The Rites of Passage and Outdoor Education: Critical Concerns for Effective Programming

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Rites of passage practices have caught the attention of educators seeking better methods of teaching adolescents. The fascination with the rites of passage model (ROP) is especially strong among outdoor educators. Once Van Gennep (1960) defined the rites of passage, a three-stage system of social transformation mediating role changes in a community, anthropologists were able to observe his social conception throughout all cultures. Outdoor educators have demonstrated interest in framing outdoor programs as rites of passage because of the structural similarities between outdoor programs and Van Gennep's first and second stages of a rite of passage.

While the ROP model has similarities to outdoor programs, the model is generally ineffective in most contemporary contexts because of challenges associated with the third stage of the ROP model. It is important for outdoor programs to understand these challenges prior to investing effort into using ROP models to achieve expected lasting benefits.

Most outdoor adventure programs use a Contemporary Adventure Model to mediate change, a fundamentally different rite of passage from the classic anthropological model. Outdoor educators need to decide among three choices with a ROP: abandon the ROP framework based upon a lack of goal congruence, follow a classic model and answer the many challenges the model brings with it, or follow a contemporary adventure model while cognizant of the model’s weaknesses.

Key Words: Rites of Passage, Transformation, Community, Outdoor Education

Introduction

Coming-of-age rites are practiced in virtually every society in the world. Some of the most dramatic of these rites occur in Africa, where the transformation from children to adults is celebrated in positive and public ways for those who overcome a set of challenging rituals prescribed by a community (Binkley, Decarbo, & Mullin-Kreamer, 2002). Coming-of-age rites are one subset of a rite of passage. Van Gennep (1909/1960) coined the term “rite of passage” and defined it as a rite which accompanies any change in social state, age, place, or life cycle stage, such as birth, puberty, marriage, or death. Rite of passage practices have caught the attention of contemporary educators seeking better methods of teaching adolescents. Numerous educators have a romantic fascination with the concept, claiming participation in a rite of passage is an essential component of becoming a healthy and well-adjusted person (e.g.,
The fascination with the rites of passage model (ROP) is especially strong among outdoor educators. One possible reason why the method is so attractive resides in the many structural similarities existing between the typical outdoor adventure trip and the elements contained in a ROP model. But the structures are not identical. Although several outdoor and youth development programs use the rites of passage as coming-of-age rites with students, the students often return to an environment lacking the formal social mechanisms for maintaining change. In fact, research on the rite of passage use in contemporary outdoor programs (e.g., Cushing, 1998; Venable, 1997) has not demonstrated the dramatic, positive results its proponents claim. Still, advocates maintain the rite of passage provides an important solution to society's ills. What a rite of passage can provide is a useful model for teaching and facilitating transformation under specific conditions. A deeper understanding needs to exist for outdoor educators seeking to use the rites of passage as a transformational model.

**Examples of a Rite of Passage**

In most cases, coming-of-age rites are group activities designed to build character, foster productive adult behavior, and forge friendships and alliances among initiates who undergo the rites together. Boys and girls usually participate in separate rituals to acquire specialized knowledge they will use throughout their lives. Instruction often focuses on domestic life and daily work; fertility, marriage, and raising a family; and ritual responsibilities (Binkley et al., 2002, p. 1).

Although a rite of passage mediates numerous role transitions, the coming-of-age, or youth-to-adult transition receives the most focus among outdoor programs. Every culture has rituals and beliefs concerning how a child becomes an adult, yet some cultures' rituals are seemingly more dramatic and powerful. Northern American educators observe the transformations of adolescents involved in the ritual life of pre-industrial societies and believe such rites and rituals have promise as educational models in other cultures. The typical conception of a rite of passage comes from a simplified observation of a pre-industrial society, such as the Bassarri, a West African ethnic group in the country of Senegal. An outsider looking into this complex culture may observe Bassarri boys completing a rite of passage, a month-long endeavor full of challenges and tasks the initiates face as a small peer group. Initiates travel and live in the wilderness where they complete many challenges (e.g., governing themselves, hunting and gathering, cooking food, and enduring painful physical challenges). On a day chosen by elders in the community, the initiates are brought back to the village where they become recognized as an adult through an elaborate ceremony. The former role of child has symbolically "died" and the initiates have been "born" into adults with clear responsibilities (Fabrizio, personal communication, October, 2001; Nolan, 1986).

