Jasper S. Hunt Jr.

Jasper Hunt's professional involvement in experiential education began in 1970, when he was hired as a Sherpa by the North Carolina Outward Bound School. Since then he has held a variety of instructional positions with North Carolina Outward Bound School, Pacific Crest Outward Bound School, the Darrow Hall "Operation Breakout" Juvenile Delinquency Program, the University of Colorado (Department of Philosophy and School of Education), Western Washington University (Associate Professor of Philosophy of Education, Department of Educational Administration and Foundations) and Mankato State University. His formal education includes: B.A. (Philosophy) The Evergreen State College, (Olympia, Washington); Graduate Study (Theology) Graduate Theological Union (Berkeley, California); M.S. (Experiential Education) Mankato State University (Mankato, Minnesota) and Ph.D. (Philosophy of Education) University of Colorado (Boulder, Colorado). He is currently Professor of Experiential Education at Mankato State University.
Chapter Three / Informed Consent


Chapter Four

Deception

The directors of a church youth conference had a goal of teaching the young people about the dangers and realities of state controlled, totalitarian interferences in religious freedom. The directors were agreed that an experiential approach to this problem would be a more effective teaching technique than simply giving a lecture on the issue. The conference was being held in a camp setting, removed from much contact with the outside world. Several adult church workers, not known to any of the young people, arrived on the scene. After supper, while the campers were cleaning up the dishes, the adult workers burst into the kitchen. They had stockings over their heads and they carried unloaded rifles and pistols. All of the young people were herded into a group and were informed that they were hostages and that the only way to secure their release was to sign a document renouncing their religious beliefs. Several campers began to cry. The cries were met with barked orders to shut up, else they would be shot. This scene went on for several hours, complete with interrogations, agreements to sign the documents, and some defiance of the orders. After a while the adults took off their masks, revealed their true identities, and began a group debriefing and counseling session with the young people. The conference leaders were pleased with their educational techniques. Several campers required professional counseling after leaving the conference. Several parents filed law suits against the conference leaders claiming psychological cruelty.

A group of students on a wilderness-based experiential education course were having a hard time learning the fundamentals of emergency first aid. They were not taking the lessons seriously and wanted to go climbing instead, claiming that first aid was not very important or difficult to learn. The instructor of the group had the assistant instructor sneak into the woods where she feigned
Chapter Four / Deception

There are two types of deception to be considered that help shed some light on the difficulties of this issue. It is useful to characterize acts of deception in terms of the ends to which the deceptive acts aim. I call these two types of deception malevolent deception and benevolent deception.

Malevolent deception is an act of deception that has as its end something that the deceived person would not find desirable or favorable to her own interests. For instance, suppose I wish to steal your stereo. In order to gain entrance to your house, I tell you about a sale at a store nearby so that you will leave your home. However, I know that all the goods on sale have already been sold. You leave. I enter your house and steal your stereo. You return, find your stereo stolen, and thank me for directing you to the store, even though all the goods were already sold. You then deal with the stolen stereo, having no idea that I am the one who stole your stereo. My act of deception here can be characterized as an act of malevolent deception. I did the deceiving in order to obtain an end that was against your interests.

Most acts of malevolent deception are not particularly interesting to examine here because, as in the above example, the deception seems so clearly wrong. However, some acts of malevolent deception could possibly be construed as ethically right. Recall my example from Chapter 1 about the drunken wife beater asking where his wife is. Suppose I deceive him about where she is. Clearly it is his expressed interest to find her. In a sense, my act of deception violates his interests and could, therefore, be called malevolent. However, I could reply that I did not deceive him in order to hurt him, but rather to protect him from doing something that will work against his interests once he is sober again. Therefore, I could argue that I acted benevolently and not malevolently. A better example of a morally acceptable malevolently deceptive act might be something like this. As I write these words, Ted Bundy, the infamous serial killer, has just been executed in Florida. Suppose the only way I had to catch this killer and stop his killing was to deceive him. Here, unlike the drunken wife beater, I am not deceiving Bundy for Bundy's protection. I am deceiving him in order to destroy him, either through permanent incarceration or through execution (whether or not capital punishment is morally right is an issue I cannot take the time to address here). An argument could be made that my act of malevolent deception to Bundy was right because by getting rid of him I have given him his due for his evil acts. In other words, a case could be made that malevolent acts are the only proper acts to make to someone like Bundy.

A benevolent act of deception is one in which the act is done in order to attain an end that the person being deceived finds desirable and in her best interests. Drawing from the two examples at the opening of this chapter, an argument can be made that both the church and the wilderness leaders were acting deceptively only in order to help achieve laudable educational ends. Benevolent acts of deception in experiential education range from blatant acts of deception (like the first aid example) to more subtle acts of deception. I can recall several instances with students in the field where I deliberately put a student on a rock climb that I knew beforehand she could not complete. Usually these were the super achiever students who had not met a single challenge on the course that they did not complete successfully and with aplomb. I would suggest that she attempt a difficult climb (notice that I did not say impossible).
liberty and autonomy are contained in the chapter of this book on "Paternalism." Most uses of benevolent deception by experiential educators are done by practitioners motivated by paternalistic concern for their students. Whether or not paternalistic interventions in students' lives through deception are morally justified is quite problematic.

Endnotes / Chapter 4


2. Bok, Lying, 14.


5. Bok, 97.

6. Bok, 98.

Chapter Five

Secrecy

A group of students on a wilderness-based experiential education program are planning their final expedition route. The topographic maps are laid out and the group has settled on a tentative route. Before going on the expedition the students must have the route approved by their instructors. The head instructor studies the proposed route and notices that the students will end up bushwacking through a mosquito-infested swamp for a significant period of time. The instructor refrains from mentioning this fact and approves the route. Upon the completion of the expedition, the students angrily confront the instructor and demand why he did not inform them of the swamp. The instructor replies that his withholding of the information was done only in order that the students encounter a consequence of their route finding, and that had he told them what he knew, they probably would have missed a valuable learning experience.

An instructor has a particularly troublesome group of juvenile delinquents. The group is not working well together and there is a high degree of intra-group hostility. One of the students approaches the instructor and asks if he can speak confidentially. The instructor agrees to the request and the student then informs the instructor that the reason the group is fighting so much is because one of the students has a bottle full of Librium pills and he is giving out small quantities to his friends. Therefore, the group is in conflict over who gets how many pills. The instructor is unsure how to proceed with his newfound information, secretly given.

The issue of secrecy in experiential education is closely related to the issue of deception but it is not the same thing. Where a deceptive act is one deliberately designed to induce people into believing that what is false is true, the secretive act is simply the withholding of information and not the distortion of information. Deception is active by nature and secrecy is passive by nature.

The whole issue of secrecy is complicated by the different ways in which
Chapter Five / Secrecy

Secrecy manifests itself as an ethical problem for practitioners. For instance, in the opening example of this chapter, the issue was the use of secrecy as an educational tool for the goal of having students come to know what they did not know before. The second example concerned the issue of having assured a student that the teacher would keep their conversation secret and confidential. Another way in which the secrecy issue manifests itself in experiential education includes the withholding of information learned about a student while on a course. This information could be withheld from any number of information seekers including family, friends, employers, therapists and other educators who will have future contact with that student. For instance, suppose I have a student on a course who intends to become an airline pilot upon his completion of the course. I learn from first-hand experience that he handles himself very poorly while under stress, and I make the judgment that he shows signs of a behavior pattern that would make him a dangerous pilot. Ought I to keep this information secret if I am asked to write a job reference for that student? In other words, should students of experiential education practitioners have a claim to secrecy, much as a patient has with a physician or a penitent has with a priest?

