People, Place, Process: The Geographies of Outdoor Education in the Outward Bound Trust

by

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Abstract

This original study explores the geographies of outdoor education. In recent years, there has been an unprecedented drive to make use of the outdoors as a learning space in educational practice. This has been coupled with a growing body of research critically examining the geographies of education. Despite the perceived benefits of outdoor education, which have been the focus of much academic literature to-date, the particular spaces through which outdoor education operates have been significantly under-researched. This study therefore contributes to an increased understanding of these spaces, through an empirical focus on the Outward Bound Trust, the UK's leading provider of bursary-assisted outdoor learning.

The qualitative research adopts an ethnographic approach, incorporating semi-structured interviews and innovative participatory methods. The empirical data set captures the voices of 26 outdoor instructors and 47 young people, and includes 40 moodboards created by these young people. The views of the study participants provide new insights into how the people and places of outdoor education co-produce particular experiences for young people. Specifically, the concept of 'centre geographies' is proposed in order to understand the ways in which the physical environment is implicated in outdoor education, and capture the diversity of spaces which are utilised. The findings expose the ways in which outdoor instructors embody the organisational culture, and how this contributes to their personal and professional trajectories and mobilities. The study highlights where the Outward Bound Trust (mis)align with contemporary citizenship education discourses, and, critically, how the organisation employs a 'methodological slowness' to allow for embodied learning to unfold, with time being revealed as a key factor in outdoor education experiences. Young people demonstrated how embodied encounters with place can be both opportunities for agency and alterity, and politically and culturally bounded. These interactions with outdoor spaces also foreground how young people's mobilities animate land and landscape, as well as destabilising the nature/culture binary inherent in traditional outdoor education narratives.

Overall, the thesis explores the geographies of outdoor education through an explicit consideration of the Outward Bound Trust's defining features: 'people', 'place', and 'process'. It contributes to extant bodies of literature on young people's bodily encounters, the interplay between formal and informal education, and life-course transitions, bringing outdoor education firmly into debates on children's geographies and the geographies of education.

Acknowledgements

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

Figures

Tables

CHAPTER ONE
Introduction

1.1. Background to the study

In recent years there has been an unprecedented drive in the UK and beyond, to make use of outdoor learning spaces in educational practice (Beames & Ross 2010; Harris 2018). This has been motivated by growing calls for education that is cross-curricular, locally relevant and affords strong elements of student responsibility (Ibid.). Generational concerns over youth disaffection (Sandford *et al.* 2008; Dickinson 2013) have resulted in a series of societal anxieties around 'youth', and young people are dominantly portrayed as in need of developmental experiences (Weller 2007). Currently, there is also significant media attention relating to a series of interconnecting issues regarding young people. These include concerns over 'generation fat' (BBC 2018) and the rise of the diabetes health crisis (Diabetes UK 2018); the resurgence in the value of character education (NatCen 2017; Tes Institute 2017) as demonstrated by the DfE Essential Life Skills programme (Department of Education 2017); and the reported decline of outdoor play (Moss 2012). These public discourses, along with the 'deficit' rhetoric surrounding young people, have led to youth initiatives seeking to inculcate a sense of responsibility, leadership skills and improved self-esteem, as well as reinvigorating calls for engagement with the outdoors in the UK.

Accordingly, there has been a noticeable increase in the popularity of outdoor education initiatives, exemplified by the rapid revival of the 'forest school' concept (Kraftl 2013a), and championed by the *Learning Outside the Classroom Manifesto* (DfES 2006). Outdoor learning is defined as "that which is beyond the walls of the indoors" (Zink & Burrows 2008: 255), and is used in various formats to support young people's personal, social, and emotional development (Fiennes *et al.* 2015; Harris 2018). There is an enduring rhetoric connecting ideas of youth, nature, and morality (Matless 1998) embedded in the literature regarding informal education/learning. Consequently, a diverse landscape of historical and contemporary youth organisations now operates through rural settings, and there is a resurgence of 'life skills' education through the outdoors (Garst *et al.* 2011; Waite 2017). More and more, the outdoors is being incorporated into mainstream education as a method of learning across the whole curriculum.

Over the past two decades, the geographies of children, youth and families has grown into an active and engaging subdiscipline (Holloway *et al.* 2010). So too has research in the field of geographies of education, as part of the wider social sciences (Holloway *et al.* 2010; Holloway & Jöns 2012; Mills & Kraftl 2016). Holloway *et al.* (2010) argue that the fast-developing geographies of education is currently impaired by its limited engagement with work on young people and youth. Bringing these two fields into closer dialogue is important to both ensure that the implications of children's geographies are understood in wider intellectual contexts, and to foreground young people as subjects rather than objects of education, demanding that attention is paid to their "current and future life-worlds" (Holloway *et al.* 2010: 1). It is now acknowledged that education takes place in a greater array of places than have hitherto been studied by geographers (Ibid.). In particular, and attending to these deficits, Holloway and Jöns (2012) call for the uniting of 'geographical' and 'social identities' and the spaces of learning through which they are constituted. This includes exploring informal, alongside formal learning environments, as sites where socio-spatial identities coalesce (Mills 2013).

As such, this thesis seeks to contribute to the relative paucity of geographical research on informal education, and spaces of outdoor learning in particular. It takes the Outward Bound Trust as its case study, in order to centre a critical understanding of outdoor education in key debates in geographies of children and youth, and geographies of education.

1.2. 'Childhood', 'youth', and young people

Young people have been the subject of a vast body of research that has increased in pace and scale since the 1970s (Holt 2009). Throughout this time, the way in which young people have been conceptualised in sociological thinking has changed rapidly, marked in no small way by the so-called New Social Studies of Childhood (NSSC) set out by James *et al.* (1998). This extends the sociology of childhood paradigm (James & Prout 1998), which acknowledges childhood as socially constructed by adult society in different ways in different times and places. Crucially, the NSSC foregrounds children as competent social actors, and emphasises their agency, participation and voice in research and social life (Holloway & Valentine 2000).

Theorising childhood as a social construction helps to understand how the category of 'youth' varies greatly across time and space (Ansell 2016). As Holt and Holloway (2006) assert, there are commonalities and differences in the socio-spatial contexts and experiences of children and young people across the globalised world. Indeed, there has been a need for children's

geographers to destabilize constructions of the universalised child, a challenge attended to by such edited collections as *Geographies of Children Youth and Families: An International Perspective* (Holt 2011). In the Global North[1], the word 'youth' is often associated with the distinct phase of life separating childhood and adulthood, although this is frequently use interchangeably with 'young people' (Spence 2005). This relates both to chronological biological age, and the societal positioning of an individual in terms of their social and economic status, as well as ways of being in terms of cognitive and physical behaviour (Evans 2008; Spence 2005).

During the International Year of the Youth, the United Nations defined youth biologically as those between 15-25 years of age (Tyyskä 2017). This overlaps with the category of 'childhood' which is commonly understood as anyone under the age of 18 (de Waal 2002). Young people have also been variously categorised as 'young adolescents' (10-14), 'teens' (15-19) and 'young adults' (20-24) (Galambos & Kolaric 1994). Scholars have differentially taken up a position on this and the utilisation of particular terminologies; Holt (2004) highlights her engagement with *children* aged 7-10 as significant, given their placing within the 'invisible' 'middle years' of childhood (James *et al.* 1998). Similarly, Susie Weller (2006; 2007) has contributed research on *teenagers*, prompted by Valentine's (2003) observation that research has predominantly focused on two age groups: children aged 5-16, and youth aged 16-25, which acts to neglect those 'in-between' childhood and adulthood (Weller 2006).

In contemporary Britain, youth is categorised as an unstable period of life (Spence 2005). This is linked to dominant discourses around childhood centring on incompleteness, dependence and vulnerability (Weller 2007), and young people as in a state of 'becoming' in transition to adulthood (Spence 2005). This diminishes the idea of youth as a stage in its own right (Evans 2008; Skelton 2002), and ignores the ways in which definitions of youth and adulthood are intricately intertwined "with issues of power, authority, and social worth" (Christiensen *et al.* 2006: 9). In light of this, I have elected to use the term 'young people' in this thesis to encompass the participants in this study (the selected age range and underpinning rationale is discussed in Chapter 3). This is firstly to capture their biological and social positioning as 'young', whilst simultaneously recognising their status as individuals and citizens – as 'being'

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[1] The Global North, also commonly termed the Western, or First World, broadly denotes a socio-economic and political North-South divide. The North is defined as the richer more developed region, and the South as the poorer, less developed region.

(James *et al.* 1998) in opposition to 'becoming'. Secondly, it acknowledges that it is beyond the scope of the study to delineate between the experiences of children/adolescents/ teenagers/young adults. The term 'young people' therefore acts as a 'broad brush' term to capture the experiences of individuals subsumed under the category of 'youth'.

1.3. Informal learning, outdoor education, and citizenship

As already asserted, the range of spaces within which education now occurs is vast. Accordingly, there is some sense that in-school learning is *formal*, and out of school learning is *informal* (Eshach 2007), and the idea of 'informal' and 'non-formal' learning practices are often conflated. However, Eshach (2007: 173) differentiates between informal learning, which applies to "situations in life that come about spontaneously", and non-formal learning which occurs in a "planned and highly adaptable manner in institutions, organisations, and situations", characteristically mediated as in the case of formal learning (see also Coombes & Ahmed 1974). Mills and Kraftl (2014: 3) similarly identify informal learning as occurring in and through the everyday, taking place in "an infinite array of situations, geographical and historical contexts".

Informal learning has a long history (Cartwright 2012), which has been formalised through the various professional and deliberative practices of informal *education*. Informal education is the facilitation of informal learning (Ibid.), and refers to forms of learning that sit between education, social care, play, and occasionally health care provision (Kraftl 2013a). Cartwright (2012) suggests that although there are some key tensions between informal and non-formal education, these spaces of learning operate on a continuum. It is my observation that many of the practices which report to be informal education are perhaps characterised more accurately as non-formal education. Informal education is conceptualised as voluntary, dialogical, and spatially unstructured (Cartwright 2012), but it is increasingly being called upon in the UK to provide supplementary activities within schools (Cartwright 2012; Jeffs 2007; Kraftl 2013a). Consequently, there are various levels of dis/connections between informal and formal educational spheres (Kraftl 2013a), and indeed 'alternative' education (Ibid.), as is discussed in Chapter 2.

Within the framework of informal education, outdoor education is a term attached to a disparate range of educational practices which draw upon nature and outdoor spaces to aid the personal and social development of young people (Wattchow & Brown 2011). Higgins (2002) suggests that outdoor education incorporates the interrelating elements of outdoor activities,

environmental education and personal and social learning. Contemporary mainstream outdoor education in a Western context has developed since the 1970s (Wattchow & Brown 2011). Variously referred to as outdoor adventure education (OAE), outdoor environmental education (OEE), outdoor learning, and outdoor education, this pedagogic approach focusses on certain outdoor activities, is concerned with notions of adventure and challenge, and emphasises the anthropocentric benefits of personal and social development by immersion in the outdoors (Payne & Wattchow 2008). Insofar as the spaces of outdoor education are less structured and formal than classroom environments (Harris 2018), and are designed to support the holistic development of young people, they are understood to fall somewhere along the continuum of informal/non-formal educational practice. Whilst accepting the 'fuzziness' of the in/formal binary (Bauer 2015), for the purposes of this study, outdoor education is considered as part of the professionalised landscape of informal education.

As will be explored in detail in Chapter 2, 'nature', as the setting for this outdoor learning experience, oversimplifies this messy and conflicted concept. However, given the oft-cited idea from outdoor instructors involved in this research project that "*it all depends on your starting point*", for the purpose of this study, 'nature' in relation to outdoor education is conceived of as "the wilder place" (Doherty 2007: 94). This is to acknowledge that the environments that the Outward Bound Trust operate from seek to be, or appear to be, relatively free from human influence, at least from the perspective of their participants.

As this chapter has suggested, outdoor education has a long history, and connections between outdoor pursuits and self-development are longstanding. Outdoor education is widely considered as a tool in the holistic personal and social development of young people, and there are strong correlations between the aims of outdoor education, and public discourses around citizenship, and producing active citizens who can contribute to society (Lawson 2001). Consequently, Chapter 2 opens with a consideration of contemporary debates regarding young people's citizenship, to understand the place of outdoor education within the landscape of citizenship education.

1.4. The Outward Bound Trust: People, Place, Process

The Outward Bound Trust (OBT) are an educational charity, and the UK's leading provider of bursary-assisted outdoor learning. In 2016 they engaged with nearly twenty-eight thousand young people (OBT 2018a) through courses which aim to equip young people with the skills

they need for "education, work and life" (Ibid.). Founded in 1941, the OBT are a stalwart of outdoor education practice in the UK, and one of the most iconic organisations seeking to use nature in the positive development of young people (Cook 1999). The Trust now operates as part of a wider global network of Outward Bound centres, and as one OBT instructor suggested, *"Outward Bound is almost synonymous with outdoor education"*. The OBT therefore presents an excellent case study through which to explore the geographies of this educational practice.

The OBT's pedagogical approach in encompassed in the notion of the three 'P's; 'people', 'place', and 'process' (Figure 1.1). The Trust state that having an impact on an individual is achieved "through skilful people working in an inspiring and challenging environment and applying an affective process" (OBT 2017a: 9). In responding to calls that geographers need to better understand a diverse range of educational spaces (Holloway *et al*. 2010), and the assertion that there are "blank spots" in the literature on outdoor learning (Christie *et al.* 2014), this pedagogical framework presents a neat entry point into a geographical study of outdoor education. This is especially so given Gulson and Symes' (2007) observation that investigating the geographies of education necessitates attending to educational and spatial processes as indistinguishable from one another.

1.5. Research aims and questions

In light of the above context, this study interrogates the specific geographies of the Outward Bound Trust, with respect to the main aim, which is:

To investigate how the social and physical environments of outdoor learning programmes are constructed, particularly in pursuit of learning for citizenship, how they are 'consumed' by participating young people, and how these experiences intersect with axes of social difference.

This aim is pursued through exploring the key defining features of the Trust: 'People', 'place', 'process'. The key research questions in relation to these themes are:

1. How are the social and physical spaces of the Outward Bound Trust constructed and used to produce an outdoor learning experience?

2. How are the key concepts of the Trust embodied in its staff, and how does this contribute to the outdoor learning experience?

3. How do young people experience nature and the outdoors through Outward Bound Trust Programmes?

THE TRUST'S DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

An Outward Bound course is all about learning and the impact this has on the individual. This is achieved through skilful people working in an inspiring and challenging environment and applying an effective process. This is best illustrated by means of the following diagram.

HARD SKILLS

IMPACT
Participant
Outcomes

SOFT SKILLS

AUTHENTIC
ADVENTURE

OUR PLACES

Real adventures in the natural environment

Inspiring locations provide limitless opportunities

Scale of experience and journeys is unique and challenging

OUR PEOPLE

Experienced educators who facilitate learning

Challenge and impel people to perform

Highly qualified and experienced outdoor instructors

OUR PROCESS

Personal journey

Experiential and transferable

Continuous reviewing and reflection

Figure 1. 1   The Trust's distinctive features, depicting the three 'P's: 'people', 'place', 'process' (OBT 2017a)

1.6. Structure of the thesis

The remainder of this thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter 2 presents the relevant theoretical and conceptual debates that inform the study. It reviews and discusses the existing geographical and social science literature with regard to young people's citizenship, spaces of learning, and social constructions of nature. The chapter explores the use of the outdoors as a space of learning, and problematises the hitherto lack of attention to particular places of outdoor education. In addition, Chapter 2 provides an introduction to the case study, situating it within historical and contemporary debates in youth citizenship.

Chapter 3 outlines the methodological framework of the research, the methods utilised, and the process of data analysis undertaken in this study. Specifically, it introduces a qualitative methodology as a choice for data collection and sheds light on particular issues that arise when conducting research with young people. The participants of the study are introduced and the particular phases of the research outlined, including the benefits and constraints of the selected

methods, and the analytical approach used. The chapter is attentive to the ways in which qualitative research is always subjective and partial, and therefore includes a personal reflexive account of undertaking the study.

The empirical findings of the research are presented in Chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7. These chapters are broadly divided into the themes of people, place and process. It should be noted, of course, that not only do the OBT present these defining features as operating in tandem to produce an outdoor education experience, but that working towards a more culturally-inspired geographies of education (Mills & Kraftl 2016) entails exploring both the social and the spatial, *and* understanding how these come together through materialities and performances. Therefore, the empirical chapters do not exclusively map onto these themes, but rather, they privilege a particular 'P' whilst acknowledging the roles of the others. Chapter 4 focuses predominantly on *place* through an exploration of the physical spaces of the OBT. This chapter highlights the contribution of the centre building and immediate setting, the wider varied environment, and purpose-built and 'managed' nature to outdoor education programmes. Specifically, the concept of 'centre geographies' is proposed to encompass the ways in which particular places are implicated in creating outdoor learning experiences. This chapter demonstrates how place *matters* in outdoor education, beyond merely its value in being 'outside'.

Chapter 5 centres on the *people* of the OBT. It investigates the organisational culture of the Trust, and how the key concepts of the OBT are embedded within the organisation through its staff. This chapter explores the role of outdoor instructors in creating outdoor learning programmes, necessarily exploring how they interact with particular places to choreograph an experience. Chapter 5 also attends to the ways in which outdoor instructors' patterns of employment are intertwined with their lifestyles, and the impact this is having on their life-transitions and patterns of mobility. This chapter drawing on ideas around the concept of citizenship to understand notions of identity and belonging within the OBT staff group.

Chapters 6 and 7 are about experiences of outdoor education, and therefore more concerned with *process*, as well as how people and place come together through this endeavour. Chapter 6 specifically considers the construction of the 'Outward Bound experience'. Firstly, by identifying how the notion of citizenship and teaching for citizenship education is mobilised in the OBT through the personal ideals of the instructors and the social and physical spaces of the centres. Secondly, through an exploration of the impact of the residential process and of friendships. Finally, in employing a 'methodological slowness'. Chapter 7 builds on these ideas

through a discussion of young people's *embodied* experiences, demonstrating how young people produce particular natures and seeking to understand how their mobilities animate landscapes and places. This chapter also provides a discussion of structure and agency, exploring the ways in which environments of outdoor education became both spaces of 'alterity' and spaces which enacted particular 'effects' on young people through their encounters with them. This final empirical chapter argues for a foregrounding of young people's lived experiences of outdoor education, thus re-centring the body in debates on educational practice.

In bringing the thesis to a close, Chapter 8 pulls together the key findings of the preceding analysis chapters and outlines the explicit empirical and theoretical contributions of the study. In so doing, it offers a direct response to the study's initial aim of understanding how the social and physical environments of outdoor learning programmes are constructed. The study seeks to bring a 'geographical' understanding to work on outdoor education, which has most frequently been situated in the fields of educational theory and psychology. This chapter considers how this research has expanded current understandings of the geographies of outdoor education, and contributed to (re)connecting research on children and youth, and research on education. This chapter also makes recommendations for future research in this field.

CHAPTER TWO

Towards geographies of outdoor education: key approaches and debates

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2.1. Introduction

This chapter places outdoor education in the context of a wider conceptual framework and existing literature. The chapter is structured in five sections. The first of these explores current debates regarding young people's citizenship and the principle discourses regarding educating young people for citizenship. The second section brings these debates into educational spaces, discussing the literature on learning in and beyond a school setting. This is followed by two sections exploring conceptualisations of nature; firstly, reviewing dominant discourses of 'the rural', and secondly, discussing literature around young people's engagements with the outdoors, both in the sphere of the everyday and more structured educational settings. Finally, the chapter introduces the Outward Bound Trust (OBT) as the case study of this thesis, outlining the organisation's development from its inception through to present day practices.

As discussed in Chapter 1, geographers' combined interests in education and children and youth now represents a burgeoning body of work. However, these areas of the discipline have not traditionally engaged with work on *outdoor* education. For this reason, the literature presented in this chapter is interdisciplinary, drawing on studies from fields such as sociology and educational research as well as geography, in order to more comprehensively review the relevant outdoor education literature. Overall, this chapter identifies gaps in order to highlight the contribution to existing knowledge that this study makes.

2.2. Young people's citizenship

The concept of citizenship is a priority in politics and social policy, with its prominence reflected in a proliferate body of critical academic literature regarding both citizen-state relations (Staeheli 2011; Staeheli *et al.* 2016; Yarwood 2014) and educating for citizenship (Pykett 2010a; Osler & Starkey 2005a). The term is undeniably problematic, often equating to political shorthand for the 'good behaviour' that nation states or particular governments require of individuals (Parker 2002). As well being deployed in uncritical ways, ideas of citizenship are linked through a variety of definitions that are open to much contestation and debate (Lawson 2001). Understanding conceptualisations of citizenship involves a multitude of spaces

and actors, formal and informal practices and the intricacies of citizen subjectivity (Pykett 2010a). The study of youth citizenship is an important growing strand of study in young people's geographies (Benwell & Hopkins 2016; Mills & Duckett 2016; Mills & Waite 2017). Given this current primacy awarded to young people's negotiations and understandings of citizenship and citizenship in practice, the challenging and changing nature of these discourses is discussed below.

2.2.1. *Traditional citizenship and the new governance*

Traditional understandings of citizenship are based on the relationship between an individual and the state, with the balance of rights and responsibilities being pivotal to the role that citizens play (Lawson 2001). This type of citizenship is politically and territorially bound (Ibid.), forged in spatial patterns and marked by belonging and commitment to specific places (Desforges *et al.* 2005). The more recent rhetoric of the British Government is that of a communitarian approach (for an overview of the differing political approaches to citizenship see Jochum *et al.* 2005) whereby citizenship constitutes more than just legal status – there is an expectation that citizens will participate and take 'responsibility' within their political community. This is clearly reflected in David Cameron's 2011 *Big Society* speech:

> "There's one word at the heart of all this, and that is *responsibility*. We need people to take more responsibility. We need people to act more responsibly, because if you take any problem in our country and you just think: 'Well, what can the government do to sort it out?', that is only ever going to be half of the answer." (Cameron 2011, emphasis added)

This idea of citizenship as obligation, the changing balance between rights and responsibilities, and the restringing of notions of community is developed further in Theresa May's 'Shared Society' (Mills & Waite 2018), and represents a broader process of change in the citizenship literature. The static notion of entitlement attached to traditional citizenship has been heavily critiqued (Brown 2014; Mallard 2004), and the relationship between the citizen and the state is being increasingly challenged (Yarwood 2014). This style of governing through communities is indicative of a new 'politics of scale' (Desforges *et al.* 2005) in socio-political and economic geographies more generally, whereby the supremacy of the nation state is being contested from all directions. States are losing ground to global processes, as well as subnational, regional and ethnic challenges (Hall *et al.* 1998). The rise of mobility is creating 'disrupting geographies'

(Cresswell & Verstraete 2003) and creative possibilities which alter the way people understand their sense of belonging and responsibility (Desforges *et al.* 2003). There is also greater diversity and difference; in the make-up of communities, in the complex interplay of identity with modern society, and in the new and differentiated ways in which individuals participate in social life (Hall *et al.* 1998). Yarwood (2014) suggests that these new scales of governance are blurring the boundaries of responsibilty and challenging traditional assumptions - the notion of *social citizenship* and what it entails is receiving significant public attention (Ibid.).

These new emerging geographies of citizenship highlight citizenship as a cultural phenonmenon as much as a legal status or bundle of rights (Parker 2002). Citizenship appears not as a given, but as an active negotiation of acceptance and belonging that must be learned and contiunally worked at (Hall *et al.* 1999). It is spatially and performatively contigent, linked to a variety of social and spatial scales and conducted through the everyday (Ibid.). Related public spaces each become a potential site of indentification and citizenship (Delanty 2000), which in turn encourages multiple identities and flows of interaction (Jansen *et al.* 2006). In addition to this *relational* understanding of citizenship - conceived in relation to other people and places (Yarwood 2014) – the cultural practices which influence citizenship experiences mark it out as *socially constructed* in and through the practices of daily life (Ibid.). Jansen *et al.* (2006: 196) consider it a "contextualised social practice" whereby the possible manifestations of citizenship are significantly shaped by "structural developments, quality of the public sphere […] and prevailing rationalities of governing social order". Anderson *et al.* (2008: 34) sum this up by saying:

> "…citizenship is increasingly organised through a variety of non-state as well as state institutions. This extends citizenship in the cultural sphere, to describe people's senses of belonging in relation to places and people, near and far; senses of responsibility for the ways in which these relations are shaped; and a sense of how individual and collective action helps to shape the world in which we live."

The way in which these new spaces and scales of citizenship formation play out in interconnecting and dynamic processes, recognises that citizenship has an inherent *spatial complexity* (Yarwood 2014). That is, despite the decreasing salience of the nation and national belonging – citizenship is still contingent on place, space, territoriality and mobility. It may be that citizenship and civil identities can be constructed in terms not related to the nation (Ross 2007), but the spatial networks and everyday spaces through which local and global influences

operate mean we cannot understand citizenship without a consideration of space (Yarwood 2014). It is also important to note that the notion of citizenship as a bilateral relationship between an individual and the state is deeply embedded in our understanding of the concept, and multiple citizenships represent an ambiguous reality (Heater 1999). Thus, modern citizenship entails a contradiction: contemporary flows of goods, people and information weakens the primacy of nations, yet the idea of belonging to a national community maintains a stronghold on the imagination (Yuval-Davis *et al.* 2005).

Ross (2007) suggests that new forms of citizenship are uncoupling rights and responsibilities from territory, but that broader definitions still necessitate the consideration of belonging, participating and engaging in a 'community'. Ross (2007: 297) positions contemporary citizenship as "working towards the betterment of the community one lives in [...] to improve life for all citizens". Understandings of community are still heavily associated with place, which can be problematic for understanding citizenship in relation to individuals who affiliate with multiple identities. For example, Abu El-Haj (2007) discusses immigrant Palestinian youth in America as experiencing a sense of belonging to a community beyond the borders of the nation state, but that negotiation of their citizenship and identity as Palestinian, American, or both, is incredibly complex and shifting.

2.2.2. *Citizenship and identity formation*

Traditionally seen as synonymous with a national identity and premised on a notion of belonging, the naturalised relationship between citizen status and an individual's identity is a longstanding one. Notions of citizenship and identity are considered in relational terms, but it is crucial to adopt an understanding of citizenship as fluid rather than fixed; as an identity created in relation to other people and places (Yarwood 2014). In this way it is possible to appreciate how daily actions are important in reproducing these citizenship identities and how they are socially constructed through socio-cultural practices and the power relations that shape them (Ibid.).

The idea of a singular identity is dismissed (Hall *et al.* 1999; Sen 2006) in favour of a repertoire of identities which are socially contingent (Hall *et al.* 2000). Several contributors suggest that the primary identity and 'notion of self' is irrevocably linked to the national (Smith 1991; Hall 2002; Jamieson 2005; Brubaker & Cooper 2000). However, the way in which citizenship can relate to plural identities raises the question of citizens who hold a sense of belonging to several

places. Hall (2002) suggests that multiple citizenships create a fractured sense of identity which complicates the way in which individuals negotiate national identity, and civic and political participation. This is further compounded by the idea that identities are constantly in flux and contested through everyday spaces and practices (Ibid.).

In the policy arena, national identity is called upon to evoke this notion of belonging and community, and the teaching of any kind of civics education is traditionally aimed at preparing young people to take their place in the national community (Osler & Starkey 2001). However, Hall *et al.* (1998) point out that citizenship status is perceived as too singular, formal and inflexible. It is not utilised in everyday social interactions through which young people construct their social identities. Yuval-Davies *et al.* (2005) describe belonging as a 'thicker' and more useful concept than citizenship, and one that is increasingly multi-layered and complex. The fourth annual report of the citizenship education curriculum in England supports the idea that belonging is an important factor in young peoples' lives (Ireland *et al.* 2006). The report commented that belonging to a community engendered social responsibility and the ways which young people felt they belonged and developed their identity through their community appeared to be crucial in the development of notions of citizenship (Ibid.).

Abu El-Haj (2007) also suggests that it is this feeling of belonging to a community which is required to encourage individuals to exercise their rights and responsibilities. These rights and responsibilities are understood through culture and practice in the communities that individuals identify with, and help to shape an individual's sense of identity, resistance and compliance (Parker 2002). Citizenship is clearly an integral part of the way in which individuals construct identities and conduct themselves across different spatial scales, but the feelings of belonging and responsibility that it engenders are complicated by increasingly multi-layered identities (Pykett 2010a).

2.2.3. *Active citizens and Citizenship Education*

The rescaling of the state downwards and new modes of governmentality which underline the responsibilities of citizens, represent a paradigm shift from a rights-based approach to citizenship centred on mutual obligation (Lawson 2001). This focus on community-led action is underpinned by the idea of *active citizenship*. Active citizenship is increasingly mobilised through place-based communities, with citizenship now requiring practicing as a member of, and active participation in, a political community (Peterson & Knowles 2009). The

communitarian position on citizenship emphasises a re-moralising of communities through common morals and collective identity (Jansen *et al*. 2006), with a socially inclusive society in which all individuals make an active contribution. In this way, rights and responsibilities fall under the rubric of active citizenship (Lawson 2001).

The notion of citizenship as a responsibility for one's self and for others in the community has shaped UK government policy, notably since 2010, through, as mentioned earlier, David Cameron's notion of 'Big Society':

> "Citizenship is not a transaction – in which you put your taxes in and get your services out. It's a relationship – you're part of something bigger than yourself, and it matters what you think and you feel and you do." (Cameron, cited in Yarwood 2014: 2)

Citizenship Education, introduced as part of the national curriculum in 2002 for young people aims to develop social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political literacy. This is achieved through three interrelated elements: knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens, developing skills of enquiry and communication, and developing skills for participation and responsible action (Ireland *et al.* 2006). However, the idea of active citizenship presents a number of problems for both academics and practitioners. Firstly, as Hall *et al*. (2000) suggest, there appears to be a big concern with achieving active citizenship, but relatively little concern with interrogating the concept. What does it mean to be an *active* citizen? Perhaps unsurprisingly, there is no universal definition, and beliefs as to what constitutes active citizenship vary greatly (Lawson 2001; Mills & Waite 2017; Nelson & Kerr 2006). The Crick Report[2] espouses the need to develop 'meaningful' participation opportunities (Ireland *et al.* 2006), but gives no indication of what exactly this meaningful participation entails – are these experiential, influential, or empowering experiences? Is the aim to simply participate in civil society, or to achieve transformative action? Jochum *et al*. (2005) delineate between horizontal and vertical participation, as opportunities to take part versus affecting real change, and it is clear that the former has currently taking precedence in citizenship education practice (Hall *et al.* 1998).

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[2] 'The Crick Report' was published in 1998 by the Advisory Group on the Teaching of Citizenship and Democracy in Schools to set out the rationale for citizenship being introduced as a National Curriculum subject.

For some, active citizenship involves contributing to the common good, and there is often a focus on active service within communities (Yarwood 2014). Indeed, this can be seen in the 2010 Coalition government's flagship youth scheme, the National Citizen Service (NCS), which engages participants in a community action project (Mills & Waite 2017). Other examples include the *#iwill* campaign[3] supported in the Conservative Party's 2015 manifesto (Roberts *et al.* 2016), which aims to make social action "part of life for as many 10 to 20 year-olds as possible by the year 2020" (Step Up to Serve, 2018). The notions of active citizenship, volunteering and participation are closely linked and there is confusion over how to distinguish between the three concepts (Nelson & Kerr 2005). However, the way in which active citizenship has become commensurable with volunteering and service learning obscures the idea in academic discourses that active citizenship requires engaging in action for social change (Ross 2007). Hall *et al.* (1998) argue that simple corporeal participation obscures the need for full engagement with understanding; active citizenship requires *purposeful* action with rationality and reflection (Wringe 1992). In addition, Osler & Starkey (2001) point out that a focus on physical participation through active service brings into question the status of those who cannot actively participate. This would position active citizenship as a platform for social exclusion, despite the rhetoric of an inclusive and contributing society resting on the 'inclusive' concept of citizenship.

The civic renewal agenda from the Home Office defined active citizens as individuals who take responsibility for tackling the problems they see in their own communities. Indeed, their 2005 action plan *Together We Can* sought to encourage and empower people to become actively engaged in their communities (Ireland *et al.* 2006). This purposeful assertion of commitment to place and community in active citizenship policy discourse points to its role in culturing a sense of belonging and collective identity (Desforges *et al.* 2005). However, this seems at odds with the contemporary cosmopolitan public sphere outlined by Delanty (2000), characterised by multiplicity and mobility. Jansen *et al.* (2006) suggest that active citizenship can be seen as a way of balancing communality and freedom in late modern society. But the multiscalar (Parker 2002) and mobile nature (Cresswell 2009) of the current socio-political landscape means that feelings of belonging and identity can often be transient, especially in youth (Ross 2007). Active citizenship is focused at a local scale, but spatial networks allow interactions to take place at

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[3] #iwill is a UK-wide campaign that aims to make social action part of life for young people. It has been endorsed by current Prime Minister Theresa May through a £40 million #iwill fund. In the context of the campaign, social action alludes to '*practical action in the service of others that creates positive change*'.

the global, which is reflective of the way young people's transitions have become more fractured and problematic over the last few decades (Hall *et al.* 1998). Citizenship is more often than not seen as an outcome and end status (Biesta *et al.* 2009) which ignores the fluidity and complexity of citizenship formation.

Notions of community and belonging have been transformed by twenty-first century changes, and active citizenship must adopt a more flexible approach for young people. Indeed, Jansen *et al.* (2006) reminds us that active citizenship can be understood as negotiated just as other forms of citizenship are – it is neither a product of voluntaristic ideals or a pre-given blueprint on 'good society'. Ross (2007) suggests that young people are educated to form a 'loyal citizenry', but as Staeheli (2011: 399) suggests, "it seems unsatisfying to overlook citizens in favour of citizenship". As Biesta *et al.* (2009) remind us, learning is always situational, contextual, and contingent on individual dispositions.

Ross (2007: 300) points out that learning active citizenship can only occur through participation, coupled with understanding:

> "The enactive learning of citizenship will naturally include the involvement of young people in establishing rights in their own schools and societies, and extending rights to the third generation. *Teaching active citizenship is learning citizenship through participation in the understanding and the extension of rights."* (emphasis added)

If we remind ourselves that (active) citizenship is learned and negotiated across time and space (Hall *et al.* 1999), this leads Brown (2014: 30) to raise the question of "how and where people have the opportunity to learn and embody the competencies […] upon which their citizenship is conditional", especially in relation to performing citizenship across multiple spatial settings. Where do young people get the opportunity to learn active citizenship? The suitability of citizenship education in a school setting is discussed in the next section.

