

Article

Unpacking Systems of Privilege: The Opportunity of Critical Reflection in Outdoor Adventure Education

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Abstract: Outdoor adventure education has an extensive history of considering how its students should wrestle with privilege. Recent events have brought issues of privilege to the forefront, which raises the question of whether outdoor adventure education can play a role in learning to see and affect systems of privilege. This paper examines several elements of outdoor adventure education that make it an ideal environment for teaching about systems of privilege, and makes the argument that Jack Mezirow's critical reflection, wherein people question the principles that underlie their ideas, should be a key element of outdoor adventure education curriculum in the 21st century. The authors' perspectives are grounded in critical theory and the assumption that power dynamics need to be examined in order to be changed. By combining critical reflection with the unique characteristics of outdoor adventure education, outdoor adventure educators may be able to successfully teach participants to recognize and impact systems that operate around them.

Keywords: social justice; experiential learning; transformative learning; equity; pedagogy; whiteness; gender; critical theory

1. Introduction

Recent events across the world have heightened people's awareness of injustices in their communities, and have led to a call to fix systems that have privileged one group of people over another [1]. As each movement arises, a common refrain heard from people, particularly those with privilege, is that they did not realize that systems operate around them that reinforce beliefs and behaviors that oppress one group while benefiting another [2]. Following George Floyd's murder, many United States citizens who have privilege have been confronted with their contributions to racist systems. Other recent movements, such as #MeToo and the European migrant crisis, have highlighted how systemic injustices often go unchecked and manifest as a flawed strand of the Western societal fabric. The COVID-19 pandemic is yet another unfolding example of how systems privilege some people over others. As awareness of injustices and the motivation to change these entrenched systems continues to mount, people need tools to help them to identify hidden systems so that they can take action to change them.

Outdoor adventure education (OAE) is a setting wherein instructors could teach critical reflection to students as a tool to help make invisible systems visible, and use the unique structure of a course to challenge participants to act with an awareness of the systems in which they participate. Critical reflection describes the process by which people become aware of "how and why the

structure of psychocultural assumptions [have] come to constrain the way we see ourselves and our relationships" [3], a concept which emerged partially from thought emanating from the Frankfurt School of Critical Social Theory [4]. While some OAE educators may already teach and use critical reflection, we argue it should be a key component of the OAE curriculum in the 21st century. Modern OAE is often attributed to Kurt Hahn's Outward Bound School and continues to embody his original educational endeavors [5–7]. Hahn believed that developing moral character was central to overcoming the most pressing social issues of the early 20th century [8]. During Hahn's involvement with the Salem School prior to Outward Bound, he established the seven laws of Salem, the last of which was to "free the sons of the wealthy and powerful from the enervating sense of privilege" [7,8]. With these goals, he identified issues that troubled society in the early 20th century and which sadly remain as pressing today.

While much of contemporary OAE continues to support Hahn's principles, OAE has been and continues to be a space occupied predominantly by people who identify as White and male, have higher socioeconomic status, and are able-bodied [9–11]. While OAE encompasses a broad array of learning opportunities, for the purpose of this paper, we define OAE as the classic educational expedition wherein a small cohort of instructors and participants spend several days, weeks or even months in a wilderness setting away from society [12,13]. These courses are thought to develop participants' leadership and technical outdoor skills as they undertake physically arduous expeditions where they backpack, mountaineer, or sail from their starting point to a predetermined location [13]. The ethos of many OAE programs is steeped in colonial thought that promotes rugged individualism and encourages participants to conquer the challenges before them, such as mastering the environment, without significant consideration of how their actions feed into a dominant narrative that ignores people who have a different lived experience [14–16].

Many contend that unless OAE changes, it may be challenging or even impossible for OAE to address social issues, such as how to remedy systemic injustices [10,17]. People with privilege have been charged to do their own work to identify how their actions contribute to systems that perpetuate injustice [18], which includes problematizing institutions that they participate in, like OAE, and making changes. Therefore, we argue that practitioners in OAE should examine their curriculum to see how they can incorporate critical reflection as a tool to disrupt systems that operate within the course. As they include lessons on critical reflection, practitioners should also require students to practice taking different actions than they normally would, based on what they learn by examining their socially conditioned belief systems. Practicing these behaviors on course could lead students who are doubtful to understand that systems exist, and that they have the power to change them.

