

Nature, bodies, and practices: walking, adventure, and ecopedagogy

Natureza, corpos e práticas: caminhada, aventura e ecopedagogia

Naturaleza, cuerpos y prácticas: caminar, aventura y ecopedagogía

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the praxis of the relationship between motricity, adventure, and education, through the empirical study of the nature of walking with/in Nature as part of outdoor education practice in southeastern Australia. Historical/cultural influences from the Anglo-North/West are evident in bushwalking (as known in Australia). In outdoor education, Nature is subordinated within these instrumental and commodified logics of practice and anthropocentric bias. To be clear, the pedagogical preferencing of these historically conceived and constructed orthodoxies can marginalize or ignore other pedagogical possibilities. Drawing from the author's PhD, using inductively sourced empirical data, the nature of walking with/in Nature is interpreted and understood through autophenomenographic impressions of sensory, embodied experiences in two cases. In this study, eco-phenomenology and eco-feminism inform the conceptual, empirical development of an ecopedagogy of walking that contributes to the importance of grounded, embodied movement experiences in various environmental and scapes of Nature.

Keywords: Autophenomenography. Ecophenomenology. Ecofeminism. Embodiment. Outdoor Education.

RESUMO

Este artigo examina a práxis da relação entre motricidade, aventura e educação por meio do estudo empírico da natureza da caminhada com/na Natureza como parte da prática de educação ao ar livre no sudeste da Austrália. As influências históricas/culturais do Anglo-Norte/Oeste são evidentes na prática de bushwalking (como são chamadas na Austrália as caminhadas com/na a Natureza). Na educação ao ar livre, a Natureza está subordinada a estas lógicas instrumentais e mercantilizadas da prática e do preconceito antropocêntrico. Para ser clara, a preferência pedagógica destas ortodoxias historicamente concebidas e construídas pode marginalizar ou ignorar outras possibilidades pedagógicas. Com base na tese de doutorado da autora, utilizando dados empíricos de origem indutiva, a natureza do caminhar com/na Natureza é interpretada e compreendida através de impressões autofenomenográficas de experiências sensoriais e corporificadas em dois casos. Neste estudo, a ecofenomenologia e o ecofeminismo informam o desenvolvimento conceitual e empírico de uma ecopedagogia da caminhada que contribui para a importância de experiências de movimento enraizadas e incorporadas em vários ambientes e paisagens da Natureza.

Palavras-chave: Autofenomenografia. Ecofenomenologia. Ecofeminismo. Corporeidade. Educação ao Ar Livre.

RESUMEN

Este artículo examina la praxis de la relación entre motricidad, aventura y educación a través del estudio empírico de la naturaleza de caminar con/en la Naturaleza como parte de la práctica de educación al aire libre en el sureste de Australia. Las influencias históricas/culturales del Anglo-Norte/Oeste son evidentes en la práctica del bushwalking (como se llaman en Australia los paseos con/en la Naturaleza). En la educación al aire libre, la Naturaleza está subordinada a estas lógicas instrumentales y mercantilizadas de práctica y prejuicio antropocéntricos. Para ser clara, la preferencia pedagógica de estas ortodoxias históricamente concebidas y construidas puede marginar o ignorar otras posibilidades pedagógicas. A partir de la tesis doctoral de la autora, utilizando datos empíricos de origen inductivo, se interpreta y comprende la naturaleza de caminar con/en la Naturaleza a través de impresiones autofenomenográficas de experiencias sensoriales y encarnadas en dos casos. En este estudio, la ecofenomenología y el ecofeminismo informan el desarrollo conceptual y empírico de una ecopedagogía del caminar que contribuye a la importancia de las experiencias de movimiento arraigadas y encarnadas en diversos entornos y paisajes de la Naturaleza.

Palabras clave: Autofenomenografía. Ecofenomenología. Ecofeminismo. Corporalidad. Educación al Aire Libre.

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INTRODUCTION

Walking is the great adventure, the first meditation, a practice of heartiness and soul primary to humankind (Snyder, 1990, p.18).

Nature writer, Gary Snyder, depicts the primacy of the human experience of walking as embodied and immersive describing it as “the great adventure”. This relationship between walking and adventure contrasts with dominant orthodox descriptions of adventure in the Anglo-North/West literature (mainly USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and UK). The term ‘adventure’ is at the core of the central question of this Special Issue (SI): “What pedagogical praxis is possible in adventure experiences?” In “considering the praxis of the relationship between motricity, adventure and education” (SI), this article draws upon my thirty year experience as an outdoor educator and research from my (auto)phenomenographic PhD study (Blades, 2020) to provide a critical (re)structuring of (bush)walking as an ecopedagogy of walking (Blades, 2024; 2021). This practical, empirical/experiential and conceptual study was conducted and auto represented in southeastern Australia, in the State of Victoria and occurred in a series of (bush)walks in different settings and times. These were part of an undergraduate outdoor education (OEd) program with many of the students in pre-service teaching of OEd, potentially in upper secondary school.

