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Morgan, Alun

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'Salting': preserving, seasoning, savouring, purifying and transforming through 'marine adventuring'

This article explores, from a personal perspective, ageing and adventure in the context of the outdoor environment. Employing an autoethnographic sensibility, and drawing on fields of positive psychology, life course development, Outdoor and Adventurous Learning, and leisure studies, the paper discusses a range of motivations that contribute to my personal pursuit of a 'fulfilled life' now and in the future through 'marine adventuring'. Adventuring is used to refer to my engagement with challenging physical outdoor activities; but also to my pursuit of learning; and, moreover, in my 'existential' quest for meaning. The specific activities under consideration are: seakayaking, SCUBA-diving, and sailing.

Keywords: ageing, adventure, motivation, seakayaking, SCUBA-diving, sailing

Introduction

In this article I seek to explore, from a personal perspective, a number of important themes related to ageing and adventure in the context of the outdoor environment. I do so by drawing on a range of related but discrete fields including: positive psychology; life course development; Outdoor and Adventurous Learning (OAL); and Leisure studies. The scope is further narrowed to a focus on 'marine adventuring' by which I mean 'nature challenge activities' (Davidson & Stebbins, 2011) in maritime contexts. Drawing on these fields, I seek to better understand my personal 'motivations' (intrinsic and extrinsic) for engaging with 'adventurous marine activities' as an 'ageing' man in his early 50s. I also seek to explore how might the 'affordances' of the marine environment generally, and specific marine-based activities fulfil these. This necessitates a consideration of my autobiography given that ageing should properly be considered in life-long terms (Dannefer & Settersen Jr., 2013).

The activities under consideration are: seakayaking, SCUBA¹-diving, and sailing which represent a constellation of related yet discrete activities implicated in my

own attempts to ‘live fully and well’ (Csikszentmihalyi, 2006) both in the present and future. They represent ‘Serious Leisure’ pursuits (R. A. Stebbins, 2006) associated with the element of water (Davidson & Stebbins, 2011) and, more specifically, tide-affected and saline foreshore, offshore, and coast zones (Wilson & Garrod, 2003). Given the risks associated with each, they are often considered as ‘adventurous’ activities (Davidson & Stebbins, 2011; Jennings, 2007). However, they might equally be considered forms of ‘marine ecotourism’² which, as a subset of ecotourism, are characterised by being: nature-based, learning-oriented, and sustainability-oriented (Wilson & Garrod, 2003); principles shared by many proponents of ‘Outdoor and Adventurous Learning’ as reflected in the pages of this journal.

As ‘serious leisure’, the activities require perseverance and significant investment in terms of time and effort (training, practice and pursuance), and money (specialist equipment, protective clothing, training fees and membership subscriptions). These burdens demand answers to the question: why would anyone, myself included, pursue them? In essence, my answer is that I have alighted on these specific ‘marine adventuring’ activities as vehicles to realise (in the dual sense of recognise and enact) the ‘Good Life’ as I enter the later phases of my life. What this might constitute, however, is complex and something I have only really reflected on recently, partly in response to writing this article.

Happiness

Certainly, the pursuit of happiness is key. However, as Ryan and Deci (2001) suggests, there are two principle versions of happiness. First, there is the *hedonic* pursuit of pleasurable and fulfilling experiences that satisfy mind and/or body. For me, these specific marine activities provide ‘pleasure’, a “revitalization or an uplifting of the

spirit” (Torkildsen, 2005, p. 120), in the present. They are also activities I feel will remain ‘pleasurable’ for a reasonable time to come, although this is not certain since they are also quite physically demanding and entail physiological strain on an ageing body. Consequently, I appreciate that I will inevitably be subjected to particular life challenges (such as declining physical ability and changing social circumstances) that might rule out future participation, and require me “to find pleasure in a broken world or a wounded self by discovering and creating new ways to engage [with life]” (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. 135). Given that older people exhibit “a common tendency for them to turn to the past as a source of gratification” (Ibid., p. 145), ‘investing’ in marine adventuring now to provide experiential capital for future nostalgia seems another worthy goal.

The second approach to happiness is based on the Aristotelian notion of *eudaimonia* - the pursuit of a ‘meaningful’ life in which one identifies one’s ‘true Self’ or *daimon*, and uses one’s signature strengths and virtues to pursue a fully authentic and engaged life (Ryan & Deci, 2001; Seligman, 2006). This sees the mere pursuit of pleasure and instant gratification as potentially harmful. Rather, success in this respect represents ‘true’ happiness or well-being, and is associated with human thriving or ‘self-actualisation’ (Maslow, 1987).

This bears comparison to Campbell’s injunction to ‘follow your bliss’ (Campbell, 2004), finding what it is that deeply motivates you and pursuing this. For me, the marine environment and ‘marine adventuring’ represent important and enduring aspects of a more general personal positive disposition towards the terraqueous world (local through global) in which I seek to understand, enjoy, contribute to, and connect deeply with it. My life choices over the past decades reflect this. I have been motivated to pursue an academic and professional career in Geographical,

Environmental and Earth Sciences, Education for Sustainability, and Outdoor Education, with an increasing focus on marine contexts.

Adventure

I am particularly drawn to the critical, creative and expansive interpretation of ‘adventure’ proffered by Beames and Brown, and their advocacy of ‘adventurous learning’ (Beames & Brown, 2016; Brown & Beames, 2017). This represents a reformulation that speaks to the needs of anyone in any context, not just AOL; and at any time, not just childhood. Rather than requiring learners to be taken outside their comfort zone, they advocate “starting from the learner’s strengths and interests and encouraging them to find a challenge that will extend them” (Beames & Brown, 2016, p. 90) to promote an outlook of ‘adventurous inquiry’ (Ibid.). This seems a very *eudaimonic* reading of adventure. In their formulation, adventurous learning requires four qualities: authenticity; agency; uncertainty; and mastery. Adventure then no longer becomes narrowly restricted to typical ‘OAL’ activities but rather denotes any endeavour characterised by these attributes.

