EXPERIENCING FREEFALL: A JOURNEY OF PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES

by

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Abstract

Experiencing Freefall is an inquiry into outdoor experiencing. It focuses on both my experiences with a group of Grade 10 students in an outdoor adventure education program and my personal experiencing of the outdoors. I explore the awareness we embody within moments of unexpected happenings while negotiating whitewater rapids or searching for a handhold while clinging to the side of a cliff face. Also in this thesis I explore the ‘phenomena of experiencing’ which emerges out of our actions and interactions within outdoor activities. The challenge of this dissertation is capturing in prose, the phenomena of experiencing and ‘embodied awareness’ arising through such unexpected instances. Hence, the thesis, in trying to articulate the complexity of experiencing in the outdoors, uses stories, poetry and the metaphor of life, breath, and mountaineering to invite the reader on a journey of inquiry. This thesis escorts the reader, like a true pedagogue, into an outdoor environment of experiencing that opens the reader to ponder pedagogical possibilities.

I explore several themes in the thesis which include ‘freefall,’ community, ‘turning points,’ and ‘embodied respect’ using a methodology of ‘enactive inquiry.’ The thesis takes a journey through each theme by weaving students’ stories from the study, my own personal stories of the unexpected, and the theory of enaction.

The thesis creates an opportunity for readers to embrace their own struggles, fears, and inquiry. Through the use of outdoor stories to illustrate moments of freefall into the unfamiliar or unknown, we may imagine pedagogical possibilities. As an enactive inquiry, this research thesis embodies an “education” or way of being, living, experiencing that explores unexpected happenings. In articulating an ecological perspective of experiencing, the thesis juxtaposes encounters in the outdoors with enactive theory to move beyond traditional representationalist models of cognition.

Specifically, I focus on the embodied awareness that arises through phenomena of experiencing and its relation to pedagogy. The thesis contributes to the theory of the enactive approach by bringing examples of human experience which unfold, not only our interactions within the ecological web of the outdoor world, but an emergent space of pedagogical possibilities. As such, this thesis is an experiential work through which the reader may realize their own interpreting of possible pedagogies for many educational contexts.
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For
those
landscapes
that opened me to
the passion and inspiration
of life'sving potential.

In memory of climbing partner,
Scott Fischer,
Grandmother, Juliette Yevette Haskell,
And my tree climbing buddy, Allagash,
Who were all very much a part of this journey.
Orientation to the Journey

This thesis is an inquiry into outdoor experiencing. It focuses on both my experiences with a group of grade 10 students in an outdoor adventure education program and my personal experiencing of the outdoors. More specifically, my work explores the awareness we embody within the unexpected and unpredictable moments that happen, for example, while negotiating white water rapids, clinging to the side of a rock face, or cramponing up a glacial icefall. Such instances bring forth what I describe as 'embodied awareness.' My intent through the writing of this thesis is to escort the reader, like a true pedagogue, on a journey into outdoor environments using students' and my own stories, poetry, photographs, and mountaineering metaphors. At the same time, the thesis invites the reader to ponder pedagogical possibilities within experiential learning contexts.

The thesis is a risk-taking endeavor as I share my personal stories of white water kayaking on rivers in Maine and mountaineering experiences in Europe and Russia. The Grade 10 students also undertake a similar risk by sharing their spontaneous personal journal writings, poetry and stories of intimate and memorable moments of risk from their outdoor experiences. As a researcher/participant with students over this 5-month journey, I carefully selected students' experiences/stories from adventures in sea kayaking, rock climbing, backpacking, and winter camping. While choosing stories, I focused on those that emerged from unexpected happenings for students or through unexpected conversations with these students.

The thesis weaves these sets of experiences with concepts of enactive theory, inspired by *The Embodied Mind* (Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991). In this book the authors ask us to reconsider our traditional views of the mind as separate from the body. In other words, the
enactive approach to researching or studying experience does not separate our experience and ongoing actions. Rather, I argue, embodied awareness emerges through our actions during outdoor adventures and during acts of inquiry. As such, experiencing can not be represented as a fixed event, but as evolving through a continual interplay of perception and action. Two key theoretical concepts I describe in the thesis related to ‘phenomena of experiencing’ are ‘embodied awareness’ and ‘pedagogical possibilities.’

In trying to articulate the complexity of experiencing in the outdoors, I juxtapose theoretical ideas with the metaphors of life, breath, and mountaineering. The form and structure of the thesis invite the reader on a journey of inquiry while trying to capture the sense of the unexpected within outdoor experiencing. I wrote the thesis as a journey that mirrors the unpredictability which comes with such activities as climbing a mountain, kayaking river rapids, or resting in swirling eddies.

Four themes, which emanate from the research in the outdoor adventure education program, emerge into separate chapters. I examine ‘freefall,’ community, ‘turning points,’ and ‘embodied respect.’ Each theme arises through my interpretation of the students’ embodied awareness of fears, risk, and pushing perceptual limits. During our journey through the thesis, I use the conception of camps, instead of chapters, as a place of acclimatization while we ascend a high altitude mountain.

In each stage of the thesis, I explore the pedagogy implicit in the phenomena of experiencing. Central to this pedagogy is my notion of ‘freefall,’ that is teaching and learning which arises in unfamiliar, uncontrollable and unpredictable contexts. Freefall pedagogy acknowledges the embodied awareness that emerges through outdoor experiencing. Accordingly, I maintain that pedagogical possibilities, inherent in the phenomena of experiencing, are important to consider with/in teaching and learning environments.
Foreword

There comes that mysterious meeting in life when someone acknowledges who we are and what we can be, igniting circuits of our highest potential.

(Expedition Annual, Term 1, 1998-99)

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1 The Expedition Annual was a document put together by students in the program. They gathered sayings, pictures, and individual student entries from all the students in Term 1.
UNVEILING THE CHIASM

Like a June bug, I have been buzzing around, frantically hitting the wall, body numb to the pain. I sit in my Maine farmhouse staring at the computer screen, patiently awaiting words. *Words will come, won’t they?* Uneasiness seizes my body in waves of tension.

I am writing a thesis, but today fellow boaters convince me to kayak the Dead River. I hesitate then rationalize, *after all, it is over 90°F and humid, so why not cool off my body and gain fresh awareness? I have paddled this river many times in my 15 or so years of river kayaking, so it might be a good warm up.* After slipping my boat into the water, I try a roll to start the day and cool off sweating flesh. Right away, my spray skirt rips off and I have to paddle to shore to empty the boat before I even start down the river.

The dry rock tops are scorching to the touch, but the cool water is a welcome relief on this hot day. I decide to wear sunglasses under my helmet to cut the glare off the water. *I want to prevent the headache I got while teaching canoeing to disabled students yesterday.*

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2 Chiasm is not the split between two mountains but the interaction that occurs in such biological examples as genetic crossing over and that of the chiasma of the optic nerves. Barbara McClintock, a Nobel Prize winner and geneticist working with corn, discovered “jumping genes” where genetic elements actually exchanged places with other chromosomes during cell division. This intermingling of chromatid material during cell division is a rather complex process that biologists are still trying to understand. The interaction among chromosomes is that place much like the interactions during kayaking, breathing, and experiencing.

3 The Dead River got its name from the flat water (lacking moving current) referred to as “dead” that begins miles above the waterfalls, which provides the transition into fast moving water.
After lunch on Enchanted Stream, we head off for Elephant Rock, a perfect place to practice enders, with a nice place to roll after. I summon my courage up and decide to point my bow into the hole. I squirm with anxiety, thinking about the possibility of not being able to roll up, but I love the feeling of enders flying me into the air. Breathe, and paddle strongly forward. On my second try, I am over to the right too far, forcing my boat to flip in the hole. I wait, after all I can hold my breath for a long time. I feel my paddle surface the water, but what is this? The swirling water sucks at my helmet, actually ripping it right off my head. I want to reach up for it, but, I need my hands on the paddle to roll up. Oxygen is more pressing. I roll up and chase down the river after my floating yellow head protection. Luckily, my sunglasses stay on in this turbulent water. As I find my helmet, I see the rivets holding my helmet chinstrap have given way to the interaction of two different metals touching. The aluminum rivet has actually dissolved into a white paste where it clinches the steel washer holding the chinstrap webbing to the helmet. My partner rigs a new chinstrap with a piece of string from the first aid kit, as in the old days when we used hockey helmets tied on with string.

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4 Enders are when the boat front (tip) is forced down by water pouring over a rock, standing the boat on end. How the paddler leans, determines whether the boat lands upright, on its side, or on the kayaker’s head. The boat is easily righted with an Eskimo roll by the kayaker. The paddler, if you can image when the boat flips over, hangs upside down in the water without the comfort of breathing air freely. The Eskimo roll is a technique used by the kayaker to roll a boat right side up without the paddler leaving the cockpit. With a good sprayskirt seal, the boat gets only a tiny bit of water inside. Helmets are a must in doing such activities around rocks.

5 A “hole” in the river is where water pours over a rock creating turbulent water along with a large wave just after it, which boaters often surf or ender their kayaks on. The kayak balances on the wave and then points down into the hole. If the paddler doesn’t lean forward while keeping the boat pointed straight, the boat may just spin out sideways and not allow the boat to tip under the water for ender potential.
We are not quite half way through our 11-mile journey down the river. My confidence is coming back, and I coordinate the smooth entries into eddy turns on the way down the river. I am looking for waves to surf. I try one I’d seen my partner, John, having fun surfing. Forcing my bow down, the water catches my boat sideways. I am over. *Wait, patience, feel the surface. How long can I hold my breath? I decide to try the roll. Why can’t I feel the surface? That attempt won’t do. I am caught upstream right in the hole. Back down into the obscure underwater world. Still in the hole, still no surface, I decide to bail. I hate to swim! But, I- need- to- breathe.* Eventually, I pull my legs out of the boat, but before I can swim to stay with it, the boat is up in the air on a rock. *Swept backwards, down, I lose sight and air once again.*

This incident is like being in a Maytag washing machine of foamy, churning water. *No, not another hole! Will I wash out? Seconds feel like hours. Finally, I see foam, light. Gasping for a breath, disoriented, I try to get my feet down river. Nonetheless, this powerful force snares its unsuspecting victim, a log-like body, back, down, under again.* The hole is what we might call a “keeper” which recirculates whatever pours down over it. I am being taken for another 360 degree wash. I have always avoided certain holes, unsure of how sticky they might be. Keepers being my worst fear. I run through my mind the various techniques to find a way out of this type of situation. One technique is to take off your life jacket and swim to the bottom and out. *However, I discard this idea instinctively knowing I will circulate to the top soon. By this time, my chest is painfully contracted. I ache for oxygen. Now, I am angry, using this energy to flip around even as I am being sucked back up against the rock. I want out, now! I launch my feet off the boulder sending me backwards down the river. Quick, swim, spin your feet back downstream. Just in time before going over another drop--seeing*
rocks, breathe, feet first, breathe, butt up, breathe, head over, hold breath. I have had enough of the ‘fun’ of swimming, where is my boat? Where am I?

John, my partner, sees my predicament and paddling upriver to help, asks me twice, “Are you okay?” before I can suck enough air in my lungs to answer. I cling to his boat for a few minutes, taking a few shallow breaths, my chest still tightly constricted. I reluctantly let go of the safety of his boat because we are headed over another rock, and yet another hole. I wash through gasping, shaking my head to see, and swimming. Oops, down over again, holding my breath, forced under water yet spit out just as quickly. I see my boat coming at me. I wonder where it has been. Surely it would have passed me by now. Apparently, it had spent a bit of time being endered in the washing machine hole too. I am relieved to pull myself up on my boat and out of the water long enough for a deep breath. Another paddler, Jeff, hooks a rope to my boat. John has my paddle. I swim yet again, directed by John’s voice, feet down, over a rock, then ferrying my body with underwater strokes of the hands, kicking across the river to shore. It is much easier to kayak down the river, with all that extra floatation, than to swim against the tremendous power of the DEAD River.

□ Yearning for Passion—Breathing Deeply □

As I reflect afterward, this breathless encounter feels like a free fall down a mountainside, where, in the moment of panic, we may hold our breath. The body tightens; cells soon die without oxygen. The breathlessness in a recirculating hole of the river or a free fall reminds me that without passion, we can get stuck in life’s holes. Passion fuels potential,

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6 When you see the □□□□ symbols, I will be introducing theory that adds to the enactive perspective.

7 I use the term recirculating to refer to how we often get stuck in the familiar not knowing how to break a cyclic pattern of interaction.
yet we make choices each moment either to risk seeking our potential (which is a changing, unknown peak similar to how moving water changes the appearance of a wave crest) or to interact with the world in familiar patterns. Recirculating in the same holes enable us to paddle, to run, to write, to live, becoming breathless, like an asthmatic. Consequently, passion is not some separate quality, but permeates “each experience, each encounter, with vitality, magic, and meaning. . . . To be passionate is as natural to you as breathing, as natural as being alive” (De Angelis, 1998, pp. xi, 5). We live and interact with our bodies whether we choose to pay attention to those interactions or not. The river experience snaps me back to feeling the passion of living and breathing, deeply.

What happens while experiencing these moments of freefall into unfamiliar holes in the outdoors? This thesis creates an opportunity through stories such as whitewater kayaking and mountaineering so the reader may re-imagine pedagogical possibilities that breathe vitality into everyday living.

When I am passionate, I breathe deeply and spring into what I am doing with excitement, be it teaching or kayaking. In order to realize and revitalize the spring in my steps, I need to touch my plants, to breathe their oxygen. I need to open my chest and smell

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8 See Desalvo (1997) for a better understanding of breathlessness from an asthmatic’s experience and how this affects the rhythm of writing. She talks about how as an asthmatic, she writes in shorter sentences much like her breathing.

9 Throughout this thesis, I present different ways of “seeing” that may require a little more thought than may at first appear. Words, for example, are intentionally used in ways to open spaces for new ways of perceiving that align with enactive thinking such as bodymind, groundlessness, or chiasm. For instance the verb “experiencing” shows that experience is a dynamic process continually arising through action and interaction. Also the word “freefall” connotes more than falling down but a concept that I expand on in Camp #1 where an embodied awareness arises out of unexpected happenings. I further expand on this notion of freefall to assist our thinking of pedagogy, such that freefall pedagogy (where I combine two words) opens up a ‘space’ for arousing insight or possibilities.
the earth. I had not been able to decide whether to climb or embrace the wall I kept hitting while writing until the experience in the river unveiled for me how to push off the rock of recirculated thinking, bringing my body, mind, and spirit noticeably alive. The wall is gone; I have found my voice. I cannot see or feel the illusionary wall anymore as I sit to write. Instead, energy surges like ocean waves over my body as I view the world from a different vista.

This vista I describe is perhaps similar to one that students experience when they breathe the air, feel the sun on their faces, and push toward a hard climb up new paths in their lives. In this thesis, I explore students' perspectives from experiencing outdoor adventure journeys as part of their Grade 10 curriculum. My writing of this pedagogy is not meant to be a map to follow, but an opening through which story envisions possibilities for ways of knowing we might consider in education that help students strive for their living potential. In this sense, pedagogy as experiencing unfolds living potential.

Living is not an act that we do once and then it's over; otherwise, we spend the rest of our life dying. A full passionate life can not be separated from the breathing, natural world. Living is a way of being, where worlds unfold, and we push into the unknown, welcoming its unmarked slippery paths. We become spellbound, but not breathless. We actually breathe more deeply to soak up the buzzing potential of living and decaying matter around us like persistent insects. This animation is brought to life through words.

Words, words on the page
words that lift you out of your seat

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10 Potential is not a fixed climax or peak to strive for but a way of living to seek the best we can be.
words like emotions that fill buttercups with tiny water droplets.

Words are filled with passion

yet we never see the cup

words have the invisible experience

all wrapped up inside like budding Peonies

which need ants to eat off the protective wax.

We also need the caressing, the interactions with breathing the air, touching the natural world, so that we can bud into delicate blossoms, opening petal by petal to the sensuous air.

Breathing deeply opens us to voices of potential bellowing forth as we exhale.

Natalie Goldberg says, “If you’re not afraid of the voices inside you, you will not fear the critics outside you” (as cited in Lee & Miller-Kritsberg, 1994, p. 94). Freeing the voice inside ourselves is not always encouraged in educational institutions nor in the buzzing human world we live in. In fact, I have found the opposite. In education, we encourage students to rattle words off their tongues, to express experiential interaction with the world without actually stepping outside built environments. So, helping students sense the natural world through breathing in the possibilities of experiencing outside is to open the voices inside them. Even houses need to breathe or fungi starts their decay. Realizing the interconnection of our lives and the natural world means not separating the air we breathe (life) from the living world.

As Descartes did in his dissections on live dogs, physically cutting the body from the mind (Masson & McCarthy, 1995), we continue to maim and destroy the wonderment of cells living, breathing and decaying. Cells give birth to the sensual earth. We can be just as spellbound in listening to a dying dog as we can about freefalling down a mountain, or
recirculating in river rapids. The spell that allows us to continue to breathe deeply without cutting off the air and voices deep inside us and the earth open us to possibilities. The earth bellows through the heat and lightning storms trying to cool the intricate web of life.

Within the web, I wonder how we find our journey. Somewhere within what appears as a world of chaos, I am “laying down a path”\textsuperscript{11} in experiencing. Some people may not understand why I kayak rivers, climb mountains, or brave the Maine coast solo in a sea kayak. However, when I was at the top of Mount Elbrus, in the Caucasus mountains of Russia, I was in the space where I could find my voice, breathe deeply and look out into this vast place. I could see the almost discernibly moving glacier forming the land before my eyes. Through this expansive view, I was one with the world. My drive and passion had enlivened me to find a different path that connects with the natural world. As I breathed deeply all the air around me, I found peaceful bliss, tingling, cell by cell, as each recovered from the long struggle up the mountain.

I had a conversation the other day with a dear friend who was insistent that I should come back to New England to share my gifts and influence the educational system of which I was once a part. I wonder if educators’, researchers’, and students’ traditional ways of thinking and being are ready to listen to what I have to say? Do I return to tell communities about enactive approaches where the bodymind never separates or objectifies teaching, learning and researching?

More importantly, do I write this dissertation for all those struggling to find the flow with the living land; or, do I write this dissertation as a re-experiencing of my own way of knowing? Can I really separate my way of knowing and experiencing from the writing and

\textsuperscript{11} See Varela et al. (1991) for the enactive view of “laying down a path in walking.”
survive the pain of breathlessness? I decide not to endure the painful struggles of asthmatic bronchitis, which I experienced while writing my master’s thesis. I choose to discover my own path out of the recirculating movements.

**Laying Down a Path in Experiencing**

In my research, I focus on the phenomena of ‘experiencing’ which is not a fixed event, but actions flowing in a continuously unfolding process. Philosopher, John Dewey supports my notion of experiencing as a continuity embodied in the uncertainties of knowing which emerge in the act and nature of experiencing. It is through direct interactions that Dewey (1938) indicates we can interpret the significance, value, and quality of experience which connects to the further desire to continue ‘experiencing.’

John Dewey grew up in Vermont, earning a Ph. D. in philosophy and teaching at the University of Chicago and Columbia. He has greatly influenced education, probably more after his death, as people still elaborate on his contribution to the theory of experience. In his work, John Dewey defends the need to have a theory of experience where organic connections exist between education and personal experience. Dewey reinforces the philosophy that theory is not separate from experiencing whether verbal, non-verbal or

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12 I change the original metaphor of “laying down a path in walking” by Varela et al. (1991) to talk about experiencing.

13 I use the active word “experiencing” as introduced by John Dewey (1929) in *Experience and Nature*. He indicates that the shift in emphasis from what is experienced to the embodied relational ways of experiencing opens capacities for perceiving “unattained possibilities” (p. 151) and promoting respect for the potentialities of human experience (p. 36). He argues that the process of experiencing such as breathing which includes an interaction of both air and function of the lungs cannot be separated (p. 13). It is this notion of object-subject separation that we come to believe and accept in education through the traditions and habituations, which Dewey’s theory of experiencing attempts to bring into question so that we may welcome the unknown, invisible and ineffable of experiencing.
through interaction with animate or inanimate participants (Haskell, in press). Experiencing unfolds as actions of learning, where participants emerge with new perceptions and ways of knowing.

Dewey refers to the interplay between a person’s “body-mind” (where body and mind are inseparable) and environment or surroundings as situations. He is not indicating that experience is separate from contact with surrounding interactions. Experience is relational and “lives on in further experiences” and affects the “quality of further experience” (Dewey, 1938, pp. 27, 37). Likewise, I concentrate on the inter-actions or relationships that unfold between students and their learning environment as an ecological interplay. I plumb to the depths of emptiness, much like the Buddhist notion, where the chiasm is the intertwining of possibilities for living fully.

Similar to philosophers, poets, artists, and educators, I grapple with and practice interrogating ways of knowing in the world that do not separate and disconnect me from it. Does it matter who said it best, or is what I have experienced and know through my own interactions and systemic relations with the world more significant? I struggle with how to bring into being that way of knowing, which breathes deeply, alive on the page. Living, breathing words connect us sensually to a vibrant world. Throughout these struggles, I also question the interrelationship between pedagogy and students. How will our students know they are aspiring toward their limitless potential if they cannot find passion in daily living? How do we teach students (who may be our teachers) to challenge themselves and adventure into new territory, to breathe in unfamiliar air?

14 I borrow the word chiasm from Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) work, where he refers to a chiasm between various senses, as a cohesive perceptual intertwining of human flesh and the flesh of the world. I prefer his term over chasm which is merely an opening or gap in the earth’s flesh.
We often teach through content as a way to break down the complexity and chaos of the world, whereby we use the language of objects and subjects such that we attempt to firmly fix our interactions to solid ‘foundations.’ This practice is only an illusion---because if we celebrate the unknowing groundlessness of everyday living, an embodied awareness continually emerges out of the web of interactions. Hence, a relational space of possibilities arises in the fluidity of interaction. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) say groundlessness is found in everyday experience, “that is, in knowing how to negotiate our way through a world that is not fixed and pre-given but that is continually shaped by the types of actions in which we engage” (p. 144). As such, groundlessness is a way of thinking, acting, and perceiving which constantly arises in the momentary flux of experiencing.

What happens when we move beyond grounding our interactions and concentrate on the phenomena of experiencing? We move beyond conceptualizing knowing as separate from our experience, and lay open an awareness of interaction as continually evolving with the living landscape around us. The complexity of learning, then, is not sealed in a body but released through our bodily actions where we focus and become in tune, in flow, in embodied awareness. In fact, physical doing as well as breathing help us focus the bodymind for attentiveness. Adventure activities open an opportunity for this flow of action when

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15 When putting two words together, I open another space for interpreting. In the case of groundless as non-grasping, and flow which awakens an embodied awareness through the movement of the bodymind, I open a relational space for contemplating the phenomena of experiencing.

16 Francisco Varela, a cognitive neuroscientist from the National Centre for Scientific Research in Paris, began the dialogue between cognitive science and Buddhist traditions. Evan Thompson contributed to their book, *The Embodied Mind* with his knowledge of Buddhist studies and comparative philosophy. Eleanor Rosch joined the project as the third author with her work in cognitive psychology and Buddhist psychology at Berkeley.
approached with effort and intention. Moreover, the bodymind can show a path to attunement, an awareness through the flow of experiencing.

Imagine for a moment, that you are kayaking down the river with me. Your full attention is on the body movements to surf out into Elephant hole, the water passing by, the eddy tossing your boat up and down on spiraling whirlpools. There is no room for distractions of other thoughts as you focus to paddle up river, surf over and balance the boat pointing it straight into the hole. The boat is pointed perfectly sending your 13-foot kayak up into the air. You want this time in the air to last forever as you crash down on your head and Eskimo roll the boat upright paddling back to the eddy for more.

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, a professor of psychology and education at the University of Chicago, first undertook a study to understand the nature of enjoyment and how play and game activities provide a satisfying feeling of accomplishment and heightened functioning.

What is common to such moments is that consciousness is full of experiences and these experiences are in harmony with each other. Contrary to what happens all too often in everyday life, in moments such as these what we feel, what we wish and what we think are in harmony. These exceptional moments are what I have called flow experiences. The metaphor of ‘flow’ is one that many people have used to describe the sense of effortless action. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 29)

Athletes refer to these moments of flow as being in the zone. A focus on a clear set of goals and imagery help athletes move into experiencing the flow of actions for which they are striving.

My goals for this dissertation are to explore the pedagogical possibilities that arise while challenging ourselves to push our limits and while experiencing embodied awareness.
Embodied awareness emerges in flow experience. “Flow experience acts as a magnet for learning” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 33). The experiential flow of interactions with the world are opportunities that open our thinking and actions toward living everyday with passion. How do we provide opportunities for students to embody an awareness of experiencing which fully connects with their own evolving goals and skills?