2.3. Spaces and places of learning

Citizenship Education can be seen as a commitment to producing a politically engaged and civil population with democratic values, a greater self-awareness and citizenly consciousness (Pykett *et al*. 2010). This certainly has implications for the physical and social spaces of school, which dominates early learning and citizenship experiences. As Holloway and Valentine (2000) observe, the space of the school acts an important institution through which children are

socialized. Overwhelmingly, schools have been theorised as serving wider society by "inculcating compliant *citizens* and productive workers" (Aitken 1994: 90, emphasis added). However, it must be remembered that school constitutes just one small part of the environment through which young people are influenced and learn (Biesta *et al.* 2009); it is part of a network of spaces which carry broader messages in the social and cultural sphere and the influence of different contexts cannot be discounted. Osler and Starkey (2005) add to this by remarking that citizenship is not realised exclusively through school – there need to be spaces beyond the school environment and youth need opportunities to make connections and build on experiences in school *and* their communities.

In order to explore the impact of different spaces of learning it is useful to consider how space and place more generally are constructed. Massey (1994; 2005) shows how 'place' is formed through particular social relations which interact with particular locations. Given this, place and space can be understood as dynamic and changeable and provide a site for contestation and resistance. Place is significant in shaping our experiences and learning through our engagement with, and interpretations of it (Stuart 2003). Place plays a role in shaping the meaning we give to it, and there are continuous opportunities for changes in interactions between people, space and place (Ibid.). Kraftl (2013a) highlights this entanglement between social and spatial processes, which he suggests are impossible to separate. He draws on the concept of 'spatiality' here, "to capture the ways in which the social and spatial are inextricably realised in one another" (Pile & Keith 1993: 6).

For Kraftl (2016), the notion of spatiality thus helps to elucidate how geography and history, or space and society, are intimately linked. This intertwining of space and society has certainly been considered by geographers and beyond, in relation to educational settings and to young people, both in isolation and in tandem. For example, Reay (2007) demonstrates how policies for school choices manifest themselves in a highly class-stratified "geographies of schooling", and Kraftl (2016) points to a larger-scale understanding of educational spaces as entrenched in neoliberal discourses regarding flexibility and choice. At the local scale, Valentine (2000) explores how gendered and sexualised societal norms are performed and negotiated with the space of the school. More recently, Holloway *et al*. (2018) have engaged with ideas of spatiality to critically rethink understandings of young people's agency within the geographies of children youth and families literature. As they observe, notions of childhood are spatial contingent, and act to inform socio-spatial practices, which can then "reinforce, or occasionally challenge, our understandings of childhood" (Holloway & Valentine 2000: 779). Hackett *et al.* (2015) have

also sought to examine the interplay between children's lives and the material and immaterial worlds they inhabit. For Hackett and colleagues, spatial perspectives are central to understanding young people's practices, and the concept of spatiality is drawn upon to examine the production and impact of social processes within children's lives.

In relation to alternative education, Kraftl (2013b) mobilises notions of spatiality to uncover how young people's experiences of learning, and alternative education practices, operate in the production of social spaces. This acts to emphasise the experiences which characterise this educational space and acknowledges that learning and education takes place in a diverse array of spaces. Consequently, the physical and material elements of learning environments tell us very little in isolation, and we must consider how the physical interacts with the social to produce learning spaces and educational experiences. From this perspective we can understand that social and spatial inequalities will impact the way in which citizenship is imagined (Pykett 2011), and the physical ordering of space is significant in the way in which young people experience education, and education for citizenship.

2.3.1. *Problematizing citizenship at school*

The teaching of active citizenship through citizenship education provides a contradictory message: In the first instance, learning active citizenship aims to develop participatory, moral, biographic and critical competencies (Jansen *et al.* 2006) and young people are encouraged to engage in debate, discussion and alternative points of view (Ross 2007). This points to governance through self-reliance and self-enterprise. Conversely, the aim of citizenship education is to provide young people with the knowledge, skills and dispositions necessary to fulfil their roles as citizens (Torney-Purta *et al.* 2007). This points to unifying practices which strengthen the social order and maintain the status-quo (Lawson 2001), modifying young people's behaviour instead of building on personal development experiences (Cartwright 2012).

As well as this conflicting rhetoric in active citizenship discourse, the 'deficiency approach'[4] to teaching in citizenship education is problematic (Jansen *et al.* 2006). Jansen *et al.* suggest that the development of participatory and moral competencies is not possible through 'decontextualized deliverable knowledge'. In other words, citizenship education must be in the

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[4] Specific groups, such as youth are labelled as 'deficient' in terms of lacking adequate competencies, attitudes and morals for social integration. These 'deficiencies' are seen as a threat to social cohesion, and education therefore promotes social cohesion and integration through teaching the 'right' knowledge, skills and attitudes (Jansen *et al.* 2006).

context of genuine practice not abstract lessons and formal learning. Indeed, they suggest that active citizenship entails four dimensions: capacity, connection, challenge, context – which require situated, creative and experiential learning. Peterson & Knowles (2009) agree and suggest that the Crick Report has minimal conceptual and methodological guidance on teaching active citizenship. The report has an ambitious goal – "for people to think of themselves as active citizens, willing, able and equipped to have an influence in public life" (QCA 1998: 7), but fails to outline exactly how this is to be achieved, which has left much ambiguity in practical negotiations of active citizenship.

More recently, the House of Lords Select Committee on Citizenship and Civic Engagement have reported that citizenship education has a crucial role to play in helping to build active citizens (House of Lords 2018). It is suggested that these formalised lessons develop useful 'life skills' to do with "critical debate and public speaking" (Weinburg, citied in House of Lords 2018: 28). The Association for Citizenship Teaching (ACT) presented evidence to the Select Committee, proposing that citizenship education is most effective where it is strongly embedded in the curriculum and led by citizenship-trained teachers, and affords students real experiences of participation, for example through campaigning, organising public meetings, or participating in local decision making (ACT 2017). However, this was seen to be made more difficult by the narrowing of the subject curriculum for citizenship, whereby key aspects of subject content have been removed, leaving the emphasis on national institutions (Ibid.). Therefore, we can see that methodologically and logistically, achieving learning for active citizenship through citizenship education is still a challenge, in light of a "slimmed-down curriculum" (House of Lords 2018: 29).

2.3.2. *Learning spaces beyond the classroom: informal and alternative education*

Schools are conceived of as inherently neoliberal spaces – institutions suffuse with rules and regulations designed as a form of social control (Biesta *et al.* 2009; Collins & Coleman 2008; Holloway & Valentine 2000; James *et al.* 1998; Pykett 2011). This formal setting can be considered in contrast to non-formal and informal education (Mills & Kraftl 2014). In general, the former refers to organised educational activities outside of formal systems, for example after-school clubs. The latter constitutes a less structured process which seeks to foster learning in everyday settings through dialogue and the development of agency (Cartwright 2012). In reality, as Chapter 1 hinted, the distinction between these terms is often lost and they are used in a messy and interchangeable manner, operating on a continuum. Kraftl (2013a) also offers the idea of 'alternative educational spaces', which are understood as those that are not

controlled or predominantly funded through state-sanctioned education programmes. Alternative education represents a diverse array of practices and spaces which function both to *supplement*, and to *replace* mainstream education (Ibid.). Although not necessarily completely disconnected from the mainstream (Kraftl 2013b), this form of education is "grounded in alternative philosophies and cultures" (Woods & Woods 2009: 3).

Dialogue is central to the idea of informal education as an opportunity to allow young people to enhance their own autonomy (Cartwright 2012). Conversely, formal educational spaces appear to function as preparation for civic life and a training of the workforce (Goerisch 2014), with limited opportunities for dialogical action. The need for communication and exchange in learning experiences is highlighted (Biesta *et al*. 2009; Ditton 2014), with opportunities for young people to express themselves, be self-reflexive and build rapport. Conversations can engender trust which in turn can help to create positive relationships with peers and significant adults. Seemingly everyday conversations can embody numerous qualities associated with positive youth development such as trust, respect, affection and concern for others (Jeffs & Smith 2005). In addition, learning is a dynamic process which is not merely about cognitive function, but is inherently situated, relational and linked to an individual's life trajectory (Biesta *et al*. 2009). The role of context, relationships and dispositions are important in young people's learning experiences, and the more flexible and open spaces of informal education allow for a recognition of these situational factors.

More informal settings are also helpful in playing one's part in a group, and therefore clubs and groups can be a space through which young people learn about community citizenship. This has direct comparisons with Hansen *et al.*'s (2003) observation that organised youth activities can facilitate team work and social skills through collaboration. The superficial interactions privileged in an informal learning environment are encompassed in the notion of 'giving voice' to young people (Serido *et al*. 2011), which allows informal education to position itself against some of the deficiencies of formal educational settings (Mills & Kraftl 2014).

Hansen *et al*. (2003) consider two key categories of development experiences. First, personal development is that which occurs within the individual and includes identity exploration, the development of initiative, and basic emotional, cognitive and physical skills. Second, interpersonal developmental experiences involve building social connections with others through team-building exercises, practicing social skills and developing relationships with peers and significant adults. These developmental outcomes can be seen to relate to Lerner *et*

al.'s (2000) five 'C's of positive youth development; confidence, competence, connection, character and caring/compassion, which collectively produce the sixth 'C' – contribution. Parallels can also be drawn between Hansen *et al.*'s typology of developmental processes, the five 'C's, and the aims of the Citizenship Education programme (Crick 1998) to produce socially and emotionally healthy adults who will likely contribute by 'giving back to society'. This shows how citizenship education policy aligns with youth development models, even when general outcomes are not branded under the concept of 'citizenship'. Further work is needed to understand where informal educational spaces contribute to the production of 'active citizens' or certainly communicate this rhetoric, even when this is not their explicit aim.

2.3.3. *Learning through the outdoors: Outdoor education*

The symbolic and actual use of outdoor environments in youth work has a significant history, and informal learning spaces which make use of nature, rural environments and outdoor activities have a longstanding tradition in Western culture and Britain in particular (Philo 1992; Matless 1998; Freeman 2011). Outdoor education is premised on some assumed qualities of the natural environment – putting young people in challenging situations which require team work, problem-solving and decision-making within these environments to achieve certain social outcomes (Hattie *et al.* 1997). This is understood as a means of *experiential* learning (Nicol 2014) which aims to nurture qualities such as spirit, readiness and compassion (Mckenzie 2003). The learning process of outdoor education encompasses methods called for in teaching citizenship education to young people (section 2.3.1).

Nature and wild environments have long held a deep fascination in the British imagination (Brown 2014) and there has been a particular historical connection between the British countryside and the promotion of citizenship values. The 1944 Education Act increased the use of 'outdoor education' under the auspices of improving health, providing experiences of the countryside, increasing curriculum understanding and developing character (Cook 1999). A wealth of youth organisations now exist which utilise 'the great outdoors' as a forum for moral as well as physical wellbeing, not least NCS (Mills & Waite 2017), introduced earlier. The most longstanding and iconic of these aforementioned youth organisations are the Boy Scouts, Girl Guides, and The Outward Bound (see section 2.6), which use nature as 'the great educator' and are committed to cultivating character (Cook 1999). Initially, outdoor education centred around opportunities for character training associated with physical challenge and 'fitness for war' (Freeman 2011). However, post-war there was an emphasis on the social benefits to be derived

from outdoor education, and today the language attached to these organisations is that of personal growth and citizenship (Ibid.).

Recently, enlisting nature and outdoor activities to support and substitute mainstream educational practice has become increasingly popular in the UK. This can be seen through the rising opportunities for outdoor learning experiences (Christie *et al.* 2014), championed by the Department of Education in outlining the mandatory provision of outdoor learning within the early years foundation stage since 2007 (DfES 2006), as well as a dramatic increase in the number of 'forest schools' since the mid-1990s (Harris 2018; Kraftl 2013a; Leather 2018). In the Scandinavian concept of forest school which denotes outdoor play for kindergarten age children, the unstructured and diverse environments presented by nature allows for greater possibilities and a more stimulating setting for children (Fjørtoft 2001). Fjørtoft indicates that nature provides greater 'affordances' (Gibson 1979) than a classroom and therefore presents more opportunities for play which in turn help to develop better motor skills in young people.

As well as affording opportunities for play and motor skill development, the challenge of the unfamiliar wild environment and its connections to morality and purity are used to test teamwork, leadership, self-sufficiency, enquiry, resolve and confidence – all valuable in the self-development of future citizens (Yarwood 2014). However, this relationship between rurality and citizenship highlights how imagination and the performance of space contribute to forms of citizenship (Ibid.). Nature is 'produced' as we configure space and shape the ethical parameters regarding how body and environment intertwine (Brown 2014). Outdoor recreation in the UK is governed through the Countryside Code, which reflects certain hegemonic and historical values and is enforced through daily performances and practices (Yarwood 2014; Matless 2016; Macnaghten & Urry 2001). Everyday norms help to negotiate outdoor access and some activities are seen as complicit with idyllic and traditional visions of countryside, with others as 'out of place' (Macnaghten & urry 2001; Woods 2011). This points to embodied experiences of nature which are almost always regulated, be it by moral imperatives or supervisory organisations. Outdoor recreation practices (including outdoor education) can present conflicting opportunities for bodies in nature, symbolised by escapism and freedom, but in reality, moderated and constrained by bodily surveillance (Woods 2001). Clearly, how rural places are imagined has a bearing on the way rural society has been shaped. The identities connected to rural landscapes are frequently used to instil citizenship through various forms of outdoor education (Storey 2001). These constructed 'identity-scapes' of the British landscape are explored in the next section.

2.4. Deconstructing nature

Nature and rurality are, for the most part, taken-for-granted neutral constructs. But the concept of nature is used in multiple ways by a variety of individuals, groups and organisations to serve a range of means. Nature refers to the type of space, as well as the representation of space (Halfacree 1993). Notions of nature (and rurality) are complex, encompassing all of the physical things to which the concept itself refers to (Castree 2001). As Soper (1995:1) asserts it is "at once [...] very familiar and extremely elusive". What precisely do we mean when we think of 'nature'? It is important to explore constructions of nature in relation to how it is experienced and embodied as this has significant implications for the way outdoor education can be understood.

2.4.1. Constructions of nature

The work of Castree (2001) and Hinchcliffe (2007) has identified how nature is often defined as being 'out there', as *external* to and different from society and separate from human culture. This understanding supports a 'people and environment perspective', which acts to deny the social aspect of how we come to understand nature (Ibid.). However, the way in which we describe and understand the world is entangled in our own values and assumptions, and it is not possible to separate the two (Cronon 1996). Not only this, but meanings of nature have varied over time and space with various 'natures' being produced through different social practices (Macnaghten & Urry 2001).

In response, many geographers view nature as a 'social construction' (Cronon 1996; Hinchcliffe 2007). This challenges the environmental perspective by suggesting that nature has never been *natural*. Indeed, human action is an absent presence in natural environments, which exist through the "imagined, boundaried, [and] managed" representations of people (Nairn & Kraftl 2016: 7). This seemingly abstract understanding of nature stands in stark contrast to the very concept itself, which is reproduced as relatively fixed and stable (Buijs *et al.* 2009), often set in opposition to evolving urban environments. The rigidity of the taken-for-granted normalized discourse around nature acts to supress this social understanding of nature, rurality and the 'great outdoors'. But, as Cloke and Thrift (1994: 4) comment,

"To accept the rural as a social and cultural construct allows the rural to be rescued as an important research category, as the way in which the meanings of rurality are

24

constructed, negotiated and experienced will interconnect with the agencies and structures being played out in the space concerned."

This understanding of rurality as 'coming into being' through interplay with agency and structure chimes with Hinchcliffe's (2007) assertion that human geographers view culture and nature as thoroughly entangled. We are reminded that in order to further explore the idea of nature and rurality as research categories, it is useful to remember the intertwining of space and place through the notion of *spatialities,* as outlined in section 2.3.

2.4.2. *Dominant discourses and alternative understandings*

Western culture dictates a very particular vision of 'real nature' which has been variously described as the 'arcadian' image (Buijs *et al.* 2009), the 'romantic sublime' body-nature relationship (Michael 2001), and as possessing an Edenic narrative (Cronon 1996). Certainly, Buijs *et al.* (2009) discuss a move from functional views of nature and the natural environment to this arcadian view in which the fragility of nature is highly emotive, and we have a moral obligation to protect it. Similarly, Cronon (1996) depicts nature as a 'secular deity' in a post-romantic age, which fits well with discourses around the rural-urban divide as the physical and essentialised difference between city and countryside (Askins 2009). Nature is thus conceptualised as upholding innate values, which we seek to (re)connect with in order to recover an 'authentic state of being' (Michael 2001).

This dominant Western view of nature is reproduced through popular culture such as scenic landscape portraits and musical lyrics – for example Joni Mitchell's *Big Yellow Taxi* - the 'clean rural' is upheld as the antithesis to the 'dirty city' and nature is imbued with an ability to uphold a moral imperative. This helps us to understand how this Western perspective has become dominant, but also evolved and developed over time as cultures, ideas and practices change. This is often an influence on the rationale for outdoor educational experiences, which provide an opportunity to reconnect with these moral landscapes.

It is easy to forget that other cultures and communities have different experiences and expectations of the nature and physical world around them. Halfacree (1993) relates the concept of 'social representations' to perceptions of rurality; these are socially elaborated systems of values, ideas and practices that define an object for a social group. These values are imbued in material spaces, acting to recode them at an imaginative and physical level. Buijs *et al.* (2009) describe five different images of nature: the wilderness image, the autonomy image, the

inclusive image, the aesthetic image and the functional image. These images are based on different understandings of what nature is. For example, the wilderness image is based on an eco-centric understanding, versus the functional image which is based on anthropogenic values where nature has a utilitarian role (Ibid.). These images can be understood as frameworks which structure how individuals perceive nature (Keulartz *et al.* 2004) and are directly related to certain social and cultural positions (Bang *et al.* 2007).

There is a small body of work exploring cultural differences in attitudes to nature, to help understand patterns of outdoor recreation and implications for nature policy. Buijs *et al.*'s (2009) paper suggests that there is a general lack of appreciation for landscapes as *scenery* in Islamic cultures in the Netherlands, with the Islamic migrant population presenting a 'functional image' of nature versus the 'wilderness image' of the native Dutch population. This assertion is supported by Gentin (2011) in her review of outdoor recreation patterns in Europe, where she concludes that ethnic minorities reject the dominant Western wilderness image for a functional view of nature. Buijs *et al.* also point towards processes of 'acculturation' in younger second-generation migrants, who held a lessened functional view but did not fully embrace a wilderness perspective.

Conversely, Askins' (2009) qualitative study of perceptions and use of the English countryside shows understandings of nature and rurality as expressed internationally through emotional connections and embodied experiences. There were direct comparisons drawn between the Peak District National Park and non-European landscapes, with different rurals connected through their non-urbanness. Askins observes how disparate physical geographies are linked by their seemingly natural attributes such as fresh air, peace and quiet, and idyllic scenery. This points towards similarities in cultural understandings of nature, with a 'global rural' that evokes similar feelings and emotions. As European countries become more ethnically diverse, it is not impossible to envisage processes of cultural assimilation and acculturation influencing images of nature, as is the case for Buijs *et al.* (2009). However, it is problematic to make generalisations and assumptions about different ethnic categories in relation to access and use of nature and the outdoors. There is a danger of essentialising these differences as well as masking inter-ethnic diversity (Gentin 2011; Jay *et al.* 2012), and underlying processes of social exclusion (Holloway 2007), which are discussed below.

2.4.3. *The 'rural Idyll' and British identity*

There is a parallel nature discourse which dominates the British, and particularly the English, imagination – a specifically racialized and nationalistic discourse surrounding the English countryside, the 'rural idyll', and British identities. The countryside in these imaginings corresponds to a well organised "pastoral-agricultural rural", as opposed to a "remote desolate-wilderness rural" (Matthews *et al.* 2000: 142), and the implications of this will be discussed shortly. Askins (2009) highlights the 'entanglement' between subject and effect in the implication of rurality and space in identity construction. This is consistent with notions of spatiality and describes how there are mutually constitutive relationships between place and identity; the physical countryside "is intertwined with people's understanding of rural space and themselves in rural space" (Askins 2009: 369).

Connections between the countryside, the nation and racialisation are longstanding and constructed through quintessential versions of Englishness (Neal 2002; Matless 1998; 2016). The rural is understood as genuine (monocultural) England which acts to strengthen the rural/urban dichotomy through the white safety of the English countryside versus ethnically mixed urban Britain (Holloway 2007). Accordingly, Halfacree (1995) highlights eight dimensions of 'the rural'; relaxation, tradition, healthiness, safety, naturalness, community, simplicity and high status. Here, the 'rural idyll' is formulated around notions of innocence, naturalness and tradition, away from the corrupting values of urbanism (Matthews *et al.* 2000).

Crang & Tolia-Kelly (2010) utilise Thrift's (2004) theory of 'geographies of affect' to discuss heritage sites as embedded 'affective' infrastructures which represent these kinds of national sensibilities. They use the example of the English Lake District as a landscape which orchestrates categories of nature, native and culture. Social values and culture are naturalised through emblematic natures which have an ethno-nationalist sensibility, and those who engage with these places are imbued with virtues of English citizenship (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010). The British countryside, and especially heritage sites such as national parks, seek to preserve imagined landscapes and consequentially contribute to a *nationalising* of nature (Ibid.). There is a political idea of the bond between people, land and nation deeply embedded in the English countryside (Bunce 2003). Consequently, as Ingrid Pollard's visually evocative photography captures (Kinsman 1995), an intangible atmosphere pervades the countryside, making it an uncomfortable space for ethnic minority residents and visitors (Knowles 2008). Migrants are marked as out-of-place in these naturalised white rural spaces, which acts to deny the

experience of racialised minorities as tourists and residents (Garland & Chakraborti 2006; Holloway 2007).

Holloway (2007: 18) calls for social scientists to privilege counter-discourses which demonstrate the heterogeneity of rural areas, and the "frailty" of this "discursive whitewashing of the countryside". As the work of Askins (2009), discussed above, and Tolia-Kelly (2006; 2007; 2008) demonstrates, ethnic minority groups mobilise multiple, sometimes conflicting, and invariably 'translocal' visions of landscape. These understandings disrupt singular moral narratives of landscape and rurality, revealing the manifold relationships and sensibilities mobilised through engagements with 'natural' space in the UK. Certainly, more critical attention is needed to explore processes of social-exclusion in rural areas, to challenge normative assumptions around rural practices, and fully appreciate the nuanced ways in which conceptions of the UK countryside are both reinforced and challenged through the experiences of diverse social groups.

Imaginations of the rural idyll also become problematic in understanding the construction of British identities, as well as those of minority groups. Ideas of 'Britishness' are frequently tied to the landscape, but the question remains open – whose landscape? Representations of the rural are deeply bound up with constructions of *Englishness* (Valentine 1997) which is often conflated with a *British* identity. This acts to mask significant heterogeneity in the physical landscapes of the UK, and also how regional identities are constructed through rurality and space. Indeed, Britishness always seems to be hindered by a 'South-centred national imaginary' (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2318). But as Philo (1992) reminds us, there are multiple cultural constructions of rurality and meanings ascribed to living in the British countryside. How, for example, does the rural idyll fit with Crang & Tolia-Kelly's depiction of the English Lake District - which presents a wildly different physical space to that of South England's arable farm land - as an articulation of 'genuine' England? The complexities of regional landscapes and the national heritages of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales show how the concept of *British* nature through the rural idyll becomes incredibly multi-layered and conflicting.

2.5. Nature, youth and learning

Children's geographers have sought to address how young people have traditionally been a marginalised group in social science research (James 2010; Holloway 2014). However, dominant discourses around nature often neglect the experiences of young people (Matthews *et*

al. 2000). Children's geographies is now a vibrant subdiscipline (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson 2011), and research theorising children, nature and space has grown in breadth and depth (Shillington & Murnaghan 2016). The body of recent work conducted on youth and nature can be divided into two main areas: studies considering young people's everyday nature encounters; and the role of place in outdoor education. Despite a relative range of literature herein, young people often remain unproblematically linked to nature discourse (Holloway & Valentine 2000), and relationships between nature and childhood have been largely uncritical of the constructions of nature inherent within these discourses (Taylor 2013). This is relative to the conceptual challenge of the rural idyll as a notion constructed by adults *for* adults (Matthews *et al* 2000). Increasingly, and going someway to counteract this deficit, child/nature relationships have begun to be unpicked through recent post-humanist and 'new materialisms' perspectives (Barad 2007; Latour 2004; Taguchi 2010) (discussed below), including a consideration of the two areas outlined above. That said, there is a continued need to bring together literature on nature, and work in children's geographies – to focus more explicitly on how they experience natural space. As discussed, different social groups construct, access and experience nature differentially, and it is necessary to understand this better. It is important to explore how young people experience nature and how this intersects with other social categories such as race, gender and class. Some of the key debates relating to young people's everyday nature encounters, the place of nature place in outdoor education, and 'more-than-human' (Mycock 2018) child/nature relationships, are addressed below.

2.5.1. *Young people's everyday encounters with nature*

Research by Milligan and Bingley (2007), Kong *et al.* (1999) and Kong (2000) recognised the need to understand young people's perceptions of the natural environments. Kong *et al.*'s empirical study of Singaporean youths' constructions and experiences of nature reveals the impact of social and cultural context on their understandings. Singaporean urban youth held two conflicting constructions of nature: that which was familiar and close – neighbourhood parks, footpaths and rows of flowers – versus the unknown or 'other', which was free from manmade elements and represented vast and open faraway places to which they had limited access. All three studies highlighted above showed that young people with limited childhood experiences of natural environments were more likely to perceive them as threatening. In Singapore, fears over nature stemmed from a perceived threat from insects and animals. Comparatively, Ward Thompson *et al.* (2007) found that a fear of gangs in isolated natural areas

was prominent for young people in a British context, which could be attributed to an environment of social disorder in the UK (Burgess 1993). In addition, studies also reflect the fact that parents' environmental perceptions impacted on young people's opinions (Kong 2000; Harden 2000).

A number of geographers have also examined rural childhoods (e.g., Skelton 2000; Tucker 2003; Tillman *et al.* 2018). Matthews *et al.* (2000) seek to challenge assumptions around the rural idyll through their study of British rural childhoods, revealing a disjuncture between the symbolism of the good, rural life and children's realities and corporeal experiences. For Matthews and colleagues, the reality of Western rural childhoods reflects much of the literature on Western urban childhoods. Children's spaces in the community were still contested and there were typical discourses surrounding disaffected youth and anti-social behaviour. In addition to literature considering urban and rural childhoods, Von Benzon (2011; 2016) attends to an absence of empirical work on learning disabled[5] children's experiences of the natural environment. Here, the role of the embodied, social and structural outcomes of young people's impairments are highlighted as creating distinct patterns of independent access to, and experience of, green space for learning disabled young people.

These studies reveal the role of social and cultural context, physical (urban/rural) settings, and physical and social access in mediating young people's experiences of nature and outdoor environments. It is argued that these contextual factors will undeniable impact young people's engagements with natural spaces in an educational setting. Therefore, further research must consider the implications of young people's socio-cultural, and economic positions in their nature experiences.

2.5.2. *The power of the 'great outdoors' in outdoor education*

Holloway *et al.* (2010) draw attention to the diversity of places in which education happens, and Kraftl (2013b: 436-7) argues that the challenge for geographers is to articulate "how alternative education practices operate in the production of social spaces". Specifically, in relation to *outdoor* learning spaces, certain natures are always privileged and others deemed undesirable (Kraftl 2013a). This raises important questions about whose natures are privileged, and how (un)familiar these environments are to the young people in question. To break down

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[5] In the UK, the term "learning disabled" refers to people with a low IQ, and is used consciously in Von Benzon's work to emphasize the social responsibility for placing limitations on the lived experience of those born with intellectual impairment (Von Benzon 2016).

how young people interact with and relate to nature requires an understanding of what Kraftl (2013a; 2015) calls the 'more-than-social' elements. This again brings us back to *spatialities*, to understand the 'blurring of interaction between natural and social' and how the impacts of learning in nature are diverse and complex. As such, nature must be explored as constitutive of learning, as it does not operate outside the social but has an active role in determining human activity. However, nature as a socially constructed, but invariably naturalised concept, complicates the assumed utility of the 'outdoors' for outdoor education in four primary ways. Firstly, nature as an objective category prevents the interrogation of place in outdoor education. Secondly, nature as a universal experience negates alternative understandings of nature. Thirdly, nature as possessing innate moral qualities ignores the intricacies of specific nature locations in outdoor education experiences. Finally, nature as the natural physical environment hides the artificial construction of many outdoor education experiences. These are discussed in turn below.

The dominant discourse around nature allows the outdoors to be positioned as an empty site for context-free personal development (Brookes 2002). In reality the outdoors is not neutral or objective but is unsurprisingly complex; tied to ideas of place and space, activity, practice and process (Zink & Burrows 2008). If we add to this the knowledge that space is never fixed or neutral (Massey 2005) and the fact that meaning is inscribed through particular power relations (Sharp *et al.* 2000), it becomes necessary to move away from an objective understanding of the outdoors. Harrison (2010) suggests that there is a lack of consideration of the impact of location on social interaction, and we need question how the 'where' impacts the 'what' (Dickson 2003). In the outdoor education literature there is a limited focus on the significance of place, and the experiences of particular places in outdoor learning need to be better acknowledged (Dickson 2003; Wattchow 2001a; Wattchow & Brown 2011).

Secondly, more often than not there is a universal approach to implementing outdoor education. The outdoors is assumed to enhance learning experiences across a range of dimensions and deemed to influence students in similar ways (Bunting 2006). In addition, the 'nature experience' is seen to contribute to educational outcomes in a linear way (Russell 1999). Russell warns against this 'natural panacea'; why do we believe in the power and possibility of being submersed in nature? The importance of social interaction and cultural background in informing individuals' understandings of place (Matthews *et al.* 2000) tell us that this is neither a suitable or particularly effective approach. Dickson (2003: 86) reminds us that the impact of place upon people is "of great concern… to human geographers". Therefore, when planning initiatives for

outdoor learning it may be more appropriate to question 'what nature and whose experience?' (Russell 1999), as the experience of outdoor learning spaces will almost certainly not be interpreted in the same way by each participant. Stuart (2003) suggests that the role of place in education has generally been overlooked for three reasons: firstly, because it is easy forget the obvious and mundane; secondly, because place is a vague concept; and, finally, because places are very specific where we are inclined to think in abstract ways. Where special attention is given to place in outdoor education research there is relatively little to draw upon in a UK context (for an exception see Harrison 2010). There is a need for attention to the specificities of place (and nature) and the way in which it is constructed and experienced in very different ways across different cultures. A number of qualitative studies have been conducted on place-based experiences of outdoor education in an American and Australian context (e.g. Sobel 2004; Wattchow 2008). Given the variety in global 'natures', it would be naïve to expect empirical data from other countries to be easily mapped onto UK-based outdoor learning experiences.

Thirdly, a construction of the outdoors as 'inherently good and moral' allows research to gloss over the intricacies of the outdoors in outdoor learning and rely on the assumed and innate qualities of nature. Harrison (2010) suggests that the use of the outdoors is often 'inadvertently justified' through a need for increased physical activity or greater opportunities for personal and social development. Zink & Burrows (2008) highlight how the rationale for nature as a learning environment is built upon the dichotomy between indoors and outdoors. This 'difference' from everyday indoor spaces is seen to provide new possibilities, rather than an explicit focus on what the outdoors and the specific locale bring to the learning experience.

Finally, the outdoors in outdoor education is used to infer much more than just the physical and natural environment. Technology acts as a facilitator for what are fundamentally understood as outdoor activities 'in nature'. Indoor ski slopes and climbing walls, for example, create indoor-outdoors through these artificial environments which are upheld as outdoor educational activities in outdoor learning spaces (Zink & Burrows 2008). They are designed to help individuals accrue the assumed benefits of engaging in learning *in the outdoors*. In addition, the type of activities associated with outdoor education are considered a world away from activities that take place outside, such as playing football on the school field (Ibid.). These spaces of outdoor learning, whether indoors or out, are clearly constructed as different to other outdoor environments. Mills' (2014) historical consideration of how nature is constructed through both indoor and outdoor spaces in The Woodcraft Folk, a British youth organisation,

highlights the performative place of nature. Nature and the outdoors as an educational instrument are evoked and artificially created within the meeting places of the Woodcraft Folk through specific practices and performances. The way that these man-made environments and technologies are subsumed under the concepts of nature and the outdoors, further complicates what these concepts mean and how they are brought to life through outdoor education.

Overall, there is a complex relationship between 'educating for citizenship', spaces of learning, young people and nature. As this sub-section has explored, hitherto, there has been a lack of rigorous geographical inquiry into the 'outdoors' of outdoor education, and its implications for young people's learning experiences. This paves the way for the current study, which focuses explicitly on the geographies of outdoor education, within the context of children's geographies and geographies of education.

2.5.3. *Post-humanist perspectives on the child/nature dichotomy*

Alongside these bodies of research, Taylor's (2013) text represents an interest in destabilising dominant romantic idealisations of childhood and nature. Taylor opens up a critical line of enquiry for 'queering' the relationship between childhood and nature, and a key contribution of the book is its engagement between the broad field of human-environment geography and children's geographies (Shillington 2014). Drawing upon the feminist work of Haraway (1994; 2003; 2011) and childhood sociologists (for example Jenks 2005), Taylor seeks to reconfigure the concepts of childhood and nature, to enable an understanding of it as infinitely more dynamic and complex. Elsewhere, Taylor and colleagues (Taylor *et al.* 2012) have sought to push against the inadequacies of child development theory, which focuses on the individual autonomous child. For Taylor *et al.*, this conceptual framework not only disguises some of the complexities of children's relations with the more-than-human world, but is "grossly inadequate […] for responding to the challenges of growing up in an increasingly complex, mixed-up, boundary blurring, heterogeneous, interdependent and ethically confronting world" (Taylor *et al.* 2012: 81). Latour's (2005) notion of 'common worlds' is drawn upon (Blaise *et al.* 2013; Pacini-Ketchabaw *et al.* 2016; Taylor & Guigni 2012) to reposition children within human/more-than-human relations, and reassemble all constituents of our worlds (Pacini-Ketchabaw *et al.* 2016).

Against the backdrop of this post-humanist approach, children's geographers have engaged in research exploring young people's experiences and perceptions of nature, in both the everyday,

and educational environments, in a range of global settings. For example, Malone (2016a; 2016b) adopts materialist theories to reveal the messiness of theorizing children's encounters through her study of child-dog relations in Bolivia (2016a), and children's encounters with botanical gardens in Kazakhstan (2016b). Malone (2016b:197-8) seeks to interrogate child-earth relations differently, to:

> "[O]pen up possibilities for exploring human-nature binaries and for noticing and attending to questions of the child-nature-place relationship that could contribute to a reconsideration of alternative theorizing."

Similarly, Arvidsen and Beames (2018) explore young Danish people's use of 'outdoor refuges', providing a critical insight into the practices and interactions which mark outdoor places as therapeutic and restorative. The paper utilises Ingold's (2011) concepts – lines, knots, meshwork, and wayfaring – as an analytical framework to mark out the importance of young people's mobilities, and attend to the inherent 'ongoingness' and interaction in the ways in which young people inhabit their outdoor places of refuge.

