Facilitating learning: mine, yours and others’ : gaining insight into the facilitation of corporate experiential learning programs through the lenses of personal experience and the learning styles analysis

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NOTE

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Chapter 6. What Else?: Exploring Other Perspectives

"The reason we know that we will discover things that we can't describe now is that this has been the history of science. We do things to learn something we can define, and we wind up knowing things we never imagined even asking about", Maxine Singer, 1989, biochemist (Partnow, 1993:470)

6.1. Introduction

Chapter 3 provided a traditional review of the literature related to areas such as experiential learning, reflection, learning styles and corporate training. What follows is a more critical and eclectic treatment of the dominant literature using multiple perspectives, as maybe suggested by the picture to the right. There is also a brief foray into a range of other literature that may provide further insight into the themes of ‘space’ and ‘place’ that emerged from the autoethnography. The three key areas to be explored in this chapter are:

- Dominant Themes in the Literature: A Journey to Explore the Development of Thought on Facilitation
- Deconstructing The Five Generations of Facilitated Learning from Adventure Experiences
- Literature from Other Traditions

Some of what follows is developed from my own ‘stream of consciousness’ that has evolved through different times and places and is indicative of my own individual experience of learning. Many different things such as art, nature and a multitude of drives along a long highway, to and from my ‘place’, have triggered my thoughts, ideas and critical reflections.

This continuing journey begins with an exploration into the origins of the dominant thoughts about facilitation. This began with a request to an international electronic discussion group (or listserv) to elicit ideas of what different people considered to be key writings on facilitation. Responses were used as a basis for further exploration.
Here, I delve further into the suggested articles, looking at the origins of ideas by tracing the references used. A sidetrack on this journey was to also look at some of the visual images used in some of the popular literature on facilitation and processing of experiences. Having explored down those paths, I then focus upon one article in particular, that is Priest and Gass's 1993 article entitled *The Five Generations of Facilitated Learning from Adventure Experiences*. This article was chosen as a result of both the references made to this article and others by the authors by other writers, but also because of the unquestioned references made to the model provided in many presentations and conversations I have participated in. I deconstruct this article to search for what hidden assumptions and meanings may be laying within the text, ending with a short deconstruction of the deconstruction.

The final aspect of this journey involves exploring literature from other traditions, such as urban planning and organisational aesthetics, to help deepen the themes of 'space' and 'place'. This journey will also venture into some literature related to solos and solitude that are activities not uncommon in experiential learning programs, but not necessarily well explored in the literature.

### 6.2. Dominant Themes in the Literature: A Journey to Explore the Development of Thought on Facilitation

A question that has been in my mind for sometime is: what are the origins of our current understanding of facilitation of outdoor and experiential learning? To gain some insight I sought the collective wisdom of people on the Outdoor Research Listserv (*outres*), which has people participating from across the world. The intent was to then look at the recommended readings and to explore what the 'pedigree' of these writings might be. A second avenue was to gain some further insight via exploration of pictures and images used in some of the writings. This led me to look at three particular resources that had images that stood out to me: Schoel et al (1988), Priest and Gass (1997) and Luckner and Nadler (1997).
6.2.1. Recommended Readings: A Request to ‘outres’

To gather a broad cross section of potential articles I put a request on the outdoor research listserv (outres) on 8th February, 2000, administered in the UK. In part the email said:

Imagine: You are asked to conduct a training/professional development day in Facilitation Skills. You are requested to recommend your three favourite articles or book chapters on facilitation. What would those articles be? What is the appeal/interest/value ....? (Dickson, 2000)

The responses to this request are summarised in Figure 6-1, which also includes the gender and nationality of each respondent. Table 6-1 summarises some of the attributes of the authors of the recommended articles, thus returning to some of the impetus for my writing and research as well as Bell’s suggestion that “the subject, or author, of Western definitions of rationality was always those with access to the texts and their transmission: masculine, Caucasian, well-educated, and heterosexual” (Bell, 1993:21). This is explored in more detail in section 6.3.

![Figure 6-1 ‘Best’ Facilitation Articles](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male, Australian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like to think of facilitation (in the sense that we use the term) as a focussed dialogue or discussion. To this end, reading in the area of &quot;discussion&quot; has been very fruitful for me. A prolific author in this area is James Dillon. His book: Using Discussion in Classrooms (1994) Philadelphia: Open University Press, is a very good reference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male, UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I can recommend &quot;Effective Leadership in Adventure Programming&quot; by Priest and Gass - this has a couple of chapters on facilitation, and seems to cover the ground pretty thoroughly. For a more theoretical approach to facilitation (and not specifically aimed at outdoor programmes) try the &quot;Complete Facilitator's Handbook&quot; by John Heron.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male, UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Effective Group Work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male, UK</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Good question, Three sprang to mind almost immediately so I thought a fast reply might be helpful, check out: DeLay, R. (1996) Forming Knowledge: Constructivist Learning and Experiential Education, JEE, 19 (2), 76-81. Hammerman, D. (1990), Teaching by Inquiry. In Adventure Education. Unsoeld, J. Education at Its Peak in The Theory of Experiential Education Why do I like these? It's a long answer but the fundamentals are: DeLay is critical and honest about what actually happens as oppose to what we like to think would happen thus highlighting a hypocrisy that is mainly denied. Hammerman writes in English and demonstrates a person centred approach in line with humanistic psychology. Unsoeld captures much of the compassion and says much of the unsayable about the essence of adventure and the joy of what we really do.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6-2 provides a summary of the references cited in several of the more recent recommended books and articles from the listserv responses. The purpose for structuring this table is to get some sense of the origin of and the influencing factors that have helped shaped the current writing in the area.
a. Who Are the Authors?

A brief summary of the available information on each of the authors who were recommended by *outres* members is in Table 6-1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommended Author/s</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Well-Educated</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Times Recommended</th>
<th>References Obtained</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brackenreg, Mark</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Davis, Hilary</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>De Lay, Randolph</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dillon, James</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egea-Kuehne, Denise</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gass, Mike</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gillis, Lee</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greenaway, Roger</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hammerman, Donald</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Handley, Ray</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heaney, Thomas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heron, John</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James, Thomas</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luckner, John</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nadler, Reldan</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pinch, Kath</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Australian</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest, Simon</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>North American?</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ringer, Martin</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New Zealander</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsoeld, Jolene</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One observation of the information in Figure 6-1 and Table 6-1 is that *every* response is by a male and of 80% of the authors of the suggested readings are males. Some of the questions that come to mind as I look at Figure 6-1 and Table 6-1 are:

- Where are the voices of the 'others'?
- Where are the insights from the rest of the world, that is outside the predominantly Western/English speaking world?
- What is it about an outdoor research listserv that encourages participation by males? Is it the subject/content, the technology or even the listserv culture (even though the list is administered by a woman)?
- Who is being excluded through the use of English language on this listserv?
- How can we begin to search out and hear other views?

Again, these are questions to be explored at another time and/or place.
b. Where Have The Key Ideas Originated From?

My investigation of influences on the recommended articles or books was limited to the 19 articles or books I was able to access. Table 6-2 summarises those articles and highlights the following three broad categories related to the references cited in each article or book:

- Those articles or books that had no references cited
- Those that have a variety of additional references, but were dissimilar to the references of the other articles and books
- Those references that had similarities with the other articles and books

The information in Table 6-2 suggests that the references that have had the most influence on the recommended writings on facilitation are works by Bacon (Bacon, 1983), Priest and Gass (their works include: Gass, 1985; Gass, 1987; Gass, 1991; Gass, 1993; Gass and Dobkin, 1993; Gass and Gillis Jr., 1995; Gass and Gillis, 1995; Gass, Goldman and Priest, 1992; Gass and Priest, 1993; Priest, 1987; Priest and Gass, 1993; Priest and Gass, 1997; Priest et al., 2000; Priest and Naismith, 1993) and works by Nadler and Luckner (their work includes: Brackenreg et al., 1994; Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Nadler and Luckner, 1998; Nadler, 1995; Nadler and Luckner, 1992). All of these dominant authors are white, educated, North American males. The two most prolific writers on facilitation considered here are Priest and Gass with either one or both of them being an author of 11 of the most commonly cited references in the articles listed (Gass, 1985; Gass, 1991; Gass, 1993; Gass and Dobkin, 1993; Gass and Gillis Jr., 1995; Gass and Gillis, 1995; Gass and Priest, 1993; Priest, 1988-89; Priest and Gass, 1993; Priest and Gass, 1997; Priest and Naismith, 1993).