This dissertation is not meant to be mere words which the reader receives passively, but a sharing of my experience and those of students, so you can journey with us. I want you to experience my words, to feel the emotions, to slip down the page yearning for the next footstep or handhold. At times, you will have to make the images visible through your own interactions with the text. In describing her hopes for the reader, Jeanette Winterson (1996) articulates these possibilities:

They can make the jumps, they can make the imaginative leaps. If your structure is firm and solid enough, however strange, however unusual, they will be able to follow it. They will climb with you to the most unlikely places if they trust you, if the words give them the right footholds, the right handholds. That’s what I want my readers to do; I want them to come with me when we’re going mountain-climbing. This isn’t a walk through a theme park. This is some dangerous place that neither of us has been before, and I hope that by traveling there first, I can encourage the reader to come with me and that we will make the trip again together, and safely. (p. 142)

I invite you to struggle with me up the mountainside. I will give you handholds, encouragement, and camps along the way, but you may need to make a leap or two during the journey, perhaps even jumping crevasses. Your rope, however, is secure. I will help belay you, so that you, too, can reach the top and share in the most spectacular view of the world.
Climbing Above 20,000 Feet—Walking Through the Themes

In unveiling the chiasm of possibilities, we begin our walk up to Base Camp and then to five other camps up the mountainside. This mountain maybe higher than Everest, requiring us to establish camps, usually gaining altitude slowly so the bodymind can adjust. As we approach each camp, moving supplies back and forth, we acclimatize to high altitude and the structure of the emerging essay. The thesis connects to this erratic journey from Base Camp, iterating and re-iterating an emergent text of experiencing embodied awareness.

It is important to mention that the themes actually emerged out of students’ perspectives from the outdoor adventure education program. My interpretation of those themes and the inquiry further into my personal outdoor experiencing brings forth a text that is risky. It was a privilege to listen to the stories of students and while interpreting their perspectives, I decided to risk sharing my own personal stories in a more formal thesis genre which may be mis-interpreted. It is not my intention here to debate the appropriateness of high-risk activities in education, but for the reader to become more aware of their own perception of risk and/or limits. Also, it is important for the reader to realize that to climb high altitude mountains or kayak certain rivers requires many years of training. I am, however asking you to dwell in a place where fears may arise, and for you to take this opportunity to envision your own experiencing and possibilities for pedagogy.

I flip between stories and the theory of enaction to slowly introduce fresh perspectives that are relevant to the theme of each camp. In addition to the enactive perspective offering a lens to explore the phenomena of experiencing, it “lays down a path”\textsuperscript{17} of inquiry into outdoor experiencing that brings forth what I describe as embodied awareness. More

\textsuperscript{17} Varela, et al. (1991).
specifically, throughout each theme or camp, I weave the following:

- a picture with a quote written by a student or chosen by a student to include in either their personal journals or expedition annual (a booklet of their outdoor semester)
- my personal climbing experiences in Europe or Russia, or climbers perspectives from expeditions to Everest and other high mountains of the world, or my personal poetry
- in addition to these stories of mountaineering, the form of the text weaves in specific theories of enaction marked by the symbols as well as other theorists which inform my thinking and enactive inquiry or journey into, not only outdoor experiencing but the experiencing of writing text
- also each theme is centered around one activity such as sea kayaking, winter camping, or hiking, where I bring in carefully selected experiences that were either unexpected by students or unexpected conversations that emerged in my interactions with students during the research study (i.e. camp #1 focuses on rock climbing, Camp #2 focuses on sea kayaking, and camp #3 on back country skiing)
- the context of not only the natural world but the communities that I have lived with, in the outdoors are hugely important to my interpretation of outdoor experiencing
- at the end of each camp, we take a moment to reconnect to our actual ascent of climbing a high altitude mountain whether in spirit, actuality, or imagination.

It is here where I introduce the themes (chapters) which I refer to as “camps.”
Base Camp—Introduction to the Study

Base Camp is the place where we rest and impassion possibilities along our journey of experiencing the ascent up an unclimbed mountain. I introduce the study of students’ perspectives in an outdoor adventure and environment education classroom for Grade 10 students in a public high school. Base Camp is a place to rest, reflect, and prepare for inquiry toward new camps or theoretical understandings. I explore how possibilities arise in groundless pedagogy which embraces the inseparableness of ways of knowing, doing, and being. What are the ways educational “goals” can embrace a fluid pedagogy continually shaped by the actions of engagement?

Camp #1—Freefall Pedagogy

Camp #1 ponders how freefall pedagogy might arise for students living, being and embracing an experiencing of the unknown. Exploring landscapes which challenge personal limits requires a balance of skill, trust, risk, and flow of interactions. Rock climbing is an activity which opens students to bodymind choices, fears, and possibilities of living freefall moments. The coordination of behaviors between belayer and climber require a communication of trust and support. How does freefall pedagogy bring forth embodied awareness?

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18 Impassioning possibilities is the way we envision possibilities and the passion or zeal we use to approach experiencing.
19 When referring to goals, I see these as constantly evolving with actions.
Camp #2---Community

Camp #2 explores how the bonding of community arises in the coupling of new social networks and within the struggling of relationships in the making. Bonding occurs in the midst of living interactions best described as “fun.” In this sense, what brings a community together? The coordination of behaviors which emerge through the community include collaboration, respect, trust, and ecological sensibilities with nature. Pushing perceivable limits brings forth an embodied choice of wanting to help others and taking on a leadership role to accomplish group goals. How does community provide an opportunity for meaningful engagement, shared experiences, and the sharing of stories?

Camp #3---Enactive Inquiry

Camp #3 narrates a dialogue with theorists, students, readers, and myself to bring forth an enactive inquiry of a world unfolding before us. Enactive inquiry is an emergent methodology embodying actions, which open awareness to unexpected conversations and dialogues that emerge during the research process. How does the experiencing of dialogue with theorists help us realize the important possibilities for enactive inquiry?

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20 Camp #3 is one chapter that does not originate as a theme from the research in the outdoor adventure education program but is my own terminology for an emergent methodology.
Camp #4—Turning Points

Camp #4 explores the turning points experienced through moving beyond the fear of failure. Turning points are not one actual point in time but the phenomena of experiencing a journey which brings forth a heightened perceptual awareness. From this, potentials are embodied through shared experience and common goals. So the sharing of journal entries become one way to bring awareness to the process of struggle leading to a time of accomplishment and the fresh perception of the natural world. An openness to exploring opportunities is like summiting new mountains where possibilities are embodied through climbing. How does potential manifest through the phenomena of experiencing?

Camp #5—Embodied Respect

Camp #5 recounts the embodiment of respect that occurs through encounters with the natural world and within community interaction. Intuitive, embodied ways of knowing evolve during experiencing, bringing forth happenings which are not pre-determined. Students, no less, choose to focus on the positive during times of struggle exhibiting their desire to keep the community "alive." How does a path of embodied respect for others and the natural world come forth through the phenomena of experiencing in the outdoor environment?

Descending to Base Camp—Re-experiencing our Journey

Descending the mountain is a journey where we pass through what we have seen before in new ways, often able to move forward faster than the ascent. Descending to Base Camp offers a
re-experiencing or opening to the passion of living and the value of outdoor education as real-life learning. While descending, we focus on each camp, exploring what we have embodied on our previous journey (reading) to push further our perceptiveness. Humans may embody an awareness of their potential through the phenomena of experiencing, becoming the best they can be while unveiling a chiasm of rich possibility. Most important, pedagogical possibilities emerge through the phenomena of experiencing as an interplay of human bodies and landscape (animate & inanimate) bodies.

This thesis journey is more than connecting theory with practice. It is the living, breathing way of interacting with “experiencing forms” which bring us into a fluid flow of experiencing the everyday with vividness.

21 I use the words “experiencing forms” as introduced by David Abram (1996) in The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World. David’s work focuses upon the intertwined mysteries of perception and language — the way in which these two dimensions modulate the relation between ourselves and the animate earth.
Mountain Metaphor: Starting at Sea Level

I will take you on a journey up a mountainside for a first ascent, where we will make several camps and become a team. Together we will experience this journey with landscapes not only surrounding us, but within us, wherever the air flows. I ask you to breathe deeply and exhale fully while impassioning the possibilities of new chiasmal worlds of interaction.

First you need to pack all the supplies you need for the climb. Remember after we get to Base Camp you only have your backpack to carry tent, food, oxygen, and many layers of clothing to survive as we move through high altitude climbing up to Camp #3. We will spend an extra night at Camp #3 to acclimatize and then head back down to Base Camp before the final summit attempt. We will be traveling in the original mountaineering team of four for safety and low impact to the mountains.

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At the end of each camp, we will take a moment to re-orient ourselves as to where we are on our journey of ascending our high altitude mountain and/or making connections to the mountain metaphor and our acclimatization to reading this dissertation.
It is important that we prepare for getting to Base Camp. We will be making our way up to Base Camp, some 17,600 feet above sea level. As you can imagine it is a struggle to get up to Base Camp. Survival in the mountains can mean life or death if we are not present in the moment. So while climbing this mountain, I ask you to shed your academic clothes while reading and to embody breathing air from unfamiliar altitudes. We need to ask ourselves if we accept certain ways of knowing our 'Western' world or why we accept our worldviews. I ask you to step out on a moving glacier and to embrace the unpredictable moments of surprise. Instead of trying to grasp and ground——through asking what does this tell me, conclude, or allow me to take away, I ask you to trust the unknown, the moments of freefall. Step out into an unfamiliar territory where our goal is to summit some far off mountain, yet this opportunity opens a place for you to put down your pencil and to just experience these moments. Freefall is not always clear in words but these moments of surprise speak to us if we take the time to stop and dwell. Take the time to read, re-read, stop and dwell as we begin our journey searching for the passion of living, teaching, and researching.
*Often when trying to summit a mountain, a climber crests a ridge that appears to be the summit (which can happen many times and entail many more hours to the actual summit). This notion of crests a summit or "summitless mountain" is very much like our journey to seek or find our potential or possibilities for pedagogy during our journey. So I let you choose the height of the mountain we are trying to ascend.
There comes a time
when someone must risk something,
or sit forever with one's dreams.

_Trevor Petersen_²³

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²³ This quote was found in the Expedition Annual. Trevor Petersen was a 'so called' extreme skier, pioneering runs both in British Columbia and around the world. He died at the age of 34 in an avalanche near Chamonix, France.
IMPASSIONING POSSIBILITIES

I look out the small plane window at the smooth black tarmac speeding by. I am flying to Vancouver to set up my Base Camp of sorts, where I will begin the mountain climb of researching outdoor experiencing. The black, blurring tarmac reminds me of a journey I embarked on in Russia.

Having just satisfactorily climbed Mount Elbrus in the Caucus mountain range, I was nestled safely in a top bunk. The Priut, a giant, silver capsule-shaped building, was a bustle of noise, for a team of rescuers had just brought down the body of a woman who had attempted the climb from a different route. Her corpse lay outside, in the same darkness I imagine as only black, her lungs filled with fluid, which had cut off oxygen, strength, and life. The death made it hard to swallow the fervor of breathing air at 18,589 feet above sea level when the stone-like body outside had spent the night out somewhere on the side of the mountain.

Climbing has many inherent risks. But while experiencing the unknown, we push the body, mind and soul to new, mysterious places and encounters. I was on a journey to find my passion for living, a quest worthy of those risks. Yet, death is inevitable whether the body is changing back into the earth or whether we live everyday with deadened awareness. Mountain climbing breaths new life into my body, and my life is richer from the newfound friendships.

The next morning, after loading my pack in my lap on the single chair lift ride down off the snow field, I walk down the dry valley and journey by bus back to the International Climbing Camp. We eat our meals around tables by country of origin. I am fortunate to meet Scott and over the next week, convince him to take me and another friend up a glacier,
through the ice fields, to attempt Ushba, a most magnificent peak seen in the sunsets off Elbrus.

On the first day, we spend tedious hours balancing on scree\textsuperscript{2} left by the glacier. By early the next morning, we arrive at the ice field. Large chunks of snow and ice succumb to the heat of the day, making the path through the ice field as changeable as the weather. On the journey up, stopping to take pictures is even too dangerous. I place each foot with certainty moving toward the safety of the plateau. Suddenly, a huge chunk of the glacier avalanches off to my right, under where our path leads. Hoping to savor the views once we reach the plateau, my heart pounds with each step. We pitch our tent on the plateau amidst the icefall, a crevasse, and the spectacular views of Schelda, a nearby peak.

Later, trapped in the tent between bodies and surrounded by hailing snow outside, I try to read and stay warm inside my bivy bag. The tent sides feel as though they are growing smaller and smaller. The whiteout effect of the snowstorm keeps us from wandering too far out on the plateau for fear of falling off. Even going to the bathroom seems dangerous. Several Russian teams trudge by on the plateau via different routes but descend again with the bad weather. We plan to make radio contact with the climbing camp for bus transport and descend down through the icefall the next day. Ushba remains summitless. I am not disappointed as the ice climb up appears to be a technical climb beyond my abilities for the moment.

Early next morning, Schelda, with its dark shards of rock and ice lit with an orange glow, sparkles with first morning light. The sky is clear, but with the new snowfall, we will have to find a whole new path down the icefall. As I step into a crevice up to my knee, I am

\footnotesize\textsuperscript{2} Scree is the accumulation of loose stones and rocks at the bottom of a cliff or mountain.
elected the last person on the rope, carrying the rest of the coils around my neck, with Bob in the middle and Scott leading. It looks as if Bob is dancing down in front of me. Reality hits as I am jolted off my feet, tumbling head over heels, cartwheeling down the slope. As I plummet past Scott, I make eye contact, praying for him to firmly plant his ice ax. Next, I pass Bob, tumbling dizzily to a painful, halt. My whole body is trembling and my right ankle searing with pain. I see my etriers up on the snow. I practice breathing in and out feeling more comfortable by the time Scott arrives with Bob in tow. Scott, kneeling down by my left foot, reattaches the dangling crampon from my boot. We take account of our damages and Bob seems to be the worst, with cuts and bruises, and a severely sprained ankle. I am familiar with the throbbing pain, having torn and repaired all the ligaments in this ankle before back in 1982. I retie my boot, not wanting to remove it since it was acting as a splint keeping my ankle from swelling any larger. Scott loads most of Bob's pack into his own, and we wander down to face a 50 foot span across a crevasse, luckily, only about 15 feet deep. We climb down in, across, and front point back out. Our journey is now painfully slow with our useless ankles. However, we covered a lot of ground in the free fall down the icefall. Scott, jokingly talks about how he has taken a fall on every trip. I sense that someday, Scott will die on a mountain, doing what he loves, living and climbing passionately.

I awaken from my reminiscence, look up from the tarmac to steal a last look at the trees, the Atlantic ocean, my world, with its familiar faces. As the plane surges down the runway, I wrestle with much anxiety. I fear the unknown and yet, am excited about my journey to British Columbia. I look out the window through tears, whispering a silent

25 An etrier is a short flexible rope used to support the feet for aid climbing. They can be attached to a rope to ascend out of a crevasse.
good-bye to my partner, and our home in Maine. When I finally turn to look at the woman sitting next to me, she wordlessly hands me a tissue. I smile in thanks, quickly taking comfort in my view out the window. Soon, the clouds, food, and people all around me begin to glow with excitement and energy. My passion for learning fueled by a need to find my voice has sent me on a journey, a quest to experience the unfolding of an unknown world.

On the ground, after two hours of customs queues, I walk with my belongings out of the airport and into the landscape of Vancouver. I am greeted by two friendly faces and a red pickup truck, waiting to drive me to the University of British Columbia (UBC). I am here to research students’ experience in an outdoor adventure education program in a Westside Vancouver high school.

After a brief acclimatization to Vancouver culture, I find my way through the city by bus and walk the last four blocks to the high school. I walk into a classroom of couches set on gradually higher levels, which look down to the front chalkboard. This, minus the desks, reminds me of the lecture halls for science classes during my undergraduate education. Class is about to start. I need to pick a place to sit. Overwhelmed from the moment I walk into the room, facing 54 students, sprawled throughout the classroom into a web of various bodily positions, I have lost my voice and pray that the teachers will introduce me, and my voice will return when I need it. This looks more like a big slumber party than a classroom.

I choose to weave through legs, up the two sets of stairs to the back middle, thinking I might have a chance to see most of the students from that vantage point. I am overwhelmed with stimuli. Where do I start describing or observing? How can I possibly take this all in during one brief hour of observation? I plunge into the "crisis of perception" where reality is

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26 See Capra (1996) for his insight of the crisis of perception as a paradigm shift.
the chaos of interaction between students, teachers, this student from UBC while the constant pounding in my head says, you have to get this all down, every detail, interaction—this is impossible. I take a deep breath. We are having an English lesson and the teacher asks what I think. Ohh, please leave me out of this lesson. I smile and reply, confirmingly. Now what was I trying to write in my little notebook? Oh, . . where is everyone sitting? I begin by drawing the seating plan. It would take me many months in the program before I could explain what happens in this classroom.

**Contextualizing the Classroom of the Study**

The program is an outdoor adventure and environmental education classroom for Grade 10 students in a Vancouver public school. Students participate in two, half-year semesters. In the first semester (September-January), half the students are in the traditional academic classroom, while the other half are in the outdoor portion of the program. In the second semester (February-June) the two halves of the program switch.

During the outdoor semester, students are involved in a combination of outdoor activities and classroom lessons. The program is designed to introduce students to a wide range of outdoor pursuits. According to the school’s brochure, the program provides instruction and experiences to develop leadership, self-confidence, personal responsibility, environmental awareness, love of the outdoors, and group co-operation skills. I try to emulate the teachers’ goals and program philosophy as I begin to spend more time in the program.

Two years after my first observation in the classroom, I join the program as a researcher. On the first day of class the program participants meet down on the beach for a day of initiative activities. Amazingly, at one point, all 54 students sit down going around the circle saying names I had never heard of, in sequence. Every now and then, a student makes
an incorrect response causing them to sit in the middle of the circle. The whole point of the
day was to begin building community, and the students seem to be carrying it out on their
own at the moment. They are engaged in this activity “Stella Ohla” while the teachers
watch the interactions unfolding. I wonder if this often happens in the program and ask one of
the teachers. However, they are just as surprised by this emergent group activity. Even though
many students tell me later how nervous they were, they enjoy this day of laughing and
making new friends.

In addition, the outdoor semester aims to develop students' skills in written
composition, group work, oral presentations, and time management, combining challenging
academic assignments with outdoor activities and trips. The outdoor activities include: basic
outdoor survival skills, backpacking, hiking, rock climbing, canoeing, kayaking, cross-
country skiing, back country skiing, winter camping, including building snow shelters, map
and compass navigation, orienteering, and cycling.

My enactive inquiry into students experiencing the outdoor portion of the program
over the fall five-month period focuses on their experiences on outdoor trips. I want to

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27 Stella Ohla is an activity where you have to pay attention to what people are saying and to
respond with the correct term when it is your turn or you have to get up and sit in the middle
of the circle. The activity apparently continues until there is one person left.

28 Enactive inquiry is a term I use to refer to emergent action while conducting the research.
This enactive approach embodies actions which bring together a way of exploring the
phenomena of experiencing in relation to outdoor adventure education. I have come to the
enactive approach through Varela, Thompson, and Rosch’s (1991) explanations in The
Embodied Mind where they view cognitive science (mind) and human experience (body) as
inseparable. Enactive inquiry is a methodology that I manifest in research which requires an
embodied awareness of actions and interactions. I explore this more extensively in Camp#3.

29 Out of 54 students, four did not want to participate in the study. Out of these four, only one
student did not want their picture used. I received all signed forms back after repeated
reminders. Students preferred that I choose a pseudonym for their names.
know more about what happens during this time spent in the outdoors as a group. In order to understand student reflections and evolving perceptions, I begin interviewing ten volunteer students about their conceptions of the program. I cannot decide who is more nervous, them or me. I re-interview some of these same students, in the middle of the program, after several trips in the outdoors, and again at the end of the program. We become more comfortable after spending more time together on trips. Also, I audio tape group debriefings when they occur during and after trips. I find that most students are still holding back until they feel more comfortable in front of their peers. I tend to get more honest answers during the one-on-one conversations I have with students. My enactive inquiry in looking for the spontaneous and unanticipated data grows out interrelationship bringing in those voices which open pedagogical possibilities.

I write in my journal over the next five months. Much of my time was also spent waterproofing tents and packing for various trips. Clotheslines criss-cross my little studio apartment (Base Camp) with tents, stuff sacks, sleeping bags and other equipment drying or airing out.

While analyzing the information I collect weekly, the research process emerges as an embodied, reiterative, methodological inquiry. I reread journal entries to rethink, reiterate, and question before the next week of observation, to determine what I want to know, confirm, or pay attention to while participating in outdoor activities. However, any consistent process of analysis disappears with the emergent structure of the program. I rely more and more on photographs to preserve the images and narrative interpretations of the multitude of interactions, body positions and expressions occurring during trips. I concentrate on experiencing and find less and less time for writing perceptions of my experiences. Now that
I have gotten to know the students, I spend time with them enjoying the winter wonderland skiing or exploring. I begin to try and continue the conversations I have with them in this outdoor setting (during interviews), talking as much myself to express my own perceptions. It is difficult to obtain artifacts such as students' journals, poetry, drawings, and other work they generate during outdoor experiences as students either think their work is not of any value, or they do not feel comfortable sharing personal details.

I wait patiently for the right moments to talk with students. On the ferry rides before and after sea kayaking in Tofino, B.C. some students are willing to talk to me in the big bulky seats at the rear of the rumbling craft. But often, students are tired, so I stop counting how many interviews and let them occur at opportune times and with whomever feels like talking. After students tire from rock climbing (by day two) we wander off to snack and talk in the sunshine. On the telemark, nordic ski trip, and two winter camping experiences, I manage to talk to a few students in between dinner sessions, as there is not enough kitchen space for everyone to cook. In the final night slide show, I am given an award for being the one always taking pictures! With over 600 pictures and 45 taped conversations, I continue to explore the data.

Several themes emerge out of students’ memorable moments and their narratives of fears, risk, pushing limits, or moving beyond their fear of failure. Students talk about choosing a positive attitude and about giving supportive comments to their peers even though they are experiencing their own struggles. They begin to “see” the natural world around them differently as well as their interactions within that world. As I sort through the many experiences on various trips, particular unexpected incidents stand out. I map each of these unexpected moments using enactive theory to help interpret and gain perspective on the
possible ideas as they emerge. I then begin to use the next several months to explore how these themes unfold out of the phenomena of experiencing and how embodied awareness arises within these outdoor adventures. As already mentioned, the themes that arise out of my conversations with students include: freefall pedagogy, community interaction, turning points, connections with the natural world, and embodied respect. As this thesis is my interpretation of the data, I will attempt to illustrate how I come to know the epistemological and ontological perspectives which evolve during my enactive inquiry of the program.

Ungrounding Epistemo(onto)logical Perceptions

My interpretations of the research intertwine with my assumptions and learning. I remember when I first heard the word *epistemology* (epis-te-mol-o-jē). Ology is the study of---but what is this episte . . . ? Epistemology, according to Gregory Bateson, (1979) is:

A branch of science combined with a branch of philosophy. As science, epistemology is the study of how particular organisms or aggregates of organisms know, think, and decide. As philosophy, epistemology is the study of the necessary limits and other characteristics of the processes of knowing, thinking, and deciding. (p. 250)

Bateson along with Maturana, another biologist, brings a new and needed perspective of knowing for educators to consider. Like Bateson, Maturana & Varela (1980) address the processes of coming to know with that of the processes of life. However, Bateson never focuses on the ontological view or the act of knowing through the senses, essentially inseparable from perception and participation. See Dell (1985) for further discussion of the similarities and differences of Maturana and Bateson’s work.
from experiencing, then how does perceptual knowing arise through bodymind interaction?

My views combine the Buddhist definition of ontology and its relationship to epistemology as inseparable. Winnie Tomm (1995) in *Bodied Mindfulness* defines ontology as "the study of being, of reality . . . about going beyond linguistically constructed boundaries to experience reality as a process of interrelated and changing conditions. . . . Epistemology is about ways of perceiving reality" (p. 17). That is, she discusses the nature or reality of experience as influenced by the person's way of perceiving, an epistemological perspective. I refer to ways of knowing and ways of being as inseparable from the process of experiencing, where participation, perception and knowing co-evolve together. Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) refer to this antecedent as structural coupling.

On this matter, Maturana offers the coordination of behaviors as a structural coupling with our environment. Similarly, he refers to the coordination of behaviors such as languaging and emotioning as bringing forth a reality or perception, structurally determined by the organism. In this sense, a system such as the human body has a structure, with a history of experience, an epistemo(onto)logical participation, where experiencing is a coordination of perceptual knowing. My epistemo(onto)logical perspectives are best articulated in an interplay of knowing/doing/being with the natural world. Perceptual knowing or embodied awareness continuously evolves, whether mountain climbing, learning, teaching, or researching to bring forth the living world.

Changes in perception are changes in the relations with phenomena which involve sensual participation. This sensual experiencing arises out of the act of knowing or an

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31 I use the combined word of epistemology and ontology to reiterate the inseparableness of these two concepts. Perception and knowing co-evolve in the actions of experiencing, where perceptual knowing or being are indiscernible.
embodied awareness that is not grounded, but more of an evolving interaction. We may also gain some insight from cognitive theorists about the groundlessness of our perceptions and actions with/in the world. The Santiago theory\textsuperscript{32} of cognition, in fact states: "cognition is not a representation of an independent, pregiven world, but rather a bringing forth of a world" (Capra, 1996, p. 270). Varela, a student of Maturana, suggests that:

Groundlessness, then, is to be found . . . in everyday experience. Indeed, groundlessness is revealed in cognition as "common sense," that is, in knowing how to negotiate our way through a world that is not fixed and pregiven but that is continually shaped by the types of actions in which we engage. (Varela et al., 1991, p. 144)

We might then be able to consider groundless\textsuperscript{33} ways of perceiving and interacting where we embrace the unknown.

\textsuperscript{32} The Santiago theory, developed by Maturana and Varela in Chile, is now referred to as the theory of enaction or the enactive approach by Varela, Thompson, & Rosch in \textit{The Embodied Mind}.