Outdoor adventure education has many elements that make it an ideal space to learn to see systems of privilege. First, a classic expeditionary OAE course consists of a small group of people who form a temporary, bounded social system for the duration of a course [12]. This characteristic allows the group to remain intact and temporarily separate from society [19], which may make it easier for students to identify how individuals influence dynamics within the social system than in typical daily life because they operate in a "bubble" with fewer outside forces influencing them. Second, OAE's problematic nature as a space shaped by colonial thought, neoliberal ideologies, and persistent hegemony may provide students opportunities to identify their own power and privilege and make deliberate choices about how they want to act during and after the course [10,11,20,21]. Third, a key element of OAE is the reflective process, wherein people engage individually, and as a group, in making meaning about what occurred over the day, week, and entire course [22]. Meaning-making is an important step in recognizing how one participates in oppressive systems [23]. Finally, the fact that OAE resembles society [24], with its propensity for injustices, suggests that, with the right scaffolding, students could carry learning that occurs within OAE into their lives where they could enact positive change.

In an effort to help OAE practitioners work toward social justice, we explore how the OAE curriculum could be adapted to teach participants to identify and confront systems of privilege. To start, we explore aspects of OAE that make it a potential site to learn about systems. Next, we identify

how OAE replicates society and presents OAE students with opportunities to identify how systems of privilege operate around them. Then, we explain how Mezirow's critical reflection [25] can be employed in OAE to encourage students to question the discourses that underlie systems of privilege in the field and in their communities. Finally, we present specific examples for how OAE instructors could employ these techniques on a course.

2. Positionality

Our goal in writing this paper is to look at how a system that is flawed can be improved upon because we want to work towards creating a more just society. In the present moment, we believe that change will be most realistically accomplished by operating within existing systems. Our paper maintains a critical approach that argues that individuals construct their reality as a function of their values [26]. We do not believe that any one action is sufficient; rather, we are hopeful that a multitude of actions can create change. We recognize that we have many privileges, which vary between us but include having higher socioeconomic status, being cisgendered, having no visible disabilities, and being White, to name a few. We also recognize that our privilege may prevent us from fully seeing all perspectives, as could our previous work experience as professionals in OAE. However, we believe it is our responsibility to try to create positive change and that through repeated efforts, we can be successful. Our hope in writing this paper is to reach audiences who work in OAE and seek tools that they can use while on course to affect change.

3. Outdoor Adventure Education as a Site to Realize Systems of Privilege

One of the challenges of systems of privilege is that they cannot be seen, held, or touched, so people must acknowledge their existence without having a tangible product at which they can point [27,28]. This invisibility can make it difficult for people to recognize systems of privilege at work, or describe them to others who are not yet aware of or willing to admit they exist [29]. A person who cannot identify systems around them may struggle to change them. Outdoor adventure education, however, has certain characteristics that make it easier to detect systems as they operate than when most people are in their regular daily lives. For instance, OAE creates a bounded social system wherein students and instructors spend the duration of the course together, typically without much or any interaction with people outside of their small group [12]. Once together, the group forms a temporary system with its own rules and norms that are impacted primarily by the people on the course, creating a bounded system [19,30]. A person may step outside of the group briefly, but they ultimately remain connected for as long as the course lasts. Thus, while invisibility of systems remains an issue, it can be easier on a course to trace how actions that occurred at one moment impact a later moment in time, whereas in regular life it might be harder to see the connections because they involve different people in different places.

The curriculum on many OAE courses presents another opportunity for learning to see the impact of systems of privilege. Much of OAE is designed to present students with opportunities to practice decision-making and leadership skills [13,31]. Those who have leadership and decision-making responsibilities are often in a powerful position where their actions affect others [32]. In OAE, instructors typically take on the initial leadership roles and gradually relinquish those responsibilities to students, who are able to make decisions for the group in a scaffolded environment [13]. This dynamic, where students practice leadership skills, can allow students to understand the impact of their choices, particularly when paired with the nature of the bounded system [13,30,33]. Ideally, instructors would not allow students to make decisions that benefit one student while disadvantaging another. In practice, some decisions may lead to inequities or reinforce systems that privilege one student or group of students. Students might decide, for example, how to split up gear, how quickly to hike, how frequently to take breaks, and how to designate roles such as who sets up the tent versus who cooks dinner [12]. Their choices have the potential to reinforce or disrupt systems, which can provide

rich learning opportunities less frequently encountered in daily life where actions and their impacts are less easily traced.

