Adventure Education as a Christian Formation Tool for Increased Self-Awareness among Young Adults in the Dominican Republic

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This article is based on a master's level capstone project that developed, tested, and evaluated a 5-6 hour adventure education learning event with three groups of participants in the Dominican Republic, as a formation tool for increased self-awareness, toward holistic Christian formation. Though hypotheses were not all supported, the project confirmed what the literature indicates, that through facilitated adventure education, participants can learn a lot about themselves in a relatively short time. This understanding can affect intra-personal, interpersonal and group interaction, aiding in formation and discipleship. Adventure education experiences can allow individuals and groups to face reality, taking physical, emotional and relational risks, while experiencing a safe environment that encourages core values and strengths to emerge.

In working with children and young adults over the years I have often said, "A diploma can get you a job, but only character will keep you there." I have seen a dichotomy in youth, where words do not match up with lifestyle choices, reflecting a lack of integrity. Are they truly oblivious to the dichotomy? What is their degree of self-awareness? How might greater self-awareness help youth think through the implications of their decisions?

This research process was pursued in hope of developing a holistic formation tool attractive to young adults and their families for its short time duration (5-6 hours), low cost, and effective design. In this paper *young adults* refers to those between the ages of 14-21 years, in recognition that teens are sufficiently mature to take responsibility for themselves and others.

This project posits the validity of adventure education as a tool for holistic integrated learning and growth in self-awareness (as contrasted with rote memorization), maintaining with Hendricks that "maximum learning is always the result of maximum involvement" (1987, p. 56). How could adventure education provide opportunity for true learning about one's self and the world, in a context of safe disequilibrium, where the participant can face reality and take physical, emotional and relational risks while experiencing a safe environment that encourages core values and strengths to emerge? I wanted to see if adventure education could facilitate growth in self-awareness, resulting in growth in character and interpersonal relationship skills.

Literature Review

Self-awareness

Self-awareness has been identified as having a deep understanding of one's emotions, strengths, weaknesses, motives, life values and limitations (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee, 2002), and as "the capacity to take oneself as the object of thought - people can think, act, and experience, and they can also think about what they are thinking, doing, and experiencing" ("Self-Awareness Theory," 2008). Self-awareness includes the ability to reflect, reason and self-

evaluate (Duval & Silvia, 2001), "being able to be honest with oneself about oneself" (Polk, 2013, pp. 122-123), and requires the capacity to reflect on perceptions and process stimuli. Human beings have a *self-concept,* which has been defined as a personal view or assessment of themselves (Nasir, & Lin, 2013). This self-concept frames the way they see their abilities, their past, and the way they perceive their future.

Akert, Arroson, and Wilson (2007) attribute the development of self-awareness theory in psychology to Duval and Wicklund's (1972) study, which states that self-awareness is the "idea that when people focus their attention on themselves, they evaluate and compare their behavior to their internal standards and values" (as cited in Polk, 2013). Self-awareness can aid in the process of growth and discovery, especially in the context of Christian formation where the internal standards and values are informed by Scripture.

Humans have the capacity to compare themselves to their internal standards and then assess whether they are sufficiently intelligent, physically attractive, sociable, or whatever is the ideal seen as accurate and good (Duval & Silvia, 2001). A person with high self-awareness will be able to discriminate between similarities and differences between their current self's state and their internal standards (Sedikides & Strube, 1997). Through being self-aware one is better able to analyze the cause of one's behavior and is better able to identify incongruence between the standard and oneself, and find a reason to change. "Self-awareness is thus a major mechanism of self-control" ("Self-Awareness Theory," 2008).

Self-evaluation is a related concept, referring to the process in which the person chooses to compare themselves with standards of correctness. The standards of correctness state what is appropriate behavior, feelings, thoughts, and actions at any given moment. Through the process of comparing and contrasting oneself with the standards one is able to choose to change (or not to change) one's behavior, resulting in satisfaction or dissatisfaction with oneself.

Polk (2013) posits that **"**self-awareness develops through intra-personal (i.e., reflection), interpersonal, and group interaction." Self-awareness relates both to positive and negative intra-personal and interpersonal outcomes. Intra-personal refers to self-directed thoughts (particularly an expectancy of success) and self-directed emotions (pride, guilt, shame, etc.). Interpersonal self-awareness includes the beliefs one holds about the responsibility of others and other-directed effects of anger and sympathy, etc. In her review of literature on connections between classroom learning and experiential learning, Polk (2013) finds that an increase in self-awareness "produces effects across the disciplines."