As such, I am using the term ‘adventuring’ to imply three simultaneous and complementary orientations in terms of my outdoor person(al)-environment transactions or experiential learning opportunities in marine contexts. Paraphrasing Loynes (2018), there is my ‘adventure of the inward gaze’ associated with personal growth through physical challenge in nature. Earlier formulations of Outdoor Education were significantly driven by such a vision (Loynes, 2008a). Psychological and learning theories of ‘risk’, ‘challenge’, and ‘competencies’ and the conditions necessary to achieve the optimal learning conditions of ‘arousal’ and ‘flow’ to avoid boredom on the one hand, and stress, anxiety and ‘misadventure’ on the other have been developed as

key aspects of this orientation (A. W. Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). These do have a part to play but are not the whole story.

Then there is my ‘adventure of the outward gaze’ (Loynes, 2018) in which the environment, nature, localities, the world or even topics or types of activities becomes external ‘object of interest’ (Krapp, 2002) stimulating the ‘need to know’. For me, this is manifest in the desire to learn about the natural history and cultural heritage of the marine and coastal environment both generally and in terms of particular localities. Similarly, it is reflected in my desire to learn about the ‘lore of the sea’ - the accumulated cultural wisdom and praxes associated with maritime endeavours generally, and each activity specifically. Finally, there is my ‘existential adventure’ of shifting away from seeing the environment as ‘*Other*’ (as with these preceding ‘gazes’) towards seeing it as ‘*M’other*’ i.e. the profoundly intimate yet, paradoxically, wholly transcendent ground of being and becoming, and the associated processes of developing a deep, spiritual or transpersonal connection to Nature (Fox, 1990).

Thus, I am involved in ‘marine adventuring’ in all three senses. First as challenging physical activities that pit me in terms of my competencies, abilities and mental state against the challenges presented by nature in order to undergo ‘*personal growth through adventure*’ (Mortlock, 1984). But also as activities that bring me into intimate and experiential contact with my ‘object of interest’, namely maritime contexts in ways impossible otherwise. Thus, seakayaking allows me to approach areas of coastline and wildlife impossible to reach by other means; SCUBA-diving brings me into intimate connection, albeit it briefly, with the undersea landscape, flora and fauna; and sailing enables me to engage intimately with the natural elements of weather and sea, and cover much greater expanses. At the same time, I am learning the lore of the

sea. And finally, I am drawn to these pursuits because they facilitate a deeper connection with *M'other* Nature.

Methodology

I have adopted an autoethnographic approach, since it allows me to “offer complex, insider accounts of sense-making and show how/why particular experiences are challenging, important, and/or transformative. In turn, autoethnographers provide a perspective that others can use to make sense of similar experiences” (Adams et al., 2015, p. 27). Whilst acknowledging the legitimacy of more evocative, expressive and creative forms of self-representational research, I have adopted a more ‘analytic’ sensibility as an academic striving “self-consciously to understand themselves as an important part of what they are signifying” (Butz & Besio, 2009, p. 1665), in this instance ‘ageing and adventure’ in the context of marine activities. As such, it places my article towards the first of the four approaches recognised by Butz and Besio (Ibid.), in which I attempt to “analyze [my own] own biography as resources for illuminating larger social or cultural phenomena” (Ibid., p. 1660).

Conceptual Framework

Motivational Theory

My ‘autoethnographic sensibility’ is directed towards understanding my personal experiences of, and motivations towards, becoming a ‘marine adventurer’ at this particular phase of my life, looking back and, more importantly, looking forward. Pertinent to these themes is Self-Determination Theory (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2002) which posits that people have three basic or fundamental psychological needs, for: competence; relatedness (in terms of belongingness, connection, and care); and

‘autonomy’. Another key concept is the distinction between Intrinsic- and Extrinsic-motivation. Thus, Intrinsic Motivation (IM) refers to “behaviors [sic.] performed out of interest and enjoyment. In contrast, extrinsic motivation (EM) pertains to behaviors carried out to attain contingent outcomes” (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002, p. 38). There are a range of motivational typologies in the outdoor culture field. For example, Stebbins (R. A. Stebbins, 2007) proffers ten substantial rewards of ‘serious leisure’ which fall under two broad categories, personal and social (see Box 1). Ewert et al (2013) came up with a comparable list of principle motivations for adventurous activity based on an extensive literature review and factor analysis of a 44-item survey (see Table 1). Conceptual schemas such as these have been important for the reflections to follows. However, a more subjective rhetorical list is presented later in this paper.

[insert Box 1 here]

Box 1: Personal and Social rewards of ‘serious leisure’ (from R. A. Stebbins, 2007, p. 14)

[insert Table 1. Here]

Table 1: Motivations to engage in ‘adventure’ (simplified from A. Ewert et al., 2013, p. 100)

Levels of reflection

Such perspectives reveal that motivations involve factors beyond the individual. Unfortunately, despite an acknowledgement of the ‘post-Mortlockian’ need to consider “wider socio-cultural, ecological and geopolitical circumstances” (Beames et al., 2017, p. 275), space precludes overt attention to these dimensions (a task for another time).

Instead, this article is preoccupied with a more personal account. Even so, different levels of analysis of ‘personhood’ are possible:

- *Intra*-Personal, often conceptually divided into Cognitive, Affective, and Psychomotor domains. Of course, it is not possible to make this neat analytical distinction, as cognition-affect-embodiment operate inextricably and synergistically.
- *Inter*-personal, the level at which wider familial and sociocultural processes operate; and
- *Trans*-personal: the still broader, more-than-human (Abrams, 1997) ecological and ‘spiritual’ dimensions

Just as with the intrapersonal level, these different dimensions of my ‘personhood’ (intra-/inter-/trans-) cannot be easily separated or distinguished. Rather, they represent a complex relational web as conveyed in Figure 1.