Probably most notable of the information contained in Table 6-2 is that five of the articles or books that are recommended have no references listed. From a practitioner perspective this may not be an issue, but it prevents assessment of the field's rigour via the most basic academic test. From the perspective of the development of the field's academic rigour this may be of concern.
### Table 6-2 References in Articles on Facilitation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cited References</th>
<th>Various Additional References</th>
<th>Recommended Articles:</th>
<th># of Times References Cited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Hammerman, 1990)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Brackenreg et al., 1994)</td>
<td>5 5 4 1 1 2 3 3 1 2 3 3 1 1 3 3 3 2 1 1 4 2 1 2 1 4 5 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Handley, 1992)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(DeLay, 1996)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Heron, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Greenaway, 1996)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(James, 1980)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Hammel, 1986)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Luckner and Nadler, 1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Knapp, 1993a)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Priest and Gass, 1997)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Knapp, 1993)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Priest et al., 2000)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Priest and Gass, 1997)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Ringer, 1999)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Priest and Naismith, 1993)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Unsoeld, 1995)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Quinsland and Van Ginkel, 1984)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Smith, 1986)</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: X indicates a reference cited in the respective article.*
As an example, the author of *The Conscious Use of Metaphor in Outward Bound* (Bacon, 1983), which is referenced four times in the 19 highlighted sources, states that his book is written as a staff training manual for the Outward Bound instructor. Bacon’s work, even though it is a staff training handbook, is often used as a resource that has influenced other writings on facilitation (e.g. Gass and Gillis, 1995; Gass and Priest, 1993; Hovelynck, 1998; Itin, 2000; Mack, 1996). The lack of rigour in some works and the ongoing use of resources that may not have been intended as a basis for research suggests that the field is driven by popular ideas ahead of scholarship. This raises questions about the ‘breeding’ in our field. Is facilitation just the bastard child that we choose to ignore his lack of ‘pedigree’? Or does it not matter?

### 6.2.2. Images in the Literature

3/02/01 21:56 “A Picture Paints a 1,000 Words”, Study, Jindabyne

For some time I have been thinking about the impact of images on our expectations and ‘pictures’ of the world. I have collected images from key resources: books and training catalogues that provide images of groups being facilitated. What I am considering is the impact these may have on our views and how we perceive and construct learning experiences. The saying above that “a picture paints a thousands words” would seem very apt for visual learners. Pictures provide powerful messages and lasting impressions. Even if words are forgotten, people may still remember many images.

My choice of images is somewhat biased in that I am looking for ones that support my ‘thesis’, that generally people facilitate groups while sitting in circles. These are the images that have begun to stand out for me. The bias is also a result of the availability of images which reflects the perspectives of authors, editors, publishers and photographers. What is not recorded and/or published may say as much as what is recorded and/or published. Exploring these absences may tell even more than looking at those images that are present (Stern, 1996).

The dominant literature, brochures and other sources provide a particular insight into how people perceive outdoor and experiential learning. These perceptions include images of how one is to construct the place of reflection or processing. The following images are gathered from three books, two of which were referred to in the previous section (Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Priest and Gass, 1997) and the third is a book that has been influential in my own professional development and an influence on this
research (Schoel et al., 1988). The images have been taken from the chapters or sections that focus upon topics such as: processing, debriefing or facilitating.

**a. Using Visual Images**

Visual images have the potential to provide a powerful impression, with the possibility of influencing the understanding and interpretation of the text. Yet, they are not used extensively in research, nor are they covered to any great extent in books on research (Crotty, 1998; Glesne and Peshkin, 1992; Grbich, 1999; Harper, 2000). This may be due to the understanding that photographs are not impartial communicators of objective truth. Photographs are made from within a particular theoretical and social context. The photographer, the authors and the editors of books and publications are looking for a particular focus; they are looking to portray a particular perspective. In many cases the photograph can “re-create our unexamined, taken-for-granted perceptions. We are interpreting sociological topics in our unexamined theorizing, and our photographs are our conclusions” (Harper, 2000:729).

Grbich suggests that there are two categories of images: public and private:

Public images are those taken in contexts isolated from the viewer’s memory and experiences. Private images are those that have meaning for the viewer and can be read or ‘read through’ in context. ... Visual images are generally viewed as being incomplete as a sole data source, however, because they lack information about the historical context of the situations and actions that are portrayed (Grbich, 1999, 136).

The images used here are public images, images where the context is the publication in which they appear and the topic they discuss. Where there is no explanation or description of the context or meaning from the perspective of photographer, author, editor or participant. The interpretation rests with the viewer, me.

In my case, to a certain extent, I am a viewer who is a cultural insider because I understand many of the rules and norms that guide the behaviour of participants in the images. I can place myself in those images. I can imagine some of the feelings, the questions, the conversations that could be taking place. I may also be projecting much of my experience onto those images! These rules and norms may not be obvious to the cultural outsider; that is someone who does not facilitate experiential learning (Harper, 2000), or is not seeking to learn what might be considered best practice.
b. Images in the Text

I remember years ago hearing a respected colleague say that for new staff the best thing they could read on the topic of debriefing was the chapter in Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe’s book (1988). This book has become a much quoted and referred to text (Estrellas, 1996; Gass and Gillis, 1995; Martin, Leberman and Neill, 2002; Ringer, 1999; Ringer and Gillis Jr., 1995), yet the thing that sticks in my mind from this book is the picture at the beginning of the chapter on ‘debriefing’.

For me, the picture is like the table of contents for the chapter. It outlines what I am about to read. This ‘table of contents’ conveys an image where the ‘best practice’ is where the group is sitting in a nice outdoor setting, in a neat circle, all sitting up. It sets a visual image, a framing of the text that will influence what I ‘see’ as I read. Yet, there seems to be a contradiction in the messages being conveyed. I would have assumed that what is being encouraged is open communication but many of the group are sitting there with arms crossed over their knees. Could this be a sign of defensiveness or trying to cover up? Or could it be that they are uncomfortable and that they are trying to find a comfortable way to sit? If defensive, then how effective is this method? If uncomfortable, what hope is there of achieving prolonged focus and participation? Will the participants say what they think the facilitator wants just so they can get to a more comfortable place, or will the participants say what they mean (at the risk of generating more conversation)? And what of the person whose body faces away from the centre of the circle? Is there any significant in the position of this person’s body?
Luckner and Nadler’s books (Luckner and Nadler, 1997; Nadler and Luckner, 1992) are quite extensive on processing of experiences. Other authors when writing about the facilitating of experiences often refer to these authors as is demonstrated in Table 6-2. The images they convey all support a method dominated by circles and various states of possible discomfort (physical and/or emotional). The physical locations chosen for these two pictures (Figure 6-3 and Figure 6-4) are both in relatively open and exposed positions, places where revealing one’s inner thoughts and emotions may be a little threatening. These do not appear to be intimate places, where people’s attitudes and behaviours may be addressed. In Figure 6-3 the facilitator has the group sitting on a wooden floor while the facilitator in Figure 6-4 has a group with some on the ground, some standing and others balancing on upended logs. Both pictures are within a section of the book entitled: *Effective Leadership Knowledge and Skills* and fall within sections on guidelines (Luckner and Nadler, 1997:97-100) and ground rules for working with groups (Luckner and Nadler, 1997:101-108).
In contrast is the image of the sole adventurer in Figure 6-5 within a chapter entitled *Additional Processing Questions* (Luckner and Nadler, 1997:109-114). Here the person is sitting high with the mountains in the background, seemingly, in the midst of taking time out, to write, maybe in a journal. I do wonder what risks there are of objects falling from the sky that demand that he continues to wear a helmet, maybe it is protecting him from too much influence from the God above! What is the influence of that space, that place, upon his reflections? Does he even notice where he is?