Through a study of children's relationships with outdoor environments at early learning centres, Merewether (2018) makes and important contribution to these debates. Here, the intra-active nature of the world is emphasised (Barad 2007), by highlighting young people's sensitivity to the agency of non-human materials. Although Merewether privileges children's 'multispecies' stories and is hence attentive to the 'agency of all matter', she also pays homage to the NSSC by ensuring that children's perspectives are an important part of the 'assemblage' of agential matter, but insists that listening to children's multispecies stories may help us reconceptualise what 'matters' in an educational space. This generally positive account of child-nature entanglement is contrasted by Mycock (2018), who focuses on the politics and exclusions that can be co-produced in and through social-material processes. In the context of forest school and school garden spaces, Mycock identifies how "mud governs individuals and their experiences" and concerns over "becoming muddy" (n.p) acted to reinforce the child/nature dualism and limit children's muddy encounters. These final papers indicate a need to expand Taylor's (2013) question around how we might otherwise 'do' nature in childhood studies, to consider the more material places and practices of everyday life (Shillington 2014). Taylor (2013) looks critically at the pro-nature educational movement, and this needs to be further examined in order to deconstruct assumed qualities of nature, and reconstruct social-material intra-actions which shape young people's educational encounters.

2.6. Research case study: The Outward Bound Trust

In light of the literature reviewed above, and in order to examine the particular geographies of outdoor education, this research is conducted through the case study of the Outward Bound Trust (OBT). As Chapter 1 outlined, the OBT are the UK branch of an international organisation which aims to help develop young people through "adventurous and challenging outdoor learning programmes" (OBT 2018a: n.p.). This final section outlines the Trust's history and their present-day practices.

2.6.1. The history of the Outward Bound Trust: Hahnian character education

The first OBT school was established in 1941 by Lawrence Holt and Kurt Hahn, with the explicit aim of character training amid fears of moral decline (Freeman 2011). Hahn was also a key figure in establishing the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, and he mobilised his vision for developing young people through the belief that "we are all better than we know" (OBT 2017a). For Hahn, education was a passion. His educational ideas were embedded in a critical view of Western European society, which he perceived as one of moral decline and defeat (van Oord 2010). He often referred to six 'declines of modern youth'. First, a decline of fitness due to modern methods of locomotion which led to physical illiteracy; second, a decline of initiative and enterprise due to the widespread disease of 'spectatoritis'; third, a decline of memory and imagination due to the restlessness and lack of reflection of modern life; fourth, a decline of skill and care due to the weakened tradition of craftsmanship; fifth, a decline of self-discipline due to the ever-present availability of stimulants and tranquilizers; and sixth, which Hahn perceived to be the most damming of all, a decline of compassion due to the haste with which modern life was conducted (Loynes 2007; van Oord 2010).

As an antidote to these six declines, Hahn developed an educational training plan of 'experience therapy' (van Oord 2010). This plan comprised of what have come to be known as Hahn's "four pillars": physical fitness, self-discipline (realised through expeditions), craftmanship, and service (Ibid.; McKenzie 2003). This training plan was explicitly aimed at the building of *character* (Freeman 2011). Hahn's view of the importance of education was in ensuring the survival of the qualities of "an enterprising curiosity, an indefatigable spirit, tenacity in pursuit, readiness for sensible self-denial, and above all, compassion" (Outward Bound Canada 2001: 5). Richards (1990) marks out these ideas as more than just a method; he credits Hahn with contributing a *philosophy* to the educational sphere. For Richards, the idea of active citizenship

was at the heart of this philosophy (Loynes 2007), encapsulating Hahn's vision of education through its purpose to "develop a righteous man who is vigilant and an *active citizen*, who has a sense of duty to his fellow man and to God" (Richards 1990: 68, emphasis added). Through this pursuit of character education, we can see connections to ideas around young people as 'in need of training', and as Richards points out, the six declines would not be out of place in the moral panics of the 1980s, 1990s, 2000s and beyond.

The original OBT school was the Aberdovey Sea School in Wales. Its purpose was to equip young seamen with the ability to survive in wartime Britain, or, as Loynes (2007: 123) suggests, "developing moral fibre to the drown proofing of merchant sailors". The original OBT course was developed by seconded naval officers (Ibid.). The course was four weeks long, during which trainees were given intensive athletics training, learnt seamanship, and prepared for a land-based expedition (Freeman 2011). Influenced by criticisms regarding its militaristic nature, as well as educational research around 'moral development' and peacetime models of masculinity, Freeman (2011) documents a changing rhetoric in the OBT through the 1960s and 1970s. The language of 'character-training' was superseded by 'personality' and 'self-discovery', representing a turn toward individual development. This change in language represents a subtle shift, emphasising *individual responsibility* (Loynes 2007). The idea of 'moulding the young' began to give way to the notion of empowering youth to make their own moral choices (Ibid.). This thesis therefore aims to interrogate the contemporary discourses and practice of the OBT, in light of this shift in its key messages. Indeed, although histories (Freeman 2011) and pedagogy (Armour & Sandford 2013) have been studied, this is the first geographical study of the contemporary OBT.

2.6.2. *The Outward Bound Trust today*

Today, the OBT is the UK's leading provider of bursary-assisted outdoor learning for young people aged 11-19 in education, training and employment (OBT 2018a). The Trust's core values still align with Kurt Hahn's vision, represented in their mission statement "to unlock the potential in young people through learning and adventure in the wild" (OBT 2017a: 7). Through their courses they seek "change how young people think and feel about themselves and their lives, by building their personal, social and emotional skills" (OBT 2018a: n.p.). Courses are delivered from their six residential centres (Figure 2.1) each of which provides a unique setting for OBT courses in areas of 'outstanding natural beauty'.

These outdoor settings are one of the most fundamental aspects of OBT programmes. As outlined briefly in Chapter 1, The OBT 2016-2020 strategic framework outlines three distinctive features: skilled people, an inspiring and challenging environment (place), and an effective process (the three 'P's). There is an unquestioned agreement across the Trust that "learning in the outdoors provides direct and practical experiences that cannot be achieved within a traditional classroom setting" (OBT 2018a: n.p.). The natural environment is seen as an opportunity to take young people away from distractions and modern amenities, and immersion in the natural environment is used as a facilitator for young people's development (OBT 2016). The way in which the OBT make use of the British landscape is encompassed in their description on the Outward Bound International website:
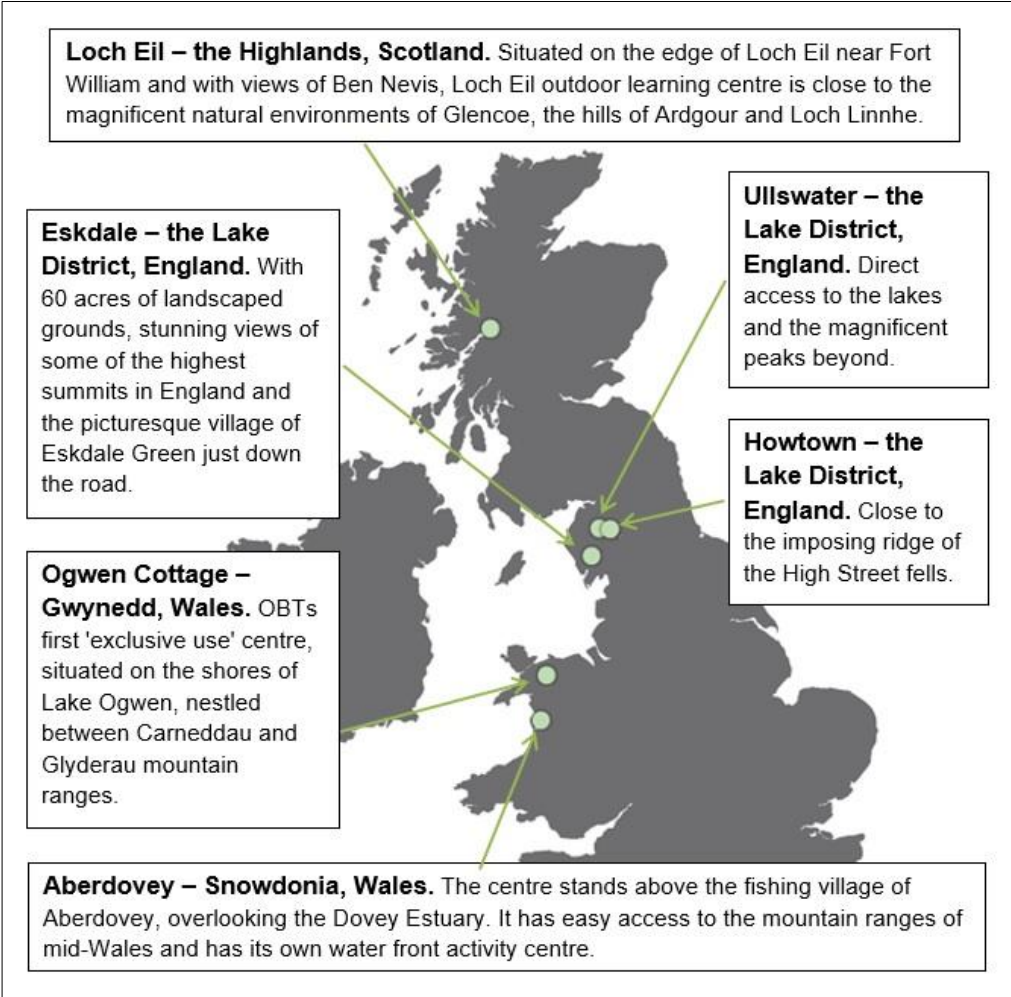
Figure 2. 1   Map of the British Isles giving locations and descriptions of the Outward Bound Trust residential centres (Source: OBT 2018a)

"The true Outward Bound experience is about 'getting out there', using the mountains, lakes, rivers and sea on our doorsteps as a classroom, to enable young people to see what they are truly capable of achieving in life. The Trust's centres are based in some of the most inspiring locations the UK has to offer […] Adventures and activities offered depend on the location of the centre, but range from kayaking, abseiling, expeditions and orienteering to sailing, canoeing and gorge walking." (OBI 2016: n.p.)

Outward Bound International (OBI) was established to support the now international network of Outward Bound schools, which operation in thirty-three countries and two hundred and fifty locations. The OBI's mission is to "help people discover and develop their potential to care for themselves, others and the world around them through challenging experiences in unfamiliar settings" (OBI 2016: n.p.) - which is consistent with Hahn's focus on self-development (McKenzie 2003). However, it is worth noting the decentralized nature of OBI; encouraging schools to cultivate their own sense of purpose relative to the mission and needs of the society in which they operate. It is easy to appreciate how each school reflects the contemporary culture of its own country, when you consider the UK-based OBT which is (historically) wedded to the British landscape and the powerful opportunities these settings are seen to provide.

2.6.3. *Courses for young people*

The courses that the OBT currently offer differ from the original four-week courses. The Trust still run longer, nineteen-day summer courses for individuals, but the majority of its work, and the focus of this research, is the five-day residential courses for school groups. Young people are split into groups of twelve, accompanied by an instructor, and often a member of school staff. They take part in a variety of team and individual tasks throughout the week, including canoeing, rock climbing, gorge-walking and an over-night expedition. There is deliberate focus on learning, and therefore young people take part in pre- and post-activity 'classroom' sessions to reinforce what they have learnt during an activity. This is encompassed in the "Outward Bound Experiential Learning Model" (Appendix 1) which details the process of framing and reviewing the activity to encourage the transfer of learning (OBT 2017b). Through its courses, the OBT aims to develop transferable life skills, including: setting and achieving goals; listening and communicating; facing a challenge with determination; cooperation and collaboration; maintaining a positive outlook; and effective leadership skills (OBT 2018a).

There is clearly still a strong alignment with Hahn's understanding of the main targets of education – nurturing the qualities of curiosity, spirit, pursuit, readiness and compassion (Mckenzie 2003). The OBT still advocate Hahn's idea of 'experiential' learning, whereby young people were exposed to situations that would challenge them mentally and physically (Nicol 2014), and this is the way in which the OBT seek to develop these skills. These discourses are examined in more detail in the analytical chapters, but are provided here for context, and positioned now in relation to the outdoor education 'market'.

2.6.4. *The 'market place' of outdoor education*

As Hattie *et al.* (1997) comment, there has been a marked increase in the use and popularity of outdoor education over the past fifty years, perhaps most obviously demonstrated by the rapid growth of the Outward Bound organisation. The OBT is operating in a competitive market place and as a result has had to construct an exclusive and unique identity around its brand. The Trust has expanded its provision to offer a range of themed courses including *engaging in learning, transition to sixth form, teamwork skills* and *adventure and challenge*. However, the OBT uphold Hahn's original philosophy within these courses and it is evident that the organisation is deeply connected to the very place-specific natures of its six residential centres (explored in more detail later). It is this strong affiliation with iconic British landscapes that the OBT frequently draws upon to justify the quality and impact of its work. For example,

> "Close to the imposing ridge of the High Street fells, Howtown outdoor education centre is an inspirational place for participants to learn and develop - a stunning yet accessible location for learning through adventure." (OBT 2018a: n.p.)

"Frontier adventure" and "striving to journey into the 'big environment' […] and give people as intense and challenging experience as possible" is now "just part of the everyday wallpaper" of the OBT (OBT 2018a: n.p.). One of the most salient OBT tag lines is the commitment to "developing people, naturally" (2017c: 10). The dual meaning of this statement – as an ode to the Trusts use of natural environments and the suggestion that these are the sorts of experiences that young people should have access to – has powerful implications for the image that the organisation projects. The unique Outward Bound experience all comes at a price, of course – secondary schools and colleges can opt for a three or five-day outdoor residential experience, with prices starting at £1,404 or £2,268 respectively (for a group of twelve participants and one member of visiting staff) (OBT 2018a). Consequentially, the OBT *brand* is essential for

continued success – prospective clients must be able to associate the OBT with a certain calibre of experience not offered elsewhere in the 'market place' of outdoor experiential learning.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to outline the debates and approaches which frame this thesis. Overall, four key inter-disciplinary issues have been discussed: the problematic notion of citizenship and learning for citizenship; the role of learning spaces beyond the classroom; dominant and exclusionary nature discourses; and young peoples' experiences of nature. These debates crosscut geographies of education and children's geographies and bring them into dialogue with dominant discourses regarding nature. In addition, this chapter has introduced the research case study. It has identified some initial connections between the OBT and literature on youth and citizenship, and how nature/youth relations are played out in context of the OBT, which will be a central focus of the discussion chapters.

To date, the social and physical spaces of outdoor education remain largely underexplored, especially within geography. This thesis responds to the relative lack of research on outdoor education in the of geographies of education through an exploration of the particular spatialities of the OBT. Interrogating how the core components of people, place and process coalesce in particular time-spaces serves to broaden our knowledge of informal educational practice, and young people's experiences of such practices. The research methodology used to address this research objective is outlined in the following chapter, which details the original programme of research and fieldwork.

CHAPTER THREE
Methodology

3.1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the original research design and process, including methodological principles, methods of data collection and the analytical approach used to interrogate the research aims and objectives. The chapter is divided into 9 sections. Section 3.2 outlines the rationale for the qualitative approach to the study, followed by Section 3.3 which outlines the research design and the logistics of the fieldwork process. Section 3.4 details the process of selecting and recruiting research participants, including the politics of accessing young people and the rationale for the schools and sites chosen. Section 3.5 outlines the experiences of using multiple qualitative methods, including: semi-structure interviews, ethnography, participant-directed photography, and moodboards. A discussion of how data was processed and analysed is presented in section 3.6, before a reflective account of issues concerning power, positionality and ethics is documented in section 3.7. Finally, Section 3.8 presents some conclusions.

3.2. Justification of a qualitative approach

Qualitative research is broadly concerned with illuminating human environments and human experiences within a variety of conceptual frameworks (Winchester & Rofe 2016). Qualitative approaches place an emphasis on the ways in which the world is socially constructed and understood, and generally employ methods which are small-scale and intense, with significant interaction between the researcher and the researched (McEvoy & Richards 2006). This departs from a quantitative approach, shaped more by a methodological enquiry focused on measuring, representing and modelling (DeLyser 2009), employing standardised measures and statistical techniques (McEvoy & Richards 2006).

Changes in conceptualisations of nature (Macnaghten & Urry 1998) and youth (James *et al.* 1998) have involved the remodelling of research practices and methodologies within both disciplines. In relation to theorisations of childhood, James *et al.* (1998: 207) identify an epistemological break, wherein "the child is conceived of as a person, a status, a course of action, a set of needs, rights or differences – in sum, as a social actor". This foregrounds an

approach to research *with,* rather than, *on* children, as central informants of their own life worlds (Christiensen & James 2000). Further, just as the concepts of childhood and youth have been conceived of as socially constructed concepts (Holloway & Valentine 2000; James *et al.* 1998), as outlined in Chapter 2, nature has also come to be understood as constituted through a variety of socio-cultural processes (Macnaghten & Urry 1998). Both these views incorporate a progressive understanding of socio-spatial processes surrounding childhood and nature, and the ways in which (young people's) identities are constituted in and through particular (nature) spaces. Subsequently, qualitative approaches have the potential to explore and better understand the manifold interactions which make up young peoples' outdoor education environments. As McEvoy and Richards (2006) assert, the key strength of qualitative methods is their 'open-endedness'. That is, they allow unanticipated themes to emerge through the enquiry, and can help to highlight complex concepts and relationships to emerge, which may not have been captured by standardised quantitative measures (Ibid.). Adopting a qualitative approach to this research therefore provides an opportunity to gain a deeper insight into young people's behaviours and practices (Cieslik & Simpson 2013), and generate more purposeful data to address the study's research questions.

In addition, qualitative methods have been identified as more appropriate to the study outdoor education than quantitative methods (Barrett & Greenaway 1995). Previously, research focusing on outdoor education sought to rationalise experiential learning through well-defined and measurable outcomes (Davidson 2001), often achieved through quantitative instruments such as self-report questionnaires (Ibid.). However, the process of experiential learning (Nicol 2014) involves the interaction of complex variables – people, processes and outcomes – which come together to produce subjective and personal learning experiences (Barrett & Greenaway 1995; Allison & Pomeroy 2000; Davidson 2001). Research that explores these complex variables is necessary to understand how adventure experiences influence perceptions and behaviour in individual and context-specific ways.

The number of mixed-method and qualitative empirical studies exploring the processes of outdoor experiential learning, including studies of the Outward Bound (both in the UK and internationally) *has* grown in number and quality over the past two decades (see Hattie *et al.* 1997; Davidson 2001; Mckenzie 2003; Goldenberg *et al.* 2005; Martin & Leberman 2005). However, much of this research has focused on how core elements relate to key prescribed outcomes. Privileging those 'quantifiable' outcomes can marginalize other areas of research (Mcdonald 2000), and these studies often include some underlying assumptions about outdoor

learning experiences (Ewert & Sibthorp 2000). The need for accountability has previously allowed for empirical qualitative studies with weak anecdotal evidence and a tendency towards the descriptive (Long *et al.* 2000), which also tends to assume a common appreciation of processes across programmes (Hattie *et al.* 1997). Although the nature of qualitative research means that it is difficult to generalize from studies, it provides a unique interpretation of events better suited to the personal nature of experiential learning (Martin & Leberman 2005). The rich information that can be captured through qualitative research can give insights into the individual meanings and perceptions that participants give to experience (Davidson 2001). Given this, employing qualitative methodologies also allows this research to respond to calls for a greater focus on the *how* and *why* of outdoor education programmes over the summative outcomes (Ewert & McAvoy 2000). This study therefore focuses on areas of outdoor education research which have hitherto been overlooked.

Increasingly, multiple qualitative research methods are being used to explore the experiences of children and young people (Hemming 2008). Common research methods include semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions and ethnographic observations (Cieslik & Simpson 2013). There has also been a move toward the use of visual methodologies (Pimlott-Wilson 2012; Pink 2007) and participatory approaches (Gallagher 2008), to 'give voice' to young people in different ways and enable them to be actively involved in the production of research data. There is much methodological debate in children's geographies regarding power relations between the researcher(s) and participants, and issues of ethics and positionality (Gallagher 2008; Hemming 2008; Holt 2004; Morrow 2008; Wilkinson 2016), particularly in the use of 'child-centred' methods (Hemming 2008). Holt (2004) compels (children's) geographers to engage in 'empowering research relations' within their research practices, whilst Gallagher (2008) warns against the potential contradictions in supposedly 'empowering' participatory methods with children. Accordingly, this study adopts a multi-method, qualitative approach, in an attempt to provide a rich account of different individual experiences, contexts and interpretations of outdoor education spaces from both practitioner and young people perspectives. However, it does so whilst acknowledging the "complex multivalency of power" exercised across spaces of research (Gallagher 2008: 137). The knowledge produced is always only partial, influenced by the researcher's subjectivity and positionality (Rose 1997), which is something I reflect on throughout this chapter.

The research uses a case study methodology, closely examining the data within a specific context (Baxter 2016; Zainal 2007). This approach allows for an in-depth, holistic investigation

of the complex processes of outdoor education, and has been used prominently in sociological research, including educational studies (Zainal 2007). In combination with a multi-method approach, an in-depth case study of the OBT provides an excellent lens through which to understand the social and physical spaces of outdoor education, thus contributing to broader geographical debates by combining a focus on educational spaces, youth and nature.

3.3. Research Design

To ensure depth and breadth in the dataset, data was collected across all six OBT sites in the UK (outlined in Chapter 2). Data collection took place between October 2016 and June 2017, using semi-structured interviews, ethnography, participant-directed photography and moodboards, supported by a researcher field diary and self-directed photography. In total, 26 OBT instructors and 47 programme participants were involved in data collection.

The data collection was divided into three stages (Table 3.1). Stage One involved visiting each OBT centre to explore the immediate physical site and wider off-site locations used by the OBT in their programmes. 26 interviews with instructors were conducted across the 6 centres during this stage, with a minimum of 2 at each centre. Stage Two involved an ethnographic study of four OBT courses: two at Outward Bound Aberdovey and two at Outward Bound Ogwen. This involved 47 young people from four case study schools, all participating in an 'Adventure & Challenge' course. Stage Three involved follow-up interviews in pairs, with some young people back in school, within five months of their course. participants were accessed through their school trip, as schools are the OBT's biggest client and target audience.

Table 3. 1   Fieldwork schedule

Stage	Methods	Time frame
1	6 site visits; semi-structured interviews with OBT instructors (n=26)	October 2016 – January 2017
2	4 x 1 week ethnography with 47 young people (n=47); participant-directed photography (n=35)	February – April 2017
3	Semi-structured interviews (n=23) with young people (n=44); moodboards created with the interview process (n=40)	May –June 2017

3.4. Selecting and recruiting research participants

Selecting and recruiting research participants for the study entailed different processes. The ways in which OBT staff and young people were selected and engaged is outlined below.

3.4.1. OBT Instructors

Instructor participants were recruited through the OBT. I adopted a purposive approach to sampling (Patton 2002) to ensure informants were representative of the types of people that OBT employs. The sample sought to include both long standing and new employees, a range of ages, male and female (where possible, given that the outdoor education is a male-dominated industry (Collins 2000; Lugg 2001; Wright & Gray 2013), and a variety of job roles. This sampling technique sought to gather the perspectives of OBT staff with varied biographies and trajectories. OBT were an open and welcoming organisation, keen to support this research. Given this, participants for Stage One were selected in the field, with the support of a senior staff member to coordinate an interview schedule.

3.4.2. Schools and young people

Four schools were chosen for Stages Two and Three of the research: two schools were located in more rural settings, and two were located in more urban settings (which consequently offered contrasting demographic characteristics). One school from each category was already taking part in a one-week OBT course at either the Aberdovey Centre or Ogwen Cottage at the time of the research design. The selection of case-study schools aimed to provide an opportunity for comparison between schools with distinctly different demographics. As such, the schools that took part were selected according the following criteria;

- Participating in an *Adventure & Challenge* course;
- Young people in the age bracket 12-14;
- Located in a local authority district categorised as either *largely rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%),* or *urban with major conurbation* according to the DEFRA 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities and other geographies (RUC2011) (Defra 2017a) (Appendix 2).

The OBT facilitated access to schools to participate in the study. To an extent, this gave the recruitment process a 'political edge', as suitable schools were selected first by the OBT based

on certain factors. However, having the backing of the Trust meant that recruiting schools was a straight forward task as teachers were happy to take part in a project supported by the OBT. In addition, despite the 'manufactured' nature of the recruitment process, it was still possible to identify case study schools which fulfilled specific characteristics (outlined above) to address this study's research questions.

It was important that informants were engaged in similar OBT programmes and were of the same age bracket to provide consistency and opportunities for comparison across the study. Mainstream education in England and Wales dictates that the majority of young people start a new school aged 11-12. Attending a new school can be associated with building and maintaining new peer groups and adult relationships, negotiating new rules and systems, as well as coinciding with the physiological changes associated with puberty. As such, the chosen age bracket marks a significant event in the life course of young people, related to identity formation and individuality, self-esteem and security, and overall social and emotional development (Valentine 2003).

Weller (2006) also stakes a claim for 'teenagers' geographies', suggesting that particularly *young* teenagers have been neglected in children's geographies. She highlights the 'fuzziness' of boundaries between childhood and adulthood, arguing that teenagers distance themselves from both and occupy an 'in-betweenness', which is highly mobile depending on context. This notion of being 'in-between' or in-flux is a useful starting point when looking at developmental experiences for young people in this study, aged 12-14 (Ibid.).

3.4.3.   2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authorities Districts in England

In relation to the school selection, it is important to highlight that local authorities are categorised as rural or urban based on the percentage of their resident population in rural areas or 'rural-related' hub towns. These are built-up areas with a population of 10,000 to 30,000 and a certain concentration of residential dwellings and non-residential establishments (Defra 2017b). The use of the term 'rural' in this classification relates to settlement form and dwelling density; the classification is not based on character or use of the land, policy or economic function (for further details on the methodology of RUC2011, see Bibby & Brindley 2016).

The RUC2011 of local authorities was chosen as the reference point for school selection. Despite the classification not being based on character or use of land, the location of the four case study schools clearly provided divergent opportunities for access to urban and more rural

spaces (Figure 3.1). This allowed informants to be representative of a range of young people's experiences and interactions with nature and the outdoors in their everyday lives (see Chapter 2). Although the immediate physical setting was the primary motivation for the selection of schools, the over-lapping social and economic geographies of class, race and urbanism across the UK provided some useful contrasting demographics between the four schools (Table 3.2).
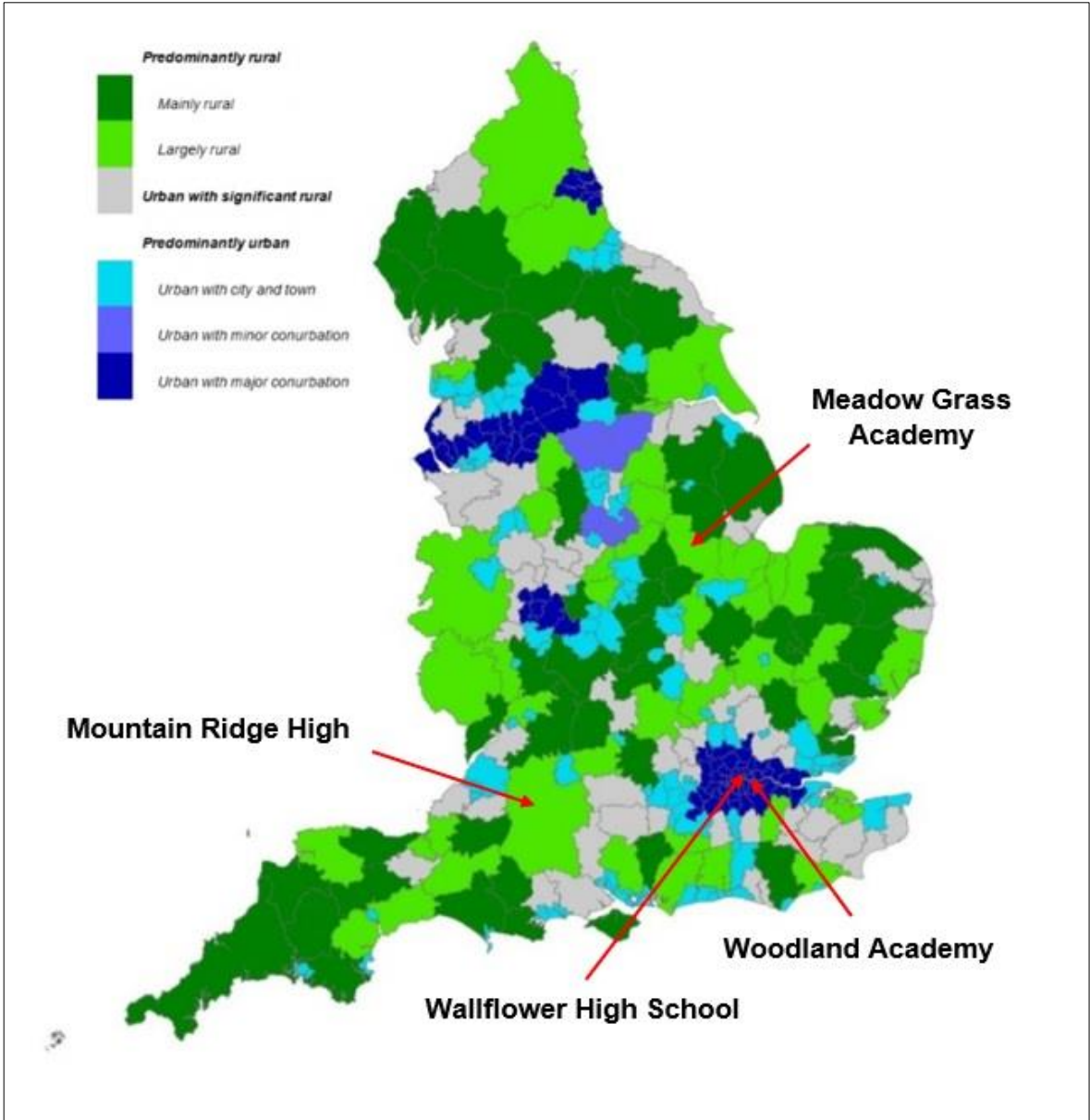
Figure 3. 1   Map of the British Isles showing the 2011 Rural-Urban Classification of Local Authority Districts, highlighting the locations of the case study schools (Defra 2017a)

Table 3. 2   Selected demographic characteristics for Local Authorities in which case study schools are located (Public Health England 2015; UK Data Service Census Support 2011; ONS 2013; Open Data Communities 2015)

		South Kesteven (largely rural)	Tower Hamlets (urban - major conurbation)	Wiltshire (largely rural)	Hackney (urban - major conurbation)
Index of Multiple Deprivation (2015)		14.2	35.7	13.5	35.3
Population Density (People per square km) (2014 data)		145	13,798	147	13,511
Ethnicity (%) (2011 census data)	**White**	97.5	45.2	96.6	54.7
	Asian/British Asian	1.2	41.1	1.3	10.5
	Black/Black British	0.4	7.3	0.7	23.1
	Mixed Ethnic Group	0.9	4.1	1.2	6.4
	Other Ethnic Group	0.1	2.3	0.2	5.3
Eligible and Claiming Free School Meals (%) (2015 data)	**Local Authority**	12.1*	39.1	7.7	32.8
	Regional	13.6	19	11.7	19
	National	14.9	14.9	14.9	14.9
	Significance	Better	Worse	Better	Worse

*% for Lincolnshire local authority, as data only available for top level local authority

3.4.4. Case study schools

The four (anonymised) schools participating in the research were Meadow Grass Academy, Woodland Academy, Wall Flower High, and Mountain Ridge High. This section provides an overview of each school and characteristics (also see Table 3.3).

Meadow Grass Academy is located in South Kesteven, a RUC2011 *largely rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%)* local authority area (Defra 2017a) (Figure 3.1). This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Open Data Communities 2015). The school is a mixed secondary comprehensive, sponsor-led academy. It is considerably smaller than the average-sized secondary school, with an above average proportion of disadvantaged pupils and pupils with a statement of special educational needs. The majority of pupils that attend the school are from a white British background (Ofsted 2017). All students have the opportunity to go on an OBT course in year 7, and therefore some of the members of the group had been on an OBT course before with the school. The chosen fieldwork week was an additional trip, and the opportunity was opened up to students from years 7-10. The school part funds the students' place on OBT courses.

Woodland Academy is located in Tower Hamlets, a RUC2011 *urban (major conurbation)* local authority area (Defra 2017a) (Figure 3.1). This is amongst the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Open Data Communities 2015). It is an all-girls comprehensive school, much larger-than-average with almost 1500 pupils. Nearly all students are of Bangladeshi heritage with a very small minority from other backgrounds (Ofsted 2013), and most are practicing Muslims. This reflects the ethnic and religious composition of the local area, which is over 40% Asian (ONS 2013) (Table 3.2). The majority of students speak English as an additional language. Over two-thirds of pupils are eligible for free school meals, which is above average. The proportion of students with a statement of special education needs is also above average (Ofsted 2013). The school offers OBT trips to all year 8 and 9 students, although the future of these trips is under question due to government funding cuts.

Mountain Ridge High is located in Wiltshire, a RUC2011 *largely rural (rural including hub towns 50-79%)* local authority area (Defra 2017a) (Figure 3.1). This is amongst the 50% least deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Open Data Communities 2015). It is a mixed secondary comprehensive of average size. It is located in a Garrison town[6], and as such a high

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[6] 'Garrison town' is the common expression for any town that is the location of a military base.

number of service children attend the school. The majority of pupils are from White British backgrounds and those eligible for free school meals is below average. The proportion of students with a statement of special educational needs is in line with the national average (Ofsted 2016). The school offers the trip to pupil premium[7] students in year 9, and those who would be seen to benefit most from the experience. The trip is sponsored by a National company.

Wallflower High School is located in Hackney, a RUC2011 *urban (major conurbation)* local authority area (Defra 2017a) (Figure 3.1). This is amongst the 10% most deprived neighbourhoods in the country (Open Data Communities 2015). Approximately half of students are eligible for free school meals, which is above the national average. The proportion of disabled students or those with special educational needs is also above average. The school represents the culturally and linguistically diverse local community, with a high proportion of students of minority ethnic heritage, and 90% living within half a mile of the school (Ofsted 2012). The school offers OBT trips as a reward for those students in years 7-9 who excel in school work, so again, some of the members of the group had been on an OBT course before with the school at the Aberdovey centre.

It is worth noting that groups were often 'manufactured' to take part in the research project. For example, Meadow Grass Academy were part of a four-school trip with mixed groups. The lead teacher deliberately created a group of young people solely from Meadow Grass, suggesting that these students would 'just get on with it'. This highlights the difficulty in avoiding the political nature of the sampling process, especially in children's geographies.

Table 3. 3   Case study schools, centres, and groups by gender

School	Urban/Rural LA	Centre	Male participants	Female participants
Meadow Grass Academy	Rural	Aberdovey	3	9
Woodland Academy	Urban	Aberdovey	0	11
Mountain Ridge High	Rural	Ogwen	5	7
Wallflower High School	Urban	Ogwen	8	4

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[7] The pupil premium is additional funding for publicly funded schools in England. It's designed decrease the attainment gap for the most disadvantaged pupils (by income or family upheaval).

