriptions in such a way that the descriptions do not truly reflect the subjects' actual experience?*

During interview situations “subject” descriptions were frequently reiterated back to the study participant in order to facilitate effective communication. I also conducted member checking in order to assure that any influence of subjects' descriptions was taken into account. None of my participants disagreed with the transcriptions or the meaning I applied to the contents of the transcriptions.

2. *Is the transcription accurate, and does it convey the meaning of the oral presentation in the interview?* The transcription appeared to accurately represent what was discussed in interview situations. Again, transcriptions were shared with each participant in entirety as part of member checking. None of the participants asked that the transcripts be changed.
3. *In the analysis of the transcriptions, were there conclusions other than those offered by the researcher that could have been derived?* It seems possible that there could have been alternative interpretations of the transcriptions. Participants in the research were encouraged to read and respond to their individual interview transcriptions and equally encouraged to respond to my analysis of the transcriptions. There were no objections made to what was presented.
4. *Is it possible to go from the general structural description to the transcriptions and to account for the specific contents and connections in the original examples of the experience?* In many cases this is possible, since themes and sub-themes were adopted from the emic perspective and used participant language. The study made use of a great deal of direct quotations in order to strengthen it in terms of fidelity to the participants' voices.
5. *Is the structural description situation specific, or does it hold in general for the experience in other situations?* Attention was paid to clearly articulate the context of the study. It is unclear—due to the rich context of the study—whether or not all the structural descriptions of reflection would be represented in other

environments and with other older adults. Rather, as is expected in interpretive research, it is left ultimately to the reader to determine if the findings of my study provide insights to their context and uses.

A review of Polkinghorne's criteria for judging phenomenological studies suggested that my data and findings are sound. I recognized that if more research focused on older adults in experiential education, it would be far easier to gauge my findings and interpretations by comparing and contrasting related findings. I remain interested to see if my participants' experience and their descriptions resemble others elsewhere. As Van Manen reminded me:

The challenge of human science research is that the experiential situations may be drastically different. Thus it can be misleading to use one research study as a model for application in another research environment. Situations in which the studied phenomenon occurs may be as different as a particular schoolroom, a playground, a home, a hospital, a professional workplace....(Van Manen, 1990, p. 166)

Throughout the research period, ongoing appraisal of the soundness of this study included attention to numerous additional details. Lengthy writing and rewriting and multiple member checks provided additional evidence for soundness of the data and its interpretation. Unforeseen developments that occurred in the field were discussed in Chapter 4. Slightly fewer participants than anticipated and hot temperatures led to data that was not as thick as I had planned. In an effort to acknowledge the appropriateness and the soundness of the study, I am reminded of Stake's (1995) comment: "it is not uncommon for case study researchers to make assertions on a relatively small database, invoking the privilege and responsibility of interpretation" (p. 9).

There also remained a continual question for me about the real or perceived effects of the Navajo culture upon participant experience. Throughout the writing stage of the study, I frequently wondered how much of the participants' experience of reflection would be shared by other older adults participating in other adventure education experiences? For instance, did participants regularly reflect about their values during this trip because of Navajo influences?

A closely related, but broader, issue I considered during the study was the effect Navajo culture had on the overall adventure education experience for this group. For example, I learned that today's Navajo culture includes an amalgam of cultural icons and practices borrowed from others. Contemporary Navajo culture is filled with paradox, making it difficult to point to one thing and say, "that is Navajo" (personal communication, David-guide). To this extent, it was never clear to me if what I was experiencing was necessarily Navajo. To extend this question, it was difficult to discern how much the Navajo context contributed to the quality, or felt experience, of adventure education for participants, and what the cultural influence was upon the quality of participant stories. Additional thoughts regarding the research process are shared in the final section of this chapter. The chapter will next focus on implications my study has for future researchers seeking to examine aspects of older adult experience of adventure education.

Implications for Future Research

Quality research not only helps to guide improved standards of practice, but sound studies help lay the groundwork for future studies, as well as lending support for previously conducted research. This section is presented for those researchers seeking to advance current knowledge about older adults in adventure education, or for those wishing to enhance what is understood about the phenomena of reflection and the process of making meaning from experience. Upon reviewing the overall study, four primary implications were identified that can help to guide focused, sound research efforts in the future. These considerations include:

- 1. Increase duration of study and number of research participants.* While this study was conducted within the parameters of its proposed study design, it is recommended that future efforts consider studying an adult adventure education experience that lasts

a longer time, as well as including more participants. This recommendation is made in the aftermath of my study, where I found myself desiring more data—or “thicker” data with which to work. As I described previously, the environment and human factors played a role in limiting the amount of interviewing I was able to conduct, thereby lessening the amount of data that I had planned to be available to me. In addition to considering a longer duration experience, another option for further research would be to study two short experiences with the intent of increasing the number of study participants.