Increases in self-awareness imply more awareness of one's thoughts and values, why one makes decisions, and how one's decisions affect others. Self-awareness facilitates growth. According to Hall (2014) "you can't deal with it until you name it"; naming presupposes awareness. Perhaps one of the main strengths of adventure education is that as an educational tool it can facilitate learning through an increase in self-awareness, through intra-personal, interpersonal and group interaction, all of which can contribute to the formation process.

Self-efficacy was also considered because of its overlap with self-awareness, but for reasons of space it is only mentioned in passing (see Bandura, 1977; Propst & Koesler, 1998).

Christian Formation and Discipleship

Education is people-forming and relationship-forming, thus being formation and discipleship, not merely transfer of information. The aim and developmental process of discipleship is therefore the same as that of education: to facilitate a person becoming who God has designed that person to be (*fully human*), in relationship with God and others. Ortberg (2009) defines *fully human* as "humanity as he [God] intended it to be, uncontaminated by sin" (p. 174).

Palmer (2010, p. 88) says that "To teach is to create a space in which obedience to truth is practiced." Adventure education can be used to create that relational space, in which an increase in self-awareness can aid in learning truth and practicing truth.

Menard (personal conversation, 2013) says "A disciple grows as the result of ongoing participation, with the incarnate Jesus, in the presence of the Father, through the dynamic ministry of Holy Spirit, in the context of fellowship with other disciples." Menard identified three distinct roles in the developmental process of discipleship, that of the individual participant or disciple, that of the Holy Spirit, and that of the community or team. These roles are also found in adventure education.

Character is expressed relationally, and so relationships become Palmer's (2010) "space in which obedience to truth is practiced" (p. 88). To paraphrase Palmer, to learn is to obey the truth within that relational space. We have been created relational beings with the purpose of loving God and others, because God is love. This is what it truly means to be *human*. Jesus showed us that the Kingdom of God is relational: vertically with God and horizontally with others. He, living *fully human*, showed us that discipleship and formation is a group process through relational bridge building (see also Macaulay & Barrs, 1998; Cloud & Townsend, 2001).

Holistic Learning and the Experiential Learning Cycle

"There is a direct correlation between learning and doing. The higher the learners' involvement, the greater his potential for learning" (Hendricks, 1987, p. 57). Adventure education gives opportunity for doing and serving, in team, which can promote maturity and growth. The learning takes place both corporately and individually. The adventure education event participants soon realize that their team requires their full wholehearted participation: cognitive, affective and psychomotor, in order to complete the activity.

Kolb (1984) identified the cycle for maximized learning, known as the *Experiential Learning Cycle*, with four stages: learning experience, reflection, integration, and continuation. In adventure education these four stages are critical for maximizing learning. In later studies, Kolb and Kolb (2005) found that these stages to the learning cycle actually interact with different parts of the brain: concrete learning experience relates to sensory and post sensory; reflection relates to the temporal integrative cortex; integration to the frontal integrative cortex; and continuation to premotor and motor.

In adventure education for spiritual formation, the concrete learning experience becomes a sacred journey to be lived out in relationship, in team with God and with man, in which each person has a unique identity and contribution.

Identity. Identity, or knowledge of who we are, is found in relationship. This study engages the teenage stage identified by Erikson (as cited in McLeod, 2008) as the stage in which there is a need to develop a sense of self and personal identity. If personal identity is not established there tends to be role confusion and a weak sense of self. The teenage stage can be marked with much change and confusion. The teenager tends to spend a great deal of time comparing and contrasting self to the supermodels of the age, trying to establish identity. Through an increase in self-awareness about their own uniqueness they can be freer to live their design instead of trying to be someone else.

The adventure education event also included young adults. At the young adult stage, there is a need to form intimate, loving relationships with other people. Success is found in strong relationships, while failure is seen in loneliness and isolation (McLeod, 2008). The adventure education activities give young adults a fresh chance to form new relationships.

Tension. There is also a certain inherent tension in adventure education learning; participants are challenged to take risks (Stremba & Bisson, 2009). If the perceived risk is low and the actual risk is low the participants readily lose motivation to participate. If the perceived risk is low and the actual risk is high, or if both the perceived and actual risk are high, then the participants are in an unsafe environment and participation could result in injury. However, when the perceived risk is high but the actual risk is low the participants experience safe disequilibrium and with the encouragement of the facilitator they will take risks. They will face their fears and risk extending trust, so that the team will be successful in finishing the activity.