[insert Figure 1. Here]

Figure 1: The (-)personhood Trialectic comprising intra-, inter- and trans-personal dimensions (adapted from Morgan, 2007, p. 171)

Life Course Development, and Serious Leisure Career

The focus of this paper necessitated consideration across the ‘lifecourse’ which, following Green (2017), can be seen from both psychological and sociological perspectives. Explanatory models of human development can be biogenetic; socio-contextual; or psychodynamic (Hoare, 2009). Once again, unfortunately space precludes overt attention to the first two. In terms of the third, the life stage and task models of Erikson and Havighurst have proved seminal, particularly in relation to ageing (Hutteman et al., 2014). Such an approach posits a set of life ‘stages’ and ‘tasks’ linked to specific periods. Childhood and adolescence are periods when the ‘self’ is being ‘formed’ as an autonomous social being; whilst early adulthood is associated with establishing work and family life. Middle (c40+) and older adulthood (c60+) , the particular focus of this paper, represents a time when “development is bi-directional for there are advances (e.g., introspective ability) and declines (e.g., processing speed)” (Hoare, 2009, p. 75). Later stages are associated with tasks such as ‘generativity’ (seeking to contribute to wider society and the next generation to leave a legacy), ‘integrity’ and ‘self-transcendence’ (seeing meaning beyond the narrow egoic self) in the face of mortality. A consideration of death and dissolution in personal, social and environmental senses is an overlooked dimension in Western society, as reflected in learning discourses. This is regrettable in relation ‘environmental education’, ‘education for sustainability’ and ‘outdoor learning’ given their attention to existential threats to human and ‘more-than-human’ realms (Affifi & Christie, 2018); and given that natural outdoor contexts provide the rawest opportunities for experiencing the “ongoing co-presence of life and death. In addition, the dangers of the outdoors can make existence seem precarious, contingent, and therefore - not paradoxically - a blessing or a gift.” (Ibid., p. 3).

One aspect of the lifecourse particularly associated with adulthood (in that it is diametrically opposed to ‘work’) is leisure, the focus of another, albeit it more constrained, temporal formulation presented by Stebbins (2014). This is the notion of a ‘career’ in ‘serious leisure’ and/or ‘fulfilment’ which describes a general path or ‘ladder’ that is ascended as one advances in a particular pursuit. At the entry level is the ‘dabbler’ who participates in a ‘casual’ manner. Greater engagement and commitment then leads one through steps from ‘neophyte’, ‘participant’, ‘moderate devotee’, ‘core devotee’. A final stage – that of ‘devotee worker’ – is when the individual adopts the pursuit as a profession, and moves them beyond the ‘leisure’ sphere.

Positive Psychology, Transformative Adult Learning and Mythopoesis

Positive psychology (Carr, 2004; Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 2006) represents an emerging field which is starting to inform AOL theory and practice (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005), and which is highly relevant to this paper given its orientation towards ‘optimal living’. This has significant overlap with ‘transformative learning’ theory (Cranton, 2006; Mezirow, 2000), both having a tendency to be adult-oriented and specifically concerned with maturation, ‘ageing’ and the pursuit of ‘wisdom’ (Ardelt, 2013; Brändstadter, 2006; Staudinger & Werner, 2003).

Transformative Adult learning considers processes involving “alterations in human functioning and in ways of perceiving and interpreting oneself in the world and in one life ... typically ... toward greater expanse and complexity” (Hoare, 2009, p. 75) which relates to the life tasks of ‘integrity’ and ‘self-transcendence’ noted above. Both perspectives consider strategies to enhance and engender a more fulfilling life, and are associated with a range of constructs such as ‘lifegoals’, ‘well-being’, ‘resilience’, ‘mindfulness’, ‘emotional intelligence’, ‘flow’, ‘reflexivity’, ‘wisdom’ and ‘savouring’.

A simple, yet useful, typology is presented by Bryant & Veroff (2007) in their discussion of ‘savouring’, the “capacities to attend to, appreciate, and enhance ... positive experiences” (Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. 2). They make the distinction between: ‘world-focused savouring’ which is elicited by “an external positive stimulus that captures one’s attention” (Ibid., p. 69); and ‘self-focused savouring’, “an internal thought or feeling to which one attends” (Ibid.). They make the further distinction between two types of processes: Cognitive Reflection and Experiential Absorption. Together, this provide a typology of four different types of savouring orientations and associated positive (and negative) affective states (see Table 2).

[insert Table 2. Here]

Table 2. Four primary savouring processes and associated (positive) and [shadow] emotions (adapted from Bryant & Veroff, 2007, p. 137)

Another shared characteristic of positive psychology and transformative learning discourses is the exploration of mythical and metaphorical routes to ‘being-in-the-world’ as a vehicle for human flourishing and a healthy aspect of maturation. This also relates to Wright’s (1947) notion of *geosophy* (earth wisdom), in which the human imagination is driven by curiosity and wonder to discover an ever more adequate understanding of the world through the transformation of metaphorical *terrae incognitae* into *terrae cognitae*. An important insight of Wright is the benefit of complementing a rational perspective with a mythic one. Thus for him *geosophy* is developed at the intersection of formal ‘disciplinary’ knowledge with informal, subjective and intersubjective knowledge of place (mythology, personal experience, place in the imagination). Such a perspective is apparent in ‘AOL’, for example the notion of the ‘hero’s journey’ (Loynes, 2008b), although it is important to acknowledge

critical perspectives such as its potential masculinist prejudices (Gurholt, 2018; Warren, 1996).