2. Include alternative contexts for gathering data on older adult experience. This study strove to examine the experience of reflection for older adults within a specific adventure education setting: a wilderness-based, developmental oriented experiential education trip. Future researchers might consider different settings for gathering data about the experience of reflection for older adults involved in adventure education. This recommendation is made based upon questions I raised throughout the analysis and writing of the study, probing the effects of the Navajo culture and the socio-historical backdrop of the program on participants’ experience. Previously, I shared my concern that our Navajo guide’s values and perspective might have strongly influenced my study participants’ views and overall experience of reflection. By encouraging future researches to include alternative contexts within their study design, some of these concerns might be answered. Future contexts for studying older adult experience of reflection might include day trips or challenge course experiences, for example.

A related recommendation needs to be made as it relates to including alternative contexts for studying the experience of reflection. It was noted previously that the

style of education and instruction adopted by our female Navajo guide was largely of a “telling” nature, whereby instead of directly eliciting reaction and discussion, she would tell the group of listeners what she wanted them to know. This mode of being—of leading—is important to note here because it is a departure from other modes of experiential education strategies that provide opportunity for a more student-centered and collaborative encounter with information. It is recommended that future researchers consider contexts that include more diverse styles of teaching and instructing.

3. *Include alternative strategies for studying the experience of reflection.* Within this phenomenological study design, data was collected using interviews, observation, and field notes. This approach was chosen in order to gain an appreciation of the inner experience—the lived experience—of participants. My findings were the result of interviews that I directed, and transcripts that I transcribed and analyzed. While phenomenological inquiry embraces the experience and the role of the researcher, I recognize an opportunity to *limit* the influence of the researcher by including alternative strategies for studying the experience of participants. I recall my experience with Paula, the participant in this study, who kept to herself and answered my questions with a marked succinctness. Also, recall my experience with Victoria, the participant in this study who was loquacious and at times seemed eager to provide me with the information that I was seeking. In both instances, I sensed a strong reaction to my presence as a researcher.

Alternative means of acquiring data for future similar studies might include the use of participant journal writing as a means of accessing and analyzing participant reflection. By including document analysis as a means of acquiring data (but not

limiting the approach to this strategy), the researcher's influence might be lessened, and the inner experience of individuals might be more accurately represented.

Researchers can turn to Brown's (2002) study of facilitation sessions for guidance on how one might proceed with an analysis of facilitated discussion. In this study, Brown examined the power and decision-making used by leaders and facilitators in debriefing, and their influence (sometimes hidden) on the discussion. While I strove in my study to be conscious and sensitive to the meta messages I sent to participants and strove to limit my influence, I think that my data collection methods did have some influence on the perspectives shared by study participants. It would be helpful in this regard to reiterate the potential benefit of including alternative data collection techniques in future studies, as they may help to reveal even more about older adults' experience.

4. Consider triangulation as a means of strengthening findings. As demonstrated previously in this chapter, and in chapter three, I relied on numerous accepted means of ensuring soundness of my findings. The technique of member checking was included in order to gain feedback about the findings from the participants. None of my research participants had remarkable feedback concerning the findings of the study, despite my efforts to correspond with them about the study. Based on this experience, I believe that future studies would be strengthened by including triangulation as a technique for strengthening the dependability of findings. More specifically, researchers designing future studies might consider enrolling older adults as focus group participants, and encourage direct feedback about findings and assertions made about older adult processes.

Each of the four implications for research that have been identified in this section ask researchers to consider aspects of their study design. By paying attention to issues surrounding data collection techniques, context of study, and strategies for ensuring soundness, researchers will improve the soundness of my exploratory research relating to adults in adventure education . This chapter now moves toward conclusion by offering implications for those seeking guidance in their practice as experiential educators, and designers and facilitators of older adult programs in adventure education.

Implications for Policy and Practice

Based on my study findings, policy makers charged with establishing procedures and protocols for working with older adults, and practitioner in the field who are responsible for leading participants through safe and meaningful educational experiences should consider the following four potential implications.

1. Consider designing adventure education programs that include a prominent reflection component as a vital, life-giving, healthful activity for older adults. After reviewing the apparent connection in this study between reflection in adventure education and Rowe and Kahn's (1997) concept of successful aging, it is apparent that the overall health and longevity of the participants in my study were promoted. While these findings are not generalizable, practitioners are encouraged to consider how successful aging is supported by combining rich cognitive activity of reflection with the social and physical nature of adventure activity. The component of reflection, it seems, has the capacity to transform activity for older adults by infusing physical activity with social, emotional, and cognitive aspects.

2. *Consider that older adult students may be prone to connecting and telling stories as a means of reviewing their learning.* Chapter five of the study depicted the study participants as individuals who were prone to connect to their values and to connect to others and rely on stories a great deal of time to do so. If this is true for these older adults, practitioners might ask themselves first off, “Is this true for the older adults I’m working with?” Next, “If these are prominent features of other older adult experiences with reflection in adventure education, then what programmatic changes must be made to accommodate these tendencies within my educational program?” “Will practitioners need to set more time aside for participants to talk and share about their previous life experience and what they have learned?” While these appear to be quite simple ramifications, the task of designing effective and meaningful educational programs can hinge—it appears—on the habits of its students and clients.

