

International Perspectives in Outdoor Education Research Editors' Notes

Morten Asfeldt

University of Alberta – Augustana Campus

Patrick T. Maher

Cape Breton University

In November 2013, a group of about 120 outdoor education researchers gathered at the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand. We had come together at the 6th International Outdoor Education Research Conference (IOERC) from many corners of the world. Without such events, it can be easy for us as outdoor education researchers (and practitioners) to limit our perspective and inquiry to the people and places of our home range, forgetting that outdoor education is happening in some shape or form in most countries around the globe. The biennial IOERC has become a time of renewal and sharing of ideas for many researchers, a time to be inspired by colleagues' research, which in turn reframes our own research, and we start viewing and understanding it through a more diverse international lens. In Dunedin, we were selected to co-convene the 7th IOERC and chose to host it at Cape Breton University, on Unama'ki (Cape Breton Island) in Nova Scotia, Canada. The purpose of this special issue of the *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership* (JOREL) is to showcase examples of international research, some of which was presented at the 7th IOERC, where 150 researchers from 17 countries lived and learned together.

As Canadian outdoor education researchers, we have had the privilege of significant international experience and we have benefited from the enrichment of international perspectives and the international outdoor education communities. Unlike researchers in some countries and regions of the world, Canadian outdoor education researchers are spread across the 7000-km breadth of the country, often working as lone researchers at their respective universities (e.g., we are physically separated by 5,000 km as we write this editorial). As editors, we have as our goal to present in this special issue an international sample of the social, cultural, and critical dimensions of research and theorizing in outdoor education. As our international experience has enriched our research (and practice), we hope that this collection of articles will enrich yours.

In the first regular paper, researcher Mikael explores the educational potential of a place-responsive pedagogy to teaching and learning in *friluftsliv* (outdoor life; roughly translated to be a blend of outdoor recreation and education) within the Swedish physical education and health curriculum. Mikael points out that the current Swedish understanding of *friluftsliv* as curriculum limits the teaching of school-based *friluftsliv*. His findings indicate that a place-responsive pedagogy can enable teachers to work within school-based *friluftsliv* in new and innovative ways that facilitate cross-curricular teaching and learning initiatives more

locally. The second paper, by Roberts, suggests a re-placing of outdoor education and the use of microadventures. Roberts shares veins of thinking and ideas with Mikael, encouraging a critical examination of the romantic roots of outdoor education. Roberts encourages local microadventures while leaving room for the conventional expeditions to remote wild places.

The next two regular papers come from Australia. In the first of these, Rose, Williams, Olsson, and Allen examine the extent to which participation in structured outdoor programs is associated with improvements in adolescent health and well-being. Their findings support the view that structured outdoor programs may have a beneficial effect on well-being. Meanwhile, Lloyd, Gray, and Truong employed a unique research method—having the children wear cameras—to give children an authentic voice in the research process. Their results demonstrate that footage from body-worn cameras can provide previously unknown insights into student learning experiences, which adds an additional layer of validity to their findings.

In the final regular paper, Sibthorp, Funnell, Riley, Chan, and Meerts-Brandsma examine the function of Western outdoor adventure education (OAE) practices and philosophies in East Asia, specifically Hong Kong. They identify a number of important implications including better aligning OAE with schools and teachers, understanding the merits of the relationships developed through OAE, and appreciating that some traditional OAE practices should be questioned when exported to different cultures.

These papers point to a number of themes and issues that are common internationally. For example, first, some issues pertain to local versus nonlocal outdoor programs, programs developed in the “place” they will be delivered versus adopting what may be the “standard-issue approach.” Second, there is the theme of using outdoor programs to promote health and well-being. This is not limited by political borders or ocean expanses, nor is the use of innovative research methods. In addition, a third key issue, pointed out by Sibthorp et al., is the need to think carefully before adopting Western values and traditions (or absorbing non-Western values and traditions) to guide outdoor programs. Rather, as outdoor educators, we must critically consider culture as we aim to provide programs for more diverse groups, whether those are culturally diverse groups from other countries, immigrant groups within our own countries, or Indigenous groups who have been historically marginalized in countries such as Canada.

Overall, this collection of papers suggests that we have a great deal to learn from each other regardless of the countries we work in, or call home. We are global educators who have as many similarities as we have as differences, not least of which is the desire to understand the meaningful experiences that outdoor education can provide to enhance the lives of our students in every corner of world.

Thank you for supporting this journal and special issue,

Morten Asfeldt, Guest Editor

Patrick T. Maher, Guest Editor

JOREL Advisory Board:

Raymond Poff	(Western Kentucky University)
Nathan Furman	(The University of Utah)
Peter Bannon	(Sagamore–Venture Publishing LLC)
Will Hobbs	(Georgia College)
Tammie Stenger-Ramsey	(Western Kentucky University)
Jeffrey Dowdy	(Georgia College)
Kimberly Vecchio	(Sagamore–Venture Publishing LLC)