Summoning Spirits from the Vasty Deep: Autobiographical reflections

My qualification for speaking of ageing and adventure is not straightforward. I am of a certain age. I was born in 1965 meaning I passed my 50th birthday in 2015, a milestone which, historically at least, would be deemed well on the way, if not into, 'old age'. It also locates me in the penumbra between 'generations' – as a tail end 'Baby Boomer', or early 'Generation X', and well within the 40+ 'oldies' adventure market (Becker, 2018). As such, I could be seen to be part of a global trend where I am able to take advantage of greater wealth and health relative to previous generations to undertake adventurous outdoor activities (Naidoo et al., 2015) partly driven by the desire and nostalgia to feel younger (Ibid.), and choosing adventure activities to 'spice up' my life. However, rather than attempt to recapture my youth, it is true to say that my 'subjective age' (Settersten & Mayer, 1997) is, as with many people, much younger than my chronological age. I don't 'feel' like I am 'over the hill' and am still 'up' for engaging in adventurous activities, in the case of sailing, relatively from scratch.

In addition, in many respects I am behind in my life-tasks. I am chronologically aligned to middle adulthood but am engaged in 'tasks' more characterised by 'early adulthood'. I started a family relatively late (my eldest daughter was born when I was 44, and my youngest when 52). Financial commitments including a mortgage and changing pension conditions mean that I am, unlike many of my peers, unable to consider retirement for some considerable time and have a limited disposable income. I am also arguably part of a 'sandwich generation' and experiencing 'life-cycle squeeze' (Dannefer & Settersen Jr., 2013) because of my dual responsibilities towards my

children and my widowed mother. These commitments and constraints mean that finding and financing leisure time can be a challenge.

However, I am also very mindful that time is creeping on. As is typical of a person of my age, I have become much more oriented towards intrinsic rewards (Sheldon, 2006). Consequently, a significant part of my current outlook on life is oriented not towards material or career success but rather towards establishing other, non-material and more intrinsic motivations (Kasser, 2006). I seek to develop appropriate 'life-goals' that remain both desirable and fulfilling, but are also achievable in the context of acknowledged future-facts of an ageing body and mind, and shifting social circumstances and agency (Brändstadter, 2006; Nurmi & Salmela-Aro, 2006). Finally, my maritime focus has not emerged from nowhere, but represents a persistent thread to which I have returned at various points in my life. So, it is important to recognise my earlier biography and 'significant life experiences' (Chawla, 1999) and how it has shaped my interest in 'marine adventuring'.

I was born in Switzerland, and spent my formative years in the English Midlands, inauspicious landlocked contexts. However, I learned to swim in Stafford's Victorian Brine Baths (long since demolished), and benefitted from additional lessons, resulting in me becoming very much at home in the water at an early age. I also spent many happy summers on the beach in South Wales visiting grandparents. Television provided a magical window onto the marine world in terms of documentaries and adventure stories. I was entranced by *Robinsonade* and *Vernian* fantasies such as the screen adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* (Sacha, 1964), *2,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (Fleischer, 1954) and *Mysterious Island* (Endfield, 1961) which were staples of 1970s Summer holiday viewing. At the same time, I was enthralled by the 'The Undersea World of Jacques Cousteau' (Landsburg, 1966-1976), dreaming of a life of adventure

‘on board the Calypso’; and became fascinated by the diversity of life, particularly marine, through Attenborough’s ‘Life on Earth’ series (Attenborough, 1979).

This was the background behind my choice to study at Swansea in South Wales, one of the very few coastal campuses in the UK. Originally, I intended to study marine biology or oceanography but eventually focused on Geography. I joined the Sub-Aqua Club and undertook BSAC³ training as an open water diver, taking part in a Summer diving trip to South Devon. However, I found the BSAC regime rather exacting and, like many of my contemporaries fell away as other social attractions took precedence. After graduation, I trained as a Geography teacher and took up a post in Torbay, South Devon, a popular coastal resort, where I stayed for seven, generally very happy years. During this time, I was tasked to take the lead on outdoor provision at the school which opened up a whole new world to me of AOL. Purely for leisure, I joined a local seakayaking club which operated out of the fishing port of Brixham, gaining 2* BCU⁴ qualification. I also picked up my diving again, taking advantage of my proximity to the sea and my newfound wealth which enabled me to become fully equipped.

I left Devon in 1995 to take up another teaching post in South Wales but this represents something of a hiatus in my outdoor and marine adventuring. In 1999 I moved into teacher advisory work in the English Midlands where I re-engaged in SCUBA diving, and achieved certification through SSI⁵. However, feeling this certification to be limiting, I undertook training and assessment with more internationally recognised PADI⁶ to achieve my Advanced Open Water and Rescue Diver certifications in 2002, ironically my qualifying dive taking place in an inland freshwater lake with contrived dive attractions. That same year I moved to London where I stayed for ten years to take up positions as Lecturer at two Universities working in Geography, Environmental Education and Education for Sustainability. During this

time, apart from periodically diving whilst on holiday in warm and tropical locations (e.g. Cuba, Jordan, Malta, Croatia, and Indonesia), I had only limited engagement with any form of marine adventuring, and certainly none in the UK.

In 2012 I moved back to South Devon. A major motivator was the opportunity to move, now with a nuclear family of a wife and toddler, back to a 'greener' and maritime location and to try to take full advantage of the opportunities this affords. I was now 45 years old and wishing to nostalgically reengage with past adventures, whilst experiencing new challenges, and start thinking about preparing for later life. Part of this has been a desire to become more active for the sake of my fitness and health, physical and mental. It is also important to admit that, in adolescence and early adulthood, I experienced mental illness, which necessitated time off work and prompted a degree of existential re-evaluation, resulting in a shift towards a more ecocentric worldview. This partly accounts for my professional focus on environmental and outdoor education, and personal commitment to 'transpersonal ecology' (Fox, 1990).