These adult social roles are not natural; they are constructed by a society and its culture. The study of these roles is an area of inquiry for anthropologists who can offer outdoor educators a deeper understanding of the rites of passage phenomenon.

Van Gennep (1960) was the anthropologist who took much of the early data from various ethnographies of pre-industrial societies and articulated the rites of passage model. The discovery of this three-stage social schema has become one of anthropology's best-known terms. Once Van Gennep defined the analytical category of a rite of passage, anthropological research observed such rites in numerous cultures throughout the world.

**Van Gennep's Rite of Passage**

The three-stage system of social transformation begins when a person becomes ready to make a role change in the community. The initiates move through the following three stages: separation, a stage of transition or liminal phase and a stage of reincorporation. The rite of passage is a physical and cultural process of role and responsibility change.

*Separation.* The first stage separates the initiate from her/his role in the community. This separation can occur symbolically, physically, or emotionally. For example, a group using a rite of passage as a coming-of-age rite may physically and psychologically remove the youth from the community by taking initiates to a special enclosure where rituals are held. Changes in clothing, diet, furnishings, and at times, language reinforce the separation. The separation from the community marks the end of the initiate's former role (i.e., child) and the initiate is thrust into a stage of in-between (i.e., not an adult but no longer a child).

*Transition.* A period of transition follows, lasting from a day to several months, depending on local practice. During this time the initiate may experience a symbolic death and rebirth that, in some African societies, is marked by physical alterations, such as circumcision, body decoration, or moderate weight gain to suggest robust health and well-being (Binkley et al., 2002, p. 1).

This liminal (transition) phase is what the anthropologist Turner (1969, 1974) describes as being "betwixt and between" a former role and future status. It is where the transformation work occurs. This transitory stage is
where the initiate is in a period of becoming; moving toward the new role. This period presents challenges, communicates cultural norms and promotes new skills that an initiate will need to have in order to integrate into her/his new role in the community (Turner & Bruner, 1986). Types of challenges presented to initiates include circumcision, hunting and killing certain animals, and the enduring of physical difficulties.

**Reincorporation.** During the final stage the initiate returns to the community, ready to embrace roles and responsibilities that come with being an adult. A joyous celebration, the public performance of music and dance, and the display of initiation artworks allow family and friends to recognize the initiates’ achievements and new skills (Binkley et al., 2002, p. 3).

As the above quote highlights, the community can provide an acknowledged ending to the transition phase through events like a celebration. Besides welcoming initiates back, the community plays a role in exerting a pressure on the initiate to fulfill and adopt new roles through expressing expectations and social constraints. These two forces, the new knowledge of the initiates and the social pressure of the community, act together to support and sustain a transformation to a new role (Cushing, 1999).

These three stages are illustrated in Figure 1, where the individual is contained within a role designated by a metaphorical box. The circle represents the transformation from one role to another, leaving the box and taking on more fluid boundaries. After passing through the transition phase, the initiate is welcomed back into the community through a ceremony. The initiate then is placed into a new role, or a box. The community acts to reinforce and maintain “role pressure” on the newly transformed individual, essentially enforcing the boundaries of the new role. A contemporary example of a cultural transformation overlaid upon this model in Figure 1 is the transformational shift from civilian to soldier.

An important distinction in the classic model (Figure 1) is how the initiate is destined for a role, not left to find or figure out her/his own role. In the case of the civilian, once boot camp ends and the graduation ceremony occurs, the newly initiated are socially supported to take a new role as a soldier. The boot camp graduates are not left to figure out a social role, instead the transformational system pressures initiate’s to adopt a new role. The “social pressure” placed upon the initiate comes from various “reinforcers” (i.e., boot camp, military staff, fellow graduates, friends, family, and community members) who expect a prescribed transformation of the initiate into a soldier.

The rite of passage previously described is an example of the classic transformational model. This model has similarities to many standard types of outdoor experiences, such as an Outward Bound course, which have sometimes seduced educators into believing they are creating rites of passage transformations with participants. Few outdoor programs, however, follow such a model completely. Outdoor programs do not develop the appropriate reincorporation activities essential to transformation (Cushing, 1998).