The adventure education event facilitator is responsible to help the participants safely become aware of valuable lessons about themselves, others and God. The word *facilitate* means t*o make easy*. Making it easy does not mean removing or resolving all the tension. Hendricks (1987) stated that, "tension is absolutely indispensable to the process [for growth, development and learning]" (p. 41). The facilitator does not diminish all tension but wants to *make easy* the learning connection between what the person experiences in the event and its integration and application to all of life through the power of the Holy Spirit.

 Through adventure education the individual learns in the midst of relationships. Others on the team provide opportunities for relationship through honest transparency, sharing, and accountability. In the adventure education event one can more easily be aware of how sin, selfishness, lack of participation, etc. quickly affect the entire group, contributing to whether the team will successfully complete the activity. The facilitator must be free to allow tension, and free from the expectation of fixing the situation, if Holy Spirit is not asking for that. The facilitator is to be present to listen and observe and, as appropriate, facilitate the learning while ensuring participant safety. Safe disequilibrium requires an environment that is secure physically, mentally and spiritually (Vella, 2002).

For real learning to happen you have to be real, and tension facilitates authenticity. According to Hendricks (1987), "Too much tension leads to frustration, stress, anxiety. But too little tension produces apathy. So God moves into our lives by divine design, to periodically disturb our equilibrium. That's how he develops us" (p. 41).

Reflection. The adventure education learning activity needs to be followed by reflection, in which the individual and the group can process their experience and emotions. The learning activity involve intra-personal, interpersonal and group interactions, many times with great tension. A time of reflection to process these interactions and emotions can help facilitate an increase in self-awareness. Reflection allows one to listen, compare and contrast. Reflection quiets the outside noise to engage what is going on inside. Reflective questions challenge participants to engage their hearts and not just their heads.

In Jesus we see how a master teacher used questions to draw the individual to reflect on what was going on inside. Rarely did he use monologue, but rather chose dialogue education. Jesus, the perfect teacher and discipler, modeled praxis: doing with reflection. In the adventure education event the debriefing is part of that dialogue. Reflection is a key that the Holy Spirit uses to increase self-awareness for further personal formation in an integrated manner.

Integration. The facilitator wants the participant to bridge what they are learning about themselves, intra-personally and interpersonally, to their own personal lives. The facilitator wants the learning from the experience and reflection to be woven into the participant's life. Teens and young adults often manifest a dissonance between what they say they believe and what their actions and lifestyle choices demonstrate. They say what they are expected to say, but they live by what they really believe to be true. "Your tongue follows correctness. Your heart follows truth" (Willard & Ortberg, 2013, p. 28). Adventure education is concerned to provide a safe place in which truth can be known and practiced relationally as one grows in self-awareness. It is understood that the process of transformation touches the inner core, the desires, the jealously guarded loves, and the imagination. We are better positioned for transformation when we experience truth personally through safe disequilibrium, as in an adventure education event.

In summary, a solid theological base on which to see people grow, is when one sees relationship as the primary vehicle, and the Trinitarian God as the complete authority. God's idea was and is for us to be in authentic relationship, with him and with others. Adventure education creates a space in which the Holy Spirit can work, forming the participant more into the image of Christ, as they see themselves mirrored in the context of relationships.

Adventure Education Definition and History

Adventure education was born out of the idea that play can be purposeful. It was believed that through natural forms of recreation and leisure one could attain personal growth. Kurt Hahn led in the use of challenging activities to develop moral character in young people (Rubens, 1997, p. 16). Hahn went on to develop an institution called Outward Bound, using the natural environment for youth development programs in the 1940s. The program included orienteering, expeditions, service, and simulated activities. The disequilibrium created by *looking risk in the face* was found to produce a platform for teaching life and leadership skills.

Later, Project Adventure brought activities into the class room in the 1970s. "The concept of transfer of learning is the single most important purpose of adventure education: taking what is learned in a simulated environment and transferring it back to the school, home, field, court, dormitory, office, etc." (Woods, 2011, p. 6). Adventure education is known to create a learning environment through unique purposeful activities. Risk is a component of adventure education,

though it is not its final purpose (Cain, 2005; Dunning, 2012, 2014). Adventure education involves challenging outdoor experiences to enhance the educational process, building and strengthening moral character and inter-personal relationships and leadership skills (Gass & Priest, 1993; Hopkins & Putnam, 2012; Wurdinger, 1995).