The last six years have represented something of a whirlpool of marine adventuring that could be seen as an early attempt to fulfil my personal 'bucket list'. One of the first things I did was to re-engage with seakayaking, buying a 15-foot plastic seakayak, courtesy of a small tax rebate. A large part of the appeal of seakayaking is that it is perhaps the most environmentally benign form of 'marine adventuring' (Cater & Cater, 2007, p. 93). Another major appeal is that it allows for solo exploration of the local coastline with the potential for wild camping. However, lacking confidence, I joined a local canoe and kayaking club in order to undergo training and engage in peer paddling trips in a friendly and supportive context in areas I would otherwise not have known about. I have recently undertaken club-run courses in VHF marine radio, outdoor first aid, and BCU 3 Star. Real highlights have been communing with a seal in

the Dart and watching the sun set near Plymouth breakwater. As the courses have progressed, I have found my sense of self-confidence and self-efficacy as a paddler to have increased. Consequently, I felt confident to take my family for inflatable canoe trips down the Teign and Dart rivers, and on Lakes Geneva and Annecy on a 'Big Birthday' trip visiting the place of my birth in my 50th year.

Alongside paddling, I have re-engaged with SCUBA-diving, with the avowed intention of becoming more a committed 'homie' as opposed to 'remotie' diver (Garrod & Gössling, 2008, pp. 19-20). On the one hand, this represents a more sustainable practice given the lack of long-haul travel to 'honey-pot' destinations with fragile marine ecosystems. On the other hand, I am motivated to come to know my home marine environment much more intimately, which relates to place attachment in diving (Kler, 2007; Moskwa, 2012; Wynveen et al., 2012). However, my temperate 'backyard dive sites' involve a more 'extreme' form of SCUBA diving (Lew, 2013), as it necessitates "additional diving skills to accommodate low visibility and colder water temperatures at home" (Johansen, 2013, p. 92). Consequently, I have undertaken technical Drysuite training which has also opened up opportunities to undertake 'cold water' diving overseas, most memorably off Tyee Cove, Vancouver Island in the Salish Sea last Autumn. However, I have to confess that an additional motivation is the 'esteem' associated with becoming a more advanced, technical diver. Since then, I have undertaken a number of local dives, and have volunteered as a Community Seagrass Initiative surveyor. This had the multiple benefit of providing free diving, an opportunity to socialise with likeminded people, and to learn about marine biology – a win-win-win.

Finally, my move back to Devon has instigated a real desire to live out a long-held dream of sailing. My 50th Birthday gift from my wife was a day of skippered

cruising together, with opportunities to ‘have a go’. Then, in Summer 2018, I was presented had an amazing opportunity to volunteer as ‘crew’ for a voyage from Plymouth to Dublin on a gaff-rigged ketch with only rudimentary luxuries. The journey took eleven days (compared to a 90 minute flight back to Exeter) with moorings in Portmellon and Mullion Cove in Cornwall, St Mary’s in the Isles of Scilly; and, after a 34 hours non-stop crossing across the Celtic Sea, Waterford, Kilmore Quay, Arklow, Dún Laoghaire and finally Dublin City. This was a magical experience and has instigated a real desire to embark on a third new ‘serious leisure career’ (see figure 2).

This period of frenzied activity has also coincided with some very recent ‘wake-up’ calls in terms of my health. I was diagnosed with glaucoma in 2016, a condition that seriously affected the eyesight in later life of both my maternal grandmother and mother, a prospect I am now faced with. In 2017 I suffered a compacted fracture of my right shoulder (proximal humerus) in three places, necessitating surgery to implant a PHILOS plate and pins and an extensive period of physiotherapy. The former represents a condition associated with ageing; the latter a consequence of mishaps that necessarily accrue as life progresses (joining the compound fracture of my wrist suffered when 16, and the ongoing issues with my sprained left shoulder), but which might have further significant implications as I age.

[insert Figure 2. Here]

Figure 2. My ‘Serious Leisure Career Trajectories’ and associated training/certification (adapted from Robert A. Stebbins, 2014, p. 34).

Current streams towards fulfilment

My present re-/engagement with ‘marine adventuring’ involves a complex set of motivations. I wish to become healthier, partly to slow down the ageing processes. I

recognise physical activity in nature as an effective vehicle for reducing stress, increasing fitness and physical health, whilst enhancing ‘mental health’ and ‘resilience’ (Thompson-Coon J. et al., 2011). Such ‘extrinsic’ (Frederick-Recascino, 2002) motivations could be supported through other physical and outdoor activities. However, I am also motivated by an ‘intrinsic’ drive towards ‘self-fulfilment’ and ‘self-actualisation’, a metaphoric ‘current’ (one intended meaning of the subheading) carrying me forward from the ‘here and now’ (second intended meaning).

Whilst it is important to acknowledge critical perspectives on ‘fulfilment’ in outdoor culture (see e.g. Becker, 2018), it remains a key theme in the literature (e.g. A. Ewert et al., 2013) and a fruitful line of autoethnographic scrutiny. On the one hand, I seek to enhance and ‘savour’ lived experience in the present, as I appreciate with ever-greater urgency the precious gift of ‘being-in-the-world’ in the face of inevitable mortality. On the other hand, I desire ‘late-life satisfaction and well-being’ (Hendricks, 2013, p. 255) as I move towards, and enter, old age. My present engagements represent part of a ‘projected script’ or ‘possible future state’ or ‘self’ that functions like an incentive to action (Hendricks, 2013, p. 253).

The personal significance of ‘marine adventuring’ requires a more nuanced account. I have devised an intentionally rhetorical inventory of motivations, partly drawing on the literature⁷, and partly from subjective reflection, to frame the finer grained discussion to follow. Each aspect is relatively distinct, yet with seepage and convergence between as is inevitable with such a fluid concept (third intended meaning) as motivation (A. Ewert et al., 2013, p. 93). Collectively, they represent the ‘*e-xperiences*’ (hence the contrived alliteration) I, as an ageing man, am motivated to pursue through ‘marine adventuring’.