The final picture (Figure 6-6) is on the title page of a chapter on *Basic Facilitation Techniques* (Priest and Gass, 1997:189). This image triggers mixed responses within me. At one level, I enjoy the dominance of the landscape, the overwhelming presence of nature and our comparative ‘smallness’ in contrast. Yet, if I place my self in the picture as a participant, I begin to feel the impact of that dominance and the exposed place in which we sit. I begin to feel small and exposed and it is these feelings that begin to suppress my desire to be open and communicative in that place. It is not an intimate place, it is a place where nothing or no one can be hidden. It is a place where I cannot hide or be protected and feel safe to reveal who I am. As discussed in the traditional literature review, the role of setting or place has little consideration in the literature, and this is supported by these images and their impact upon me. Again, what is the influence of that environment upon the participants, and upon the process?
These are just a few images in books influencing, mine and others', perceptions of facilitation. Following I begin to explore at greater depth one article by the predominant authors, Priest and Gass, as I seek to deconstruct the text in order to gain a deeper understanding and ultimately a more effective professional practice.

6.3. Deconstructing The Five Generations of Facilitated Learning from Adventure Experiences

6.3.1. Deconstruction: A Lay Perspective

Deconstruction has overtones of pulling apart, of destroying. Construction suggests building and creation, maybe even producing something of value. In attempting to deconstruct there seems the possibility of destroying something that may have been valuable beforehand. When applied in a literary context, the aim of looking for contradictions and assumptions seems beneficial, but there continues to exist that risk of destroying something that was of value to others: a model, a theory, a practice. As I seek to deconstruct a popular article, I do so with the intention of seeing this through another set of eyes, to see it from an ‘Other’s’ perspective. The challenge for me is to read and see this material as a woman. While, of course I should be able to read this as a woman, I have, however, lived my life reading, studying and learning from mostly male writers. I have read very little work by women or by women who write from a feminist perspective. Thus, in attempting to open the eyes of my readers I am doing so with the knowledge that my endeavours are potentially limited due to my own history and experience of living and working within male-dominated cultures. Yet, travel with me as I try.

6.3.2. Deconstruction: Another Perspective

A perspective of deconstruction is that it “involves the close reading of texts in order to demonstrate that any given text has irreconcilably contradictory meanings” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:75). This highlights Derrida’s perspective that there is no one ‘true’ meaning that can be found and that those “who seek to find a single, homogenous, or universal meaning in a text are imprisoned by the structure of thought that insists that only one of various readings can be ‘right’” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:77). Murfin and
Ray continue by saying that deconstruction is a “process involving moments of aporia (irreconcilable uncertainty) and an act performed with the awareness that all texts are ultimately unreadable (that is, irreducible to a single, homogenous meaning)” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:79). Sparks, in recalling the work of Derrida, states that texts that are deconstructed are “taken apart, and examined in the light of the author, context, assumptions, and effects of their production” (Sparks, 2000:308). In referring to the work of Miller, Murfin and Ray suggest that “moments of lucidity in reading exist, each such moment itself contains a ‘blind spot’” (Murfin and Ray, 1997:79). In seeking to clarify, deconstruction may result in things becoming unclear. But without the attempt there may be little discovery and questioning of assumptions, biases and contradictions.

a. Dismantling Repressive Ideas

Derrida claims that the pleasure of deconstruction arises from dismantling repressive ideas (Murfin and Ray, 1997:81). At this point I do not know whether I would call the article I have chosen ‘repressive’, however as I look at the definition of repress: “to restrain or stop an impulse ... to prevent discussion ... in order to stop others becoming influential or powerful” (Crowther, 1995:994) it may be appropriate to place prominent or dominant articles in this category as they lead to an unintentional hegemony. Does defining a model or articulating a position become repressive if it is expressed in such a way as to discourage debate? This expression may not be limited to the words chosen but may also be influenced by the context or forum chosen as well as the impact of the stature and reputation of the authors upon the creation or crushing of dialogue. In reflecting upon Derrida’s words, it also comes to mind that a repressive action could be a result of the combination of conscious and unconscious thoughts and beliefs. Not all repressive actions need be the result of intent.

Deconstruction enables the reader to explore, not only the writer’s deeper held view, but also their own. Warren, writing from an ecofeminist perspective, reminds us that:

the language one uses mirrors and reflects one’s concepts of oneself and one’s world – one’s conceptual framework. Language use is part of the social construction of concepts. When that language is sexist, racist or naturist, it mirrors and reflects conceptions of women, or people of color (sic), or nonhuman nature as inferior to, having less status, value, or prestige than, that which is identified as male, masculine, white, or ‘human’ (i.e. male) (Warren, 2000:61).
b. Risk Taking and Deconstruction

Risks may be considered as either having the potential to lose something of value, or the potential to gain something of worth (Zink and Leberman, 2001). If risk is about the potential to lose something of value, then in approaching this task of deconstruction I am taking a risk. For me it is a personal, professional and social risk. I have already received feedback from one person that they perceive this to be an attack on the authors. I disagree. In contrast to Derrida's words, I do not approach this with a sense of pleasure. I approach it with a sense of fear, of responsibility and of loathing. What if I am wrong? What if I am very misguided in my assessment of the words? What if there are repercussions? How would I feel if I don't do it? If, however, this risk has the potential for positive outcomes, then deconstruction has the potential value of providing a deeper understanding of facilitation, a stronger sense of self, guidance for further writing and research in the future, and even the support for improvements in professional practice. It is this latter perspective on risk that I am following as I deconstruct this article.

Another way of classifying risk, within the context of outdoor activities, is that it is either perceived or real (Haddock, 1993). The perceived risk is in the eye of the 'risk-er', while the real risk exists for all who may undertake the action. In making any choice we face risks, some may have positive outcomes, others may have negative outcomes. The risks for me in choosing this article, if focusing upon the negative outcomes, may be more perceived than real, only time will tell. (But even in perceiving a risk, the emotions and fears are very real). The perceived risk is that in seeking to deconstruct an article by two of the 'gurus' of the field, I open myself up for severe criticisms by either the authors or those who may uphold the 'gospel' of these gurus. One risk management strategy that I could implement is to ensure that this section of my thesis is not available for all to see but at the other end of the risk spectrum is for me to face the risk and 'just do it' and thus focus upon the potential positive outcomes of taking risks.

"Society, being codified by man, decrees that woman is inferior; she can do away with this inferiority only by destroying the male's superiority", Simone de Beauvoir, French writer and philosopher in The Second Sex, 1953

Priest and Gass are two of the most prolific North American writers in the area of facilitation. Of their work this is one model that I have come across in a range of articles, classes, conferences and conversations. Its predominance gives rise to its potential influence on how programs are designed and how facilitators construct experiences.

a. Why Choose to Deconstruct?

Part of my decision in addressing the issues in this PhD relates to my dissatisfaction with the limited perspectives from the body of work that has been written. With the bulk of the work coming from a particular cultural authorship (e.g. white, educated, males) it seemed apropos to begin to investigate at a deeper level one of the articles that has originated from that perspective. One potential outcome of this process may be that:

what is previously considered ‘universal’ is seen as but one construction of reality (e.g., that of the white, male, educated, middle class), then deconstruction brings to light the alternative disenfranchised realities (e.g., those of the culturally marginalized audiences such as minorities, women, lower classes, or uneducated members of society) that have been suppressed (Stern, 1996:64).