Adventure Education as Curriculum

The adventure education event is hosted by a facilitator who guides the participants through a tailored learning process. The facilitator aims to help participants walk through the *experiential learning cycle* (Kolb, 1984), which begins with the experience of the individuals in the group. This experience is debriefed through reflection, with questions aimed at integrating the experience to the individual's whole life. As facilitator, I was responsible to adapt the curriculum to meet the individual needs of group members as well as to pay keen attention to group dynamics in situations requiring trust and risk taking. During the activities it was important as the facilitator to use appropriate learning progressions and risk management (Priest & Gass, 2005, p. xi), all the while facilitating individual progress. The team needed to be coached in appropriate communication with one another, using a contract agreed upon at the beginning of the event, emphasizing fully valuing others and yourself, particularly in stressful situations. I stopped activities multiple times for them to recall the commitments made when we began.

There were times when an individual became "frozen" by fear. It was helpful for me as the facilitator to use a variety of self-efficacy building techniques. These were as varied as reminding them of their past successes, of their team's support, presenting options, and helping the individual to focus on the difficult area. After the activity was complete, I as the facilitator needed to reinforce the individual's learning through debriefing their successes and setbacks. This was done through exploring their feelings, what they learned, what they did, and exploring how their new self-awareness could be applied to their home and life situation. The careful sequencing of activities, the needs assessment developed prior to the program, the processing, debriefing and reviewing of experiential activities, all affected the learning potential of the event.

The adventure education event therefore was intended to be a tool to facilitate an increase in self-awareness which could in turn contribute to further Christian formation and discipleship. The background research reviewed thus far suggests that growth in Christian formation and discipleship may be mediated by increased self-awareness, and that adventure education is a context for increased self-awareness, and therefore adventure education may be a useful context for discipleship and formation. Such a context of highly integrated involvement readily lends itself to the formation process. As Hendricks (1987) argues, "the higher the learner's involvement, the greater his potential for learning" (p. 57).

Methodology

The adventure education learning event which I developed included the use of portable ropes elements as well as low ropes course elements at Youth With A Mission's five acre mountain property near Santiago, Dominican Republic. For maximum learning, each group had between eight and twelve participants ranging in age from 14-21 years. The content of the event was laid out to facilitate self-awareness, taking into account that each group was very different. Space was given to the leading of the Holy Spirit to tailor content to the needs of the group and

its members, with no written script of exactly how the conversations should play out.

I developed both a pre-event and post-event survey through which I wanted to measure any change in self-awareness through participation in the adventure education event. Due to the lack of internet and electricity at the property, the survey was preprinted and handed to the participants. The survey was administered by someone unrelated to the event. The event concluded with the participants taking a multiple choice post-event survey, either through Survey Monkey or on a printed copy, a few days after the event. The event was run three times, with three different sets of participants. Pre and post-surveys from the previous event were consulted in preparation for the following event, to facilitate improved effectiveness of the tool.

No examples were found of other studies measuring self-awareness through adventure education. I engaged the capstone project assuming this had been done, and that I would be able to contrast the other findings with those of my study in the Dominican Republic. I contacted a number of experts in the field, as well as professors of adventure education. They agreed that measuring for increased self-awareness through adventure education sounded fascinating, though they knew of no such study having been done. Therefore, I developed the survey through combining a few tested survey instruments already developed in other areas of study, as well as adding a few questions of my own. The pre and post surveys were the same except for the first and fifth sections. By having different first sections, I felt I could help the participant assume that they were not retaking the same test again. I felt that if they thought it was the same test, they might not pay the same attention as they had the first time they took the survey.

Development of Surveys to Measure Self-Awareness

The pre-survey consisted of four sections, while the post-survey had an additional fifth section. The first section of the surveys consists of questions that I made up to identify the socioeconomic background of the participants. The Dominican Republic cultural context has tremendous differences between rich and poor, and I wanted to see if socioeconomic background might be correlated with other aspects of their adventure education experience.

The second section of the surveys incorporates most of the Spanish version of the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (León, Fernández, Grijalvo, & Nuñez, 2013, p. 197). I selected 10 of their 15 questions. I eliminated five of their questions so that the survey would not be too long and intimidating. The MAAS was chosen because I did not find a better measure of self-awareness already available in Spanish. Mindfulness has considerable relation to self-awareness (Brown & Ryan, 2003), and the mindfulness survey had already been translated into Spanish and tested for reliability and validity. Baer, Walsh, and Lykins (2009) describe the Mindful Attention Awareness Scale as a "15-item measure assessing the general tendency to be attentive to and aware of present-moment experiences in everyday life."