3.4.5.   Case study centres

As noted, the ethnography of OBT programmes (Stage Two) with these four schools was carried out at two OBT centres – Outward Bound Aberdovey and Ogwen Cottage (Figure 3.2). The centres were chosen as the basis for the fieldwork as they were different in a number of ways, and therefore offered participants a distinctly different Outward Bound experience. The fieldwork with Meadow Grass Academy and Woodland Academy was conducted at Aberdovey, and the fieldwork with Wallflower High School and Mountain Ridge High at Ogwen Cottage.

Figure 3. 2   Photos showing Outward Bound Aberdovey (top) and Ogwen Cottage (bottom). Aberdovey is set in relatively large grounds, accessed via a long drive. In contrast, Ogwen is situated on the edge of a main road (authors own photographs).

Aberdovey is the original OBT centre, located on the West coast of Wales on the Dyfi estuary, a UNESCO world biosphere reserve and the very bottom of Snowdownia National Park. The centre was originally 3 private residences, one of which still exists as the main house, whilst the other 2 have been replaced by dormitory blocks. The site has recently benefited from an investment in new purpose-built equipment stores and individual group cages, and a new hall used for meetings and as a social area. It can comfortably fit 15 groups (12 individuals per group) which means that it usually hosts more than one school at a time, and has over 50 regular instructors. The centre site is relatively large, incorporating the main house and dining hall, the new block incorporating stores, the hall and review rooms, and the dormitory houses. In the grounds there are spaces for dynamic challenges such as a climbing wall, trapeze and challenge wall, as well as a large back field with woodland areas where groups regularly have camp fires. The centre has access to a private wharf, where it stores water sports equipment. This was the site of the warehouse when Aberdovey functioned as a port, but was rebuilt 12 years ago. There is a building with changing rooms and showers, review rooms and equipment stores at the wharf site, located in the village of Aberdovey, a ten minute walk from the centre. The wharf is perhaps one of the most famous places in OBT history, as the location of the legendary 'jetty jump'[8] (Figure 3.3). The centre has access to four log cabins up in the surrounding hills and mountains, one of which has been newly built. These allow the Trust to continue to run overnight expeditions throughout the winter months when the weather is more challenging.

In contrast, Ogwen Cottage is the Trust's newest acquisition, opening as an OBT centre for the first time in September 2015. It is situated in Gwynedd, north-west Wales, on Llyn Ogwen[9] and the A5 London-Holyhead road. The centre is owned by the National Trust and leased to the OBT. In the summer months it operates as a National Trust visitors' centre when the area is popular with walkers and climbers. The centre has a history in outdoor pursuits, formerly as a base for climbers, then as a mountaineering school, and, most recently as part of Birmingham City Council's Outdoor Learning Service from 1964 until its sale in 2014. The centre can accommodate 3 groups at a time, with everything housed the same building: dormitories, dining room, review rooms and a social room, instructor office and one drying room which doubles up as a kit cage. There is a small 'stores' building across the road from the centre (Figure 3.4).

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[8] This was an element of the original OBT courses, whereby participants ran down to the jetty and jumped into the estuary. It has been adapted for modern courses, but still retains its significance as the first challenge young people face when they arrive at the centre.

[9] Llyn is the Welsh word for lake.

This is split into two rooms, plus an undercover area and a shipping container used as a store. The centre's canoes are kept at a farm a few miles away. The site is significantly smaller than Aberdovey, with no onsite activities and the stores area located across the road next to the lake. The OBT have a 5 year contract with the National Trust, which restricts changes and improvements they can make to the site. Instructors based at Aberdovey work across both Aberdovey and Ogwen, with a group of 5 instructors driving up to Ogwen on a Monday, and staying on site for the duration of the course. The centre does not run all year round as the small capacity means that is does not suit all of the OBT's clients.

The activities the OBT used varied greatly across centres and courses, but as Chapter 2 outlined, often included such tasks as backpacking and overnight camping (the 'expedition'), climbing, gorge walking, canoeing and raft building. A typical day in an OBT course begins with breakfast in the dining hall at 7.30am, group activities 9am – 5pm (mostly off-site), free time and dinner between 5pm – 7pm, and an evening activity 7pm – 8.30pm.

Figure 3. 3   The wharf at Aberdovey, showing the jetty on the right-hand side (authors own photograph)

Figure 3. 4   The stores at Ogwen Cottage (authors own photograph)

3.5. Data collection

This study made use of a number of qualitative techniques to explore the geographies of the Outward Bound Trust. This section critically discusses my experiences as a researcher during the fieldwork process, which drew on a number of methods: semi-structured interviews, ethnography, participant-directed photography, and moodboards. Throughout the three stages of fieldwork, a field-diary and self-directed photography was used to aid the reflexive process.

3.5.1.   Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews represented one of the main methods of data collection in the study. They were carried out with OBT staff during Stage One of fieldwork and with OBT participants during Stage Three. Interviews present an excellent means of gaining access to information about events, opinions and experiences (Dunn 2016). As Longhurst (2016: 143) suggests, semi-structured interviews are about talking and *listening* in ways that are "self-conscious, orderly and partially structured", allowing for an informal and conversational manner of interaction

between the researcher and participant (Ibid.). This style of interviewing is particularly useful as it allows for flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant (Dunn 2016), and offers the opportunity for them to explore issues which they feel are important (Longhurst 2016).

3.5.2. *OBT staff interviews*

26 members of staff were interviewed in Stage One (Table 3.4), all of whom were current instructors, or former instructors who had moved into management roles. Interviews were conducted face-to-face during visits to each of the centres. The flexible and informal nature of outdoor education work allowed interviews to be conducted ad-hoc, when the respondents had some free time during their day. This meant, that on occasion, interviews were paused to allow respondents to carry on with their work. In addition, interviews were often disrupted by other members of staff coming and going. They occurred in a variety of settings, from staff rooms to dining halls and from reception areas to benches in the centre grounds. Each interview was recorded using a Dictaphone and lasted between 40 minutes and one hour.

Table 3. 4   Semi-structured interviews in Stage One

OBT Centre	Number of interviews	Male	Female
Aberdovey and Ogwen Cottage	7	6	1
Eskdale	6	4	2
Ullswater & Howtown	6	4	2
Loch Eil	7	5	2
TOTAL	**26**	**19**	**7**

The interview process would begin by getting respondents to introduce themselves, and recall the key events in their life which led them to work for the OBT. This helped participants to relax into the flow of the interview, and provide useful background information. This acted as a steer for the rest of the discussion, providing material for future questions and the option to expand on experiences mentioned in respondents opening accounts. An interview guide (Appendix 3) was used to ensure all themes were covered, which included experiences of working for the OBT, instructor roles in OBT processes and the impact of location on OBT courses. All questions were open-ended, with respondents free to interpret questions as

appropriate. The guide acted to keep the interview on track, whilst respondents were free to expand on, and express their own views and feelings.

The power dynamic between the interviewer and interviewee can be unequal (Dunn 2016; Winchester 1996). Power can be in the hands of the interviewer as more dominant than their 'subjects', or reversed where the interviewer is supplicant to powerful people (Winchester 1996). These relations include issues of gender and race, and act to influence access to individuals/participants, as well as the structure and conduct of the interview. Dunn (2016) argues that in an interview situation, the flow of information (and therefore power) is most often from informant to interviewer. During the semi-structured interviews, I sought make OBT staff feel at ease through conducting interviews in an informal manner and in familiar surroundings, and being engaging in our discussions. This was aided by the fact that interviews were carried out in participants' own working environments and during their working days, and as such they were in a position make decisions about 'where' and 'when'. Spending time at each of the OBT centres during Stage One helped to build a rapport with staff, and allowed them to ask me questions and get to know me outside of the interview environment, which further facilitated a positive interview process.

Moser (2008) unites ideas of personality and positionality, to understand how our personalities, including interpersonal skills, emotional responses, mannerisms and navigation of others' personalities are integral to how we are perceived in the field. She argues that often our research encounters are based more upon our unique individual social and emotional qualities as opposed to our biographies (Moser 2008). In agreement with Moser, I suggest that how I conducted myself, beyond my perceived positionality as young, female and white British, were key aspects in promoting a successful research environment. This included exercising my emotional intelligence, displaying a positive and personable nature, and showing a genuine interest in instructors' hobbies and points of view, both within and outside the context of the interview. In asserting the influential role of my *personality*, I draw attention to the hitherto neglected area of emotional and social skills as a key consideration when planning research projects. As Moser (2008: 390) argues, it is not guaranteed that we (researchers) will gravitate toward methods which utilise our strengths, and "a deeper knowledge of our emotional abilities could guide us towards making better choices in fieldwork".

In general, respondents expressed that they had enjoyed the interview process, as it gave them an opportunity to stop and reflect on the work they do and the organisation they work for. It

became apparent that their hectic work schedules did not always allow for this reflection in such a structured and purposeful manner. Respondents were invited to asked questions, although most of these questions came after the dictaphone has been stopped, and usually revolved around discussing the kinds of trends that were emerging in the data and where the research was heading. In a similar way, discussions around interview themes continued after the dictaphone had been switched off, and on several occasions I found myself wishing it was still running. These 'after thoughts' were encompassed in the many informal interactions and conversations with OBT instructors throughout the fieldwork stages which complemented the more formal interviews, and were recorded in the field diary.

3.5.3. *Young people interviews*

Interviews were conducted with young people during Stage Three of the fieldwork (Table 3.5), within five months of their OBT experience and the corresponding ethnography. Through a desire to position children and young people as competent social actors (Christiensen and James 2000), research *with* young people has both vastly expanded in volume, and generated a wealth of debate regarding the inherent ethical and methodological issues (Ibid.). It is widely documented that qualitative research with children is not a straightforward process (Aitken 1994; Chrisitensen & James 2000; Holt 2004), especially through the use of adult-centred 'mainstream techniques' (Morrow 2008), such as interviews. Specifically, conducting interviews with children and young people carries with it more definite and visible power relations (Eder & Fingerson 2003) than when conducting research with informants perceived as adult. In addition, Pimlott-Wilson (2010) recognises that young people are generally not accustomed to the interview process, which can be an intimidating and stressful experience. To mitigate against some of these issues, interviews in Stage Three were conducted in pairs, which were decided based on observations in the field: sometimes they were paired according to friendships, and sometimes according to behavioural traits. Conducting the interviews in pairs sought to alleviate any anxiety, as well as addressing the power dynamics that may have been more prominent in a one-to-one scenario (Eder & Fingerson 2003). Generating discussions with both interviewees was also geared toward providing opportunities for potentially more dynamic conversations than may have been the case in individual interviews. Furthermore, it was hoped that by having already spent a week with the young people, they would be relatively at ease in my presence and feel comfortable enough to speak freely of their experiences and opinions.

The ethnography (Stage Two, discussed shortly) helped to provide a back-drop for the interviews, and being part of their OBT experience was of real value in providing context for their personal reflections. Here I began the interview process by recapping what we did during the research week, and introducing the moodboard activity (Pimlott-Wilson 2012) (see section 3.5.7), which sought to act as an ice-breaker and get the interviewees involved in the process. The moodboards provided opportunities for discussion and acted as a prompt for further interview questions. Again, an interview guide was used (Appendix 4), which covered themes including young people's backgrounds, motivations and expectations, experiences of nature inside and outside of the OBT, and attitudes towards their OBT week. Although interviewees were directed through the themes, they were encouraged to talk about all aspects of the course and have freedom throughout the interview process. The interviews were recorded on a Dictaphone, generally lasting 35-45 minutes.

Table 3. 5   Semi-structured interviews in Stage Three

School	Number of Participants	Number of interviews
Meadow Grass Academy	13	7
Wallflower High School	12	6
Woodland Academy	9	5
Mountain Ridge High	10	5
TOTAL	**44**	**23**

Given that I was already well acquainted with the young people, I was surprised at their shyness during the interviews. There was an obvious contrast between their behaviour and character in an Outward Bound setting and in the more formal setting of a classroom. This highlights the influence of the institutional school space on young peoples' behaviour (Holloway & Valentine 2000), as well as the importance of setting for conducting research. The interviews took place in various spaces: classrooms, a meeting room, and a poly tunnel[10] in the school grounds. The former settings were private and quiet, but the later was generally busy as other students continuous came and went, participating in lunchtime gardening activities. In all instances, I used the available space to spread magazines out for the moodboard task, setting out pens, glue

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[10] The poly tunnel was set up in the school grounds as a green house. It was coordinated by a member of staff so that pupils could learn about and take part in gardening, and the process of growing fruits and vegetables.

and scissors, to encourage the interviewees to move around, become absorbed in the task and feel comfortable. The poly tunnel was limited in terms of practical space to create the moodboards, but did present a more relaxed environment versus the classroom and meeting room.

Inevitably, some young people were more forthcoming than others, but at times I had to work quite hard to coax answers out of many participants. I had anticipated conducting paired interviews as potentially problematic, as participants may talk over each other or be easily influenced (both in verbal answers and moodboard ideas), but in practice I didn't perceive this to be an issue. On the contrary, I often had to specifically direct the question at someone, otherwise neither would give a response. Consequently, at times there were also imbalances in the interviews, with some interviewees responding more than others. The moodboard task was well received in general, and most respondents got quite involved in the process. However, this was sometimes constrained by time as interviews were often scheduled around the school timetable (discussed further in section 3.5.6).

Throughout the fieldwork process, I sought to position myself as 'researcher as friend' (Wilkinson 2016) toward both staff and young people, although as section 3.7 explores, the realities of this were challenging. I invited the young people to call me by my first name, I laughed and joked with participants (both young people and OBT staff), and within the context of the young people interviews, I reminisced about funny and embarrassing memories (mine and theirs). Other authors have discussed relationships that researchers must deal with (e.g. Mason 2002), including Blackman's (2007: 703) telling of "shared friendship moments". For myself, these were friendships in the context of the research, and I naturally connected more with some young people than others during the ethnographic process. These relationships filtered through into the interview process, and were certainly reflected in the enthusiastic and openness of some informants with whom I developed 'friendships', and the relative reticence of others, with whom I had struggled to associate with on a personal level.

3.5.4. Ethnography

As outlined above, Stage Two of the research involved an ethnographic study of four OBT courses. O'Reilly (2012) describes ethnography as a practice that draws upon a family of methods, rather than a single method in itself. It includes the key processes of watching,

listening, taking part and sharing in conversations (Madden 2010). For O'Reilly (2015: 1), ethnography:

> "…pays attention to people's feelings and emotions, their experiences and their free choices, but also to the wider constraints and opportunities that frame their agency."

If we understand outdoor adventure learning as the process of "making meaning out of experience" (Davidson 2001: 11), then this research must seek to understand these experiences and processes. Ethnographic practices are thus well positioned to explore individual experiences with and through the Outward Bound Trust. Ethnography seeks to gain understanding through involvement in daily practices, with the researcher immersed in the context, aiming to build trust and rapport with informants (O'Reilly 2012). Christensen & James (2000) also suggest that ethnographic methods are particularly useful when trying to represent children's knowledges and experiences as accurately as possible. To observe these interactions between structure and agency and explore meanings of place and context, whilst negotiating classically challenging adult/child power relations (Holt 2004), requires a good deal of flexibility on the part of the researcher (Christensen & James 2000; Watson & Till 2010). As is the case with all qualitative research, ethnographic practices contend with some ethical complexities, which will be addressed in this section (and overall in section 3.7).

For this study, a multi-sited ethnography was conducted (O'Reilly 2012), consisting of four one-week visits across the two OBT centres (introduced earlier), with two weeks spent at each centre. Whilst acknowledging that traditionally, ethnography is conceived of as a "long-term research process" (Pink & Morgan 2013), this project employed what has been conceptualised as 'short-term' (Pink & Morgan 2013) or 'focused' (Knoblauch 2005) ethnography, characterised by relatively short (weeks rather than years) and intensive field visits (Ibid.). The multi-sited nature of the research enabled the ethnographic approach to include a comparative element, looking at the meaning and relevance of different places across time and space. Importantly, the fieldwork was reflected upon as one extended embodied journey, rather than compartmentalising those experiences. This was facilitated by conducting the visits over a three-month period, enabling me to stay connected to the process, rather than 'dipping in and out' of fieldwork. This made comparisons and theoretical observations more effective.

During each week of ethnography I was attached to the school group participating in their OBT course, and attended every activity session with them. Field notes were written down each evening, which incorporated analytical notes, self-reflections, and observations. Field notes

were accompanied by photographs to act as a reminder during the data analysis process, and to support arguments and conclusions made. Naturally, as the ethnography progressed and I got to know the participants, notes moved from first impressions to gaining more 'insider sensitivities' (O'Reilly 2012). More often than not, key parts of the day would be forgotten, and added in at a later date, and the field diary was an evolving commentary of the fieldwork. The chronology was frequently interrupted by after-thoughts and it was inevitably selective as it was not possible to write everything down. The inclusion of personal thoughts and 'in-process' memos for data analysis helped to raise awareness of my individual subjectivities and biases during the fieldwork, and provided opportunities to 'stand back' from the process.

The field diary began as an overwhelmingly self-reflexive exercise. I was acutely aware of my own perspectives and prejudices, and how these impacted on my thoughts and feelings. However, as Ezzy (2002) points out, ethnography is an 'ongoing process'. The data collection, analysis and writing are all linked, and an iterative-inductive approach to the research is necessary (O'Reilly 2012). Basic ideas, theories and preconceptions can be continually shaped and reshaped through immersion in the research environment (Ibid.). As I spent more time in the field, theories and directions for the research became clearer and themes started to develop, which then impacted on how the field diary was kept. I became more comfortable in my (social and physical) environment and more confident in how the field diary was taking shape.

My position in the field was flexible. I was open about my identity as a researcher, and requests for consent we sought prior to the research commencing (discussed in full in section 3.7). However, young people had been introduced to my project through their school and it is arguable how much agency they had over deciding whether to participate. It was also not always clear how much they knew or understood, and they may have felt obliged to take part on the request of the teacher (this issue of informed consent is discussed further in Section 3.7). The participant information sheet stated the research aim but did not disclose exact research questions as I did not wish to influence how the young people reacted to me, which Holt (2004) provides as an example of how ethically ambiguous ethnography can be. However, the students never seemed overly interested in my work and I did not feel that I was a disturbing element in their OBT experience.

I was of course neither a young person, an Outward Bound instructor, nor a member of staff from the school with which I was working. Despite my desire to position myself as "researcher as friend" (section 3.5.3), at times, I occupied a position akin to a teaching assistant. Young

people mostly addressed me as *'Miss'* (I suspect in part because they couldn't remember my name) and I was frequently referred to as an 'adult' by the instructor, treated differently, and clearly separate from the group. For example, I was often given different equipment such as buoyancy aids and climbing helmets, which were reserved for visiting school staff. I also attended the OBT staff morning meetings, and many of the school staff review sessions. At meal times I sat with the school staff where we would discuss our day, and for the visits to Ogwen Cottage I shared a room with a female member of school staff.

I spent a good deal of time with both the OBT group instructor and the member of staff accompanying the group during my week(s), and grew quite friendly with these individuals. During the overnight camp (which happened in three out of the four weeks), there were times when the students were having 'down time' and not engaged in a specific activity. At these times we would chat not just about my research or the students, but about more personal topics such as relationships and future plans. There were opportunities for very open and honest conversations, and I was keen to present the truest version of myself throughout the ethnography as far as I was aware I could do so (Holt 2004). I spoke about my research, my challenges in the field and my personal motivations as openly as I felt comfortable, as well as my own interests. Sharing aspects of my personal identity helped to build positive research relations (as identified in section 3.5.2), and was reciprocated with what I felt were genuine relationships with those in the field.

It took a few days for the young people on each trip to start asking me questions and become more interested in what I was doing. By about three weeks in the field, I also began to feel a sense of acceptance and place within the OBT and with the centre staff. During my third week I was given more responsibility with the young people by the OBT instructor; for example helping them to plan their task whilst the activity was set up, and being in charge of scrubbing walking boots. I joined the instructors in the pub one evening, and they invited me back to go on some 'adventures', outside of the research project. As well as this, I felt more at ease with my task, and began to view the young people more through the eyes of an instructor, rather than getting easily frustrated with their lack of motivation or effort. Again, I felt that relationships established in the field were more than research-based. As one instructor summed up our time together, "*It's been like working with a mate for the week!"*.

Despite these genuine friendships and my aspirations to be open and honest in the field, I am aware that the way I presented myself, and my embodied actions, mark out all research

encounters as performative (Woodyer 2008). We cannot escape our own bodies, which affects how we are received, how people interact with us, the assumptions people make about our abilities and our status (O'Reilly 2012), and consequently the data we collect (Gentin 2011). Indeed, as I re-visted centres, and came across the same OBT staff and same activity sites, I became more familiar with the general format and expectations of the week. I had eaten the food before, negotiated the centre layout, used the equipment and completed the activities, and was therefore in a position of power relative to my participants. On one occasion a student had forgotten who I was, and assumed I worked for the OBT. The students often asked me questions about equipment, for example how to tighten harnesses and rucksack straps. Here, my familiarity with the OBT, and with outdoor activities and equipment, reproduced adult/child power relations. In addition, as a young person (25 years old), who was relatively fit and capable, I fitted well into the environment of the OBT. I chose to wear my own waterproofs and walking boots, and use my own rucksack, which physically marked me out as different to the students, who were all dressed in OBT kit. Although the outdoor education industry is overwhelmingly dominated by male staff, the OBT employs a good number of female staff and my gender did not therefore create markedly different encounters.

To counteract this feeling of, both distance from the group's experiences (as I had often been through the OBT activity previously) and hierarchical adult/child relations, I attempted to adopt what Holt (2004) describes as a 'least-adult' role. For Holt, this is a conscious effort to perform our identities in non-dominant ways when working with children. Holt contends this to be a complex and challenging task in a school setting where there are institutional and societal norms and expectations around adult and child behaviours. In some ways, my fieldwork presented similar challenges, given that the young people were there as part of a school trip with their teachers. The addition of physically and mentally challenging tasks was also an important aspect here. Although the trend is to move away from the child/adult binary, we must acknowledge that abilities of children are different to that of adults. Compared to the young people (aged 12-14), adults were generally physically stronger and more capable, as well as having more experience with given tasks, myself included.

The negotiations of adult/child statuses were complex during the research process and at times left me feeling very confused and anxious about my positionality and performance in the field. The OBT instructors occupied what I observed to be a less domineering role to the school teachers, by never losing their patience or becoming strongly dictatorial with students. They also went by their first names, rather than 'Miss' or 'Sir' (although mostly the pupils reverted

to using the latter). Whilst the teachers were there to 'keep them on track', the instructors were happy to let them make mistakes. In addition, the young people were also in a transitional period in their life, when the expectation was that they started to become more 'adult' (see section 3.4.2). I aimed to build a rapport with the students, learn the languages of the schools and the OBT, so as to present myself as equal. I was aware that at times my position shifted; during practical tasks I would assist and provide guidance, taking on a more dominant adult role. During classroom-based tasks I could not contribute to their private conversations or practical jokes, and these moments reminded me that I would never be an 'insider'. At times I will also admit to evoking my 'adult' status, for example through reprimanding students when I got frustrated with their attitudes or behaviour. Mostly, I sought to align myself with the sorts of interactions and relationships OBT instructors and students had, as I genuinely wanted them to complete their week feeling that they had achieved something. I referred to the learning models (used by instructors) with the young people, and often challenged them the way the instructors did, for example by encouraging them to answer their own questions. As Holt (2004) suggests, as an adult researcher conducting research with children you are ultimately limited by your 'adultness'. In essence, I was surprised to realise how quickly I had forgotten what it was like to be a child on a school trip (Philo 2003; Mills 2017).

As Woodyer (2008) reminds us, it is important to acknowledge the role of the body and the embodied process of (children's) participation. During the research process, bodily interactions with space and material objects were not only an essential part of the OBT experience for the participants but also for myself as a researcher. By going through the same experiences as the young people, my body became an instrument of research (Longhurst *et al*. 2008) and provided a means of getting at those haptic knowledges: wearing waterproofs, wet shoes, carrying heavy rucksacks and eating ration packs for dinner. Participating in the same activities as the students also helped to 'close the gap' between researcher and subject (Davidson 2001). Bennett *et al.* (2015) also suggest that 'joining in' helps to counter the objectifying way of seeing. An additional benefit of being 'in the moment' with the young people, was that they could talk more easily as things happened, as a consequence of being more engaged in the process (Fetterman 2010). The intention of OBT activities is to challenge participants, which in turn often evoked strong emotional responses and quickly highlighted vulnerabilities, attitudes, and individual tipping points. This personal insight was invaluable in providing some common ground, and raising questions which were subsequently explored during Stage Three (Davidson 2001). However, the way I presented myself and participated in these experiences was in no

way comparable to that of the young people's experiences, whose understanding and interpretation of situations will be different to mine. My own experiences impacted on my interpretation of events, and the embodiment of these research encounters will be explored in Section 3.7.

3.5.5. Participant-directed photography

Researchers across the social sciences are increasingly turning to visual techniques such as photography as a methodology (Pink 2007). Pink (2007) discusses a type of 'visual ethnography', whereby photos produced during ethnographic research become 'visual texts' – not only the images themselves and what they represent, but also the experience of producing them and discussing them with informants becomes part of the ethnographic knowledge produced. Links between images and realities are constructed through individuals' interpretations, and enables an exploration of participants' views of the world.
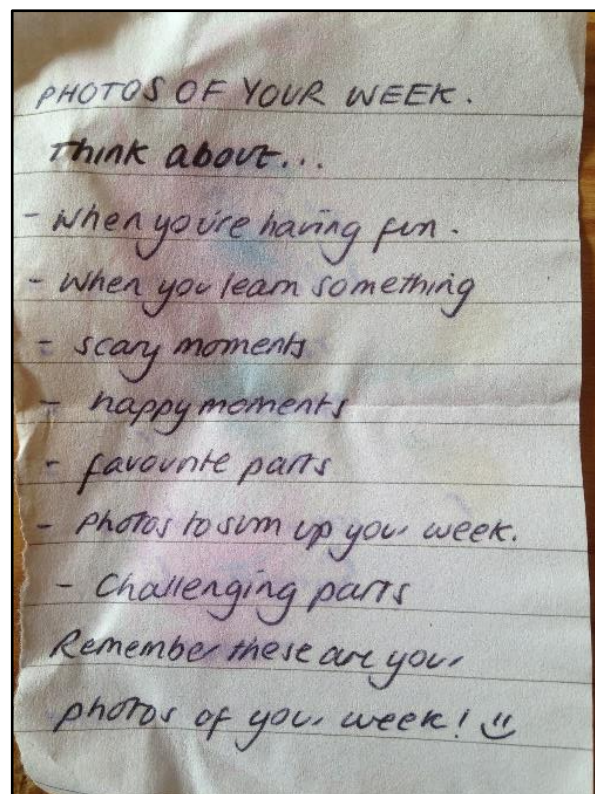
Figure 3. 5   Instructions provided with the cameras for participant-directed photography (authors own photograph)

For this study, young people were provided with digital cameras for the ethnographic weeks during Stage Two of the fieldwork. The cameras were cheap and relatively robust, which proved useful as they were 'lost' (usually at the bottom of rucksacks) or exposed to the elements on a regular basis. Participants were each given a camera and an instruction sheet in order to document their week (Figure 3.5). They were asked to take pictures of situations, moments or objects that evoked particularly strong emotions and thoughts: fear, happiness, challenge, motivation, and friendship. The pictures were then saved and printed, and used during the school-based semi-structured interviews (Stage Three), serving as prompts for questions and used in the moodboard activity (see section 3.5.6).

As well as enriching and creating new knowledges, using participant-directed photography enables researchers to access spaces that may be physically difficult for them to enter (Pink 2007). In addition, by allowing informants to take their own photographs they are accorded the agency to actively co-construct the story told through the ethnography. This allows research to combine the intentions of the researcher and the researched (Ibid.) and contribute to empowering research practices (Holt 2004). Crucially for this project, Pimlott-Wilson (2012) highlights the need to draw on techniques which engage young people in order to uncover their perspectives. Through using a participatory research method, I sought to genuinely involve young people as active agents in the research (Malone 2016a; Tuck & McKenzie 2014). Participant-directed photography became a tool for young people to relate their individual experiences to the research aims, through the instructions given with the cameras. By getting informants to hold the cameras and chose which images they took, it allowed the photographs to reproduce the "objects of their gaze" (Malone 2016a: 50). Having the option to delete, assess and re-take photos also gave the young people ownership and choice during the task.

Despite the cited benefits of graphic methodologies, Pink (2007) warns against using them in isolation. Images act to emphasise visual aspects of culture but are not purely visual tools. The meanings given to photos and images are subjective, and a variety of meanings can be attached to one photo as research progresses. The creative use of images works well when combined with other methods such as participant observation and interviews (O'Reilly 2012). During interviews, photographs have the potential to become a rich source or data. The moments captured by images are meaningful to those who took them, and discussing the photos places them within new narratives of meaning (Pink 2007). These meanings relate to personal experience as well as wider cultural discourses. The opportunity to draw on images and

photographs also provides a medium through which to express experiences and emotions which could possibly go uncovered during a purely verbal interview (O'Reilly 2012).

In spite of these merits, there were some problems in utilising cameras effectively within this study. For example, the young people were very easily influenced by each other, so if one got their camera out to take a photo, so did others. Often there were lots of photos during the first day or so, and then they were forgotten about and left in coat pockets. I was hesitant to remind them of taking photos as I wanted it to be driven by their own thoughts, but they very quickly forgot, or took silly pictures of themselves messing around. I felt that because they were not fully aware or interested in my reasons for being there, they did not appreciate the purpose of the cameras. It was also clear that some enjoyed taking photos and had the cameras out regularly, whereas others did not. On occasions they proved to be too distracting for the young people and they had to be told to put them away by the instructor. Overall, the task of balancing the requirements of the research with the desires of the young people and adults expectations was challenging (Pimlott-Wilson 2012).

When I presented the cameras to my first group of young people, I felt very positive about the outcomes of the method: the group were not allowed their phones during the week and therefore the cameras provided them with an opportunity to take photos. The novelty of having cameras appealed to the group and they were keen to take photos. However, their enthusiasm wore off relatively quickly, and was affected by factors such as the type of activity and the weather. The active nature of OBT courses meant there were not always good opportunities for getting cameras out, especially when the young people were struggling with a physically challenging task where taking photos was not their key objective. There was always a 'water day' during the week (canoeing or gorge walking) where it was not possible to take the cameras as they were not waterproof. In addition, inclement weather made it less appealing to take photographs, as was the case in week two when it rained solidly for four days! This meant that some very 'emotionally charged' moments within the courses were not captured on camera. In addition to the cameras often not being used to their full potential, they were not used at all with Woodland Academy students. Here I was guided by the lead teacher, who suggested there were often issues of photograph consent amongst the pupils, which appeared to be as a consequence of their religious, ethnic or cultural backgrounds.

On a personal level, the photographs acted as a useful reminder of the ethnographic fieldwork, especially where some young people had used the cameras to take videos and 'video diary' type

recordings. Unfortunately, they were not draw upon during the school-based interviews as much as I had expected. Many young people were initially interested as the photos provided conversation points and reminders of their week. Some participants also asked to take the print-outs of the photos with them. However, in most cases the photos were of poor quality, and they were not draw on extensively in the moodboard task.

3.5.6. Moodboards

The use of moodboards was inspired by Pimlott-Wilson's (2012) useful assessment of visual participatory methods when conducting research with young people. For Pimlott-Wilson, moodboards provide an opportunity to work *with* young people, as opposed to imposing adult views and interpretations. In this approach, moodboards are defined as a collection of magazine cuttings, as well as hand-drawn pictures and photos from the participant-directed photography (see section 3.5.6) which represented how informants felt about their OBT experience. As Gallagher (2008: 138) asserts, participatory methods, a diverse set of techniques bound together by a "concern for actively involving research subjects", have been valued in research with children in recent years. Punch's (2001) use of photography is a notable study here, and Rose (2003) suggest that visual and creative methods may provide a better forum for articulating thoughts, feelings and abstract concepts. In this instance, the combination of visual data plus narration sought to provide deeper insights and richer data. Pimlott-Wilson (2012) highlights this need for a continued dialogue to ensure that the moodboards are interpreted in the right way by the researcher. Issues of interpretation and reliability need to be considered, as well as the subject of ownership and anonymity (Ibid.).

I introduced the moodboard concept at the beginning of the interviews with young people, by showing an example that I had made, which addressed the question 'how did I feel during my first week at university?'. I talked the young people through the thought processes which led me to create the moodboard, to help them to understand how I wanted them to approach the exercise. I asked them to address the question 'how did your experiences during your Outward Bound week make you feel?', and provided magazines from a range of sources including food and health magazines, outdoor magazines and lifestyle magazines, white A3 paper, coloured pens and pencils, glue and scissors. Although I tried to emphasise their ownership over the moodboards, they frequently ask me whether pictures were appropriate, and often struggled to find pictures that they deemed suitable. The young people also struggled to address the specific question of how their OBT experiences made them feel, and often the moodboards purely

depicted the activities they took part in. However, there were still useful, as it helped to highlight which parts of the week really stood out for individuals. At the end of the interview, respondents discussed their moodboards and the rationale behind the pictures and words, which was recorded on the Dictaphone.

The challenges encountered above highlight, on the one hand, the ambiguity in the method whereby young people had to check if they were using the right pictures. On the other hand, they draw attention to the ways in which young people can exploit, redirect, and contest participatory techniques (Gallagher 2008). Some young people chose to depict one key episode of their OBT week, some spent more time colouring in their name, and others did not create a moodboard at all. Participatory techniques are designed to empower research participants and produce more 'authentic' knowledge about young people's subjective realities (Grover 2004). As my experiences with the moodboards indicate, these techniques can afford participants greater agency, but not always in the ways anticipated (Ansell 2001).

The moodboard task was optional, but the majority of young people attempted it, and I felt it was positively received. They seemed to enjoy the creativity it afforded, and it helped to create a more relaxed atmosphere. As previously mentioned, they were sometimes constrained by time, but overall they added value to the interview process by uncovering thoughts and feelings that were not discussed explicitly until addressed within the context of the moodboard. None of the young people wanted to keep their moodboards, which therefore avoided any issues of ownership.

3.6. Data processing and analysis

All interviews were transcribed verbatim. The raw data (interview transcripts and moodboard scans) were collated and organised in the qualitative data analysis soft package NVivo 11. Fieldnotes and photos were not uploaded to NVivo, but were used to support the process of analysis. The process of data analysis describes the practice of "the search for patterns in data and for ideas that help to explain why those patterns are there in the first place" (Bernard 2011: 338). Thematic analysis was employed to search for these patterns, broadly based on Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phase approach. I familiarised myself with the data through the transcription and organizing process, reading, re-reading and generating initial ideas. From this I generated initial codes to symbolize interesting features identified across the data (Saldaña 2013). This preliminary analysis was done manually, using the process of 'concept mapping' (Kane &

Trochim 2006; Cope 2016) to help visualize the data and potential relationships (Figure 3.6). immersing myself in the data and generating initial codes provided and "analytical scaffold in which to build" further rounds of analysis (Charmaz 2008: 217). This was an iterative process of identifying and collating codes, and reviewing key themes. These subsequent rounds were conducted in NVivo 11, which functioned as a means of organizing and storing the data in appropriate themes. The analytical tools available in the software were not drawn upon. An example of how codes and themes transpired is shown in Figure 3.7.