Bell also acknowledges the need to critically examine definitions and taken-for-granted concepts, especially when “the accepted definitions do not match the lived experiences of 'others', when they do not 'make sense' to those whose experience is denied by the dominant norm” (Bell, 1993:21). As discussed previously, Bell’s view reflects the initial motivation for this study, my lived experience did not reflect the accepted definitions and theories. I needed to honour my own experience and to take the risk to examine and question the potential hegemony.
6.3.4. Attempts at Deconstruction

In approaching this deconstruction I will focus upon three key areas. They are:

- The Authors
- The Context of the Article, and
- Questioning Assumptions and Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks

a. The Authors

The authors of this article may be considered to come from the so-called privileged class: "the white, male, educated, middle class" (Stern, 1996:64), or as Bell suggests "the subject, or author, of Western definitions of rationality was always those with access to the texts and their transmission: masculine, Caucasian (sic), well-educated, and heterosexual" (Bell, 1993:21). The authors also come from a strong sub-group of the privileged class: the North American white, male, educated, middle class. The views expressed may be perceived by some as 'universal' but in reality, they may not fully express the views of the majority who may fall into any of the other categories of: non-white, female, uneducated and/or not middle class. A question I would wish to pose is what would our theories look like if someone had written them from a different sector of the world's population? What if a black African woman from Ethiopia had dominated the writing or a rice farmer in China or even a carpenter in the Middle East? How would their different life experiences such as: history, culture, education, opportunity and expectation influence their experience and expectations of the world? Would I identify more closely with their views? Or maybe Priest and Gass hold similar views to me due to their origins in democratic, developed, English-speaking societies with access to high levels of education.

From the perspective of an organisational theorist Geert Hofstede (a Dutch academic) discusses the potential influence of culture, origins and nationality on the development of organisation theories and raises the question:

... how could nationality not be reflected in organization theories? The people who conceived and wrote the theories were born and raised within a country, learned the way of speaking but also of thinking of that country, went to school within that country, played with friends from that country, read or watched the media of that
country, participated in the organizations of that country, were rewarded according to the norms of that country, married and multiplied in that country. How could their ideas have escaped the national influence? This would be superhuman. My assumption is that even organization theorists are human (Hofstede, 1996, 531).

If organizational theorists are human, are authors and facilitators of experiential learning also human? Kwang provides some support for Hofstede’s point when writing about the differences in creativity between Asians and Westerners, highlighting the influence of the social philosophy of liberal individualism of Western societies and the social philosophy of Confucianism of many Eastern societies. These differences are summarised in the Table 6-3.

Table 6-3 Difference Between East and West


Where we come from influences what we say, what we see and what we do. No one region has the monopoly on truth. - what other ‘truths’ come from the many regions of the world?

**b. The Context of the Article**

The context of the articles may include the forum in which it was published, the historical/social/political etc. context at the time and the environment from which the authors were writing. The focus here is upon the journal and the environment from which the authors are writing. Priest and Gass’s article appears in the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Leadership*. This is a UK journal with an international audience. The journal has both refereed and non-refereed sections with the latter primarily targeting the practitioner. At the time of publication both authors were lecturers in North American universities (one Canadian, one American). These environments would come with a ‘publish or perish’ imperative for the authors, with
the risk that articles are 'pumped out' to meet academic performance criteria, rather than to present new ideas or to influence the growth and development of the profession.

c. Questioning Assumptions and Oppressive Conceptual Frameworks

Conceptual frameworks are the "basic beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions which shape and reflect how one views oneself and one's world" (Warren, 2000:46). An oppressive conceptual framework seeks to maintain the subordination of the 'Others', that is those that do not fit within the dominant categories. The oppressive conceptual framework is characterised by five features: value-hierarchical thinking, oppositional value dualisms, power is conceived as 'power-over', promotes privilege as the domain of the 'ups' and there is a logic of domination (Warren, 2000). The following explores four themes related to power and the privileging of hierarchies I see emerging from the text. The topics are:

- Scientific 'Truth': Evolution and Generations
- Recreation vs Education
- Scientific Methods: Production Line Education
- Power and Control: The Power of the Facilitator and the Subordinate Role of the Participant

i. Scientific 'Truth': Evolution and Generations

... (t)he evolution of facilitating adventure experiences has passed through several distinct stages of generational development (Priest and Gass, 1993:23).

The article begins with the above phrase which sets the tone by using pseudo-scientific language that may convey an impression of unquestionable truth and reality that may exist in the minds of the authors, but not so in the experience of the reader. The focus upon the rational or the intellectual, through the use of evolutionary language, has connections with patriarchy and the dominance of the masculine interpretation of the world (Culler, 1983). The use of terms such as 'evolution' and 'generations' may lead the reader to view the latter generations as of a higher order or more evolved than the earlier generations, and thus to be preferred.
The dictionary defines evolution as “the gradual development of the characteristics of plants and animals ... esp the development of more complicated forms from earlier, simpler forms. ... the process of gradual development” (Crowther, 1995:396). ‘Evolution’ may also give the underlying impression of the survival of the fittest, that is, that only the best developed and the strongest will continue to exist. This would seem to align with the thinking of nineteenth-century biologists who held the view of evolutionary thinking that the “living universe evolves from disorder to order, towards states of ever-increasing complexity” (Capra, 1996:48). Earlier generations that do not fit the environment will become extinct, disappearing into the history books, leaving only the more evolved to dominate and live on.

‘Generations’ suggests a chronological order from the first generation to the last, there may also be differences in maturity, giving a sense that the latter generations may be more sophisticated. This is reinforced by a dictionary definition of ‘generation’, outside of that referring to generation as people or things at a similar point in time which, is: “a single stage in the development of a type of product” (Crowther, 1995:492). When considering generations, one may also begin to focus upon genealogies and progeny. Who are the ‘creators’ of the earlier generations and where have their descendents led? With generations and genealogy there can also be a focus upon the desire to establish “patriarchal authority, unity of meaning and certainty of origin” (Culler, 1983:62). In some senses, to focus upon the generations has as air of trying to identify the legitimate descendents of the earlier models to ‘claim’ the rightful heirs who will take the message/models into the future.

ii. Recreation vs Education

These programmes [recreationally based outdoor programmes] provide excellent experiences ... This approach is fine, provided intrapersonal and interpersonal goals of adventure education are not sought. Once a programme seeks to perform adventure education, another approach to facilitation is needed. The problem of poor programming in the past has been rooted in the application of this recreational solution (learning and doing only) to an educational problem (Priest and Gass, 1993:23).

This quote identifies the privileging of education as the source of intrapersonal and interpersonal learning over recreation. There is even a sense of privileging of education over experience. Recreation is seen as the ‘poor relation’ of education as it is a source of having “a good time” and becoming “proficient at a new skill” (Priest
and Gass, 1993:23). Education is projected as the means of intrapersonal and interpersonal growth. Does such a demarcation mean that if people achieve other learning in recreation programs (apart from new skills) that activity becomes education even though the intention may not have been educational? Alternatively, if changes in thoughts, feelings or actions occur as a result of an educational experience, are they not considered learning because they were not in an educational context?

This privileging of education over recreation is one source of power of the educated middle class who has increased access to education (Veal and Lynch, 2001) while the working classes may have access to recreation (but maybe not recreation programs). Even the concept of having facilitated programs to achieve these learnings indicates a privileged position not available to possibly the majority of the world’s population (North America only accounts for about 260 million of around 6 billion people world wide). How do the ‘others’ achieve these learnings if they cannot attend these programs? How have we learned about interpersonal and intrapersonal things for the previous several thousand years without the benefit of facilitated adventure experiences? Wearing (1998) further acknowledges the limited access to leisure experiences by those who are not in paid work when she writes: “a person’s own relationship to paid work determines her/his access to leisure. For the working class, leisure is limited by lack of the ability to pay for access to private space, while public spaces such as museums, botanical gardens, sports centres are geared towards middle-class cultural values” (Wearing, 1998:24). Wearing’s comments may also be applied to the working class’s access to leisure/recreation programs as referred to by Priest and Gass (1993).

iii. Scientific Methods: Production Line Education

A metaphor (represented by Figure 6-7), which may be overlayed on this article, is that of a production line. The inputs or resources (the people/participants) are put through some process (e.g. activities, reflection, debriefing) in a manner determined by the production engineer (instructor/facilitator) to achieve predetermined outputs or outcomes (e.g. learning).
This metaphor makes assumptions about power and control, predictability and quality control, much as would be expected under Taylorism, or Scientific Management, and Fordism where:

'Fordism' ... is a term used to describe the technological and industrial system based on the classical production line, developed by Henry Ford in the USA ... Fordism refers to a system of mass production and the development of a mass consumption market ... Taylorism did not depend solely on assembly-line concepts or mass-production, but rather on the scientific design of work and the creation of what Taylor called a total mental revolution in how management was practised (Sewell, Fulop, Linstead and Rifkin, 1999:212).