Sections three and four of the surveys incorporated the Spanish version of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965; Atienza, Balaguer, & Moreno, 2000) and elements from the Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, BaBler, Kwiatek, & Schroder, 1997, pp. 85, 86). Self-esteem and self-efficacy are obviously not the same as self-awareness (Bandura, 1977), but the research results could be enriched by noting the relationships between these constructs. The order of some of the Self-Efficacy Scale questions was changed.

Finally, the fifth section of the post-survey incorporated a few more questions to help in measuring the impact of the event on the participants and their relationships.

Development of Adventure Education Event to Measure Self-Awareness

The pre-event survey was administered as participants arrived at the gathering place in the city of Santiago in the Dominican Republic. When all were present the participants traveled the 20 km to the NIKOland adventure education site on a mountain overlooking the city. The adventure education event took five to six hours, for eight to twelve participants aged 14-21 years. The post-event survey was administered within a week of the event.

To ensure the presence of the same participants in both the taking of the survey and the event itself, the pre-survey was administered in hardcopy as participants gathered, by a person unrelated to the event. The participants were not told that the survey had anything to do with the actual event in which they had been invited to participate, nor that the investigation was intended to measure the impact of an adventure education event on participant self-awareness.

Previously I had considered that the participants would take the survey a week ahead of time either online or via hard copy, through a person unrelated to the event. However, because individuals did not need to identify themselves in the survey there was a risk of persons completing the pre-survey and then not coming to the event. If someone did not show up, I would not have known what survey to eliminate from my data base, affecting the validity of the results.

The post-survey was administered a week after the event to the participants via Survey Monkey or a printed copy, if internet was not available. Administering the post-survey one week after the event allowed participants to evaluate the event's impact after the emotions of the event had settled down and life had *normalized* in their daily routines. If the post-survey had been administered immediately after the event the participants would have been more likely to base their answers on the emotional state in which they found themselves at the end of the event.

This project consisted of running the event a total of three times, for three different groupings of persons. Each group completed the pre and post-surveys, in which I hoped to measure an increase in self-awareness for the purpose of their formation and discipleship.

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Assessment and Evaluation of Results

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In this section I refer to the five finger contract which helps remind participants of their commitment to healthy community, as they recall the value given to each finger on their hand. Also referred to in this section are the debriefing questions and debriefing tips, some of which I used to help connect the learning experience to the participants' lives. A detailed description of the different named activities may be acquired through contacting the author or by conducting an online search.

Review of First Event

The first event was administered to nine girls who were part of a weekly mentor group at the local school. The mentor group leader administered the pre-survey and was able to do it in

the context of her relationship with them. All nine of the girls knew each other well and so the ice breaker question was omitted. The Spider Web game was also omitted due to the lack of upper body strength in the girls. In the first activity, the TP Shuffle, I asked them to organize themselves according to birthdate without talking. I realized that they knew each other well as they had no apparent need to communicate their birthdates by hand signals (as groups tend to do in that activity), as they reorganized themselves. Their reactions were to giggle and laugh throughout the activity. When we sat and debriefed the activity, the most commonly identified emotion experienced was fear: fear of failure, fear of being embarrassed, fear of shame, and fear of standing out. For me it was remarkable, as their fear expressed itself in giggles, with heads bent down. Their focus was not so much on helping each other as on avoidance of shame on themselves. This confirmed what Georges (2014) says,

> Shame-honor societies assume a strong group orientation. Honor is a person's social worth, one's value in the eyes of the community. Honor is when other people think well of you, resulting in harmonious social bonds in the community. Honor comes from relationships. Shame, on the other hand, is a negative public rating: the community thinks lowly of you. You are disconnected from the group. ("Shame-Honor Cultures," paragraph 2)

I drew the girls out through asking debriefing questions and providing a safe environment in which they knew that I valued their opinions. Their response in not wanting to be shamed has led me to reread the gospel in light of how Jesus ministered to shame-based cultures. Many of these teenagers have not experienced being part of a healthy team. The family relationships they have experienced have been ones of competition and conflict, where fear and shame dominate. They have not experienced the healthy relationships that God intended to be the primary vehicle for their personal growth and discipleship.

In debriefing the TP Shuffle one of the girls said that there was no frustration experienced during the activity. I had seen some members struggle with it, so I asked her how she would identify frustration. To her, frustration meant physically hitting. It opened up the conversation to explore how different people express frustration. She was amazed that others in the group were frustrated, though through her personal lenses she did not identify it as such. It opened up a great conversation about emotions, and why God gave us emotions. Emotions are identifiers of our inner landscape (Thompson, 2010), giving us clues of what is happening inside.