Another important aspect of an OAE course is that the experiences are simultaneously authentic and simulated [10,12]. At the start of a course, a specific overarching goal is identified, such as backpacking from point A to point B. The work students put in to achieve this goal is real, and results in sweat, sore muscles, and, at times, exhaustion. Throughout the course, the students are active participants engaged in direct, authentic experiences [12]. OAE stands in contrast, then, to other experiences that are entirely simulated, such as the Poverty Simulation [34]. In the Poverty Simulation, participants adopt roles and run through simulated rounds where they need to complete objectives while being given limited resources to do so. While participants report profound learning from the Poverty Simulation [34,35], some of what they learn comes through imagined rather than actual experience. One might argue that OAE students choose to embark on what is in many ways an artificial experience. In this sense, the experience is a simulation, and it has characteristics, such as the bounded system, that are not representative of most people's daily life. These characteristics also make it easier to set aside time and space to have important conversations about privilege, because many short-term objectives can be dropped to accommodate the most pressing; however, this will not occur without challenges or significant effort from instructors [21].

The temporary nature of an OAE course also makes it distinct from other common experiences in life, and may be a quality that supports students experimenting with new behaviors and beliefs [36,37]. Most students in the OAE courses described in this paper do not know the other students prior to the course unless the course is designed for an intact group. Because they have no prior experience with one another, they may be able to more easily adopt new roles because no one expects them to conform to certain identities [30,38]. Instead, they are able to present themselves—to some extent—as they want to be seen. The liminal space that is created by OAE may allow students to feel more comfortable exploring new beliefs because it is limited in duration [36,38,39]. Students may feel they can behave in a way that is unlike the identity/identities they present at home because they will not see these people regularly after the course ends. Trying out a new way of being can be perceived as risky [40]. A student who has their beliefs challenged and attempts to change them may feel more comfortable doing so in an environment that is impermanent, knowing that they can revert to their old beliefs once they return home if they so choose.

Finally, reflection is an essential component of OAE, which is designed around the experiential learning cycle where a person engages in an activity and afterward reflects on the experience [41]. During a typical course, instructors facilitate discussions for students to reflect on what occurred during the day, and attempt to process how different actions contributed to the outcomes [32,42]. With the appropriate scaffolding, these moments might allow students to explore how their decisions contribute to or disrupt systems that operate around them, and how their underlying belief systems guide their actions [20]. In addition, students in OAE courses often report having more opportunities for solitude and reflection than they do in daily life [30,39]. Because systems are largely imperceptible, reflection and thought are likely to be necessary to help students become aware of them and their influence (e.g., [34]).

4. Parallel Structure in Outdoor Adventure Education and United States Society

While an OAE course may be a small, bounded system, it is also a reflection of the larger society [24]. Courses are not designed and facilitated by individuals living in a vacuum, but rather by people who are part of and influenced by the systems around them [43]. Their participation in these systems plays an important role in shaping their values and beliefs. Consciously or unconsciously, OAE instructors are guided by these same values and beliefs when making decisions about the course structure, content and policy [21]. Similarly, students do not become *tabula rasa* once they join a course and step into the outdoors. They bring with them all the same attitudes, assumptions and privileges as they hold in their everyday lives.

Some of the parallels that exist between OAE courses and the larger Western world highlight the systemic injustice perpetrated within both. Many courses are designed for able-bodied people and occur on appropriated lands, often without any acknowledgement of how even the common definition of wilderness erases the lived experience of indigenous people [11,44]. While praising Hahn as a central figure in OAE, many neglect to consider the militaristic aspects that underpin how Outward Bound developed [45], and the imperial struggles occurring across the globe that influenced thought at that time. As occurs in other types of programs in Western society, OAE remains populated predominantly by people who share the demographics of those who first devised it [46,47]. For example, in the United States, people who identify as Hispanic or Asian constitute approximately one quarter of the total population, and individuals who identify as Black or African American make up about 13% of the population [48]. However, due to systemic resource constraints, cultural factors, and discriminatory or exclusionary practices [49], individuals who identify as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) remain underrepresented in outdoor spaces. Despite representing significantly larger percentages of the U.S. population, Hispanic and Asian Americans collectively represent less than 10% of total U.S. national park visitors, and Black or African Americans represent less than 2% of all visitors [40]. The same underrepresentation of BIPOC individuals can be observed in OAE spaces, where the majority of students are White [50].