Analysis was ongoing throughout the research process. This was important given the length of time in the field, helping to inform the later stages of data collection. I created memos (Clarke 2005; Cope 2016) as I proceeded through the research, which allowed for informal interpretations and reflections (Watson & Till 2010). These reflections influenced the generation, merging and condensing of codes, as well as encouraging critical reflection on my role in the research process. Consequently, the following section presents a reflexive account of my experiences in the field.
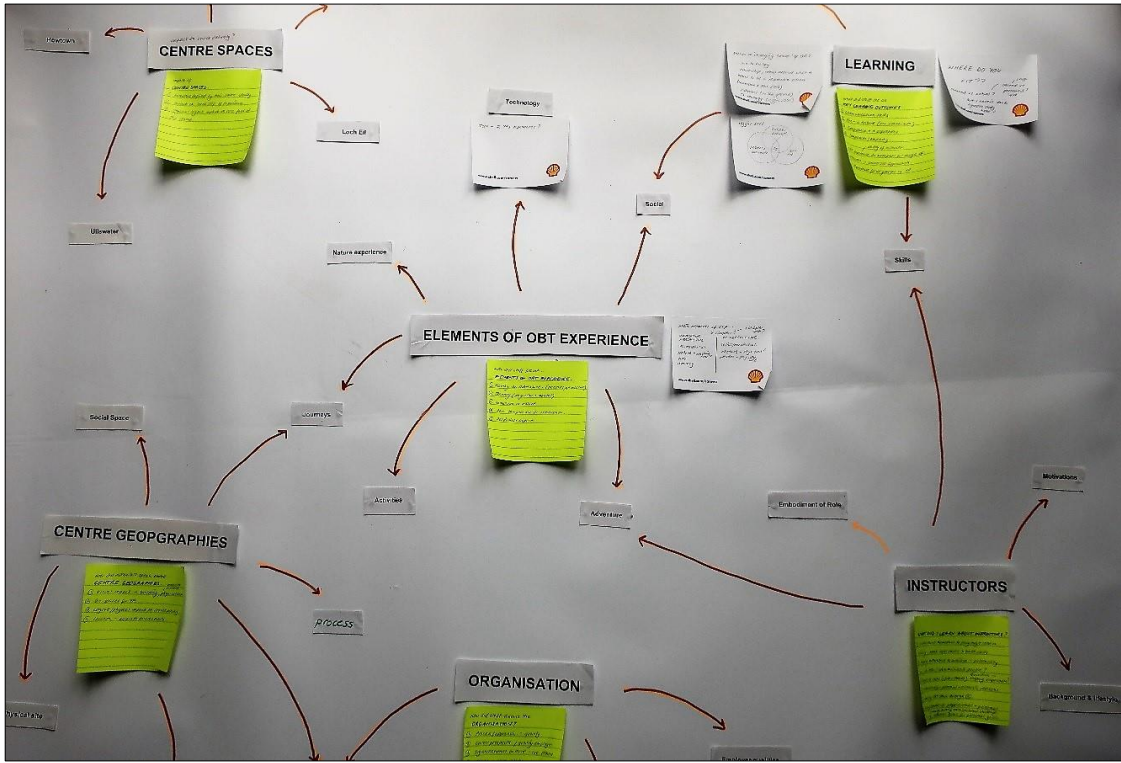
Figure 3. 6   Concept mapping of initial themes

Figure 3. 7   Examples of how themes and codes were organized in NVivo 11

3.7. Negotiating power, positionality and ethics

Through undertaking qualitative research, both the research and the researcher shape that which is studied, and representations are always fundamentally partial (DeLyser 2009). Undeniably, as has been explored above, my position as a young, white, female, British PhD student, my interactions with participants and our own subjectivities contributed to the research process (Skelton 2001). My presence in young people's outdoor education programmes will have ultimately influenced their experiences, and the knowledge produced through the data collection is inherently linked to personal and situational characteristics (Limb & Dwyer 2001). Consequently, the fieldwork required a continual self-awareness, critical reflection and a sensitive approach.

The research project was granted approval by the Loughborough University Ethics Committee. The focus here was on ensuring that both young people and their guardians were clear about the intentions of the study and had formally consented to partake in the research. The research was overt, and consent was sought before both the ethnography and interviews. As already highlighted (Section 3.4.4), this was often challenging as the participants were recruited and the information disseminated through their schools. Morrow (1998) draws attention to the fact that school-based research can sit uneasily with notions of informed consent. Holt (2004) also

points out that it is difficult for a child to truly consent in a situation whereby they usually comply with adults wishes. Schools dealt with the consent process in different ways, and as a researcher I was guided by the lead teacher as the gatekeeper. Letters were provided for parents about the project, with the option to withdraw their child. Similarly, letters were provided for the young people, with assent forms[11]. The project was often introduced to the young people by their teachers before I had met them face-to-face and explained the project to them verbally. It is fair to say, especially in the case of Woodland Academy where for many parents English was their second language, that consent often seemed to be based on a commitment to the school, rather than an informed desire to participate in the research.

It was often unclear whether the decision to take part was made by the individual, or influenced by teachers. Given this, although technically the young people had already consented to take part, at the beginning of the interview process I verbally recounted the participant information, reiterated their anonymity in the study, data confidentiality and right to withdraw. The schools have been anonymised in the research, and all participants given pseudonyms.

In addition to negotiating issues of informed consent, working with children and young people requires a conscious effort to conduct research in an empowering way (Holt 2004). Historically, research has been conducted *on* children, and there is now a concerted effort to avoid this pitfall and represent their views as accurately as possible (Valentine & Holloway 2000). By using methods which engaged and involved participants (see sections 3.5.5 and 3.5.6) the study sought to produce qualitative research which captured their diverse voices. In a Western context, children often have experiences which are culturally very different to adults (Pimlott-Wilson 2012) and it is necessary to provide a platform for these differences to be understood. As a caveat, Holt (2004) reminds us of the importance of focusing on the *similarities* and differences, rather than essentialising the adult/child dichotomy (Holt 2004). Involving young people in the research process helped to recognise how adult-child relations are "punctuated by connection" as well as disconnections (Woodyer 2008: 353), and provide balance in the fieldwork process.

As alluded to already (Section 3.5.4), embodiment is key to the research process, and is implicated in everything we say, think, feel and do. As Davidson (2001) asserts, in qualitative research the researcher's positionality is intertwined with the data collection process, and it is

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[11] An assent form is used in cases where an individual is not competent to give legally valid informed consent to participant in research (e.g. a child or cognitively impaired person).

important to be aware of the potential biases and subjectivities introduced into the interpretation of the data. For Dowling (2010: 35), "subjectivity involves the insertion of personal opinions and characteristics into research practice". For myself, it was critical to be aware of the role of my own experiences and perspectives in my interpretation of events. This was made most clear to me when working with Woodland Academy, who represented a majority Asian community (Table 2). One girl described how her daily routine was the same, *"we go to school, we go to mosque for two hours, then we have a few hours at home with family and then go to bed"*. This did not match my own memories of being at school and I distinctly remember struggling to relate to these young people. This is clearly a consequence of positionality, and serves to highlight the importance of understanding ourselves as researchers as only 'partially knowing' (Holt 2004). On a personal level, this made me more acutely aware of my own subjectivities.

Finally, and in contrast to highlighting my relative position of power throughout the research process, I wish to draw attention again to Moser's (2008) discussion of researcher's personalities (see also section 3.5.2). As Wilkinson (2016) suggests, researcher personality is capable of shaping both the research process and the final outcome, especially when acknowledging that "personalities respond to other personalities in different ways" (Hoogendoorn & Visser 2012: 264). In this instance, I discuss my emotional capacity to conduct a relatively intense social research project. Despite feeling competent in my ability to develop positive relations with research participants, and coming across as sociable and personable, I still found fieldwork an emotionally demanding experience. I consider myself introverted by nature, and I found it challenging being on my own in an unfamiliar environment – I certainly felt a pressure to 'perform' a particularly interested and engaging version of myself. Fieldwork is (emotionally) tiring, and there were many occasions when I did not want to speak to anyone, or 'critically reflect' on what was going on around me – I just wanted to stay in my room and take some time out. To this end, I did not always ask questions when I should, or take a moment to 'chat' with participants when the opportunity presented itself. Being an 'outsider' (neither an OBT employee or a young person) was hard work, although as I have discussed above (section 3.5.4), as the fieldwork progressed I began to feel much more settled in the OBT environment. As Moser (2008) suggests, researchers should have an understanding of their emotional abilities, and it is necessary to be reflexive about how individual personalities affect fieldwork. In this final reflection, I have highlighted the ways in which fieldwork was an 'uncomfortable' experience at times, and in which I occasionally reached an emotional 'limit'. To acknowledge this is to further understand the impact of personality on the research process and outcomes.

3.8. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined and critically explored the methods of data collection and analysis used to address the research aims and objectives of this project. It argues that the use of a combination of qualitative techniques, including participatory methods, helps to mitigate against some of the difficulties when conducting empirical research with young people and on outdoor education. Despite this, the chapter has also highlighted some of the challenges during the data collection process, and that even with careful planning and ethical considerations, research with young people presents issues of access, power relations and positionality. Furthermore, it draws attention to the embodied process of qualitative research, how these complexities contribute to the research process and interpretation of data, and the ways in which we as researchers must be mindful of our performances and subjectivities in the field.

The forthcoming chapters (4,5,6, and 7) present the empirical findings generated from the methods outlined in this chapter. All the methods address all of the research questions, and the four empirical chapters draw on data from both OBT staff and the young people in a series of thematic discussions regarding people, place and process. As stated in Chapter 1, these are interlinked, but Chapter 4 begins by focusing on *place* through an exploration of the physical spaces of the OBT.

CHAPTER FOUR

Placing outdoor education: spatialities and 'centre geographies'

4.1. Introduction

Contemporary outdoor education practices are characterised by the development of relationships: between *self* (through increasing self-awareness via challenge and adventure), *others* (the development of group cohesion through social experiences such as overnight expeditions) and the *natural environment* (as an arena for challenge) (Wattchow & Brown 2011). Despite the utilisation of nature as a key component, a lack of attention to relationships with the natural environment have been lamented (Brookes 2004; Wattchow & Brown 2011; Humberstone & Stan 2012; Stewart 2008; Zink & Burrows 2008). The Anglo-American tradition of outdoor education has been critiqued for foregrounding individual abstract experiences over specificities of culture and particularities of place (Brookes 2004; Humberstone & Stan 2011). As such, this first empirical chapter presents a discussion of more specific experiences of place in outdoor education. As introduced in Chapter 2, the OBT is an organisation fundamentally grounded in its *places*. This chapter investigates these in more detail, before the discussion moves on, in subsequent chapters, to consider their consequences for identity construction (Chapter 5), the Outward Bound 'experience' (Chapter 6), and young people's embodied experiences of nature (Chapter 7).

The very idea of *outdoor* education puts the environment and physical location at the heart of this educational practice. Certainly, for the Outward Bound Trust 'place' constitutes a core component of their pedagogy (see Chapter 2). However, the emphasis is often on the pedagogical experience, at the expense of focusing on experiences of the natural environment as a central, but largely taken-for-granted element (Humberstone & Stan 2012). As Russell (1999: 124, emphasis added) suggests, "what might constitute an educative *nature* experience is rarely interrogated". Concepts of wilderness and nature come with underlying assumptions regarding their ability to provide a suitable location and content for (a range of) developmental experiences (Harrison 2010). However, understanding what defines nature is problematic, described as "physical and biological, human and nonhuman, natural, cultivated and constructed, social and political, cultural and aesthetic, and temporal with a past and future" (Smyth 1998: 1, quoted in Nichol 2012). It is clear that conceptualisations of nature are fluid, and beholden to social, cultural and historical contexts (see section 2.4 of Chapter 2). It is not

the intention of this chapter to determine 'what nature' is constructed through the OBT, which is explored in detail in Chapter 7. Instead, the discussion presented here explores some of the desired characteristics of the environments that outdoor education utilises. In so doing, the following sections (and further chapters) tease out some of the complexities inherent to experiences of places of outdoor education.

It is essential to move beyond the long-accepted dualism that outdoor education takes place in a natural environment that acts as an escape from, and antithesis to, modern life, as universalised, pristine and fixed. Massey (1994; 2005) reminds us that places are formed through particular social relations which come together and interact at particular locations. If spaces are fixed and bounded, then places must be considered dynamic in nature, shaped by both their characteristics and the social interactions that occur within them (Stewart 2003). This understanding of place marks out outdoor education settings as messy, fluid and constantly changing (Wattchow & Brown 2011), and the location where individual experiences and beliefs, group ideals, cultural customs, and the geophysical site come together (Ibid.). It brings to the fore the relationship between people and the natural environment, when place is considered as being a co-creation between individuals and the physical venue (Massey 2005).

Kraftl (2013a) acknowledges how the social and the spatial are "inextricably linked", captured by the idea of 'spatiality' (see Chapter 2), and subsequently calls for a consideration of learning *spaces* and well as learning processes. Kraftl (2013a) sought to address the spatialities that characterise alternative education in the UK. This chapter take its cue here, in considering the spatialities of OBT centres. As Harrison (2010) suggests, in relation to outdoor education, key questions we should be asking are 'why are we in these particular places?'. What have the Lake District, the Scottish Highlands, or Snowdonia National Park got to do with personal development? What are our relationships to these places and how might we learn from them through educational experiences (Ibid.)?

This chapter draws attention to the primacy of particular places in the OBT, proposing the concept of 'centre geographies' to encapsulate how the physical environment is implicated in OBT courses. I demonstrate how and why the specificities of place are important to outdoor education practices, and how certain environments are made and re-made to facilitate encountering, exploring and experiencing nature. The remainder of the chapter is divided into three sections. Section 4.2 considers the physical location of the OBT centres, and the effect of this in terms of attracting staff, creating contrast value, and providing access to a variety of

outdoor environments. Section 4.3 then elaborates on some specific features of the physical sites, and where these interact with social and cultural practices to create particular spatialities conducive to outdoor education. Finally, section 4.4 provides some concluding comments and directs the discussion towards Chapter 5.

4.2. Locating centres: places of adventure, juxtaposition and variety

The OBT seeks to locate itself in very particular locations, such as those with National Park status or comparable *Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)* (see Chapter 3). These environments are distinguished for their apparent *wilderness* and *unpredictability* which provides opportunities for 'real adventure', as well as having *inspirational capacities* which encourage young people to reach their potential (OBT 2017b). From this, we can see how the OBT attaches meaning to the places that it operates within. The perceived inspirational, natural and wilderness qualities of the centre locations is paramount to its work. The forthcoming discussion recognises the importance of these place-based characteristics for OBT instructors, as well as their interpretation in the eyes of young people.

4.2.1. Attracting employees

For the instructors in this study, there was the feeling that all of the OBT centres were in superior locations in terms of access to physical environments for both courses and personal use:

> *"I think Aberdovey is another very beautiful place, it's very different from here [Ullswater]. Being a coastal centre, so you've got access to an estuary that […] can be another amazing place on the right day. And you're also not far from some big mountains, Snowdon, for some expeditions there. In terms of place, it's another good place. Ogwen Cottage – right in the footstep of a big valley, so you can just go straight out onto the hill and do some really big mountains. Loch Eil is near Fort William, again – a long way to get to – but if you're there it can be amazing."* (Oliver, male, Senior Instructor/Operations Coordinator, 35-45)

Instructors appreciated the diversity of the centres, and as Oliver's words indicate, they gained enjoyment and happiness from spending time in these locations. Hutson & Montgomery's (2006) exploration of outdoor instructors' connections to their workplace environments highlights a common comfort and belonging, and shared view of happiness found through being in nature. This broad feeling of *belonging* in natural environments echoes Askins' (2009)

77

observation that resonances are felt across different natures. Askins asserts that parallels between geographically diverse landscapes can be draw through the emotional responses that they evoke (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010), and this general appreciation of outdoor environments was seen across the OBT employees.

In addition, staff expressed enjoyment of nature and the outdoors in relation to their particular centres and locations. They commented on the cultural history of centre buildings, for example as former hunting lodges (Loch Eil) or the 'original Outward Bound School' (Aberdovey). They also expressed an affection for the geographical area more generally, as David and Jamie exemplify in their discussions of the Loch Eil and Aberdovey centre locations:

> *"There's something about the West coast that's got a very unique feel to it. Because all the other centres, they complain about the midges, they complain about the cold weather, complain about the rain and all that kind of stuff – but it's a bit more demanding on you, and in some ways that's a good thing, to try and get those things right."* (David, male, Senior Instructor, 25-35, describing the location of Loch Eil)

> *"Cadair Idris [mountain] and there's a huge history there you know? Cadair Idris and the stairs there, they're not… they didn't motivate Led Zeppelin to right Stairway to Heaven but they were – Led Zeppelin lived in the area, climbed Cad loads of times. Black Sabbath used to live further up north at the Llyn Peninsular, so there's a lot of cool history, a lot of cool stuff. Cool people come here because it's a cool place."*
> (Jamie, male, freelance Instructor, 25-35, describing the location of Aberdovey)

As David and Jamie indicate, their feelings of belonging were not predicated on notions of a universal nature environment. They were contingent on an appreciation and enjoyment of their specific centre locations. Staff were attracted both to different centres, and to varying aspects or qualities that the centres had to offer (see also Chapter 5). In terms of their relationship to the outdoors, some expressed what Hutson *et al.* (2010) framed as a 'spiritual' perspective, whereby they felt strong connections to the natural environment and found inspiration through immersion in outdoor places. Lucy (female, Learning & Adventure Manager[12], 35-45) aligned with this particular viewpoint; she found links between nature spaces and her educational background in psychology, and felt that there was huge power in the potential influence that

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[12] Learning and Adventure (L&A) Managers were introduced as part of the restricting of the Trust in 2015. L&A Managers are part of the centre management team, and their main role is to provide line management support and development to a team of up to 12 instructors.

the outdoors could have on people:

> *"I love it over here [Eskdale]! It's so inspiring. I moved over here, and you've got the beach looking back up into the mountains, you've got rivers, we've got Scarfell Pike but we've also got a range of mountains that are really inspirational. I think, even if you just go and sit in them – you don't have to go up them, you can sit in them, and that's inspirational enough for some young people. So, I think that's just a great space to have. We don't have to create something. It's all just here quite naturally."*

Lucy focused on psychological rejuvenation through outdoor environments, finding comfort and connection in these surroundings. There is a clear appreciation of these particular environments as being naturally *restorative,* without requiring any additional input or activity. Hutson *et al.* (2010) differentiate between this 'spiritual' relationship and a 'natural' perspective, which places importance on sensory exchanges and intentional, active engagement with the outdoors. Many of the OBT instructors exhibited aspects of this on several occasions during fieldwork, through their enjoyment of physical activities often regarded as 'lifestyle' (Wheaton 2010) or 'nature' sports (Krein 2014) such as climbing, mountaineering and surfing (the significance of these will be further explored in Chapter 5). This perspective is framed by environmental and experiential knowledge and attunement with surroundings sought through bodily interaction.

As well as engaging with nature spiritually, emotionally and physically, it was clear that for OBT staff, an enjoyment of outdoor environments was also mediated by social interactions. Hutson *et al.* (2010) identify this third 'relational' perspective, whereby there is perceived to be great value in establishing relationships with others in places of personal significance. In one fieldwork encounter, during a visit to a disused slate quarry, that now provides a popular climbing venue, the support instructor Lawrence recounted his personal experiences of the quarry. He pointed out the routes that climbers could take, those that he had completed himself, and where the particularly challenging sections were. He recalled being there with another member of OBT staff who got stuck, and having to help him down off the rock, and of incidents he had heard from other climbers and the difficulties they had faced. Lawrence demonstrated how he had come to know this environment – through the primary acquisition of bodily knowledges of this particular site, through the sharing of stories about which routes were accessible and which were not, and through the creation of shared memories with others. This

short example highlights how places come to be understood throughout interactions with them, and through the social relations which coalesce at those sites (Dickson 2004).

The way in which social relations come together in particular places is pertinent in understanding why instructors are drawn to OBT centres. More often than not, motivations were three-fold, as Oliver, David and Jamie alluded to above. There was firstly the attraction to a general outdoor environment, followed by a preference for the specific characteristics of a centre and localised surroundings. Finally, there was the attraction of the individuals in those centres who made it a positive environment to work in, and facilitated access to those physical environments. One of the key benefits of working in the centres was that there was always someone to 'go out and play with' (expanded on in Chapter 5). A 'relational' perspective of nature relations helps to centre collective 'person-place experiences' as integral to the on-going meaning-making in place. In considering how particular places 'come together' we can see that the spatialities of the OBT centres are created through their physical locations and the people they attract. The social interactions in those places then become not only a cause but a consequence of this place-based identity. This has implications for the way instructors develop a sense of place, make meaning from their experiences, and construct their identities. These dynamics will be the focus of Chapter 5.

This section has discussed how the centres and centre locations represent spaces of familiarity and belonging for instructors. However, they seek to provide a juxtaposition to young people's everyday spaces, and it is to this role of perceived difference in place that we now turn.

4.2.2. *Juxtaposing the urban familiar*

Many instructors perceived the OBT to be able to create a natural environment which effectively juxtaposed everyday urban settings. The traditional argument of outdoor education is that its power comes from this contrast (Wattchow & Brown 2011; Zink & Burrows 2008), and staff bought into this idea. They suggested that "*we've got the balance right*" (Owen, Head of Centre, 45-55) between accessibility for clients and feelings of remoteness and immersion in nature – "*we're in the thick of it*" (Owen). This perceived contrast to young people's everyday lives was seen as essential:

> "*I think it needs to be in an environment that is completely alien from what they have experienced – for the majority. […] You need the topography, you need the crags, you*

*need the mountains. If it wasn't here, and say you were running it in a playing field…
there would be too much that's the same."* (Tim, male, Instructor, 25-35)

Staff also valued the work that they did in being able to magnify that contrast:

*"It's an Alice in Wonderland experience, because it's just not what they know, they've
never seen it. They don't have their iPhones. These kids were born when smart phones
were normal things. It's just incredibly different. That is the strong point, Outward
Bound is better than other centres because they can take the natural experience and
bring it so much further."* (Jamie, male, freelance Instructor, 25-35)

The staff saw two core parallel benefits from exposure to these unfamiliar environments.
Firstly, it was understood to disrupt young people's attitudes and normal behaviours; '*giving
them an opportunity to see something they've never seen before, which then unsettles them
enough for learning to take place*' (Len, male, Operations Manager, 55-65). Secondly, it
generally pushed participants outside their comfort zones, and instructors placed emphasis on
this for the work they were trying to do. Given this, it was regularly concluded that OBT courses
had a greater impact on those from disadvantaged or urban/inner city backgrounds, where
participants would be less likely to have visited similar locations previously. As Owen (male,
Head of Centre, 45-55) suggests:

*"I think it works for everybody, but I do think it has more impact on – well it's all about
how we set it up, but mainly the more challenging behaviour groups and the kids from
the poorer areas. They have more straightaway visual stuff – you can see that they're
benefitting from it straight away."*

Similarly, Jack (male, Instructor, 25-25) commented that *"It's very noticeable if the kids are
used to being in the outdoors, that they're not so astounded by being here"*. Owen and Jack are
remarking on the importance of the *visual* contrast value, and staff regarded the centre buildings
and immediate sites as being particularly impressive. As Suzie (female, Instructor, 25-35) says
of the Eskdale centre: *"The building itself is absolutely brilliant – you come round the corner
and there is a sense of 'oh, we're going somewhere pretty important here…' and the views,
being in nature, I think it sort of does a good job of that!"* (Figure 4.1). At Eskdale in particular,
there was an appreciation for the impact of the mountainous landscape, where *"the moment the
kids get off the minibus and they see this very rugged country compared to what they're used
to, you see their faces, and it's the wow factor when they get to the centre."* (Stephen, male,

Operations Manager, 55-65). This 'wow factor' of place was seen as important in having an instant impact on young people, to capture their imagination and anticipation for the week to come.

Figure 4. 1   The main building at Eskdale (authors own photograph)

In addition to these emotional and visual factors, the rural/urban juxtaposition took on a temporal dimension. Firstly, the process of travelling to centres was significant:

> *"[…] the fact that they drive here for two or three hours through countryside that they may have never seen, and they get here and they believe they're in the middle of nowhere. […] And they often ask 'what do you do if you need a pint of milk?', they've driven past a shop 5 minutes ago but they don't really think along those lines. They just think 'oh my god where is this school taking us?'."* (Jack, male, Instructor, 25-35)

The fact that the centres took a long time to get to, particularly in the cases of Eskdale and Loch Eil, seemed to be a blessing and a curse. Logistically it made them less popular choices, with one member of staff at Loch Eil noting that even Scottish schools may choose to go to Ullswater as it is easier to get to. But the awareness of travelling into the 'wilderness' – coming out of towns and off of motorways, having to driving for hours – was regarded as inherent to creating

the right 'sense of adventure' for young people. This feeling of travelling somewhere wild would culminate in the visual impact of seeing the centre for the first time. Secondly, the locations of centres and rural environments more generally were conceived of as spaces where the procession of time was slowed, *"the ability to be in a place where you have time to stand and stare is really important."* (Len, male, Operations Manager, 55-65). Instructors saw real value in nature spaces as providing opportunities for seeing, thinking and reflecting:

> *"It gives them space to stop and think, and look inward a little bit. If there were lots of other people there or boats going past on different lakes and things like that, that would be a distraction and therefore take them out of the moment of what's going on in their own team"* (Alan, male, Senior Instructor, 35-45)

This was in comparison to young people's regular environments and contemporary lifestyles, understood by instructors to be demanding and distracting, and governed by ever-quickening work- and school-day schedules, high speed technology and instant gratification (see Chapter 6 for a full discussion).

Through these emotional, visual, and temporal qualities discussed by OBT staff, we can see the that conducting work within places that juxtapose participants' everyday settings is considered to be a crucial characteristic of outdoor education. However, some did question this total immersion in natural environments, and acknowledged that there are limits:

> *"Because that [the expedition] just takes them completely away from everything they know, and they're sleeping a tent, and it's all – like you're in nature all the time. But for some people that's completely way out of their comfort zone and that's just kind of, it's too much for a lot of them."* (Mia, female, Instructor, 25-35)

Mia suggested that there is an *optimum* contrast and that pushing young people too far out of their comfort zones can have a negative effect. Similarly, there were questions over how and where technology should be used during OBT courses to *"talk their language a bit more"* (Jack, male, instructor, 25-35). Although many instructors were in favour of continuing to operate through simple, non-technological methods, there was a recognition that not communicating with young people in the ways that they were used to could be detrimental to the outcomes of courses. As Drew (male, Operations Manager, 45-55) remarked,

> *"It seems like two very different worlds I suspect. It's coming here and doing what they do here, and then working in a training environment back in their factory where*

everything is shiny white and they've got…you know… and they've been using stuff called Bluetac and paper. There just seems quite a disparity there between those two ideals."

It was suggested that OBT centres and locations, as so far removed from how young people participate in daily lives, could make the transfer of learning from one environment to another too difficult. Mia also called for a greater appreciation of the diversity of participants' backgrounds:

"But I think we have to remember where these kids are coming from and what kind of futures they're going to have. And I yeah I guess that goes back to people who have been here for a long time and grew up in a totally different world. And so their priorities for young people are quite different. And unless they're engaged in the modern world… and I hear a lot of the time adults saying 'oh they shouldn't be doing this'*,* 'they shouldn't be doing that'*,* 'it's because of this or that'*. And it's like well, that's your opinion and you don't know what their lives are like. You grew up lighting fires and running up trees and that's great, but these people's lives are totally different. So, there is that kind of respect for diversity I think is something we need to keep reminding ourselves of."*

Mia's words echo some wider debates regarding young people's changing life-worlds (Jeffrey 2010), as well as positioning young people as future-orientated (Kraftl 2008). In regard to these changing experiences of growing up (Jeffrey 2010), Mia, Jack and Drew are all contesting the relevancy of the approach of outdoor education for young people's contemporary lives. The longstanding focus on immersing participants in wilderness environments and a reversion back to 'basics' – without Wi-Fi or phone signal – is being questioned, and finding the right balance seems challenging. Dickson (2004) argues that a current problem for outdoor education providers is meeting the expectations of 'generation net', who have grown up with the world at their fingertips. Ultimately, the personal values and beliefs of OBT staff aligned with the work and ethics of outdoor education, to utilise the power and possibility of the outdoors. However, in some instances, they called for more mediated approaches to the contrast value of outdoor education settings.

The opinions of Mia, Jack and Drew are set against a wider narrative of nature as a morally superior space which has universal benefits. This narrative invites a specific, *socially entrenched* emotional response, depicted in Crang and Tolia-Kelly's (2010) paper on national

heritage sites. Here, the Lake District (and National Parks more broadly), is understood as a space with a particular emotive force, whereby:

> "Affective economies of citizenship are secure in these sites [natural environments] as valuable, historical representatives of national sensibilities which imbue those able to enjoy them with the virtues of citizenship." (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2316)

These national sensibilities were evident in the attitudes of the OBT instructors through their appreciation of the aesthetics of the centres, the inspiration and enjoyment they drew from the centre locations, and the value they attach to being out *in* nature. The instructors adopted principally Western values in their views of nature, as a space with moral ideals attached to it, and a place we need to get back to (Buijs *et al.* 2009; Cronon 1996; Macnaghten & Urry 2000). However, it is important to consider affect, emotion and physical relations between the audience and these spaces of heritage (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010) to move beyond these normalized visceral responses. The young people in this study also offered sentiments which developed through spending time at the centres. Some of these responses correlated with normalized, naturalised feelings of connecting to nature spaces such as feelings of freedom, peacefulness, and an appreciation of the rural landscape. Reference was made to the relative calmness at the centre locations:

> *"The good part is, because I know [home town] is a busy place, I think it gets you in a not-as-busy, it kind of refreshes you in a way."* (Amy, year 10, rural)

> *"It was calming. Yeah. It felt really peaceful, but you've got to go a long way. I wish like, we lived in a mountainous area, rather than – because we've only got the tracks in the village, and once you've done them once it's not much."* (Laura, year 8, rural)

> *"I liked that [less people], it was just nicer, because all the time we're with other people, and you feel like all your personal space - bubble – is gone. But there you had a whole country to yourself! Which was nice."* (Priya, year 8, urban)

OBT locations, as quieter places, in a rural environment with fewer buildings and people was an appreciated difference for Amy, Laura and Priya. Even Amy and Laura, whose school locations provided relatively easy access to typical English countryside, viewed the centre locations as significantly contrasting with their home towns. Tom and George (both male, year 7, urban) particularly noticed the value being in a remote location at Ogwen Cottage, when they

relocated to the Aberdovey centre during their week due to a storm affecting the power at Ogwen:

George: I think I preferred being in the middle of nowhere [Ogwen Cottage]. When we went to the second place [Aberdovey], I sort of felt that we were back in the city. Because it wasn't in the city, but it was in a massive complex with loads of other houses around. So, I think if I was to go to it again, I'd much rather that the storm didn't happen, and we'd stayed in the other place [Ogwen Cottage].

Interviewer: Ok so what was it about the other place [Ogwen Cottage]? That there wasn't lots of other buildings around?

George: It was more like, the place without building – it was a bit more what you would imagine nature. But when we went to the massive complex [Aberdovey], it was a bit more like London. Like you have gone back to London.

Tom: Everything was more, shiny and stuff [at Aberdovey]. And there was like, more facilities, like instead of having enough climbing set for one group, there was like 10 groups. Which I think, I think the Outward Bound is meant to be really like, I dunno, getting yourself more durable? But in the city you have more stuff to rely on. Or lean back on if you need something.

George and Tom's sense of immersion was easily disrupted by their move to Aberdovey, which has broader implications for considering how space is constructed at the individual centres and will be explored in section 4.3.

Despite some of these positive opinions on centre locations, other more negative emotions and thoughts were elicited as a response to being in a remote location. Nuria (female, year 8, urban), perceived a sense of isolation, which she disliked:

Nuria: There was no one really there. It's empty. […] like if you look outside, the roads, cars come by but not very often.

Interviewer: Ok so it's not very busy, and you would prefer it if there was lots of people?

Nuria: Yeah.

The physical remoteness was also deemed to be boring due to the lack of telephone signal and amenities, as Mark and Jordan (male, both year 7, urban) discussed:

Mark: I just thought it was too cold. Oh yeah, I remember now – I thought it would be too boring to live in. I need wifi.

Jordan: Everyone was outside when we got our phones, looking for connection! You had to be lucky to get it though.

Mark: Our room had it though, on the second day. For some reason on the first day we didn't have wifi, but on the second day I had four bars!

Interviewer: Ok you wanted wifi, what else would make it boring?

Mark: There wasn't that much to do to be honest, I mean you could climb the mountains, but it would probably get a bit repetitive. And you also have to be wary about what you step in!

The disjuncture between young people's opinions of the centre locations as calming and peaceful versus boring and isolated, acts to illustrate where understandings of nature environments do not always map onto the anticipated emotional responses these landscapes are assumed to induce. In addition, the discrepancies between the value of juxtaposition perceived by the staff and the young people suggest it is not always the case that experiences of outdoor centres are as they are expected or designed to be. Staff drew on the idea that pushing young people outside their comfort zone would provide opportunities for change, and on understandings of wilderness as inspiring and restorative. Some young people understood the centre locations in this way too, but this was not always the case. The next section moves beyond the location of centres as remote and immersive, to consider the role of the surrounding environment in understandings of place.

4.2.3. Variety in environment

In this section, I argue suggestions that the 'outdoors' of outdoor education is a context-free and neutral environment are misguided. If this were the case, why would it be necessary to drive five hours to an outdoor centre, when that same experience can be simulated on the school playing field? OBT instructors were adamant that specific locations mattered, for their crucial role in providing variety. As Bevan (male, instructor, 25-35) commented, *"It doesn't matter where your centre is, it's what's around your centre that enables you to access adventure"*. Centres which afforded access to a diverse range of natural environments were see as essential for creating key course experiences and outcomes.