The rationale for this study arose from pervading patriarchal and settler colonial structures of bushwalking in OEd. Arguably, the practice of bushwalking in OEd is embedded within Global-Anglo/North assumptions whereby the dominant epistemology and assumed axiological preference of conventional, instrumental orthodoxies of (bush)walking² in OEd enacted in patriarchal and colonial structures, made evident in the historical study in this SI. Within this geo-epistemological context, Nature³ is subordinated and dominated by an anthropocentric bias of a *humanly* valorized practice of (bush)walking/backpacking. To be clear, the pedagogical preferencing of these historically conceived and constructed orthodoxies can marginalize or ignore ecopedagogical possibilities and have contributed to blurry, messy boundaries between bushwalking, adventure, and OEd in Australia.

FRAMING

In responding to the calls of this SI, what I aim to develop conceptually and empirically in this study is a (re)constructed ecopedagogy of (bush)walking with/in Nature that *walks/moves* to an ‘ecocentric’ conceptual vantage point. The two “broad frames” identified by Payne and Rodrigues guide this study’s ontology and methodology that is: (a) The ‘philosophy’ of eco/motricity (Rodrigues, 2018) where walking becomes a ‘new’ movement experience in ecopedagogies in environmental education; and (b) asserting and prioritizing the phenomenological nature of movement/walking experiences in Nature, or ecophenomenology (Payne, 2013).

In this autophenomenographic study, using inductively sourced empirical data (Blades, 2020), the purpose of interpreting and understanding the nature of walking through sensory, embodied experiences with/in Nature aims to give “de-centered” life and “non”

² In this paper, (bush)walking is bracketed to emphasise the historical and cultural assumptions of ‘bush’ and walking, and their relationship.

³ Nature is a term laden with complexity. It can be understood in relation to what is ‘natural’ such as natural processes and elements as well as the relationship between Nature and human agency (Brennan; Lo, 2010). In this paper, what is referred to as Nature are derivatives such as ‘environments’, ‘landscapes’ and ‘bush’. In this paper, an upper case ‘N’ is used to distinguish Nature from ‘the nature of’ phenomena.

essentialist, but praxical meaning” in OEd research (Payne, 2020, p.125). As an ‘auto’ experiential study and my position as a female academic with settler colonial ancestry, I acknowledge my “contingent, contextual, embodied social self” (Payne, 1994, p.145). In doing so, this paper’s ‘reimagining’ of adventure in OEd (bush)walking is conceptually and empirically demonstrated as an ecopedagogy that draws upon ecophenomenology (Toadvine, 2009) and ecofeminism (Payne, 1994; Salleh, 1991).

Two cases are included to enable the reader to witness the felt/lived (bush)walking experiences with/in two geo-cultural/historical contexts/locations in southeastern Australia, giving empirical, *lived* meaning to “*movements*” and “*moments*” of embodied time-space intra/interactions (Payne, 2020, p.133) that are ecopedagogical in nature. This contributes to the nascent practice theorization of *movement* (humanly, but also other-than-humanly) or “ecomotricity” (Rodrigues, 2018), as a key point of *access* to understanding and interpreting the nature of walking with/in Nature.

Prior to the conceptual/empirical research of (bush)walking as ecopedagogy, to give the context for the rationale for this study, a brief map of the ‘traditional’ terrain of (bush)walking in OEd and adventure in Australia, highlights the problematic “temporal, spatial and symbolic structures” (Payne, 1994, p.141) of (bush)walking. Within this geo-epistemological context, consideration is then given to the praxis of the relationship between motricity, adventure, and education.

MAPPING THE TERRAIN

In Australia, and the Global-Anglo/North more broadly, the interchangeable use of the concepts OEd and adventure, also referred to as ‘outdoor adventure education’, creates conceptual confusion and blurs the various historical/cultural contexts. Add to the mix, outdoor recreation, leisure, physical education and sport, and there is mash/mess of concepts. It is (un)clear as to what any one ‘culture’ of adventure (Bell, 2017) could look like. Therefore, the contextualized and contingent nature of any (bush)walking experience, must be acknowledged from the outset.

The contested nature of ‘bush’ and its ‘walking’ is often ‘hidden’ within assumptions that are rarely examined practically, conceptually and methodologically (Blades, 2021). The following sections address selected questions posed in the CfP of this SI: problems of ‘wild’ places; interrogating ‘performative conventions’ of technical skills and competencies and commodified walking adventures and the materialistic tradition of body-environment relationships.

‘GONE BUSH’: PROBLEMS OF ‘WILD’ PLACES

In Australian vernacular, the term ‘gone bush’ refers to a person getting away from the city and is identified with national identity (Harper, 2017). The ‘bush’ can refer to remote rural areas and areas of forests and woodlands (Brookes, 2002, p. 409), the latter often being ‘public land’ zoned as National Parks and State Parks.

In these remote settings, the ‘wilderness experience’ has been prominent in the mental landscape of the so called ‘serious’ bushwalker (Harper, 2007) and so too in OEd. This became apparent in OEd in the 1980’s when ‘psy’-driven humanistic discourses penetrated the softer constructions of the outdoor experience. These curriculum aims assumed an “entitlement to remote places ... earned through mastery of skills” and valued as “a challenge

in its own right” (Slattery, 2009, p16). Any ecological form of pedagogy got ‘lost in the Australian bush’ (Brookes, 2002) where Nature is merely a backdrop.