Another parallel can be drawn between gender norms prevalent in Western society and the expectations placed on students of different genders on OAE courses. Women in OAE have reported that they experience challenges in OAE that match their experiences in daily life [9]. In mainstream Western culture, women have historically been seen as nurturers and caretakers and have faced criticism when they deviate from this script. Rogers and Rose [9] found that women in OAE experience the same disapproval while on course, and noted that women who did not conform to gender expectations received lower student evaluation scores, which has implications for their career trajectory much as it does in other education settings, such as academia [51]. Allen-Craig et al. [52] reported similar findings whereby OAE continues to include gendered language, such as hard and soft skills, and that employees presenting as women have experienced being overlooked for promotions, have had their skills questioned, and have found colleagues presenting as men being assigned “higher risk” activities. Across all contexts, the expectation that women ought to conform to historical norms is problematic and limiting.

While OAE may represent a microcosm of United States society, the fact that it does is an opportunity. When these similarities are left unacknowledged and unchallenged, OAE maintains the same systematic injustices rampant in larger society [17]. However, these structural and philosophical similarities combined with the small and bounded nature of OAE courses creates an ideal space for students to learn about privilege in a way they may not be able to in their everyday life. In daily life, people deal with competing demands on their attention that are less likely to exist while spending days on end removed from society [38]. During a course, opportunities exist to pause and ask why, for example, the majority of other people seen while hiking are White, and critically reflect on why this is a problem and how it came to be so. In fact, reflection—seen as an essential component of OAE—presents a unique opportunity to see systems of privilege when intentionally employed.

5. Critical Reflection in Outdoor Adventure Education

One of the key theories underlying OAE is experiential learning theory, which is often described as a four-stage cycle wherein participants do an activity, reflect on the activity, relate the activity to more abstract concepts, and revise their actions as they prepare to do the activity again [41]. At at least two points during this cycle, participants engage in a reflective process. Reflection is seen as a technique that helps individuals make connections and draw meaning from experiences, and its use was heavily advocated by theorists such as Dewey [53], Kolb [54] and Mezirow [25]. We argue that rather than depend upon the traditional experiential learning cycle, OAE should advance and incorporate critical reflection as a component of the cycle and as part of its curriculum. Experiential

learning and transformative learning are seen as complementary frameworks [55,56], and preliminary evidence exists to suggest that transformative learning, and thus critical reflection, occurs for some OAE participants [30,39].

In the 1970s, Mezirow [57] developed transformative learning theory as a way to describe how people come to see the world from an entirely different framework or perspective. Transformative learning typically begins with a disorienting dilemma wherein a person has an uncomfortable experience that does not fit within their existing ways of understanding the world [25]. As they try to reconcile how the disorienting experience fits within their existing understanding, they engage in critical reflection where they ask epistemological questions about how they came to know the world as they do. Mezirow argued that critical reflection was a key element to transformation, and defined critical reflection as being focused on the premise that underlies an idea [25,57,58]. Instead of simply thinking about what happened or how that relates to other ideas, a person who critically reflects explores how the initial thought came to be and questions the validity of their reasoning [59,60].

The process of critical reflection encourages a person to delve into sociocultural analysis so as to understand why it is that women, for example, are seen as nurturing, and why women might face criticism and judgment for deviating from that expectation. After critical reflection, the end result for someone who once stereotyped women as care-taking might be that they now understand that those stereotypes are culturally induced, and not indicative of how a woman might see herself and her potential identities. Transformative learning is typically a gradual process, so, over time, they might identify how their behavior reinforces the stereotype, and how their actions contribute to it, such as when they judge women in leadership roles who take decisive action the way men commonly do as rude [61]. They might also recognize that a series of systems has encouraged these assumptions as opposed to their earlier assumption that women care-take because it is the natural order of the world [2]. If so, they would have experienced what Mezirow called transformative learning [25].