3. *Consider the impact of physical challenge and exertion upon older adult reflection.* My experience with older adults in the field during this study focused my attention on the physical demands placed upon this group when participating in rugged trips. In chapter three, I shared excerpts from my field notes which revealed the challenges I experienced in trying to find time to conduct interviews. I discovered that my study participants spent a significant amount of time resting and relaxing after and before hiking. Therefore, practitioners working with older adults are encouraged to view downtime as a critical program element. This consideration sits in contrast to recommendations typically made for practitioners working with young adults, whereby structured time is leveraged and activity-heavy. The question for practitioners working with older adults becomes, “How can I respond in a unique way to older adult needs for rest and relaxation such that it contributes to the overall adventure education experience?” In other words, practitioners might find themselves asking “How am I going to facilitate dialogue with my group at the end of the day if they are tired?” One possible solution

to this dilemma is to conduct reflection sessions less often with older adults. This is feasible, given that this group's reflection appeared to come easily, and included in-depth topics.

4 Consider older adults as motivated and capable program participants. Based upon my experience in the field observing and interacting with research participants and based upon observations and insights shared in this study, it is advised that practitioners consider the motivation and ability of older adult participants. Specifically, I observed older adults engaged in conversation with each other—debriefing the day's events, and sharing about their lives—without apparent difficulty. This is valuable information for the practitioner because this observation sits in contrast to typical adolescent and young adult participants of experiential education programs, who classically resist efforts to reflect and debrief experiences as a group. As this study described in chapter four, the leader of the experience frequently would ask a single question that would lead the group into easy dialogue. As a way of drawing attention to this implication, a question can be posed to practitioners: “Are older adults likely to benefit more from specific debriefing questions, wherein efforts are made to sharpen and direct the discussion?”

The second part of this implication takes up the issue of older adults as capable participants. What is meant by this is that older adults, as depicted by findings in this study, reflect about things and in a manner that reveals potency, aliveness, and substance. The major theme of connecting to personal values revealed an older adult educational experience filled with lively and descriptive sub-themes. The message for practitioners is that this study's older adults were active learners, and appeared to find personal meaning in their experiences, as depicted in the thematic description of their inner experience.

Upon conclusion of this study, it is hoped that some element of the research—whether it be something gleaned from the review of literature or a particular aspect of the study

design, the findings, or perhaps connections that were established between the findings and existing literature—may support, elevate, or otherwise advance the research or the practice of adventure education with older adults. After having undertaken a study of this magnitude, I wish to share a number of observations and ideas that do not fit anywhere but in the closing section, where personal remarks are more appropriate.

Concluding Thoughts

This final section is set aside to share a few of my thoughts that are less formal, and less grounded in the findings of this study. First, I wish to share from my intuition and my own reflective process a series of descriptive statements that I think captures the essence of older adult reflection. Secondly, I will state two research questions that I think deserve some attention by researchers in education. These are mentioned here because they have emerged from my own reflection, separate from formal findings within my study. Now I wish to share the descriptive statements. The experience of reflection for older adults can be described as:

1. Consisting of telling stories about life experience;
2. Reconsidering personal values;
3. Including the experience of intensity, passion, joy, guilt, and empathy;
4. Affirming an alternative form of knowing which includes procedural knowledge, and a morality of caring;
5. Occurring innately—a natural desire to make meaning of life. This happens with minimal active support;
6. Providing older adults an alternative expression of intelligence and development (“pragmatics of life”), and providing older adults the opportunity to pass on their stories in a supportive environment. These stories support older adults in serving as “wardens of culture.”

7. Possessing a strong time-oriented dimension. Stories are anchored squarely to past, present, future, which includes older adults' thinking about their legacy and future generations;
8. Lending support for integration and wholeness. An avenue for exploring the development and expression of wisdom;
9. Representing an authentic experience (personally relevant, sincere, and at times emotional); and
10. Reinforcing the value of a break from the modern concerns of life back home.

These are descriptions that have emerged from study with four research participants, and are not intended to generalize to a broader group of individuals.

The following two questions slowly began to take shape during my review of the literature for my study.

- 1) To what extent does story reliably depict reflection for older adults in other experiential education settings? That is, do older adults use story as a means of reflecting on their experience when they are participating in other experiential education programs? This question is important because once resolved, it would lend greater or lesser support for story as an established mode of reviewing experience. In this study, a connection was drawn between story in adventure education and the process of life review (Butler, 1963; Haight, 2001; Merriam, 1993; Staudinger, 1989) and reminiscence (Bornat, 1994; Coleman, 1994; Haight, 1991; Molinari & Reichlan, 1984) in the field of gerontology. It would be helpful to know whether this is an isolated phenomenon, or if it is observed elsewhere. If story did not appear elsewhere—in other contexts—one might begin to ask the question whether or not story occurred in this context because of environmental influences (i.e., because the facilitator used story as a means of communicating).