The opening example of the withholding of information from students is one which is ubiquitous in education in general. It becomes particularly acute for experiential educators. One of the determining characteristics of experiential education is its concern with the process of learning as well as with the content of learning. Education which is exclusively concerned with information assimilation will find that the rapid elimination of ignorance through quick presentations of information suffices for learning. For the traditional educator, learning is a fairly simple affair and the presence of ignorance is not to be tolerated. It is to be eliminated as rapidly as possible through the teacher's superior quantity of information.

The experiential educator oftentimes embraces ignorance on the part of students. Indeed, it is commonplace to find experiential educators working with students' ignorance as a strong ally in the process of learning. One of the classic examples of this comes from one of the earliest experimental educators, Socrates. In the dialogue, Plato describes an interaction between the teacher (Socrates) and a young slave boy. Socrates is attempting to teach geometry to the ignorant slave boy. As Socrates works with the slave boy, he describes the process with a young man named Meno:

Socrates: Observe, Meno, the stage he has reached on the path of recollection. At the beginning he did not know the side of the square of eight feet. Nor indeed does he know it now, but then he thought he knew it and answered boldly, as was appropriate - he left no perplexity. Now, however, he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows.

Meno: Quite true
Socrates: Isn't he in a better position now in relation to what he didn't know?
Meno: I admit that too.
Socrates: So in perplexing him and numbing him like the sting ray, have we done him any harm?
Meno: I think not.

-and later-

Socrates: Do you suppose then that he would have attempted to look for, or learn what he thought he knew, though he did not, before he was thrown into perplexity, became aware of his ignorance, and felt a desire to know?
Meno: No
Socrates: Then the numbing process was good for him?
Meno: I agree.¹

Notice that Socrates does not confront the slave boy's ignorance with a rapid-fire lecture designed to eliminate the boy's ignorance as quickly as possible. Rather, Socrates, in a sense, holds his own knowledge as a secret and attempts to impel the boy into perplexity before going on to learn the geometry. Socrates refers to the attempt to impel one into realization of one's own ignorance as "the numbing process." Whenever we impel a student into perplexity rather than simply informing him, we are keeping our knowledge secret from him until he is ready for that knowledge. This is the heart of the issue.

I'll never forget an incident that happened during the summer of 1975. I was instructing for Pacific Crest Outward Bound School in the Cascade Mountains of Oregon. My assistant and I had a particularly able, but arrogant, group of students. Two or three students had taken control of the navigation tasks from the group, with the group's permission. I noticed one afternoon that the compass bearing they had taken was 180 degrees off what it should have been. They had simply placed the compass improperly down on the map. In their haste, they took off on the wrong bearing. My assistant asked me if I was going to inform them about their mistake. I said no. Instead, we followed them all afternoon on the wrong bearing. They became quite lost ("numbed") and were in total confusion about why they were lost ("perplexed"). When we told them what they had done wrong, several students became quite angry and said that they should not have kept my knowledge of their mistake secret.

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He finished the program successfully and reported to his parents and social worker that being forced to finish that climb had made all the difference in his success. Ernie never again was arrested and never again came into contact with the juvenile court authorities.

The story of Ernie raises a set of ethical issues in experiential education which should be addressed here. It is becoming clear that experiential education, especially the adventure-based wing, is an effective form of treatment and education for various populations with legal, psychological, and other problems. Many of these people are sent on programs against their will or at least as a condition for obtaining some desired end. For instance, I have heard of psychologists and psychiatrists who give troubled adolescents the choice of participation in an experiential education program or being confined to a psychiatric hospital. In Ernie's case the choice was between the wilderness program or confinement in the juvenile detention center.

It is important to get clear that the issue at hand is not the psychological issue of the therapeutic effectiveness of various programs. Rather, the issue is about unique moral issues surrounding the use of experiential education techniques with students who are there against their will or who are there under some sort of coercion. For definitional purposes, I shall refer to a captive population as any student or group of students who are in a given program because of being ordered or coerced into being there rather than through their own free initiative. A juvenile delinquent under the power of the court's officers (judges, social workers) fits this definition nicely.

A useful starting point for discussing this issue is to go back to the whole issue of risk-benefit analysis. I argued in Chapter 2 that it is possible that a symmetry exists between the amount of benefit that may be gained by a student and the amount of risk that is ethically acceptable. If the student stands to gain a great deal from being exposed to risk, then it is arguable that that risk is more acceptable. If there is little to be gained by the risky activity, then justifying impelling students into the activity becomes more difficult.

Among the various student groups that practitioners encounter, it is possible, even probable, that the groups which stand to gain the most from experiential education programs are the captive populations. As more and more research reveals that experiential education is a viable option, educationally and psychologically for captive populations, the justification for using experiential techniques becomes stronger.

On purely utilitarian grounds, if it can be shown that juvenile delinquency recidivism rates drop from 80% to 40% as the direct result of participation in experiential education programs, the attendant risks of these programs may be ethically acceptable for these populations.

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Chapter Six / Captive Populations

as possible prior to being impelled into potentially dangerous situations. Drawing from the principles of liberty and autonomy, it was argued that people could give their consent based upon having been well informed. The critical problem that comes up here is that captive populations are not operating from positions of autonomy and liberty in the first place. A person under the jurisdiction of a court of law is hardly a person who is autonomous and free. By definition, that person has lost his or her autonomy and his or her freedom. How, then, can a person who is not autonomous or free possibly give truly informed consent?

The informed part of informed consent is not a problem for the captive population groups. An argument can be made that a woman in jail can be as informed about risks and benefits as any other reasonable person. As far as simply being informed is concerned, this seems true.

The problem is not with becoming informed but is with the consent issue. If I have the choice between sitting in a jail or a detention center and attending an adventure-based experiential education program, how much actual consent am I really giving? It is arguable that there is very little consent being given and, therefore, the use of risk is questionable at best.

What emerges is an ethical dilemma that is among the more troublesome ethical dilemmas in experiential education. On the one hand are groups of students who, potentially, have the most to gain from experiential education programming. On the other hand, many of these groups are the least capable of giving their consent due to their status as captives.

One way of dealing with this is to acknowledge the fact that consent is artificial at best with captive populations and to refuse to use such dangerous programming with these groups and rely, instead, on perceived risk exclusively. However, as pointed out in the Risk/Benefit chapter, even so-called “perceived risk” has at least a modicum of actual risk built into it.

One of the presuppositions of the argument against risky activities with captive populations is that consent is not possible unless the person is autonomous and free. That may be true, but the concepts of autonomy and liberty must be clearly applied in terms of where they are restricted. It could be argued that the delinquent boy in a detention center is neither autonomous nor free, only in that he cannot leave the detention center. It could also be argued that any alternative that presents itself as an option to that which restricts autonomy and liberty increases the person’s freedom. The person could elect to stay in detention and pass up the opportunity to attend the experiential education program. In this sense, informed consent could be given.