**Figure 1. Rites of passage classic model (Van Gennep, 1909/1960) demonstrating a role shift with external forces supporting role 2.**
Why Educators Are Attracted to the Rites of Passage

Although North American society has its share of transitional rites (e.g., confirmations, bar and bat mitzvahs), these experiences often lack the dramatic power evident in other cultures, where rituals seem to chart clear paths for youth to become adults. Bringing more impact to existing rituals or developing new rites in contemporary cultures could be of use to educators concerned with youth development (Gibbons 1974; Kimbali, 1960; Neill 2001).

The ROP model has gained favor among North Americans as a potential answer to the question of how to develop healthy adults. Some educators are interested in the idea of a rite of passage as a teaching tool (e.g., Gibbons, 1974), while others go so far as to declare “a rite of passage is a significant factor in the development of a stable adult personality” (Delaney, 1995, p. 891). Some claim that without rite of passage rituals youth lose an important opportunity to understand values and are left alone to find their own markers of adulthood (Weibel, 1984). The lack of ritual creates a sense of “ritual bankruptcy” (Grimes, 2000) leading to various societal problems. Kimbali (1960) claims “mental illness may arise because of an increasing number of individuals are forced to accomplish their transitions alone and with private symbols” (p. xviii). However, the evidence supporting Kimbali’s bold claim, that a ritual has a direct psychological benefit upon people, is lacking in the outdoor education literature. Still, with a lack of clear evidence supporting the efficacy of ritual and ROP, there exists great interest in bringing ritualistic and rite of passage, coming-of-age models to outdoor programs.

How Outdoor Education and Rites of Passage Are Similar

One “place” where contemporary society may be able to correct some of its perceived ritual bankruptcy is in the adventure education field.

By providing adolescents with safe, supported passage through a journey of challenging experiences in which adolescents have much responsibility, a powerful, holistic experience, even a “rite of passage,” can be achieved. (Neill, 2001, p. 1)

Outdoor educators are somewhat accurate in seeing the similarities between the ROP model and an outdoor program model. Van Gennep’s (1960) first and second stages of a rite of passage are structurally replicated by many outdoor education courses. Students are separated from society and taken to places they do not typically live (e.g., woods, deserts, rivers). Adventure programs structurally mimic a liminal/transition phase where rules and coping mechanisms from previous roles no longer work. Such structures place participants in a state of searching for new ways to succeed, preparing initiates for learning. Myerhoff (1982) states, “When the initiate is stripped of all that he/she knows and understands—the sources of knowledge of self and society—he/she is likely to develop a freer, deeper understanding of the system from which he/she has been removed” (p. 117). Such separation and placement into a new environment is a common educational practice for outdoor educators. Although the level of “stripping” the initiate of all he/she knows, as mentioned by Myerhoff, is probably significantly less dramatic on a typical outdoor education program, a structural congruence is still
apparent. For instance, Gass (1993) describes the use of the unfamiliar in wilderness therapy: “One of the goals of adventure experiences is to take participants out of familiar environments and immerse them in situations that are new and unique... Doing this enhances therapy because it provides an environment where clients possess few expectations or preconceived notions about their success” (p. 6). Removing expectations of a previous role by placing a person in a new environment is a structural similarity between outdoor education and a rite of passage. The structural model shows the similarities between an outdoor education model and its commonalities with Van Gennep’s (1960) Rites of Passage schema as listed in Figure 2.

The structural congruency of the separation in outdoor education and powerful rites has not been lost on educators. Outdoor educators familiar with the anthropological idea of a rite of passage have found a potential structure that may strengthen the effects of adventure experiences (e.g., Neill, 2001).

The Challenges of Conducting Effective Rites of Passage Programs

While the ROP model has similarities to outdoor programs, the model is generally ineffective in most contemporary contexts because of three major challenges associated with the third stage: (a) outdoor educators tend to neglect the importance of the community in providing an elaborate incorporation ritual to support initiates after the transitional/liminal phase; (b) the people supporting a role-shift may not believe in a single, instant, powerful experience as the determinant for new responsibilities (for good reasons), but rather see growth as a slow process of accumulation; and (c) democratic post-industrial societies value role pluralism, where freedom from role definition is often valued more than defined role clarity. It is important for outdoor programs to understand these challenges prior to deciding if an ROP model is the best method for framing an experience, and certainly before investing effort into using a ROP model and expecting transformational change.

