be a cornerstone in the experiential education field both in the United States and internationally. Perhaps the best exemplar of the nascent field is its organizing body—the Association of Experiential Education (AEE), which was founded in the 1970s. AEE's definition of experiential education reveals the connections between Deweyan constructions of experience and "experiential" education. "Experiential education is a philosophy and methodology in which educators purposefully engage with learners in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values" (AEE website, retrieved 9-10-04). There are many definitions and discussions of what defines an educational activity as "experiential." The following discussion by Proudman seems archetypal.

> Good experiential learning combines direct experience that is meaningful to the student with guided reflection and analysis. It is a challenging, active, student-centered process that impels students toward opportunities for taking initiative, responsibility, and decision making. . . . Whatever the activity, it is the learning and teaching *process* that defines whether a learning experience is experiential. (Proudman, 1996, p. 241)

This theoretical and practical strand has produced an entire industry of applications including ropes courses, adventure education, therapeutic wilderness programs, expeditionary learning schools, place-based learning initiatives, and service learning programs, among others. Despite significant obstacles against their implementation, both historically and in the modern context, experiential approaches remain a significant, if marginalized part of the educational landscape. Indeed, experiential programming and curricula have expanded significantly in recent years—particularly among groups traditionally labeled as disadvantaged or "at-risk"—as educators seek novel ways to engage students who do not experience success in more traditional educational environments.

The arguments on the effectiveness of such programs are well-intentioned. They get students out of the confinement of the four-walled classroom (Keen and Howard, 2002). They acknowledge and recognize individual differences and the importance of group learning (Rubin, 2000). They stress "real-world" application and relevance to what is taking place in kids' lives (Smith, 2002). Often, and rightly so, some of these approaches are championed as examples of innovative thinking and practice in curriculum development (Lee, 1976; Sizer, 1992; Meier, 1995; Fried, 1995). Examples are legion of students whose lives have been transformed by such educative experiences. Laudable outcomes include improved self-efficacy, increases in trust, accelerated relationship-building, and enhanced problem-solving, communication, and leadership skills. By all accounts, John Dewey should be quite proud of this manifestation of his philosophy. But, despite the lack of substantive critique of these approaches,[1] those who care deeply about the democratic and transformative role of experience in the curriculum ought to be uneasy.