A key distinction arises that may be of practical help to practitioners. It seems clear that there is a difference between giving a student an order and giving the student an opportunity. If I order someone to participate in an activity and that person is my captive, then that person can hardly be called a free agent. However, if I present my captive with an opportunity to do something and that person really has the option of not doing that activity, then that person can be called partially free. Recall that Ernie, in the opening example of this chapter, initially was given the opportunity to do the rock climb. As the activity progressed, Ernie became a captive, not only in the sense of being referred under court order, but he became even more of a captive because of the increasing dependence of his life on the belay rope the further he got off the ground. What started out as an activity that Ernie could give consent to (remember that he continually withdrew his consent by asking to be lowered to the ground) turned in a very few minutes into Ernie’s becoming the instructor’s captive. Ernie’s life was dependent upon the belay rope and the instructor had control of this rope. Therefore, Ernie’s life was dependent upon the instructor. In this sense Ernie was transformed from at least a partially free student to the complete captive of the instructor. This transformation from student to captive manifested itself as the shift was made from the student’s opportunity to do the climb to the instructor’s order that the student do the climb.

What emerges is an important distinction between students as institutional captives and students as activity captives. A student who is an experiential education program against her will can be classified as an institutional captive. At the same time that institution could have within its operational processes, rules which provide some freedom to the participants to give their consent within that confining institution. For instance, a prisoner in a state maximum security prison has reached what might be the ultimate level of captivity. Nevertheless, within that environment, the prisoners can give or withdraw their consent to certain practices. An excellent example of this is in the use of prisoners for medical research. A great deal of attention has been given to this issue as far as informed consent is concerned. What has emerged from this debate is the notion that even prisoners in maximum security prisons must have the real option of not giving their consent to being experimented on. Thus, the prisoners are institutionally captive but free to give consent to specific activities. They are also free not to give consent to certain activities, and that freedom is institutionally protected.

Experiential education could draw from the example of medical research on prisoners. A way of operating ethically with captive populations might be to keep the distinction between institutional and activity-based captivity very clear. Just because a student may not be free to withdraw consent to being in the program in the first place, it does not follow that the student cannot give consent once she is within a given program.
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Endnotes / Chapter 6


Chapter Seven / Sexual Issues

Marie and Phil were 19 year-old students on a month-long cultural journalism, experiential education program. They were in a group of young adult students who would be together for the duration of the course. Two instructors were assigned to the group. About day 14 of the course, it became apparent to both Marie and Phil that they were romantically attracted to each other. This attraction manifested itself by sexual behaviors such as hand holding and walking arm-in-arm upon occasion. Marie and Phil began to sleep together. Both students were outstanding participants in the program and both had contributed a great deal to the group. Their outstanding performances both as students and as group members continued after the romantic liaison began. The two instructors met one evening and discussed the situation and wondered what, if anything, should be done about Marie and Phil’s relationship.

Sue was an experienced and capable wilderness-based experiential educator. She was 28 years old and unmarried. During one of her courses, she had a student named Al who was 30 years old, single, and interested in the possibility of pursuing an outdoor career. As the course went on, Sue and Al began to have long talks together when time permitted. The course was going exceptionally well and Sue and Al began to anticipate their time together alone. It became clear to both of them that there was a romantic attraction. Being mature adults, Sue and Al sat down one evening and discussed their emerging feelings for each other. They decided that they had better be very careful about the emerging romance but they also felt that they could handle sexual expressions of their feelings during those rare moments when they were alone.

Will and Angie were two instructors assigned to instruct an adaptive wilderness program for juvenile delinquents. It was a 42-day-long course. The two of them made a powerful and effective instructional team. The course was
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Going well and they were making significant progress with their students. As they worked together they began to realize that their working relationship was turning into a romantic relationship. As the course went on they began a sexual relationship which seemed to add to their overall appreciation for and interest in the course in general.

These three scenarios just outlined illustrate three aspects of sexuality that are common in many situations of experiential education. The three aspects addressed in this chapter are: Student-student sex; student-teacher sex; and teacher-teacher sex. It seems clear that sexuality manifests itself pervasively in our culture and, therefore, it seems reasonable to assume that it will manifest itself during the professional lives of practitioners. It should be pointed out that there is a peculiar aspect of many experiential education programs that adds to the potential for sexual matters becoming an ethical issue. I am referring to the fact that so many experiential education programs involve long periods of time of living together away from the normal strictures and rules of the culture. Therefore, it is appropriate that practitioners think critically about what some of the moral implications are for sex in their professional lives.

Two alternatives present themselves immediately as possible methods for dealing with sexual issues. These are denial and prohibition.

The human inclination for denial of problems has received a great deal of attention by professionals in the human service occupations. It is a well-known adage of chemical dependency treatment, for instance, that denial is the chief obstacle to confronting chemical abuse problems. I argued in the Risk-Benefit chapter of this book that the attempt to run a risk-free wilderness program is a form of psychological denial. My experience with discussing sexual issues has been that oftentimes a type of psychological denial takes place. Practitioners sometimes retort that their students are too interested in learning to have time for sex. Or they say that they have never had to deal with sexual matters and, therefore, such matters are really fictitious. Sometimes denial takes the form of saying that what appears to be sexual behavior is really just “kidding around” or friendly “hugs” that have nothing to do with sex. My contention is that sexual matters are usually present wherever human beings are together. To deny the presence of sexual issues is to deny the intricacies of human nature. As an ethical issue, denial is especially pernicious because it makes it impossible to deal rationally with something that cannot be admitted as real. My contention throughout this book has been that ethical matters must be dealt with rationally. To deny reality is a form of irrationality. Therefore, the denial of the reality of sexual matters in experiential education is a form of irrationality that is antithetical to a rational discussion of sexual ethics.

The second common response to raising sexual issues is the simple prohibition of sex. In the past two years, I have had conversations with several practitioners from different parts of the country, in entirely different types of experiential education programs, who said that their programs deal with sex by prohibiting it completely. This move acknowledges the reality of sex but its response of prohibition simply evades any discussion of the ethics of sexual behavior. To cut off discussing serious ethical matters, while convenient, nevertheless leaves the matter unresolved. Prohibition of sexuality is like a “Now you see it, now you don’t” magic trick. More specifically, it is my view that simple prohibition of sexuality is really a subtle form of denial. To prohibit that which is real is like shaking one’s fist at a bothersome mosquito. I may feel better after shaking my fist at the mosquito, but unless I confront it directly, it is still buzzing around, waiting to bother me.

The opening example of Marie and Phil presents the issue of students becoming sexually involved with each other. I purposely presented that case because it involves two people over the legal age of consent and it involves a group situation. Cases that involve students who are younger than the age of consent (which varies from state to state in the United States), and which do not involve a larger group of students, require a different ethical analysis than the case of Marie and Phil. What follows immediately below assumes: 1) the students are adults, and 2) they are involved with a larger group. The case of younger students and no group impact is examined after the first case.

At first glance it can be argued that sexual relations between consenting adults are, simply, none of an experiential education practitioner’s business at all. One could say that the teacher’s job is to teach and since expressions of student sexuality do not involve the teaching function, it is, therefore, beyond the instructor’s professional concern. While this appears to be a reasonable premise, it may be false. Many experiential education programs have as a vital aspect of their methodology, the impact of small group living. I recall a newspaper article recently where a group of college students in Minnesota participated in a history class which included living in a pioneer era cabin during two months of the Minnesota winter. They lived exactly as the Swedish settlers did in the 19th century. The article pointed out that the most demanding aspect of the whole course was dealing with the other students and the intense interpersonal relationships that had to be worked out.