As suggested in section 4.1, 'nature' is a disputed and loaded concept, with particular landscapes associated with the political idea of the bond between people, land and nation (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010). A specific *English* rurality has developed around constructions of identity and belonging (Neal 2002) and "nonnative cultures, bodies and sensibilities" are deemed out of place in the British and English sensibility of national parks (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010: 2324). Having access to a variety of environments was seen as a way to combat these discourses. Opportunities for the young people to come into contact with a range of natural settings was seen as a way to 'find something for everyone' so that all young people could go home with 'an experience':

> *"You either need to be travelling through different kinds of environments or going to different places and then coming back. If you're in a forest for 10 days it's really boring, and if you're on a moor for 10 days it's really boring. So, it's about having a mixture of different environments and having a bit of water and a bit of mountain, and being able to do different activities within those, so you interact with those environments in different ways, I think that's really important."* (Mia, female, Instructor, 25-35)

The emphasis was on finding something to inspire everyone, so that:

> *"everyone will take something away from it, whether it's a memory, or an experience, or places they've been where they wouldn't normally get to go, [...] And hopefully it will make them think a bit differently about themselves as well."* (Bevan, male, Instructor, 25-35)

Having access to a range of mountains or hills, as well as water, woodland, crags and gorges also allowed activities to be up- or downscaled according to the needs of the participants. As Sam (male, instructor, 25-35) suggested, one of the key features of a centre location was having *"a variety of mountains, in terms of height and topography [...] so that we can adjust challenge for groups"*. Consequently, the large-scale physical landscape that was so attractive to instructors (Chapter 5) was also seen as a challenge to conducting courses. As Bevan suggested, at Loch Eil:

> *"[it] can be quite hard to find a really impactful short day here. If I compare it to when I worked in the Lake District where you've got lots of little mountains and little hills, where you get to a very defined summit. And no matter what the group are like you can always find somewhere where you can get up high and you can have that achievement of getting to the top of somewhere and back down again. Whereas here, because the*

mountains are so big, sometimes you're just going across land. You don't actually get

that point of getting high up and having that feeling of getting to it." (Bevan)

In thinking about which environments are desirable for the practice of outdoor education, instructors pointed to diversity in a relatively small area and the ability to be able to provide the appropriate level of challenge through, for example, manageable water or small summits as described by Bevan above. As is suggested at Loch Eil, the centre locations varied in their ability to provide these requirements.

Although Aberdovey was the original OBT centre, many staff suggested that its location posed significant challenges. The centre's setting on the estuary was aesthetically impressive (Figure 4.2) and my fieldnotes pay testament to the striking setting:

First impressions: Beautiful location, view out onto the bay/beachy flats from the centre, and hills behind. Very rural. Old-ish building, classically converted with youth hostel style/feel – perhaps appropriate? shiny and new would feel out of place.

Figure 4. 2   View of the estuary from the Aberdovey centre (authors own
            photograph)

Herein we can see how the centre has been constructed as a particular kind of place (Cresswell 2004), where 'shiny and new' would not fit in, and this played into the sense of juxtaposition and contrast that OBT sought to establish. However, the influence of the tide meant that it was regularly rendered unusable due to tidal currents and challenging water. These difficulties became apparent during a canoe trip with Woodland Academy. It was evident that the group were not going to paddle fast enough to reach their pick-up point before the tide turned, so we had to re-route and turn back towards the Wharf. At the end of the canoe activity, the instructor realised that the day and time he had scheduled for the jetty jump was no good, because the tide would be out and the drop from the jetty to the water would be too big. As such, the group had to prepare themselves to do it there and then, or not get the opportunity to do it at all.

In addition to the logistical challenges of working on the estuary, groups had to travel significant distances by minibus to access some of the preferred venues for climbing, gorge-walking and mountain walking, as one instructor explains:

> *"The Plynlimons, which are the mountains to the south are cool, but they get very mucky, very boggy, very wet. And the distances between water sources, roads and available campsites are large. So they knock out the possibility for us, just the geography doesn't work. Outward Bound started as a sea school and it's no longer a sea school. So as a sea school its excellent, but, you know, other centres can walk to their crags. We've got to drive 45 minutes to the best one, and it's erm, 20 minutes to one but it's tidal. So we could be battered by the winds or the tides which means knocking it out half the time. It's also not such an exciting venue."* (Jamie, male, freelance Instructor, 25-35)

The travelling involved in accessing good venues at some sites was problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, it took time away from working with the young people, and 'rounding up' groups and equipment ready to get on the bus was often a lengthy and frustrating process. Secondly, it required significant organisation in terms of ensuring there was a minibus available for use, and co-ordinating group activities to fit in with minibus schedules impacted on the instructors' autonomy in the structuring of the learning process, which is something they valued highly (discussed in Chapter 5). Furthermore, it detracted from the feeling of immersion that instructors sought to create for their groups, by disrupting the learning process and the 'journey' that is inherent to the 'Outward Bound experience' (Chapter 6).

Despite these shortcomings, the location of the centre – *"close enough to the mountains and close enough to the sea"* (Josh, male, senior instructor, 25-35) – was seen by staff as beneficial for their work. Furthermore, throughout the fieldwork process, it became apparent that there were a number of cultural sites which could be drawn upon at the Aberdovey centre. Most prominently, The Ynylas National Nature Reserve is located just across the estuary and easily accessible by speedboat (which the centre owned). This was not only an interesting physical location to explore, it was also used to teach participants about methods of conservation, and the process of dune development. The village of Aberdovey has war-time connections, and these were drawn upon on two separate occasions: first in paying respects to the village war memorial; and second, recounting the story of the World War II bomber who flew his plane under the Barmouth viaduct to announce his homecoming.

Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue that the way in which place is 'denied' through outdoor education silences local communities, histories, and ecologies from educational experiences. However, in this research project, places were frequently utilised for their socio-cultural value, beyond the examples above. Local histories were drawn upon to generate environmental interest and knowledge. For example, during the fieldwork I visited the National Slate Museum at Llanberis and adjacent quarry, where the group were encouraged to find a piece of slate to take home. One group instructor explained the remnants of copper mines that we passed during an expedition walk, and another told us (during our walk through a forestry) how dynamite was historically hidden in felled logs to stop them being stolen. Perhaps most importantly, these were often the details that young people could recall when recounting their trips. Local histories were not only embedded in OBT courses, but they also acted to embed particular places in young people's memories (further discussed in Chapter 6). Although these are social, historical and cultural aspects of place, as opposed to qualities embedded in the natural environment, they created vital moments of fleeting interaction between young people and these particular places.

The Ogwen Cottage centre was also a site imbued with significant cultural history (see Chapter 2). In addition, despite being situated on a relative major through road, its setting on the edge of Llyn Ogwen and nestled in the Glydereau mountain range – with no other buildings in view – gave a strong sense of being immersed in the natural environment (Figure 4.3). Indeed, Mark and Jordan's comments above, regarding the relative remoteness of Ogwen versus Aberdovey, are indicative of the contrast in these sites. However, the difficulty at Ogwen Cottage was that much of this landscape was inaccessible to participants due to its challenging nature.

Figure 4. 3   Views over Llyn Ogwen (left) and mountains behind Ogwen Cottage (right) (authors own photographs)

The centre at Loch Eil was considered to have a similarly impressive location, with all the instructors based there holding its proximity to some genuinely exciting climbing, mountaineering and sea-kayaking venues in high regard. The centre location was valued predominantly as a consequence of the Scottish Open Access code, as Mia explained:

"So, in Scotland we have the right to roam wherever we want, on any wild land. Whether it belongs to the Queen or whoever. As long as we treat it with respect, don't leave litter, are aware of what's happening with the deer stalking and farmers and stuff. So it's a law that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world. And it means that we can go wherever and do whatever we want pretty much. Which is really exciting." (Mia, female, Instructor, 35-35)

Staff enjoyed the freedom and flexibility that the open access code provided. However, the surrounding landscape was seen as a limiting factor, as previously mentioned. Although the location of the centre at Loch Eil was visually striking, on the shores of the Loch, shrouded in dense woodland and relatively remote, the surrounding landscape lacked options to up- and downscale adventures according to the needs of the participants. It was acknowledged that the centre was better suited to older, more physically capable groups and that it didn't really cater for primary school aged children. It was deemed to be at the upper end of the OBT scale, whereby clients began at Aberdovey, where the climate was milder, progressed to a more mountainous environment at Ullswater, and finally graduated to Loch Eil, where *"they really are in the mountains, and some bigger scale expeditions and journey and challenge"* (John, male, Head of Centre, 55-65).

The two centres in the northern Lake District – Ullswater and Howtown – are in close proximity to each other but are fundamentally very different centres which offer different OBT experiences. Most obviously, Ullswater has just benefited from a substantial financial investment in the form of a new stores area and the building of 'learning pods' in the grounds. This is in contrast to Howtown which is a less expansive site and operates on a much smaller scale. These differential onsite constructions of space will be addressed in section 4.3.1. Here, I draw attention to the advantages of Howtown in that:

> *"It's easier to just walk out and get somewhere. Whereas at Ullswater, you can canoe out across the lake but you can't really walk anywhere direct from site. Whereas here [Howtown] it's just so easy to get out up a fell on a really quick an easy adventure just to get them going. Smaller and more accessible. […] I just think you are a bit more surrounded by things – a bit more immersed in it. You don't necessarily have to get bus to go somewhere. It's easier just to throw a rucksack on and go and do something. Less faff!"* (Paul, male, Instructor, 25-35)

As was the case at Aberdovey, having to rely on minibuses was seen to be problematic at Ullswater. The ability to walk straight out of the centre was highly valued; it encouraged greater feelings of immersion in the natural environment, and it was more efficient, more flexible and afforded the staff greater agency to shape their courses. There were lots of really accessible places you could walk to for scrambling, climbing, orienteering and camping. Paul commented that "*you are restricted in terms of time – you're essentially running on a working week*", so the ability to be self-sufficient and leave the centre when you wanted to was a bonus.

In contrast to Loch Eil, Howtown was seen as a more appropriate centre for younger participants, due to the greater variety in the surrounding landscape. It provided access to a range of mountains, in terms of height and topography, a large body of sheltered flat water, and numerous other landscape features such as ghylls and crags as *"other things to link around […] so that we can link in and do different things"* (Paul, male, Instructor, 25-35). As Paul suggests, a landscape which provides and array of options, without being too extreme is important element of centre locations:

> *"3D land is really important, rather than flat land. It just gives you options doesn't it? It's all different textures – rocky paths, easy paths, steep things. I think for some many people that come here there is a big kind of shock factor in that things aren't flat, things aren't smooth and easy to walk on, things are quite tricky. […] I don't think mountains*

have to be particularly important, not really big ones. I think summits can be really
good, viewpoints. But it doesn't have to be a 900-metre mountain."

Paul makes reference to the *accessibility* of environments here too. It was important that young were able to be successful, for example in reaching a summit. In this regard, Paul continued, describing how *"it has to be somewhere not too windy or too cold, otherwise actually people don't have a good time".* There was clearly an understanding that exposure to 'wild' and natural places was good, but this these places had to be within the young people's capabilities.

Having access to a variety of environments in relatively close proximity was not only valued for allowing staff to pitch courses at the appropriate level of challenge for their groups. Accessing a range of physical environments and being able to travel through them in different modes, was also vital for creating a sense of *journey*. The notion of 'journeying' is one of OBT's key concepts (OBT 2015), and instructors sought to create that feeling for young people:

"You know they're not just going on a climbing session, they're going to climb through a mountainous, something… crag, whatever, into a journey – and they then might go on to expedition and spend a night under the stars, or you know, seeing the sunset […] and then travelling out again the next day. So erm, they might paddle across a lake, down a river, onto a camp, whatever. And to be able to link those things together I think is quite different for the outdoors. But it provides that journey experience that's really easy to translate into people's lives." (Drew, male, Operations Manager, 45-55)

Here, the OBT connects the OBT journey to the 'journey of life', again hinting at transitions to adulthood and equating youth with futurity (Mills & Waite 2017). In this vein, the focus on constructing a physical journey was pivotal in creating a sense of progress throughout the week; as a means of demonstrating the distance that groups had physically travelled and creating sense of achievement. Young people were encouraged to take responsibility through making decisions regarding their journey, such as map reading or choosing a sensible site to camp. This sought to foster a sense of agency among participants and add to feelings of success. This construction of a journey is clear premised on a particular vision of young people on a linear trajectory, acting as a metaphor for life.

Attending to the role of *place* in this journey, we can see that not only are OBT practices located in multiple sites, but emphasis is placed on *the transition between*, and physical movement *through* spaces. Kraftl (2013a) argues that the spatialities of learning are *lively*; places of education become animated through bodily movement, creating a dynamic quality of space.

The emphasis in OBT courses on *movement* – of bodies paddling/walking/climbing, of young people navigating from one environment to the next, of constant physical progression along a pre-determined route – adds a haptic, corporeal dimension to the spatialities of outdoor education which is impossible to ignore. The importance of places in the OBT, seen through the context of their centre locations, is their ability to demand a range of interactions and engagements from young people. In this way, the OBT demonstrates what I have termed 'centre geographies' – locating itself in sites which both attract, inspire and contrast, as well as in places which physically challenge individuals, encouraging them to engage in new and embodied ways. It is clear from the data set that the local geographies of the centres needed to map on to the pedagogical aspirations of the planned learning. In the forthcoming section, I explore this idea further, considering how both indoor and outdoor spaces are purposefully constructed to achieve an outdoor learning experience.

4.3. Spatialities and constructions of (nature) space

Section 4.2 explored the types of environments the OBT operates from, characterised by simplicity, remoteness, naturalness, and self-sufficiency (Wattchow 2001b). However, the fieldwork demonstrated that the spaces used within the OBT varied vastly and, in reality, drew upon flexible understandings of nature and wilderness – making use of purpose-built venues, privatised and privileged settings, and cultural sites with socio-historical value (as suggested in section 4.2.3). These places are inscribed with meaning, and engagements with them are influenced by the characteristics of place and the medium of engagement (Stewart 2003). The nuanced and diverse encounters with spaces imbued with inspirational, wilderness and natural qualities – both inherent and fabricated through the ideals of nature – must be taken into account when comprehending outdoor education experiences. Notions of nature in outdoor education are often constructed as part of a demand for 'authentic adventure' (Humberstone *et al.* 2003). The 'natural environment' of the OBT encompassed multiple materialities and technologies subsumed under this ideal (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004). Given this, this section explores the types of places which become incorporated into nature discourses within the OBT, considering how particular (material) places are constructed to create feelings of wilderness and immersion in nature. For as Stewart (2003) asserts, we need to more fully comprehend the value of particular places to the practice of outdoor education, which necessarily demands an understanding of the entirety of places that the OBT operates through, not merely the fells, crags and lakes.

4.3.1. Historic buildings versus purpose-built centres

As sections 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 highlighted, the iconic locations, histories and impressive visual impact of the old buildings that the OBT operates from had value. These sites were attractive for staff and were seen to be influential in providing contrast value for young people. However, the use of old buildings was also a source of frustration for some instructors. They were often discussed as unsuitable, with narrow corridors and systems that easily created bottlenecks when centres were busy, limited storage space for every expanding equipment collections, and with social and physical spaces that created unfavourable learning environments. As Suzie (female, Instructor, 25-35) commented at Eskdale,

> *"I would get rid of this gardens block. I think it's really not a very social kind of structure. The review rooms are awful I hate working in those. It's really unhelpful with the glass fronts. Especially as the people working in those review rooms might be housed other places, so their friends possibly walk pass and that kind of thing. And they're hot, they're stuffy, nothing sticks to the walls. And I know we don't really want to spend that much time in our review rooms but when we do I think they need to be more comfortable. I think we need to be able to sit on the floor, they need to be less formal, a bit more friendly to our younger people."*

There were clear contradictions in the appeal of old buildings. They were desirable for their strong juxtaposition to young people's everyday lives, but they created obvious problems in trying to accommodate larger numbers of participants and carry out outdoor education programmes which were effective. Many of the sites had recently been, or were in the process of being, upgraded, with new stores, on-site activities and dining halls, to create places which are more user friendly. The rationale for these on-site changes were two-fold. Firstly, new equipment stores with a purposeful design would help the centres to function more efficiently. Geoff (male, Senior Instructor, 35-45) deplored the current system at Loch Eil:

> *"We've got ancient systems, we've got ancient buildings, […] it just doesn't work. So if we improved the infrastructure that would mean instructors time was sped up, which would mean that participant to instructor time […] Because we don't want to be handing out waterproofs, we want to be taking people out, but we need to give them waterproofs to be out. So as efficient as that can be it means the more time we can be out."*

Secondly, having good quality on-site activities and purpose-built venues was seen as an opportunity for young people to get more from their OBT course. For example, the cabins in the woods at Aberdovey were a real asset in terms of enabling participant's experiences of 'camping' in the forest, without the challenge of inclement weather and carrying heavy tents. The activities around the grounds, such as the trapeze and Jacobs ladder[13] were viewed as an important aspect of the work that OBT instructors did – as a *"supporting element"* to full day 'adventures'. They were seen as beneficial in terms of doing something purposeful when time was short, or getting participants ready for more challenging environments outside the centre:

> *"If you haven't got the time – maybe you've got an expedition coming up where you want to leave around lunch-time – that probably doesn't give you enough time to visit the glen and the climbing venues we have there, so maybe going to Jacobs ladder or the crate stack, that's going to fill the time appropriately. […] And sometimes it can be – it's like stepping stones. So you might have a group who are quite concerned about the idea of going climbing on a mountain in a wild place, so you can kind of build them up to it."* (Bevan, male, Instructor, 25-35)

As Bevan suggests, conducting OBT courses required more than the purely natural environment, and spaces were purposefully constructed to this end. The purposeful construction of space can clearly be seen at the Ullswater centre, where a recently completed £3 million redevelopment project (OBT 2018b) was centred on the OBT's pedagogical aims. The centre had been redesigned with an open plan stores area incorporating easily accessible group kit cages, which groups moved through into 'learning pods' (Figure 4.4) – individual review rooms situated in the woodland behind the main centre building. The renovation was specifically designed with the idea of 'flow' in mind, as Oliver (male, Senior Instructor/Operations Coordinator, 35-45) explained,

> *"It flows a lot easier, in terms of employability – to allow kids to learn where to put stuff and take stuff back. It's easier as an instructor to take the groups through, rather than having to depend on a storeman to get stuff for you and take it back. And it flows nicely to a nice heated review room. And you know it's yours, and it's out there in the trees, in the environment."*

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[13] Jacobs Ladder is a popular team-building activity, whereby the groups objective is to climb to the top of a suspended ladder of logs.

The redevelopment was seen to help encourage independence and responsibility as young people could navigate the new stores system by themselves without hands-on supervision from a member of staff. In the way centres are being designed to stimulate certain responses and effects, we can see parallels with Kraftl's (2013a) use of spatialities in alternative education. There are both spatial and social processes at work within the built environments of the OBT, which are productive of one another (Kraftl 2013a) and here act to produce specific 'centre geographies'. It is evident that the intended social outcomes for young people are being considered through these purposeful geographies. Furthermore, the physical spaces of the centres leant themselves to creating particular identities. This was the case with Howtown, where the surrounding landscape was seen by instructors as being more appropriate for younger participants (see section 4.2.3). The smaller site, with an enclosed courtyard, meant that the centre was perceived as less intimidating and more inviting. This was in contrast to Ullswater, where the open-plan design, with a focus on independence and a visually modern and polished appearance was deemed to be more 'professional'.

Figure 4. 4   The learning pods at the Ullswater centre, strategically nestled amongst the trees (authors own photograph)

In addition to these centre geographies, the built structures within the grounds of the centres were designed to mimic the natural environment whilst facilitating the learning process. As Oliver (quoted above) suggests, and Figure 4.4 evidences, designated spaces of learning and reflection were purposefully created to engender feelings of immersion and connection with nature and the outdoors – *"out there in the trees, in the environment"*. Creating 'natural' spaces where young people could sit and reflect was seen to provide continuity between physical journeys in the outdoors and the transfer of learning for young people, as Gemma explains:

> *"I think the learning pods are fantastic [...] because you've got that little space in the woods. A little forest review space which they tend to see less as a classroom. And because it flows with the day – you get ready, you go in to your space, you chat about – but you're in a wee forest shed – you're now chatting about what's to come. And as you come back over the hill you come back into that space, and you chat about how the days gone, and it flows really well."* (Gemma, female, Senior Instructor, 25-35)

Here Gemma clearly frames a distinction between formal and informal education spaces. The learning pods demonstrate the physical designation and structuring of space for learning, and therefore do not correlate with Cartwright's (2012) observation that informal education takes place in the everyday spaces of young people. However, they are clearly seeking to be perceived as unstructured, as a *"little space in the woods"*. These spaces of review and reflection also included fire pits and log-seating areas, where natural materials were re-fashioned to become 'user friendly'. There were numerous examples at the Ullswater site where the grounds of the centre had been adapted to maintain a feeling of being immersed in, and connected to the natural environment, whilst making these interactions with the outdoors more accessible and comfortable, through the laying of paths, fences and seating areas (Figure 4.5). As Gemma also suggests above, creating group spaces which were more informal and embedded in the natural environment was an effort to make review sessions feel less like a lesson in a classroom. She went on to comment that across the lake at Howtown,

> *"it's a bit more classroom-y, and sometimes the young people get a sense that it's like classroom time. And that can have negative connotations for some young people. Not for all, but it's less – the reviewing is more 'come inside' and do that, whereas over there [Ullswater] it's kind of in the forest, a bit more linked up maybe."*

Figure 4. 5   Modifications to the natural environment in the Ullswater grounds
                (authors own photographs)

Through these nature-inspired spaces, there was an effort to main the physical 'flow' of the course, and, negating the fact that the idea of going on a journey was a choreographed process in itself (Chapter 6), facilitate the feeling of learning as natural and organic. Perhaps crucially, the opinions of the young people reflected the ways in which they experienced these types of spaces differently. For example, Amelia (female, rural, year 9) discussed her group review session that took place in the camping barn in comparison to sessions they had done in their review room at the centre:

> *"[In the barn] that was kind of like a bit different to what we were doing in the classroom, it was like how we thought who done well and our opinions on things. When we were in the classroom we were talking about our actual thinking and what we done, and talking about the person and stuff. It was a bit different. It was better in the barn."*

The reality is that the occasions Amelia is referring to could have taken place in either space, and indeed similar sessions were conducted in both classrooms and more natural spaces. However, Amelia clearly perceived her activities in the barn as more enjoyable. The barn is just one of a multitude of artificial spaces that the OBT drew upon in their creation of an authentic experience in nature. To understand this commodification and construction of particular places, it is helpful to consider how nature is employed as part of the *servicescape* in outdoor education (Fredman *et al.* 2012). During outdoor education programmes, the natural environment is consumed as part of the learning experience, and therefore physical and ambient factors are foregrounded. Natural and manmade conditions coexist, but environmental and climatic aspects

have a greater impact on these experiences. Activities are packaged in terms of adventure, journeying, and escape, and nature is produced to serve these (educational) purposes (Ibid.).

There is a certain irony in the purposeful design of centres. The OBT aims to create a feeling of immersion and connection to nature, and the value of outdoor education is seen to be in these unmediated experiences of outdoor spaces. However, these are often distinctly managed and artificial spaces. To conceive of nature as a *servicescape* is indicative of the professionalisation of educational experiences and their perceived value for money. As already remarked upon in this chapter, the OBT must grapple with the hopes and expectations of young people (Dickson 2004), balancing encounters with the natural world whilst providing an enjoyable and suitable experience for participants.

Technologies and materialities are used throughout OBT courses to make the outdoors more accessible, more enjoyable, and ironically, further participants' sense of immersion in outdoor environments. This use of technology and material objects in structuring, facilitating and mediating the 'authentic' outdoor experience has been discussed widely in outdoor education literature (for examples see Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004; Dickson 2004; Wattchow 2001b). Experiences of place are realized through a range of sensual interactions (Askins 2009), but these are strongly mediated by technology and materiality (Wattchow 2001b), and Dickson (2004) asks the question, when does this 'interference' become too much? Equipment acts as an intermediary in the outdoor experience (Michael 2001) and this can be seen as detracting from the *authentic nature* sought in outdoor education narratives (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004). Cuthbertson *et al.* (2004) argue that technologies have been taken up uncritically and that we need to be aware of this commodification of experience; does it subtract from the goals of outdoor education (Dickson 2004)?

Instructors in this study displayed a subjective approach to wilderness and adventure – it was dependent on a young person's starting point as to what they perceived to be a really wild and natural environment. Eva's (female, year 7, urban) appreciation of Ogwen Cottage and its surroundings supports this idea:

> *"It was very different to what we normally see outside our window. And I know this sounds weird, but in the morning I kind of felt like it was a dream in a way, because the views were amazing, and it's nothing like I've ever seen before."*

The opinions of the instructors and young people support Becker's (2003) notion of a 'sliding-scale' in the perception of authenticity. Becker comments on the prevalence of 'stage-managed'

adventure, and contributing artificial constructions of nature, but concedes that this is not always what counts. For young people, the artificial features of much of their OBT programmes did not detract from a recognition of their experiences as authentic. This distinction is an important one. We can argue that spaces of outdoor education are highly commodified and paradoxical with the aims of programmes, but if these programmes are developed for young people who perceive their environments to be real and natural, then surely this not as critical as some of the literature suggests. Places in the OBT are highly structured and purposefully designed to encourage feelings of immersion through the 'Outward Bound experience' (Chapter 6). The words of the young people in the study suggest this is often the case, exemplified here by Jade (female, year 9, rural) in comparing her OBT course with a previous experience of an outdoor residential:

> *"[previous outdoor residential] wasn't as full on. We didn't… we had climbing but that was on climbing walls and high ropes, but it wasn't the proper outdoors, it was all man-made."*

As Jade observes, the places of the OBT are designed to be perceived as *'the proper outdoors'*. Through the use of technology – for example, in relation to Jade's comment, permanent climbing bolts to facilitate easy access to rock faces – the OBT aims to construct settings which allow young people to get more from their experiences and mediate against extremes in the natural environment. Their programmes are designed to enable young people to interact with nature in ways that are safe, logistically practical, and encourage positive experiences.

4.3.2. *Privileged nature experiences*

The purposeful design of centres discussed in the previous section is indicative of an experience of nature which is not only commodified, but also highly *privileged*. The fieldwork demonstrated how young people experienced the landscapes surrounding the centres in a very particular way through the OBT. In addition to the privatised spaces of the centres, which provided access to woodlands, wharfs and, in the case of Eskdale, an onsite tarn, OBT groups were permitted to walk across or 'wild' camp on private land beyond the centre sites. As noted, the Aberdovey centre owned five wooden cabins (Figure 4.6) in the hills surrounding the centre to allow expeditions to take place throughout the winter. On both fieldwork trips to Ogwen Cottage, groups 'camped' overnight in a farmer's barn which was used as a holiday let and rented out to the OBT at a reduced rate.

Figure 4. 6   One of the five wooden huts owned by OBT used for overnight camping (authors own photograph)

Through this overview of some of the places that participants experienced through their OBT courses, it is clear how outdoor education experiences can be privileged, managed, and manufactured in quite subtle ways (Wattchow & Brown 2011). This occurred through traditional nature conservation methods such as the dictation of walking routes by footpaths and bridges (Ibid.), and also through access to these privatised spaces. For example, at Loch Eil, the centre owned a slip way down to the Loch and adjacent warehouse to store their canoes, which was situated directly across the road from the centre (Figure 4.7). Young people's experience of canoeing therefore usually followed this routine: walk approximately 100 metres from the centre building to the stores shed to put on wetsuits and buoyance aids, walk a further 100 metres from the stores, across the road to the Loch, then unload canoes and carry them down the slipway to the water's edge. This could all be achieved without the need for a minibus, and without encountering another person. This construction of space is, as with purposeful design of centres, a means of making nature more accessible for young people and affording more from the experience. However, this intimate and privately-owned setting draws attention to the 'politics of access' inherent in experiences of nature (Beard 2003). Through OBT-owned sites, and via special relationships with land owners and organisations such as the National Trust, participants came to know and experience particular natures they would otherwise not have had access to.

Figure 4. 7   The wharf at Loch Eil with the private property sign and warehouse (top) and
the slipway (bottom) (authors own photographs)

Similarly, the aforementioned use of huts and barns for overnight camping was a way to
engender a more authentic outdoor experience, and instructors saw this as adding to their strong
reputation as a leading outdoor education provider:

> *"I think there are more organisations out there now that are doing a lot of what we do.
> I think one of our unique selling points is our overnight camping. It doesn't happen
> very often and if it does it's in a campsite – but more often than not they do day walks.
> Also, not very many other providers will do what we do, which is go out all day and do
> linked journeys. I think our linked journeys, our camping, and the extent that we go into
> reviewing activities and focusing very much on specific learning outcomes."* (Len,
> male, Operations Manager, 55-65)

The OBT saw the spaces that they operated from as bringing young people closer to wilderness and real experiences of nature. However, throughout the fieldwork, the pressure on particular places, that allowed this type of engagement with nature (Russell 1999) was evident. Russell argues that a nature paradigm which highlights nature as something we must 'return to' emphasises the human-nature separation and becomes a burden on more accessible spaces. During a climbing trip with Mountain Ridge High to a site known as 'Lion Rock', I was surprised to find a number of other climbing groups (not linked to OBT) already there. We had to negotiate our route up the rock face, claiming our piece of wall and coordinating with other groups to avoid getting in each other's way. Likewise, when canoeing on the estuary with Woodland Academy, we ended up muddled and interacting with three other groups from the school whilst on our way back to the Wharf. During Mountain Ridge High's OBT week, two groups had to camp in the barn on the same night, as the weather restricted their options. One member of school staff commented on the challenges of trying to review the day with another group present. The barn was transformed from the secretive, immersive camping spot where my group had shared an intimate evening the night before, to a noisy, distracting space where reflective moments were difficult to engender. These examples accentuate the problematic saturation of more accessible nature spaces, which speaks to Becker's (2003) 'topography of authenticity' – the way in which once 'nature' has been touched it loses its reality and genuine status. The sites that the OBT used had been chosen for their natural and environmental qualities, such as climbing on a real rock face, paddling on the estuary, and camping in a remote location. However, the busy-ness and human influence often detracted from encounters with these 'natural' spaces.

The OBT combatted this saturation through the use of privatised and regulated spaces. Natural spaces of reflection in particular were essential to constructing an immersive nature experience, as Gemma's discussion of the learning pods suggested (section 4.3.1). The spaces of review and reflection such as learning pods, fire-pits, yurts and barns, aimed to provide a continuation and connection to young people's physical journeys, offering moments to reconnect with the intense corporeal experiences of their OBT courses. These private and privileged spaces still invited interpretations of nature through the senses, and Beard (2003) suggests that the body and senses, along with strong and immediate emotions, are key sources of experience. Smells, sounds, weather and tacit knowledges were not completely filtered out in these privileged settings, but were mediated and made more tolerable.

4.4. Conclusion

This chapter has examined the *places* through which OBT practices are grounded and performed. Outdoor education is characterised by the development of relationships with self, others and the natural environment, and for the OBT *place* is a core component of their courses. Chapter 4 has highlighted how these pedagogical sites are variegated, constructed and utilised through what I have termed particular 'centre geographies', which developed in four primary ways, summarised below. This is a key contribution, given that an understanding of the spatialities of outdoor education spaces is necessary in order to fully explore young people's experiences of and within them.

Firstly, I have discussed the importance of centres being located in areas of perceived wilderness and inspiration. This was essential for aligning with the personal values of staff and their universal enjoyment of nature. Individual centres also played a key role in instructors' sense of self and feelings of belonging. Secondly, I have demonstrated that feelings of place-based familiarity for staff were in direct contrast to the juxtaposition that the OBT aimed to create in relation to young people's everyday life, through their centre locations. This contrast was achieved through visual impact, in both the centre buildings and the unfamiliar rugged landscape in which they sit. Furthermore, through a temporal shift in the length of time and therefore physical distance travelled to the centres, and the 'slowness' of that environment. Third, I have highlighted how having access to varied landscapes sought to provide a range of experiences to appeal to all young people, as well as opportunities to up/down scale the level of challenge. The surrounding environment was crucial in creating and maintaining a sense of physical journey; a pivotal element in generating feelings of progress and achievement across the week, as well as translating this into social outcomes for young people. Finally, I argued that centres were clearly purposefully designed to create a sense of immersion in nature, to facilitate perceptions of 'journeying', and to engender particular learning outcomes such as independence. Spaces of learning within the OBT often involved the mimicry, commodification or 'taming' of nature, as well as the use of indoor spaces and cultural-historical sites, to facilitate learning and feelings of authentic engagement with the natural world.

Through an exploration of *place* in the OBT, it is clear through this chapter that participants experienced the outdoors in a very particular and privileged way. The use of privately-own land and purpose-built settings such as the wooden cabins provided potentially more intimate encounters with the outdoors than would otherwise have been afforded to these young people.

Moreover, the use of spaces of reflection as a means of continuing and connecting to physical journeys was a way to evoke intense emotions and bring more authenticity to some of these managed experiences with nature. I have also briefly alluded to young people's interpretations of outdoor education settings, and the role of bodily encounters in OBT experiences, and these will be the fully discussed later in the thesis.

Overall, this chapter has explored the types of outdoor environments desired for outdoor educational purposes, and some of the flexible and somewhat paradoxical characteristics of these nature-based settings. It has shown that the locations of OBT centres and the construction of onsite environments is purposeful – the OBT seeks landscapes with particular qualities to enable practices of learning to take place. Particularities of place emerge through geographical locations in combination with psychological processes, activities and histories, and these factors coalesce through specific 'centre geographies'. The next chapter now examines how the key concepts of the Trust are embodied in its staff, and how this contributes to an outdoor learning experience.

CHAPTER FIVE

Individuals make organisations: instructor identities and mobilities

5.1. Introduction

The presence of an instructor is a standard element of outdoor education, and the positive and critical influence of outdoor instructors on course outcomes has been widely cited (McKenzie 2003). The potential of instructors to act as role models and facilitators, and their capacity to build meaningful relationships with participants and create safe environments for learning have been identified. However, in-depth empirical investigations into how and in which ways these capacities are understood and carried out by instructors are lacking. As Allin and Humberstone (2006) suggest, there has been little research into the perspectives of staff who provide these outdoor experiences. Critically, Kraftl (2013b: 436-7, original emphasis) suggests that a key challenge for geographers is to articulate "how *alternative* education practices operate in the production of social spaces". This necessarily entails exploring the social geographies of outdoor education organisations through a consideration of their *people*. In addition, a focus on outdoor instructors as a "cultural phenomenon" (Barnes 2003: 241) who may be profoundly impacted on by extended immersion in outdoor learning environments has been limited (see Barnes 1999 for an exception). Given this, this chapter explores how and why individuals come to work for the OBT, and how they understand and articulate their role in the outdoor education experience.

Although this chapter, and the study more broadly focuses on *outdoor education instructors*, it is understood that as a social group, instructors may also identify as members of the outdoor community or outdoor industry, and participate in 'lifestyle sports' (Wheaton 2010). Clearly, these distinctions are overlapping, and often one is seen as synonymous with the other. Wheaton (2010: 1057) describes lifestyle sports as "an alternative…to traditional ways of 'seeing', 'doing', and understanding sport". They are sports in which participants describe their activities as *lifestyles*, and frequently include nature sports (Krein 2014) in which an aspect of the physical environment is essential, such as climbing, mountaineering and surfing. They are characteristically divergent from traditional Western 'achievement' sporting cultures, with particular social identities including embodied styles, dispositions, expressions and attitudes (Wheaton 2010). These lifestyle sports have subcultural affiliations which are transnational,

underpinned by an emphasis on participation, with meaning found in their "creative and self-actualization potential" (Ibid.: 1059). There are clear overlaps here with Barnes' (1999) conceptualisation of 'outdoor communities', who experience outdoor education as a vocation or lifestyle, and are driven by personal challenge and growth. Furthermore, outdoor education necessarily entails engagement with particular lifestyle sports as a method of teaching and learning, and many outdoor instructors take part in these activities to some degree outside of their employment. Given this, the ideals of lifestyle sporting communities are taken as parallel with the culture of outdoor education, sharing a similar values paradigm (Barnes 1999), and respondents in this study identified with both.