Wilderness is also symbolic of Indigenous people’s removal and displacement from their ancestral lands (Cronon, 1996; Rose, 1996). The hierarchy of the ‘whitist’ view of ‘entitlement’ to remote locations, is another form of imperialism/supremacy. Decter (2020) examined the Trans Canada Trail and found how walking or hiking in settler states is an expression of the “right to go anywhere” and “can be understood to support a form of white settler emplacement that is contingent on Indigenous displacement, hence (bush)walking can operate as a territorializing process. It is also a form of “cultural appropriation” evident in Anglo OEd (Payne; Rodrigues, 2024). In Australia, Indigenous ‘Country’⁴ is sacrosanct but too often ignored in, for example, the ‘white’ promotion of ‘place’ pedagogies in the outdoors, and in the social construction of outdoor ‘experience’.

PERFORMATIVE CONVENTIONS

(a) ACQUISITION OF TECHNICAL SKILLS, AND COMPETENCES

Through a presumption that environments will be unfamiliar and by having a set of competencies to ‘lead’ in these conditions, Brookes (2015, p. 13) maintains that “a distinctive form of militarism shaped Anglosphere outdoor education.” “Pedagogical attention” was devoted to a range of ‘developments’ such as skills, competence and mastery, safety, social and personal that prioritized the individual (Payne; Rodrigues, 2024). For example, learning to navigate and read topographic maps were seen as ‘expert’ skills. Loynes (2020) found that the values embedded in traditional navigation instruction and leadership training were characterized as the geometric military style (Schmitz, 1999). This style, with its focus on the ‘leader’ as ‘expert’, masculinized OEd in hegemonic ways (Kennedy; Russell, 2021), creating long lasting structural and social inequalities (Gray, 2016). Importantly, “the potential of other ways of navigating are unavailable to the educational discourse” (Loynes, 2020, p. 143). These instrumentalized logics of practice are overtly anthropocentric, whereby Nature is an abstraction, with strategic (bush)walking route plans that were ‘anchored’ in militarism/survival and territorial (Payne; Rodrigues, 2024).

Skills and competencies are framed in masculine ways with axiological preferences of rugged individualism, self-sufficiency and physicality that underpin traditional notions of adventure. The nature of the construction of the OEd (bush)walking ‘journey’ is an example. Historically, it can be traced back to ‘heroic’ narratives of explorers in Australia (Slattery, 2013). These masculine constructs have long permeated OEd (Bell, 1997; Humberstone, 2000) whereby (bush)walking/backpacking is *humanly* valorized and Nature is subordinated and conquered.

(b) COMMODIFIED (BUSH)WALKING ADVENTURES

(Bush)walking was/is part of the professionalization and commercialization of the OEd ‘field’ as discussed by Payne and Rodrigues (2024). For instance, the credentialization

⁴ The capitalization of C for Country is used when referring to Indigenous use of the word. Rose’s (1996) often-quoted definition describes Country as a “living entity” with a consciousness akin to a “nourishing terrain” and “spoken about as if you were speaking about a person or friend” (p. 16).

of ‘bushwalking leaders’ driven by ‘industry standards’ of ‘best practice’ bound within risk averse environments. The preferencing of ‘remote’ locations for (bush)walks in OEd ‘fit’ the adventure credential but, as Rodrigues and Payne (2017, p.30) point out, are costly and resource intensive “that encourages the further commodification and technologization of nature.” These commodified and commercialized economic structures are emblematic of the current expansion of ‘developed/constructed’ walking tracks/trails in Australia. There is a national grading standard for walks based on ‘difficulty’ determined by being on-track or off-track, degree of physical difficulty afforded by constructed surfaces, topography, distance, all of which reduces Nature to a number.

(c) HUMAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIPS

The dominance of these performative conventions exerts strong external influences that reinforce the dualisms of body-Nature, culture-Nature. For example, a ‘landscape’ is seen in the Global-North/West via “spectatorial observation” that is held “within an overarching historical narrative in which western visual cultures are implicated in issues of order, power, spectacle and control” (Wylie, 2002, p. 4). As such, traditional forms of adventure are externally driven experiences. For example, in (bush)walking, the destination becomes the primary focus, similarly, scrambling/walking to the top of a mountain for a commanding view. The pedagogy in these organized time-space walking events is routinized, prescriptive and inflexible and manifest in the movement of the walking body such as gait, speed and rhythm (Edensor, 2010).

What are the ecopedagogical ramifications in terms of educational goals and the position and status of the environments in which we (bush)walk, learn in and about, and instruct or ‘train’ competently for and ‘credentialize’ in? (Blades, 2021). In these times of social/ecological crises the precarious nature of Nature, bodies and moving/walking in Nature is widely apparent.

Critically, as Payne (2002, p.6) points out, the “nature of experience” requires scrutiny in terms of how it is ‘constructed’ pedagogically by “examining the ‘material conditions’ and ‘social positioning’ of the activity.” In this study of (bush)walking experiences, the question of “how ‘inner’, ‘social’ and ‘outer’ natures are constructed / often in contradiction” (Payne, p.4) is a core focus. In summary, the geo-historical/cultural constructs of adventure and their association with OEd/(bush)walking, raise significant structural problems that urgently call for a (re)formed ecopedagogy.

The next section (de)maps the terrain of the dominant discourses of OEd, adventure and (bush)walking. Beginning with some foregrounding of nascent research in ecopedagogy and ecomotricity that will lead into relevant conceptual and empirical research of this study.