The Importance of Community in Reincorporation

Two research studies have highlighted community challenges. The first study by Cline (1993) involved adjudicated youth in a wilderness therapy program. In this program, participants were taken from jail directly into the woods. It was the program’s intention that after 60 days in the woods, facing both physical and emotional challenges, the participants would come to recognize themselves as changed by a rite of passage experience. Cline’s conclusion, concerning his study, was that the use of a rite of passage was ineffective. He attributed this ineffectiveness to the lack of understanding and support on the participant’s role shift by their home community (P. Cline, personal communication, October 28, 2000). When the wilderness trip ended and the participants went back home, instead of being recognized as responsible adults, they reintegrated into the same role they had had in the community before they left—troubled teenagers. No one in the community recognized a 60-day wilderness trip as an experience transforming their children into adults (Cline, 1993).

Cushing (1998) came to a similar conclusion while conducting research on an Outward Bound course for adolescents. In examining how the course reflected elements of a rite of passage, Cushing’s research found stu-

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**Figure 3. The Contemporary Adventure Model (CAM).** The freedom from role definition after the liminal/challenge phase allows for a search for a new role, which may include a regression to role 1.

![Contemporary Adventure Model Diagram](image-url)
student transformations to be themed around a specific student issue (i.e., leadership, social support, challenge) and if a transformation occurred it was partial, even though the participants were adolescents at a critical age for a natural transition (i.e., moving from child to adult). Although the Outward Bound experience had some structural similarities to a ROP model (e.g., separating students from their community and providing a challenging “liminal” type of experience), Cushing believed the trip failed as a rite of passage for one of the same reasons Cline expressed: When the students returned home to family and friends, their community welcomed them back home, but into the same role as when they left. The reincorporation phase did not occur. Instead of students moving into a new role and identity, they were more likely to regress to their previous role (Cushing). The problems discovered by these two researchers can be seen when comparing the structures of the Van Gennep (1960) and contemporary adventure models highlighted in Figure 3.

The Contemporary Adventure Model (CAM) differs from the Van Gennep schema in two specific ways after the liminal phase. The CAM lacks community support after the liminal/challenge phase. Second, the CAM does not provide a specific value system or role for the initiate. In other words, there is no box for the initiate and no group to keep an initiate in the box.

Having a system of support post-trip may be the essential component to a traditional rite of passage. If the system, such as a family unit, does not recognize a difference in the role of the participant in an ROP model, the participant is at risk of reverting back into the same roles he/she had previously, and tried moving away from—in effect the system can prevent growth and development (Cushing, 1998; Senge, 1999). For a group like the Bassari, the social context of the rite of passage rituals is born out of years of tradition, creating a cultural consensus regarding what is expected from an initiate. These expectations and social pressure may be the most important part of the traditional ROP model. Although participants may have an excellent ritual experience on an outdoor program, change may be negated because of failure to develop or connect with post-trip support to reinforce the role-shift as part of the program design. Important considerations for creating post-trip support are highlighted later in the paper.

Challenge of Cultural Beliefs about Experience

Although proper community support provides a holistic framework for change, the community needs to know how specifically to support change. Belief systems help to influence and direct change. The need for attention to belief systems is highlighted by Venable’s (1997) study focusing on a structured reintegration. He developed a rite of passage experience with a group of adolescents from a church community, specifically noting the importance of the church community in reintegrating students after the liminal phase. The initiates participated on a three-week backpacking trip to mark their passage from child to adult. After the trip, the students were to become formally recognized by the church members as adult participants in church life, fully able to contribute and given voting privileges. “In operational terms, however, it appeared that the church body in general was not entirely ready to modify their perceptions of the teenaged participants sufficiently to
include them in the formal or informal decision-making process" (Venable, p. 11). The communities’ pre-existing beliefs of how a person becomes an adult reduced the plausibility for the role shift of the participants.

This study reflects how cultural beliefs impact transformations. Change can be viewed as coming from one powerful experience, such as a conversion or being saved; or change can be a slow and continual developmental process (Abrahams, 1986, p. 50). The rite of passage in its simple conception is viewed as a conversion; the shift from child to adult is a dramatic "trading" of roles, as highlighted in Figure 4, and the ROP model mediates the shift. Rarely does a person "trade places" so dramatically in western contemporary culture where few common conversion experiences are valued as defining moments of change. Instead, contemporary culture views a person as a "work in progress:" people warm up to a role, steadily accumulating more responsibility and competence as they progress.

The path to adulthood can be culturally structured as a slow journey of accumulated growth, or a transformation based upon a key experience. Developing a belief in a youth to adult transformation is a challenge faced by educators constructing rites of passage experiences.