\textsuperscript{33} My use of the term groundless and other references to Buddhist thinking are related to my interpretation of Varela, Thompson, & Rosch (1991) as well as Winnie Tomm’s (1995) explanations.
Preparing for Freefall---17,600 Feet

The art of teaching, learning, and experiencing all aim toward goals. However, these goals are fluid much like a groundless pedagogy open to mindful participation and the passion for continued learning, not necessarily adhering to an ultimate experience.

Impassioning possibilities is just such a groundless exploration. Base Camp is that area on the mountain that we can always come back to, to recover and rest before pushing up the mountain to establish new camps. From my Base Camp established at the University of British Columbia, I coordinate my research encounters, directly experiencing, sensing, and coming to know a community in the making. The pedagogical unfolding of the program (of study) helps students embrace the unknown living world as they ascend new mountains.

Experiencing freefall might open our inquiring questions within academic spaces. If we dare to breathe deeply within academia, I hope that we may open the doors and windows for fresh and unique ways of experiencing. Like Scott in mountain climbing, we take chances every time we climb or enter academic spaces. We cannot foresee how our interactions in either the mountain environment or the outdoor classroom will evolve. An enactive inquiry into
research/teaching/learning embodies perceptual possibilities for groundless, passionate, breath and life much like we experience during mountain climbing.

We need to spend a few days at Base Camp to acclimatize our bodies to this different way of perceiving and questioning. Groundlessness is this space of possibility and a place to question how we have come to know the world. It may be uncomfortable to ask why we climb mountains—why we should move out of the familiarity of academic classrooms? How could experiencing ever be the same in that it is changing as we speak, read and engage with others. It is this embracing of new opportunities to rethink and experience other ways of knowing, doing, and being that we embody in an inquiry for education and the ever evolving world. I am not asking you to totally step out of the traditional views of the world, but to provide a balance in our living/classrooms for instituted skills/goals and opportunities for questioning these very modes of inquiry. If we are always in action and interaction, then how can we be attentive and mindful of modes of inquiry that embody unpredictable teachable moments and help push us out of recirculating holes down the river of possibility? What are the ways educational goals can embrace a fluid pedagogy continually shaped through actions of inquiry and engagement?
Camp #1

The marvelous richness of human experience would lose something of rewarding joy if there were no limitations to overcome.

(Expedition Annual, Term 1, 1998-99)
LOSING OUR GRIP: PEDAGOGICAL POSSIBILITIES OF FREEFALL

The sunset views of Schelda hang on my living room wall, images for my stories of climbing with Scott. Since that experience, I perceive the fear of falling in an extraordinary way, but I am ready for the challenge to continue mountain climbing within my limits. There is a relationship between the visible and invisible of my climbing experience. My embodied experience of climbing reminds me of the hidden possibilities for teaching and learning. This way of knowing is not a solid pedagogy of ideas. We experience ways of knowing through relationship, between the visible and the invisible, to bring forth a landscape yet to be explored (Merleau-Ponty, 1968). 

Teaching can open that landscape or world, visible yet "pregnant with the invisible" which we introduce our students to and hope their flesh experiences the intertwining of the unknown (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 216). My climbing experience embodies movements, even though I cannot actually see myself while moving up the ice, a movement into unknown learning for which my teachers/practice have prepared me.

Although not physically climbing mountains in education, I struggle to find the embodied actions which allow me to move up the mountain or to arrest the moments of free fall. From my climbing in Russia, I have never forgotten the vividness and aliveness of the icefall glacier movement of Ushba. The rock and ice demanded a concentration and flow of coordinated movements. I need to coordinate my everyday path with that of the moving glacier to bring forth a landscape of embodied perceptions. How might we teach or facilitate learners to embody actions embracing unknown landscapes?

34 Maurice Merleau-Ponty was a French philosopher and phenomenologist whose working notes after his death were translated by Alphonso Lingis in the Visible and the Invisible. Phenomenology is the "study of essences" such as the essence of experiencing or essence of perception (Merleau-Ponty, 1962).
Is Freefall up or down?

Now on my second trip with the students, even with the familiar ankle throb from recently spraining my ankle while running at UBC, I open my eyes to unfamiliar, snow-covered mountains calling my attention. I watch as Jude opens her window, quietly staring in deep concentration at the landscape. Windy sunshine touches her face as she closes her eyes and opens them again. Fourteen students ride the bus to Skaha, a beautiful section of cliffs located in the Canadian desert. Speakers blare music students have recorded on tape from movie CD’s. Many of the songs come from a time which I recognize from my high school and college years. I wonder what images the students conjure while listening. Some students are lulled to sleep, heads bobbing, while others socialize, telling jokes. A few braid each other’s hair. The bus comes alive with singing as certain songs become audible over the humming engine.

Loves horses and her boyfriend too
It’s a long day living in Reseda
There’s a freeway... running through the yard
I’m a bad boy cause I don’t even miss her
I’m a bad boy ....for breakin' her heart

And I’m FREE
Free Fallin

\[35\] Song sung by Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers.
I find myself singing right along with the students. The bus comes alive with everyone shouting ‘free fallin.’ In concentrating on these two words, I feel a wave of nausea. I think about what we are going to do on this trip. We are headed for four days of rock climbing and free falling is my least favorite image for this activity. The words are ironic since the goal is to stay attached to the rock. Yet I wonder if students have the same fear of free falling as I do? What were students taught in the skill rotations\textsuperscript{36} and how would they be able to trust, risk and live this pedagogical challenge of freefall?\textsuperscript{37}

\textbf{Freefall Climbing}

In rock climbing, I am not referring to just the mind or brain of the body, but the entire body, interacting with the rock to embody how we know the world. Climbing embodies those actions while acclimatizing to the movements with the rock cliff. The epistemo(onto)logical concerns here are thinking about how we come to know through experiencing as well as the perceptual understanding of that experience. What are the phenomena of experiencing during the challenges of climbing with the rock or losing the tiny fingertip holds to the free fall? Freefall is the moment of groundless engagement that we cannot foresee but the actions which arise in the moment of doing. To understand our fluid experience of the world is to look for what makes this experience possible instead of what it is; not what we think, but what we live, the connections of sensations that come into being (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. xvi-xvii). Stories of climbing bring to light experiences of

\textsuperscript{36} During skill rotations, students spend the first month of the program mastering basic skills such as proper stove operation, tent and tarp setup; paddling and self rescues for both canoes and kayaks; and belay and climbing techniques for rock climbing.

\textsuperscript{37} I use the term “freefall” to refer to the pedagogy or act of acclimatizing through experiencing. “Freefall” is a moment where embodied awareness arises out of unexpected happenings rather than simply falling down as referred to by the separation of the words—free fall.
groundlessness where the outdoor classroom offers a domain of possibilities.\textsuperscript{38}

bell hooks (1994) introduces the idea of a critical thinking that empowers individuals to transgress boundaries and an “engaged pedagogy” where everyone learns including the teacher. She affirms that possibility, allows us to move beyond our boundaries and open our hearts and minds collectively, to experience what I refer to as the passion of freefall. The choice to climb always opens us to the possibility of freefall experience.

\textbf{When Time Appears to Stop}\textsuperscript{\textbullet}

Freefall stops familiar interaction and provides a freshness to perception. An enlightening of embodied actions at the moment of the freefall is when motions and actions appear to move in slow motion or stop. “The stop,” as extrapolated by David Appelbaum (1995) is an experience of mindfulness arising between the interstices of actions. Embodied awareness emanates out of the intermingling of actions. Such awareness in the act of rock climbing is where the body flows (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975).\textsuperscript{39} The stop offers the opportunity for choosing to dwell in the same motions or to risk the as-yet-unknown. Risk follows the invisible web of senses, or the synaesthesia of participating senses, while perception arises in the newness of experiencing. It seems as though choice is the perturbation in our own perceptual interplay with the world. From this, experiencing the world in new ways allows an invisible landscape to come forth into domains of consciousness, sentient unfolding, and moments of freefall.

\textsuperscript{38} A domain as a place arising through our actions is interpreted by Maturana and Varela (1987) as a domain where languaging or emotioning unfold.

\textsuperscript{39} Csikszentmihalyi studied people who were engaged in activities such as rock climbing to better understand the nature of enjoyment. He found that his participants had a common experience of satisfaction, exhilaration, and feeling of creative accomplishment which he refers to as flow.
The halt at the end of freefall is a moment when time appears to stop. As David Appelbaum (1995) says, "when time comes to a stop, one experiences, not timelessness, but time unqualified by intellect" (p. 85). The climber embodies an awareness of time relations amongst phenomena. During the act of climbing or skiing, the body coordinates these relations among time which Maturana and Varela (1980) refers to as the coordination of behaviors of systems, and Csikszentmihalyi (1975) refers to as flow. Climbing requires the rigorous attention to the moment, so intensely so, that the 'coordination of languaging' only becomes known through the re-experiencing, either with sensations of image or the sensations of bodily movement. In short, communicating the moment is not only through human language but also through actions.

Preparing to Climb

The bus parks in a field above Skaha Lake. We lay out all the gear to be carried such as clothes, lunch, water, ropes, carabiners, rock shoes, harnesses, webbing and the first aid kit. Beginning the hike up 200 steps built into the landscape allows us a closer view of the cliffs and the reality of climbing or falling.

Falling, in climbing, is that feeling when you lose your grip, all handholds and footholds to that empty feeling of lightness due to gravity. At the moment of feeling groundless, you hope your rope system doesn’t fail. In rock climbing, the rope is an integral part of the system on which a climber relies to stop their fall from hitting the bottom of the cliff. In the program, students are constantly being reminded not to step on this lifeline and how to take care of the rope.

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40 See Maturana and Varela (1980).
41 I use the term re-experiencing in place of reflections so as not to perpetuate bodymind separation.
Belayers who pay attention to the task of belaying, whom you can trust, and who allow you to struggle, fall, and still attain the top of the climb are difficult to find. Though, as long as students continue to climb under a top rope system\textsuperscript{42} always set up by instructors, they may never experience fully the responsibility for their own choices/actions. The climber, however, chooses which rock face to climb, whether or not they are ready for the climb, and when they want to be lowered regardless of whether they reach the top. Students, at some point before climbing on their own, need to check, replace, and set up their own top rope system. The safety of climbing relies on how the system is attached, giving climbers confidence to focus on the climb ahead of them.

Maintaining this delicate perceptual choosing and knowing how to encourage students to push their limits is always the tension and challenge for educators. The instructors have not actually climbed this rock face before, but they check your knots and let you find your own journey up the rock face. Teachers familiar with the flow of climbing impassion the possibilities, feel the tension of decisions, and encourage the unknown path up the rock face. A fixed and determined way to climb the rock face with each handhold and foothold marked does not lead down a path of enactive inquiry.\textsuperscript{43}

Depending on the rock face chosen, the climber struggles to find enough handholds, yet still pursues a climb that pushes their limits. Students continue on a path structurally determined by the system, yet find \textit{imperceivable handholds} as they move up the rock face.

\textsuperscript{42} A top rope system refers to climbing on a cliff where the climber anchors the rope to the cliff top, usually around boulders, trees, or off of at least three protective pieces lodged in cracks. The belayer belays from the bottom, feeding the rope from climber up through the anchor system and back down to the belayer.

\textsuperscript{43} Inquiry in this sense is not fixed and emerges through the climbers embodied actions with the different rock faces and belay system.
Risking Freefall

Although the majority of students in my research successfully climb many rock faces, some students struggle to seize moments of flow which allow them to push new limits. They endure the well-known patterned movements of the everyday, yet the program opens new ways to inter-act through such activities as rock climbing. After learning some basic climbing moves, and the skills to belay, students in the program can then explore numerous climbs, especially as they did on the four days of rock climbing in Skaha. The experience of rock climbing for most students, who are inexperienced, is exciting as they adventure up this unknown path.

I climb a footpath seeking a view from the top of the cliff. I come over the rise to the mesmerizing view of mountains mirrored in soft tones of blue and brown in Skaha Lake, framed by the green trees and fields of farmland. I take a deep breath and walk carefully along a ledge eighty feet above the ground. The gravel moves under my feet; I hold my breath hoping not to send it down on all the climbing students. Seeking to find the right perch to observe the activities below, I sit, hanging my legs over the edge, and wait for each climber to reach the top of their climb.

Below me, Alice is preparing to climb up the face of Red Tail, a 5.9-5.10 in the Skaha climbing guide. She rechecks her harness and the figure eight knot with a bite that she has tied to attach the end of the rope to her harness. As the climber, Alice is also checking to

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44 Climbs are based on the Yosemite Decimal System and the French grades from 5.0 up. Gear is placed for protection as one starts to climb 5.4 and up. Climbing grades are based on the subjective assessment of whomever climbs in the area mostly as a guide for new climbers to an area. Students warm up on 5.6-5.7 climbs with relative ease and are climbing 5.11’s which can take climbers years to master. However, the Skaha guide indicates that the scale seems to be a bit higher. For example, a 5.10 actually feels like a 5.9 in other climbing areas.
make sure her partner, the belayer, has properly attached the other end of the rope through the belay device. The rope, attached to carabiners and webbing at the top of the cliff, dangles into a neat pile atop a small plastic tarp to keep it out of the dirt.

Alice: Hey, we need a teacher over here to check us out.

Harry comes over and gives both Alice and her partner the okay.

Alice: Belay On?

Belayer: On belay.

Alice: Climbing? [She takes a deep breath, breathing out her nervous tension.]

Belayer: Climb Away.

Alice daintily attaches her rubber-soled toe to a one-inch ledge. She finds a small nub of rock with her left hand as she stands up on her right foot. She finds a perfect little shelf for her left foot and is now reaching up with her right hand for a finger width crack. Alice slowly and methodically moves up the rock continually trying holds, some small shelves and other little nubbins of rock jutting out from the surface.

She is wandering off route to the right side of this nose of rock, which hangs down about 15 feet. Her belayer is saying something about the rope being caught on the bottom of the nose. As Alice climbs, her belayer has to let out rope instead of taking it in. It is as if Alice is concentrating so hard to climb up this right side that she cannot fully comprehend the large U of rope forming from the top of the belay to her.

All of a sudden, with a screech like an owl, Alice’s hands and feet lose their grip on the rock face, falling....upside down, swinging 25 feet about the ground... hitting her back into the cliff. Her nervous belayer is yelling instructions, such as, “Are you okay Alice? Hang on, I am going to lower you.” I hear Alice’s sobs, and I tell her belayer to just hold on a
minute while Alice uprights herself. Here is a perfect example of freefall pedagogy where all the skills learned make it safe for students to challenge themselves and move into the falling zone. I tell the belayer to let Alice decide what she wants to do. I allow her to embrace the moment of stop. A bit rattled, with a slightly bruised back and ego, Alice says she wants to keep climbing. This time, she takes the left side of the nose, almost directly below me. I can tell she is concentrating again as her tongue sticks out of her mouth, and she is only aware of each move, feeling the rock. As Alice tops out her climb, she looks over at me and asks if I had taken a picture of her fall, as if this is her only worry now. I smile back, saying I was too worried about her to take a picture. Her belayer lowers her back down to the safety of the ground.

Freefall Pedagogy

When pedagogy moves beyond the ground to a constantly changing state, perceptions of learning can never be the same. The groundless experience of perceptual knowing or embodied awareness emerges as Alice and other students move and interact with the world through a different lens of being. Embracing this emergent pedagogy opens our perception to possibilities. How this experience will translate for Alice can only be retold over time, where Alice will make other choices to keep climbing or to be lowered to the safe ground of the familiar.

How is the bodymind challenged? What perceivable risks allow students to flow through problems, disruptions, or falls, where learning is a free, sensual act or a living pedagogy? Freefall brings forth a time where actions, skills, and everything that one has learned through practice become visible. This experience is new, unpredictable requiring full concentration for each move. Freefall experience opens the eyes, alerts the body to new
choices, fears, and possibilities not yet realized. In the split second, we move with embodied, intuitive actions and actions in the making.

Epistemo(onto)logical struggles occur for the teacher when trying to transform the freefall experience into a pedagogical structure, whereas my notion of groundless pedagogy is the act of acclimatizing through experiencing. The only structure lies in the teaching of belaying and climbing skills. Each student is then encouraged to partake in a problem solving movement and interaction with the rock. The experience of climbing opens awareness through the actions and interactions. Physical ability, strength, stamina, determination, the willingness to try, and the ability to concentrate or focus allow students to explore flow with the rock. Darren expresses his struggle when other students are trying to help him up a climb. “I want to try and figure it out for myself . . . to reach past what I thought I could.”

Epistemo(onto)logy emerges through embodied, intuitive actions. These actions require concentrating on our interactions (choice) with the living world of all experiencing forms including the rock.

How we go about teaching skills or information portrays and models a way of being that incorporates our theoretical experiencing or understanding of the world. The way we think of knowledge and knowing is not separate from who we are or our experiences. Often in teaching, we attempt to carry out curricula as separate from who we are, our own learning and ways of coming to know, as though it is something apart from us. Can the teacher completely dissociate from pedagogy? The phenomena of teaching is interwoven with the philosophical understandings and theoretical ways of embodying what we do. Our actions are intertwined so tightly with what it is that we know (worldviewtheorypractice) that when we try to break them down to teach steps for ways of thinking, it just doesn’t appear to flow..
While teaching scuba diving or rolling a kayak, we set up a particular sequence or strategy that allows the participants to feel movements of flow. In order for the participant to realize this, they must practice and sense this feeling of flow, so that they can enact it in different situations. So how do we teach flow, for instance, in math or rock climbing?

We teach various sequences of belaying and communication between belayers and climbers for safety. We show some basic moves with the body, and then we let the students embark on the rock. Some perceptions and actions interfere with the focus of climbing, just as they do for people learning to roll a kayak. Some of these interactions are with the rock or water, and the feedback one perceives or senses gives one the drive, the confidence, to push onward. However, you can’t actually teach each individual how they should move all the way up the rock. Each body is different and interacts differently with the rock. So we move beyond the basic principles of our taught climbing skills into exploring the next move or a totally different path up the rock.

Pedagogy turns into freefall experiencing when we don’t know what the possibilities are for students except in the doing. How do we epistemo(onto)logically break down what actually happens? This is impossible, much like separating our worldviews from kayaking/from theory. “Kayaking helps bring to light theorizing/experiencing as a fluid interactive process” (Haskell, in press, p. 17). We can think and try to make sense of our experiencing in words or stories. However, freefall pedagogy opens students to experiencing ways of thinking or ways of coming to know the world through actions.

Freefall pedagogy as an act of acclimatizing through experiencing is not a model that can be followed or taken out of context and applied to every pedagogical situation. Teachers
and learners delve deep within to figure out their own strategies to get in touch with flow or the zone of interactions, where possibilities visibly arise through the doing and experiencing.

Once again, the notion of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975) brings me back to the interactions with “things.” The relationship of human bodies with the environment or landscape bodies can not be separated as they meld through interaction. In fact, the bodily interplay exists between humans and non-humans or what Abram (1996) refers to as “experiencing forms.”

Our way of thinking about or with the world is interwoven with how we interact with the world, how we experience the world, and how we act with all experiencing forms. So in teaching something like rock climbing---what worldviews are we teaching? Holly, a student in my study, perceives rock climbing not as something to conquer, but as something she has “experienced . . . like I want to thank the rock for giving me this opportunity.” Holly realizes the importance of her interaction, her connection, and her respect for nature. Some might find this pedagogical act of teaching rock climbing to be nonessential for individuals in an urban-based society---yet the individuals and participants learn how to fit in socially and to gain group skills often modeled poorly in traditional schools. How do we prepare and teach students to push into the unknown, to climb new mountains?

When rock climbing instructors encourage climbers to try new climbs and to find a rhythm and flow in their climbing, they allow students to open doors unfolding new worlds. Embodied awareness as it were is this sense of effortless action or flow experience that emerges through rock climbing. Csikszentmihalyi (1997) recounts:

Flow experience acts as a magnet for learning--that is, for developing new levels of
challenges and skills . . . a person would be constantly growing while enjoying whatever he or she did. (p. 33)

Activities are not, he says, linear, like the school day, but “depend on their systemic relations to everything else we do” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 35). He adds:

Since time immemorial, artists, scholars, and religious mystics have chosen carefully the surroundings that best allowed serenity and inspiration. (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997, p. 45)

Thus, the surrounding environment is recognized for its interaction with/and in the focus of active experiencing. We freshly experience our everyday surroundings with new awareness. Such awareness comes through experiencing flow in challenging activities with the natural world.

Opening opportunities for students to live to their full potential requires them to step out of the familiar and to adventure into new challenges, new struggles, which actively embody inter-relationships that are productive and fun. The balance of productive and fun activities, both push limits and encourage people to live fully while experiencing pedagogical possibilities.

I find no better way to move into a groundless pedagogy than to teach the possibilities of moving above the ground as with climbing. Within the complex system of interaction amongst students, teachers, and environments, embodied awareness and actions emerge directly through experiencing. The experiencing embodied in rock climbing are threefold:

- The perception of risk and faith put in the rope alludes to the adventurous characteristics of learning.
• Climbing involves the coordination of behaviors between belayer and climber augmenting communication and trust.

• The direct interaction with the rock through climbing may bring forth a concentration or flow of movement or a struggle with perceivable limits. The climber’s direct interaction within rock climbing allows the choice to dwell in the familiar or risk the path of discovering the invisible.

There is a fine balance in pedagogical moves which help encourage students to push beyond, while letting students discover for themselves what happens off the ground. To fully experience the groundless world, the world of freefall, we need to enable flow and unpredictable interactions where embodied participation opens perception to the possibilities inherent in the setting.

Risking the unknown pushes perceivable limits. Our interaction with the rock gives immediate feedback, where the choice or willingness to risk is tested, sometimes with every movement. However, when we quiet the “mind,” breathing, flowing, the bodymind dances up the rock, opening our perceptual interplay to an enactive inquiry. We take risks every day in the familiar, driving 60 mph facing other cars. The risk of freefall while rock climbing is no greater, with the added possibility that we may learn from it how to live passionately, in a groundless unveiling of the unknown. Our willingness to touch our bodies with rock bodies brings forth a movement, a knowing, an experiencing. This interaction or phenomena of experiencing, infuses an aliveness in teaching and learning, as long as we as teachers and as students can live and learn to embrace the freefall of climbing new mountains.

29
Camp #1---19,500 Feet

I have invited you on a journey up an "unknown mountain," a journey that involves an adventurous pedagogy of struggle and risk. Struggle and risk are important for moving toward the flow of doing/experiencing with the natural world in two ways. First they provide the opportunity for climbing and second they allow moments of freefall within the safety of learning and inquiry. As we climb up through an icefall, we don't know how we will measure up; we begin testing perceptions of our interactions of this unknown interplay with the rock, snow and ice. We play with these tensions of risk, fear, struggle and control in classrooms everyday. How do we embrace an adventurous pedagogy that opens new paths of inquiry that our students embody in the flow of doing/experiencing?

In addition, after living everyday with our climbing party, various tensions arise in the network of chaotic interactions. A community of opportunity is possible as we coordinate our behavior and actions toward Camp #2.
The water is much too cold for a swim, but passion swells up in your heart and shouts: "Throw off your clothes and jump in---now!!" Something within you longs to experience the wonder of life, the gift of nature, the magic of the moment, whether it makes sense to the mind or not. And when you plunge into the water shrieking with joy as every cell in your body wakes up, you feel completely present, completely alive.

(De Angelis, 1998, p. 24)
LIVING INTERACTION: WHAT MAKES UP THE BONDS OF COMMUNITY?

I climb for three reasons: to be with nature and appreciate the mountain environment, because of the people—fellow climbers, and just for the climbing. Sometimes climbing is the most important, sometimes people and sometimes nature.  

Wanda Rutkiewicw

I ponder the question, why do we climb? I suppose at times I see clarity, connection, and clear goals as I set them for myself. I also feel the passion, the enveloping karma and the intense adrenaline of being on the rock or ice, especially while leading. The feedback I receive through my interactions is real, immediate, and either pleasurable or harsh. It isn't easy. Most of all, I find that time spent with a caring friend is a significant part of the experience. Although the actual climbing involves my interaction with the rock, I know I can rely on my belayer to encourage me (my goal) while being patient with my process.

On my climb up Ushba, my fellow climbers had a strong influence on my experience. Because we couldn't actually climb due to the storm, we spent hours in a small space, the tent, where we began to learn about each other. Walking the long trail in and out of the glacier allowed us time to talk and share experiences. It is amazing how fast the time goes by, the miles you put on while walking, and the conversations that emerge.

A strange bond formed among Scott, Bob and me while climbing Ushba. It seemed to occur so rapidly, especially after sharing the fall. I do not tell many non-climbers about falling, as they tend to misinterpret what happened, yet I think that through the telling, I bring clarity to my embodied perceptions of climbing mountains.

45 Wanda Rutkiewicz, from Poland, has lead many women's expeditions, and has made ascents of the Eiger, the Matterhorn in winter, Gasherbrum III & II, Everest and K2. This quote was taken from an interview with Wanda in April, 1984 (Birkett & Peascod, 1989, p. 125).
It was through experiencing these newfound communities of support and sharing with the climbing community that I discover a missing, yet necessary, essence for living. I know that establishing a supportive community is important for pursuing research while away from my family and partner with whom I have shared many excursions into the wilderness.

I conduct research in Vancouver with the illusion of a “community in the making,” where people support one another while beckoning philosophies not yet imagined (Ayers & Miller, 1998, p. 41). Communities are built around participation and positive, contagious interactions. From this, one can move beyond a lack of relational space through bonding or sharing experiences.