The second generation of facilitating learning, where the instructor speaks for the experience, is considered suitable "to role plays and simulations where results are predictable and reproducible time and time again" (Priest and Gass, 1993:23) as if adventure experiences with the combination of standardised inputs (people) and processes (role plays and simulations) produces predictable outputs (outcomes). However, with people as the inputs and with the interplay of differences in the processes and the environment, the outputs must vary greatly. Any production line that uses different inputs, in quality, characteristics, quantity and timing, in an environment that may change with temperature, location in a sequence (or program), must result in a wide variety of end products. People are not inputs and experiential learning is not a mass production line.

iv. Power and Control: The Power of the Facilitator and the Subordinate Role of the Participant

A central theme of this article is the dominance of the instructor and the submission of the participant. This can be seen through the following quotes that focuses upon the central role of the facilitator or instructor controlling the experience of the learner:
Third Generation: “participants enjoy learning through reflection under the facilitation of an instructor ... guiding them to discover their own learning” (Priest and Gass, 1993:23).

Fourth Generation: “perhaps some added benefit can be gained by directing the learners before the experience ... the instructor directs the learner to act in a certain way ... the learners are focused toward certain distinct outcomes set by the instructor” (Priest and Gass, 1993:23-24).

The dominant role of the instructor continues to be present in the fourth generation where their role is to debrief the activities. The debriefing is done under the facilitation of an instructor introducing “carefully designed questions and guiding them to discover their own learning” (Priest and Gass, 1993:23). This is deemed to ensure that the participant will “enjoy learning through reflection” (Priest and Gass, 1993:23). What is supported here is the dominant position of the instructor in facilitating the learning of the individual. This puts the onus on the instructor to develop carefully constructed questions; to do otherwise may result in missed learning or ‘mis-learning’. Again, referring back to the production-line metaphor, the implication would seem to be that a well-designed process (the questions) will ensure that the inputs (the people) will achieve the appropriate outputs (their own learning), but it seems the participant can only achieve ‘their own learning’ through the intervention of the instructor.

Fifth Generation: “If the instructor can frame the adventure experience to serve as a mirror image of reality for the learners” (Priest and Gass, 1993:23-24).

The fifth generation continues to present the dominant role of the instructor as they generate and introduce the use of metaphors and isomorphs. The former are seen as the “analogous connections made by the learner between the adventure experience and real life” while the latter are the “parallel structures added to the adventure experience by the facilitator so learners are encouraged to make certain metaphoric linkages ... Since these linkages are quite motivating and strong, the transfer of learning is usually enhanced” (Priest and Gass, 1993:24-25). The onus is upon the facilitator to create these isomorphs to ensure that the transfer is enhanced. There is little onus on the individual taking responsibility for her or his own learning, nor the possibility that learning will not take place in the time and place specified by the facilitator. The individuals may not be in a learning space (emotionally, intellectually, psychologically, etc...) conducive to achieving the learning specified by the facilitator.
at that time, despite the instructor’s best questions and/or isomorphs. The facilitator is
given the dominant role to ensure that the whole group achieves the learning. However the participants may have more control over the learning than this article may suggest.

The control of the learning situation by the facilitator, suggested by Priest and Gass, has parallels with the oppressive nature of the banking concept of education discussed by Freire (1972). Key aspects of the banking concept of education, where the students are the recipients of the wisdom and instruction of the teacher, are represented in Table 6-4.

Table 6-4 Banking Concept of Education

![Please see print copy for image]


v. Other Possible Perspectives to be Explored

The key areas of this deconstruction present a brief introduction to the possibilities available when seeking to investigate assumptions and other perspectives. Table 6-5 from Belenky et. al. (1986) provides another range of frames or lenses through which an article such as the ‘*Five Generations*’ could be viewed in another time and place.

The educational dialectics proffered originated from a contextual analysis of 135 interviews of women’s experiences of learning conducted by Belenky and her team and reflect the “ways in which women construe their experience of themselves as developing beings and experience their learning environments” (Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger and Tarule, 1986:16). What they suggest is “that in women one mode often predominates whereas conventional educational practice favors the other mode” (Belenky et al., 1986:16). It may also be suggested, given the above deconstruction, that it is not just *conventional* educational practice, but also *conventional experiential* educational practice as evidenced in Priest and Gass’s article, that operates in the other mode. In the context of a deconstruction it may be contradictory to suggest that all
women, or all men, prefer one mode over another, however, Table 6-5 does provide further perspectives that may be considered in future research.

### Table 6-5 Educational Dialectics


#### 6.3.5. Deconstructing the Deconstruction

Is it possible to choose to engage in a process of deconstruction without actually considering the possibility that my deconstruction is open for deconstruction by others. Could I even try deconstructing my own deconstruction? How would my text be taken apart in light of me as author, the context and assumptions and their production (Sparks, 2000)? Is deconstructing your own deconstruction a reflexive
deconstruction or am I just playing with words late in the afternoon?! Some questions that come to mind about my own deconstruction of the article follows in this section.

**a. Author**

I would fall within most categories of the privileged class: I am white, middle class and well educated. However from an ecofeminist perspective I also fall within the category of ‘Others’. ‘Others’ refers to:

... those who are excluded, marginalized, devalued, pathologized, or naturalized ... in Western systems of unjustified domination-subordination relationships. In Western, Euro-American cultures, ‘Others’ includes ... ‘humanOthers’ (sic), such as women, people of color (sic), children, and the poor (Warren, 2000:xiv).

I had not really considered myself as an ‘Other’. However if I stand back and consider the dominant theories with which I engage (in experiential literature, psychology, management and education), there is a trend that the loudest voices seem to be those of dominant class. I am not one of them. And I guess I probably don’t experience, see, nor interpret the world in the way that they do. And they don’t experience, see, nor interpret the world in the way that I do.

Another influencing factor upon who I am as the author is the historical and experiential ‘place’ from which I write. At the time of writing this deconstruction I was very aware of not wanting to be seen as ‘attacking’ the authors. This reflects something of the culture of our profession, but also the challenge for me to be able to express my questions and concerns in a way that communicates my position effectively and continues to promote a critical perspective on our theoretical and practical traditions.

**b. Context**

The context in which I write and reflect, and for which I write and reflect, is the rarefied and contrived world of the PhD. Juggling the external expectations of some ancient model of theses with the seemingly subversive nature of the postmodern critique is a major challenge. If I were to attempt to deconstruct an article at another time and place would my perceptions and questions differ as my context, focus and experience differs? How would I ‘see’ things differently if I wrote from the
perspective of a Faculty of Arts or Science, rather than from the perspective of one writing from the realm of the Faculties of Commerce and Education?

c. Assumptions

One of the assumptions is implied by the metaphor of the generations. This, as suggested previously, conveys a sense of evolution and development where the latter generations are the preferred modes. Rather than using a generational model, maybe a model of a continuum of styles may present a more effective model or even an organic model of evolving, interconnected organisms existing in an ever changing environment. What of my reaction to the possibility that this model presents a controlled and controlling model of learning? Where does this reaction come from? My own experience, as expressed in Chapter 4, demonstrates my lack of connection with neat models and systems. But who do I exclude whilst seeking my own inclusion? Do I write-off the dominant class just as they seem to ignore me? What would another ‘other’ think of my attempts at deconstruction?

6.3.6. Concluding the Deconstruction and Moving Forward

A deconstruction is one person’s view at one point of time in one place. It is my perspective in the context of writing a PhD thesis, and thus my perspective and my place may change over time. Yet, I believe, that the questions raised by seeking the voices of the ‘others’ raises important questions and challenges to the apparent dominant paradigm in experiential learning that is so freely accessed and sought across the world. While this deconstruction is concluded, the process of deconstruction may be never-ending. In reading this text and writing something, a new text is created. As Rhodes suggests “these texts do not embody a final or solid meaning, but rather they reflect a shadow of a meaning that was created in the transient process of them being written” (Rhodes, 2000:24).