(DE)MAPPING THE TERRAIN

ECOPEDAGOGY AND ECOMOTRICITY: SOME FOREGROUNDING

The structures of (bush)walking in OEd that maintain traditional adventure traditions, also serve to “maintain the traditional *status quo* of outdoor/adventure curriculum and pedagogy” that are limits to change (Rodrigues; Payne, 2017, p.30). How might different these various historical conflations of key ideas be part of the eventual/inevitable practical problem of ‘ecopedagogy’, an increasingly popular term in its recent usage.

The ‘ecological turn’ in education, including OEd, has gained momentum amidst ecological crises, bringing into question human-Nature relationships and the urgent need to (re)center Nature. The popularity and interest in ecopedagogy was to avoid the problem of environmental learning ‘add-ons’. In the “rush for new theory in the Anthropocene” (Payne, 2018b, p.76), was ecopedagogy just another add-on of the ‘eco’? Misiaszek (2022, p.1267) argues from a Global-South perspective, of “the need for critical, Freirean-based ecopedagogy to disrupt the oppressions and dominance characterizing the Anthropocene.” At a macro level, the need for “deepened and widened understandings of praxis grounded in socio-environmental justice and planetary sustainability, including disrupting anthropocentrism” is a central tenet (Misiaszek, p.1267) and demonstrates the messy dilemmas of North/South tensions.

It is evident from the preceding analysis of OEd and (bush)walking, that there are the eventual/inevitable practical problems of ‘ecopedagogy’ in the messy assemblage of OEd, adventure, and physical education, leisure and sport (Payne; Rodrigues, 2024). Hence, an important aim of this study, is to contribute and extend the nascent ecopedagogies as/in scapes assembled in a SI of the *Journal of Environmental Education* (Payne, 2018a). This SI (re)presented various cases of ecopedagogies experientially and empirically as “embodied-conceptual ... specificities, movements, moments, encounters, and episodes of what really matters” (Payne, 2020, p. 127). That is, to *presence* the material, historical and structural elements of experiences located in proximal embodied time-space ecological praxes.

To address the practical problems of ecopedagogy in relation to adventure, this study of embodied movement experiences of walking with/in Nature, scopes the material, historical and structural elements of selected scapes⁵ of geo-historical/cultural contexts. Payne (2020, p.133) states clearly how “*Walking*, as “intense experience” of (embodied) “movement” in “relation” to (materialized) Nature, or “ecomotricity” (Rodrigues, 2018), is one ontologically basic intra/interactive “moment”.” Furthermore, offering different practical-conceptual-methodological-empirical ways to *access* phenomena literally from the ground up in contrast to top-down adventure driven agendas.

LOCATING ECOPEDAGOGY: WALKING AND ALIVENESS WITH/IN NATURE-BODIES

Walking itself extends into the world ... of knowing the world through the body and the body through the world (Solnit, 2001, p. 29).

Resonating with Snyder’s (1990) ‘great adventure’ of walking, the integration between the body, the mind and the world is apparent through the long history of walking both in literature (Solnit, 2001) and scholarship. For instance, geography (Edensor, 2000; 2010), perception (Ingold, 2011, Wylie, 2005), ethnography (Ingold; Vergunst, 2008) and, the philosophy of walking (Gros, 2014). There is a presence and aliveness of walking that is ecopedagogical in nature. Thrift (2000) refers to this as a *feeling* life and describes how walking is a means to make contact with the Earth. The immanent nature of this contact is captured by Lingis (1998, p. 70): “[...] when we go out for a walk, our look is not continually interested ... The perception of things, the apprehension of their content and of their forms, is not an appropriation of them, but an expropriation of our forces into them, and ends in engagement”.

⁵ The deliberate employment of the term “scapes” in this study, aims to represent the corporeal fabric and aliveness of scapes of Nature (Payne, 2018b) and the plurality of Nature more fully.

The nature of this engagement is ecopedagogical. That is, the inter/intractions of/between/with body-time-space. Thrift (2000, p. 34) brings attention to the importance of Nature, the body and time in Western societies as it is “apprehended, based upon giving much greater credence to that small but vitally significant period of time in which the body makes the world intelligible ... is much or what we feel as ‘Nature’.” These discourses in relation to the body and Nature are inclusive of the other-than human world and its enigmatic nature (Abram, 1997; 2011).

To (re)create walking as an ecopedagogy, is a body-political act that calibrates the experience of walking with/in Nature as proximal and embodied. Payne (2002, p. 17) explains: “In regard to ‘nature’, we might turn our attention to the enigmatic interplay of its ‘inner’ (embodied, human), ‘social’ (interactive, communicative and associative exchange) and ‘outer’ (external, environmental) forms as each is historically and circumstantially circumscribed”.