- 2) What is the difference between men and women in their quality and quantity of reflection in adventure education? Are women better situated to learn in environments that rely more heavily on introspection and sharing dialogue? Are women situated to gain more from experiential education environments that place an emphasis on the reflection-component of the learning than men? Haight (2001) found that the reflection-oriented activity of life review was more difficult for men—that they contained less emotionality, and that they fell out of process more regularly than women. While my research did not entertain questions of this nature, observations were made that tended to support Haight’s observation. As this study pointed out Eric’s style of reflecting about his experiences resembled Haight’s findings in a general way. It was noted that Eric’s reflection was dominantly about his accomplishments throughout his life, and referred very little to what things were like for him; nor did he describe life in terms of being difficult, or bringing joy, etc. In other words, Eric’s reflection was mechanical—this stood in stark contrast to the descriptions of the women in the study who were more descriptive and elaborate when they described their experiences.

As my thoughts now turn toward the future of experiential education and adventure education, I hope that readers’ motivation have been piqued in order to respond to shifting educational and cultural needs revealed by this study. It appears that the needs of an older society will invite exciting opportunities in the area of experiential education. The quote below offers a possible view of the role of older adult reflection in the context of the “public world:”

If the act of reminiscence fails to recover the public world—fails, that is, to participate in something larger than a single story—then reminiscence fails of its larger purpose. In that case, reminiscence becomes a sentimental journey: an

evocation of nostalgia or a flight from the present. By contrast, the old person who helps the present generation to remember the public world also redeems it from the natural ruin of time, and for future generations, bestows guidance on the life journey. (Moody, in Coleman, 1994, p. 19)

In closing, as Garvey and Garvey (1997) pointed out, we must continue in earnest to prepare for a shifting demographic of students in experiential education programs. Successful integration of knowledge about older adults into the practice of experiential education programs around the country will continue to draw upon the courage of practitioners—courage to confront ageist barriers and replace outmoded views and perspectives about older adulthood with perspectives that paint a more accurate picture of aging as a time of potency and richness. Courage looks different when expressed by different individuals. This study taught me that perhaps the courage adventure educators will be drawing upon in the future, as they prepare for a different sort of work with older adults, will be about making brave adaptations to “adventure curriculum” in order to better match the experience to the student. To admit this and act on behalf of older adults will mean letting go of a long-held set of beliefs about what it means to do adventure education. Furthermore, I found in this study that reflection meant listening to others’ personal stories about life. As Roberson (2001) demonstrated, older adults have albums filled with stories from their adventurous travels that haven’t been told.

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<http://www.census.gov/ipc/prod/ageame.pdf>; United States Bureau of the Census, National Institute on Aging. Aging in the Americas in the XXI Century.

<http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html>, International Programs Center database, United States Bureau of the Census.

www.planetphoto.free.fr

www.reviewing.co.uk/research/experiential.learning.htm

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/00000.html>

Appendices

Appendix A: Letter of Consent

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

April 20, 2004

To Whom it Concerns,

Thank you for speaking with me recently on the telephone. I am writing to follow up on that conversation and to provide you with further details regarding the research that I am conducting in conjunction with Oregon State University. This letter is designed to protect and inform you, and is written in six major sections. If any of the language is unclear I am happy to speak with you directly.



OREGON
STATE
UNIVERSITY

100 Education Hall
Corvallis, Oregon
97331

I. Purpose:

This is a research study for my doctoral dissertation. The purpose of this study is to gain greater insight into the nature of how older adult learners reflect on their experiences in adventure education. Additionally, this study proposes to examine more closely how adventure education, such as the Moki Treks trip, supports older adult learners in their personal development. As more and more people move into older adulthood, the lack of understanding about adult's needs and their experience as learners is becoming more important. This research proposes to help aid in the advancement of experiential education programs for older adults. The results of this research will be documented in my doctoral dissertation at the Oregon State University, and may possibly be used in the future as a part of academic presentations or scholarly publication.

II. Procedures:

If you agree to participate, your first involvement in the study will last from May 16th until May 22nd, 2004. It is expected that your participation in the research will include up to two additional contacts with you by me in the future, lasting a duration of up to 45 minutes at a time, and occurring within two to five months from the original contact date. The following events can be anticipated in the study:

- May, 2004: interviews and observation will take place as part of my participation in the Canyon de Chelly trip. I will conduct in-depth interviews with participants and make notes regarding the experience of reflection (this will include participant comments and behavior, notes about the setting and the place). All interviews will be recorded on an audio tape recorder.
- June & July, 2004: Taped interviews will be transcribed.
- August-October, 2004: Content of taped interviews and other collected data will be analyzed in a detailed manner to gain understanding about the experience of reflection and adventure education.
- September-October, 2004: Content of taped interviews that is selected to be included in the study report will be shared with participants for their reaction as to accuracy and their willingness to have included in the study report. Interpretations of taped interviews and other data will be shared with research participants for their feedback as to the validity of the interpretation to assist in refining the interpretation. Final decisions on the interpretations will rest with me, the researcher.
- October-December, 2004: Writing final portion of dissertation.
- January, 2005: Present research to the university and send research participants

Telephone
541-737-4661

copy of dissertation. If further information about this phenomenon is sought, I will seek permission from participants. Any additional research on the experience of the participants will be handled independently by me and apart from Oregon State University.

