WILD MIND

Kathryn Riley

Precarious Times: New Imaginings for Sustainability
My Research Question:

How do adolescent stories of meditation provide insight into their Outdoor and Environmental Studies experience?
Tensions within Outdoor and Environmental Studies

The position of OES within the Health and Physical Education curriculum framework

• The learning objectives within HPE curriculum are:
  ‘In, about, and through movement’
  (Australian Curriculum & Assessment Reporting Authority, 2014)

• The classic definition for Outdoor Education is:
  ‘Education in, about and for the outdoors’
  (Ford, 1981; Priest, 1986)
The Eco-feminist journey towards Deep Ecology: A conceptual model

**The Macrocosm**
- Assumptions of patriarchal discourses within OES
- Adventure and masculine hegemonies
- Power relations (construct, legitimise & reproduce gender)
- Physically focussed
- Consumer oriented

**Pedagogical Approaches**
- Meditation practice
- Feminist epistemology (political metaphor: revering the feminine/nature connection)
- Expansion of feminine power within (not a power over patriarchy)
- ‘Shadow’ work
- Earth-based spirituality

**Deep Ecology**
- Expansive sense of self
- Introspective
- Deep connections to nature
- Human/nature connection (non-essentialist)

**The Eco-feminist Journey towards Deep Ecology**

**The Post-structural Emphasis**
- Reflexivity
- Deconstruct meta-narratives
- Emotional embodiment
- Agency and individualism
- Dismantling androcentrism
- Dismantling dualisms:
  - human/nature
  - male/female
  - mind/body
  - reason/emotion

**Seeking a felt sense of connection to nature through concrete loving actions, bound by autonomy and rationality**
Nature Detachment

Androcentric values within adventure hegemonies can imbue the nature experience in domination and consumption.

Thus, feats of stamina and endurance, in physical movement as the central focus, can arrest any form of spiritual inquiry within nature.
Meet the Students

**Ricky**: “I feel ‘masculine’ in nature. Yet, I do feel more connected to nature when meditating, rather than hiking, but I find it very difficult to embrace the ‘feminine’ stuff. A sense of adventure is very important to me...more important than trying to be connected.”

**Kathryn**: “Do you perhaps feel that the ‘feminine’ is inferior to ‘masculine’? Particularly in the outdoors?”

**Ricky**: “Yes, definitely! It is a weakness to be vulnerable and to express feelings and emotions. ‘Masculine’ qualities are very important as I like to feel in control of things and only do the things I want. And I do feel a lack of empathy when wanting to be in control. To connect with others and nature you need awareness. In the bush I feel in control, and more powerful, and in charge. But I think that these qualities have a weaker connection to nature and to my friends as well. We compete against each other out here...it’s funny to see when one of my mates falls over with such a heavy pack on...then I know I’ve won that battle...there’s definitely no empathy for them!”
Meet the Students

James: “In the outdoors I feel mostly ‘masculine’, although I do feel more ‘feminine’ when meditating, especially when the topic is around flowing rivers. But I think I prefer to be hiking, I enjoy the challenges that it brings and seeing how much I can push myself.”
Meet the Students

Meg: “I feel more ‘masculine’ in the outdoors and I do believe physical fitness is important, yet I don’t think this could link with environmental conservation.

I still respect the nature around me when we are hiking, but I feel too tired to care. The ‘masculine’ is more appropriate for this trip; it’s important to stay ‘siked’ up! But I prefer to be ‘feminine’ and this is how I usually feel every day; but out here I need to be ‘masculine’.

I think I would care more for the environment when feeling more ‘feminine’ because I feel kinder. When feeling ‘masculine’, its feels harsher and I feel like I just want to conquer the trail to get where we need to go...I feel huffy and unremorseful. I am just looking out for myself. I am happier in the ‘feminine’ because ‘masculine’ is more endurance and strength based and ‘feminine’ is more connective and I am happier when I feel more empathy.”
Jungian Psychological Theories:

• Retreating into a dark, introspective solitude and isolation from the crowd (with its collective values), is quintessential to discovering our own truth, power and full sense of self (Greenwood 2005; Plotkin, 2008).

Deep Ecology: A Spiritual Solution?

Induces a shift in consciousness that entails an intrinsic and organic interconnectedness with nature...
Spiritualities...

• Emotions need not be reduced to the denigrated side of the reason/emotion dichotomy.

• Considering the role emotions play towards a fully embodied experience with wilderness.

• Rather, that one can reflect upon feelings, and feel strongly about reasoned convictions (Glazebrook, 2002).
A striking paradox...

Preventing disassociation

It is important that we do not surpass what we are, in order to understand our engagement with nature.

Transcendence is against the very experience that deep ecology is actually trying to procure in the first place.
The Ecological-self

Seeking a felt sense of connection to nature through concrete loving actions, bound by autonomy and rationality (Bigwood, 2007).
Merleau-Ponty & Emotional embodiment

• Self, as part of the ecological community is appreciating that it is through the body that we are most connected to nature (Burns, 2008).

• It is not possible to think our way out of the environmental mess, we must feel our way out the mess (Rozsak, 2001).
‘Masculine’ and ‘Feminine’ Archetypes

• Integrating all psyches, in the development of a state of renewed reunion with our wholeness:
  ▪ Finding inspiration from wilderness.
  ▪ Seeking a greater balance with nature, with Planet Earth, and with our self (Greenwood 2005; Griessel & Kotze, 2009).
Uniting the ‘Masculine’ & ‘Feminine’
Thank you!

Questions, Comments, Feedback?

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