Having delved into deconstruction it almost seems contradictory to begin to look at texts from others’ traditions with a rather limited critical ‘lens’ on. However, the value is in the process of reflecting upon my position and practice of experiential learning from the perspectives of those traditionally outside my field.
6.4. Literature from Other Traditions

It may be possible, and even desirable, to assume that learning is seen as a positive life experience, something to be pursued and something that is enjoyed. However all may not be so positive if one accepts the view given by Edgar Schein, an organisational learning specialist, who likens some organisational learning situations to brainwashing of prisoners of war (quoted in Coutu, 2002). Schein’s criticism is focused upon situations of coercive persuasion whereby individuals and groups are told what to think and to how to behave. This oppressive socialisation, for some, becomes their survival mechanism in the organisation. Schein cites organisations such as IBM, General Electric and Digital as examples where similar processes have been applied. Schein includes in his criticisms various experiential programs:

Consider something as ostensibly innocuous as the learning that is supposed to take place at the off-site meetings and Outward Bound programs that many companies now sponsor. These companies force their employees to climb trees all day then reveal personal stuff to one another at night. It’s very strange to think about a bunch of people sitting around a campfire and confessing their problems and their marital pains. These bonding activities seem like a very coercive way to shame somebody into being as open as he can be and then getting him to spill his guts. The idea, obviously, is to create bonds among individuals so they will become a much stronger group, but the camaraderie can come at a cost to the individual, who may prefer to protect his true personality. So yes, the group has learned something. But that learning was coerced, and the resulting new team may be dysfunctional because its members are not necessarily being true to themselves (Schein quoted in: Coutu, 2002:106).

Schein’s suggestion then is that we are to be clear about what people are learning and to help make individuals comfortable with the learning process. But how can we help individuals be happy with the learning process? What other perspectives may enlighten our journey?

What follows is a review of some literature from a variety of disciplines which are not normally considered in the mainstream experiential learning literature, or, if they are then without significant emphasis. The additional literature to be considered draws upon themes evolving from Chapter 4 which also have connections with some of the broader categories of the Learning Styles Analysis and thus includes:

- Solo and Solitude: Social Groupings
- Creativity and Innovation: Creating Space
6.4.1. Solo and Solitude: Social Groupings

Solos and times alone are not uncommon in many experiential learning programs (refer to Workshop Surveys in Chapter 5), but the actual literature surrounding the 'whats', 'whys' and 'hows' of solos and solitude is limited in the experiential literature (Bacon, 1983; Gibbens, 1991; McIntosh, 1989). The use of solos and solitude is also common to a range of traditions from psychology, spiritual development as well as personal development, current and classical (Buchholz, 1998; Gorrell, 2001; Mackenzie, 1998; Neumann, 1992; Thoreau, 1854/1986).

a. Reflection

McIntosh refers to the dual role of the solo “as an experience in itself, but it can also be viewed as the reflective stage in an experiential learning cycle encompassing a whole program” (McIntosh, 1989:28). An explanation given for the different outcomes of a solo, especially a multi-day solo, is based upon the level of skills and comfort people feel in their environment, and their place in Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1970). Another inhibitor to reflection is the level of skills, held by some populations, necessary to reflect, such as self-talk and writing skills. The skills and activities suggested by McIntosh are aimed at achieving more significant outcomes from the solo and not being dependent upon letting the wilderness speak for itself.

b. Solos in History and Exploring Self

Gibbens reflects upon the historical use of solitude and wilderness experiences as he traces a path through Moses, John the Baptist, the Celtic Aesthetics, Thoreau and Wordsworth (Gibbens, 1991). For Gibbens the use of the solo in development training is not to “pit the individual AGAINST the environment. It is not a test of strength nor ability to survive in the woods. Rather the emphasis is on the qualities of awareness, identity, individuality, self-expression, contemplation, and harmony –
becoming one with nature, flowing easily and living simply and honestly within the environment" (Gibbens, 1991:23).

Thomas a Kempis, writing early in the fifteenth century said that:

... often I wish I remained silent, and had not been among men. But why is it that we are so ready to chatter and gossip with each other, when we so seldom return to silence without some injury to our conscience? The reason why we are so fond of talking with each other is that we think to find consolation in this manner, and to refresh a heart wearied with many cares (a Kempis, 1952:23)

This sharply contrasts with the suggestion of some notable writers on facilitating learning who see silent people as a problem and their motivations for being quiet are deemed to be negative: “silent clients can be difficult to understand, since they can have many reasons for not talking (e.g., fear, shame, reluctance, and shyness)” (Priest et al., 2000:130). Maybe they are being silent in order to listen: to others, themselves and maybe the experience. Today people continue to participate in retreats involving prolonged periods of silence. Tenzin Palmo, a British Buddhist nun, found a cave at 13,200 feet in the Himalayas would provide her with the “silence that was so necessary for her inner search, for she knew, like all meditators, that it was only in the depth of silence that the voice of the Absolute could be heard” (Mackenzie, 1998:79).

In contrast to these practices, Csikszentmihalyi notes that “in many preliterate cultures solitude is thought to be so intolerable that a person makes a great effort never to be alone” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990:165). In fact, he notes that only witches and shamans (that is, religious leaders) felt comfortable being alone and that rejection by community in the form of shunning which is a form of punishment used in some communities (this latter point may highlight the significance of choice by the individuals over when, how and why you are alone).

**c. Alone But Not Lonely**

Buchholtz is a strong advocate for time alone, i.e. ‘aloneness’, is distinguished from ‘loneliness’, especially as she considers that “we live in a society that worships independence yet deeply fears alienation: our era is sped-up and overconnected” (Buchholz, 1998:51).

Now, more than ever, we need our solitude. Being alone gives us the power to regulate and adjust our lives. It can teach us fortitude and the ability to satisfy our
own needs. A restorer of energy, the stillness of alone experiences provide us with much-needed rest ... Alonetime is fuel for life (Buchholz, 1998:51).


Buchholz (1998) raised the importance of the context, the ‘place’ in the which solitude occurs. This is explored further in 6.4.3. The role of solos, solitude and ‘aloneness’ is not limited to supporting reflection, as is discussed following, these ‘alonetimes’ can also help support our creativity and imagination. Buchholtz emphasises the difference between being alone and being lonely. Loneliness is not a function of being alone, nor does being alone necessarily mean that there is no one else around you. Time alone, without extraneous stimulus, leaves one alone with her thoughts and feelings.

d. Connecting to Nature

Cornell (1979), in suggesting the use of a silent walk as a way of connecting to nature, says that “through watching nature in silence, we discover within ourselves feelings of relatedness with whatever we see – plants, animals, stones, earth and sky” (Cornell, 1979:123). For Cornell the use of times alone in nature can lead to great calmness and joy in the lives of busy people. Neumann (1992), in recalling a woman’s intense experience of sitting alone on a rock overlooking a canyon at sunset, suggests “this experience of solitude reflects the desires of many who look to nature seeking some primary and natural relationship with the world” (Neumann, 1992:187). While Fine (1992) notes the personal nature of wilderness which “is a state of mind ... a lived reality that is felt as different than being located in a built environment” (Fine, 1992:166). Cornell, Neumann and Fine aptly reflect the essence of Thoreau’s endeavour to reconnect with nature when he wrote: “I went to the woods that I may live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived” (Thoreau, 1854/1986:135). In these situations the place in which they were impacted upon formed an integral part of their experience. If they were to sit and reflect in a different location, the experience too may have been different. This impact of ‘place’ is of great interest to urban planners and human geographers as discussed in 6.4.3.
6.4.2. Creativity and Innovation: Creating Space

"... it helps to relax, deliberately, by subjecting your mind to material complicated enough to occupy the voluntary faculty of thought, but superficial enough not to engage the deeper involuntary one. In my case, it is an action movie, in your case, it might be something else" (Asimov, 1977:98)

At a time when life has 'sped up' (Buchholz, 1998) and the pace of change is accelerating (Sofo, 1999) there appears to be a need to assist people to be more effective in being creative and innovative, in order to be able to adapt to and move beyond the demands of today. Yet, can creativity be manufactured? Or is it a result of creating the 'space' for creativity to happen? This is explored further through reference to psychology, science fiction and art.