As Barnes' (1999) study of staff motivations in the outdoor education industry illuminates, the physical and social environment of the industry has both a powerful effect on, and is a product of, outdoor instructors' cultural and social identities. This impact permeates approaches to work, professionalism and lifestyle, as well as relationships with broader society (Barnes 2003; Atkinson 2010). It opens up the potential for an inquiry into "how outdoor staff…relate to each other and to the environment they work in" (Barnes 2003: 242) as a question in and of itself, and in its implications for understanding the social processes which underpin outdoor learning. This chapter builds on the work of Barnes, as well as drawing on geographical literature regarding embodiment, talent, capital and migration, to understand the dispositions, lifestyles, teaching practices, and career mobilities of OBT Instructors. I utilise observations of the values-based paradigm which pervades the outdoor industry, and its inherent 'culture of mobility' (Barnes 1999; 2003) to create a coherent picture of staff transitions through the outdoor industry.

This chapter focuses predominantly on the second research question, through exploring how outdoor practitioners conduct and understand themselves in outdoor spaces and spaces of outdoor education, both personally and professionally. Outdoor education encompasses the process of performing, representing and creating stories around the interactions between people and place (Stewart 2008). Therefore, outdoor instructors, along with other adults present in these contexts, play a key role in performing the spatialities of outdoor education. If we understand discourses of outdoor education to be socially, culturally, historically and geographically contingent (Brookes 2002), nature and the outdoors are not experienced in a vacuum but are influenced by a range of factors. Exploring the ways that outdoor practitioners understand these spaces provides a context through which to consider how participants are introduced to particular 'stories' of the land (Stewart 2008).

The remainder of this chapter is divided into 4 sections. Drawing on biographical interviews with OBT instructors, each section provides space for instructors to narrate what they deem to be crucial aspects of their lives and work. Section 5.2 discusses OBT staff perceptions of the organisation, and how this aligns with their understandings of themselves as outdoor practitioners. Section 5.3 considers how OBT staff value both the social and physical aspects of working in outdoor education, and how their (work) identities are inextricably bound up in their encounters with natural environments and specific physical sites. This section also introduces 'cultures of mobility', and critically investigates how staff embody the values of the OBT through their actions and teaching practices. Section 5.4 considers how a 'culture of mobility' has to be navigated through a career in outdoor education, and the differential mobilities which arise through this. Finally, section 5.5 provides some brief conclusions.

5.2. Organisational culture

As Chapter 4 argued, the physical sites and locations of the centres are central to the imaginative and experienced geographies of OBT courses. In addition, staff upheld the internal culture of the organisation as pivotal in its success and as an attractive prospect for long-term employment. The hitherto limited focus on the geography of alternative educational praxis (Kraftl 2013a) brings into sharp focus a neglect of these social spaces and processes particular to organisations in the outdoor education industry. To understand how outdoor learning spaces function, it is pertinent to fully explore the social geographies of the organisations and individuals which operate within them. This section seeks to address this gap by exploring what employees valued in the OBT, how they understood themselves within the organisation, and how this influenced their work.

5.2.1. Creativity, freedom and trust

Levels of 'trust' were a commonly cited benefit for individuals working in the OBT. Staff highly valued the expectation on them to take ownership over their work and make use of the technical skills and qualifications that they held. This was set in contrast to other outdoor centres, where interviewees expressed that there was a rigid schedule which ran through the same activities on a weekly cycle. This meant that although they were often financially supported to gain further professional qualifications at these centres, they rarely had the opportunity to put them into practice. As Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) commented:

"I felt really constricted where I was before [...] – occasionally you'd get to take other people out, and that was like training other staff members, but here, you're expected to use your professional experience to design and deliver an appropriate course for the individuals that you get. And you're trusted to do that, and that's really important to me, if I was told that I couldn't do something – they said 'no you're not allowed to do that' that would really offend me! Because it's like what is point of me having these qualifications if you're going to override that?" (Tim, male, Instructor, 25-35)

As a consequence of this high trust culture, staff perceived there to be a strong degree of autonomy in their day-to-day practices. Within the scope of the young people's ability, the logistics of the centre (for example minibus availability) and the intended outcomes of the course (Chapter 2), instructors could choose where they took their group and what they did with them. Staff cited this as providing important opportunities for young people's experiences to be tailored to their needs, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach. As John (male, Head of Centre, 55-65) recalled, *"I loved our expeditions. I really loved the sense of 'right, I'm leaving the centre here, I can be in complete control of what I do and where I go'"*. This freedom and autonomy also maintained motivation and enthusiasm amongst staff. John continued:

"As a young instructor I had a map of the Lake District [...] and I had lines on that map of all the expedition routes that I had done. And every time I went on a journey I'd try to find somewhere new that I hadn't been. Not for the whole duration, but it might be a new campsite or a section of the journey, and that was a real motivation for me. And after 10 years working in the same area it was quite challenging, but it was fun to do! So I really did love being out there, with young people on expedition."

John articulates the sense of agency that instructors gained through their ability to 'chose their own route'. This agency came both conceptually in designing a learning programme, and physically in navigating the landscape. Further to cultivating an autonomous and independent working environment, staff were actively encouraged to try new things and take (considered) risks in their working practices. These were understood not as big physical risks but as aiming to 'do something better' which might involve challenging the status quo. Exploring and using new physical sites for activities, developing different learning metaphors that resonated with their group, or using creative techniques for reviewing learning sessions were all encouraged and shared. As Barnes (1999; 2003) observes, outdoor instructors are often characterised by highly individualistic motivations and driven by self-realisation, challenge, and independent

trajectories (these will be explored in section 5.2.2). The opportunities to inject elements of agency and risk into their working practices fits well with this aspect of the instructors' identities.

This autonomy, and the encouragement to take risks and try something new, also translated into opportunities to express individual creativity, as Gemma (female, Senior Instructor, 25-35) expressed:

> *"[working at OBT] had a huge impact on me and my personal development. [...] Having the opportunity to do that [leading expeditions] myself and be creative and find my own ways of helping people [...] the amount of ownership we have over that process. [...] The autonomy and creativity we can put into programmes. So you can really bring it to life. It's not prescriptive, you have a starting point [...] but as an instructor you have scope to design a programme, and I love the creativity that comes with that."*

Gemma clearly felt empowered through being able to take charge of her work. It had enabled her to individualise the process and embed her self-identified creativity in her work as an outdoor instructor. Throughout the fieldwork, staff were observed injecting creativity into their work in numerous ways: by turning mundane jobs such as packing expedition bags into games or challenges, creating feedback tasks which utilised home-made picture cards to help young people articulate their emotions, and using folklore and stories to bring particular places to life. Clearly, and as will be further elucidated throughout the chapter, there is a two-way process at work here. Staff are attracted by the prospect of being able to work independently and stamp their own characteristics of independence and creativity on teaching practices. At the same time, the cultural ethos of the OBT cultivates an autonomous working environment where staff are not micromanaged but encouraged to take ownership and utilise their skills.

5.2.2. *Developmental experiences*

Despite a feeling of empowerment and ownership over instructors' working practices, views on professional opportunities within the OBT were mixed. For some, there was an acknowledgement that managerial positions and more senior roles were limited and did not become vacant very often:

"It's funny, there isn't really that many places to go within Outward Bound if you want to stay here. It's kind of like, you can move up the pay scale but you have to stay with being an instructor because there isn't really any other roles." (Mia, female, Instructor, 25-35)

However, others, such as Josh (male, Senior Instructor, 25-35) saw opportunities 'on the horizon':

"Because it's such a big organisation I have the opportunity to develop or move within the Trust. So there's always job opportunities within the other centres, there are prospects of new and bigger things coming on the horizon. Possibly new centres. There are possibilities to advance as well, so I'm not just stuck as an instructor."

Mia suggested that to stay with the OBT longer term had the potential to slow and stagnate her own development. Conversely, Josh believed that developmental opportunities were there for the taking, focusing particularly on prospects of mobility (Adler & Adler 1999). These conflicting statements highlight some tensions between outdoor practitioners as independent and motivated by self-development, and the increasing commercialisation and formalisation of the outdoor industry (Barnes 2003). They also draw attention to potentially gendered views on employment aspirations (Johnstone *et al.* 2011; Valentine 2003), and gender is discussed more fully in section 5.4.2.

As the industry has been professionalised, Loynes (1998) argues that the field is in danger of leaving behind its foundational social values and ideals. Central to these values is the idea that working in the outdoors is a vocation and an identifiable lifestyle, which sits outside mainstream society (Barnes 2003; Wheaton 2010) (explored further in section 5.3). The way in which outdoor instructing has evolved to become a career opportunity has evidently had an impact on how outdoor instructors identify with their work. It is now a 'profession' that is stable and financially viable, and more mainstream, but perhaps lacks the essential qualities of spiritual and physical progression.

The perceived limit of opportunities with regard to promotion or progression was mitigated by the variety in the work, which many staff members appreciated. The instructor team operated a flat-hierarchical structure whereby staff were not always instructing, but could be course-directing, acting as the extra instructor in a dual-staff activity, or on back-up duty. This facilitated team bonding, as everyone held the same roles, and no-one was understood to be more 'important' than anybody else. To a degree, the variety of the role seemed to prevent

boredom and burn-out, as the job of being a group instructor for the week was physically and emotionally draining – rotating through different jobs provided rest and change. In addition, as Josh's comment above indicates, there were occasional secondments to other national OBT centres, as well as Outward Bound centres in other countries.

It seemed relatively commonplace for outdoor centres to invest in staff qualifications, and many instructors had mapped out their career paths based on which organisations would fund key outdoor courses. This seemed to contribute to the mobile nature of outdoor instructors and the outdoor industry more generally, as interviewees suggested it was often a case of upskilling and gaining experience, and then moving on to new experiences and new adventures – both personal and professional (see section 5.3.2). The OBT was valued for its financial investment in staff, and the possibilities that gave them to further their outdoor careers. Bevan (male, Instructor, 25-35) described the concept of training credits that staff accrue, which financially contribute to training courses, *"as long as it counts to your development and benefits both yourself and the Trust"*.

Bevan's comment chimes with Bourdieu's notions of 'capital' (Bourdieu 1986). Bourdieu argues that the four key forms of capital – social, economic, cultural (embodied, objective, or institutional), and symbolic – *interact* to define our positions with particular settings, or fields (Ibid.; Painter 2001; Gatrell *et* al. 2004; Holt 2008). The (financial) opportunities for formal training that Bevan and others highlighted clearly held significance as forms of institutionalized cultural capital (Bourdieu 1977). Qualifications (known colloquially among the instructors as 'tickets') held value and were utilised as resources to successfully negotiate the 'field' of outdoor education, as exemplified by instructors moving between different centres to gain tickets and further their career prospects. This clearly identifies how institutional cultural capital is realised as social capital, whereby the qualifications had 'currency' and become a resource for individual instructors to use with the social networks of the OBT. There were also opportunities for this cultural capital to be translated into economic capital through doing freelance work. For example, Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) commented that "*as I've got more qualified and more experienced I've sort of recognised the value in that, delivering NGBs[14] – so I've started doing some of that now*".

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[14] National Governing Bodies (NGBs) are independent, self-appointed organisations responsible for managing a specific sport through the common consent of the sport itself.

The focus on institutionalized forms of cultural capital such as formal qualifications, further exemplifies the marketisation and professionalisation of the job. This formalisation was a source of frustration for some members of staff, most commonly through the necessity to be 'passed out' in order to be deemed competent to conduct activities with participants. As Josh (male, Senior Instructor, 25-35) explained:

> "So, for example for climbing I've got nationally recognised qualification that allows me to go and work on all the cliffs that we operate here. But we have a system of, the L&A [Learning and Adventure] Managers have to come and see us working in that environment and we're not allowed to work in that environment until we've had a pass out or a tick, so someone has just come to say 'yeah, he's ok'. So that doesn't sit well with me, because I've spent 11 years to get to where I am in terms of qualifications that are nationally recognised. So that for me is the hardest thing to get my head around."

Suzie (female, Instructor, 25-35) also raised the point that:

> "[T]here are so many systems and processes within the Trusts to get you endorsed on, say, running things. So I may have run a Jacobs ladder at loads of other centres – but in order to get time to get 'passed out' on things, so it's taken more than 4 months and I'm still not ticked off for everything yet."

The sentiment expressed above is that the bureaucratic nature of OBT processes signifies a perceived lack of trust in its employees' competencies. This is paradoxical to the autonomous and independent environment that the staff value and detracts from the sense of agency expressed by John's comments in section 5.2.1. The need for staff to be 'passed out' also points to the way that "ever-encroaching legislation […] is seen as threatening to the very nature of outdoor education itself" (Barnes 2003: 243). An increase in health and safety regulations and legislature is bringing outdoor instructors (and their practices) under increasing scrutiny.

Alongside the professionalisation and legislation of practices in the industry, more casual processes of training and learning were expressed as a primary benefit of working for the OBT. This is significant, given that nonformal and informal processes of learning have been identified as making a fundamental contribution to coaches'/teachers' continued professional development and sources of knowledge (Cushion *et al.* 2003; Nelson *et al.* 2006). The considerable amount of informal sharing that took place was explicitly highlighted by all interview respondents and was evident throughout the fieldwork process. This informal knowledge sharing has three key implications for understanding the role of individuals in the

space of the organisation. Firstly, the wealth and diversity of experience present in the staff community was held in high esteem by its members:

> *"The associates that come here are massively experienced, one of them is probably the most experienced caver in this area – or in Northern England. […] I don't think you've met Cliff, but he has led quite a few Everest expeditions, and he does a lot of work for the BBC. […] And that was really inspirational to me when I first started working with the Trust. When I worked at Ullswater there was a lady […] she was the first lady to solo sea kayak around the UK – all of the islands. So yeah, […] this wealth of experience and that was all being used."* (Tim, male, Instructor, 25-35)

Tim indicates the way in which demonstrations of skill and expertise, not in the form of qualifications but through successfully completing physical challenges such as Everest expeditions and kayaking round the UK, imbue individuals with *symbolic capital*. For Bourdieu (1986), this is any form of capital that takes on a symbolic character based on mutual cognition and recognition. It cannot be institutionalized or objectified but exists only "in the eyes of others" (Siisiainen 2003: 191). Bourdieu's work is key here, in emphasising the differing capital value of social relationships (Holt 2008), whereby social capital is defined as:

> "[t]he aggregate or actual potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." (Bourdieu 1986: 249-50)

Tim's comments are indicative of this contextual characteristic of capital. The symbolic capital of instructors is being mobilized as social capital, as a consequence of the social network and "institutionalised relationships" (i.e. the OBT) within which they are engaged (Holt 2008).

Secondly, OBT staff as a group of individuals with a range of specific skill-sets and relative 'experts' in their field highlights the role of *tacit knowledge* in the continuation and the success of the organisation. Dickens describes this as "the deeply personalized knowledge processed by individuals that is virtually impossible to make explicit and to communicate to others through formal mechanisms" (2015: 108). For many staff, the breadth and depth of expert knowledge they could access through other members of staff was the most important aspect of the organisation. Respondents were effusive about the sharing culture, which was common across all OBT centres – there was a real buzz around being involved in this informal network

of best practice. During the fieldwork process, this knowledge sharing was a regular occurrence, with the types of information and knowledge, and methods of dissemination, varying widely. Often, staff members would run technical skills workshops in their free time, which would be advertised in the staff room. There were also ad-hoc conversations – in the staff room, on the mini-bus or in the pub – which would revolve around which new sites they found to camp, or which exercises really worked to engage their group. Jamie (male, Freelance Instructor, 25-35) describes the benefit of this culture:

> *"You get emails sent around about people who have a really cool article or learned something. Instructors organise and run their own workshops, if they do a new assessment or training, or they go to a workshop [...]. They share it you know? the amount of progression here is awesome."*

In addition to this work-related knowledge, sharing also concerned their personal trips and future plans, which in the main centred on outdoor pursuits and physical adventures. As Meusberger (2000) asserts, organisations which utilise networks of tacit knowledge and rely on highly skilled individuals tend to be spatially concentrated. We can see that the geographical spread of knowledge networks/transfer is extensive in the OBT. Staff travel and garner information not only from their work in the Lake District, Snowdonia or the Scottish Highlands, but also from trips to international Outward Bound centres, the top of Everest, and the entire coastline of the UK. These flows of knowledge are embodied by the instructing staff, and coalesce and are sedimented in the sites of the OBT centres. Holt (2008) suggests that by and large, human geography has neglected the analytical purchase of 'social capital', and recasts a Bourdieusian theorisation of the concept through the notion of 'embodied social capital' (Holt 2008: 238). This acts to emphasise how "the process of becoming an embodied individual is inherently bound up with the sociospatial contexts within which people's lives are lived" (Ibid.). As Thomas (2005) asserts, and was identified in Chapter 2, identity has an inherent spatial complexity. Here, instructors accrued cultural capital as performed through mobile and adventurous practices. This represents a form of 'embodied social capital' which is 'valued' in the 'field' of the Trust (Holt 2008).

Finally, instructors found the environment of knowledge sharing inspiring and motivational. As Barnes (1999; 2003) highlighted, outdoor instructors are often driven by individual motivations such as opportunities for new experiences and self-realisation. Tim's comments above are indicative of the OBT as a social space which provides opportunities to inspire and further

individual ambitions. Somewhat paradoxically (and in agreement with the work of Barnes 1999; 2003), the staff presented a like-minded community driven by a strong set of values and beliefs. This values system is equally supported through an environment which encourages an informal knowledge sharing culture, through stimulating close social networks. Here, we can see again the two-way process in which staff bring their own knowledge and values to the organisation, which are then cultivated and encouraged through an organisational practice of sharing to produce social ties, common goals and feelings of community, akin to Bourdieu's (1986) 'social field'. As Holt (2008) asserts, there is a recursive relationship between the development of social and cultural capital. Therefore, the (institutionalized, objectified, and embodied) cultural capital that instructors possessed afforded them spaces in which "particular contingent relationships [could] emerge" (Holt 2008: 232). Being embedded in the social network of the Trust also influenced opportunities and access to cultural capital (Ibid.). The ways in which the 'field' of the OBT developed as a coherent community is explored in the next sub-section.

5.2.3. *Community spirit and common goals: developing 'Communities of Practice'*

As the previous section outlined, knowledge-pooling and sharing in the Trust was perceived as essential to its operations. It acted as a form of symbolic capital and an inspiration for instructors, and their embodied knowledges helped to fulfil this virtuous cycle through close social networks. In tandem with the flat-hierarchical structure and culture of autonomy and trust, these social interactions conveyed a sense of equality and support for each other, which translated into a sense of community. This community feeling was underpinned by a deep acknowledgement that everyone was working towards a common goal. Paul (male, Instructor, 25-35) who had been working at the OBT for a little under a year, described how individuals in every different area of the Trust, from centre staff to fundraising and marketing, all *"really care about what it is that OB does'*. He suggested that *'the majority of people are really keen and passionate, and that is kind of infectious"*. Similarly, Sam (male, Instructor, 25-35) reflected,

> *"The thing that struck me is how willing everyone is to work for everyone else. Everyone is just really committed – they look like they need a hand – even if it's just making them a cup of tea when they get back from a wet hard expedition. It's a really nice atmosphere, it's pretty good."*

This support and passion overlapped both the professional and personal spheres of instructors' lives. For example, at Aberdovey, many of the instructors lived together in rented shared accommodation in the village. The Aberdovey staff were described as a *"tight social group outside of work"*, and this communal element was a real attraction. At the Loch Eil centre there were a number of houses on site where instructors lived, which Jack (male, Instructor, 25-35) described as creating a form of camaraderie amongst staff:

> *"The people are so welcoming, it's a lovely bunch. We live on site in the houses, and there's always someone to do something with. It's like living in halls [university accommodation] I suppose – knock next door and 'what you doing tomorrow?' But there's a Facebook group as well, so even the people that live off site are still putting up 'what are we doing tomorrow?'"*

Jack alludes to a closeness amongst staff members and the creation of a community through their collective identity as outdoor practitioners who engage in similar leisure practices. As Chapter 2 identified, a consideration of belonging to and participating in a community is key to conceptualisations of contemporary citizenship (Ross 2007). This feeling of belonging to a place and to the organisation extended beyond the physical community of the centre, to the 'imagined community' of the Trust (Anderson 1983). This can be seen in both Paul and Jack's comments above, which is suggestive of the common values and the sharing of powerful outdoor experiences that united staff across the organisation. Here we can see not only the re-scaling of ideas around citizenship (Mills & Waite 2017), but also the ways in which this is inherently tied up with instructor identity formation (Hall 2002).

This communal culture has been identified by Barnes (2003: 249) who states that "outdoor staff form a distinctive community…bound together by a strong sense of values and vocation as well as shared outdoor experiences". Building on the work of Barnes, I suggest that outdoor education instructors are more than a 'cultural phenomenon' (Ibid.) and that the OBT represents a distinct 'Community of Practice' (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991). CoPs can be understood as "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour… [whose] practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour" (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1992: 464). Lave and Wenger (1999) propose that we may be involved in any number of CoPs, and we learn through our sustained and active participation within these. In this sense, we can observe outdoor education and lifestyle sports as overlapping and contributing CoPs (section 5.1). According to Wenger (1998) CoPs have three core elements. Firstly, they must constitute

a *joint enterprise*, the pursuit of which creates relationships of accountability; secondly, they entail a *mutual engagement* whereby members get together to participate in shared practices; and thirdly, they create a *shared repertoire* which is a cumulative result of internal negotiations. This repertoire can include routines, sensibilities and vocabularies which carry the accumulated knowledge of the community (Smith 2003).

The OBT is characterised by its goal of developing people, and as the examples throughout section 5.2 have demonstrated, all employees take an active role in contributing to this common purpose. The OBT have adopted a distinct *praxis* – informed, committed actions which embody certain qualities – and these ways of doing and approaching things are shared to a significant extent among its members. In addition, there is a distinctive shared repertoire, most notably in language and embodied styles (Barnes 1999; 2003). Outdoor education, as with any number of professions, is rife with acronyms and colloquialisms (such as 'ticket' described earlier), many of which are OBT specific. Perhaps even more specifically in the case of the outdoor industry is the vast array of equipment, which has led to the development of a host of further abbreviations. This, along with amalgamations of language typically found in other 'lifestyle sport' settings (Wheaton 2010) such as 'gnarly' and 'stoke', creates a distinguishing language underpinning this CoP.

Lave and Wenger (1991) call for an understanding of learning as a social process achieved through active participation. Wenger (1999: 4) suggests that this participation is an "encompassing process of being active participants in the *practices* of social communities and constructing *identities* in relation to these communities". The term 'legitimate peripheral participation' speaks to the relations between new and longstanding members of the CoP, and the intention to move towards becoming fully participatory in socio-cultural practices (Smith 2003). We can see this move from the periphery to the core in the OBT through active engagement in skills workshops and sharing of best practice, and taking on outdoor activities which align with the ethos of the community. As Tim commented in section 5.1.2, those at the centre of the CoP were *"really inspirational to me when I first started working with the Trust"*. Tim's tone is aspirational in moving towards practices which characterise the community. The strong social relations that have been highlighted in this chapter so far are conducive to the understanding of learning as a social process and facilitating periphery participation. There is also a clear connection with identity here cultivated through embodied actions such as speech and physical capabilities in outdoor pursuits, and in relation to the cultural and symbolic capital

discussed in section 5.2.2. The themes of identity formation and embodiment will be expanded upon in the next section.

5.3. Embodying outdoor identities and philosophies

There are strong personal connections between outdoor educators and their professional work, as has been observed in explorations of career trajectories in outdoor education (Allin & Humberstone 2006). Giddens (1991) argues that the post-industrial economy and subsequent processes of globalisation have created opportunities for the emergence of new identities and social movements. In this context, lifestyle choice becomes critical in the "(re)constitution of self-identity" (Cohen 2011: 1538) and 'life politics' comes to the fore as an individual strategy (Giddens 1991; Valentine 2003). Subsequently, lifestyle practices become "decisions not only about how to act but who to be" (Giddens 1991: 81). These lifestyle practices are reflected in the field of outdoor education, which is considered vocational, linked to personal beliefs and altruist motivations (Barnes 1999). Consequently, it is very difficult to delineate the work from the individual outdoor instructors themselves (Collins 1997; Allin & Humberstone 2006). This section explores the key ways in which instructors in this research project constructed their identities and understood themselves through their work and workplace environments. Furthermore, it untangles the constant negotiations between balancing personal and professional adventures and highlights the distinct ways in which employment in outdoor education becomes a strategy to fulfil lifestyle choices.

5.3.1. 'I'm a white-water paddler': developing a sense of identity through the OBT

Many of the OBT instructors I encountered during fieldwork had specialisms in outdoor pursuits, such as water sports or climbing. These 'outdoor identities' impacted on instructors' perceptions of feeling 'in' or 'out' of place within their respective centres. As Geoff (male, Senior Instructor, 35-40) suggested,

> *"The location of Aberdovey, it's stunning – you've got the beach and you've got all that stuff, but I was a white-water paddler then – the white-water in Wales is quite difficult […] so I wasn't getting to paddle as much."*

Despite an idyllic location, the centre at Aberdovey did not allow Geoff to express himself as an outdoor professional through his self-identification as a white-water paddler. This ultimately influenced his decision to move to a different centre. He also alluded to how instructors can be

moulded by their environments. He suggested that he no longer considered himself a white-water paddler, and preferred sea-kayaking, which was very accessible from the Loch Eil centre where he was currently based. The opinion was often expressed that OBT centres attracted certain types of outdoor practitioners. Loch Eil was perceived to be for *"mountain men"*, whilst Aberdovey was for those interested in water sports, and Ullswater fell somewhere in the middle. In reality all the instructors were competent across the breadth of outdoor pursuits, but they often felt drawn into a certain character type, dictated by their centre locations. As such, we can see how their identities become part of those wider 'centre geographies', which then become central in moulding and constructing their sense of self.

Geoff's preference for a particular environment elucidates Bourdieu's concept of 'habitus', the embodied materialisation of individuals' capitals (Bourdieu 1986; Holt 2008; Painter 2001). Habitus is expressed via an individuals' embodied dispositions (Holt 2008), and acts as the "mechanism by which the 'objective' external world […] becomes incorporated within the 'subjective' internal, embodied, experience" (Ibid.: 233). The instructors often drew upon personal histories to understand their connections to the immediate landscape and the centres themselves. In this way, their habitus was embedded in their childhood experiences and memories of place. As Holt (2008) observes, childhood is a primary period in which subconscious embodied dispositions are inculcated. For example, David (male, Senior Instructor, 25-35) described how his childhood was spent *"climbing in Glencoe"*. This initial interest in climbing and mountaineering developed through a college course in technical skills located in Perth. However, he moved back to the Loch Eil area to finish his studies to enable him to be closer to the mountains. He explained:

> *"I didn't really like living down in Perth and Dundee 'cos it was far away from the mountains. So I used that [University of Highlands and Islands course] as a way to get back up here. […] And that was mainly just to live here so I can go climbing and do the stuff I like doing again."*

For David, it was not enough to be involved in outdoor pursuits, his drive for pursuing a career in the outdoors revolved around an embodied drive for, and sensory experience of a specific place. Through his career decisions we can see a strong connection to the Scottish mountains and David's desire to invest in maintaining this physical bond with the environment. David clearly demonstrated how his corporeal interactions with that landscape informed his physical

identity as a mountaineer and climber, engendering a sense of comfort and belonging in this particular place.

Instructors also expressed emotional links to specific places. Ruth (female, Instructor, 25-35) had experienced outdoor education as a teenager at the Howtown Centre, when it was owned by a Local Education Authority. She found that she really affiliated with the practices of outdoor education and learnt a lot through them;

> *"I found I was really good at rock climbing and ghyll scrambling, […] I was good at all the activities, and they really sort of suited my learning style. Then I left school and decided it was my ambition to be an outdoor instructor at Howtown."*

Ruth had worked in a range of outdoor education centres and settings all over the world before securing a job with the OBT. She conveyed a passion for, and connection with Howtown as being a consequence of her positive psychological experiences there, through an outdoor education programme. This childhood experience *in-place* informed not only her career choice, but also her career location. As Ruth's words suggest, this experience, which included both the setting and the outdoor practitioner who interacted with Ruth, helped her to understand herself as a person. Her current role as an OBT instructor was suggestive of the fact that it played a significant role in forming Ruth's sense of embodied self (and, therein, habitus). David's and Ruth's stories both have elements of bodily, haptic and cognitive connections, although these take different forms. David prioritises his physical interaction with space, while Ruth focuses on her emotional experiences. However, they are both embedded in personal histories.

Holt's (2008) conceptualisation of 'embodied social capital' resonates strongly here. Holt (2008: 238) argues that previous social encounters are "embodied and influence […] future social performances". Drawing on Butler's (1997: 2004) notion of performativity, which emphasises how "norms of identity performance are central to the process by which a person is subjectified", we can see a potential interpretation and consequent embodiment of this place-based social capital, being influenced along axes of gender difference. Cresswell (2002: 381) argues that an individual's habitus acts to internalise the social order, which in turn "reproduces the social order". Therefore, embodied acts are always (unconsciously) socially situated (Holt 2008) and must be conceived of in tandem with a performative understanding of place/space (Gregson & Rose 2000). Traditional gender norms which dictate what men and women value, and how they relate to particular places (McDowell 1999) can be especially pertinent in the field of outdoor education, given historical connections with moral character (Chapter 2) and

the physicality of outdoor pursuits (Allin 2000). Hence, David and Ruth's accounts of their development of embodied habitus, and their physical and emotional interpretations of these, hints at a socio-spatially specific (re)production of broader scalar inequalities (Holt 2008).

5.3.2. Outdoor life: personal motivations and 'cultures of mobility'

Instructors' motivations for working for the OBT were mostly aligned with the values and aims of the Trust (Chapter 2). Those interviewed and as part of the ethnographic fieldwork had a passion for purposeful work and developing people, and were driven by a need for challenge and growth. As earlier sections have indicated, they came together through the CoP to achieve these aims for young people too. However, Barnes' (1999; 2003) assertion that outdoor educators are strong-minded individuals with their own motivations for working in outdoor centres is also evident here. Staff were often driven by ambitions to gain new outdoor education expertise and improve their professional capabilities (as exemplified in section 5.2.2). They were also motivated by the opportunities to work and play in physical environments that they enjoyed. These personal drivers were overlapping and shifting, with some instructors indicating in their interviews a change in priorities, discussed shortly (section 5.4).

Indeed, the majority of staff had extensive experience in the outdoor education industry, working in a variety of centres and roles both in the UK and abroad. Ambitions to undertake personal trips and gain further qualifications were regularly cited. In some respects, this was reflective of an industry in which seasonal employment is common, and individuals often do not remain in one place for long. Barnes (1999; 2003) has identified a 'culture of mobility' within the outdoor community related to "new challenges, maintaining variety and facilitating learning opportunities" (Ibid. 1999: 177). Certainly, participants in this study reflected on a transient lifestyle as an important aspect of their social and collective identity, and living the outdoor 'way of life'. This embodied desire to seek new experiences was evident in Tim's (male, Instructor, 25-35) consideration of where he saw himself in five years' time:

> "I'd like to travel to the other Outward Bound centres and get more experience working with different people, seeing what other centres do, and just having that experience for myself. Because we're constantly telling people or talking to people about, broadening their horizons or taking that opportunity, growing as a person. [...] if I stayed here for 5 years I would think – I would probably be better at delivering learning, but I don't think I'd change that much. [...] I think I need to practice what I preach a little bit."

Tim's concept of personal development was echoed across the respondents. For many, there was a desire to challenge themselves and achieve both professional and personal goals, although these frequently over-lapped and were inherently interlinked. This is supportive of Barnes' observation that this 'culture of mobility' is a "good indication of how they see themselves as responding to the need for challenge which outdoor education aims to instil in its participants" (2003: 249). It also suggests that concern over (industry-wide) high turn-over rates is not just a consequence of the industry's seasonal nature, but also a result of this culture of mobility which permeates the outdoor practitioner community. Richard's (male, Head of Centre, 35-45) story is also illustrative of this point:

> *"I realised I'd been in the same role for 10 years [at OBT] and maybe I needed to shake things up a bit. [...] I rented the house out and spent 2 years sailing boats! [...] It was great and it definitely served a purpose in terms of my personal needs and thinking about other adventures and seeing the world, and challenging myself to learn something new."*

For both Tim and Richard, this need to move and develop themselves in both personal and practical spheres came across as a necessary characteristic of engaging in an outdoor instructor way of life. It is clear that as well as being tied up *in-place*, the habitus as embodied disposition and ideals is also concerned with mobility. This 'culture of mobility' served multiple purposes. Firstly, it allowed instructors to seek new physical challenges, which was appropriate given the corporeal engagement of their professional life and personal leisure choices. Secondly, it provided an outlet for instructors to remain true to their core ideals, as conceived through Bourdieu's (1986) 'habitus', which revolved around personal improvement and rejected the commercialisation and formalisation of the industry. Third, it allowed instructors to accrue 'embodied social capital' (Holt 2008), through differentiated outdoor experiences, gaining qualifications and opening up spaces for new contingent relationships (the building of social networks) to emerge (Ibid.). As Beaverstock (2005) has discussed, networks of [international] migration are now a key mechanism of career progression, mapping on to processes of globalisation, travel mobilities (Castles *et al.* 2014), and subsequent new identities and 'life politics' (Giddens 1991; Valentine 2003). Barnes (1999; 2003) acknowledges that committing to this mobile lifestyle choice necessitates a lack of other normative markers of contemporary adulthood, such as home ownership and financial stability (McDowell 2002; Valentine 2003). These compromises will be examined in section 5.4.

5.3.3. Performing the outdoor instructor: resourcefulness, role models, playing and guiding

As the previous section suggested, instructors were driven by self-realisation and growth. Through the developmental opportunities offered by the OBT (outlined in this chapter) they embraced opportunities to improve their skills and progress in both personal and professional spheres. This is evidenced by their biographical accounts, which revealed how hard many of the interview respondents had worked to gain employment within the OBT. For some, working for the Trust realised a personal aspiration, but it had taken time to gain the necessary qualifications and some had only been successful in their second attempts. Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) discusses his journey into his current role:

"Whilst at Robin Hood [activity centre] I built up some more quallys [qualifications], learnt about Outward Bound and decided I wanted to work for them. So I took two years, the first application that I wrote wasn't very good. So I went and got some more experience, did a bit of freelance work, was with some local companies in the Lakes. Got to know the areas in the Lakes, got to know a bit more about the Trust, wrote a better application, got an interview – and it was probably one of the best interviews I've had because I knew so much about the job that they were giving me the job that day, they didn't know it yet but I did."