III. Risks:

Potential risks include the possibility of public dissemination of personal information. Participants will not be identified by name and will be given the opportunity to express their interest in modifying, editing, or removing information from the transcribed narrative that could cause them discomfort. Furthermore, you will have the right to refuse to answer any question, terminate any interview at your discretion, and/or withdraw from the study at any time. The ultimate decision to edit or remove interpretations of gathered data rests with me.

IV. Benefits:

The potential personal benefits that may occur as a result of your participation in this study of reflection in adventure education exist most notably as an increased level of learning and enjoyment that may happen for you as a result of the interaction and conversational interviews that are proposed. By inquiring about your experience, and by joining in mutual dialogue about the events that unfold in Canyon de Chelly, it seems reasonable to suggest that your program will be enhanced. It is helpful to point out that I have over 20 years of experience providing guidance, instruction, and facilitation of group experiences in the outdoors. My expertise and awareness is likely to lend to an overall more enjoyable, if not safer experience for you.

V. Confidentiality:

Records of participation in this research project will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. However, federal government agencies and the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews and approves research studies involving human subjects) may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. It is possible that these records could contain information that personally identifies you. Numerous precautions will be taken to protect your identity in the research, including the use of coding techniques, secure storage of audio recordings, and transcriptions of those recordings. In the event of a report or publication from this study, your identity will not be disclosed. Results will be reported in a manner that protects your identity, making it extremely difficult to identify you.

VI. Questions:

Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: George Copa, PhD, at (541)737-0123, copag@oregonstate.edu; or Drew Brennan, telephone, email address. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at (541)737-3437, or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu. Thank you for your detailed consideration of my research.

Your signature indicates that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Participant's Name (printed):

(Signature of Participant)

(Date)

RESEARCHER STATEMENT

I have discussed the above points with the participant or, where appropriate, with the participant's legally authorized representative, using a translator when necessary. It is my opinion that the participant understands the risks, benefits, and procedures involved with participation in this research study.

(Signature of Researcher)

(Date)

I greatly look forward to the possibility of meeting you in Chinle, Arizona on May 16th.

Sincerely,

Drew Brennan
PhD Candidate
Home telephone
Personal email address

Appendix B: Member Checking Letter I

RE: RESEARCH ON THE EXPERIENCE OF REFLECTION

October 20, 2004

Dear Participant,

Hello! I hope that you have enjoyed your summer and have found the opportunity to get out and enjoy the wild places. I am writing to follow up on two details in regards to my research on reflection in adventure education.

First, I wish to forward to you a copy of the transcripts that resulted from our interviews in Canyon de Chelly in May. Recall that the primary purpose of sending you the transcripts is to further enhance the soundness of the study. The transcripts were typed word for word, with me providing punctuation where I saw fit.

Second, I am forwarding to you a brief profile of you that I wish to include in my study. It is to be used for contextual purposes only. Your pseudonym was chosen randomly to protect your identity. I will refer to your pseudonym only when necessary.

Would you please read over the enclosed information that I have collected and make any corrections, revisions, or additions that you feel necessary in order to maintain the intent of your comments? I appreciate any insights you might at this juncture. Please return the commented paper to me at my home address (below)? If I don't receive anything from you by November 15th, I'll assume everything is okay.

Thank you again for your participation and your continuing support in my research. Summer progress on the dissertation writing has been slowed by my need to live my other life: income earner. I appreciate your patience in the process. My intent is to contact you in the future to collaborate further in the research process and gain more information about your learning. And of course I will be sharing more of my writing with you in time. I hope you enjoyed the picture(s) that I sent to you in July. Fond memories!

Gratefully yours,

Drew Brennan
home address
home telephone
[email](#) address

Appendix C: Member Checking Letter II

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION



OREGON
STATE
UNIVERSITY

100 Education Hall
Corvallis, Oregon
97331

Telephone
541-737-4661

February 10, 2006

Dear Research Participant,

It has been several months since I have contacted you regarding my research about older adult learning in adventure education. I hope that each of you are healthy and happy and enjoying the splendor of the outdoors. A great deal has occurred since we last spoke, and I am writing to apprise you of the progress that I've made on the analysis of our interviews and our time spent together in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona in May of 2004. Most importantly, I am writing to invite comments about my interpretations related to the interviews, observation and participation in the Moki Treks Experiential Education program.