The Challenge of Pluralism

When a rite of passage occurs, its effectiveness is demonstrated by how well the initiate learns and takes on the intended role and responsibilities in the community. Within small, pre-industrial cultures, years of tradition and reinforcement can form a cultural consensus of role definition, but a cultural consensus is difficult to replicate in pluralistic communities valuing role-diversity and choice. A society promoting freedom from strict gender roles, as well as freedom from systematic racism, sexism, and homophobia is not a society that easily reverts to creating narrow and clearly recognized role definitions. In fact, contemporary North American society displays a history working to devalue rituals in an effort to provide freedom from role definition (Grimes, 2000).

Outdoor programs may encourage young people to "discover themselves" rather than teach what it means to be a man or a woman, and induct them into a traditional conception of a role. In addition, programs designed to induct initiates into a narrow form of acceptability can be viewed as oppressive. The challenge in using an ROP model is the potential for standardization, likely to oppose the intentions of the democratic or progressive educator with whom so many outdoor education leaders identify. Since the typical ROP model works best in circumstances where homogeneity is reinforced, defined and valued, the educator needs to come to terms with the potentially arrogant position of knowing what another person should become. This is a tension often ignored by ROP model advocates.

Overcoming the Challenges: Contemporary Application of a Rite of Passage

An effective rite of passage is not easily created. This does not mean the ROP model cannot be useful to outdoor educators. Rites can help us to give meaning to, frame and amplify experiences, deepening the value of what we learn from them. Rites provide a structure to assist us in feeling part of a community through shared expressions. During confusing times, such as a loss of a loved one, funeral rites may bring comfort, providing direction and mechanisms for honoring and expressing grief. Marriage and commitment ceremonies provide a mechanism for couples to express intentions of care and support. Rites help people mark important changes (Grimes, 2000).

The challenge to educators tempted to use an ROP model as part of an outdoor program is how to: (a) apply the rite of passage “method” to an appropriate situation, (b) include the development of community support for defined roles, and (c) understand and overcome the organizational cultural beliefs weakening the effects of a rite of passage, but realize in doing so it may create a situation where freedom and individualism are de-valued.

Finding the Appropriate Situation

Essential for introducing a participant to a new role is a clear definition of that role. What behaviors will the community expect from this person and how will restrictions be placed on the initiates? What responsibilities are the initiates going to be prepared to undertake? The clearly defined role facilitates the re-incorporation, but when the goals of educational programming are not intended to place an individual into a role, the ROP model is the wrong method to use for transformation.

The rite of passage may be an appropriate method when initiates join an established community seeking members to support its value system. Various religious and fraternal organizations conduct the ROP model effectively in this manner. A potential area where a rite of passage could be a tool in outdoor programming is in college and university orientations, as a commitment ceremony to a value system espoused by a trip or expedition, or inductions to a team or organization.

Some camp and outdoor programs conduct rites to incorporate new staff into the organization. The ROP model can often fit because of the definitive value systems to which incoming staff is expected to adhere. One example of ritual use in such a manner has been conducted at The Biking Expedition. During staff training, new members are led on a challenging trust walk by the administration. The walk serves as a metaphor for the trust the staff is expected to show to the community of support (e.g., administration, past leaders, course directors) and it is considered a sign of submitting to the community.
As the blindfolded staff members negotiate “walking” through deep mud, and then a chest high stream crossing with the help of their administrative guides, one by one the staff are ritually incorporated into the organization. Initiates are greeted by a celebration on the other side of the river, welcoming them into the supporting community. The new staff members are also being welcomed into a community of expectations. The community expects the staff to maintain a high commitment to the care and nurturance of children throughout the summer. Such outdoor communities with homogenous values may find the rite of passage tool appropriate for role changes.

Creating Community Pressure

A challenge to outdoor educators beyond the right application is effective enactment. Cushing (1998) suggested six ingredients for enacting a rites of passage: (a) provide space for initiates to express their transformation (e.g., journal writing, group discussions, poems, and carvings); (b) provide opportunities for initiates to perform or experiment with their new role (e.g., community service projects); (c) introduce interactions with people indirectly involved with the initiation to ease transition (e.g., share time with base camp or kitchen staff of outdoor program); (d) plan time for students to share and communicate their experiences to family members (e.g., write a letter to parents, have group write to the parents of an initiate); (e) build in a reward system for initiates who are able to maintain their new role (e.g., bracelets, pins); and (f) provide long-term support, reminding initiates of past accomplishments and present expectations (e.g., newsletters, cards, letters, e-mail list or web page).