These are significant structural signposts that help de-center the human in this dynamic interplay of *becoming*. Lorimer (2010, p. 23) explains how ‘becoming’ “happens on foot, in a greater and more diffuse field of aboutness than the individual can ever encompass”. This emergence or *becoming*, of “aboutness” is echoed in the important work of Elizabeth Grosz (2004) whose “onto-ethics” of *becoming* concerning bodies/Nature and their actions and relations are, as Payne (2020, p. 128) succinctly summarizes, “relations of the ontologically oriented materialism of the *corporeal* body and *intercorporeality* or “ecologies of things”. These ‘agential relations’ are acknowledged in this study by the coupling of ‘walking *with*’ that methodologically aims to access the often ‘nonrepresentational’ and affective/felt/lived ‘other’ (Instone, 2015; Springgay and Truman, 2018). ‘With’ intercorporeally fleshes out “the ethico-political (in)tensions brought to bear on walking, the grounds where one walks and the concepts, bodies ... that are co-composed through walking” (Springgay; Truman, 2022, p. 175). The ‘walking with’ encounters that are sampled in this study, are inclusive of humans and other-than humans, and of things afforded environmentally, materially. As Payne’s (2020, 126) “memory work” of Ariel Salleh’s ecofeminism and “embodied materialism” demonstrates, to transform “our shared “selves” *through* relived and revitalized Natures in ecopedagogical order via collective movement experiences such as ecofeminist praxis and its agential actions and relations” is timely.

SCOPING EMBODIED SENSORY MOVEMENTS/MOMENTS OF WALKING WITH/IN NATURE

METHODOLOGY

The overarching methodological approach used in this study is autophenomenography that extends the first person ethnographic focus “further inward to the phenomenal layers of the researcher’s lived experience” (Allen-Collinson, 2011, p. 53). Engaging with my bodily movements (Rodrigues, 2018) enables a reflexive interpretative method (Ellis; Bochner, 2000, p. 740) where my subjective intercorporeal experiences offer insights that can stimulate ‘reflective practice’ in education (Humberstone, 2014). Embodied encounters are a methodological pathway offering the researcher “a corporeal route to the sensorial and emotional affects” of the research encounter “which themselves are ways of ethnographic knowing” (Pink, 2015, p.147). Additional methodological framings were required in order to avoid the lingering anthropocentrism of conventional accounts of pedagogy and learning in OEd. These additions include autoethnography (Adams, Holman; Ellis, 2015; Chang, 2008), phenomenology (van Manen, 2014), and sensory ethnography (Pink, 2012, 2015).

INTERPRETIVE SIGNPOSTS

Centring Nature is at the core of a reformed OEd practice inclusive of ecopedagogy (Payne, 2018a). The duality of adventure/Nature in the Global-North represents Nature as anthropomorphized, instrumentalized and commodified. In scrutinizing historical problems and limitations of mainstream adventure in OEd, a reverse way of thinking about how we experience the world is required. In this study, asking the ‘what’ and ‘how’, is guided by Toadvine’s (2009) “ecophenomenological” framing of “nature experience” as a decentered approach that steps beyond various anthropocentric assumptions (Blades, 2024). Briefly, it asks what is the nature of experience, the experience of Nature and the relation between experience and Nature? (Toadvine, 2009, p. 8)

Within this relational ontology, inter/intractions with/in Nature are the interpretive pivots aided by “empirical scopes” (Payne, 2018b, p. 78). Scopes were inductively derived to access my phenomenal, social, and cultural layers of walking. Examples of scopes include the senses, felt and affected, and materials/affordances such as environmental conditions and affects. To aid in differentiating the scopes a ‘sensory narrative framework’ adapted from lisahunter and emerald (2016) is used. It consists of three ‘sensory epistemologies’ or ‘epistemes’: the senses (the five sense sensorium); the sensual (the experience of the senses eg. mood, affect); and the sensational in narrative (what claimed my attention) (lisahunter; emerald, p. 40). Scoping at three scalar levels: micro (body-time-space), meso (social-cultural) and macro (global-cosmos).

Integral to this, from an ecofeminist perspective, is my position in this autophenomenographic study where I have attempted to remove the baggage, in other words, decenter, my outdoor (bush)walking ‘leader self’ and acknowledge my “contingent, contextual, embodied social self” (Payne, 1993, p.145) that bears witness to the absences/silences/domination of the structural inequalities and problems of (bush)walking in OEd.

LIMITATIONS

In a study of ‘lived experiences’ represented via reductionist texts, ‘correspondence’ of the “textualized self” (Payne, 2005) is a limitation and challenge of ‘non-representation’ (Thrift, 2008). Accessing and interpreting the felt nature of embodied experiences is difficult, in the very first instance, let alone understanding how ecologically dynamic the numerous environmentally ‘afforded’ encounters are within the broader contours and geographies of spatialized affect (Blades, 2024). A more obvious limitation is of a ‘self study’

is that they can represent “atomistic conceptions of agency and intentionality” (Payne, 1994, p.145) and the generalizability and transferability of findings can be limited.

Within these limits, my deliberations on decentering via ecophenomenology and ecofeminist framing, aim to accommodate transferability of insights to ecopedagogical praxis. In the first instance, I empirically scope *what* is felt whilst walking with/in Nature. For example, sensory scopes such as tactile, scopes of affect such as forces, temporal-spatial affects. In the second instance, acknowledge my “contingent, contextual, embodied social self” (Payne, 1994) with/in geo-historical/cultural contexts that are specific to scapes located in Victoria that may not fully but albeit partially presenced. Word limits in this paper is a limitation for a qualitative descriptive study. The two cases sampled cannot fully represent the data collection and representation of this PhD study but offer the reader empirical/lived experienced insights of an ecopedagogy of walking.