A handful of studies have explored transformative learning in OAE. D'Amato and Krasny [39] found that aspects of the OAE course, such as living in nature, experiencing a different lifestyle, being a part of a community, and dealing with challenges, led to transformative experiences. Meerts-Brandsma et al. [30] showed that after participating in an OAE course, students were more likely to have questioned the ways that they act and their beliefs about social roles, a key step in the transformative learning process. This finding indicated that students encountered a disorienting dilemma. According to Mezirow, a disorienting dilemma serves as the entry point into transformative learning. It occurs when a person faces information that they cannot reconcile with their existing way of understanding the world [25]. As an example, one student in Meerts-Brandsma et al.'s study described how he had been raised in a sexist culture and held sexist beliefs [30]. On his OAE course, he was expected to be respectful of everyone, including women, which tested his as yet unexamined belief systems. When he returned home, he was appalled by how he saw women being treated and realized that his beliefs had changed, which he attributed to his experience in OAE and how members of his course challenged his behavior.

It would be a mistake to assume that OAE will naturally provide the disorienting dilemmas needed to provoke students into questioning the roles that systems have played in developing their beliefs. As described above, without intentional action, OAE could be just as likely to reinforce existing, problematic expectations about the world [17]. Rogers and Rose described how women in outdoor leadership who deviate from gender expectations face additional scrutiny from students, and how their gender presentation can lead both students and even women themselves to question their competence in technical skills [9]. However, it also seems clear that OAE can provide experiences that allow students to critically reflect upon their assumptions—and potentially change them. For students to critically question their assumptions, instructors will need to be trained on how to facilitate opportunities that could evoke critical reflection and encourage participants to question how their underlying beliefs may lead them to problematic conclusions.

6. Employing Critical Reflection on Outdoor Adventure Education Courses

Critical reflection likely already occurs on some OAE courses. Our aim is to draw attention to its intentional use, and offer the recommendation that outdoor adventure educators deliberately incorporate opportunities for critical reflection into their course design, and consciously teach its terminology, so that participants experience the process of evaluating their actions and the underlying premises that guide their behavior. Concerns about and awareness of injustice have escalated in recent years. These issues do not appear likely to abate as the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbates existing issues of privilege [62]. What we now need are tools and techniques that can help people identify unjust systems, consider what actions they can take to rebalance them, and then practice taking action. To demonstrate an application of critical reflection, we will provide examples that show how instructors could employ it on an OAE course.

Many instructors who intend to teach critical reflection will need training themselves on how to identify opportunities where they can encourage it. The colonial underpinnings of OAE are likely to provide problematic occasions for instructors to question their own or their students' actions. While expedition-based OAE courses are temporarily separate from society, each person brings their lived experiences to the course, which, as we said, creates a microcosm of the world in which they live while they participate. Historically, OAE has been seen as a space to improve oneself, and the focus of many courses has been on students developing skills and character traits that will position them for their future [13]. Many students boast about how they learned to live simply through OAE, without recognizing that the simplicity they experienced on course is still a significantly richer lifestyle than many people around the world will ever encounter [63]. For many students, the ability to access an OAE course is an example of an unearned privilege that stems from the circumstances of their birth in a Western country or to a family with financial means, or to being in a culture that feels safe recreating in backcountry settings [10,64].

On course, some students may also benefit from unearned privileges, such as the student who is taller and can hike faster. Their height and associated strength may allow this student to take on more weight, which might encourage the group to look favorably on the student, whereas the group is frustrated with a smaller student who cannot carry their pack weight as well and slows down the pace. If left unchecked, a moment like this can support an existing unexamined system that values ability and physical characteristics that provide immediate benefits. Because of the flexible time constraints of a course, an instructor could stop and ask students to consider why they think they appreciate the taller student more, and whether the smaller student did anything to warrant their disdain. The instructor might push students to question why their goal-driven behavior is so important that they would look down upon a member of their group. The aim of such moments would be to disrupt the system in the moment, and to encourage critical reflection on what underlying beliefs and socialization made it acceptable for students to behave the way they did. Finally, the instructors should ask students to take action in a way that goes against their conditioned responses and belief systems.

Instructors may also need training on the major issues that tend to arise during a course, which could be accomplished during the cultural competency training that many providers already offer [21]. As described above, virtually all of the problems that exist in OAE also occur in broader society. Topics that are likely to occur on a course include issues around gender roles, the limited racial diversity in OAE student groups and among employees, the requisite wealth needed to purchase gear and take time away from work and family responsibilities during the course, and the appropriation of lands that created the wilderness where many courses are held. Instructors are likely to need examples and coaching to understand how to bring up these issues, and to work with students who may not expect this component of the curriculum to be part of a course ostensibly focused on adventure and expeditions.