A new community was forming, where a few of the people I met at the University of British Columbia went out to Chinese dinner at least once a week. Although people came and went, I was finding friends to share my journey of experiencing. Nonetheless, I find myself in new surroundings, pushing limits and dealing with relationships that are shaky. Students in my research expressed this same insecurity as they enter new relationships and new experiences, such as a weeklong sea kayaking trip.

**Paddling the Waves of Community**

It has been raining most of the night and well into the day. The winds, according to the weather radio, are suppose to be gale force which means we will stay on land for safety. We are sea kayaking in Clayoquot Sound, off the west side of Vancouver Island. The thirteen students and three instructor/teacher/leaders are practicing reading maps and attempting to stay dry under the huge white tarpaulin on the beach. The afternoon brings swirling clouds, but the sun shines brightly for an hour, warming up the earth. Soon, most students clad in their bathing suits, are running around in the sun preparing for a swim in the ocean. Even
though it is the beginning of October, they plunge into the water as a group and bond. The sunshine brings out a variety of behaviors. Students are organizing running races up and down the beach, coating their bodies in mud, washing themselves in the ocean, and girls are shaving their armpits and legs to scrap away the dirt and grime of one night’s camping. One student sits apart from the group, reading her book and soaking in the warmth of the sun’s rays.

Individual students are dealing with their own limits and straining to form relationships with other people, especially among tent partners. They cannot avoid coming together for cooking, so they spend considerable amounts of energy making these gourmet meals of sushi rolls, fajitas, and lots of cheesy pastas. Minuscule bits of sand adhere to everything from stove parts to tent linings to gritty feet in sleeping bags. Now we are ingesting particles of the same beach that helped the group bond in the sunshine. Despite the frustrations of learning to help each other, the trip soon became “fun.” Alli, a student, describes fun as “when you get to meet new people and you know that the friendships will work” (taped conversation, December 8, 1998). The willingness to share set the stage for bonding, and for bringing these living interactions toward a networking community. Even though students spent a month learning skills together, they were in four different groups and still haven’t met everyone. These close experiences of sharing living quarters, meals, and paddling in different boats (some double sea kayaks) everyday, provide the relational space for community and working with people we might not yet know.

What brings a community together? How do teenagers coordinate, support, and bring together this network of people experiencing phenomena when familiar social systems
disappear? I watch students’ actions “couple”\textsuperscript{46} with peers, teachers, and the environment. They disclose familiar behaviors of gender, competition, rudeness, and lack of motivation. I also see students working cooperatively, actively interacting with peers, volunteering for group tasks, imparting a positive influence, organizing camp set up, practicing minimal impact, and improving skills with effort, interest and enthusiasm. What is happening in the chaos, on this first weeklong trip for students?

This is an educational community with a classroom of living interaction amongst peers, teachers, the islands, and the ocean. The motivation only to want to spend time with one another became so strong that it took hours for students to coordinate behaviors to pack up camp and actually paddle to a new destination. Coordinating new community behaviors in the outdoor classroom occurs through the relational sharing of experiences. Living interaction with phenomena (animate and inanimate) opens a network or community in the making, where the familiar patterns of behavior slowly change, allowing voices of collaboration, respect and trust, while blurring social and ecological sensibility.

I pack up, taking gear down to my boat by 6:30 a.m. It was light out on the beach as I watched some movement around the cluster of tents. I began my long walk down to the bathroom spot, only to find a pile of human manure above high tide. Some student would be surprised to have to move and bury these remains. After buckets of water falling on my tent last night, it looks like the skies are clearing. I am dry clothed in my long cajoule just in case the storms hurry a return.

My ritual of washing my face and brushing my hair helps wake me up, and by the

\textsuperscript{46} By “couple” I am referring to the shared experience that occurs in the interactions with students, teachers, and the environment.
time I return to the cooking tarp, most of the male students are up. After our breakfast of leftover couscous, fruit, brown sugar, and tea, we begin to move leader boats to the water’s edge, waiting for the rising tide. I slide into my boat as the water creeps higher, launching my little craft. I write in my journal, awaiting the group’s coordinating efforts to set boats offshore.

I float, planes soar, kayaks roar. 
Seven people lug kayaks to the shore. 
Sand grinds, students whine. 
Oh, how the water quietly ebbs up the shore.

Tides flow, storms blow, clouds billow over. 
My kayak drifts over seaweed bending to tidal currents. 
Sunshine teases, wet suits suck against salty skin. 
Oh, where does the paddle blade face?

Tents down, gear gone, boat hulls full 
Arising early to the scurry, students hurry. 
Boats fill, voices howl, wind gusts. 
Oh, I pleasantly float offshore.

Dan’s beach, hidden beach, sandy shores of time. 
A journey in our lives, savoring time. 
Paddle blades alternate, instructors fluctuate. 
Oh, how I love the ocean.

Loons call, breeze ripples, morning sounds awaken. 
Kayaks line up, water laps, each craft sets to sea. 
Foot pegs even, rudders straight, life jackets donned. 
Oh, how the story goes.

Paddles in hand, spray skirts snap secure, fingers find pogo retreats. 
All aboard, let’s keep feet dry, flotilla, a fleet. 
Sun reflecting, time glimmering, Rassier point receding. 
Oh, where will we go as the wind blows?

Floating boats, colliding paddles, ensuing chaos. 
As we paddle the calm eddies of distant shores. 
Ducky formation, shining kelp, disappearing sea stars of orange. 
Oh, how the tide greets the morning.
An hour passes as paddle strokes slow. Paddling with shoulders finds some students lagging behind in the single boats. In our long line of 12 boats, we meander along the shore of rich vegetation and intertidal life. I poke along, exploring, paddling quickly ahead to take pictures, and encouraging the stragglers to keep up their progress.

The outdoor classroom continues to teach the value of skills while pushing perceivable limits. Students whine and complain, yet after they have pushed themselves into the wind, past perceptual limits, they enlighten with feelings of accomplishment. If you "push yourself," you get "more benefits" (conversation with Ann, November 13, 1998). Sharing songs helps them pass the time, keeping rhythm with windmilling blades, back and forth. As they suppress their negative thoughts, the positive energy of helping others supports them through the tasks at hand. Some paddle with familiarity and ease, while others paddle with extra effort to keep in pace, focusing on singing as their boats weave in and out of the line.

Community is not something you create, but it emerges in the living interaction of interweaving networks of phenomena (a group's wellbeing). Through experiencing shared goals, pain, humor, persistence, and group effort, students "coupled" together, in what they refer to as bonding. As Ann narrates from a different trip,

You have to work together and you have to encourage everyone. [Two peers] were encouraging me the whole way up [a mountain ridge]. It made everyone bond so much" (taped conversation, November 13, 1998).

-Living Interaction—The Social Historical Coupling of Fun-
How does bonding emerge in the shared interaction? According to the work of Maturana and Varela (1980) on cognitive systems, the structural coupling of organisms consensually brings forth the world of friendships. Through the coordination of behaviors, a collaboration invites
communicating, participating, and engaged being and doing. Maturana & Nisis de Rezepka (1998) maintain that education is a creation of living space, where students become socially responsible human beings. They indicate that practice or teaching should not correct the being, but open a space for students to reflect and act in awareness on what students do respectfully. In other words, comments or interchange should not focus on the structure of being, but on the student actions and reflective doings. As Mitten (1995), an outdoor experiential educator further depicts, the forming of communities are reinforced through being and doing statements that help affirm a nurturing and supportive environment for healthy bonding. For example, a statement such as “I am glad you are here” affirms being, whereas “I appreciate your support in helping us load the canoes in a timely manner,” is a doing message (Mitten, 1995, p. 87). Therefore, relationship skills originate in connective experiences which include students’ social history such as family and continue to emerge in the unexpected actions of doing.

Living in a relational space or domain of mutual respect opens students’ experience to meaningfulness and a sense of ‘fun.’ Bisson and Luckner (1996) affirm that “fun” is a time when participants can risk being themselves without modulating their actions. However, some students in the program struggle to feel part of the group among the social cliques. For example, Alli (taped conversation, December 8, 1998) describes her struggle to voice her thoughts and risk being rejected or ridiculed.

I couldn’t really express what I wanted to express, like even if I said something it wouldn’t . . . you still had to be on guard and it wouldn’t be accepted. [Nonetheless, she risks talking to someone she feels uncomfortable around.] This person that I don’t get along with or don’t have too much respect for---I have actually tried to say hello,
which is the first step. To see if that person... I haven't been getting any feedback until yesterday. But, I actually took the risk of saying something... you risk being rejected or ridiculed. I feel comfortable with people who I know won't reject me. Everyone takes their own safety... When I said hi, it was more than a grunt or a dismissal... Some people still think one-dimensional [referring to them thinking of only themselves].

The phenomena of experiencing ‘fun’ arises in activities or communities of opportunity for students to be themselves in an accepting, non-judgmental, tolerant environment, open to all encounters. Later near the end of the five months in the program, Alii relates her most memorable time as learning to telemark ski in over eighteen inches of powder.

My best days in the program were today... I couldn’t believe how well people worked. People weren’t putting each other down at all they were being really supportive, like come on you can do it as they were falling down. Everyone was positive!... It was fun. I really enjoyed today, people connections were good, weather was great and the scenery was beautiful.

Experiencing continues through reflection or what I refer to as re-experiencing and the embodied actions of “consensual” retelling or stories of historical coupling.47

Many students spoke of the sun coming out on the beach as the most memorable experience. Arty (taped conversation, October 7, 1998) narrates her most memorable experience while sea kayaking:

47 Maturana & Nisis de Rezepka (1998) refer to intelligence as situations of consensuality which take place in the animate and the inanimate. Intelligence is the capacity to participate which is influenced by the emotional flow of humans that expand or restrict consensuality of behavioral interactions. See Varela et al. (1991) for a more inclusive understanding of social historical where past experiences are part of human experience.
We were on the beach and the sun was out. . . . running on the beach . . . having so much fun with each other, everyone was happy. . . It was so much fun. I loved that afternoon. . . it brought the group together and it was like a total bonding experience. Cause the sun all of a sudden just came out from behind a cloud. No one except our group experienced that.

Students embody the beach experience as fun, a living interaction with networks of phenomena in the outdoors. The outdoor experience is a coordination of connections with peers, the ocean and the sand; an interconnecting ecosystem including the “web of life” (Capra, 1996). The bonds of community arise in the passion of fun, where students find a flow in interaction, a time of meaningful engagement between individuals.

Communities in the making form deep connections or bonding friendships through shared experiences and living interaction. Some educators may ask, why go out sea kayaking? On outdoor trips, where students focus on the necessities of food, shelter, water, and kayaking skills, the making of community and bonding is central to the sharing of the highs (fun) and lows (pain, persistence, endurance) of experiencing. The sharing of stories from day to day, while encouraging each other to coordinate interactions toward paddling and packing up camp (common goals), embodies a living, breathing, intertwining community in the making.
Camp #2---21,300 Feet

We live in a very large community. The world, as such is an interconnecting web of shared experiences arising out of living interaction. Community is important for our final summit bid. As we move up the mountain, these relations are tested in the small intimate quarters of sharing food and tent space. Acclimatizing is not only for the body to adjust to, but a time for the growth of a supportive community in the making. As we move up the mountain, the views are incredible. We can now begin to see the expanse of mountain ranges and get a sense of how this opportunity to gain even this height helps us acclimatize to new world views and thinking.

Paying attention to how we each deal with living in this new community, and how we enact in the moment while exploring higher up the mountain, can mean life or death. How do we embody or come to know this unfolding world through experiencing theory? What methodology of inquiry embodies our actions and how do we encounter this unfolding web of interactions?
As theories relevant to the enactive approach are complex, our acclimatizing to evolving ways of being and inquiring has been a slow process thus far. Tomorrow we have to ascend up a section of the climb which requires ice climbing techniques. As we front point up this ice face, we will encounter places (theorists) requiring intense concentration. To give a sense of what it is like to read and interpret foreign, yet fresh perspectives which resonate with enactive inquiry, I engage in a "dialogue" much like my swinging an ice axe and crampon points in ice\textsuperscript{48} and slowly moving up toward camp #3.

\textsuperscript{48} Often when ice climbing, the climber may need to reset ice axes (which act as their finger grips) because certain ice formations are not solid and dinner plate off in chunks hopefully not directly on one's belayer below. It is through this interaction with the ice that I refer to as a "dialogue."
And when I was in the program
my perspective and values were
flipped upside down.

Impossible to sum up
and the most influential
yet incredible months of my life.

(Expedition Annual, Term 1, 1998-99)
ENVISIONING DIALOGUE: AN ENACTIVE INQUIRY TO INTER-STANDING
THE FLESH OF EXPERIENCE

As I crest the ridge of the Ushba plateau in Russia, I breathe in the most magnificent views of the world. I am reminded of this journey and the struggle as I watch students in the outdoor adventure education program labor through a foot of powder up a tiny mountain in British Columbia. The snow surrounds us in a winter wonderland of chaotic whiteness. While pushing, confronting, and opening my being to fresh ideas from the enactive approach, I feel my vision blur into an unfamiliar, unclear, whiteout sense of perspective. My gaze is more than just a vision of reality, but an ecological worldview that requires a “radical shift in our perceptions, our thinking, our values” (Capra, 1996, p. 4). From the plateau, I “envision” an experiential dialogue among theorists, philosophers, researchers, readers, students and myself using direct quotations and conversations in the making.

Is the Reader Experiencing or Enacting Inquiry?

Through sharing my dialogue of enactive inquiry, I hope to engage the reader in the entanglement of experiencing the world as unfolding through our very living, breathing, actions. Enactive inquiry provides an emergent, embodied way to approach research, which I share through story and interactive dialogue. By dialoguing with theorists, I invite you, as reader, to engage in the possibilities for an emergent research methodology through these imaginary encounters.

My envisioning is intended to give a sense of movement and consequently shifts in different directions. The dialogue format provides an interplay of ideas and literature that tries to make sense of the phenomena of experiencing the outdoors and the everyday through enactive inquiry and embodied awareness. Thus, enactment as embodied inquiry allows the
re-experiencing or the re-embodiment of me as teacher, instructor, learner, researcher, and (co)inquirer. I begin while looking out at the expansive landscape at 24,000 feet above sea level.

—is Enactive Inquiry—Is it a perspective or methodology?

Johnna: Is this real, can I see the earth forever? [I try to slow my breathing to soak in the view from the plateau, or what feels like the top of the world.] Isn’t this the best? What could possibly be more beautiful? What is this flesh I feel, cannot see in the actions of climbing, yet embody? What is the flesh of researching such actions, such phenomena of experiencing?

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. . . . The flesh is in this sense an ‘element’ of Being. . . . If we can show that the flesh is an ultimate notion, that it is not the union or compound of two substances, but thinkable by itself; if there is a relation of the visible with itself that traverses me and constitutes me as a seer, this circle which I do not form, which forms me, this coiling over of the visible upon the visible, can traverse, animate other bodies as well as my own. And if I was able to understand how this wave arises within me, how the visible which is yonder is simultaneously my landscape, I can understand a fortiori that elsewhere it also closes over upon itself and that there are other landscapes besides my own. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, pp. 139-141)

Johnna: So is the flesh the invisible, passion, the element of Being which we can not see; a landscape or chiasm where I am the world and the world is me? I continue to ask these questions while trying to “interstand” the phenomena of experiencing (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994). I want to inter-stand the relational experience of worlds unfolding, which is more than just an understanding. Through inter-standing, can I glimpse into the chiasm of possibility?
Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen⁴⁹: When depth gives way to surface, under-standing becomes inter-standing. To comprehend is no longer to grasp what lies beneath but to glimpse what lies between. . . . Interstanding is relational but not dialectical, connective but not synthetic, associative but not unitive. The between of the “inter” neither fragments nor totalizes. (Taylor & Saarinen, 1994, p. Interstanding 1, 8)

Johnna: The inter- allows living, dying, being to unfold as a phenomena of experiencing. I experience the world arising as an intertwining of relations, a chiasm open to a re-searching of embodied actions. What must I inter-pret to inter-stand the en(act)ing of the phenomena of experiencing?

Reader:⁵⁰

Maurice Merleau-Ponty: We are interrogating our experience precisely in order to know how it opens us to what is not ourselves. This does not even exclude the possibility that we find in our experience a movement toward what could not in any event be present to us in the original and whose irremediable absence would thus count among our originating experiences. (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 159)

Johnna: Yes, the ineffable essence of the phenomena of experiencing is embodied in my everyday experience. I touch the invisible, an inter-standing while climbing mountains where my focused concentration is embodied, aware and seeking a flow of movement. I ask, “What

⁴⁹ The authors of Imagologies, Mark Taylor and Esa Saarinen study in the field of media technology.
⁵⁰ I leave this space in the text as an invitation for the reader to enter into the conversation.
are the phenomena of experiencing for students participating in an outdoor adventure education program?" I anticipate that before we can fully inter-stand the invisibleness of experiencing, we need to first talk about how ‘I,’ as a structural system, come to think about the world. What exactly is this notion of embodied action known as the enactive approach to cognition and human experience?

**Francisco Varela, Evan Thompson, & Eleanor Rosch:** By using the term embodied we mean to highlight two points: first, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensorimotor capacities, and second that these individual sensorimotor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, psychological, and cultural context. By using the term action we mean to emphasize once again that sensory and motor processes, perception and action, are fundamentally inseparable in lived cognition. ... In a nutshell, the enactive approach consists of two points: (1) perception consists in perceptually guided action and (2) cognitive structures emerge from the recurrent sensorimotor patterns that enable action to be perceptually guided. (Varela et al., 1991, pp. 172-173)

**Johnna:** It seems as though the enactive approach draws on cognitive science, phenomenology, and Buddhist awareness practices which open paths to confront methodological concerns for researching human experience. If in fact we are trying to get at

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**51 Meandering Up a Stream**

After eight years as a secondary science teacher, I am now gaining experience as a researcher. The orange truck is humming loudly down the highway. Trusting to share stories is what makes my research relationship rich while traveling with teachers and to understand the passion behind what they instruct. I stare out
the window at the most magnificent views of the mountains. They are white covered and backlit by a beautiful blue sky.

Our relationship evolves and grows in our interactions of research, talking, sharing, and embodying an enactive inquiry. My worldview and perceptions of experiences are tipped on end while engaging with theoretical understanding as well.

My understanding of Varela, Thompson, & Rosch's (1991) book, *The Embodied Mind* was pivotal to my views of the world being disrupted and yet offering possibilities for my research in thinking about human experience. The authors explore the possibilities that exist between human experience and cognitive science. They propose a new approach in cognitive science referred to as "enactive" where they are trying to recover a view of cognition as embodied action. They utilize the idea of embodiment first brought about by Merleau-Ponty (1962) in which embodiment has a double sense of the body as living and the body as the experiential structure or context of cognition. They refer to the "enactive view that cognition has no ultimate foundation or ground beyond its history of embodiment" (Varela et al., 1991, p. xx).

In trying to bridge the gap between cognitive science and what this means for everyday human experience, the authors offer an alternative orientation of the "enactive." The enactive approach is best expressed as "the growing conviction that cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world and a mind on the basis of history of the variety of actions that a being" performs with the world (Varela et al., 1991, p. 9). In using Buddhist philosophy, the authors propose a middle way or a path of mindful, open-ended learning which they propose is profoundly transformative and embodied out of compassion for the world and not an ego-self. They mean to include in science the ideas of an enactive approach, where experiencing the everyday world is more than a desire to ground, objectify, and fixate.

It is not my intention to view the enactive approach as another "ism," but to open approaches to research and how we experience and perceive our interactive world. The approach to experience influenced by Buddhism would bring about
the phenomena of experience, we must first realize that the interaction with phenomena is an
embodied cognition. This embodiment is the essence of Being that may be expressed through
perception or conception. The conceptions of abstract and metaphoric thinking allow us to
engage and bring forth the theories of our time. Theorizing is then an embodied experience
which is not separate from our experiencing (Haskell, in press). This is not to say that theory
is fixed, but evolves with the coupling interactions of an unfolding world. Thus, our actions
of the everyday embody worldviews of how we inter-stand the world and as such, influence
our experiencing of the world.

George Lakoff and Mark Johnson⁵²: Our experience of the world is not separate from our
conceptualization of the world. Indeed, in many cases (by no means all!), the same hidden
mechanisms that characterize our unconscious system of concepts also play a central role in
creating our experience. . . . In other words, our cognitive unconscious plays a central role not

mindfulness/awareness in a way that helps uproot or to bring forth perspectives
through learning to embody groundlessness. Although many will find this notion of
groundlessness and a world without a self frightening, I see it as an exciting
“chiasm” where possibility arises for how we think about knowledge, cognition, and
experience. If knowledge and learning are not located in the body of self but located
in the shifting movement of experiencing, then this opens new possibilities for how
we perceive, interpret and represent research. The pedagogical possibilities for
transformative human experiences become apparent through our encouragement of
students to grapple with thoughts, theories, and ways of being that are not grasping
a fixed reality.

⁵² George Lakoff (1980, 1999) is a Professor of Linguistics at the University of California,
Berkeley, and co-author with Mark Johnson, of Metaphors We Live By and Philosophy in the
Flesh: The Embodied Mind and its Challenge to Western Thought. Johnson (1987) is
Professor and Head of the Philosophy Department at the University of Oregon and the author
only in conceptualization but in creating our world as we experience it. It was an important empirical discovery to find that this is true, and it is an equally important area for future research to discover just how extensive this phenomenon is. (Lakoff & Johnson, 1999, p. 509)

**Maurice Merleau-Ponty:** The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being.... remaining faithful to its intention, never knowing where it is going.... the same demand for awareness, the same will to seize the meaning of the world... as that meaning comes into being. (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. xx-xxi)

**Johnna:** Bringing the phenomena of experiencing into Being is not separate from the “flesh of the world” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968) or the “more than human world” (Abram, 1996). It is through the body that we experience the passionate experiencing of phenomena and phenomena of experiencing where we encounter and bring forth a world hidden from our view yet inter-standable. How would the appropriate research methodology or method bring forth the extensiveness of phenomena?

**David Smith**\(^{53}\): The appropriate method for interpreting any phenomena can only be disclosed by the phenomena itself. (Smith, 1999, p. 33)

**Johnna:** I bring forth a dialogue to disclose the conversation, stories, reflections, voices, and possible interpretations of encounter between experiencing phenomena and/or the phenomena of experiencing. This dissertation is a writing or a re-telling of my encounters with the unknown in reading theory, participating in dialogues, and writing interpretive text as our

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\(^{53}\) David Smith is Professor of Education at the University of Alberta. Born in China and raised in Central Africa, he is author of *Pedagon: Meditations on Pedagogy and Culture*. 50
experiencing world comes forth. How do we know or interpret our worldview/experiencing? How do the metaphorical images, you as reader bring forth through your actions of reading stories and writing in the space below, help enact an inquiry?

**Reader:**

David Abram: Without writing, knowledge of the diverse properties of particular animals, plants and places can be preserved only by being woven into stories. Stories, like rhymed poems or songs, readily incorporate themselves into our felt experience; the shifts of action echo and resonate our own encounters—in hearing or telling the story we vicariously live it, and the travails of its characters embed themselves into our own flesh. (Abram, 1996, p. 120)

Jude\(^5^4\): Hey Johnna, want to see my journal?

Johnna: Yah, let's go some place where it's quiet.

[We walked down the hallway of the ski lodge and ducked under the dripping tents to find the edge of the bed. The bed is set at a 45 degree angle atop of another bed, out of the way of the dripping tents hung on a web of lines strung throughout the room. The room is chaotically filled with bits of every imaginable piece of clothing, ski skins and packs that were soaked with the heavy wet snowflakes that turned to pouring rain on our winter overnight ski trip. We ponder the unveiling of an annal holding secrets to life within the program.

\(^{54}\) Jude is a student from the outdoor adventure education program in which I engage as researcher in an enactive inquiry.
I listen to events and a pictograph representation of Jude’s entire experiencing of the program. She talks about her thinking at an earlier age, thinking there was a twin somewhere that was exactly like her. She knows this is not true, as she is the only person like herself. My conversation with Jude changes research questions and interviews into an inquiry that my skills once again (like paddling a new river) allow me to enact in the moment. As I tumble in the river rapids, what will I do next? Research genuinely occurs in the unveiling of invisible worlds unfolding. Re-searching or re-experiencing a time where we couple our social histories, allowing us to enact a mindful approach, while asking who we can potentially become within the living world.

Jude: Can I read you this bit from when I went outside in the snow on my first Manning Park Trip? [Her voice infiltrates the room rising up and over the clotheslines.]

‘It’s past dinner and I have just gotten back from going for a walk in the snow. I hardly went for a walk. I walked for maybe 30 seconds, then sat in the snow. At first I was scared because of, I don’t know, well it’s stupid. I’m scared of rapists and murderers or kidnappers, not the outdoors. I would rather be with a bear, I think than a rapist. I sat in the snow and looked around. It sparkles everywhere. The snow insulates everything.

[I remember the snow that night. It was coming down everywhere. Over a foot of snow hung on every tree branch, silencing noise and reflecting light with a mystical sparkle.]