‘Escape’, ‘Entertainment’, ‘Excitement’

These represent less ‘serious’, more playful aspects. An undeniable motivation is to *escape* from my more mundane responsibilities of work and, dare I say it, family. Alongside ‘me time’, I seek ‘pleasure’ (Torkildsen, 2005, p. 120) and being at the seaside does this. At the very least, it is *entertaining*, but can also provide an exemplary context for stimulation, thrill-seeking and *excitement*.

‘Embodiment’, ‘Ecstasy’

Embodiment relates to ‘hedonic’ happiness and ‘luxuriating’ forms of savouring. A rediscovery of this ‘aesthetic-somatic-sensual’ (Becker, 2008) or ‘somaesthetic’ (Shusterman, 2012) dimensions of life through outdoor adventure is a significant personal motivation. *Ecstasy* relates to the ‘marvelling’ form of savouring, and notions such as ‘flow’ (Csikszentmihályi, 2002), ‘mindfulness’, being in ‘awe’, and, specifically in relation to water, ‘blue mind’, “a mildly meditative state characterized by calm, peacefulness, unity, and a sense of general happiness and satisfaction with life in the moment” (Nichols, 2015, p. 6). I recognise, and seek, these somaesthetically induced affective conditions through ‘marine adventuring’, although my competence in any of the three activities has not yet reached the level at which ‘flow’ has featured but fleetingly.

Such states are transitory and fragile. For example, my initial affective state when engaged in any of the activities is one of thrill, sensory delight and ‘marvelling’. However, all too often, after a period of time I can become habituated, my attention tends to wander and the thrill of the experience wanes (Bryant & Veroff, 2007). With respect to SCUBA-diving it might be as little as 30 to 40 minutes. Given the amount of time and effort (gearing up, travel to and from the dive site etc.) this represents a poor

‘cost of acquisition’ and one I seek to improve through enhancing my ‘savouring’ skills. My sailing voyage also had moments of boredom associated with the monotony of aspects of the journey when I was simply not ‘experientially absorbed’.

Then there is the shadow emotion of fear when experiential immersion is negative. I have experienced minor moments of apprehension whilst SCUBA-diving and seakayaking, but nothing like the couple of moments of alarm I experienced during my sailing adventure whilst at the helm. No matter this was due to perceived rather than actual risk, the fear was real nonetheless. The first occasion was whilst negotiating particularly big waves as we left the Isles and Scilly; and the second whilst making little headway against wind and tide when I was confronted with a fleet of speeding yachts, spinnakers unfurled bearing down on us and I feared a collision. Such moments negate any possibility of positive emotion and, indeed, learning; although having settled the nerves, the affective state was transformed to one of exhilaration once again.

‘Environment’, Element, ‘Emplacement’

In keeping with the literature (Cater & Cater, 2007; Davidson & Stebbins, 2011; A. Ewert et al., 2013), ‘marine adventuring’ satisfies my urge to engage intimately with nature and the *environment*. I am drawn to the *elemental* properties of water; “the way water moves, reflects, glimmers and glows that mesmerizes and transfixes” (Nichols, 2015, p. 93) partly accounts for its power to elicit ‘blue mindfulness’ in me. Its physical properties arouses my embodied and somaesthetic engagement:

It has a tangible quality, a weight, heavier than air yet, unlike earth, we can move through it. Like earth, water supports us and takes our weight; in fact, because the human body has a density similar to water’s, we are buoyed up by it. We feel as if we weigh less in water

(Ibid., pp. 99-100)

Leather (2018) expresses well its attributes as a medium for adventure:

Water is unique ... for it is an inherently unnatural place for us to be. The risk of drowning is ever-present, the conduction of heat away from the body when immersed is far greater, not least in the UK, and the shock of cold water on the human body has an 'immediacy' for us to process. Yet at the same time there can be a wonderful alluring and at times mystical quality to water.

(p. 129)

Specifically in relation to SCUBA diving, water has additional somaesthetic affordances:

Sight and hearing function differently underwater; your movements are slowed, delayed, elongated, magnified; ... colors [sic.] are distorted, distance perception is uncertain, sound (what there is) travels faster and can seem to come from everywhere at the same time. ... [W]e are able to hover horizontally above a fish or plant simply by using our breath and a little movement of our fins to keep us stationary.

(Nichols, 2015, p. 120)

Emplacement: Beyond these elemental properties lie the additional allures of watery contexts or places. I am drawn to the coast for the sensorial:

immersiveness of the experience: the sounds of water, wind, birds, or even the silence; the smells of earth, water, flora, fresh air, or seaweed; the restful yet novel sights of gradations of green, blue, red, yellow, orange, or the movement of leaves and water ruffled by wind or the occasional animal or fish; the feel of cool water against a hand or foot; the yielding yet firm sensation of earth or fallen leaves underfoot; or the extra focus needed to step carefully over rock, branch, puddle, or shell.

(Nichols, 2015, p. 62)

Then there are *specific* wetlands and marine places and spaces. I am knowingly developing a strong maritime 'place attachment' (Altman & Low, 1992) to localities in the South West, and indeed, the whole region. I am also developing auxiliary 'maritime

place attachments' by exercising 'place-responsiveness' (Wattchow & Brown, 2011) wherever I find myself through learning about maritime natural history, culture and heritage; sampling locally sourced, seasonal and traditional seafood; and 'marine adventuring'. By way of illustration, I have developed an affinity with coastal British Columbia and the Salish Sea where I have dived, eaten salmon and halibut and learned about indigenous and settler cultures.