Next, instructors may need to understand how reflection differs from critical reflection, and generate ideas about how they can teach critical reflection to students. Instructors who teach Kolb's experiential learning cycle may want to introduce the idea of critical reflection at that point,

and ask students to compare and contrast the two terms [54]. They could begin their lesson on critical reflection with a topic that has less immediate political charge, such as how knowledge is created, and relate it to an example on the course, such as how people learned to interpret the night skies. The instructor might guide the conversation so that students question how their direct experience on a course relates to knowledge that comes from laboratories or historians. The purpose of such a lesson could be to encourage students to consider what beliefs and values underlie their thoughts about what counts as knowledge, and whose voices are heard in the construction of knowledge. This conversation could be designed to nudge the student to explore what they believe and why they believe it, which is the criteria that differentiates reflection from critical reflection [60].

As the course develops, instructors may want to focus on the dynamics that occur within the student group, and look for opportunities to link actions that happened earlier to actions that occur later, or actions that replicate societal problems. What they could seek in these moments are examples of unseen systems that have direct impact on the students' experiences. One example might focus on how a student acts while serving as leader of the day, and how their choices impact the group. If the student picks the route for the day, how do they incorporate feedback from their more vocal peers versus those who are quiet—or do they incorporate feedback at all? Once the instructor has identified the example, they could guide students through a series of questions about why they made the choices they did, what belief systems and socialization support how they chose their action, and how that choice affected others. They could then encourage the students to disrupt the system by making different choices the next time they have an opportunity. Finally, instructors are likely to want to ask students to think about how their behavior on course relates to their behavior when they are at home. If a student's beliefs have changed about, say, leadership, the instructor might encourage the student to consider whether that will change anything when they return home, and if so, what.

No easy or guaranteed methods exist to transform a person's perspective, and change how they interact with the world. However, OAE offers a unique context, with elements that differ from daily life, which may facilitate the integration of education about critical reflection, and provide concrete, tangible moments upon which students can reflect and question why they made the choices they did, and how they would make those choices to support goals of justice. One of the most critical needs in society is for people to understand how they participate in systems that frequently lead to those with privilege gaining greater privileges, while those without struggle to find equal footing. We argue that OAE can be used as a tool to support this need.

7. Conclusions and Implications for Practitioners

OAE is a distinct type of experience that has the potential to greatly impact its students [13,65]. Its qualities lend itself to being a site to learn to see and potentially challenge systems that oppress people, because of its unique construction wherein students are separate in time and space from their daily lives, but also engaged in making multiple decisions that impact the people with them. By intentionally incorporating critical reflection into the experiential learning cycle, students could learn how to question the premises that underlie their thoughts, and may consequently learn to identify and then affect oppressive systems. By learning to do so in OAE, they may be able to continue their behavior in the greater beyond. If so, OAE can return to its roots of addressing social issues, but with a re-visioned 21st century perspective.

Our hope is that practitioners consider this paper an invitation to adapt the OAE curriculum to include critical reflection as a component of all courses. Critical reflection differs significantly from reflection, and is an essential step in transformative learning, which is desperately needed to broaden the perspectives of many people across modern society. If and as OAE practitioners do so, we encourage scholars to contribute more research on what critical reflection looks like on an OAE course, and to explore its impact on students over time so as to identify how they use this skill after a course. Simultaneously, we believe that more scholars and practitioners should make better use of Mezirow's work in OAE. Many programs suggest that they offer transformative experiences, and could

better consider how transformative learning theory influences the design and delivery of their courses. Finally, we encourage our ideas around critical reflection in OAE to be considered a starting point worthy of critique. Through continual refinement of our thinking, we will be able to better identify what additional steps need to be taken to right unjust and problematic systems.

As we write this paper, injustice is one of the most pressing issues that society faces. It requires urgency in its addressal because people are dying as a consequence of systems that discriminate against them. Every action people take to figure out how to improve the world is an important one, even if each step is not perfectly executed. OAE, after all, is a space that has been dominated by White, male perspectives, has excluded people from being able to participate in it, and has harmed people who were marginalized but chose nonetheless to engage with OAE [10,11]. We believe that OAE is a microcosm of society, and that the problems that exist in the greater world are represented on a daily basis in the hundreds of courses that head into the backcountry each year. While potentially disheartening, a silver lining may exist in that idea. After all, if OAE shares similarities with the greater world, the progress people make in OAE may translate into action elsewhere.

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