Everything is so still and quiet. I felt like an intruder because my stomach was gurgling and my breathing was loud. It took me a while before I could think clearly and have only one thing on my mind. I got to thinking, who am I? What is my purpose? How could I make use of my knowledge? What could I do for myself to be
content and make a difference? What is the world? Who is to say earth is merely a
speck in the great scheme of things? What is the great scheme of things? Perhaps
everything is simply nothing or maybe life, my life is a dream and I am at the center
of it. Why is snow cold? Who decided that snow was snow? How did I get to be here?
What is beyond? How did the earth become? Who is God? What is God? If there is a
god, how did she, he become? Where did it all start? Am I just another person who
makes up zero point zero, zero, zero, one-percent of a population? I've decided no. I
am I. I become what I choose and put my mind and heart to. Was there once
nothingness? What is nothingness?

Why am I here? What is my purpose? I have a mind of my own and I speak for
myself. But do I follow the crowd? How can I help others? Am I an
alien....completing a part of a mission? Is this it? If so, how can I make the most of
it? Why am I here? If everybody is made differently and is different, why do we all try
to be the same? Whose says what is the same? Everybody has the need to be accepted,
but it is sad how some try so hard just to be liked or approved of---but continue to be
bashed or put down. Seeking the acceptance of those who don't even know who they
themselves are, is foolish but is practiced all the time. Searching to be approved of is
hopeless. Working to make others happy all the time will in the end make me more
unhappy than in the first place.

I remember my Dad telling me a long, long time ago that in a certain religion,
I forget which, they believed that we are all living in a dream and when we die is
when we wake up. Is this when we begin to live? I have always remembered this and
who knows, but not only is it an interesting outlook, but it seems to be close to
true...for myself. When we die, is that it? If there is a heaven or a paradise, how's there room for everybody? Who decides who gets to go there? How can it be one being's choice? Why must religions be followed? Making your own rules and living to your own beat is much more fulfilling and natural. Right now, I believe that religion is not the truth. It's impossible. Religion is searching for a way to answer such unanswerable questions...such as those which are present in the century. I am not disapproving. What is approval anyway? And who the hell is Merriam Webster? Of those who believe and follow a certain religion, it's just not right for me. If there is a god, why does she allow horrible people on earth, like murderers? Are they obstacles which we must overcome? Is life a survival game? Am I a player? I've overcome many obstacles but many have yet to come. What a confusion.

What is a word? Who am I? What is life? Knowledge is useless unless it is used. Will any of this ever be clear?

**Johnna:** That is so symbolic of why I have come to do research. I don't have answers to anything. What is knowledge? What is experience? Why are we here? What am I teaching? What do I do? These are all the same questions we continue to ask throughout our lives.

**Jude:** And things always change too.

**Johnna:** Sitting in the snow contemplating all these things in the world is exactly...

**Jude:** It takes a while for the thoughts to become more clear and to stop thinking about what's happening at that very moment and to think about what is happening in general. To stop worrying about the milk and dinner and going to bed and......just be clear. [Another student had drunk all the milk of her group without asking.]
Johnna: The theory that I was working on is related to Buddhism a little bit which was asking... How do we become mindful? And mindfulness to them is emptying everything else and meditation is a way to try to get rid of that other stuff interfering so that you can really uncover what is important at that moment. I have been trying to think of it not just in the mind but throughout your body. Like sitting in the snow may have helped you become mindful.

Jude: Why is [this] a good program and why is it good to be in the outdoors? Maybe you think more clearly and the stuff in the city doesn’t bother you anymore because it doesn’t matter when you are there. So you just think about... more philosophical questions...

Johnna: That so connects to my work it is not funny. [Laughter takes over our bodies as we smile at one another.]

Pursuing Enactive (Research) Inquiry

Jude works so hard at being open to encounter and to get the most out of her experiences in the program. She certainly seems to be attempting mindfulness (clarity) and filling her journal with wonderful thoughts. My plans to inter-view 55 students are thrown out the door with the weather and the unpredictability of finding enough time to talk to students alone. However, the moment where chaos and connections unfold, I am in a conversation (relation) that relates a wonderful story blurring perception with a conceptual dialogue while questioning the whole enacting flesh of the world.

55 I use inter- as in Taylor & Saarinen (1994) where interviews are more than a conversation but a view or perspective that arises out of the relational merging of researcher and student.
In preparing myself for an enactive inquiry, I became familiar with multiple methodologies and perspectives which enabled me to embody a bricolage approach, using what I need in the moment (exactly what one does in rock climbing and paddling). My methods were not different from most traditional qualitative research, including inter-views, jour(neys)nals, and participant observations. However, the methods evolved as I focused on my embodied awareness, enactively inquiring into the phenomena of experiencing. While paddling and on other trips, I used pictures to articulate my journal images, allowing me to fully experience the ineffable essence of the program.

Jude revolutionizes my inter-standing of research methodology as experiencing. This experiencing is an enactive inquiry arising through the doing and the dialogue or sharing of experiential stories. Jude’s sharing of her open-ended reflections and writing is an experiencing of research, an enactive inquiry unfolding through the interaction, actions, and enactment of shared dialogue and questions. I follow the unfolding moments, enter into the sharing of conversation and remain open, yet mindful of what Jude is willing to share with me at this particular time through our living interactions. Enactive inquiry honors relationships, which develop depending on me as researcher and skilled outdoors women, and the kinds of emergent interactions I share with the students in the outdoor context. We enact inquiry without using formal questions, experiencing inter—views of our embodied interactions, while opening chiasmal worlds through our shared outdoor journeys.

Bricolage is an approach of using multiple methodologies and methods at hand to complete the task of research. For an introduction to bricolage, and the bricoleur’s approach, see Weinstein (1991) and Levi-Strauss (1962).
Jennifer Clements, Dorothy Ettling, Dianne Jenett, and Lisa Shields: The method is never frozen but is constantly responding to the creative shouts and whispers of the primary wisdom of the research itself. . . . Organic inquiry has emerged out of this transpersonal movement’s call to consciousness which acknowledges the inseparability of one individual’s experiences and actions from those of the greater community . . . . We four are awed by the chthonic way in which this methodology seems to have a life of its own and an urgency to be made available. (Clements, Ettling, Jenett, & Shields, 1999, p. 2-3)

Johnna: I use an enactive inquiry approach where my own experiencing and stories are the initial depiction for unfolding or rendering the narration of inter-actions. In holding on to my own experiences and coupling of social history, I use intuitive, creative and enactive inquiry to re-tell and write the phenomena of experience into being. Enactive inquiry is a process whereby intention and action blur into the flow of doing. Doing, experiencing, being are inseparable from the inquiry of embodied actions.

Valerie Janesick: One of the amazing strengths of the qualitative researcher . . . is the ability to use all the senses to undertake the research act. Sight, hearing, touch, smell, and

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57 The authors put together a qualitative methodology that they viewed as using intuitive and interactive methods, which moves beyond the linear constraints and rational expectations of traditional methods. Their approach stands between feminine spirituality and transpersonal psychology. The goal of their methodology is to promote an individual and personal transformation of some sort for all engaged in the study. Similar in one sense to enactive inquiry, their methodology requires the researcher’s relationships with the methods to follow the muse of the research topic including his or her stories and intuitive process.

58 Chthonic refers to earthly.

59 Valerie Janesick is a Professor of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies at Florida International University in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, Florida. She teaches classes in qualitative research methods, curriculum theory, curriculum planning and evaluation, and develops intercultural awareness in education. Janesick (1998) has developed several activities for her students to practice qualitative research in her book *Stretching Exercises for Qualitative Researchers.*
taste often must be used to collect data. After living in the field with participants over time, the researcher also uses intuition, informed hunches if you prefer, to plan the mode of inquiry, to undertake the inquiry, and to develop a way of “seeing” what is evident in the social setting. The role of the qualitative researcher, much like the artist/dancer’s role [climber/kayakers role], demands total involvement and commitment in a way that requires a total immersion of the senses in the experience. . . . The researcher is connected to the participants in a most profound way, and that is how trust is established, which in turn allows for greater access to sources and which ensures an involvement on the part of participants that enables them to tell their respective stories. . . . All researchers use a sixth sense, an intuitive sense, to follow through on hunches that emerge from observing and interviewing in a particular social context. Researchers ought to have the opportunity in their training and in practice to sharpen their intuitive skills, which often opens up avenues of data previously unknown or hidden. (Janesick, 1998, pp. 61, 62)

**Johnna:** Perhaps research is simply nothing or a dream, as Jude says, that we bring to life through dying? Perhaps enactive inquiry brings forth the invisible through embodiment of the cognitive unconsciousness, mindful awareness, or intuitive experience? Maybe the intangible is precisely the embodiment that we are trying to inter-stand with research? My purpose of sorts has been to awaken the alien, the unknown, the flesh of experiencing. I don’t claim that through experiencing, that I can tap into the experience of participants, yet I intertwine with them and they with me, unfolding a chiasm of perceptual awareness.

**Alphonso Lingis:** There is a seduction to the visible, a way it has of inviting us to follow the ways the patterns emerge and dissolve, a seduction to the audible, and, absorbed in the rhythm and cadence of conversation . . . . But the alien and the exotic also summon us
imperatively. We go forth to outlying regions of the alien with the prostheses our sciences have devised to enable us to see with the eyes of eagles and wasps, the sonar echolocation of bats and the sixth sense of fish, the magnetic or cosmic sense of migratory birds and insects, the sensitivity of single cells or single molecules in those bats and fish. (Lingis, 1998, pp. 43-44)

**Johnna:** I sing with the clarity of whale harmonics, where the audible and pronounceable evolves with each breathful bubble, inter-perceiving an inter-pretation of the invisible, the unknown, the alien. We find the alien to be that with which we are familiar, in some way a circular searching of inter-standing with all our actions that opens us up to the flesh, the phenomena, the world of chiasms and connective webbing. Enactive inquiry requires us to lower ourselves off our comfortable web out into the alien and sometimes chaotic web of life.

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60 I reconsider from a more ecological perspective by inter(reading)rogating David Abram's book, *The Spell of the Sensuous*. From an education class I partook in, I engaged in activities that used the bodymind. In particular, I remember one activity that was very powerful. We had to share a story of our connection to a place and then our partner would listen and perform a narrative using bodily gestures.

**The Performance**

*She comes in, closing the door after her. First she is some animal flapping wings and scratching the ground, pecking at bits here and there. Next she puts on her rubber boots and runs around chasing what appears to be a chicken until she gets hold of one and carries it back to an area in the barn yard. She appears to have the chicken in one hand and some tool she has picked up in her other. Then we see her whack the chicken.*

I feel as if I am back on the farm, where I grew up, when I saw Dad chop the chicken's head off and throw it out into the farmyard. I would watch it running around with its head cut off, blood coating the ax, blades of grass and the sides of the red
Brent Hocking and Warren Linds: Why is enactive inquiry important for education?

Johnna: First, it enlightens our perceptions of how to carry out research where we can focus on unrealized possibilities, or worldviews which are impassioned, alien and fraught with inter-standing this connective webbing. I hope that through a more enactive, embodied approach to research and teaching, we can interrogate our own practices, relational aspects, connections with nature and use the body in the classroom. Secondly, how we experience the world, whether through the classroom or our adventures in the natural world, evokes an ecology of experience as a living interaction unveiling our stories of these experiences as part of an emergent, freefall pedagogy. Teaching/learning/researching are intertwined in the flesh of experience, an inter-standing of inquiry that unfolds through en(act)ion.

A world that unfolds through the research process as conversation, as inter-view, as interpretation, as phenomena of experiencing, or as whale song embodies our inter(being)acting world. Dialogue, which co-emerges from reading theory or in conversation during research, enacts embodied inquiry. Whether storied, written, or voiced, imaging and questioning the unknown unveils a chiasm for embodying awareness while sitting with the snow, mountain climbing, or moving with the tumbling of river rapids.

barn. I close my eyes as the uniqueness of this experience stings all my senses and blurs my path back to reality.

This narrative activity is an example of “performative inquiry,” (Fels, 1999) where the body enacts a story with such vividness that we are there in the world as it unfolds before us. Research methodology is as such, the unfolding of a world, an en(act)ive inquiry.

61 I engaged in many conversations (over Chinese dinners) with Brent Hocking and Warren Linds through our interaction as co-organizers for a conference, BodyMind: Holistic Explorations of Cognition, Action, and Interaction as well as our co-editing a book of the proceedings. Both are doctoral candidates at the University of British Columbia.
Enactive inquiry challenges perceptions, brings forth emergent living/being, encourages intuitive doing, and opens teaching/learning to an integration of bodies. Bodies of water or sensual mountainous landscapes all embody experiencing as becoming or evolving, illusionary, yet touchable only as we step, breathe, and enact it out of the very experience from which it arises.
Camp #3—24,000 Feet

All this snow, uniquely patterned, chaotically coming down around to conceal, yet embodying the hidden world we enact. I crush each pile of snow under footsteps where snow mounds over the landscape. I see from the top of mountains the snow covered peaks and the raw scrapings left from the glacial retreat to the waters of the land. The forces are great, life and death interplay in the implicit way I move on the mountain top. I think about the descent and my need to allow gravity to take me back to the place where I started. Not a fixed spot but a space where passion ungrounds my every fiber and daily living breathes life into our inter-actions.

We need to sleep an extra night here at Camp#3 (24,000 feet) to maximize our acclimatization before we head back to Base Camp to rest and make final preparations for the summit bid. This enactive inquiry probes into the flesh or experiencing where perception is intertwined with worldviews and theories that come into being through shared dialogue and living interaction. How we come to interpret experiencing through reading and re-reading of theorists, or the experiencing of each step above 20,000 feet, is a slow process toward embodying perceptual clarity.
We try to hike up a couple of hours before heading down to recover, reconsider, and re-experience the journey we have just embodied on the way up the climb above Camp #3. The push for the summit will test our limits. Our preparation, thus far, will predict whether we can continue up above into the “death zone” (26,000 feet), a place where the body can’t digest food properly and each body deals with the fight to bring breath or oxygen in for all our cells (flesh) so we can continue our slow slog up the mountain. The mountain has so far provided us with a glimpse into what we must endure or struggle through to envision the possibilities of unknown vistas.
You cannot stay on the summit forever.
You have to come down again.

So why bother in the first place?

Just this:

What is above knows what is below,
but what is below does not know what is above.

One climbs, one sees; one descends
one sees no longer.

But one has seen.

There is an act of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up.

What one can no longer see,
One can at least still know.

Rene Davimal

(Expedition Annual, Term 1, 1998-99)
I have always been a seeking soul, driven by some uncontrollable urge to challenge the parameters of my small world. As a young girl I drove my parents crazy—questioning norms, social conformity, gender roles, destiny itself. As I grew to adulthood, I suffered a lot of resistance because of my way of being, doubtless compounded by the fact that I was a woman. There were many times when I was told I couldn’t, or shouldn’t, do something because I was a woman. I did it anyway. I’ve never felt I had a choice—it is just who I am. . . . The intense inner drive and personal discipline required to take on this mountain [Everest] is a part of the experience, but so is the connection with other climbers. . . . When I come back from a climb I feel renewed—a better human being, stronger and more capable of living on life’s unpredictable terms and conditions. . . . My belief is that life is meant to be lived fully, explored twenty-four hours a day. You can’t wait till some other time to fulfill your innermost aspirations. You must pursue your goal and have the courage to persevere, even in the face of failure. . . . For if you never test your limits, how will you know what they are? (pp. xiii-xvi)

Lene Gammelgaard,62 accepts the ultimate challenge in her pursuit to summit Everest. She sees this as not only struggling toward a goal, but striving to reach her full potential, living in the flow of life. While engaging with phenomena, I experience the unfolding world not as an event but as a turning point. The actual point of turning is never determined, as it is

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62 Lene Gammelgaard is the first Danish woman to summit Everest in 1996 with the Mountain Madness Expedition team.
a mixing of experiences, phenomena, and a re-experiencing brought about through heightened perceptual awareness.

**Storing Experiencing Through Journal Writing**

Many people remember natural disasters or times when emotions are heightened. Experiences of pleasure or intensity while intertwining with environmental phenomena are embodied experientially. These experiences are relayed in stories as a way to “testify to the potential for experiencing the world in profound and dramatic ways” which may be absent in daily living (Neumann, 1992, p. 189). The telling of experiences, without clear beginnings or endings, are often vividly remembered as engaging with perceptually clear and unclear phenomena. We try to tell the story in units of action and interaction using descriptive words. I make this attempt with the telling of my tumbling experience in the river rapids.

What is experiencing if not the relational space---the ecotone between the person and place. By ecotones I am referring to a rich environment much like the intertidal zone of the ocean where ecosystems meet---a place that constantly changes to the rhythmic ebb and flow of the tide. I experience the ecotones or inter-actional zones connecting with the foreign in my journal writing.

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63 Mark Neumann examines how tourists made meaning of their experiences in the Grand Canyon region of northern Arizona.

64 Ecotone --- [Greek *tonos* tension] a transition area between two adjacent ecological communities (*Merriam-Webster's new collegiate dictionary*, 1976, p. 360). In a conversation I had with Philip Booth, he says: “One interesting reference is in the Permaculture Designers Manual (Mollison, 1988: 77) which explains how the edge or interface of ecosystems is usually more productive... I am only claiming to be the 1st Ph.D. to have applied ecotones to paradigms” (Booth, personal communication via email, January 23, 1998). I see the space of ecotone as a chiasm of abounding interactions or the site of tension for the phenomena of experiencing.
December 1st, 1998

Does foreignness bring about silence or could it be the scary fearful place of the unknown, the possible, the chaotic, the unordered, the repositioning or the reinterpreting, the reperceiving, the bringing forth of the invisible to life through the stories of relational experiencing...?

Programs which dwell outside the space of traditional schooling may bring about the unconventional, the chaotic, the place of "discovering" the potential with the world of placed definites. How we choose to be, interact, act and perform is the journey, the labyrinth’s path, the way of becoming which seeks not to be a fixed icon on a screen, but a moving transforming hypertext that enacts and embodies one’s living (experiencing).

It is those spaces between what one can put into language to relate or connect to the experience, and yet it is all those ‘things’ left unsaid, but performed, moment by moment, with and within the units of space, the units of action and interaction... Although we flow in linear text, we embody the reading, the acting, the performing of our own experiencing the world and the words or lack of words to engage and enact the relational changing of becoming.

So what is my research really about if not to explore the possibilities, challenge the reader to look for the invisible, provide a site or safe space where the unheard, untouched, unseen is expressed in ways that open the mind and body to the chaotic babble of our own interactions and relational, becoming—where sites of possibility arise?-----Sites of possibility are where the foreign and uncomfortable open our eyes; where the risk and the unfathomable transform our being; and where the interactions with the environment and each other bring about the living tensions, the inquiry and questioning of our holistic
existence. An existence that is not about unconnecting but disrupting a flow of energy, a flow of tradition throughout that opens us to the chiasms, the deep crevasses and breathtaking views to “see” differently while climbing to the tops of mountains, reconnecting to the living earth.

**Human Potential—Risking Peak Experience**

The phenomena of experiencing, as such, can be the goal and process of climbing Everest or an educational encounter with a shared goal and adventure. Here individuals push through a heightened experience and perceive a heightened awareness as they move beyond the fear of failure.

The fear of failure can be thought of as the fear of knowledge, of how we will deal with a situation, or the fear of some weakness or inadequacy which may keep us from experiencing our highest potentials as creative human beings (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 71). As children, we are “open to experience,” spontaneous, expressive and attracted to the unknown and mysterious, seeing it for the first time (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 154). The courage or boldness to risk the unknown becomes contagious, like a fire feeding on dry wood burning with satisfaction. People try to describe these essentially ineffable experiences hidden in the perceiving and fluctuating flow of attention and integrated action.

Turning points have become my way of explaining the emergence or perspective clarity for these particular educational experiences. Maslow (1968/1999), a psychologist, refers to this as “peak experience,” or a “means-experience” where peak arousal is either wildly excited or blissfully calm. He refers to this arousal as not a final experience, but as a peak experience. I am using the term turning point to explain not one particular point in time but the process of struggle leading up to a time of accomplishment, such as reaching the top
of a ridge during a back packing trip. When students perceive the top as an unreachable goal, they can set small goals to walk fifteen steps or to the next rock. They can break their journey down into attainable goals based on what they believe are their limits at that moment. As students actually reach the top of a climb, some experience a heightened alertness. Much like my experience of the cave in Acadia National Park, they see the natural world with fresh clarity and vivid sensualness.

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65 The Cave

We hike up to a cave in the rocks formed years ago when the ocean was at this height, some 700 feet higher. None of us have a flashlight, so we go by the daylight shining in the cave and all kneel down to peer in. As far in as we can see looks safe, but how deep does the cave go? I decide to go first, bending down on crouched knees to walk in slowly. I take off my sunglasses. Upon bending down, my heart races as I realize I may not be able to move out fast enough should some animal living within the cave decide to come out. I start in, trying to calm my breathing. As I do so, others come right behind me, blocking the light and causing my heart to pound in my chest.

We eventually emerge into the first room, the cave cool and dripping from the cavern's breathing, trying to leave the entrance to shed light farther into the cave. John throws some rocks to determine how deep the next section is. It sounds like it goes on past the next room we can barely see into. Although curious, I am still scared. John starts to go in and I decide to follow. As my body closes off his light, his body tenses, not moving. We stare into the darkness. I imagine a soft, furry body lying against one wall--a wolf or coyote. We shriek and leave the cave with heightened alertness! We feel comfortable outside in the rather warm air. There were really no signs of life inside, we decide. No bones, no spiders, even. We comfort ourselves with these assurances as our heart rates slowly go back to a normal rate.
Other students are consumed by the tears of accomplishment in pushing themselves to new perceivable limits; they undergo more of a struggle than a heightened arousal of beauty. After the emotional turbulence wears off, many students begin to see their reaching the summit as a turning point in their lives. They use pictographs, pictures, poetry and journal entries to express their integrated experience and the sheer beauty of 'the climb.' For them, each moment is lived vividly and interpreted through the intense struggle, or through the ability to help and encourage others, as part of the shared adventure. The turning point does have the intensity, but not always the joyous happenings of peak experiences that are effortless.

With no explicit path, I hike out into the fog, looking for cairns, hoping to stay on the trail that will lead me toward the vista, of completing research and inter-standing experiencing. I wander down an unfolding path, placing ideas into some comprehensible text. Although learning to embrace the unfamiliar, I fear only that my words will not matter. In the outdoors I move into the unknown with a sense of adventure and exploration, but the writing of words into some type of argument feels fragmented, not a flow of experience. This latest adventure reminds me of the students backpacking in Cathedral Provincial Park. If you have never experienced something before, you can conjure all these thoughts filling each moment with nervous tension, and second-guessing whether you can complete the task at hand. A fine balance exists between pushing limits and seeking supportive encouragement along the way to push the margins, a painful struggle to welcome freefall.

66 Cairns are placemarkers, often piles of rocks a foot to four feet high, marking a path or hiking trail above tree line. Cairns don’t seem necessary in clear weather but once the mountains are socked in with stormy or foggy weather, they have helped many a hiker find their way in the mountains.
What happens if you fail, if you can't handle backpacking for seven days out in the wilderness?

October 10, 1997

I awake today to a pounding headache. I roll out of bed—6 a.m.—maybe it will all go away with my workout today. My head screaming, the earphones pulsing, I begin the step sequence up and over the step as I follow the beginning of my aerobics routine. My whole body pulsates with thoughts and the incessant pounding of my temples. I breathe deeply, forgetting, remembering, and moving in the semi lit aerobics room. Images appear in the mirrors and through the windows of the next room. Who is that rhythmically tapping step and wooden floor? That is strange that there is only one person in that aerobics class. The image in the mirror works on form and breathing. The pain in my head, now threatening in the background, allows me to focus and push, push, just 7 more leg lifts, just seven more knee lifts, 5 more minutes of torture today. I c-a-n do it............

Thursday, October 1st, 1998—Ann’s Journal

Stress, stress, stress! Wow, I never knew how much work Dad actually puts into these trips. There are so many things to be constantly thinking about.

Food—will there be enough / too much?

-is it too heavy?

-is it the right sorts of nutrients?

Clothing—do I have enough warm clothes due to reductions from limited space?

Packing——can I do it!...

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67To begin to understand the experience of students’ experiences on their first seven-day hiking trip, I will interweave my journal entries from 1997 and the students’ journal entries from 1998.
What am I forgetting? If only I were psychic.

I am also (this seems really dumb) but I’m so scared of everyone making fun of my bag.

**Monday, December 8th, 1997**

> It’s Monday and I started out extremely tired. I wanted to go back to bed. I spent most of the morning reading email and then reading in the sun by the desk drinking decaf coffee.

> I called the vet early. 8:50 a.m. and made an appointment for the afternoon and decided I would spend the day working on Van Manen’s (1990) work. Instead I spent the afternoon dealing or coming to grips with putting Allagash [my kitty] to sleep and the possibility of her dying while they extracted fluid from her lungs.

> She rests now on the rug after an afternoon of torture and still purrs and wants to please. It is sad that she is only 8 months old. She was firing around the house only a week ago and is now lacking oxygen to jump up on the bed. She turned out to be such a sweetheart of a kitty and my writing buddy. . . . It makes it so difficult to concentrate. Allagash is truly a fighter. . . .

> I was thinking on the drive over to the vets the similarities and difference of phenomenology of human experience to the enactive approach. I decided on the “problems and possibilities” which could arise from this comparison. . . . I am still perplexed about Van Manen’s notion of lived experience as that which is not prescriptive nor postscriptive but description or an interpretation of experience which becomes----this is all quite enactive. He gets rid of objectifying human experience but still separates the mind, as intelligence, from the body---or does he since he does not negate action---or is action solely cognitive??