Cushing’s ideas are intended to enhance reintegration by building a bridge between the world of the initiates during the liminal phase and the world of the community. Initiates need to return to a structured system able to support change. The specific elements of how community pressure is formed will differ based upon the group, but Cushing’s ideas provide “an initial listing of possible strategies” (Cushing, 1998, p. 12).

It is the community’s commitment to role transformation that builds social pressure, and commitment is often derived from understanding the experience of the initiate. Ideally, community members will understand the experience of the initiate firsthand, but firsthand experience may not be possible. This is true anytime a new initiation is created. The “understanding and experience” necessary to create a rite of passage is challenging work, but traditions and systems of support, by their nature, take time to develop.

Many other creative solutions could assist a community in learning to apply appropriate social/community pressure: chosen “elders” could participate in a shortened adventure course, community members could help lead a trip, rite of passage facilitators could hold community meetings and classes, or they could create slide shows and videos of the experiences. Creative methods of inclusion need to be explored to improve the understanding of the ritual and create support for participant changes.

We can look to the wilderness orientation program at New England College as one example of a method of inclusion. Incoming students participating in the wilderness orientation program spend the last night of their week-long camping trip in the woods near the college campus. Staff and faculty bring the wilderness orientation groups ice cream during the last evening, and each group, in turn, performs skits for the visiting staff. The evening provides one window into the experience of the students on a wilderness orientation program. Although many of the faculty and staff do not have the time to participate fully in a week-long backpacking trip, they are able to understand what occurs on the wilderness program trips because other avenues of information are opened to them. The deeper a person understands the experience, the more opportunities a person has to support the initiate and apply social pressure that reinforces the goals of the rites of passage program. At New England College, the staff and faculty reinforce the values of the orientation trip through their recognition of the students’ wilderness experience back on campus.

Checking for Goal Congruency

The rite of passage can be viewed as a tool promoting prevailing social values and systems. Cushing (1999) describes three types of transformations that occur for participants on adventure experiences: (a) The participant may become a better skilled (perform well); (b) The participant may become a citizen (conform well); or (c) The participant may become a critical/radical thinker (assess and reform well) (p. 27). The rite of passage as a cultural tool is most effective in creating a citizen who performs or conforms well, however, it may be the wrong tool to create reformers (Cushing).

Since educational programs struggle with contradictions—such as the differences between indoctrination and education, freedom and docility—educational inquiry will also have to struggle with the tension between providing an identity for a young person and helping the young person construct their own identity. Many variations exist between the extremes, but a program teaching existing social values under the euphemism of freedom, or enacting value-laden rituals under a banner of emancipation, undermines program effectiveness through its own hypocrisy. Such mixing of goals only acts to maintain a rite of passage program as a superficial exercise among educators.
Conclusion

The ROP model is not a panacea to problems confronted when raising youth. This belief as a universal truth for modern society is a mistake. However, what the ROP model can provide is a tool for educators to use when certain appropriate conditions exist.

If outdoor programs are going to conduct appropriate rites of passage programs, they need to use more than an unexamined mix of ritual practices assumed to transform students. Many cultural conflicts exist undermining such intentions. It is important for outdoor programs to focus on the systemic nature of transformation. Most important to the effective enactment of a rite of passage is community support and role consensus.

Outdoor programs tempted to use a rite of passage in their programs may need to follow the CAM model, leaving participants to choose their own roles after a liminal experience. Programs using such a model place initiates back into a system fundamentally different than Van Gennep’s (1960) ROP model. Outdoor programs using the CAM model will need to recognize that it is less effective at supporting transformational change because it leaves the initiates alone to make choices about their future roles. Outdoor programs using a CAM model should be careful in making bold transformational claims. Still, the CAM model offers a rite of passage experience which can occur within a framework of reduced role clarity and clear transformational goals.

Outdoor programs seeking to follow the classic ROP model will be challenged to find general consensus needed to support and reinforce transformation in initiates. Such challenges make the child-to-adult rite of passage an unrealistic nationwide educational endeavor for most countries. However, smaller communities (e.g., churches, clubs, college classes) may be able to use the model to successfully orient new members into the community. It is in these smaller communities where outdoor educators can use the classic ROP model as an effective tool.

References