To argue that the sole function of that history professor was to teach history using an experiential methodology is false. The students reported that they learned much more than just history. Granted they learned a great deal of history, but they also learned a lot about themselves.

My wife worked as an elementary teacher in the Alabama public schools for seven years. One day one of her most able and cooperative students began to...
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exhibit disruptive behavior. He became totally obnoxious and was affecting the entire classroom. Finally, she pulled the student aside and asked him what was going on. He denied any particular problem. Finally, the day passed and as the other children left the room this little boy stopped by my wife's desk. She asked him, once more, what was happening. His lower lip began to quiver and he sobbed, "My hamster died this morning!"

The illustrations of the history professor and the elementary teacher point out the fact that the teacher's role is not simply to input information. Especially with group situations common to so many experiential education programs, the instructor's educational role is intimately connected with the functioning of the group. It is in this sense that an instructor may have a legitimate concern with student sexuality, even if it involves consenting adults. The concern might not be with sexuality per se. Rather, sexuality is placed in the broader context of the functioning of the group in general. The reasoning is that since the instructor's role is to impel students to learn and since the functioning of the group affects student learning, therefore, the instructor is legitimately concerned with group functioning. Again, it is vital to focus in on the educational significance of the group and not just on sexuality in isolation. Sexuality becomes of concern to instructors when it has an impact of educational significance.

Sexual activity among consenting adult students can have three possible influences on the rest of the group: negative, positive, or neutral. It is easy to imagine possible negative influences of expressions of sexuality on a group's functioning. One negative result that is possible is the problem of student jealousy. Person A is attracted to person B and person C is also attracted to B. B welcomes the affection of person A but spurns person C. C then becomes jealous of A and problems result. The instructor is forced to deal with a dysfunctional group. Another negative consequence can be that the two people involved begin to isolate themselves from participation in the overall educational goals which brought the group together in the first place. Educational goals then become secondary to the goal of pursuit of the sexual relationship.

In the discussion of possible negative consequences of sexuality within a broader group, it is tempting to begin talking about group process and group psychotherapeutic techniques. It is beyond the scope of this book to get into these issues. The concern is with the morality of these issues, not with ameliorative techniques. Morally, it seems to be the case that when sexual expressions begin to interfere with the overall educational goals of the program, with a resulting negative consequence to other students, then the teacher is morally obligated to deal with the issue and prevent further harm.

It is also very possible that a romantic liaison between two students may have a positive influence on the group. The example of Marie and Phil was presented in such a way that their relationship strengthened the two students and their participation in the educational goals of the rest of the group. If this was the case, then an instructor who wanted to intervene in or stop that relationship might have a difficult time ethically justifying the intervention. However, it seems clear that there would be no way for the instructor to know about negative or positive consequences of sexuality unless that instructor was acutely aware of the group's functioning in general. Thus, the demand is placed upon the instructor, as a minimum condition, that he at least be aware of the negative or positive impact.

I raised the possibility of neutral consequences on the educational functioning of the group. My own experience has been that it is a very rare phenomenon where student sexuality is a merely neutral group influence. As a practical matter, it may be that neutral group impact is improbable. Usually any change in the complex web of student relationships will affect the group either negatively or positively. Philosophically, though, neutral impacts are possible. As an ethical matter, it would be the case that a truly neutral impact on the educational goals of the participants would render the sexual relationship irrelevant.

The ethics of student-to-student sex that involves students younger than the age of consent presents special problems and demands a different analysis. Marie and Phil were both 19 years old. How about students who are, say, 15 years old?

The key ethical problem of adolescent sexuality revolves around the notions of consent, personal autonomy, and in loco parentis. The reason that adult students who become sexually involved with each other presents a different issue than adolescent students is because it is assumed that adults can give autonomous consent. Whether or not younger students can give consent is a root problem behind hesitations of allowing adolescent sexual relations while on experiential education programs. Another source of the ethically problematic nature of adolescent sexuality is the issue of the adolescent's teacher serving the role of a parent while a student is under the teacher's care. The term used to signify the surrogate parenting role of an instructor is "in loco parentis," which means "in the position or place of a parent." It is useful to separate the two notions of autonomous consent and in loco parentis.

The reason rape is morally repugnant is because it involves a violation of the free will and autonomy of the person being raped. No consent is given in a rape. Therefore, rape is unethical. Many people opposed to adolescent expressions of sexuality apply a similar reasoning process. This application argues that non-consensual sex is unethical. In order to give consent one must
Chapter Seven / Sexual Issues

instructors' personal liberty and autonomy with no clear reason for doing so. It may well be the case that the burden of proof should rest on administrators to prove that a problem exists with the staff members' relationships, rather than putting this burden on the staff members to prove that there is no problem. Concern with student welfare need not result in unethical intrusions on staff autonomy and liberty.

Finally, I need to say a word about the key role of informed consent on the ethics of sexuality issue. An assumption I have had throughout this chapter is that nothing particular has been said about sexuality prior to beginning the educational endeavor. I think the whole analysis shifts dramatically if everyone involved in the program (adults, adolescents, teachers, students) has agreed beforehand to certain sexual rules. I can imagine a fundamentalist Christian program, for instance, that forbids any and all expressions of sexuality outside of marriage. It could be the case that everyone knew beforehand what these rules were and that sexuality is subsumed under the guidance of agreed-to rules. Therefore, the whole issue of sexual ethics becomes an issue of sexual rules. If this is the case, then the concern is with giving informed consent to abide by the rules.

The same could be said about the issue of staff members. Programs may want to decide that as a condition of employment no sexual expressions between staff members are permissible. Were this to be the case, then this policy would need to be made clear to staff members prior to being hired, if informed consent were to be taken seriously.

Endnotes / Chapter 7


3. Buber, "Education," 114

Chapter Eight

Environmental Concerns

Sammy was a 21-year old man on an extended biology field trip sponsored by his college. He was disabled, having become paraplegic due to an automobile accident. The biology trip was into a wilderness area that had rigid rules governing minimum environmental impact. One afternoon Sammy lost bladder and bowel control, thereby severely soiling himself. He was horrified and begged the biology instructor to place him beside a stream so that he could clean himself off in privacy and retain whatever dignity he had left. He wanted some water bottles and he wanted the rest of the group and the instructor to leave immediately. Realizing that complying with Sammy's wishes would possibly, even probably, result in some human waste entering the stream, the biologist was faced with an ethical dilemma. Should she respect Sammy's wishes or should she follow the rules of minimum impact and deny Sammy's request?

A group of recovering alcoholics were on a 15-day wilderness course designed to aid them in their recovery process. It was winter and severely cold. The group had encountered several days of a blizzard, were wet, discouraged, and ready to quit the course. In keeping with the goal of minimum environmental impact, the group had used no fires on the course, choosing instead to use gasoline stoves for cooking. The instructor was approached by several group members, who requested that they be allowed to build a large fire so that they could have some external heat and dry out their belongings. The instructor knew that the fire would help restore their sagging spirits but she also knew that a fire scar would result if the fire were built. She hesitated in her reply to the group, wondering what was the right thing to do.