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[68] It is December and I am finally back at home in Maine, sorting through the literature for thinking about methodology.
Thursday, October 8th, 1998 (Ann)

I’m back!

Just reminiscing on my 7 day makes it sound even more fun than it was at the time.

Judy and Harry were our teachers and the others were as follows (in tent groups) . . .

Ahh! I don’t know where to begin . . . Well here’s the quick run down of events . .

• FRIDAY --- Bus ride---felt left out at the front with Heidi.

---get to camp---started to feel a little tension with Sally [tent partner].

• SATURDAY—First hike—I’m getting so $6#09u . . . because I couldn’t pack my pack

and Sally wouldn’t take hardly any group gear. She whined the entire way “can we stop,

slow down” etc.

---Boring day with branches branches and more branches. Camp was called Sir

Branchalot. I’m wondering why I’m in [this program]. I feel left out and I know I’m
gonna hate it (when will the seven days end) and Ellen feels the same way. Bean and

cheese burritos didn’t work at all; oh does that surprise you!

• SUNDAY—left Sir Branchalot early and hiked to the meadow just before our big climb

i.e. the hardest part of the trip. Climbing was $%*^! On the verge of crying everyone else

is having fun when we break before the hard part. Ted takes cliff bars and Susan took the

fly from my 70-lb pack. Oops, I forgot this morning, Sally made me cry. I can’t take it

anymore; I took down the entire tarp and tent. RRRgh.

The first half was horrible. I was balling my eyes out at the back with Julie and

Pete behind me being super nice and encouraging. Then they left and Harry [teacher]
came. He really lifted my spirits. He got me thinking positive which helped a ton and got me on to a 20 step then rest schedule. At the top I could see Judy’s [teacher] bright jacket and from then on the trip got better and better. Sally is moving slower then ever before so Judy and I do tarp and tent.

- **MONDAY---sleep in! 11:30 start for hike up past the falls and down the ridge by Glacier Lake. Day packs, Yippee! My favorite day! Judy taped my fingers and said she noticed the conflicts with Sally and me and said she did notice these things. Got to know Ted that night.

- **TUESDAY---Day hike to Smokey the Bear and Grimface. I found out a lot that Kara and I have in common i.e. we’re nervous wrecks. At night, had minute mysteries [a rash]. I talked to Judy. Really opened up. Made good friends with everyone……Didn’t want to go home. I am in the best mood.

- **WEDNESDAY---Woke up at 7 am left at 8:15 am for 10 km down hill and found the other group after 3 km. Then woke up at 4:30 am and left at 8 am (slow much!) I am very uncomfortable. My pack is very badly packed (by Harry). Bert cut off his finger [sliced it with a knife deep enough to need stitches] at lunch and it wouldn’t stop bleeding. We regrettably camped beside the other group and they got caught streaking us and almost missed their four-day. Campfire and wrote notes to each other. A bunch of us didn’t want to ruin Judy’s trip, one of her favorites, so we quietly all hung out in Heidi’s tent.

- **THURSDAY---We loaded the bus and drove home listening to “American Pie” and the rest of my family music tape. I sat at the back with Heidi and practically cried I was so
sad to be going home. I sat also with Ayla and Susan and got lots of messages from the
“pro” (Heidi).

• TRIP WRAP UP:

If I could give one piece of advice to future [students] . . . “Enjoy it while it’s
there” I wish it wasn’t over and I also wish the same people were on my four day because
of the Bond.

Thursday, December 11th, 1997

As Allagash struggles for each breath hanging onto life, I struggle to intertwine the
words for a cohesive argument to methodology for my comp [a paper]. As each day passes, I
can’t decide what to do or how to approach the day’s agenda of reading and writing. It’s
almost not fun and painful. I wonder how to continue on---how will I survive this part of
earning and keeping up a Ph.D. degree. Does it get better when you are writing about your
own research? Will Allagash’s breathing ease or is my decision to end her life of pain and
struggle the answer? Is there really an answer? She seems so content to sleep on the bath
mat this morning so I think I will let her be.

I need to struggle with the beginning paragraphs and try to figure out what I am
trying to say or argue. Is it an argument or a search to figure out the influence of my
theoretical perspective on the process of research methods? I am amazed at how much work
this all takes, and I feel shut down on the sidelines or margins—unable to get involved in the
text. Where am I in the text? . . . Maybe it is time to image myself as the bricoleur in this
project and to use what is handy to make sense of this part of the process for my research.
October 11th, 1998 (Vicky)

It was horrible. But I managed, on the third day we rose 2000 feet in 3 hours. I died at the top of the ridge. I cried and cried. I felt so alone.

Friday, December 12th, 1997

Tears don’t seem to help the pain and anguish. . . . Her constant meows remind me of the intense pain. She just can’t get in any breaths and she wants to lie down and sleep so badly. I will warm up the truck and take her out. I should go do that now as she is struggling for each breath. What is it about being able to breathe in my life?

It is so difficult to watch one I love die of this horrible illness. I “should” have brought her in yesterday, but why didn’t I? Was it my own selfish reasons or did we really believe she would miraculously recover. I know I did at the beginning of the week. The kitty left her body early last week and she is using every last ounce of strength to breathe.

April 4th, 1996—(Gammelgaard, 1999)

Lots of things you train for, prepare yourself for, but you cannot control how your body is going to react when its oxygen intake is reduced. . . . The one who chooses to live a socially correct but superficial life, ending up a shadow of himself; versus the outsider who sinks deeply, explores all levels of life, but reaches the genuine goal in the end (pp. 68, 65).

October 8th, 1998 (Ann)

My Turn Around Point in the Program.

I truly believe this is where it all happened. The night before I had doubts about this year and even sitting at this very spot, I would be tempted to say the same thing but when I got to the top of the hill, when I had accomplished both the most physical and mental challenge I had ever tried, I knew something major was going to happen. From that moment I
set foot at the top I have never been the same person! I have learned to open up and to communicate better. To interact and mingle and mostly I have learned to love the opportunities I am given in life and the people I get to explore these opportunities with.

**Summer 1995—(Gammelgaard, 1999)**

[Lene writes in her journal shortly after Scott Fischer asks her if she wants to climb Everest in the Spring of 1996.]

It is possible for us to celebrate life and transform the invisible into the visible. To experience that our existence is a whole. This is how life can be perceived by the creative human being. Because when we reach the point where we stop trying to control reality, we become capable of accepting, welcoming, what is offered us. (p. 10)

**Thursday, October 15th, 1998—Jude**

**Sitting on the Top of the World**

There I was, sitting on top of the world speechless, teary eyed in awe. Never had I seen, touched, smelt and felt such a beautiful thing. This “warm love-and it’s ever present, everywhere.” That climb was my stairway to heaven.

Wind Blowing
Heart Beating
Sitting on the top of the world.
Ridges, rocks, snow.
Everything you need on your back.
Every step, a step closer
This feeling of achievement words cannot express.
Crying
Utopia

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69 We might follow the cairns laid down before us, instead of creating new ones or possibly destroying the vulnerable plant life above tree line. With each footstep, we change as a collective individual/system, continuing our journey yet choosing the cairns of life with a whole new perspective.

70 Jude shares a picture of her view and a poem she wrote on the top in her journal entry of Sitting on the Top of the World.
February 13th, 1999

Sometimes I feel like I am floating above and flowing with the movements of the earth, the sky as I climb to the summit. It is that feeling that so many experience after climbing, struggling step by step to see the vista, the view from the tops of mountains, the top of the world. Here we fly, we see, we tremble with the beauty that words can not express. My heart beats with the rhythmic breathing and all else is lost. I think of nothing but the vastness of the indescribable. The mountains that stretch up for me to catch their glimpsing back at me. Is there comfort and support here? Yes but is this the comfort that we talk about when we are saying we climb to find ourselves, maybe this is to reconnect to that vastness, which education and the human world work so hard to separate us from. I feel absolutely content, protected as if new born in the arms of the clouds yet standing on the slowly moving ground of the revolving earth.

I am thinking about Vicky and the way she cried at the top of the climb. What was she saying---the connections of support on the way up, the new setting of goals, the second guessing of whether she could do this, then accomplishing it with heavy pack and all, the tears that streamed down her face from the years of not believing in her own strength, and knowing that she could do it without any trouble. Why does she not believe in herself, that she can do anything she puts her mind to? Somehow the clarity of it being done in front of her peers makes it real and scary at the same time, facing the fear of failure. The program gave her the support the inner drive to push, to find, to go beyond what she knows, to see another her, another self that she doesn't believe in. She is caught in the paradigms of how society sees her, how she grows to know, the constant patterns of self-talk to believe, and how strong and vibrant she can be. Her voice is lost in the emotion, tears of accomplishment,
and intense connecting with the beauty of the ridge top. All the constant chatter in her head is quiet for once. How can she do this more? How can she touch and embody her climbing process instead of what society breeds in the human experience?

Am I trying to figure out what gave me the strength so I may use this in education and teaching to help others push and reach their potentials of becoming? I don’t want to teach my students to merely conform or fit to the everyday of society. I want them to search and become brilliant scientists or compassionate human beings that live life in happiness. What is happiness, but the bliss of experience and feeling every moment, the caress of bird feathers across one’s face, quieting the noise that we make around us in the city. Living so that we may embody and connect to all the (animate and inanimate) world. We can experience the wind in our feathers as we fly, fly high, floating in the currents above mountains and landing again in the arms of the earth striving to reach full potential.

November 24, 1999

I often find myself daydreaming of climbing and the profound turning points I found in the mountains. Acclimatization is so important. I was climbing with friends in a party of three. We decided to climb Mont Blanc in Chamonix, France and then Monte Rosa in Zermatt, Switzerland, before we made our final journey to the Caucasus Range in Russia to climb Mount Elbrus. It is hard to believe that I actually summited two of the highest summits in the world. I still have this dream of pursuing Denali (Mount McKinley) in North America.

I learned in our travels up to the huts toward the summit of Mont Blanc, that rest, water and food are essential to keep the body functioning. Also going to high too fast may not give the body enough time to adjust and the red blood cells a chance to bring the needed oxygen to all the body and the brain. We decided to climb up to the second hut before having
dinner, a mere hike up Mt. Katadin in Maine (5,267 feet). Somehow my two male friends ended up ahead and I was moving slowly up balancing my crampons on rocks using my hands and wondering why we weren’t roped up. I finally stopped to get out my headlamp, jacket and luckily found a candybar in the top of my pack. This needed food spurred me on but my head was pounding fiercely. I moved up and was never so grateful to see the hut. I lay on the floor while we boiled water. I had to drink copious amounts of water before going to bed. Gene, another member of our party also had a severe headache and was the one we had to watch out for high altitude sickness. Luckily we got stormed in and this allowed my body to recover for another day at this new altitude before reaching the highest summit in the Alps (15,771 feet) on Mont Blanc. Gene didn’t make it to the summit but his time up high on the mountain made his next climb up Monte Rosa easy as his body was in top shape for this ascent to 15,203 feet.

We were staying at the Priut hut, some 13,800 feet in the Caucasus mountain range. The views even from here were magnificent as you could see Ushba, Schelda, and many more mountains, the names of which I couldn’t pronounce. I have since learned that the Priut has burned down and its tattered remains are the mark of Base Camp for the summit attempt on Mount Elbrus. The climbing federation wouldn’t allow us to tent up higher on the mountain so we had to gain close to 5,000 feet in altitude again like on Mont Blanc. Was my body ready this time?

We arose at the normal 2 a.m. to consume hot drink and food and put on all our clothes and equipment. With crampons, ice ax and Gore-Tex wind protection, I walk out into the star lit night to crunch up through the snow toward the summit of Elbrus. This journey would take 10-12 hours to complete and hopefully no storms would hinder our progress. The
hike up was not technically difficult but as we moved higher, my body felt like it was moving in slow motion. We got what appeared to be near the summit and had to front point up this steep wall of snow. I moved each foot up, breathing in and out about 3 times before I could move the next foot but never really stopping. I was in slow motion and this camera around my neck felt like a twenty-pound weight. Finally I crested this wall to see a long walk and no summit. I concentrated on one foot at a time, moving without stopping. When I could see people about a thousand yards ahead of me, I begin to ask—Is this the summit? No it couldn't be. I can't be there yet. In fact, the views from the top of Elbrus were a relief, unfamiliar, and a trembling beauty of snow covered peaks that stretched out forever. Wow!!! Had I really stepped foot on one of the highest mountains in the world?

Will I ever be the same? That one moment from this high vantage point on the earth is one of many exhilarating moments in my life. I was only twenty-five, yet had experienced so many wonders. I had many experiences with animals in my days growing up on a 300-acre farm and the wonderful encounters with the natural world, were precious especially the wild animals that flourished in the woodland landscape.

Having spent most of my young days communicating with the natural world, words were ineffable. I suppose I communicated with quiet body gestures and smiles as with my little friend the finch back at Base Camp in Vancouver. These encounters require us to stop

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Visitors From Nature

The other day, a huge bumblebee with a bright orange abdomen came flying in and out of my closet, and the bathroom and began buzzing around my naked ankles. The bee soon found the window again and I opened it wide to allow it back outside.
or be mindful, so we may fully breathe in our experiencing with the world. Communication of peak experiences or turning points, when expressed, were often “poetic, mythical and rhapsodic, as if this were the natural kind of language to express such states of being” (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 122).

Yesterday, a bird perched right outside my window looking in at me for a bit before flying off to its calling mate. I was playing music loudly. Could she hear it from her perch? Is this what attracted her? Now I sit in front of my computer with heart beating. I assume it was my little friend of yesterday, a house finch with red head and neck, coming in my other window and proceeding to hop from plant to plant while calling its partner to come in and check things out. She likes the plant sitting atop the light fixture on the wall.

Then she tries to fly out of my room. I wonder if she will remember her entrance or perceive the window as open air. Dizzy from hitting the window and all in a fluster about where to go, she finally perches up on a ledge of the window frame, calling her friend. I smoothly walk over and move a hanging plant and open the window wide again.

With a burst of energy she starts smashing into the window again. Ping, ping. We can hear all the noises from the outside world and her mate flying outside the window. This time she ends up on the window ledge just inches from the opening. I watch as she seems stunned at first. I don’t dare move from my seat—wanting to remain quiet while she rests. We look at each other for quite some time, she blinking her eyes, confused. I keep silently urging her to listen to the sounds, outside the window. She hops up onto the window bottom and flies out to a white birch tree. She stays there for a long time; I suppose recovering from her wildly beating heart, the stunned dizziness of pounding into a window and the panic of trying to reach her mate. I wanted to freeze my memory and the intense passion in my own wildly beating heart, to bring back those blinking eyes and little chirps of energy.
Where Education Comes Alive---Sensual Landscapes

What does this experiencing of a turning point mean? It means that I will never quite be the same again. I know that I am on this journey, to where, I don’t know, but the journey into a way of being with the world that is passionate, enlivened, refreshed, energized, and revitalized. I travel toward a way of being that brings the feelings from the pit of your stomach and tingles out through your skin, where each cell feels alive and not some decaying, hanging epidermis. I suppose I feel this same aliveness when visiting the natural world, listening to the vibrant buzzing activity of animals going about their living interactions. How do we maintain the aliveness in teaching and being where we teach and learn passionately, where education comes alive? An education might be where the darkening clouds pass just like the storms to revitalize and soothe the sensual landscape.

The frogs and peepers grow louder like poetry to my ears, making me laugh, a wonderful chorus. The cattails stand out in the full moon, tranquilizing me. I try to breathe in my experiencing of the world moment by moment.

Whether experiencing peepers, moonlit cattails, peeping finches, or vertiginous mountain tops, we all must journey along the unknown to find out what we are capable of, what we know deep inside emerges into being, otherwise accomplishment is nothing but an illusion (Gammelgaard, 1999, p. 41). I seek support from my visitors from nature. My adventurous travels to cavernous unknowns and the mystical call of my footsteps forward to explore the potential of my own bodily sensations, provide the slow turning to living life fully. It is not a turning point in time but the storying of a place that allows me to re-experience shifting phenomena esthetically.
Camp #4---26,000 Feet

We have been following this journey up the mountain to Camp #4. I wonder who will make it to the summit? It feels like we are working so hard, that maybe the mountain is summitless, biding us on this journey to no where. We are now above 24,000 feet and we will be on oxygen tomorrow. How far can we push our human bodies to experience these mountainous bodies? Is there a turning point to death? We are now entering the turning point of the climb where we have to choose whether to use oxygen and cylinders or to go without oxygen. I will let you decide depending on how your body has acclimatized so far. I am choosing to go without oxygen, to focus on my breathing and embodied respect of what we might consider authentic experience with the experiential world. I am willing to take the risk so that I may bring forth mountains of perceptual possibility that are not hindered by oxygen masks and equipment.

What educational choices/actions help open us to experiencing turning points? The turning point emerges while breathing in unascertainable mountain vistas yet following the cairns set down in a journey of experiencing. One step at a time...
Camp #5

Summitless Mountains

In climbing summits of possibility
   I inter-stand relational connections with the conscious world

becoming the mountain

Visualizing the indescribable,

I see new worldviews

"Summiting Elbrus,

manifesting footsteps in slow motion

thinking in flashes,

I breathe thin air,

Meditating embodied actions

transforming femaleness

Living death yet

I feel alive

Risking life,

I push to the summit of limitless possibility

Climbing becomes a way to make visible the invisible

As my body sails with gravity traversing the void

Bottomless moving ice limits choices

While I feel the harsh gentle sneakiness of cold

85
seeking unrecoverable sleep 
through labored breaths 
My head screams 
click on rock 
Cramponed feet crunch snow, 

Darkness lightens the starry 2am skies 
Cold metal axes feel painful joy 

I feel Everest’s breath on my cheek 
visualizing spirits 
Reflecting on rich potentials 

In pushing heaviness to the unfathomable 
Intensity knows no feeling 

reaching for the sky. 
voices encourage, 
As we flow up the mountain, 
The rope connects body to body 

Why climb? 
Mountains of possibility 
Bring forth limitless worlds, 
worlds of sharing, 
worlds of perceptive insignificance.
POETIC PROSPECT: CHOOSING THE PATH OF EMBODIED RESPECT

A human being is part of what we call the universe, a part limited in time and space. [They] experience [themselves], [their] thoughts and feelings, as something separated from the rest---a kind of optical illusion of [their] consciousness. This illusion is a person for us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this person by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living beings and all of nature.

Albert Einstein (Alli’s Journal, September 27, 1998)

Bodies, whether of flesh, water or land, exist as experiential networks. The intertwining of humans / environment brings forth a capacity of actions, an inter-connecting of sentient networks arising as embodied respect.

As if while acting,

I see the euphoric image.

A white tipped mountain against the shifting sky

Blue with the wisps of white wind

Calling my name.

I focus, mind empty on the rhythmic breathing

and step, crunch, step of

an illusion of ground moving beneath my feet.

I summit

Embody-ing respect with

the unfolding, intuiting world.

While embodying the experiential world, with/in the system of interactions, natural connections permeate human actions. Expression of these actions are not through a Self, but
body forth with the enacting world.

Empty of Self—Full of Experience or Intuitive Doing

Within the outdoor education literature, I read about self-esteem, self-confidence, or self-efficacy, like we are trying to grasp a self. My work goes beyond this grasping of a self to an embodied awareness through experiencing the outdoors, away from the cultural ways of being a ‘self.’ Rather, we are empty of self, yet full of experiencing. In other words, I take on an approach of enactive inquiry that is not grounded in a world (a self) but more an unfolding world of experiential being. Being is not as body only but an embodiment of actions which are open minded/ended, hence we envelop an intuitive doing. By intuitive, I am referring to what is embodied yet not in language. As (Petitmengin-Peugeot, 1999)\(^72\) asserts:

Intuition does correspond to an experience, that is, a set of interior gestures which involve the entire being. . . . it is possible to encourage its appearing . . . It consists of emptying out, in giving up our habits of representation, of categorization, and of abstraction. This casting off enables us to find spontaneity, the real immediacy of our relation to the world. For, astonishingly, our most immediate, most intimate experience is also the most inaccessible for us. A long detour is necessary before we receive awareness of it. (pp. 76-77)

The languaging of intuitive doing is an enacting through words of consciousness that requires a form of reflection with ties to experiencing and re-experiencing. Intuitive doing is the experiencing, where acting, perceiving, and becoming intertwine to bring forth integrated happenings (we didn’t know of before or pre-determine). Integrative happenings, intuitive doings, and embodied acting are all part of the phenomena of experiencing that emerges from

\(^72\) Petitmengin-Peugeot was also a student of Francisco Varela.
inter-relating systems or bodies of the world. If my experiencing is not located in a Self, then where might we look to better inter-stand the phenomena of experiencing?

I am not seeking a reference point to ground experiencing. I am simply using words to bring about an inter-standing of the arising world, not as separate, but as an emergent network of inter-actions. If there is no self, no other, then experience happens not in a body or in a world, but unfolds or emerges in the relational coupling of animate and inanimate bodies or systems. We are empty of "self" and saturated with the experiential flow of connections amongst systems or sentient networks that integrate the phenomena of experiencing (streaming with inter-twined becoming, acting, and perceiving).

Em—Body—ment: A Coupling of Intention, Actualization & Passion

My notion of embodied actions and intuitive choice emerges out of an inter-relating world of possibility, inclusive of interaction, action, and enaction (embodied actions of groundlessness and a history of coupling) (Varela et al., 1991). Embody means to give a body to (a spirit) or to make perceptible (Merriam-Webster's new collegiate dictionary, 1976, p 371). Quintessentially, what poses as the body?

The body is our general medium for having a world. Sometimes it is restricted to the actions necessary for the conservation of life, and accordingly it posits around us a biological world; at other times, elaborating upon these primary actions and moving from their literal to a figurative meaning, it manifests through them a core of new significance: this is true of motor habits such as dancing [climbing]. Sometimes, finally, the meaning aimed at cannot be achieved by the body's natural means; it must then build itself an instrument and it projects thereby around itself a cultural world. . . .
In it we learn to know that union of essence and existence . . . (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, pp. 146-147)

In our body/world, perceptions intermingle with body systems, emerging as embodied capacities for action or compassion (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1999). Embodiment, as such, emerges through our capacity to climb mountains, through gaining the physical and cultural skills which Merleau-Ponty refers to as “intentional arc” and “maximum grip.” While intentional arc brings unity to cognitive, sensing and acting bodies, maximum grip brings clarity to our embodied motivation. Intentional arc takes into account the coupling of body/world/experience that comes through embodied actions and skills. Maximum grip is referred to as the choice or the way the body brings this embodiment into flow. As in climbing or most outdoor activities, we learn basic skills, moving through stages of novice, advanced beginner, competent, proficient and expert where (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1999) one can distinguish actions which meld with the situation intuitively. As the climber moves through the skill stages, a desire or motivation is embodied not as a concrete goal but as a “self actualization” (Maslow, 1968/1999).

Self-actualization is defined as ongoing actualization of potentials, capacities and talents . . . as a fuller knowledge of . . . as an unceasing trend toward unity, integration or synergy. (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 31)

It is this coupling of intention, motivation, and actualization that embodies a capacity for action.

It is this embodied way of knowing that guides actions or choices to bring forth the

73 I use Dreyfus (1999) for interpreting Merleau-Ponty’s notion of intentional arc. See this work for a better understanding of intentional arc on acquiring the skills of playing chess or driving a car.
capacity for interactions of the unknown. If we remain open minded, open to views, interactions, intuitive choices, then doing and knowing emerge through the flow of actions.

One does not need a goal or intention to act. One’s body is simply solicited by the situation to get into equilibrium with it. (Dreyfus & Dreyfus, 1999, p. 111)

A goal, as such, might be a choice of actions, but in reality, when following the positive energy of actions, one flows to new and unfamiliar bodily ways of attunement. For example, when climbing on a glacier of moving rock, the bodily actions become attune with the moving scree, as rock and body dance through each step. A goal becomes more than just climbing a mountain, but a continuation of this entranced foci of enacting. The positive energy or attitude of foci is contagious, an enacting of respect for bodies of interaction including the natural world. The universal world of contagious passion is best indicated by De Angelis (1998, p. 85):

No matter who you are, no matter how you spend your time, each day you have dozens of opportunities to make a difference in the lives of the people around you whom you know, as well as the people you don’t know.

How? By allowing your natural passion for life to express itself through your words, your eyes, your actions and even through the silent language of the heart.

Your passion acts like an invitation to others, beckoning their own passion to come forth.
We not only listen to the world of other humans, but we incorporate an open attitude of
listening (to all bodily views). We are open to experiential happenings and reflective of how

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Being open to experiential happenings requires a mindful inquiry as my June 2, 1999
journal entry portrays.

**June 2, 1999**

The lake is serene this late morning. With the wind down and the water
absolutely calm you can hear for miles, cars, chainsaws and planes. But the call of
the loon is unmistakably the most vibrant sound rippling across the water. It is quiet
again as the loon dives for food leaving a circle of ripples and bubbles in its path.

The ants are all marching in file from somewhere up onto the porch, along
the railing, up the post, along the rafter and down the string to the red hummingbird
feeder. These ants seem to be quite talented in that they are able to retrieve sugar
from the seams of the bottom section of the feeder and avoid the inevitable
drowning if they meander down the hole where the hummingbird sticks its long
beak.