Embrace, Esteem

Embrace here refers to 'social' dynamics such as seeking intimacy, belonging, friendship, and companionship amongst a group of likeminded people. Early in my career, as a young, single male in a part of the world with no family or friends, I was looking for opportunities to socialise and meet like-minded people through engaging with local seakayaking and SCUBA-diving clubs. Having returned to Devon, I have similar social motivations.

Esteem refers to the need for societal status. I seek approbation from within the chosen groups by becoming a fully participating and skilled member. Equally, I admit to being attracted by the 'mystique' associated with 'marine adventurers', and seek to be recognised as one. These could be seen as instances of 'basking' in elite membership and reflected glory. In the past I had a proclivity to wear my status conspicuously. A wristwatch served the pragmatic needs of toughness, water and depth resistance but also signalled to those in the know that I am a 'marine adventurer'. Cynically, the leisure industry taps into this motivation through 'lifestyle marketing'. Nowadays I am much less materialistic but still enjoy wearing clothes and adornments with marine themes, or relating to places I have 'adventured' in as part of my own self-identity and nostalgia but also as an outward sign.

However, there is the curious esteem phenomenon of ‘inverted snobbery’ in which cheap and ‘distressed’ gear is preferred over new and ‘top of the range’ by ‘old hands’, leaving neophytes open to the mockery of ‘all the gear, no idea’. This elitist and exclusionary practice can elicit shame which is galling since my desire to buy ‘as good as my purse allows’ is based on the need to feel as safe as possible, and for the simple expediency of avoiding expensive later upgrades rather than for conspicuous consumption.

Expertise, Enskilment, Elation

The desire to ‘ascend’ the ‘leisure career ladder’ to become ever more *expert* can be seen as an EM to achieve these social-identity needs. But it also represents an IM in its own right, *to accomplish*: “engaging in activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from trying to surpass oneself, creating, or accomplishing something” (Vallerand & Ratelle, 2002, p. 42). One such trajectory is in terms of ‘practical *enskilment*’ – “the embodiment of capacities of awareness and response by environmentally situated agents” (Ingold, 2000, p. 5). For each activity, ‘ascending the ladder’ demands incremental *enskilment*, from ‘basic’ to Mastery. My ‘expertise’ is at different positions along the ‘ladder’ in each activity (see figure 2.), but I am able to attain a sense of *elation*, ‘basking’ or ‘joyful pride in accomplishment’ (Elliot et al., 2002), whenever I have successfully completed a task or challenge or reached a new level of expertise.

For example, my recent success in kayak ‘rolling’, albeit it in the enclosed and controlled environment of a municipal pool with a pawlata roll, was enough to warrant celebrations with a bottle of ‘bubbly’. I also feel a more global sense of accomplishment in being a capable technical diver. At the other end of my expertise,

any claim I can make “to *be* an offshore sailor ... requires engaging in the skilful practices of sailing and living aboard a small vessel.” (Brown, 2017, p. 685 [emphasis in original]). I embarked on a just such a steep enskilment curve on my voyage across the Celtic Sea albeit only as far as approaching ‘competent crew’ status. Nevertheless, I experienced elation when hoisting sails, tying bowlines, taking the helm, and steering a course by compass and pilotage as an authentic crewmember.

Education

The need ‘*to know*’, “engaging in activities because of the pleasure and satisfaction derived from learning, exploring, and understanding new things” (Vallerand & Ratelle, p. 42), represents yet another important IM. For me, the ‘marine environment’ and associated ‘marine activities’ and/or places represent multidimensional ‘objects of interest’ (Krapp, 2002) approachable from a number of angles: natural history, techno-scientific; enskilment, and cultural (heritage and ‘lore’). My learning motivation is typically that of an ‘adult learner’ in that I am a voluntarily autodidact with a preference for experiential and, sometimes, collaborative learning (Cranton, 2006). But there is also an interesting recapitulation of pre-adult ‘formative’ learning. Being only moderately expert or, indeed in some respects a ‘novice’, I have had to follow a more ‘formal’ path. Thus I have been obliged to follow a range of curricula and awards associated with each respective activity, facilitated by ‘mentors’ or trainers to permit my apprenticeship into new ‘communities of practice’. This has often led to something of a role reversal for me as I have found myself being mentored by peers and, particularly on my recent sailing trip, early adults nearly thirty years my junior who have far greater experience.

Eco-Self

But there is also important ‘*transformative*’ learning at play as I seek to put my life into a broader, transpersonal context of meaning. I am existentially drawn towards ‘realising’ my ‘ecological Self’ (Fox, 1990; Mathews, 1994) partly through the use of symbols, images, archetypes, and ‘soul work’ (Cranton, 2006). I also wish to experience Extromotive Mystical Experiences, transpersonal experiences in which the “...the mystical features – unity, knowledge, reality, love, luminosity, and so forth – characterize experience of the natural world” (Marshall, 2005, p. 2). ‘Marine adventuring’ then becomes a vehicle to enter sublime nature rather than sport in its own right. I experienced an intimation of this ‘ecstatic’ level of consciousness during my voyage across the Celtic sea when, as ‘watch’ I *became* an integral part of a much larger whole (see figure 3). This relates to the ‘marvelling’ and ‘thanksgiving’ notions of ‘savouring’ as I experienced a sense awe, humility and of deep gratitude directed to *M’other* Nature.

[insert Figure 3. Here]

Figure 3: ‘Watch: Dolphins at Sunrise across the Celtic Sea’ (photograph: the author)

Salting

This seems a pertinent place to reflect on the choice of title for this piece. The term ‘salting’ is intended to convey a number of meanings and sensibilities which relate to the foregoing discussion. Of course, at the literal level, a key characteristic of marine adventuring is that it takes place in salt water. Natural consequences are the associated tastes, smells, and skin-sensations as the body becomes sprayed, soaked or encrusted with salt. But salt represents a substance of significant additional metaphoric power. At one level, the process of ageing is associated with greying hair, figuratively

described as ‘salt-and-pepper’ colouring. It is certainly the case that my hair – both scalp and stubble – has, over the last ten years, become increasingly grizzled. Salt is also used for a variety of culinary purposes: as a preservative (intimating a desire to slow down the ageing process of decline and decrepitude); and as a seasoning to enhance flavours (which relates to desires to ‘spice up my life’ and ‘savour’ life more fully).