Buchholz reinforces Asimov's (1977) observations about the need to create 'space' for creativity and problem solving to emerge when she says that "the natural creativity in all of us – the sudden and slow insights, bursts and gentle bubbles of imagination – is found as a result of alonetime ... Both creativity and curiosity are bred through contemplation" (Buchholz, 1998:82). Yet I recall the warnings of McIntosh (1989) about the time of solitude not being about survival and ensuring that our basic needs are met in order to create that 'space' in our lives to reflect, to be creative and to contemplate. This concept of creating some form of mental space is not a new concept, in 1977 Nisbett and Wilson recalled Ghiselin's work in 1952 on the creativity of people including Picasso, where Ghiselin concludes that "the individual has no idea what factors prompted the solution; and even the fact that a process is taking place is sometimes unknown to the individual prior to the point that a solution appears in consciousness" (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977:240). Nisbett and Wilson further suggest that "people may have little ability to report accurately about their cognitive processes ... people may sometimes be unable to report even the existence of influential stimuli" (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977:241). This gives rise to the suggestion, originally made by Polanyi (1964), "that we can know more than we can tell ... that people can perform activities without being able to describe what they are doing ... [and] that the converse is also true – that we sometimes tell more than we can know" (cited by: Nisbett and Wilson, 1977:247). Nisbett and Wilson (1977) also have something to say about the timing of reflection when investigating the stimulus for actions, their suggestion is
that "the more removed in time the report is from the process, the more stereotypical should be the reported explanation" (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977:252).

What then are the implications for reflection on activities? This is particularly significant, if, as Nisbett and Wilson argue, that:

- we cannot effectively describe the higher order cognitive processes that went into our decisions and behaviour
- what we say is not necessarily what we know
- what we don’t say may be a better indicator of what we do know, and
- that if we are looking for creativity and innovation, then the best way may be to have a sleep, do the gardening or go for a walk

Hodgkin refers to the work of Macmurray and his ideas "that our less sophisticated senses, especially that of 'the tactual' are a better guide to understanding how we know the world than are the more neurologically complex senses of vision and hearing" (Hodgkin, 1997:2). Hodgkin continues "that if we touch a thing, we act on it and it will change though perhaps only slightly; and touching it also changes us" (Hodgkin, 1997:2). Maybe a closer 'connection' with our surroundings will support this tactual process.

6.4.3. ‘Place’: Human Geography and Urban Planning

Human geographers and urban planners are interested in people in places, often public places. They form part of a collection of disciplines referred to as the "spatial disciplines (Geography, Architecture, Urban and Regional Studies, and City Planning)" (Soja, 1996:10). They look at the impact and interactions of place and people. Following is a an overview of key writers (Harvey, 1989; Lefebvre, 1991; Sandercock, 1998; Soja, 1996) and the views they have about people and place and the connection to the themes of 'space' and 'place' that emerged in Chapter 4.
In Chapter 4, I make frequent reference to the terms ‘place’ and ‘space’. I do not have articulated definitions of these terms, but an intuitive understanding or knowledge of what they mean in terms of my own experience. Human geography uses these words in particular ways that may be of use to other disciplines such as experiential learning. Massey (1994) offers the following definitions of space and place:

If space is conceptualised in terms of a four-dimensional ‘space-time’ and ... as taking the form of some abstract dimension but of the simultaneous co-existence of social interactions at all geographical scales, from the intimacy of the household to the wide space of the transglobal connections, then place, can be reconceptualized too. ... a ‘place’ is formed out of a particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location. And the singularity of any individual place is formed in part out of the specificity of the interactions which occur at that location ... and in part out of the fact that the meeting of those social relations at that location ... will in turn produce new social effects (Massey, 1994:168).

For the human geographer place is created through social relations, but it is not clear from Massey whether a place may exist if there is only one person, or whether, that individual may create a ‘place’ due to their previous social interactions. A second thought about Massey’s definitions of space and place is the dynamic nature. A place is determined by social interactions, yet those social interactions influence change and thus the place must change creating a further and continuous opportunity for change of the interaction, the people in the interactions and ultimately that place and space. A third observation of the human geographers’ perspective is the apparent lack of consideration of the impact of the location upon those social interactions. Will those social interactions be different, and thus the ‘place’, if the interactions occur on a veranda over a glass of champagne, sitting by a campfire in the mountains, walking by the beach or locked away in a room without windows sitting on hard chairs and with the air conditioning cranked up?

Massey explores the language of space and place and the potential connections with gender:

In the pair space/place it is place which represents Being, and to it are attached a range of epithets and connotations: local, specific, concrete, descriptive. ... The contrary to these classically designated characteristics of place are terms such as: general, universal, theoretical/abstract/conceptual. ... It is interesting in that context to ponder the gender connections of these pairings. The universal, the theoretical, the
conceptual are, in current Western ways of thinking, coded masculine. They are the terms of a disembodied, free-floating, generalizing science (Massey, 1994:9).

Massey’s observations can be seen to apply to the pursuit of grand narratives or mega theories, in experiential learning, where the creation of a universal ‘theory’ seeks to explain the experience of all, yet amongst the many there are the few, the individuals and often time, the ‘Others’ who may not fit easily within these grand narratives.

Delving further into the world of human geography opens up another perspective, that of seeing from other perspectives. Does how we see the world influence how we experience or know the world? If we look at the world from above do we see and experience the world differently than if we view it from below. Do women view and experience the world differently from men? And what of the ‘Others’?

b. Perspective: Above and Below (Environment, Visual)

Several times I have visited New York. The first couple of times I avoided going up the Empire State Building or World Trade Centre – I wanted to experience New York at ground level, I didn’t even want to go on the subway. It was the life on the streets that I wanted to experience, the smells, the people, the pace. It was not until about the third time that I was there that I ascended the Empire State Building for that classic view – but it did not provide the satisfaction of walking the streets. Now, since September, 11, 2001, I will never know what the experience of standing atop the World Trade Centre would be like, but then I have no regrets, as I prefer the sensation of feeling that I get on the streets.

Soja (1996), a geographer, provides some perspective to my experience when he suggests that we may learn about a city from experiencing the microgeographies of the city streets and also by looking at the big picture, standing atop sky scrappers and viewing the macrospatial. From the perspective of a geographer, Soja suggests that “no city – indeed, not lived space – is ever completely knowable no matter what perspective we take, just as one’s life is ever completely knowable no matter how artful or rigorous the biographer” (Soja, 1996:310). Soja quotes the work of de Certeau (de Certeau, 1984) about the view from the top of the World Trade Centre de Certeau suggests that “His elevation [for this is inherently a male gaze] transfigures him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by
which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eye. It allows one to read it, to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god" (Soja, 1996:314). While de Certeau may be encouraging an either/or dichotomy between the micro and the macro Soja warns that “we must realize that both the views from above and from below can be restrictive and revealing, deceptive and determinative, indulgent and insightful, necessary but wholly insufficient” (Soja, 1996:314). For the person working in experiential learning, and particularly in outdoor locations, questions may arise as to what difference the location will have upon the experience, the place and the space. Whether that location be: sitting atop a mountain, in a small natural ‘hide’, in a valley or even within a hut. Are people experiencing the environment, not just having an experience in the environment? What impact has the aesthetics of that place have upon the experience?