CASES: SAMPLED DESCRIPTIONS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The two cases located in southeastern Australia are popular areas for (bush)walking both for OEd and outdoor recreation. Case 1 is a seven day (bush)walk in the Bogong High Plains (BHP) National Park (Walking with/in mountainScapes) and Case 2 is three day (bush)walk at Kooyoorra/Guyura State Park (Walking with/in bush/graniteScapes). Both occurred in 2016 and are selected samples from my Phd research (Blades, 2020).

In my academic role as lecturer in outdoor environmental education at La Trobe university, both (bush)walks were fieldwork components of an undergraduate outdoor environmental education subject called Bush Environments. Naming the subject as an ‘environment’ was an attempt by the course program to environmentalize the curriculum of four ‘activities’, in this instance, bushwalking. Subject content included developing technical expertise of bushwalking, bushwalking leadership and safety and place-based learning. This content foregrounds the geo-epistemological context of institutionally (university) and instrumentally (the orthodox history of bushwalking) organized bushwalking in OEd.

Each case introduces the geo-cultural/historical context. In representing findings, due to word limits, tables are used to illustrate empirical scoping and impressions inductively interpreted from descriptive data sets. These cases partially demonstrate the interpretation of some of my (bush)walking experiences/ecopedagogical encounters with/in Nature, acknowledging not all moments/encounters were remembered or recorded. Each case asks the question: ‘What is afforded and felt whilst walking in nature?’

CASE 1: WALKING WITH/IN MOUNTAINSCAPES

CONTEXT

I acknowledge the traditional custodians Bidawal, Dhudhuroa, Gunai-Kurnai and Nindi-Ngudjam Ngarigu Monero peoples of the Bogong High Plains, northeastern Victoria.

The High Plains are part of the Alpine National Park, with a settler colonial history of cattle grazing and contemporary human uses of outdoor recreation (ski touring, (bush)walking, mountain biking) and a hydro-electric scheme.

The direction and orientation of walking was organized as a progressive movement over the seven days. Nature as a human use dominates: outdoor recreation pursuits; past land use as evidenced by the cattleman huts; environmental impacts such as disturbed sphagnum bogs from heavy hooved animals (cattle and horses); current hydro–electric power generation infrastructure. The presence of trails such as four-wheel drive tracks, boardwalks, aqueducts, and walking tracks, illustrate the multiple current day uses of this area.

Table 1: Data Sets of inductive empirical scopes: walking with/in the mountainScapes.

SCALE	SCOPE	SCOPE	SCOPE	IMPRESSIONS
Levels	Materialities (Affordances)	Sensorium (Episteme of the senses)	Affects (Episteme of the sensual)	(Episteme of the sensational—learning or turning points)

Micro	Ground; equipment;	Embodied memory	Sight; smell; tactile	Standing on a mountain top, the movement of wind is seen and felt in the trees below and in the clouds above.
	Scape	Touch/tactile;	Exertion; Tension;	
	Steep slopes	seeing; feeling	Amplitude of footsteps felt as slowness.	Instrumental and socially ordered—tracks, maps, navigation, group management and safety—a line of walkers moving with/in regular time-space configuration.
			Contradictions	
Meso	Nature as resource; tracks and boardwalks;	Viewing	Regular walking rhythm on boardwalk	Walking along boardwalks affords routine and predictability.
		Tactile; sound	Gaze extends	

Source: Adapted from Blades (2020, p.128, 130).

ABDUCTIVE INTERPRETATION

My moving, sensing, feeling body was constantly adjusting pragmatically to varied environmental affordances with/in this mountainScape that were amplified whilst walking with the weight of my backpack. Attention shifted between the instrumental affordances of boardwalks, of meeting the prescribed time and place on a pre-planned walking route, to being responsive sensorially to ‘moments’ and ‘movements’ as they arose. The presence of boardwalks, constructed to protect vegetation, afforded predictable movement, removing the variations and unpredictability of the ground. Vannini and Vannini (2018, p. 33) argue that boardwalks “serve as influential material conduits for variously contested outdoor recreation mobilities.” The inscription of these various tracks and trails and their variable material surfaces make visible the dominance of multiple outdoor recreation uses on the High Plains.

All of these embodied, sensory impressions were contingent upon my subjective position that moved between walker, teacher and (bush)walking ‘leader’. (Bush)walking with/in the environmental, historical and cultural surrounds of this scape, I was present to a mix of converging and contradictory Nature(s).

CASE 2: WALKING WITH/IN BUSH/GRANITESCAPES

CONTEXT

I acknowledge the traditional custodians the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples. Kooyoora/Guyura State Park is located in central Victoria and managed jointly by the State government department of Parks Victoria and Dja Dja Wurrung traditional owners. It has a recent history of gold mining, grazing of sheep and production of eucalyptus oil. Granite rock is the distinctive geology of this area and integral both environmentally and culturally. Rock wells and rock shelters are found throughout the park and were important sites for Indigenous ceremony and sources of water (Morieson, 2001). It is a place I have walked frequently and come to know well. The aim of this three day walk was to enable students to understand Kooyoora/Guyura both environmentally and culturally. I designed the walking route from my embodied ‘map memory’ of the place. Having personally experimented with a style of walking more akin to ‘wayfaring’, the route was not linear but rather, circled through areas primarily guided by the natural lines of granite, or watercourses used as ‘waypoints’. My

ecopedagogical approach was to prioritize the body senses whilst exploring a series of bush/graniteScapes.

Table 2: Data Sets of inductive empirical scopes: walking with/in bush/graniteScapes.