The group advanced quickly through the storming and norming stages (Tuckman & Jensen, 1977) and into the performing stage, perhaps in part because they knew each other so well. Perhaps for the same reason, there was also a tendency for the older girls to be very bossy, and to not value the opinions of their younger sisters. We needed to review the five-finger contract a few times, as well as discuss the importance of each member of the team. By the end of their final activity, the Acid River, the team had bonded and were cheering each other on. They had ceased just looking out for themselves, and were becoming a team whose success was everyone's success. There was joy and laughter. The truth they were discovering about themselves, about God, and about each other was setting them free. We did not have time to do the Whale Watch, as the Acid River activity took a lot longer than expected because of needing to take breaks to review the five finger contract and facilitate learning moments.

For me this first event was an amazing time of learning about the village culture in the Dominican Republic. It is much more a collectivist culture than that of the city. One of the other ways that the collectivist culture demonstrated itself happened as we invited the girls to stay for a camp fire. After supper they recycled the hot dog bun bags and began to stash extra hotdogs and buns to take home for family members.

Review of Second Event
The second event also had nine participants (four girls and five guys). There was only one participant who knew all of the others. Most were meeting at least five new people for the first time. All the participants were Christians and had a Christian mentor in their lives. They were careful to follow the five-finger contract as they related within the group. There were times when I acted as though I did not notice that they had broken a rule of the activity (breaking a rule meant that they had to restart). However, there was always at least one of the participants who acknowledged the error and asked the team to restart, without me intervening. A few times I made an exception and allowed them to continue, because there was at least one person who honestly acknowledged their error. I explained that the exception was being made because of the person's honesty in acknowledging the error. I wanted to honor truthfulness and show those who tried to hide the error that truth is rewarded. This brought smiles to their faces.

The team never progressed to the performing stage through the entire event. This was probably due to most of them meeting each other for the first time in the morning. However, they did move through the storming and forming stages fairly well. With a few more hours to the event they would have been well into the performing stage. The team members did not judge or complain when a team member's failure required them to restart. However, it was interesting that they neither encouraged nor affirmed the person either.

A few of the participants acted very sure of themselves so I increased the number of blindfolded and muted from two to three persons, in the Acid River activity, forcing them to engage and depend on each other more. This also prolonged the activity substantially, and as a result we did not do activity #5, the Whale Watch, for lack of time. It was interesting that they instantly all agreed to pair up the three muted members with the three blindfolded members, to make what they thought were *whole persons.* That seemed logical. One can see, and cannot speak, and the other can speak and cannot see. However, it did not take long to realize that they had made a mistake. They now had pairs with the muted persons not communicating anything to the persons who could not see, and the blindfolded persons with nothing to say because they did not see what was happening. They were well into the Acid River activity when I asked them to take time out to rethink their strategy. They then decided to pair a person with all of their faculties with a person who was blindfolded, to facilitate better communication. Half way through the activity we rotated those who were muted to be those with no handicap, the blindfolded to be muted, and the ones without handicaps to become blindfolded.

Debriefing was important because it helped the participants put words to what was happening inside. In the debriefing of the day many acknowledged disappointment in themselves because they had been the cause of the team having to restart, due to dropping something, etc. The team members realized that they were weak in affirming the value of the person who had

made an error. They saw how the lack of affirmation contributed to the person continuing to feel bad and thus not engaging the activity fully after that. The lack of affirmation also contributed to the person taking their failure personally. One of the boys in particular was able to put words to his feelings, and with tears welling up in his eyes he said he felt like a failure. In his transparency and vulnerability he was embraced by his team who affirmed his value and importance to the team. It would have been unhealthy for him to return home without an adequate debriefing.

At the end of the event, when the participants were asked what they are taking home from the event, it was not surprising that this young guy mentioned that his life was changed. He was going to be committed to affirm and encourage those around him when they feel like they are misfits. I could see in his eyes that what he had experienced in the event had marked him. Others realized their need to speak less and listen more. At one point in the Acid River activity, when they were making little progress, I asked them to stop and look at their team. What was happening? A third of their team, those wearing blindfolds, were sitting on the floor having no participation at all. Did blind people not have any contribution? How could the other two-thirds involve them? How could the blind people take initiative rather than waiting for someone else? They were a team. This led the team to rethink their posture. They assigned a person on the team to verbalize what was happening for the benefit of the blindfolded, and the rest of the team looked for ways to include the blindfolded in the decision making process. A few times the blindfolded took initiative in asking questions and became more involved in the decision making.