Before proceeding further with the discussion of the ethics of environmental concerns, it is useful to bracket out some conceptual parameters. The subject of environmental ethics is so broad and complex as to defy a thorough
things are not equal.

possibly stream’s need not to be polluted.

environmental ethics conflict at hand. In what sense can a non-human is better not to compromise the purity of a stream. In this case, however, all Sammy’s argued that it would be highly unethical for his instructor not to agree to places a high value on retaining his dignity and personal autonomy. Given his own waste) and his interest (to retain his dignity). Therefore, is rational, and is not confusing interests, needs, and wants. What Sammy wants (to bathe himself in privacy) is congruent with his needs (to be cleaned of his own waste) and his interest (to retain his dignity). Therefore, Sammy places a high value on retaining his dignity and personal autonomy. Given Sammy’s high value placed on retaining his ability to bathe himself, it could be argued that it would be highly unethical for his instructor not to agree to Sammy’s request. The moral judgment might be that, all things being equal, it is better not to compromise the purity of a stream. In this case, however, all things are not equal. Sammy’s need for autonomy possibly outweighs the stream’s need not to be polluted.

This raises a key distinction that should be kept clear in the type of environmental ethics conflict at hand. In what sense can a non-human stream possibly “need not to be polluted?” Can a stream have a need, even though treatment in one chapter of this book. Therefore, some selections must be made in terms of priorities. My concern is with the issue of when an environmental value conflicts with a human value. So often the topic of environmental ethics leads directly into discussions of minimum impact camping techniques, theories of ecology, and the politics of environmental protection. Those issues are not my concern in this chapter.

I take it as an assumption that attempts to preserve the environment are useful and good. I also assume that readers of this book are aware of the various techniques of leading groups of students through environmentally sensitive areas, with minimum impact on those environments. The target audience is not people who need convincing that environmental concerns are valid and worthy of attention. The audience I have in mind are those who are already convinced about the worth of environmentally sound practices but who are nevertheless confronted with conflicts of values between human concerns and environmental concerns. The assumption is that practitioners of experiential education who use the natural world as a teaching medium will inevitably encounter conflicts similar to the two examples at the opening of this chapter. Therefore, the goal of this chapter is to sort out what these conflicts of value involve in terms of the moral worth of decisions that might be made.

A useful move is to ask what the reasons might be that would guide an instructor’s decision in a case like Sammy. Suppose the instructor were to say yes to Sammy. What ethical justifications could be made in defense of that decision?

Fundamental to acquiescing to Sammy’s request might be a concern with preserving his dignity and personal autonomy. It could be argued that Sammy’s request to bathe by the stream is one that is in his own best interest as defined by himself. Furthermore, Sammy is not deluded about his own best interests, is rational, and is not confusing interests, needs, and wants. What Sammy wants (to bathe himself in privacy) is congruent with his needs (to be cleaned of his own waste) and his interest (to retain his dignity). Therefore, Sammy places a high value on retaining his dignity and personal autonomy. Given Sammy’s high value placed on retaining his ability to bathe himself, it could be argued that it would be highly unethical for his instructor not to agree to Sammy’s request. The moral judgment might be that, all things being equal, it is better not to compromise the purity of a stream. In this case, however, all things are not equal. Sammy’s need for autonomy possibly outweighs the stream’s need not to be polluted.

This raises a key distinction that should be kept clear in the type of environmental ethics conflict at hand. In what sense can a non-human stream possibly “need not to be polluted?” Can a stream have a need, even though it is not a conscious being? The distinction has already been made in this book in the Deception chapter between the notions of interest, need, and want. These notions were used to describe Sammy’s needs, wants, and interests immediately above. These same distinctions are helpful in gaining more clarity in the problem of the stream needing not to be polluted by Sammy’s washing.

The notions of want and interest are applicable only to conscious beings. What I want and what I have an interest in may not be good for me, but I consciously want or have an interest. Recall my example in the Deception chapter about the drunkard who has an interest in and wants to drive an automobile at high speeds while he is drunk. I argued there that what he really needed was contrary to what he consciously had an interest in and wanted. In other words, his real needs were not dependent upon his conscious wants and interests. This same line of reasoning can be applied to a stream. It seems silly to say that a stream wants or has an interest in staying clean. However, one could argue that the stream needs to stay clean whether or not it is conscious of this need. For example, my automobile needs oil in the crankcase in order not to burn up. Again, however, it would be silly to suggest that my car is conscious of its need in the form of expressed interests or wants or in any other form. Still, it really does need oil.

This leads directly into a moral argument that could be mustered to deny Sammy’s request that he be allowed to pollute the stream. The instructor could readily acknowledge Sammy’s wants, needs, and interests but could reply that Sammy’s need, while real, does not necessarily outweigh the streams’ needs. This is the core issue in this formulation of the conflict of value between Sammy and the stream. The instructor must evaluate the conflicting values presented by Sammy and the stream.

If a being or a thing or an ecosystem for that matter, has a genuine need, then it seems reasonable to argue that to deprive that being, thing, or ecosystem of what it needs is to injure it. Denial of a need is to injure. However, does it make sense to speak of injuring something that is not capable of conscious experience? Environmental ethicist Scott Lehmann has written about this matter:

The principle is roughly that only what matters or could matter to a thing can injure or benefit it, and the only things to which anything can matter are subjects of experience. If something has no capacity for suffering or enjoyment, no possibility of happiness or misery, no desires to be thwarted or satisfied, no ideals to be respected or dishonored, then it is very hard to see how anything can be accounted injury to it. But all of these features presuppose consciousness. 3

Lehmann’s point is that only a being which is capable of conscious experience can truly be said to suffer an injury. If this line of reasoning is true, then Sammy, being a conscious entity, would have a valid claim to being...
Cindy was a 17-year-old girl on a 23-day wilderness-based experiential education program. She was in a group of nine other students from many different areas of the United States. From the beginning of the program, Cindy had been having problems with the physical aspects of the course due to the fact that she was quite overweight. For instance, during group initiative exercises, she was unable to be of much help to the group and the biggest single problem the group had to solve was how to get Cindy through the problems. She could not hike very far with a backpack without becoming thoroughly exhausted. As the course progressed, the group figured out ways to help Cindy, like distributing her load among the other, stronger group members. When she first came on the course, her attitude had been terrible. She was belligerent and resentful of the abilities of the other students. As time went on, her attitude improved considerably and she began to show signs of dramatic psychological and interpersonal growth. She was becoming an accepted member of the group.

Sandy and Rachel were in the same group with Cindy. Both Sandy and Rachel had been athletes in college and high school and both were physically fit. Throughout their athletic endeavors, neither Sandy nor Rachel had ever dealt with serious fear and neither had pushed their limits to the utmost. The reason they had come on the experiential education program was to push some of the limits that they had never pushed before.

As the course went on, Sandy and Rachel began to resent all of the attention that Cindy had been getting. They confided their concerns to the instructors, who listened supportively and urged them to work with Cindy and make the best of a difficult situation.

On day 15 of the course, the group was scheduled to do a climb of a large, snow-covered mountain. The day before the climb was to begin, the instructors got the group together and explained the details of the forthcoming climb. Part of the climb would involve kicking steps in deep snow on steep slopes. It was going to be a difficult climb but one that many other groups had successfully climbed.