Also, salt is formed through crystallisation, the incremental process of transformation resulting in a phase change (from solute to solid) upon the delicate balance between an energising force and a non-agitated state. This transformatory process is symbolic of maturation and wisdom encountered in learning theories, developmental-, positive- and transpersonal-psychology, and spirituality. Here the processes of development and maturation are not merely driven by chronological age but must be accounted for by the catalytic effects of particular life experiences, and the effect of personal motivations (energising) and reflexivity (calming). The resultant substance is often seen as pure, an association behind the link between salt and sanctification. In alchemy salt is often used to represent the material principle, and is represented by a circle bisected at the equator, symbolically drawing together different realms (material and spiritual) (Cheak, n.d.). Salt symbolically functions “as the fulcrum of death and revivification” (p. no pagination), which is pertinent given the emphasis on embodiment and a desire to reinvigorate life in its latter stages.

Finally, increasing salinity is also indicative of the transition of a river course from fresh water/enclosed channel to estuary and thence to open sea or ocean. This imagery carries spiritual connotations of the journey of life as the individual self (the river water) merges to join the 'Oceanic Self', pertinent themes in considering the approach of mortality and the search for integration and transcendent meaning

associated with later life-tasks, a metaphor that speaks strongly to me (see figure 4). In the discussion above, the term ‘salting’ is used as a verb to describe the associated processes and performative actions associated with these various senses: preserving, seasoning, savouring, purifying and transforming. However, it is also intended to be read as a noun i.e. a ‘salting’ (c.f. an ‘earthling’) to label a person (including myself) engaged in these processes, or having, or developing, the qualities of a ‘marine adventurer’.

[insert Figure 4. here]

Figure 4: Porthclais, Pembrokeshire (where the River Alun enters the Sea) (photograph: the author)

Moorings

This seems a better subheading for these final comments than 'summary' or 'conclusions' since it carries connotations of a stopping or resting places for replenishment and reflection; but also a staging post for the onward journey to come. This Special Issue's focus on ageing and adventure represents a welcome opportunity to explore a somewhat neglected topic (A. W. Ewert & Sibthorp, 2014). However, there is an increasing literature that addresses this theme generally, and in relation to water-based activities specifically (see e.g. Hickman et al., 2016; Kluge, 2005; Loeffler, 2018; Sugerman, 2001) to which this article hopefully contributes. It also directs attention away from an exclusive focus on youth and the formal education sector to acknowledge Outdoor Learning on its own terms, and place it within broader informal, lifelong and life-wide learning discourses, developments that I applaud. Thankfully, there has been a noticeable shift away from medicalized and biologized discourses which emphasise ‘ageing-as-problem’ associated with illness and impairment, whether physical or

psychological (Dannefer & Phillipson, 2013) towards a broader social orientation and an emphasis on “positive potentialities of being an older person” (Johnson cited in Ibid., p. xxi).

As I move forward I am motivated more than ever to continue in my ‘marine adventuring’ careers. Echoing an earlier notion I developed in the context of woodland (Morgan, 2018), my ambition is to progress from Marinaïve to Marinative in each of the three chosen pursuits. This will not be easy, however, as I face the challenges of coordinating these efforts across pursuits, as each demand a degree of exclusive commitment; and between them, and my work and familial commitments. I also want to continue in my autoethnographic inquiry, and hope in future to contextualise my somewhat solipsistic account within broader, more critical socio-contextual analyses.

Hopefully the foregoing discussions have revealed how ‘marine adventuring’ contributes to my pursuit of multidimensional ‘*experiential*’ late-life learning and motivations. Particularly powerful are the ‘marvelling’, ‘thanksgiving’, ‘integrity’ and ‘self-transcendence’ I experienced through intimate communion with the ocean environment, my ultimate *M’other*. However, I wish to close with an anecdote that highlights another particularly meaningful facet of ‘marine adventuring’ to my ageing self. Standing on the outer pontoon about to depart on my offshore sailing voyage, my eight-year old daughter turned to me and whispered 'can I come with you?' This filled me with a range of sentiments. Finally, the realisation had hit home to us both that we were to be parted for a significant time and were upset at the prospect. But it was also clear that she was stirred by the likely adventures that lay before me and wanted to share them. Later that evening my wife texted to say that my daughter had announced that she wanted to become a marine biologist, and insisted they all watch Blue Planet together. This made me feel really proud and emotional. Even out of contact, I was an

inspiration of sorts and had unwittingly attained a degree of desired ‘generativity’. But maybe, in some small way, it was also an intimation of the relationship we have built that will transcend my ‘awfully big adventure’ to come.

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¹ Self-Contained Underwater Breathing Apparatus

² Marine Ecotourism pursuits include: Wildlife watching (marine mammals, whales, fish, birds), Scuba diving, beach walking, rock pooling, snorkelling, walking along coast, sightseeing trips by surface boat, submarine, aircraft; and also land-based marine activities such as visiting sea life centres and aquaria (Wilson & Garrod, 2003)

³ BSAC – British Sub Aqua Club

⁴ British Canoe Union

⁵ SSI - Scuba Schools International – the only scheme available locally

⁶ PADI - Professional Association of Diving Instructors

⁷ This list is inspired by Cater and Cater (op cit.) in their discussion of ‘self-actualization’ through ‘marine ecotourism’, but I have felt it necessary to supplement their items.