First, I want to share with you the exciting news that I accepted a job teaching as an xxxxxxxx xxxxxxxx. My family relocated here on August 1st of last year. It is beautiful here—and we've found people very welcoming.

Second, I am making headway toward my plans to graduate this year from Oregon State University in the School of Education. You can imagine how professional obligations and raising a 2-year old has disrupted the completion of the research we began 21 months ago.

As I indicated, I invite your comments regarding my interpretation of the “data” I gathered on our trip together. When conducting qualitative-oriented research studies, researchers attempt to increase the soundness and credibility of their findings using a tool called *member checking*. As participant-members of the research, I want to give you a chance to tell me if my interpretation makes sense to you. As you recall, this study focuses on an in-depth description of older adult's experience of reflection in adventure education.

In order to facilitate comment about the writing I have done, I am forwarding to you key, excerpted parts of the dissertation draft. I invite you to review these parts over the course of the next 2 weeks and use the enclosed stamped/addressed envelope to forward your thoughts as it relates to the following question:

1. Is my interpretation of statements made by you reasonable in terms of your meaning and implications? If your meaning and implications were different than I conveyed, please let me know by making specific comments on the text next to the statement by you.

What I have proposed in this research are my own tentative statements or insights about what the nature of the experience is like for this group of older adults. As with most research, my analysis includes consistent efforts to relate what occurred in Canyon de Chelly to literature that appears elsewhere in education, social science, and gerontology.

I remain grateful for whatever sacrifices you might have made to participate in the research. It has been my hope all along that you might benefit from the experience. I will send you the completed document when it is finished—hopefully this year!

If in reading this letter you find yourself confused about what you are to do or how to respond, please feel free to call me collect at my home telephone number, email me, or call me directly on my cell phone (contact data below). Thank you for your enthusiasm and support. If you choose to respond to the invitation to comment—and it is not mandatory that you respond—please have your response in the mail to me by February 28th. Please include all of your contact data, including your full name, physical address, mailing address, telephone number(s), and e-mail if possible.

I am looking forward to hearing what is occurring in each of your lives!

Sincerely,

Drew Brennan MS, MA

Work Address

Work Telephone

Work Email

p.s. I have enclosed below a revised paragraph from my original correspondence to you, on April 20, 2004, which is offered again in order to protect you, and ensure that have necessary resources for action:

[Questions are encouraged. If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: George Copa, PhD, at telephone number, email address; or Drew Brennan, telephone number, personal email address. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator, at telephone number, or by email at email address. Thank you for your detailed consideration of my research.]

Appendix D: Company Brochure Program Description and Itinerary

Program Description Provided by Moki Treks, Moab, Utah

Canyon de Chelly is one of the Southwest's best kept secrets. The Navajo Indians have lived here for many generations -- weaving blankets, growing corn and herding sheep. The canyon walls hold many stories of the Ancient Ones - the people that lived in the canyon for hundreds of years. They left an abundant amount of rock art, and ruins which are located in sandstone alcoves high above the canyon floor.

The spectacular landscape of Canyon de Chelly explains why so many people have been drawn, and are still drawn, to this special place. Each spire, each stately, carved, jutting rock in the canyon has a name, a story and significance.

A Navajo guide will share stories that have been passed down for generations and are intimately related to the culture. Dramatic views of red rock spires unfold the stories of Spider woman, the revered creator and inspiration for the intricate weaving designs of the Navajo.

We will descend into the Canyon for five days of discovering the magic of this incredible place. Our daily hikes take us to places like; Spider Rock, the inspirational rock spire so important to many of the traditions of the Navajo, and to White House Ruin, probably the most famous ruin in the Canyon. Our 5 days of hiking in the canyon offers you an intimate look at the beauty, the people and the history of Canyon de Chelly. Evening programs will please you with traditional song and drum, a local flute player, campfire discussions and Navajo creation stories.

This unique opportunity to learn about the Navajo culture and people, while walking and camping in the majestic canyon, offers you an opportunity of a lifetime! Walk in Beauty!!

A Navajo guide will share stories that have been passed down for generations and are intimately related to the culture. Dramatic views of red rock spires unfold the stories of Spider Women, the revered creator and inspiration for the intricate weaving designs of the Navajo.

ITINERARY

Day 1

You will depart for Canyon de Chelly National Monument from Chinle, Arizona. We meet our guide at the visitor center (ask for the Navajo Moki Treks guide at the Visitor Center desk) at 12:00 noon. Depart Visitor Center for the pick-nick area for lunch and orientation. After lunch we drive our vehicles to their parking place while we are in the Canyon. After handling the necessary logistics, we will be transported to the trailhead of Sand Trail. This trail down into the canyon brings us to the Sliding House campsite. Set up camp and have dinner. Evening program is about the Navajo history of canyon de Chelly. Camp dinner followed by an evening program designed to bring local stories to life. Hiking time: Approximately 2 hours. 1000 feet elevation loss on good trail (some loose rocks—making it necessary for you to hike in good hiking boots).