During the discussion several of the group members, following the leadership of Sandy and Rachel, asked Cindy if she would consider staying at the base camp that day, as it seemed clear that Cindy would be unable to complete the climb. Cindy replied that she had as much right to attempt the climb as the other group members and that she wanted to try the climb. The instructor pointed out that, as a safety matter, if one person had to turn back, then the whole group would have to turn back. A long discussion ensued and the group was unable to reach a consensus of what to do. The group was evenly split on whether Cindy should attempt the climb, with Cindy being very clear about her desire to attempt the climb. Therefore, the group asked the instructors to make the decision for them and everyone agreed to abide by the instructors’ decision.

The problem of group versus individual benefit is one of the most persistent and vexing ethical issues in education in general and in experiential education in particular. The conflict in value between Cindy, Rachel and Sandy and the rest of the group is typical of the conflict between individual and group benefits that practitioners frequently encounter.

Since the issue of individual versus group benefit always arises within the context of a group setting, it is often tempting to convert the ethical conflict into a group psychological conflict, resolvable by deft and sensitive group process techniques. In the case of Cindy versus the group, the instructor could try and show the group that the real testing of their limits would lie in their ability to adapt to Cindy’s limitations. Although Sandy and Rachel thought their limits resided in the physical realm, the real testing for them would be in learning to delay or deny their own gratifications and learn the difficult lesson of compassion for Cindy. The instructor’s role, therefore, would be to serve as an effective group facilitator. The goal would be to convert the other group members from their previous beliefs of what constituted a benefit for themselves.

The other way for the instructor to turn the ethical conflict into a psychological one would be to try and rechannel Cindy’s goals in another direction. Cindy may have thought that she needed to attempt the peak climb but what she really needed to do was to learn the lesson of compassion for her fellows who had already sacrificed so much for her benefit. The instructor’s role would be to help Cindy realize that her beliefs about what was in her own best interest were mistaken.

Either of these solutions constitute what I mean by trying to psychologize the ethical issue away. Granted, it could be convenient, even psychologically
growthful, if either Cindy or the rest of the group would change their thinking about the issue. Such a change would solve the conflict at hand and would allow the group and Cindy to function well together. My speculation is that many conflicts between group and individual benefit can, indeed, be dealt with by sophisticated psychology on the part of the staff. An instructor who can show an individual or a group that what they had thought was beneficial was not really beneficial and replace the mistaken benefit with a genuine benefit, should be applauded as an expert professional.

There are situations, however, that involve individual versus group benefit that are not solvable by good psychology. Suppose that what the group believes is beneficial, really is in their best interest. Suppose, also, that what Cindy believes is in her best interest really is in her best interest and that no amount of group process skill on the part of the instructor will resolve these conflicts of value. This is where the ethical issue presents itself.

In my experience as a practitioner, the most common way of dealing with group versus individual benefit conflicts is through some formulation of the utilitarian calculus. At first glance, it seems reasonable that the only morally right thing to do when such conflicts of value arise is to apply the criterion of maximizing the greatest good for the greatest number. In the case of Cindy versus the group, it is easy to imagine the instructor reasoning that the high benefit to the group attained by requiring that Cindy stay in base camp is enough to justify overriding her wishes.

This same line of reasoning is widely practiced in educational policy decisions involving a much wider scope than just experiential education. For instance, a school district must decide how to spend $50,000.00. The choice is between an accelerated program for the top 10% of the students or a regular program for the middle 30% of the students. Very often such decisions are made with the value that it is better to benefit more students with lower abilities than less students with higher abilities.

Just the opposite reasoning can be applied. One could argue that it is better to take those with the highest abilities and ensure that they go as far as possible in order to achieve the highest benefit for those most able. Furthermore, this line of reasoning can summon a utilitarian argument to support its case. It can be argued that by allowing the most capable, few though they may be, to achieve a high level of benefit, everyone else will benefit by having these high achievers around because of the great contributions they will make to the greater good.

The word need can be substituted for the word ability in the ethical analysis. In the case of Cindy, one could argue that her need was so great that her claim to attempt the climb outweighed the lesser needs of Sandy and Rachel. The reverse could be argued: that it is better to supply the lesser needs of the greater number of students than to focus in too much on the solitary needs of Cindy.

While the utilitarian approach to conflicts between individual versus group benefit is common and sometimes useful, severe problems are inherent in this solution to the problem. Throughout this book, I have pointed out the problem of protecting the interests of those who do not belong to the greatest number in terms of benefit. It is easy to imagine the utilitarian calculus degenerating down a slippery slope of complete disregard for the solitary individual or minority whose interests are at variance with the greatest number.

One way of approaching the issue is to cast it as a question of fairness. In terms of Cindy, Sandy and Rachel, the issue could be outlined as a problem of fairness. Given all the sacrifices made by the group to Cindy, is it fair for Cindy to make the claim for attempting the climb, knowing full well that her participation would likely preclude any of the other students from finishing? Similarly, is it fair to deny Cindy her wish just because the others were claiming their due?

One way of dealing with the fairness issue as it relates to individual versus group benefit in experiential education is to tie it in with the goals of the program and students having given informed consent to those goals. When a student has entered a given experiential education program, it seems reasonable that he has agreed to function in accord with the goals of that program once his informed consent has been freely given. It is arguable that certain goals imply certain rules. If my goal in joining a football team is to play football, then I am obligated to follow the rules of football. Suppose I fumble the ball and another player gains possession. I then look at the referee with a plaintive gaze and explain that I really need to recover the ball because my whole self-worth depends on it. If the referee were to grant my wish, then he would be violating the very structure which makes the game of football what it is. The referee could reply that I freely chose to play football and that I agreed to play by rules that were fair to all players. Therefore, I would be unreasonable in my desire to have my fumbled ball returned to me.

A similar reasoning process could be applied to the example in the beginning of this chapter. The question should be asked if all of the students had agreed to the goals of the program and thereby agreed to follow certain rules that were fair to all. It might well have been the case that the goal of the program was to allow all of the students to test their physical limits. If this had been the case, then it would be unfair to the rest of the group to deny them access to the same challenges enjoyed by Cindy exclusively. On the other hand, the goal of the program might have been to have every activity at least attempted by every member of the group functioning as a group. If this was the case, then there
During a four-week wilderness course, a group of students were approaching day 12 resupply time. The two instructors of the group were quite pleased with the course and the direction it had been taking. The students were working well together and they had resolved several interpersonal and group problems to the satisfaction of everyone. In particular, the group had enjoyed the purity of the wilderness experience and were highly appreciative of being away from any contact with other people. As resupply came closer, the instructors decided it would be best if they did not bring in the whole group to the resupply site, since this meant exposing them to the trucks and to the other students coming in for resupply. Therefore, the instructors decided to have the students make camp away from the resupply site. The instructors took two empty packs and headed down to the resupply site. On the walk down they discussed the possibility of not picking up the students' mail, which the instructors knew would have been delivered by the driver of the truck. They reasoned that not bringing the mail would help keep the wilderness experience pure for the students. The instructors picked up the food, left the mail with the driver of the truck for delivery at the end of the course, and returned to the students' camp. Upon the instructors' return, the students were delighted with the fresh food. However, several students asked about the mail. The instructors informed the group that the decision had been made to hold the mail until the completion of the course. Several students expressed gratitude to the instructors for keeping the wilderness experience pure. One student became angry and charged that the instructors had violated his rights by not bringing his mail to him. Furthermore, he wanted the instructors either to go back down to the resupply site and pick up his mail or to allow him to go down to the resupply site to pick up the mail himself. The instructors informed him that the decision had been made not to pick up mail for everyone and that since the group was not in complete agreement about the mail issue, that his mail would not be picked up.