The rapid hum of wings beating give the buzz almost like a large bumblebee.
But when another bird comes to push this one away, they race with lightning speed
and the humm of the motor intensifies. I sit back hoping I am out of the path of the
humming animals as they slice through the air pointed beak leading the way. I can
remember when one visited up close last year while I was reading on the dock. I had
my book held a foot from my face while the humming beast pecked at the yellow
sun drawn on the cover of the book. As I took the book away, fear filled my every
muscle as I was facing this huge bee with a long beak. I always wonder if the bird
can sense its path without crashing into me as the damage from that beak would be
penetrating and lethal.

The hummingbird is docile and can seem to stop with the blink of an eye.
They don't seem to like the bang of computer keys yet—an unfamiliar sound out in
this environment. I hear the chopping of wood and that high familiar call of the
pileated woodpecker out feeding away on some chosen tree.
a positive attitude unveils the possibilities for an embodied respect for the animate and inanimate.

Finally, after years of confusion,
I know what I need.

Happiness and positivity can see me through all the hurdles of this bumpy ride.

For however tall the mountain, or however cold the snow, if I believe I can make it, nothing will stop me.

When I no longer have to conquer, just experience, I know I am at home in this wilderness.

(Holly’s Journal, December 14 - 15, 1998)

While experiencing our connection to humans on journeys such as mountain climbing or sea kayaking, we also experience natural connections. While most teenagers tend to be mindful of their social, cultural ways of behaving, some focus on the connections and coupling with the natural world.

Connecting With the Natural World Through Poetic Perceptions

Walking on algae coated rocks, my boots turn into roller skates. As I carefully totter, slipping and sliding across the rock ledges exposed from the escaping tide, I finally hit the soft comfort of sand stabilizing my feet. My long cajoule protects my entire body from the

The honking of Canada Geese is coming across the water as they must have their little ones in tow by now. The sun is trying to shine through the clouds and haze of a hot summer day. The familiar buzz of a mosquito trying to find flesh to pierce catches my ears.
wetness of the day. A few of us, including Holly⁷⁵ are out exploring the beaches and tide pools next to our campsite. The sea life on the West Coast is growing before my eyes, huge in size compared to the East Coast, with which I am familiar. I peer into this little pocket of water on one of the rock ledges and there are the most elegant tube worms about 3 inches long waving up at me. We find sea sponges, crisp purple sea urchins, and sea stars firmly attached in various patterns all over the rocks at the lowest edge of the tide line. Holly is writing poetry with a stick in the sand near the water’s edge.

**Dawn of a new era**

*Because I could not stop for Death,*

*he kindly stopped for me.*

[By Emily Dickinson]

*All I can do*

*is promise never to forget you,*

*the bright little star.*

Holly’s expressions are carried out with the rising tide slowly nibbling at her neatly carved words in the sand.

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⁷⁵ I focus on Holly, rather than other students, for two reasons. Holly spends a lot of her time apart from the bonding community. We might think she is not gaining much from the program, however Holly spends most of her time interacting with the natural world around her. Holly loves to share her stories and feels more comfortable talking to adults than her own peers. I share only what she feels comfortable with me using in the dissertation.
Holly connects her struggles and growth to the natural world. She writes in her journal, October 3, 1998, as part of her assignment to compare herself with nature:

Before [the program] I was like a piece of driftwood, in one place until something moved me, full of water, but still strong inside. Now I am like the tides, strong but unsure of my power, sometimes calm but often lashing out and breaking down uncontrollably. In the future I hope to be like a Douglas Fir tree; strong, proud content, beautiful, and not afraid to stand on my own.

Holly enjoys these comparisons. She likens herself to water that she describes as powerful in that it can kill, maim, but is also beautiful. Similarly, water mixes around everywhere and is powerful without knowing it. She looks at the trees as living a long time but always in impending danger; a notion of herself as fragile even though she may look strong. As she herself is trying to do on her first trip, she views the sea creatures as always striving to survive. Her experience of writing poetry is embodied in the shape of characters in the sand and she lets the water carry out her words. Holly draws parallels between her experiences in nature with other animate and inanimate experiencing forms, a perceptual knowing that evolves through her outdoor interactions.

As Gary Fine (1992) confirms, our being in nature has an element of the lack of human control where tension exists between the fear and the demand for perceptual clarity. Consider Holly’s poetic perceptions of the ocean world,

**Ocean World**

Standing on the sandy beach,
I realize how small I am.

The world is powerful,
Threatens to crush me if I don’t respect it.
I'm glad I can respect this place,
The trees older than I will ever be,
The land purer than anything I have ever known.

I breathe in the smells of the ocean,
Wishing I could live on the air alone.

The world watches me and,
I watch the world,
And I am no longer small.

It is through the interpreting, conceptualizing, and re-experiencing of Holly's perceptual sea kayak journey, that we begin to see the possibilities for looking at an embodied, respectful way of knowing. A knowing that is not separate from the relational bodymind actions and interactions with the outdoor environment, but where experience, action, and awareness flow into/with perception. It is not only the feeling of actualization that can be experienced, but also the merging of action and awareness into the spontaneous or intuitive voicing of re-experiencing (reflections). The flow of interaction is a time spent with the wilderness as an intense focusing of attention (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Even though Holly uses the words of

76 My journal entry of March 23, 1999 (at Base Camp) exemplifies just such a reflective process of the interactions with the environment opening possibilities for education.

March 23, 1999

The clouds come by darker today. Their dark an ominous presence hide many thoughts and politics of academic life. But the wind blows over my face. What is invisible in that body? Can we ever know? Emotions bubble to the surface like the rain drops bubble on the surface of the Earth. How can all this percolating be absorbed, exchanged, and reabsorbed? I find my experiences full of emotions, intertwined with feelings, exchanges not describable. The sunsets, the water glistening and talking to me. I don't ever remember these happenings in the classroom. Is this experience not valued as part of knowing and learning? Our teachers are all around us, but we need to pay attention, to listen to the voices, silenced by our Cartesian separations of sentient bodily beings.
I tingle with excitement like the fresh dew of morning wetting my bare feet, to the beauty of music CD's bringing me the harmony of voice, and to the expression of the emotions of experience. I don't understand or know how to get the words out while the tingling overtakes my body in quivers. My body pulsates uncontrollably like a seizure patient, yet, I can stop, control the feelings. Stop the feelings. I punch the keyboard in a rhythmic pattern to the loud pulsing of Paula Cole** in my earphones. How do you experience the world? Do you cherish, focus, take the time to be mindful of these sensations that overtake the body and the mind in pulsing rhythmic waves? How is the pulsing of the piano ivory ringing from the baby grand any different than the whoosh, shoosshhhhh, of the dolphins sucking the air right by my feet at the water's edge? The interaction with the environment gives the peaceful, mindful, perceptual, sensuous experience that Abram*** refers to as the spell.

Maybe it is this spell I am cast under. The mystical that only is visible through experiencing. What is only visible to the bodymind, not visible or seen by any other body. The interaction is unique forming, reforming, deforming, and unfolding as that which we experience, but can't see, can't describe... can't describe. The sharing of which is unique but common, mysterious, yet referred to as that time----do you remember? That time which if you didn't experience, how would, could you know? Is knowing universally shared---in some way. But, how do we know? How do we understand, comprehend, feel, and experience? The possibilities are unfathomable like the oceans and air that surrounds us. We search to ground in finding existence, to take it out of that ungrounding experiential thought or sensation. Maybe, the thought of inter-standing this way of being with the world is a way of learning that we have not formalized, nor can we. How do we open up pedagogy to engage the sentient (land)scape around us? How do we open the possibilities for our earthly children to experience and mindfully be with the world of interaction, a system of unending chaos in, becoming?

** Paula Cole is a songwriter and singer that might be labeled as alternative and feminist.
***Abram (1996)

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world and self as separate, she begins to intertwine what we see as her body and the ocean body or body of air; her poetry expresses the “potential for experiencing the world in profound and dramatic ways. As caught in stories [or poetry], such moments mark the possibility for experiencing expressions . . . often absent in daily life” (Neumann, 1992, p. 189).

Reflecting or Re-experiencing the Breathing Landscape—Embodying Respect

Deep in the Woods

Deep in the woods,
I learn to be afraid for real.

On the water,
I find the true meaning of serenity.

In the darkness,
I learn to find light.

At the core of my weakness,
I find my strength.

At the end of my knowledge,
I learn to know myself.

When I find my dependence,
I learn to rely on myself.

Deep in the woods,
I find a better person.

(Holly’s Journal, October 7, 1998)

Holly articulates her respect for nature and learning, as well as the unnatural or human-made parts. She acknowledges what humans have made of nature, and her ability to enjoy city life, the city being just as good. She likes to think of herself as connected to the rawness of nature, yet she accepts how she changes nature. Still, she prefers the comfort of the city. She
compares the wilderness to dreams\textsuperscript{77} with no distractions; there is no way to tune out things in the stillness of nature.

\textsuperscript{77} When I spent time out at the island in the cabins trying to write my thesis, I found myself being taken away in the timeless flow of thought as I wrote in my journal entry of June 3, 1999.

**Daydreaming on Narramantic Island**

It is another wild day out on the lake. Some sunshine shone through the clouds but now it is starting to pour cool rain onto the warm ground. The hummingbird hit the post again but I didn't find a dead one lying at the bottom yet. A furry mouse just came up on the edge of the floor beside me as I was writing causing me to stir but when I got up it had disappeared. White caps are forming on the lake now which would make crossing somewhat unsafe so I will stick to writing and reading through the night before I depart in the morning.

All the animals seem to be busy at work singing, courting or making new nests for the spring litters. I think the red squirrel has found a home up over the porch door to the entrance to the main cabin. Ants are pouring into the wood to make homes and eat away at the buildings. As if we think we can preserve these buildings forever by putting a coat of preservative on the outside. Animals have been living in the attic all winter. At first we thought they were bats but now it appears to be the dreaded red squirrel that seems to prefer the cabin over the trees. After all it gets pretty cold out here sometimes 32 °F below zero, so I would prefer to find a way into a nice cozy cabin too.

A little female finch was playing hide and go seek with me yesterday on the porch insisting on something which I could not comprehend. Her crown of brown and white perfectly marked feathers stood right up on her head and back down again. I smiled quietly back. She would hop close and then again as long as I didn't move but if I moved, she would fly off and start this whole charade again. Today I watched a female sit upon her favorite spot on the roof. I could see her perched up there from my own perch upon one of the red adirondack chairs in the back yard. She kept singing and calling to a mate in the woods. The air was vibrant with calls. Her little breast of blown feathers pulsing to the - eeeee of her call.

I sit on the long porch mesmerized by the soft wind and chop, chop of the water hitting the shore. With the crack of thunder, I awaken from my day dreaming
“When everything else is silent, your head is speaking to you a lot louder than it usually does, and all your thoughts are there and they are not going anywhere soon.”

(Holly, January 22, 1999)

Holly sees the wisdom of accepting things and not always having to analyze them. For example, she is accepting things without having to know or be like it (nature); it’s more a respecting of natural things. In rock climbing she “wanted to thank the rock for giving [her] the opportunity,” not to conquer the rock but to “experience it.”

However, Holly’s interpretation of nature is not something you can describe but have to be a part of. She indicates that humans are a part of nature, yet separate, like a visitor.

We are part of nature that has been taken out and put into some place that is completely different from nature, so I think of it like a whale in captivity. If you were to put two whales, one that lived in the wild all its life and doesn’t know anything of the other world, and one that lives in an aquarium with people watching it all day . . . and performing tricks . . . I kind of think we are like that. We still have the qualities that nature does, but we’re so different from it now because we have been away from it for so long . . . I don’t know if we are part of it anymore. I think if we were to go back to it, we would have the same problems that a whale in captivity its whole life would . . . if you released it to the wild. It wouldn’t know how to fend for itself in a place where it came from. . . . How do we become more of nature as well as having this world? (Holly, January 22, 1999)

The analogy of the whale parallels Holly’s experience in the program. She struggles with the

to hear the sky and earth rumbling loudly. Soon, steam rises as the rain showers cool the hungry land.
traditional classroom world and her transition to the new outdoor classroom (community) world. In fact, Holly is often by herself reading or writing in her journal, apart from the group’s swimming or bonding experiences.

On her biking trip in the program, Holly tries to capture with words the sunset and a tree leaning across the water: “Nothing you can say describes it.” Holly talks about trivializing this experience when you put it into words, as it “wants to ‘be’ like it is.” Nonetheless, she tries to capture this scene by taking lots of pictures. David Abram (1996) describes the silent conversation we have with things; a perceptual dialogue or sensual exploring of a new whale world.

When my body thus responds to the mute solicitation of another being, that being responds in turn, disclosing to my senses some new aspect or dimension that in turn invites further exploration. . . . Whenever I quiet the persistent chatter of words within my head, I find this silent or wordless dance always already going on---this improvised duet between my animal body and the fluid, breathing landscape. (pp. 52-53)

Holly’s experience speaks to the opening of the sensual, the invisible, the perceptual knowing we are experiencing in the outdoors. As she points out, the “outdoors is dangerous and risky . . . safe, not harmful . . . not avoidance, it smacks you in the face. It’s not an illusion.”

Wilderness

This is beauty at its best.

The powerful ocean crashes the fine sand,
Lit by the light of a cloudy moon.

Slowly clouds roll by . . .
The trees outlined by a sky of velvet silk.

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A bird perches to sleep on a branch,
Observing all that goes by . . .

I sleep and breathe in the peace of the water,
And the life of the forest,
Undisturbed in the night.

(Holly's Journal, October 2, 1998)

Each encounter, participation and inter-change brings about the experiencing of the natural world. I think we must be mindful not to continue to perpetually objectify phenomena and, in so doing, separate our sensuous involvement, as Abram (1996) suggests,

... when consciously acknowledged, .... surroundings are experienced as sensate, attentive, and watchful, then I must take care that my actions are mindful and respectful, even when I am far from other humans, lest I offend the watchful land itself. (p. 69)

Being mindful to remain in connection with our whale world, we embody a respect for the intertwining flesh of water, land and skin. Our web or network of intertwined experience incorporates infinite bodies, embodies wordless perceptions and sensations, an intuitive doing----a capacity or potential ‘choice’ of actions synaesthetically performed in the gurgle of moving water, the watchful eye of the eagle, the glitter of smooth rock and the movement of the kayaker paddling with the flow of the river.

Choosing the path of disembodied being requires fighting our living inter-connected world, severing the experiencing of rhythmic sunrises warming sentient flesh and the whispered calls of moonlit mountains. Choosing a path respectful of the world’s watchful ‘eye,’ invites passion and the unending flow of contagious enaction (an organic soup)---a limitless world of perceptive inquiry.
Camp #5---29,028 Feet

The higher up on the mountain we climb, the closer we come to a perceptive inquiry, an embodied awareness of capacity and the shared connections of body/world. The path we have followed up the mountain will not be the same as we descend to Base Camp. Our path has been covered up with new fallen snow (experiencing) and after the struggle and push at this high altitude, I get dizzy trying to breathe in all this interaction of wind, snow (possibilities) and touching high points on the Earth. A great respect develops in this connective journey with each step into the unknown. We re-experience our climb up with renewed awareness as we move down the mountain. An embodied respect/connection arises in the interstices of our footsteps with the ecological web of life vitalizing a positive attitude and perceptual openness. A deep burning passion of interaction opens my being to this experiencing of the world's flesh.
Descending to Base Camp

Learning to Exhale

The pulsing overtakes my body
as reality hits.
I reach deep
into the smell of warm soil.

The words don't sink in,
don't have meaning,
are not understood,
but held with inter-stance abey.

"May you fly-(ind),
some comfort here. 78"
Drowning in
bubbles of hope.

Death stings with the cold bite of,
venom infusing through veins
throbbing with surprise encounter.
Let yourself believe.

We do what makes us fly above the world
"in the arms of the angels."
The sweet beauty in thoughts,
only memory can achieve.

I try to breathe humid air
in lungs refusing to believe.
I am now drowning in the
thoughts
of the after world.

A trem*bl*ing world
I am not ready to enter.
survival instincts
embody dancing bones.

I breathe
d-e-e-p-l-y
opening my chest to the
possibilities
and e-x-hale passion into living.

Where will I go?
Who will I become?
What form will I couple with?
Springing onward.

78Some of these words are quoted and inspired by Sarah McLachlan (1997), a Canadian artist and song writer.
Moment by moment,
serenity,
at peace
with the clouds
that overtake and encircle
the sensual beauty.

Climbing High,
kayaking wide,
breathing deeply,
living richly
absorbing the sensual song
of whales caressing the earth.

Vibrations tingle
like air currents
moving over the skin,
shaking reality.

I ache,
I yearn,
I dive amongst
the web of inter-action.

I live passionately.
I let those who touch my heart
live on,
swirling memories of bliss.

Burning words onto flesh.
Experiencing the unknown
silent fear
floating on feathers to earth.

Groundlessly drawing
empty innocence
from overturned soil
sinking Softly) with each footstep.
PERCEPTUAL YEARNING: OPENING TO PASSION

Learning to exhale becomes more than a metaphor for perceiving how flowing experience can unfold. If you don’t exhale, tensions are held in the body. For example, when running, exhaling the tensions through the phrases such as I can’t do math, I can’t do science, I can’t write a dissertation, allow me to relieve the sideaches and open to the mantra of I can do anything I put my bodymind to. I see this state of being in most of my experiences. If I am tense while kayaking, my stiff hips tip me into the moving water. If I am tense while climbing, my slow movement up the mountain interferes with my summit bid by consuming precious energy, movements and thoughts, each taking time away from the goal of ascent.

Lene Gammelgaard realizes this in the mantra chants she practices months before proceeding on the Everest expedition. She knew the importance of her chant, for not only reaching the summit, but for descending. Breathing requires us to exhale so that we may breathe deeply again, as climbing requires us to descend so we may ascend again.

"TO THE SUMMIT AND SAFE RETURN"

(Gammelgaard, 1999, p. 23)

While the flesh of the world exhales

I was never so scared as when I looked over the edge. What was I thinking? The water must be 15 feet below. I think I can do it. NO I can’t. All right we will hold hands and do it together. How cold is it? We have our wet suits on. After watching many jump and rejump, we freefall.

We surface the water with the initial shock that we are in hypothermic water! The wet suits hardly ward off the numbing, tingling flesh, alive yet absolutely breathless.79

79 Each box is my description and interpretation taken from an actual photograph of students or activities during my research journey in the outdoor program.
passion and breath in exchange, I practice exhaling ideas about enactive inquiry and living passionately into words. Through sharing those words in the form of a dissertation, I hope to breathe life and passion into educational curricula. As a “curriculum of experiencing,” it embodies more than a pedagogical recipe. It is integral to embodiment of unexpected happenings.

**Embodying Theory or Theorizing Through Experiencing**

The intention of this thesis is to inquire into phenomena of experiencing and the relations to pedagogy. In our descent to Base Camp, we re-visit the theorizing through experiencing as we pass through each camp on our way down. As well, we re-visit the concepts of pedagogical possibilities and embodied awareness as explored during the dissertation journey.

While this thesis elaborates upon experiencing in the outdoors, within unexpected and unpredictable moments, it contributes to enactive theory presented by Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991) in several ways. Firstly, Varela et al. argue for the inclusion of human experience in a general sense within the field of cognitive science, claiming that “experience and scientific understanding are like two legs without which we cannot walk” (Varela et al., 1991, p. 14). The interpretation presented in this dissertation specifically brings forth the

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80 By “more than pedagogical recipe,” I am referring to a curriculum that is more than a step-by-step procedure for teaching and learning. Pedagogy is, in fact, an embodied, emergent process inter-connected with experiencing that is not grounded but an unfolding world of inter-action. The idea of the curriculum of experiences comes from an email conversation with Roger Greenaway on the Outdoor Education listserv, December 9, 1999.

81 By re-visit I mean to re-experience the landscape from our ascent embodied in our laying down a path of experiencing on our descent.

82 Experiencing affirmed by John Dewey (1929) is constantly evolving. This notion of experience as not a fixed event reinforces our experience of theory as a theorizing through experiencing.
unexpected spaces of experiencing which open us to an emergent and embodied way of interacting with the animate/inanimate world. Secondly, I explore contextual aspects of the enactive perspective by showing how phenomena of experiencing create pedagogical “spaces” whereby these spaces include the unexpected, the stop, the interactions between human and the outdoor world. Thirdly, by using examples of experiencing from the outdoors, my work brings forth an ecological connection with the natural environment. As Varela et al. talk about living systems as a continuation or autopoiesis, their focus on the ecological is more evolutionary in the sense of genetic coupling with the environment. However, I argue further this web of interaction with the outdoor environment provides an opening to embodying awareness of our human actions and pedagogies.

Let us also consider the embodiment of life through pedagogical possibilities which embrace the essence of experience. The enactive approach goes beyond thinking of the phenomenological essences of experience to inter-standing the flow of essences which I outline as the phenomena of experiencing. While embracing an emergent pedagogy, I hope to open these fields of experiential, outdoor, and adventure education to the freshness arising in the interplay of perceptions and actions. This embodied awareness is a letting go of controlling the unexpected, while embracing the unpredictability or intangibleness of intuition, freefall and turning around points in teaching and learning.

The essence of climbing through this mountainous journey is to bring inter-standing to the happenings of an ecological and non-dualistic approach for the phenomena of experiencing where worldview theory practice meld. We cannot practice teaching and learning

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83 Autopoiesis is defined as a system which continues its actions for making that system. See Maturana and Varela (1980) for a more extensive interpretation of autopoiesis.
by leaving behind our theories of experience. In pedagogical contexts, it is important to ask ourselves how it is that we come to know the world, why and what allows us to continue breathing life and passion into what we do. There is a need to recognize our connections to the natural world as part of the essence or phenomena of experiencing, so we may find a flow in pedagogy, research, and living.

"Summiting the Journey of Life"

The mystery of death interacts with the bodied world, a world where passion, a “thirst for adventure, [and] a desire to live boldly and vividly in the journey through life” emerges (James, 1995, p. 39). As David Abram (1996) illustrates, death is always interconnected to breathing, exhaling, and living.

Often the invisible atmosphere that animates the visible world--subtle presence that circulates both within us and between all things--retains within itself the spirit or breath of the dead person until the time when that breath will enter and animate another visible body--a bird, or a deer, or a field of wild grain (p. 15). . . . And this
unseen enigma is the very mystery that enables life to live (p. 226). . . . the ineffability of the air seems akin to the ineffability of awareness itself. (p. 227)

It is as if this phenomena of experiencing with the living, breathing world lacks words. Yet, we open to passion through our very breath.

Our immersion in the invisible air . . . . we feel ourselves enveloped, immersed, caught up with the sensuous world. This breathing landscape is no longer just a passive backdrop against which human history unfolds, but a potentialized field of intelligence in which our actions participate. (Abram, 1996, p. 260)

It is through these actions or phenomena of experiencing that life, adventure, the outdoors and an educational imperative emerge as a breathing inter--acting world. “Where there is life, there are already eager and impassioned activities” (Dewey, 1916, p. 42). Through participation in mountain climbing, kayaking, or rock climbing, we realize the importance of life’s potential to live fully everyday. We think about cognition as experiential flesh, where bodies inter-twine to form a ball of yarn, only to unfold and unravel perspectives and ways of being. Being is that sense of living within our cultural humanness as well as the natural inanimate, yet animalness of infinite, life. A relational space where life melds with death---a place, if you will, of potential and freefall.

Currently, we are “laying down a path in walking” (Varela et al., 1991) or laying down a path of experiencing a mountaintop journey. The path we descend looks different under a blanket of snow, veiling our previous footsteps. It is through this continuous, encountering inquiry that we enact our own methodologies.

We have spent long enough at the summit of impassioning possibilities. Let’s begin our descent now. . . .
Embodying Respect—Camp 5

As students in the outdoor program experience inter-actions with peers, teachers, and the outdoor environment, they bring to light values. Motivation or respect cannot be attained like a diploma, but emerge through the actions of doing. Alex, a former student now out of the program for nine years, talks about learning within the outdoor environment and the program as a methodology that “lets you motivate yourself to achieve.”

You were bred to be a leader....

It wasn’t a competitiveness but it was more of a self-motivation that I got from the program toward life in general. I found it to be really valuable. ... In the program, you also learn self respect, respect for others, and respect for the environment. ... If you respect our environment, you are respecting the environment you live in, therefore you respect yourself and you are respecting that of your peers and whoever lives in the environment.

84 Having finished climbing up, we might now want to revisit those camps we lived in to help us re-experience the visions, missions, and passions of perceptual yearning.
Learning in the outdoors unfolds the intricate web of connections to embody respect and embody motivation for living life. Students begin to talk of their actions and interactions as not separate from the environment.

On the other hand, Holly’s story of the whale in captivity illustrates how students in education may be like a whale in captivity. They come to know the world in such a way that journeying into the outdoor natural world opens students to the unexpected waters of possibility. Ocean landscapes are classrooms where students like Holly may have the opportunity to explore possible connections and different ways of interpreting/interacting/learning, a perceptual yearning to move out of captivity. Although fearful, some students embody a respect for the relation with the flesh of the natural world. The phenomena of experiencing is a direct encounter with the outdoor environment, bringing forth an embodied awareness or embodied motivation to move beyond achieving goals toward a capacity or potential of an enacting body/world.

Turning Points—Toward Persistence—Camp 4

Dandelions seem to persevere everywhere I travel, even though their life cycle is a short two years. In that time they focus on attracting pollinating bees, regrowing new flower heads after being cut by the lawn mower, and forming mature seeds for dispersal. During three or four trips in the outdoors, students become like dandelions. Beth, who could not go on the last two trips due to a broken leg, describes what she learned in the outdoor program.