Review of Third Event

The third event had 10 participants, five girls and five guys. They were all from the same local church and had been selected by the pastor to participate in this event. Half of them had known each other since the church began six years ago. Two of the participants were the youth leaders assigned by the pastor to accompany the group, and we invited them to participate (one was 21 years old and the other 23), even though the 23 year old would push the age limit of this study. I thought it was better to have him participate rather than observe for the entire day.

This group knew each other so they didn't need to ask for each other's' birthdates as they reorganized themselves on the beam for the first activity, the TP Shuffle. However, they did not seem to know how to work in a team, as they never made a plan, and they began to take the task on individually. Eventually after many restarts they made a plan and began to communicate to each other through hand signals. The guys were in their late teens and were strong and muscular. They extended and locked their arms, giving a very solid anchor for the smaller girls to use as they reorganized. Once they made a plan they worked quickly and successfully completed the task. In the debriefing of the activity they realized that in the extending of their arms they were also making themselves physically vulnerable for the rest of the team to be able to grab hold of them. One girl said that she realized that she communicated through using her eyes. A few of them commented that after they fell and the team had to restart, they felt bad, but took time to reevaluate where they had made an error in order to learn from the mistake. Another learned the value of thinking before speaking. All of them were better able to identify with muted persons, who have the same desire to communicate, but who need people to take time for them.

Due to how quickly they completed the task, and their added advantage in having tall, strong guys on the team, I decided to do the Fruit Game, which requires engaging in

communication and greater team involvement, before doing the Spider Web activity. The Fruit Game was hard for them, as they did not understand that each group of persons had a different set of rules, and they spent a great deal of time trying to convince others to act just like them. Ones who were not muted, acted mute, mimicking the muted ones who were trying to communicate to them. It was a good 15 minutes into the game when one girl realized that she could speak and that helped the game proceed. A few of the others thought it was a competition and were grabbing things from others on their team. During the debriefing time one of the participants who had a blindfold commented, "I heard many voices, and I just wanted to hear one." I related that to how we should have the same desire to hear the Lord's voice. We have many distractions around us all the time, we live noisy lives, and we desperately need to hear one voice - God's voice. This takes being deliberate, just as Jesus went many times away from the others to spend time with the Father. We talked about how we see the human journey many times as a competition. We juggle for first place, when in reality our only task is to hear and obey the next instruction from the Father, which is where freedom and joy come to our journey.

To continue team building we proceeded to the Acid River activity, this time with three muted and three blindfolded members. After various tries, we took a break for lunch and I asked them to make a plan. When we regrouped, they were surprised that I changed who was blindfolded and muted. They had based their plan on the same participants being handicapped. One of the girls was visibly upset, however, they accepted the challenge and regrouped. They never successfully completed the activity but learned a lot about themselves in the process. One blindfolded participant commented that the blindfolded ones had learned to take initiative and ask questions rather than wait passively for others to involve them. One who complained about the number of blindfolded members realized that complaining did not help, and that it was better to accept who was on the team and work with that. We noted that we do not choose parents or siblings; God puts us all in a team called the family, and we bring our handicaps with us.

Prior to doing the Spider Web, I removed the 23 year old youth leader to help me *spot*, due to his age, as well as the fact that most would have deferred to him. The team worked hard on listening and speaking and making a plan. After many restarts they finally succeeded, when I allowed one exception. I extended mercy to the team when the second last person crossing touched the webbing, and told me he did. There was a shout of joy. In this event I could see that the team had moved into the performing stage, with great cooperation.

Survey Analysis

The survey instrument included the Mindfulness Attention Awareness Scale (MAAS) (León, Fernández, Grijalvo, & Nuñez, 2013, p. 197). On a five-point Likert-type scale participants scored an average of 3.83 on the pre-survey and 3.66 on the post-survey. This indicates a slight decrease in mindfulness, which is the opposite of what was expected. It is difficult to be sure of what this means. Are the participants really less self-aware after the event than before, or are they more aware of how unmindful they really have been? The results of the survey could be interpreted either way. Additionally, this result could be the consequence of an error in methodology, reflecting for example that the pre-survey was conducted on paper in the presence of peers as the group gathered for the event, and the post-survey was conducted online. In any case with less than 30 total participants in the survey the difference found between the pre and post is not statistically significant.

The survey also included the Spanish language version of the Rosenberg Self Esteem Scale (Atienza, Balaguer, & Moreno, 2000) which on a four-point Likert scale showed the average score of 3.16 on the pre-survey and 3.01 on the post-survey, when reverse-scored items were appropriately inverted. This indicates a decrease in self-esteem, which was also a little surprising. However, the decrease might reflect that the person is more aware of their weaknesses and has gained a slightly more realistic evaluation of themselves. There is also the possibility of survey error, possibly related to the environment of where and when they took the surveys. In any case the difference in results is not statistically significant.