A special experiential education program had been put together, the purpose of which was to get young people of diverse cultural backgrounds working together effectively and humanely. There were several fundamentalist Christian students in the group and there were also several inner city juvenile delinquents. As the course progressed, the Christian students became alarmed at the extremely foul language being used by the delinquent students. A group discussion followed and the delinquents let the Christian students know that no attempt would be made to alter the foul language. Furthermore, the juvenile delinquent students claimed that the Christian students were culturally illiterate and that the Christian students were learning valuable lessons by being exposed to the foul language. The course instructors listened to the discussion and realized that little headway was being made by the group on the issue. Therefore, the instructors decided that a compromise would be in order. They proposed to the group that everyone agree that the Christian students would try to be as sensitive as they had been and the delinquent students would make an attempt at least to moderate their foul language while in the presence of the Christian students. The Christian students agreed to the compromise. The delinquent students told the instructors to go to hell and asserted that they had no intention of changing their speech patterns to make the other students happy. Furthermore, the delinquent students argued that they had a right to free speech and that was the end of the discussion.

The problem of students' rights is one of the most complex and conceptually confusing problems of ethics in experiential education. One reason for this confusion and complexity is because of the diverse meanings of the term rights within the scope of moral discourse. Both the young man who wanted his mail delivered to him and the young students who were claiming that their foul language should have been protected as a form of free speech were appealing to their rights. The young man wanted something provided to him and the juvenile delinquents wanted protection from having their speech interfered with. People claim to have a right to health care, housing, food, and many other material necessities. People claim that carrots have a right not to be eaten and that trees have a right not to be chopped down. Other people claim that they have a right to eat their carrots and to chop down their trees at will and claim protection from those who would interfere with this right. I was in an interview with a young teacher certification candidate recently and she claimed that young people have a right to feel good about themselves. Clearly these are all very different uses of the term "rights" and they are not all compatible with each other.
Chapter Ten / Students' Rights

grapple with the problem of students' rights. In addition, many experiential education programs operate in environments and utilize certain techniques, like adventure-based programming, that will reveal issues of students' rights that other educators may never have encountered before. As the issue of students' rights is taken more seriously by practitioners, novel problems will emerge which should prove quite challenging to those making the tough decisions.

Endnotes / Chapter 10


Chapter Eleven

Social Implications

The director of an adventure education program received a telephone call from an official of a large corporation. The caller wanted to schedule a team building day utilizing the high ropes course and initiative facilities. As the director and caller began to talk about the necessary scheduling details, the specifics about the corporation's problems emerged. The corporation had been assigned a contract with the Department of Defense to develop precision weapons technology for the Pentagon. The team which had been assigned the project was having a hard time adjusting to the new assignment and leadership conflicts had emerged. The official felt that an adventure education program similar to the one he had read about in a local newspaper might help get the precision weapons team on track. Hence, the call to the director. The director told the caller it would be necessary to contact the instructor pool before setting up the day's activities. He would call back after the instructors had been identified and assigned to the course.

The director then contacted several instructors to get the course set up. Several instructors were incredulous that the director had even considered setting up such a course. They felt strongly that the corporation they were dealing with was immoral and more specifically, they felt that this particular project team was not a group that the adventure education program should have anything to do with. One instructor stated that if the course was set up for the corporation, she would resign as an instructor.

A meeting was called and all of the instructors and the director met to discuss the situation. The group quickly divided, with one subgroup arguing that any interaction with this corporation would be immoral and with the other subgroup arguing it would be immoral not to work with the project team. Some felt that working with these clients would be a good opportunity for expanding
Chapter Eleven / Social Implications

the impact of the adventure program to a much wider audience. One instructor was excited about working with the group in order that he might change the workers' attitudes about working for the corporation. Another instructor felt that the corporation was doing a national service that was critical for maintaining world peace and that the instructors who objected to working with this group were themselves morally arrogant and misinformed about the importance of precision weapons for world peace. An impasse had been reached and the director had to make the final decision about the precision weapons team and the adventure education program.

Experiential educators do not do their work isolated and insulated from the world about them. Throughout this book I have focused attention on the ethical issues confronting experiential educators within the narrow contexts of their professional activities. It is useful to examine the ethical implications of experiential education in a much wider social context. Are there any ethical obligations that experiential educators have to the wider society? If so, what are they? If not, why not?

The opening example raises this issue clearly. As experiential educators interact with the world about them, the problem arises about dealings with groups or individuals who may not share the same moral commitments of those who run programs. What should experiential educators' response be to groups or individuals who may be considered immoral or antithetical to the educators' moral sensibilities?

There are several responses experiential educators could make. One way of responding would be to identify those groups or individuals deemed to be immoral and then, simply, refuse to deal professionally with them. Practitioners taking this option might reason that professional interaction with groups deemed immoral would corrupt the moral purity of the educators involved. This presents some interesting and ethically perplexing issues.

For one thing it is not at all empirically clear that interactions with immoral people result in moral contamination of those who are morally pure. It may be true that professional interaction with morally tainted people results in damage being done to practitioners but this is an assertion based upon empirical assumptions that are problematic at best.

The problem arises of just how immoral must a group of people or an individual be before he or they are over the line of acceptability. In other words, suppose members of Group X are deemed to be immoral due to their inclusion in Group X. However, it is the case that many of the members of Group X have many good qualities that make them as a group not totally immoral. Just how much weight should be given to these good qualities? Maybe no amount of corrective goodness is enough to override the overall immorality.

I am always fascinated by individuals who refuse to deal with groups or other individuals because of the moral contamination argument. The assumption is that interaction with morally imperfect people may result in contamination of practitioners. If this is true, then the problem arises of whether those seeking moral purity are themselves morally pure. If they are not, then it seems absurd for them to do anything professionally at all, given the possibility of contaminating their clients or students. This standard presupposes a condition of moral perfection on the part of practitioners, which seems on its face to be absurd.

Another common reaction on the part of experiential education practitioners to groups or individuals of questionable moral status is to deny professional interaction with them, not because of personal risk to one's own purity. Instead the argument is made that helping certain groups or individuals will further an agenda, either personal or organizational, that is itself immoral. There is no doubt in my mind that the use of experiential education methodology to teach, say, concentration camp construction to Nazi concentration camp builders would result in quite well trained concentration camp builders. Practitioners might object to working with these people, not because of danger of personal moral compromise but because of furthering an agenda that is immoral.

That this interaction might result secondarily in personal moral compromise would be less important than the fact that the activities of the participants would be considered immoral per se. The moral onus, then, is placed upon the ends and methods of a potential student or organization rather than on simply keeping oneself morally pristine.

Absolute refusal to work with those whose activities or ideologies are completely unacceptable to practitioners is a logical option. I am reminded of Kurt Hahn, the founder of Outward Bound, and his refusal to stay in Nazi Germany. Hahn's final response to Nazism was to have no dealings with it either personally or professionally. Similar reasoning could be utilized by practitioners concerned with trafficking with immorality.