I guess I have learned. . . . that I can do anything really. Anything I set my mind to. . . .

In [the program] you learn how . . . to push . . . be persistent in your goals. . . .
When you do something individual in the outdoors you learn more about yourself and what you want to do.

You learn how to persevere.

Outdoors, students begin to see that by pushing their limits and being persistent they can achieve their goals. Such an approach to learning, living, and being opens up possibilities for students to becoming “anything” they dream imaginable.

As well, turning points seem to have this element that is unplanned and an embodied awareness which arises out of interaction.

This site of abounding interactions or site of tension for the phenomena of experiencing is a rich environment. In terms of pedagogy it is about embracing the unexpected and emergent possibilities for inquiry and our interactions with the world. While embracing emergent pedagogical possibilities of the unexpected and unpredictability of “turning points,” we see new vistas and embody fresh awareness.

Turning points are never fixed and they change through our continual experiencing of the world so we have new turning points each moment. In particular, we would find these memorable if we were interacting within unexpected environments. Maslow (1968/1999) talks of peak experience and fear keeping one from reaching potentials. My interpretation of
emergent potential as such, is where interactions are an interplay of many “elements” such as fear, risk, and perceptual limits.

Turning points push perceptual limits and move some students beyond the fear of failure. If we recall Ann’s journal entry where she expresses her turning point as this difficult journey up to the top of the pass on her 7-day backpack trip. She says, “when I had accomplished both the most physical and mental challenge I had ever tried, I knew something major was going to happen. From that moment I set foot at the top I have never been the same person!” When Ann described how she moved through this challenge by setting small achievable goals like walking 10 steps, then resting or walking up to a specific rock and stopping, Ann actually laid out her own cairns of persistence to follow, opening a path of possibility. It was not so much about the summit but more the idea of summitless mountains where we crest each ridge to see a new view (turning point), only to see another ridge to crest. This notion of cresting a summit or “summitless mountains” is very much like our journey to seek and find potential or possibilities for pedagogy as we lay down a path.

Turning points unfold a path of experiencing away from the predictable to the possible. As educators, how do we open paths which may lead to turning points in the lives of our students? As we walk down the mountain, we turn the next bend seeking to site the next camp below. We not only image the dandelion seedling blowing in the air of possibility searching for living sustenance, but experience an unfolding world of new vistas.

**Enactive Inquiry---Laying Down a Path in Experiencing--Camp 3**

Inquiry is not just merely questions, but quests or “act[s] of experiencing” (Dewey, 1929, p. 18). The “act of experiencing,” if done mindfully by involving all the senses, (not just reflection where the body is still, but re-experiencing), is an enactive inquiry. The phenomena
of experiencing is more than just action. It is an embodied perceptual history of bodies interacting, intertwining the unknowns of everyday experience.

The searching as enactive inquiry maps a road like “laying down a path in walking” (Varela et al., 1991). In research, we lay down a path to retravel, so we can inspect the breathing landscape again and again. However, in laying down a path in experiencing, the world unfolds anew as a turning point journey similar to the dynamic water of river rapids. Experiencing, as researching is fresh each time, like a new fallen snow cover or the growth of saplings in a field. Each time we travel down what would appear to be the same path, we journey into unknown waters and paths of inquiry or experiencing.

With all actions and interactions, a certain amount of risk is inherent whether we are white water kayaking, researching, or enactively inquiring. As Dewey (1916) points out:

Thinking is a process of inquiry . . . all thinking is research, and all research is native, original, with [whomever] carries it on, even if everyone else in the world already is sure of what [he/she] is still looking for. It also follows that all thinking involves risk. Certainty cannot be guaranteed in advance. The invasion of the unknown is of the nature of an adventure; we cannot be sure in advance. (p. 148)
Enactive inquiry is such an adventure which challenges perceptions, brings forth emergent living/being, encourages intuitive doing, and opens teaching/learning to an integration of bodies. Bodies of water or sensual mountainous landscapes all embody experiencing as becoming or evolving, illusionary, yet touchable only as we step, breathe, and enact it out of the very experience from which it arises.

As Jude is theorizing about the world while sitting out in the snow, she is also experiencing this inquiry through the words she writes in her journal and also while interacting with the snow chaotically coming down all around her. We may experience theorizing as a writing, a reading, or a dialogue with theorists, where our experiencing of theory or our theorizing of experiencing can not be separate from our interactions with the world. Enactive inquiry is just such an interaction where we embody the awareness that comes forth whether sitting in the snow writing in a journal with gloved hands or sitting reading Merleau-Ponty on a porch pondering possibilities of our experiencing with the world.

Descending the mountain opens us to living with the invisible, yet laying down a path of theorizing through experiencing. For educators, I hope the life breathed into enactive inquiry opens possibilities for experiencing the outdoors for all learning contexts. Human experience as such envisions a reflecting or re-experiencing of the ways in which experience emerges or possibilities arise as each moment is brought into being while researching, teaching or learning. The world breathes deeply, passionately unfolding a phenomena of experiencing through interacting animate and inanimate bodies.

**Living Interaction—Camp 2**

Communities of inquiry live in relational space, exchanging air echoed into rhythmic sounds of choral music. Singing brings the group together especially when singing a song
intertwined with words found on a hike, in a canoe, or during our walks down paths of crystalline snow. The outdoor trips help embody awareness to experiencing the bonding of living interaction. As Jude describes:

When you go on trips, you really realize what your priorities are... All that matters is what you have in your pack and what’s around you... You’re there in the moment and all that matters is what you are doing at that moment... You realize that people are so much more interesting than you would have thought. There are people that maybe you wouldn’t have been friends with before. But, because you are working so closely with them, you realize that everybody has something to offer and that we are all people... You learn how to read people better---would I want to go on a trip with that person, would they be optimistic or whiners? Would they carry their weight?

In addition to learning what is really important and how to keep focused, students, while working together so closely on outdoor trips, also learn how to communicate, read people,

Singing songs, we play with verses during our ski trip. How do we say a special good bye to our teachers, who are leaving the program? We have managed to quiet the whole group and ready them to sing the song to the same rhythm of "‘Free Fallin’", as well as other songs we have listened to on the bus.

We smile, laugh and choke the verses out with meaning, saying thaannk youuu, for this wonderful journey and reliving unforgettable moments through our storied songs.
and develop lasting friendships. Group interaction in the outdoor program fosters communication and trust.

Interactions in the regular school environment can often be avoided never pushing an uncomfortableness. In new situations, students learn “how to start a conversation, and gaining experience with how to deal with people” (Alii, taped conversation, December 8, 1998). Forming trusting and comfortable relations with new friends can be frustrating in that students “can’t really express what [they] wanted to express” (Alii, taped conversation, December 8, 1998) for fear of being rejected or ridiculed. However, students begin to explore these conversations in the making and to risk the unexpected.

In living with teachers, students realize that they are people too and this living, interacting with the outdoor adventure education program opens doors. Being well rounded—more than one-dimensional is also about being open-minded and genuine. As Jude says, “at the end of the day you feel good about yourself, but you can’t really look back and see the trail.” A community of inquiry is very much a trail or journey of challenge, achievement or fulfillment, discovery, struggle, motivation, effort, positive influence or attitude, focus, responsibility, and a relational space of shared experiencing.

**Freefalling Into the Unknown--Camp 1**

If education is the pursuit of knowledge, theories, and the coupling of the known and the unknown, how do we excite people to be lifelong learners, to ask questions, to taste sentience or freefall? Embodying perceptions emergent and groundless ways of being are seen when “action merges with awareness” during rock climbing (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 86). Students feel comfortable letting their bodies take shape with the rock, embracing a letting go, a freefall into

In addition to encouraging students to take the risk of thinking and experiencing, we emphasize safety, yet we don’t want to kill the opportunities for freefall. In re-experiencing the opportunities during Alice’s freefall experience while rock climbing, we may begin to inter-stand freefall pedagogy. How does the interactions of belayer, teacher, rock open the climber up to possibility? As teacher, when I told the belayer to “stop” and let the climber right herself—I introduced a perturbation or stop that prevented the belayer from grounding the experience. Instead of trying to ground experience into the familiar when the unexpected happens, can we instead seek possibility?

This move to possibility is not always without fear. It reminds me of the choices we have while climbing. For example, when on the side of the cliff we may be balancing on two tiny footholds and one handhold. Meanwhile the other hand searches, feeling for a nubbin that will allow us to make the next move and step up. Often our hand feels several, wondering which will hold, will work, and in making this decision, the climber often has to take a deep breath and go for it. In the split motion of moving, the climber opens to
possibility through moving up the rock or to falling as Alice experienced. In order to push up more difficult climbs, the climber struggles with not grasping but balancing among the nubbins of rock—a balance which may lead to experiencing the passionate potential of living. Freefall pedagogy balances in this same emergent and inquiring space of acclimatization, where we focus on the possible, not the grounding of experiencing. We want to give students the skills to experience and move into the zone of the alien and unknown; a groundless, freefall pedagogy open to mindful participation and passion for continued learning or perceptual yearning.

**Impassioning Possibilities—Base Camp**

Descending is slow and rhythmic, a step-by-step journey down the mountain...

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We are all elbow to elbow sitting on logs erected to create a large circle. Our classroom under the big white tarp today keeps us dry from the wet dripping weather. Each student has his/her own laminated color photocopy chart of Clayoquot Sound.

Instruction begins by teaching us how to read tidal currents and various markings which map our position and possible paddling destinations. 

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85 The descriptions in all the other photo boxes have come from pictures, whereas this one has come from an image from the sea-kayaking trip that I now capture in words.
technology at the Ontario Science Center, refers to maps based on “teleological” thinking driving scholarly activities, which are not true to our everyday experience (pp. 4-5). He uses his personal encounters with the living world as the shaping of that world.

Our journeys over the earth are experienced directly. A day spent dodging rapids and rocks will seem a lot longer and more different than a day spent sailing over a calm lake. We are creatures that flourish in the intimate interactions of life... The river is a dynamic living organism... Just as there is a constant dynamic relationship between the river and the riverbed, there is a constant interplay between the genes and the flesh and bones of the living organism... Mappings with destination carefully laid out for the reader can lead to preconceptions. (McLaughlin, 1999, pp. 6, 52, 59, 63)

This dissertation was never intended to be a map to follow, measure our progress, or confirm a final destination. We have returned to Base Camp to recover, reflect, and re-image how we teach, learn, research, and breathe passion into our lives, while celebrating death. As we live each moment, our fluid dying opens us to living and enacting in an intuitive state of embodied inquiring awareness.

In laying down words on the page, how do we open new kinds of communication and relay the phenomena of experiencing enactive inquiry? “Most difficult of all, however, judging from my own inhibitions, will be gradually opening up our journals to papers written in rhapsodic, poetic or free association style” (Maslow, 1968/1999, p. 240). It is also one’s encounter as a reader to experience, taste, touch, and sensuously exchange the air of passion.

Passion moves you out of your comfort zone into a place of risk, adventure, of daring. You meet the circumstances and challenges of your life boldly. It’s not that you don’t
feel doubt or fear—it’s that your passion is stronger than your fear. It allows you to see beyond that which is in the way of your dreams, your desire, your destiny, and to go forward with enthusiasm. (De Angelis, 1998, p. 72)

Passion is not always comfortable, yet compels us into an animated way of being, becoming, and living. Our inter-acting, enacting, brings forth this relational space of inquiry. Our encounters with the natural world help us live life, full of passion and potential.

Everywhere in the physical universe, we see this same passionate signature. Each day begins and ends with a spectacular pageant in the sky of purples, oranges, pinks and reds as the sun rises and sets. Each night we are able to witness a million sparkling stars, like distant diamonds decorating the heavens.

We are alternately entertained, exhilarated, frightened and soothed by sweet breezes, strong winds, fierce storms, steamy heat, cool snowflakes, and refreshing rain. No two clouds are ever identical. No two trees ever grow to be exactly alike. No two waves ever rise and fall in the same spot. Each impressive mountain, each meandering river, each human being has its own uniqueness that cannot be duplicated. . . . each moment is truly unpredictable, always interesting, and never, never boring.

The passionate universe challenges us to live passionately, to meet each new experience with passion, to encounter each new person with passion, to appreciate each of the wonders around us with passion. We are surrounded by constant, magical reminders of how passion manifests itself, as nature lovingly beckons us to join in the passionate dance of life. (De Angelis, 1998, pp. 91-92)
Even after my adventures in Russia, I still have a longing passion for climbing high altitude mountains. I try to quench my yearning by reading about climbers’ travels in the mountains, dreaming as if I were there. For the first time since I started my doctoral journey, I devote my energy toward actualizing the tragic Everest accidents in the storm of 1996. I am, again, looking out of a small plane window at the billowing clouds concealing the earth below as I read the most well known account, Jon Krakauer’s (1997) book *Into Thin Air*. Finishing this version of what I believe to be an “unfair” assessment of Mountain Madness’s journey and rescue efforts, I close the book to open, *The Climb*, by Anatoli Boukreev, who was the head Everest expedition guide for Mountain Madness. Maybe I can garner a better inter-standing of what really happened from Anatoli.

_And just around seven o’clock, five minutes past probably, I found Scott. Dark also, with a serious storm, and I saw him through the snow, again like a mirage. I saw the zipper of his down suit open, one hand without a mitten, frozen. I opened his face mask, and around the mask face it is frozen, but a different temperature, and under the mask it is like a blue color, like a big bruise. It is like not life in the face. I saw no breathing, just a clenched jaw._

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86 As climbers from four expedition teams were making their descent from the summit of Everest, a storm overtook the mountain claiming the lives of nine climbers. Four of the climbers including, Jon Krakauer’s (author of *Into Thin Air*) guide, Rob Hall (leader of the Adventure Consultants expedition) died. Scott Fischer (who I climbed with in Russia), guide for the Mountain Madness expedition team also perished, yet all of his climbers lived to witness this tragic storm. His head guide, Anatoli Boukreev, made two attempts out into the storm to rescue three lost climbers and another attempt to help Scott. Anatoli received a prestigious mountaineering award from the American Alpine Club for his rescue efforts on Everest before he himself died Christmas Day, 1997 in an avalanche on the slopes of Annapurna in the Himalayas.
I lose my last hope. I can do nothing. I can do nothing. I cannot stay with him.

It began to storm again, seven o'clock. Oxygen—-I lose my last hope, because I thought when I started, "Oxygen will improve his life." If by now oxygen does not improve, no signs of life, no pulse or breathing... (Boukreev & DeWalt, 1997, pp. 203-204)

Anatoli continues to relive his efforts to rescue climbers lost in the storm. I remember in particular his recounting of Scott's passion for climbing and life.

In his relationships with his fellow climbers and clients, he brought an enthusiasm and an energy that captured people. He was perhaps more of a romantic than a businessman, and I appreciated that in him. His strength, love of life and benevolence awoke something in me, and I hoped that in difficult times I could remember what he brought to climbing, that some of his ways could become more of a part of my own way of being.

I step off the bus having made it back to UBC. The research is over. I can hardly believe that 5 months have passed. Remarkably, the Vancouver rains are dripping from the leafless trees. A bright yellow sunset is glowing behind the trees, giving an awe-inspiring view of black, silhouetted branches. I walk straight into this magnificent world ready to journey up yet another climb.
Now, I sit at Base Camp, pondering the possibilities for other climbs I have yet to venture toward. I am ready to attempt one approaching summit of my research career, to summon the strength and power needed to summit and make a safe return. With the memories of Scott and other climbers who died during the time of this climb, I celebrate their lives and my own breath.

However, soon I will be undertaking the journey of pedagogical possibilities in my own teaching. What does this mean for educators, classrooms, and what should we consider for an emergent space in curricula, experiencing, or pedagogy? How might other educators consider pedagogical possibilities?

We sometimes become caught up in the economics of education and what might benefit students or society. These answers are not separate from our own experiencing of the world, but we may need to take the time to experience our world in new ways. Barry, a previous teacher in the program, suggests the following:

One of the main focuses of the school system is to produce well adjusted, enthusiastic individuals who are well connected socially. If they don’t have that, they are really handicapped. We can pump all kinds of academics into them, but if we don’t focus on their development as people, they can come out with straight A’s, but they may not do well in life. I already see the outdoor education component as focusing on those core human skills besides the whole environmental awareness, which I think is critical too. . . . [the values] you know, the sense of belonging. The big thing for me was the sense of trust and working with each other . . . They [kids] need that. The ideal program would be to do all the academics like science in the outdoors. The community support, parents, raising of funds . . . Kids are involved in their own funding to keep
the program going. Idealistically as an educator, I would rather produce a well
adjusted, happy individual. What else is there?

Students struggle with this notion of happiness, not only in their participation within the
program, but also in their daily life choices. Students talk about happiness as a choice to
portray a positive attitude. If they focus on positive thoughts and encourage one another on
outdoor trips, students begin to experience a happy learning experience as well as a positive
way of being.

The very nature of education, whether adventure based, in the science lab, or
experiential, has implicit risks relative to the environment and the activity process (Hunt,
inquiry into pedagogy balances the invisible with the possibilities.

Rock climbing, river kayaking, and mountain climbing are all potentially dangerous
activities requiring the motivation to concentrate as ‘mind wandering is dangerous’
(Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, p. 82). Other uncertainties such as weather, conditioning, mood,
partner’s performance, communication, or equipment failure can also provide unexpected
challenges (p. 79). As one of Csikszentmihalyi’s participants states:

“Up there you have the greatest chance of finding your potential for any form of
learning. Up there the false masks, costumes, personae that the world put on you--
false self-consciousness, false self-awareness fall away . . . . In civilization [people
don’t] live reality.” (p. 95)

Students, on the other hand, might be bored in classrooms because, as Beth adds, “you don’t
have a goal or know what you want to do.” Holly explains what it is about outdoor education
that makes learning so stimulating:
The program is a hard struggle and fun. The value, especially for teenagers, is that your life as a teenager is often really confusing. It’s filled with like a billion different decisions, especially teenage girls. They probably have the most things to deal with out of any other group in the entire world. Like people try to trivialize it, being a teenager . . . It’s a huge joke or it's funny or it's like the awkward years. And thank God that’s over and everything. They don’t really realize what they don’t remember, the feeling that there should be something more . . . It makes life so much less confusing if you all of a sudden have these goals . . . this potential . . . I know so much more than when I started this . . . not just more about nature, but more about everything, more about life in general. Teenagers are the people that need to know the most about life . . . because they are just figuring out their place in the world. You can’t teach that in a career and personal planning class. Not only are those things so boring . . . They don’t take you anywhere where it’s real. The outdoors is the most real place you can be.

The decision making process that Holly learns in the outdoors is relevant and real. The risks inherent to the environment are as William Unsoeld says, ‘real enough to kill you,’ and interconnected to every decision, goal, and to the passion of enacting potential (Hunt, 1990/1994, pp. 35, 39). As in most learning environments, educators try to limit the risks, but whether students are driving themselves to school, put on buses for field trips, or just being at school, there are always unknown risks (death being the one we accept in everything we do).

Embodying Pedagogical Possibilities

Pedagogy demands acclimatization, a feeling or attunement where our actions, movements and the contextual elements, blend together in harmonic staccato, stop, then
unfold, dancing a path of possibilities. Opening this space or path toward embodying pedagogical possibilities requires a balance of fears, risk, respect, and a positive attitude. We embrace the intertwining of fears pulsing in our bodies, and we risk forging footprints that are not known but "pregnant with the invisible" or possible. Our perceptual limits blend with the aforementioned interactions to bring forth what I am describing as an attunement, acclimatization or embodied awareness. Our embodied awareness helps us dance down the mountain struggling to keep our footing on a path, yet not grounding or grasping but letting go or opening to the perceptual possibilities for pedagogy.

I invited you on a journey many pages ago to come with me and climb to a place of summitless mountains. Only you, the reader, can answer if you have come in "tune" with your own ponderance of pedagogical possibilities and how we might perceive emergent potential (embodied awareness) with the moving, living landscape of human bodies. Imagine for a moment that you live in a world where you never use your body but come to know sea kayaking through the imagery of the mind only, the touch of snow on your tongue melting its sting only in the mind. Are classrooms preparing students to live "in" a world, a virtual world where the body is not needed, disconnected from the natural world? The importance of human experiencing having a balance with the outdoors is key to sustainability, communities of inquiry, and opening our students to seeking their potentials as human beings.

Our way of experiencing, classrooms, the outdoors and the world is important and relevant for all educators. We need a balance of content/outdoor based curricula with a curricula of experiencing which opens a space for emergent pedagogy. This would be a curricula of experiencing which embraces emergent goals, a generative space of shared
struggle and an embodied awareness of experiencing freefall or pedagogical possibilities. The challenge may be how to incorporate open mindedness and groundlessness in assessment.

I ask educators to consider a pedagogy of groundlessness where we stop grasping for control and are open to teachable moments, aha’s, unexpected happenings and turning points in our teaching and learning journeys. Pedagogies of possibilities might open:

- a freshness to perception through experiencing a shifting embodied awareness;
- an opportunity for experiencing or embracing the unexpected and unpredictable;
- a challenge to embodying qualities such as hope, trust, risk, humor, respect and passion;
- a connection of experiencing with the natural world;
- or potential through experiencing freefall and possibilities.

For example, Julie states that “the value of outdoor education opens things up. You are not being so one minded, but open to more possibilities.” What pedagogies or paths of experiencing allow us to flow through life as educators, learners, and researchers?

Important to this pedagogical interplay are the relations amongst, peers, teachers, the classroom, and the topics of discussion/interaction. So what happens when the classroom is moving and a “part” of the natural world? I think we have a choice of many paths, one of which I have been concentrating on our climb so far. We have made the choice of action out of the familiar into the unpredictable and unexpected. This “landscape” of the unexpected is an emergent pedagogy which can lead to potential of living or dying. Our actions/awareness, struggle/articulation and experiencing is a risky adventure, much like mountaineering where as we journey “higher” on the mountain, potential lives and dies with each moment. Thus, when we choreograph the dance of outdoor experiencing, we move or flow into this emergent
“space” of embodied awareness. Such embodied awareness arising out of experiencing freefall is relevant to the unfolding of possibilities for all educational classrooms.
BREATHE deeply

for we never know

when we will share

our last breath with the tall trees

or

exhale life

flesh

into the arising of the world.

Walk softly on the

path of ex

where footsteps,

enactively inquire, opening passion,

perceptual yearning,

&

living potential.
Epilogue

This dissertation is not simply a writing, but an Unwriting. An unwriting, retext (ual)izing, re-writing, and re writing, and re writing of “myself” into the world. A story that brings my soul into existence through the relationships with the world. I feel the water rivulets traveling over a body, more apparent where the cool air caresses the fabric of skin. A body unfolds an existence only through the actions of Being in a Heidergarian sense. A being that appears and disappears from the past, stepping into a future and turning around again to only find that the past and the future are melding into the moment. Minute moments, present through experiencing and becoming. I don’t claim to be a philosopher but a magician with words writing myself out of existence and into existence as a folding and unfolding, a re—iteration of an experiencing form, structure, being that touches many hearts. A being without center, which spirals into a center that no other can know. A knowing that breathes deeply, slowly drinking in a world, breathing out a place, knowing only through the inter-----action of molecules caressing molecules.

A poet told me that I was exploring the places of mystery in language. It is almost as if by writing the dissertation into the world, it exists with words streaming out in long thin cloudy wisps spiraling through the air. I just reach up and touch them as they stream onto the page, flowing, glowing, and knowing what character to write, what action to enact, what thought to evoke.
References


Appendix A

LOOKING BACK AT TERM ONE 1998.99:
First week. EXCITED. Scared. New faces. COMPARISON
Shopping Day. Kayaking in Byng Pool. Rotations. Learning to put up the
tents. Learning to cook. Couches. Learning to climb on a
Blaming Term Two. COTTON KILLS. LEARNING TO KAYAK AND
CANOE AT GRANVILLE ISLAND. LEARNING TO PACK. PARTIES.
Football. Jericho Path. Learning about each other. Learning to protect
yourself against blisters. Cold Can Kill. Laughing. Cheesy
70’s movies. Seven day paddle at Clayoquot. Waves. SEVEN
DAY HIKE IN CATHEDRAL PARK. HOLDING ONTO YOUR PACK SO IT WON’T ROLL
DOWN THE HILL American Pie. Learning to trust yourself. HARD fitness
STANDARDS. Figuring out the victim, murder weapon, who’s involved, and
time of death. Avalanches. INTRODUCTION TO EXPOSITORY
ESSAY. Volunteering at Von Osten, Apple Fest and everywhere else. Grouse Grind.
SO MUCH FURT. EDIT #1. Orienteeering on Cypress and Lighthouse Park. Four day Climb,
Cycle, Canoe and Kayak. Amazing Sunsets. LOOKING AT
PICTURES. Teachers as friends. Free Falling. Recycling
Depot/Transfer Station/Landfill tour. BUILDING TREE LOT. EDIT
#2. TREE LOT. EDIT #3. TREE LOT. EDIT #4. TREE LOT.
FINAL ESSAY DUE. Jakes. Climbing at the Edge. FOUR DAY
MANNING PARK TRIP IN LAST RESORT, ORCHALETS. Lightning
Crashes. Learning to telemark ski. Learning to cross country
ski. music lessons. Igloo building at Seymour. Alf over you.
Oral Presentations. Three day Manning in Quinzees/Igloos and Last
Resort. An awesome game of freeze. The Beatles. Everlasting
SAYING A BEAUTIFUL GOOD-BYE.