The survey instrument also included the Self-Efficacy Scale which on a four-point Likert scale showed the average score of 3.08 on the pre-survey and 3.10 on the post-survey. This slight increase is not significant, though it might reflect a change in self-efficacy brought on by an increase in self-awareness.

The first items on both pre and post-surveys identified personal or socioeconomic factors (do you ride public transit, do you sleep in a shared bedroom, etc.), which were included in hopes of enriching the other results. The correlation between those answers and the above scales was not calculated, given that the size of the survey meant the results were not likely to be significant anyway, and those questions were deemed beyond the scope of this project.

The final three questions of the post-test (in which the participants directly evaluated the impact of the event on their lives) indicated that participants found the event very helpful. In their assessment, 78.26% indicated that they learned "much" *about themselves* through participation in the event, contrasted with 21.74% who indicated that they learned "little" about themselves. On the next question, 72.73% indicated that they learned "much" in *new ways to relate to others* through having participated in the event, contrasted with 27.27% who said they learned "little." Finally, 60.87% indicated that they grew "much" in being *more conscious of others*, compared to 39.13% who indicated that they had grown "little." No one checked the third option for each question, that of having learned "nothing." These responses are encouraging, but are also subject to multiple interpretations: to what extent might the participants have exaggerated their positive evaluation on the basis of a cultural orientation committed to ensuring that their highly-respected facilitator not feel bad for her efforts? Nonetheless the affirmation of the participants in the survey resonates with qualitative evidence in the events that learning was happening.

In summary, the survey process was interesting but left somewhat inconclusive results. To maximize learning the group sizes were limited, and the total number of participants did not reach a size that could allow for relatively minor changes to be statistically significant.

Conclusion and Implications

This project affirms that through facilitated adventure education, participants can learn a lot about themselves in a relatively short time, potentially affecting intra-personal, interpersonal and group interaction toward formation and discipleship. Adventure education experiences can allow individuals and groups to face reality, take physical, emotional and relational risks, and experience a safe environment that encourages core values and strengths to emerge.

What stood out to me is the importance of good facilitation. It is vital that facilities and program be prepared beforehand, even though adjustments may be necessary as the group progresses through the event. Debriefing and reflection are vital, as are facilitator observation and listening skills. It is of great importance that the participants find safe-disequilibrium, with a high perceived risk but low actual risk. A team goes through different stages of development and this needs to be considered when selecting placement of the activities within the event. Easier activities in the beginning, when successfully completed, contribute to positive team spirit and identity. This sets the team up for more difficult activities without feeling overwhelmed.

The responsibility of the facilitator is to provide a safe learning place where dialogue, thoughts, feelings, opinions, and discoveries are encouraged and explored. It is important to understand where participants came from, where they are presently, and where they are headed, to cooperate with Holy Spirit in the formation process. In the midst of the activity the facilitator must guide team members to engage each other in life-giving ways. The individuals can call forth personal strengths and engage to cover other individuals' weaknesses. Each person has the opportunity to face fears. Each one can experience the grace God gives, to lead and follow, each at their appropriate time, within the team. Team members receive affirmation through being listened to. They learn to value others through listening, which validates not only the opinions of other persons, but the persons themselves. When people relate to each other in a godly way they help us see who God is. They show what compassion, forgiveness, and kindness look like. Growth, healing and maturity come out of intentional learning and application in the midst of relationship. Character is expressed relationally, and so relationships become Palmer's (2010) "space in which obedience to truth is practiced" (p. 88).

The implications for future ministry are many. This curriculum could be tweaked to accommodate different needs in different spheres of society, offering various packages with different themes. This project used fixed low rope course elements, but one could change the entire structure of the elements and make portable activities that go where the participants are.

Future research should consider how shame, fear, and guilt based cultural orientations affect the appropriate use of adventure education. This would help a facilitator better interpret behavior patterns within a specific group and direct feedback questions more appropriately. Research could also be done on facilitation of adventure education events for families. This would have unique challenges as the mother or the father may already be seen as the team leader, and could quickly dominate the activity, not allowing younger children to participate fully. It would be important to use tools to ensure that it be a *family activity,* and not a parent activity in which the children are present. Finally, one could more fully study the impact of adventure education on self-awareness through conducting activities with larger groups of participants. Further research may statistically confirm the significance of adventure education as a vehicle for increased self-awareness resulting in increased self-control, toward growth in character.

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