6.4.4. Aesthetics: Environment

"aesthetics: The study of beauty in nature and the arts" (Murfin and Ray, 1997:5)

a. Human Creations (Environment)

Strati (2000a, 2000b), a researcher of organizational studies and an art photographer, seeks to describe the role of aesthetics as an alternate approach to organizational studies. For Strati the aesthetic approach has three themes which have potential significance for a broader perspective on the facilitation of experiential learning. To see the connection to experiential learning it is possible to read the following on the aesthetic approach and replace ‘organization’ with ‘experiential learning’:

1. shifts the focus of organizational analysis from dynamics for which explanation can be given … to dynamics more closely bound up with forms of tacit knowledge. The network of the sensory and perceptive faculties … produces knowledge that is not entirely verbal, nor entirely sayable. Other languages intervene from the visual to gestural, and other knowledge-creating processes, from intuitive to evocative

2. … the aesthetic approach takes account of their (scholar’s) ability to see, hear, smell, touch and taste and their aesthetic judgement, which is otherwise implicit and hidden by abstractive capacities …

3. highlights the heuristic shortcomings of those studies and theories of organization which rely on causal explanation of organization phenomena which rely on the myth of the rationality of organizations; and which propound an objective universal interpretive key to organizational life (Strati, 2000a:13-14).
Aesthetics acknowledges and supports an experience of the world whereby it is not just the behaviours and words that are ‘seen’ but also the impact and influence of smells, actions and sounds, all of which occur within a context, a location, that also impacts upon the experience, whether it be the smells, the light, the colours, or the textures. This influence of the ‘location’ is not well explored in the literature of human geography in its description of ‘place’, as discussed previously, nor in the literature on facilitation of experiential learning. An aesthetic approach to facilitation of experiential learning would consider the influence on individual experiences of the aesthetic categories of: beauty; the sublime; the ugly; the comic; the gracious; the picturesque; the tragic and the sacred (Strati, 2000a:20-25). While an exploration of these categories would be of value, in this context an example may suffice at this stage: the experience of camping-out in a remote and wild area may, for one participant, be a beautiful and sublime experience, but for another, it could be an ugly and potentially tragic experience. The differences in how their experiences may be viewed by the aesthetic categories may provide a greater understanding of the ‘how?’, ‘what?’ and ‘when?’ they may learn from such an experience and as such how?, when? and where? one may facilitate reflection upon those experiences to fully take into account the individual’s experience of that environment.

b. Wilderness and Nature (Environment)

As noted above, the impact of ‘location’, of the environment, is not given much consideration in the human geography literature, it is as if it is an inanimate, insignificant ‘thing’. The experience of wilderness of a range of people such as Thoreau, Wordsworth and Muir is documented in a wide variety of experiential learning literature (Knowles, 1992; Miles, 1995; Thoreau, 1854/1986; White, 1999). Muir eloquently wrote in 1911 about our need for nature and beauty when he said:

    Everybody needs Beauty as well as Bread, place to play in and pray in, where Nature may heal and cheer and give strength to body and soul alike. Keep close to Nature’s heart ... and break clear away, once in a while, and climb a mountain or spend a week in the woods. Wash your spirit clean (cited in: White, 1999:15).

Yet these stories predominantly refer to the experience of white males, mostly North American or significantly influenced by North America. Again. For example, John Muir, while born in Scotland in 1838 migrated to Wisconsin in 1849 (White, 1999).
What has been the experience of women? Of minorities? Of people for whom the ‘wilderness’ is their spiritual home? Maybe the words of Australian poet Judith Wright may help us connect with another perspective through her exploration of connection to her surrounds through her five senses (Wright, 1963:136).

**Five Senses**

> Now my five senses gather into a meaning all acts, all presences; and as a lily gathers the elements together, in me this dark and shining, that stillness and that moving, these shapes that spring from nothing, become a rhythm that dances, a pure design.

> While I’m in my five senses they send me spinning all sounds and silences, all shape and colour as thread for that weaver, whose web within me growing follows beyond my knowing some pattern sprung from nothing – a rhythm that dances and is not mine.

There are many nations that have different experiences and expectations of the world around them, such as the Australian Aborigines who have much to teach us about connection with the land and how identity can be constructed in relation to place (Veal and Lynch, 2001). Yet much of our theory and practice on outdoor and experiential learning continues to come from a white man’s perspective (e.g. Bacon, 1983; Gass, 1993; Greenaway, 1996; Knapp, 1985; Priest and Gass, 1997; Rohnke, 1984; Schoel et al., 1988) that seems to focus more upon the logical, rational and scientific.

### 6.4.5. Experiential Knowing: Tacit and Intuitive

Judith Wright in *Fives Senses* makes reference to the “web within me growing follows beyond my knowing” (Wright, 1963:136). Is this a reference to her tacit and embodied knowledge? Belenky (1986) refers to “truth, for subjectiveknowers, is an intuitive reaction – something experienced, not thought out, something felt rather than actively pursued or constructed” (Belenky et al., 1986:69), and returning to the world
of urban planning, Sandercock promotes six ways of knowing that a planner may pursue: “knowing through dialogue; knowing from experience; through gaining local knowledge of the specific and concrete; through learning to read symbolic, non-verbal evidence; through contemplation; and through action planning” (Sandercock, 1998:76). Experiential knowing is a combination of tacit knowledge and intuitive knowledge, where tacit knowledge is defined as “that which people cannot say” (Sandercock, 1998:78), the Oxford Dictionary defines tacit as “understood without being put into words” (Crowther, 1995:1214). Tacit knowing draws on the work of the philosopher Michael Polanyi who suggests that we know more than we can say (Nisbett and Wilson, 1977). Intuitive knowledge, is more like an informed guesswork where a process of “using our senses to interpret signs ... in a situation” (Sandercock, 1998:78) is applied.

The work of Polanyi has been referred to in a diverse range of writings in this thesis (Belenky et al., 1986; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Hodgkin, 1997; Nisbett and Wilson, 1977; Strati, 2000a) with a particular focus upon his reference to ‘tacit’ knowledge which may be defined as “that which one knows or understands based on experience and is not expressible by language” (Stringer and McAvoy, 1992:20). If this form of knowledge exists, then it would seem to undermine a verbal ‘debriefing’ or reflective process, if it is inexpressible, how then can I say it? Braud and Anderson also acknowledge the existence of other forms of knowing such as “the importance of tacit or personal knowledge and of knowledge obtained through intuition, direct knowing, empathetic sensitivity, and what might be considered paranormal means” (Braud and Anderson, 1998:16). The role of tacit knowledge of the researcher, and it’s difficulty to be put into words, is also acknowledged and fostered in the heuristic research process through periods of incubation and in the creative synthesis (Braud and Anderson, 1998). The methods of drawing out this knowledge and ‘expressing’ this knowledge points to the potential to use non-verbal, creative and intuitive methods such as drawing, photography, sculptures and music, methods that focus on the use of the left hemisphere of the brain. Another example may be the use of more dramatically oriented techniques such as improvisation, drama, music and theatre sports. The feedback from the Workshop participants, in Chapter 5, about the use of ‘Colour My feelings’ is an indication that people may value other forms of reflection.
From my reading of Priest and Gass's article (1993) I could be given the impression that the facilitation of learning seems to be a very efficient, mechanistic and controllable process. As I look at my own learning, and insights I gain from how others learn as well as how other theoretical traditions may consider learning, knowledge, creativity and the impact of space and place, I arrive at a conclusion that learning is much more complex than may be suggested by some models. In part, I would like learning to be simple, that makes my life as a facilitator much easier! However, for me as a learner, learning is not always a simple, straight forward process.

6.5. Where to Now?

Through the course of this thesis there have been some key themes that have emerged as I have explored the topic of facilitating learning. These themes, as noted previously, have particularly focused on the 'space' and 'place'. The Learning Style Analysis (LSA) helps with consideration of preferred learning environments in ways such as formality, temperature, lighting levels as well as social groupings. What the LSA doesn't address are issues to do with emotional and cognitive space as well as the impact of that location, that place, upon the experience and thus the learning. What follows in Chapter 7 is a summary of my journey to date relating back to the research questions in Chapter 1, and then the beginnings of another journey that seeks to address the themes that I have raised. This new journey begins with the use of multiple 'voices' with my own personal photos linked to the words of Dorothy Mackellar's poem *My Country*. This combination of photos and words will form the final stage of the heuristic research process, that of the creative synthesis.