There is another option, however, open to practitioners. They could choose deliberately to work with morally repugnant clientele, not in order to further their agenda, but to thwart or change their agenda. Many experiential education programs are getting into the business of working therapeutically with disordered individuals. Take convicted child abusers. Experiential educators who work with these people do not do so in order that the child abusers become more adept at abusing children. On the contrary the whole point of the therapeutic relationship is to stop the child abuser from abusing children.

An argument can be made that it would be morally wrong not to engage in
Paternalism

Frank, a 26 year old insurance salesman, had signed up for a three-week-long, adventure-based experiential education program. He had come on the course for a break from the routine of his work and to experience the thrill of the activities offered. These activities included rock climbing, mountaineering, low and high ropes courses, camping and expeditioning. He was assigned to a group of nine other students and two instructors. Initially, he responded enthusiastically to the course and was an active and vital member of the group. Other members of the group were having a harder time with the course and three members, younger than Frank, were having a particularly rough time. Their problems lay chiefly in their interpersonal relationships and their emotional immaturity. As a result of the intense interpersonal conflicts that were becoming routine, Frank was becoming disillusioned with the course.

He discussed the situation with the instructors and attempts were made by them to help the group deal more effectively with the various problems they were experiencing. On day 10 of the course, Frank approached the instructors and told them that he was seriously considering the possibility of leaving the course. He had experienced most of the high adventure activities which he wanted to do and he figured that he had received his money's worth. He was becoming more and more exasperated with his fellow students’ interpersonal problems. The instructors convinced Frank to wait at least one more day before leaving. That night a group meeting was held and it did not go well. Frank went to bed sure that he would leave the next day.

The next morning Frank told the instructors that he wanted to leave immediately. They began to try to convince Frank that he still had a lot to gain from the course and that he should consider staying. He responded by asserting that he did not want any more counter arguments and he just wanted to leave.

Harold was a 33-year-old physician on an adventure education program. He was a member of the United States Army Reserves and had a thriving private medical practice. The instructors of Harold’s group had scheduled a rock climbing and rappelling day. The rappel was to take place at the end of the day after all of the rock climbing was completed. The day went well. Harold enjoyed his accomplishments and proved to be one of the most adept climbers in the group.

At the end of the day, the rock climbing ropes were taken down and the rappel was set up. Several students went down the rappel and all agreed that it was a fitting ending to a fine day. It was Harold’s turn. He looked at the instructor and mentioned that as an officer in the Army Reserve he had rappelled many times and that the safety techniques used by the Army were very different from the techniques used in the adventure program. The Army techniques were designed to allow for quite rapid descents, whereas the techniques used in the adventure education program were designed to disallow rapid descents. Harold asked the instructor if it would be permissible to use the Army techniques. After all, he reasoned, the Army techniques had worked well in the past for him and he enjoyed the fast descents much more than the slower ones. The instructor denied Harold’s request. She replied that the Army techniques, while good training for combat situations, were not up to civilian safety standards and were not acceptable in the present circumstances. Harold became insistent and pushed harder for permission. He said that as a physician, an adult, and an Army officer that he did not appreciate the instructor’s treating him as if he were incapable of making this decision for himself. Furthermore, he felt that he was being treated as a child by the instructor in her refusal to respect his request and told her that he deeply resented it.

These two examples represent the issue of paternalism in experiential education. Two medical ethicists have described paternalism in the manner in which I use it in this chapter:

*Paternalism can be briefly defined as taking an action toward another person without his or her permission and justified by the action’s serving the welfare, interests, and/or needs of that person. Since paternalism overrides the
commonly-held moral principle of the self determination or autonomy of the individual, it can also be characterized negatively as interfering with a person's liberty of action on the basis of its serving the welfare, interests, or needs of that person. Although this interference is sometimes regarded as coercive, it need not always be viewed as forced upon others.\(^1\)

Both Frank and Harold felt that they were being treated paternalistically by the staff members of their respective programs. Frank wanted to go home without the imposition of counseling and psychotherapeutic barriers to his leaving and Harold wanted to decide which safety system he would use on the rappel. In both cases, actions were taken that went against the expressed desires of the students. The staff members involved based their actions upon a genuine concern for the "welfare, interests, or needs" of the two students and the students did not agree with the staff members about what, in fact, constituted their best "welfare, interests, or needs." My concern here is the problem of determining what to do when disagreements arise in experiential education about what is in a student's best interests. Specifically, the problem becomes salient when the paternalistic move is made in response to these disagreements. When is paternalistic intervention in the lives of students justified in experiential education?

Harold Vanderpool and Gary Weiss, the authors of the quotation cited above, offer five logical criteria for the basis of paternalistic intervention in patients' lives by physicians. These five criteria can be very useful to experiential educators confronted with the same problem that physicians encounter with patients. Whether or not these criteria are morally acceptable must wait until they are presented. Vanderpool and Weiss write:

The logical assumptions of paternalism include, first, that paternalistic actions are usually taken toward others without their knowledge or permission, thus interfering with the extent of their choices as free persons. Second, paternalistic acts are justified as intended for the good or benefit of others... Third, as a correlate of point two, paternalism assumes that the doctor is benevolent and will perform only those interventions that are likely to benefit rather than harm patients... Fourth, paternalism assumes that the person who takes actions toward others without their consent feels qualified to act on their behalf... Fifth, the paternalist acts benevolently in another's behalf by obtaining as accurate an assessment of outcomes or consequences as possible.\(^2\)

How do the cases of Frank and Harold line up against the criteria presented by Vanderpool and Weiss? The first criterion clearly was met. Neither student gave his permission for the actions that were taken (required counseling, required rappel techniques). The second criterion was met (both actions were done for the benefit of the two students). The third criterion was met (the staff acted benevolently and with the goal of avoiding harming the students). The fourth criterion was met (all staff members involved in both cases felt that they were qualified to make the decisions they made). Presumably the staff predicted good outcomes (for Frank, that he would not leave prematurely and for Harold, that he would not get hurt through unsafe rappel techniques), which meets the fifth criterion. Therefore, both cases meet the five criteria presented by Vanderpool and Weiss.

**The question that remains for experiential educators to face is whether or not these criteria constitute morally acceptable reasons for acting paternalistically towards students.** What reasons could be mustered to argue against paternalistic interventions in students' lives?

One of the most famous and influential general arguments against paternalism comes from John Stuart Mill. In his book, *On Liberty*, Mill argues:

That the only purpose for which power can be exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. These are good reasons for remonstrating with him, or reasoning with him, or persuading him, or entreating him, but not for compelling him, or visiting him with any evil in case he do otherwise.

- and later -

In the part which merely concerns himself, his independence is, of right, absolute. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.\(^3\)

At first glance, Mill seems to be suggesting that any paternalistic interference with experiential education students' wishes and desires would violate the sacred inviolability of one's liberty and freedom, unless the reason for the interference was to protect other students from harm.

It would be difficult to find two more incompatible and diametrically opposed moral positions on the issue of paternalism than the positions presented by Vanderpool and Weiss in contrast to John Stuart Mill. On the one hand, paternalism is justified rather easily by the medical writers. On the other hand, a rigid barrier is erected by Mill between liberty and paternalism. For Vanderpool and Weiss, paternalism is justified rather easily when it results in good things for the individual. For Mill, achieving good things for an individual does not justify paternalism.

As a practical matter, experiential educators must decide what should be done in specific contexts with students. Simply understanding the theoretical