Day 2

Hike up Canyon de Chelly to Spider Rock. Stop at Spider Rock and hear the stories of creation associated with this fantastic rock pillar. We hear stories about grandmother's Hogan and while hiking we might find tracks of wild animals. This is one of the most secluded parts of the canyon, and takes you through pinion and Douglas fir forests. On our return we view ruins, tucked high in alcoves. Return to Sliding House campsite. Dinner will be a hands-on traditional Navajo meal, with group participation and Navajo "cooking lessons." Evening campfire program on stars, and the Navajo rock art planetariums of Canyon de Chelly. Hiking time: leisurely 8 hours, elevation gain and loss 200 feet, trail on the canyon floor through high desert vegetation.

Day 3

Hike from our campsite up to the rim. Hike along the rim and enjoy fantastic views of the canyon and views of the nearby Chuska Mountain range. Continue along the rim and descend down the canyon on a different trail. This nice hike leads us to an overlook with views of all directions of Canyon de Chelly. This hike takes us off the beaten path of Canyon de Chelly and allows us to see ruins unseen by most travelers in the canyon. Return to Sliding House camp. Pre-dinner down time will be followed by a sumptuous backcountry meal. Enjoy evening campfire entertainment including traditional music, and experience the magic of the echoing canyon walls! Hiking time: 6 hours, hiking on a trail to the top of the rim, walking on a flat trail along the rim and descend down the canyon again. 700 feet elevation difference.

Day 4

Leave Sliding House camp and head for White House Ruin, undoubtedly the most famous ruin in Canyon de Chelly. Enjoy lunch and lecture at White House Ruin. We view some more rock art and arrows imbedded in a rock crevice where warriors once competed on our return to camp. Return to camp. Dinner and an evening campfire program including a chance to ask questions about Navajo culture and issues. Hiking Time: 6 Hours, on good trails. Dinner, Games and Stories.

Day 5

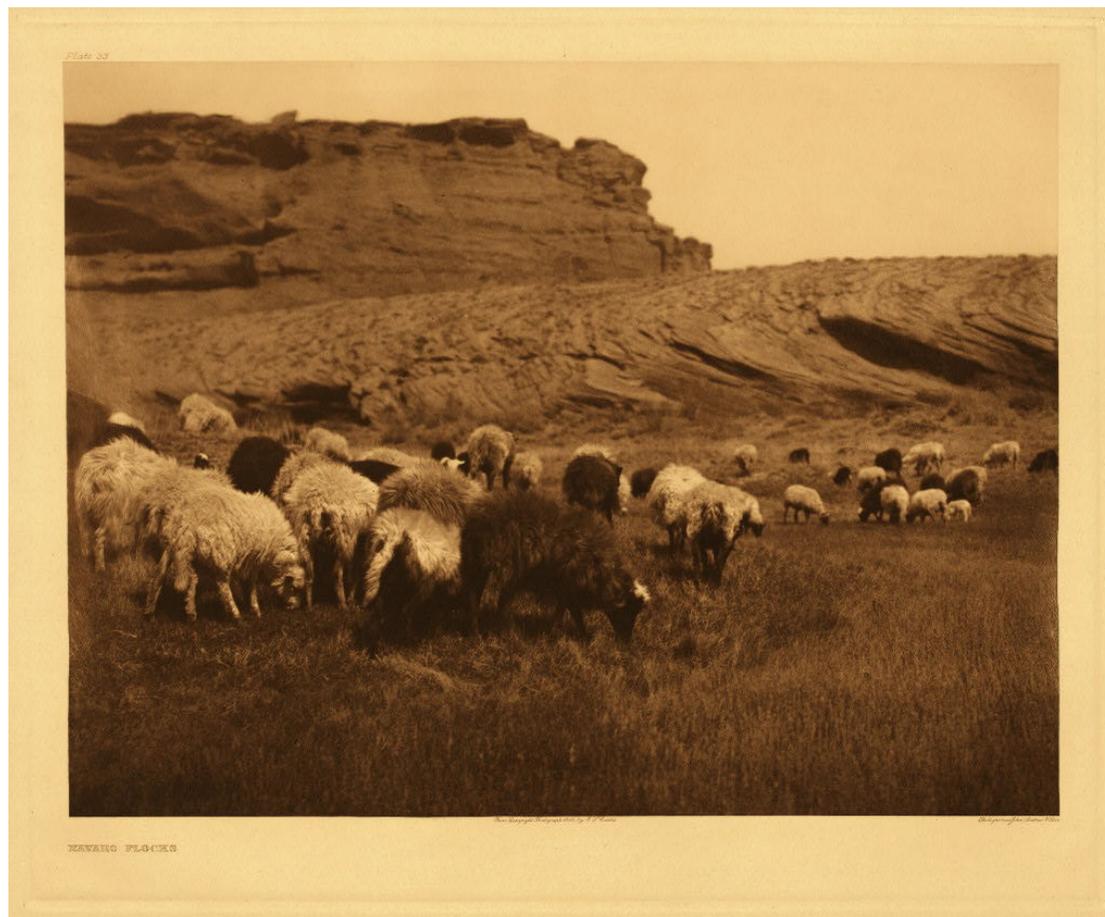
Morning hike to Cherry Canyon a special place in Canyon de Chelly and normally closed to visitors. With special permission from our guides we wander a morning in this seldom seen place and view numerous rock art sides with a potential to see lots of wild life. Afternoon free time to relax, read a book, take a nap or enjoy the plentiful and joyous sounds of Canyon de Chelly. Evening: Navajo story telling and games.