SCALE	SCOPE	SCOPE	SCOPE	IMPRESSIONS
Levels	Materialities (Affordances)	Sensorium (Episteme of the senses)	Affects (Episteme of the sensual)	(Episteme of the sensational—learning points or turning points)
Micro	Ground; vegetation; geology	Touch/tactile; seeing; feeling sensations;	Immanent time-space; Moved/being moved	Time afforded by slowing down and listening, feeling—reciprocity—what is heard is felt and seen.
	Affordances: openness and closeness;	listening;	Interrupted movement and pauses;	Surroundings and surfaces afford altered posture and arrhythmic pace in moving shifting in and out of enclosed and open surroundings.
Meso	tangible indigenous sites;	Imagining;	Seasonal time; - past/present;	Imminence of Nature afforded sensibility and sentience.

Source: Adapted from Blades (2020, p.131).

ABDUCTIVE INTERPRETATION

The cultural and environmental affordances of this bush/graniteScape were present whilst walking. So too, embodied memories from multiple visits and walking with/in this scape over many years. Present with/in the granite combined with the rhythms of my walking was a strong aesthetic that evoked a feeling of sentience with/in Nature as vibrant and alive. For example, the ebbs and flows of walking resonated with less instrumental concerns often present on longer and technically difficult bushwalks. Episodes of walking in silence, or walking barefoot, of walking off-track, or just wandering in an area, occurred. Having intimate knowledge of the place meant that the “mapped space” was not a topographic map but my map memory. This enabled a style of (bush)walking for the students to engage in that is similar to ‘wayfaring’ where attention to other-than human features are natural ‘waypoints’. Ingold (2011, p.126) explains how a wayfarer “negotiates or improvises a passage” and “come to know as they go along.” Inner affectivities were present, afforded by the energetic quality of the granite and the unseen energetic feeling of Country, akin to an intangible agentic power or feeling.

REASSEMBLING AN ECOLOGICAL PRAXIS OF (BUSH)WALKING

The preceding autophenomenographic descriptive and interpretive Cases are re-assembled in Table 3 as ecopedagogical indicators of embodied walking with/in scapes of Nature (see also Blades, 2024). Van Manen’s (2014) existential themes of spatiality, temporality, intercorporeality and relationality aid in organizing the synthesis of scoping the sensory, embodied data and are summarized across the three scalar dimensions of micro, meso and macro.

Table 3: Ecopedagogical indicators of embodied walking with/in scapes of Nature.

Thematic Scopes	Ecopedagogical Indicators of walking
Spatiality: Embodied space Self~social~ecologies.	Rhythmically attuned with/in Nature of Nature is central with/in the flow and flux of walking experienced and afforded (in)variably as environmental and other ecological processes; often encountered as walking flows and rhythmicity naturally arising. WalkingScapes affording convergent and discordant affects as/in geo~historical~cultural presences and absences.
Temporality: Immersion with/in time~space: natural rhythms; deep time.	Inter/intra~actions of time~space whilst walking. A temporal~spatial quality of ‘slowness’ or an activeness of ‘slowing down’ whilst walking. Enacted by natural rhythms, slow time or pace of walking, and repeated walks in scapes. Convergent and sometimes discordant encounters. Repeat witnessing of localised encounters.
Corporeality: Immanent vibrancy & aliveness with/in nature & movement; agentic Nature often	Intercorporeal encounters with/of/by Nature(s) afforded by environmental and cultural conditions. Awakened sensibility by attending to what is present. Afforded sensorially and inter/intra~actively presented as a ‘perceptual affectivity’ with/in/of body~time~space.
Relationality: Inter/intra~actions; meaning~making; sensorially, divergent, dissonant, convergent, haptic.	Nature~human~culture inter/intra~relations active. Absent cultural presences brought forth through eco-critical witnessing. Eco-ethical imperatives of walkingScapes.

Source: Blades (2024, p. 233).

A ‘PRACTICE THEORIZATION OF AN ECOPEDAGOGY OF (BUSH)WALKING

One basic and historical problem identified is the often patriarchal nature and practices of (bush)walking in OEd professional settings and associated colonizing influences. This alternative, grounded, embodied and inductive study of the nature of (bush)walking with/in Nature offers different evidence and professional insight, including critique. This is because it incorporates a plausible blend of credible empirical insight and evidence, as well as speculative considerations gleaned from the sampled cases of this study, yet acknowledging the limitations noted previously.

Ecophenomenological relations found with/in the nature of walking experiences and experiences of walking with/in scapes of Nature and their ecopedagogical precursors inform a ‘practice theory’ of walkingScapes as ecopedagogy. This hybrid form of ecopedagogy brings together the interactive, relational and recyclical nature of walking with/in Nature that responds to the ecophenomenological questions. It is important to note that this praxis approach is a process of simplification and reduction of empirically driven findings that are as close as possible, lived examples of what was found in this study. The findings highlight possible and probable ecopedagogical processes of walking with/in Nature which are summarized as follows (Blades, 2020, p. 263):

- Nature is central with/in the flow and flux of walking experienced and afforded (in)variably as environmental and other ecological processes; often encountered as walking flows and rhythmicity naturally arising.
- A temporal-spatial quality of ‘slowness’ or an activeness of ‘slowing down’ whilst walking. Enacted by natural rhythms, slow time or pace of walking, and repeated walks in scapes.
- Afforded sensorially and inter/intra-actively presented as a ‘perceptual affectivity’ with/in/of body-time-space.
- Varied scapes affording convergent and discordant affects as/in geo-historical/cultural presences and absences.
- Reciprocity of movement and being moved whilst ‘wayfaring’ as an open and creative mode of *being* with/in scapes of nature.
- Coupling of bodily (soma) and ecological (aesthetic) impulses activated/engaged/learned whilst walking (ecosomaesthetics).
- De-centred role of the teacher/leader.

These ‘bodied’ real/material findings from this ‘self’ (now decentered/intercorporeal) study of the nature of (bush)walking with/in Nature helps qualify Payne’s (2014, 2018a,b) educational concept of ecopedagogy as/in scapes that emphasizes the materiality and intercorporeality of/between body-time-space. They also support the three key priorities from the 2018 meta-empirical study of ‘ecopedagogy as/in scapes’ summarized by Payne (2020, p. 114): (1) the centrality of Nature experiences; (2) the importance of momentary and episodic movement(s) experiences/ecomotricity; and (3) ‘slow’ immersive and intercorporeal encounters with/in enigmatic and dynamic Nature(s).

This study also adds to the understanding of ecomotricity as/in movementScapes by Rodrigues (2018, p. 92) which is a radical revision of the standardized views of movement as “commodified, body–environment relations of performativity” to one of “an immanent movement of humans and other–than–humans–beings–in–nature.” To reveal the sensory, embodied nature of walking with/in Nature, as, for example, proximal, slow movements of walking interspersed with episodic stillness across time-space of scapes, felt like time and space was stretched and immersive. The interplay of movement and being moved whilst walking as a style of ‘wayfaring’ demonstrates the potential of ecopedagogical encounters that gives new insights. Also, the method of ‘scoping’ supports the claim made by Rodrigues (2018, p. 96) that the process of “scoping critically engages possible developments in praxical educational processes in body–environment/nature interaction.” As a (re)structured (bush)walking ecopedagogy, this study contributes towards an alternative to the traditional (bush)walking orthodoxies evident in OEd of the Anglo-North/West.

(RE)STRUCTURING (BUSH)WALKING

To ask the research questions of this study, ‘what is afforded and felt whilst walking with/in Nature?’, is a radical departure from the ‘performative conventions’ emblematic of credentials and competencies. This practice theorization of (bush)walking as ecopedagogy, has drawn into question the historically conceived and constructed orthodoxies of instrumental and patriarchal logics of practice in (bush)walking in OEd. There is a reversal, whereby Nature is at the ecopedagogical center, and the role of the leader/educator is decentered. Applying ecological thinking to this practice theory, decenters the human and in doing so, partially deconstructs the hegemonic whiteness, including physicalist masculinity, while decolonizing the Global-Anglo/North hierarchical domination, objectification and

instrumentalization of the conquest and commodification of Nature (bush)walked (Blades, 2021). It reconstructs (bush)walking with/in Nature as an embodied, felt, vibrant walking ecopedagogy (Blades, 2024).

This study also ‘materially’ deconstructs, disrupts and dismantles the structural problems and axiological preferences of adventure in three ways: de-territorialize, de-imperialize and, de-masculinize. Bell (2017, p. 289) calls for “post-adventure thinking that disconnects education from Romantic narratives of ecstasy, the abyss and the sublime”, as well as “post-colonial thinking which dissociates from myths of exploration, extraction and settlement rights as aspects of development, progress and globalisation.” These are timely indicators given the problems with the orthodoxies of adventure. Significantly, the centering of Nature in this study demanded a ‘decolonizing’ reconstruction and praxis.

What did change for me was my agency as an embodied historical/social self, *becoming* attuned and attentive with/in Nature whilst walking. This demanded a reflexive walking body/self with/in Nature simultaneously as outdoor educator and ecopedagogue. Importantly, this is not a dualism, but an awareness of convergent, neutral, discordant feelings/sensations that were/are pragmatically afforded with/in various geo-historical/social scapes of Nature. This soma (body)-aesthetic way of meaning making, understood as ecosomaesthetics (Payne, 2013), stands against many orthodox explanations of walking as a discrete activity and enduring epistemological and ontological ‘silences’ of walking and otherwise ‘absenced’ ‘others’ with critical consideration given to post-adventure experience. From this ‘auto’ study/research experience, I encourage you (the reader) to take steps and access the intimate embodied experience of walking in your scapes of Nature. The adventure is unknown.

In conclusion, this study has conceptually/empirically demonstrated emerging ecological ‘affections’, aside/along/mixed with the acquisition of technical skills and competences. The particular geo-cultural/historical and geo-epistemological contexts that were part of this study, demonstrate post-colonial thinking that overturn romantic, universalist notions of ‘bush’/the sublime and extractive actions where Nature is not a mere backdrop to (bush)walk in. This study and its (re)structuring of (bush)walking in OEd and adventure, makes an important contribution to ‘grounded’ empirical research in OEd whereby ethical and ecopolitical praxical values as found in this study, serve to advance the practical, methodological, conceptual, and empirical bases of nascent research in ecomotricity and ecopedagogy.

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Recebido em: 20 set. 2024.

Aprovado em: 10 dez. 2024.