Day 6

Pack up camp and have breakfast. Begin our hike out of the canyon up Sliding House Trail. We take this hike slowly as we ascend approximately 800 feet up an established private trail with some handrails and built up stairs to make the ascent easier. Once out of the canyon we take a few moments to look down into the beauty we have just enjoyed. Next we shuttle everyone back to the cars, shuffle the luggage, group photos, address exchange and say our farewells. Hiking time: 3 hours. Elevation difference: 800 ft. gain at the end of the trail. Hiking on trail and jeep road. Return to Canyon de Chelly visitor center around 11 a.m.

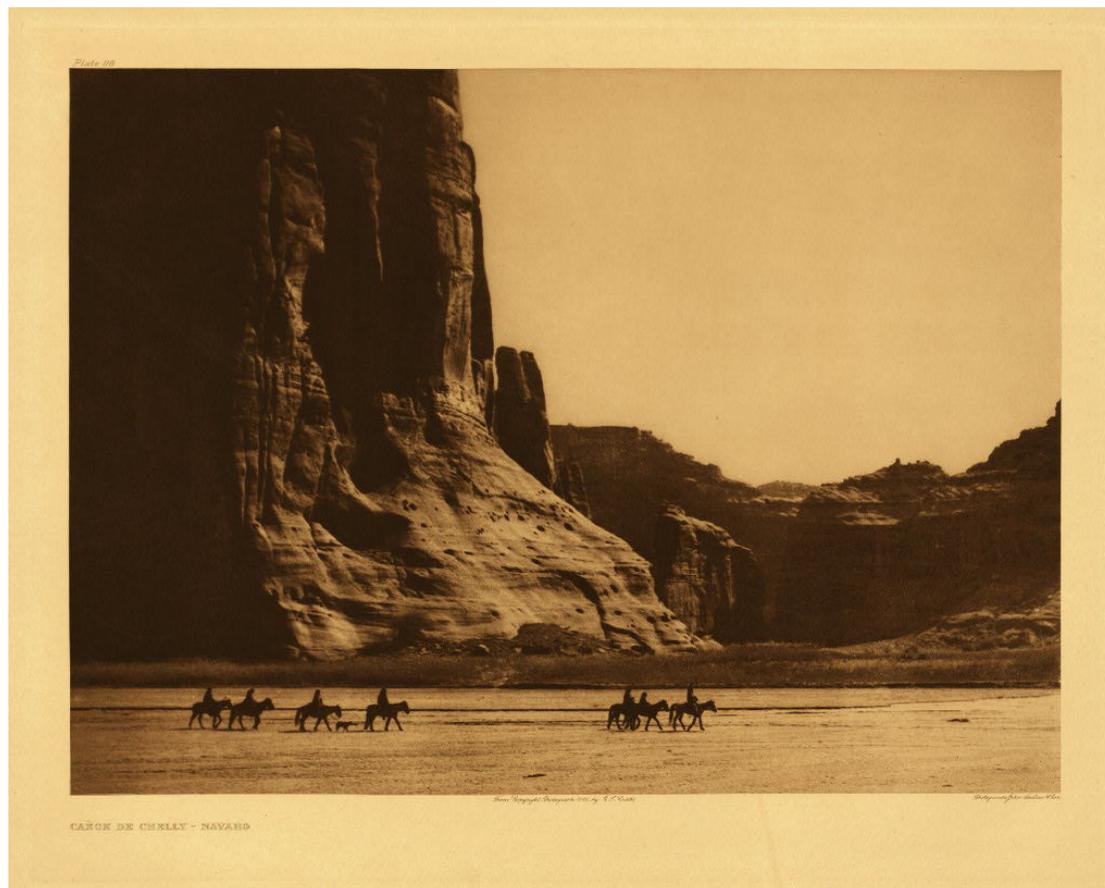
Appendix E: Pictures

Edward Curtis Historical Photograph: *Navaho Flocks*



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Edward Curtis Historical Photograph: *Canyon de Chelly*



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Edward Curtis Historical Photograph: *Blanket Weaver*



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Contemporary Landscape



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Appendix F: Maps of the Area

Arizona Map



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Canyon de Chelly Shaded Relief Map



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