Other instructors were keen to further technical skills, take part in extreme expeditions, gain academic qualifications, or run their own outdoor centres. Although backgrounds and future trajectories were diverse, staff were connected through a collective aspiration and ambition to better themselves. They were highly motivated to succeed in whatever challenge they set themselves and were always looking to 'grow' as individuals through this 'culture of mobility'. In this way, and as has been elucidated throughout this chapter so far, instructors embodied the key values of the Trust – that we all have undiscovered potential, the belief in the power of intense experiences and learning in wilderness places, and the importance of acting with compassion and respect (OBT 2017a). They also reproduced the ideals of the outdoor community in general and specifically of the organisational CoP, and acted as role models to OBT participants by enacting the very attitudes that they wished to instil in them. If the mission of the OBT is to "unlock the potential in young people through learning and adventure in the wild" (Ibid.), then this focus on personal development is clearly embedded in the organisation through its staff's attitudes and actions. This is indicative of Bourdieu's (1990: 66) concept of

'mimesis', whereby individuals subconsciously reproduce the specific "rules of the game" in social fields, through their habitus.

As well as seeking to become role models through their personal attitudes, instructors understood themselves to be facilitators of experiences, and a key factor in determining how much participants gained from their week. They themselves were passionate about their physical surroundings, but as one instructor put it, *"kids only see the square in front of their feet"*. They understood it to be their role and responsibility to get young people to engage with the natural environment. Jamie (male, Freelance Instructor, 25-35) suggested that it was this ability of OBT staff to take the natural experience and bring it that step further that set the Trust apart from other organisations in the industry: *"So, let the mountains speak for themselves - instructors can either get the kids to listen, or dictate what the mountains are saying"*. Jamie spoke of the unbridled unitary momentum that drove the OBT as *"almost sociopathic"* towards its aims and objectives, which was also highlighted in section 5.2.3.

Understanding the role of instructors in the outdoor education process is crucial, not only to further demystify 'what works', but also to break down the assumed utility of learning through the outdoors. Throughout the fieldwork process, I observed instructors making use of their resourcefulness and wider experience to facilitate dialogue and interaction between the group. This was done through the sharing of local knowledges (see Chapter 4), and through the creativity instructors could bring to their courses (see section 5.2.1) As well as being knowledgeable and inventive, instructors used their skills in infinitely resourceful ways. For example, my final group instructor had an impressive array of games up his sleeve to keep groups entertained, to use as ice breakers, to fill time whilst waiting for minibuses, or to make packing bags more fun. He also shared his keen knowledge of flora and fauna with the group, and shared stories of the historical medical uses of some of the flora we encountered. We frequently stopped, to try gorse flower which was supposed to taste like coconut; to identify 'fairy seat' moss; to look for millipedes and cave spiders. It was often these small and seemingly insignificant moments that were drawn upon by the young people when remembering their trips (further discussed in Chapter 6). These moments were also utilised when energy levels were low in an effort to break the monotony of the task or spark enthusiasm. A distinct memory from the week which several of the group brought up in their follow-up interviews was when their instructor had encouraged them to try eating ants, insisting that they tasted like lemon. Not only does this highlight the role of the instructor in sharing knowledge, and mediating and facilitating

interactions with nature, it also focuses on the role of a range of senses in outdoor educational experiences (to be explored in Chapter 7).

Rokenes *et al.* (2015) contend that given the rising popularity of nature-based adventure tourism, there needs to be more research committed to investigating the complexity of guides' roles and how they create value for clients. If we consider the key components of adventure tourism: physical and psychological challenge, danger and risk, uncertain outcomes, exploration, and the planning and choreography of experiences (Ibid.), we can see a distinct parallel with outdoor education which accommodates all of these components within an explicit focus on the development of young people. Likening outdoor instructing to tour-guiding in this context is not a means of diminishing the work that OBT staff do, but provides a lens through which to understand how instructors contribute to young people's experiences. Rokenes *et al*. put forward instrumental, educational, relational, choreographic and environmental dimensions as key areas of tour guides' work which is valued by clients, and we can see these dimensions in the work of OBT staff. This extended quote from Gemma captures the multifaceted role of instructors:

> *"When I am an instructor the head is very, very full. […] So I guess the key things are relationships, so building a positive relationship with them so that they feel safe to go on that journey with you. […] Second thing would probably be planning the adventure – that responsibility for looking at the group of people in front of you, assessing where they're at currently, and then planning something that's going to be meaningful and worthwhile and progressive – and then linking in with that, assessing where they're at in personal development terms, and again planning how to progress that, and doing that for all of the individuals in the group. […] When you're out and about as well, thinking about how you create those powerful experiences. Where you take them, part of the journey, but also, what's going to create magic moments? So there's some key bits tying in with nature I guess – like, can you build in a solo moment on a summit? Can you create an opportunity where they're going to really notice what's around them? So that connection with the wider environment and where they're actually at, and how that links to where they're from – that sort of thing."* (Gemma, female, Senior Instructor, 25-35)

Here we can see Gemma focusing on the instrumental dimension, planning the logistics of the course, as well intentionally choreographing 'magic' moments into the week. She considers how to ensure that the programme is educational, *"meaningful, worthwhile and progressive"*,

and this education regularly also takes the form of participating in new activities and learning physical capabilities and limits. Gemma also discusses the importance of building relationships and trust, which extends to managing group dynamics to ensure that the experience is enjoyable as possible (Hansen & Mossberg 2017). Rokenes *et al.* (2015) conclude that the choreography of experiences adds significant value to nature-based adventure tourism. I would suggest that similar efforts of OBT staff to purposefully design programmes which interact with nature in particular ways is one of their key roles in creating meaningful experiences for young people.

Staff regularly added theatrical elements to their courses. For example, one group leader told his group that the sheep marked with red dye were dangerous, and that we should cross the field in a huddle in order to stay safe. Others often 'played the fool' to encourage their group to action. Frequently, local folklore stories were told to engage their group in their surroundings. Hansen and Mossberg (2017) are attentive to the role of tour guides, considering how their 'performances' allow for greater feelings of immersion. Guides have also been identified for their roles as storytellers (Bryon 2012) in terms of their use of both verbal and non-verbal communications, the stories they chose to tell and those they do not, and how they tell them. They can provide information about the local natures, cultures and histories and thus facilitate an interpretation of these environments through these stories, which highlights guides as *interpreters* and *cultural mediators* through the acts of storytelling (Hansen & Mossberg 2017). Again, we can see these characteristics in the practices of OBT instructors, who frequently drew upon 'stories of the land'; depicting sites of history, culture and nature to help young people to understand and relate to their environment.

Hayes (2016) advocates a playful approach to outdoor education, through storytelling as a means of engagement and a way of creating a comfortable and discursive space for young people. The tendency towards play in the OBT, thus brings discussions of 'ludic' geographies to the fore (Woodyer 2012). Play is seen as a key element in young people's lives (Skelton 2009), but is commonly conceptualised as representing a process of socialisation which is spatially and temporally confined to childhood (Woodyer 2012). The way in which playful practices were instigated by staff through games, theatricality and story-telling challenges the dominant narrative of play as 'other' to adult behaviour. Focusing on the situated actions of playing (Harker 2005) allows us to understand the embodied acts of instructors as a potential site of resistance to adult culture, and correlates with the outdoor industry as a countercultural lifestyle (Wheaton 2010). It also helps to elucidate the 'ongoingness' of child/adulthood and the non-linearity of 'growing up' (Horton & Kraftl 2006b).

Through balancing aspects of play, socially mediating the group, and providing technical instruction to facilitate interaction with the environment, Hanson and Mossberg (2017) suggest that tour guides perform a 'guide-plus' role. This entails a "care for and focus on each individual's involvement and meaning creation" (Ibid.: 274). Gemma's words above and below pay homage to the way in which OBT courses seek to have an individual focus, whereby they are designed to be meaningful "*for all of the individuals in the group*". As such, we can see a similar 'guide-plus' role in the work of OBT staff.

It is through these interconnecting elements of choreography, relationship managing and storytelling that staff understood their roles with young people. Gemma explained that:

> *"It's bringing so many things together – bringing the adventures together at the right level and the right places, and the right progression, and making it feel like a journey. But bringing that together with the psychology of personal development, so taking the young people on a physical journey but also a mental journey as well in their own process. And how you put all that together."*

This focus on facilitation and interpretation is suggestive of the fact that although the physical environments and 'centre geographies' outlined in Chapter 4 are necessary to the process, they do not immediately 'reveal themselves' to young people. Outdoor instructors are required to help participants make meaning from their experiences. Woodyer (2012) comments on the nature of play as momentary, spontaneous and a product of openness and circumstance. For Woodyer (2012: 320) play can be "productive or transformative of space" and, as such, the way in which OBT staff utilised play (through games, theatricality and storytelling) provides an opportunity for the configuring of transformative spaces for young people.

5.3.4. *The emotional labour of outdoor education*

Given the vocational qualities of outdoor education, instructing required a personal and emotional investment. Accordingly, and as already outlined, OBT staff were passionate and committed to their roles and thus invested emotionally in their jobs. They often worked long hours, and the closeness of their staff community led to significant personal and professional overlaps. This created a situation where, by and large, instructors did not 'switch off' from work. Some spoke of their worries when the weather was bad, if it was particularly wet or stormy, for example:

"[T]o be still up at home, at midnight, thinking, worrying about what they're going to do because they want to deliver the best they can, most of us feel naturally indebted to our students to do the best we can, and you've got everything else against you. So just that takes it [energy] from you." (Jamie, male, Freelance Instructor, 25-35)

They also spoke of their frustrations with the systems and the difficulties of working efficiently in old buildings, and how this slowed them down. My first group instructor during the ethnographic fieldwork spoke particularly candidly when questioned by the group about his steely and guarded demeanour. He revealed how he would become frustrated, not with the group but with himself, when he couldn't work out what would captivate them to change. He explained that *"I try something, and that doesn't work, so I try and think of something else, and try it, and that still doesn't work".* Here there was a strong sense that negative emotions were suppressed in order to deliver a creative and engaging experience for young people. Of course, the instructors had different personality traits and a corresponding variety of delivery styles – some were more serious and others playful and light-hearted. But they all appeared, in various ways, to be managing the emotional demands of the job through their embodied roles as OBT instructors. Hochschild's (1983) concept of 'emotional labour' is useful here, to consider the effort that employees put into evoking or shaping, as well as suppressing feelings in themselves and others. As Ruth (female, Instructor, 25-35) commented,

"You do get tough groups and tough days, where the weather is horrible and your groups all crying because it's cold and they're cold and you're cold, and you've still got to be the one that's saying 'c'mon we can still make it to the top of the mountain', because it's going to make your job a lot harder. So I think being the best you can be makes it a lot easier for you to actually get your group motivated. Because if they're saying 'I don't what to do it' and you're saying 'I know, me neither!' there's no chance you're ever going to make it out of the centre never mind on to any activities."

Ruth's account aligns with the idea of an 'organisational body' (Tyler & Abbot 1998) which is the embodied presentation and performance required to remain in a particular occupation. We can understand emotion as constitutive of cognitive and bodily techniques (Hochschild 2003) and thus emotional labour involves the body and 'body work' (Wolkowitz 2006). Crang's (1994) discussion of workplace geographies is useful here, in which he discusses service work as a series of 'performative encounters'. For Crang, this helps to elucidate how service work (which can be seen to include outdoor education, where instructors are providing a product) is

an inherently social activity which is characteristically interpersonal and contextually placed (Goffman 1961). Therefore, this 'body work' required of instructors was also fused with a number of social relations, in excess of the performance required (Crang 1994). This can be seen in the reproduction and bodily expression of the practices of the outdoor education field.

The concept of 'emotional labour' has been critiqued for suggesting that there is a significant disjuncture between authentic emotions and those expressed in working roles; perhaps it is not always the case that a deeply entrenched emotional change is required to achieve the 'organisational body' (Wolkowitz 2006). Indeed, as sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 have explored, outdoor instructors are largely a community of highly motivated and driven individuals which suggests that a positive mental attitude and approach to work would be altogether embodied in their habitus (Bourdieu 1986). Crang's (1994) observation of the interpersonal nature of 'performance encounters' leads him to understand these performances as being interwoven with 'identity politics'. In so doing, Crang affords a more nuanced understanding of 'emotional labour', through his conceptualisation of 'performative encounters', wherein all forms of interaction are bound up with the (embodied) identities of the participants (Ibid.). In the case of the OBT, we again see a two-way process, where instructors bring these qualities to the organisation, and the job demands that they express these qualities through their work. Work and personal identities, as an expression of embodied dispositions, cannot be separated. However, that is not to deny that OBT instructors and instructors' bodies were involved in managing emotions regularly. This occurred through a need to control their own emotional states of frustration and corresponding body language, and in mediating the emotions of their groups in a relatively emotionally-charged environment (Becker 2003).

5.4. Matching mobilities and careers

Mobility has historically been seen as a threat to normality (Cresswell 2001). However, as section 5.3 introduced, globalisation has allowed the emergence of new identities and social movements (Giddens 1991), and the stigma associated with non-traditional lifestyles and mobility has diminished (Adler & Adler 1999). Accordingly, outdoor instructors in the study still expressed a desire to be mobile. This has been indicated at various points throughout this chapter thus far, and aligns with Barnes' (1999; 2003) theorisation of the outdoor community as exhibiting an inherent 'culture of mobility'. Three key themes emerged through OBT instructors' desires to be mobile and engage in individual practices of self-development: the (in)ability to manage work and personal time; the sustainability of such practices; and the

disconnect between these highly mobile desires and grounded aspirations. These will now be taken in turn and explored below.

5.4.1. Finding work/life balance

Instructors' ability to manage work and personal time oscillated between being a source of frustration and a positive attribute of working for the Trust. In the first instance, long working hours meant that staff struggled to find free time to take part in personal outdoor pursuits. For example, David (male, Senior Instructor, 25-35) commented, *"I find it takes up a lot more of your life than you want it to"* which meant that there was a lack of time to *"actually go and do the stuff you enjoy doing"*. This was often discussed in relation to the format of the working day, whereby instructors worked from 8.30am until 5pm, and then 6.30pm to 8pm in order to conduct an evening activity with their groups. This was an issue that was explored at length with a number of respondents. Some felt that it was an unnecessary addition, which could be negotiated by getting other members of staff to take the evening session. However, others suggested that having other instructors running the sessions lost the continuity between instructors and participants and would be detrimental to the participants' experiences and overall course outcomes. As Jamie (male, freelance Instructor, 25-35) explains, *"the brilliant thing is that it's one instructor with the team and they get in-help when they need it, and that's part of it. It's a bonding experience"*.

These conflicting viewpoints indicate how instructors' personal values and principles both impact on and facilitate their work. We see again the difficulty in detaching the professional outdoor instructor from the individual in pursuit of outdoor adventures, with these entwined embodied identities coming to the fore. For many, the job encompasses the industry values around hard work and self-improvement. However, as Barnes (2003) notes and has been highlighted in section 5.3.2, instructors collectively shared a strong belief system, but were individualistic and mobile. Here, the demands of the job are at odds with finding time and space to fulfil individual needs and aspirations.

More positively, the physical locations of the centres were attractive to staff (as Chapter 4 discussed), and they often facilitated impromptu activities. For example, during a fieldwork visit to Aberdovey, one member of staff announced at the morning meeting that he would be going surfing after work, and that all were free to join. Similarly, whilst at Ogwen Cottage, where instructors stay in the centre with clients for the week, staff took advantage of the cottage

as a popular climbing location to practice some night climbing/scrambling. Here, the importance of the physical location for capturing the imagination of staff is clear, and it enabled them to undertake personal endeavours relatively easily. This also clearly provided an opportunity to create positive social relations and a community environment through shared participation, potential strengthening their 'embodied social capital' (Holt 2008). The way in which instructors regularly and informally engaged with the landscape around them, utilising the resources that were on offer, indicates how the physical space had a direct impact on their embodied identities, as well as delineating boundaries between work and play (Woodyer 2012).

There was an acknowledgement that for those with a career in the outdoors, long hours and poor pay were the standard. Lucy (female, Senior Instructor, 35-45) explained that instructors bought into these industry characteristics and used them to their benefit:

"If this is the lifestyle you chose, you benefit from blocks of time off when you, you know, you can get random weeks off here are there. And if you're somebody who makes the most of those big chucks of time, work really hard and then you get to play hard. And I've been off and had some great adventures."

The OBT was regularly recognized as a popular employer within the industry, with the pull of a permanent contract and the opportunity to get time back being emphasised in particular. Many instructors took blocks of time off to take personal trips or fulfil other work commitments. In this way, employees recognized feelings of both job security and job flexibility, which is something they valued greatly. This came as a reparation for the long hours, remote living and demanding nature of the job. Additionally, the opportunity to be located in some of the UK's best geographical locations for outdoor pursuits made committing to a full-time contract more feasible. This analysis adds much needed complexity to Barnes' (1999; 2003) assertions that outdoor instructors' view of themselves as transitory in their career and professional intentions leads them to reject a more mainstream approach to outdoor education. Through developing an employment offer that allows staff to continue a 'culture of mobility', the OBT has enabled outdoor practitioners to accrue the benefits of permanent employment whilst remaining true to their personal goals and ambitions. This shows the potential for the distinctive culture of outdoor communities to align more closely to a market-orientated industry without leaving behind its foundational social values.

5.4.2. A sustainable lifestyle?

The sustainability of this physically demanding lifestyle was sometimes brought into question. Certainly, some older and longer-standing members of staff had stepped into more managerial roles where the opportunity had arisen. For many, this appeared to be a decisive move to put distance between themselves and the extremes of the environment, and was indicative of a changing physical relationship with the landscape and understanding of themselves as an outdoor practitioner. Len (male, Operations Manager, 45-55) talked about no longer wanting to "*jump into cold rivers everyday*", and John (male, Operations Manager, 55-65) suggested that "*if I'd have carried on instructing any longer my body would have given up on my anyway!*". There was certainly a feeling that the recent managerial restructuring across the OBT had come at the right time for some members of staff, providing an exit route out of teaching but without having to step away from the organisation.

Instructors frequently discussed the physical demands of their job and lifestyle. I observed my first group instructor – a self-identified climber – performing physiotherapy exercises to rehabilitate a shoulder injury; and my final group instructor was visibly limping and impeded in his work by a twisted ankle sustained on a climbing trip the week prior to the fieldwork. This same instructor skinned his knuckles whilst assisting young people on a scrambling route. Outdoor education, and associated lifestyle sports and outdoor pursuits, are distinctly corporeal in their nature. Len and John, quoted above, indicate that their personal motivations had shifted from seeking physical challenges, to fulfilling needs related to social relationships and cementing personal connections with specific places. This is certainly due in part to age and the related reduction in physical capabilities, whereby their bodies may have "*given up*". However, many senior members of staff also expressed a sense of satisfaction and fulfilment; they had achieved all that they desired physically and their commitment to personal challenge and development was now reflected in contributing to the goals of the OBT. In addition, employment with the OBT allowed them to maintain a connection to the physical nature of outdoor education, as well as having access to relatively low-level activity venues which were not as physically demanding.

The changing nature of the broader industry also provided opportunities for members of the outdoor community to stay connected with their vocation whilst taking a step back from the physical demands of the job. This is reflected in Mia's (female, Instructor, 25-35) vision of her future, when she says,

"I'd quite like to do more kind of, more academic stuff. There's a college in Fort William. They do Outdoor Education degrees. So if I wanted to have, or work part time I could do some assessing for them. I definitely want to work in this field, because I've got so much experience now [...] and I feel like I can do it pretty well."

The professionalisation of the outdoor education industry has thus created diversity of opportunity, in this example through academic study and the need for examiners and assessors. Through the voices of Len, John and Mia we can view the opportunity to work for the OBT in alternative roles which offer a sense of progression, or where taking an academic post represents a strategy where members of the outdoor community can maintain a position within the CoP. This strategy is frequently related to the physical nature of the job and biological aging, with Len and John indicating a shift in their identities through their changing corporeal relationship with the natural environment. In relation to lifestyle sports, Wheaton (2010) calls for an enquiry into age and the lifecycle in a body of work that has been dominated by youthful representations. In way of a response, this research draws attention to the ways in which staff negotiate their outdoor identities throughout their life course. In so doing, it highlights a need for further empirical work which focuses on the long-term sustainability of careers in the outdoor industry.

5.4.3. Alternative versions of adulthood: extended transitions

Despite the seemingly long-term career opportunities identified in section 5.4.2, the mobile lifestyle of an outdoor instructor was still typically characterised by short-term plans, and OBT staff found this difficult to reconcile with other personal aspirations. As Jamie (male, Freelance Instructor, 25-35) commented, *"I enjoy travelling and I enjoy expeditions, and that's what I live for, [...] but I do have family and I do have friends, so doing that full time doesn't work"*. Here, conflicting elements of outdoor practitioner identities come to the fore. The desire for adventure and mobility was seen as a way for individuals to understand themselves and prove their place in an outdoor context, but this was often seen as incompatible with maintaining personal (romantic) relationships and achieving certain markers of adulthood such as owning a home and earning a steady income (Valentine 2003). Indeed, Jack (male, Instructor, 25-35) expressed his initial concerns over taking on a permanent position:

"Having done seasons and never really been in the same place for more than 9 months, and be bored by the end of that 9 months and looking to move on, I was worried about a full-time job. But it's so varied, you don't just instruct week to week to week."

In this comment, Jack is almost fearful of being tied down through committing to a permanent job which inherently involved a relatively long-term plan. This represents the ideals of the outdoor community, and many instructors impressed the need to move on and do other things after a few years in the OBT. However, some did express a different approach to employment in the outdoor industry. As Mia (female, Instructor, 25-35) reflected on her future, *"I've just brought a flat here – so I'm quite happy that I want to be here for 5, 10 years. And I love doing this job because it's so rewarding"*. Indeed, there were several instructors who, when asked to think about their possible employment in five years' time, suggested that they would like to stay in the OBT. Matt (male, Senior Instructor, 35-45) gives a strong rationale for this:

"For me personally, probably still Aberdovey, still OB. I mean, it's not perfect but it's close to exactly what I want from, and wanted from the career when I started. We get treated pretty well and lots of opportunities, lots of interest, lots of rewards you can go looking for, or just get anyway. Places like here [Ogwen cottage], which is effectively a brand new job in a brand new part of the country doing fairly different work, despite it being the same – it's a small centre and lots of different things compared to working in Aberdovey – without doing anything more than emailing the centre manager and saying 'I'd quite like to do that'. There is a process of choosing who comes up here because it's not for everyone, but that sort of opportunity where you get that sort of difference and range of stuff to do without needed to change jobs."

Both Mia and Matt imply a changing attitude to what career progression might mean in an outdoor education context. Certainly, there were other members of staff who also seemed committed to staying in their locations and putting down roots. Age did appear as a factor in this, with younger and less established instructors more inclined to remain mobile to facilitate learning experiences (as Tim indicated in section 5.3.1, through his comments regarding moving on from the OBT within 5 years).

Despite observations that spaces of outdoor education have been male dominated (Allin 2000), Wheaton (2010) contends that the subcultures of lifestyle sports typically challenge dominant sporting attitudes to factors such as competition, space, risk, and notably, gender. The OBT was representative of the outdoor industry more generally, dominated by white, middle class,

educated males (Collins 2000), which is indicated in the interviewee sample, where only one fifth of respondents were female. Indeed, as section 5.3.1 suggested, there may have been differences in the way male and female instructors understood themselves within the 'field', as a consequence of internalized performative norms. However, in dissidence with the over-representation of male voices in the data, the interviewees did not express any strongly gendered perspectives on working for the Trust, or in outdoor education more generally.

Allin and Humberstone (2006) suggest that women have frequently struggled to find acceptance in jobs in the outdoor industry where physical skills and masculine strength are privileged. But in the OBT there was an assumed equality in competence, with both men and women having outdoor specialisms and being consider 'experts' in their relative areas. In tandem with this, male and female social mixing was commonplace. The relative equality between men and women in the OBT can be seen in similar outlooks regarding the future and career trajectories, in terms of aspirations and anxieties relating to sporting ambitions, family and relationships, and financial security. As previously asserted, these attitudes varied by age, but not significantly by gender. This study agrees with Wheaton's (2010) observation that lifestyle sports can act as politically transformative spaces in relation to gender, sexuality and race. Therefore, they become contexts within which normative gender roles, including dispositions, embodied styles and characteristics, have the potential to be reshaped.

Further, I argue that they provide spaces which allow community members to devise alternative 'versions' of adulthood which transcend typical male and female roles. This idea is also expressed in Spowart *et al.*'s (2010) study on surfing mothers. Working in outdoor education plays a dominant role in the construction of the self, for both men and women, as committed to remaining highly mobile and independent throughout the life course. In a climate where "contemporary, individualist, healthist, and familial discourses afford a range of subject positions" (Spowart *et al.* 2010: 1186), future personal trajectories which do not include owning a home, 'setting down roots', getting married and starting a family, or ensuring financial security are not only permitted but encouraged and perpetuated by the ideals of the outdoor community. In terms of gender, taking time out to have children was not brought up as problematic in navigating future trajectories for female members of staff. Clearly however, this 're-storying' of adulthood is a process which consistently comes into conflict with traditional discourses of both becoming and acting adult (Horton & Kraftl 2006b; Valentine 2003), such as anxieties over financial sustainability, as Paul (male, Instructor, 25-35) indicates:

"I do enjoy the work, I do like it. I don't know whether it's the most sustainable – financially, probably the main reason. I could definitely see myself still doing this for 5, 10 years, equally I could see myself leaving working outdoors all together just to earn a bit more money."

Paul's concerns are understandable given several admissions during fieldwork that staff do not work in this industry "*for the money*". Many of the ideals embedded in the outdoor community, such as the relatively low importance of materialism and monetary gain, are not compatible with the ideals of adulthood where a sufficient and regular income are prioritised. Here we seen again, in spite of Paul's assertion that it is not a financially viable career, that employment in the OBT may provide a strategy for living these alternative adulthoods, through steady income, a pension scheme and a permanent job contract. In addition, through this effort to maintain a commitment to community ideals, cope with the demands of the profession and continue with lifestyles which meet their personal needs, we can see different patterns of spatio-temporal mobility emerging. Some instructors become more fixed in space, as with Len and John. Others, by virtue of the favourable nature of OBT employment, are spending more time in one place and job before moving on, while others are remaining spatially mobile through holiday leave and sabbaticals, but continue to return to the spaces of the OBT.

Despite the enduring rhetoric around linear transitions from childhood to adulthood and the idea of 'growing up', OBT instructors' career trajectories are emblematic of a process more akin to 'going on' (Horton & Kraftl 2006b) or 'navigation' (Evan & Furlong 1999) through life. Despite the relative focus of this chapter on 'adults', the childhood/adulthood binary is ambiguous (see Chapter 1), and the extension of education-work transitions affords a conceptualisation of some of the outdoor instructors in this study as negotiating this phase of life. As Valentine (2003) contends, traditional transitional patterns are being replaced by a variety of routes into 'adulthood', and here I have presented employment within the Trust as one such mechanism to 'navigate' a route. Additionally, Holt (2007) suggests that despite observations that identities take on a spatial complexity which can act to reproduce socio-spatial inequality (see also Holt 2008; Gregson & Rose 2001; Thomas 2005), everyday performances can also *transform* these inequalities. Indeed, embodied performances can 'destabilize' expectations placed on particular bodies (Holt 2008). Given this, instructors' everyday socio-spatial practices – for example, maintaining a permanent contract whilst continuing to take sabbaticals or travel, or conducting 'alternative' lifestyle practices whilst owning a home – can transform dominant societal positionings (Ibid.).

139

5.5. Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the *people* of the OBT and the particular dispositions, teaching practices and mobilities of OBT staff. There are a number of paradoxes, in individualism versus altruism, and place-basedness versus mobility, which are embodied in their roles as instructors.

I have theorised the OBT as a distinct CoP, where close social networks play a crucial role in embedding and perpetuating the goals and practices of the organisation. I have shown how the working environment is characterised by autonomy and trust, as well as an extensive culture of informal knowledge pooling/sharing. This allowed instructors to accrue multiple forms of *capital* (Bourdieu 1986), which were distinctly 'embodied' (Holt 2008). In illuminating the accumulation of capital, I have demonstrated how outdoor instructors' understandings of self were embedded in specific places through personal histories, and this had an impact on their chosen work locations. Simultaneously, individual identities were realised through a 'culture of mobility', which acted to embody the aims of outdoor education, and consequently exemplifies the recursive relationship between the development of social and cultural capital. Indeed, this chapter has strongly emphasised the ways in which individual values are embedded in and reproduced through the organisation. I have also hinted at how embodied capital subconsciously reproduces dominant social orderings, contributing to Holt's (2008) recasting of social capital which acknowledges how sociability and performances of habitus can reproduce socio-economic inequalities.

In outlining the ways in which outdoor instructors 'embody' social capital and its perceived value within the field of outdoor education, I have illustrated more clearly how they become role models through their practices. I have identified instructors as cultural mediators who provide an interpretation of the landscape through the instrumental, educational, relational and choreographic dimensions of their jobs. In so doing, I have built on the body of geographical work on 'play' and 'playing' (e.g. Woodyer 2012), identifying outdoor education as a space where adult cultures can potentially be challenged, and boundaries between work and play are blurred. Furthermore, a focus on the role of the educator in the production of particular learning spaces contributes to a growing body of work on the *cultural* geographies of education (Mills & Kraftl 2016), through considering performance, identity and emotion in this educational space.

The challenging of dominant adult cultures has also been explored through instructor mobility. The Trust, and the changing nature of the outdoor industry more generally, represented a

strategy through which staff could operate differing patterns of mobility. These were devised to meet personal needs, and an attempt to reconcile the subcultures of lifestyle sports with more mainstream lifestyle practices, or create 'alternative versions of adulthood'. Here I have offered some empirical insights into the uniting of 'life politics' (Giddens 1991) with traditional models of transitions to adulthood. Patterns of mobility varied with age and experience, and, although it did not appear as a significant factor, Valentine (2003) contends that employment landscapes are strongly shaped by gender. This highlights a need for more research on the experiences of outdoor instructors across the life-course, to tease out the impact of societal positionings on these 'alternative versions of adulthood'.

Overall, this chapter has explored the various factors which influence the dispositions and practices of outdoor instructors, and provided a clearer picture of their career trajectories. It is apparent that OBT staff value both job security and job flexibility, autonomy, and the opportunity to engage in developmental experiences. Their identities are embedded both in place and mobility, and it is these qualities that they embody in their role as instructors. The next chapter examines the key elements in the courses that these instructors deliver, incorporating the voices of both staff and young people. In so doing, Chapter 6 builds on the discussion so far to critically analyse the 'Outward Bound experience', in relation to the overall project aims.

CHAPTER SIX

The Outward Bound experience

6.1. Introduction

The proliferation of multiple forms of outdoor education practice, with varying educational, economical and therapeutic agendas, make it difficult to define and qualify its scope (Wattchow & Brown 2011). Further, attempts to quantify the extensive range of outdoor education practices appear to mask deeper investigation into some of the subtler processes and elements of outdoor education experiences. As such, this chapter primarily focuses on the OBT *process.* It draws on the voices of instructors and young people to identify some of the key elements in Outward Bound courses, and utilises a diverse body of literature to understand how these aspects of OBT courses are significant for both instructors and young people. In so doing, this chapter moves beyond the key experiential concepts of adventure, risk, and physical challenge, to consider other ways in which the pedagogical approach of outdoor education seeks to be impactful and effective. Additionally, the sections of this chapter are tied together through the key concept of *time,* from the broader temporal narratives of citizenship education and 'developing' young people, to the small-scale and individual spatio-temporal daily practices of instructors.

Chapter 6 is divided into 3 main sections. Section 6.2 begins with a consideration of OBT founder Kurt Hahn's original aims, and traces their evolution towards a neoliberal agenda and the project of citizen-making. It analyses the overarching rhetoric of the OBT, exploring the role of 'macro-' and 'micro-policies' in shaping interpretations of citizenship discourse and the mismatch between rhetoric and practice. Section 6.3 discusses the role of the residential experience in OBT courses as an important time-space for relationship-building, developing independence and making memories. These discussions combine data from staff and young people interviews with literature from the field of emotional and affective geographies, and positive youth development. Section 6.4 discusses the implications of time in OBT courses, constituted in myriad ways. Here, I introduce the ideas of 'slow' and 'fast adventure' (Varley & Semple 2015), and 'ecopedagogy' (Antunes & Gadotti 2005; Kahn 2010), to explore the 'methodological slowness' of the OBT's pedagogy. I unpack the role of time on the physical bodily encounters in outdoor education spaces and the Outward Bound 'experience', and tie

this chapter to the forthcoming Chapter 7 on young peoples' embodied experiences. This section also addresses the contentious issue of the use of technology in outdoor education practice. Finally, section 6.5 offers some brief conclusions to Chapter 6's contributions to the overall thesis.

6.2. Going Outward Bound: pedagogy and process

The present-day OBT takes a different form to the original Outward Bound School, conceived of and developed by Kurt Hahn in the 1940s. As Chapter 2 outlined, the early days of the organisation were deeply embedded in the rationales of British youth movements and long-standing ideals around young people as 'citizens-in-the-making' and in need of 'training' (Mills 2013). This initial Hahnian vision of 'character education' and education for leadership gave way to the broader initiative of 'personal growth' in the 1960s and 70s (Freeman 2011). This turn toward individual development resonates with a long-standing interest in (youth) citizenship across the political spectrum, indicated by such initiatives as New Labour's 'Third Way' (Hall *et al.* 2000; Lawy & Biesta 2006) and the coalition government's 'Big Society' (Mills 2013). There is a substantial body of literature on the geographies of (youth) citizenship, much of which is concerned with the problematic idea of youth as being in a state of 'becoming' where future adulthood is valued over the 'here and now' of childhood (Hall *et al.* 2000; Mayall 2006), and the distinctly neoliberal flavour of citizenship (and citizenship education) discourse (Mills & Waite 2017; Pykett 2010a). Much of the OBT promotional material is indicative of youth work seeking to steer young people toward a particular set of 'citizenly' behaviours and practices and help them to become emotionally competent, responsible, entrepreneurial and individualistic citizens (Pykett 2010b). However, the data in this study reveals the flexibility and autonomy that instructors had (Chapter 5), which meant that there was variability in the way that they understood the aims of the Trust and what they were trying to achieve with, and do for, young people. Therefore, this section builds on Mills' (2013) historical study of scouting in Britain and Jessica Pykett's (2010b) critical analysis of the 'pedagogical state' (Hunter 1994, Kaplan 2007), drawing on this study's data set to examine the enactment of youth citizenship beyond a school setting. In so doing, I analyse the Outward Bound learning process, tracing it from its historical roots to present day practices, to explore if and how its key messages have changed. Given the continued pertinence of citizenship to political and social debate and geographical enquiry, I interrogate the particular citizenship agenda of the OBT and why it might, or might not, resonate with young people.

143

6.2.1. Old messages in new boxes? Developing pedagogy in practice

In their original conception, OBT courses were geared toward physical prowess and fitness for war, valorized through a Hahnian character education approach (Freeman 2011, see also Chapter 2). However, during the 1960s and 1970s the language of 'personal growth' and 'self-discovery' began to filter into OBT rhetoric. This came in line with educational research on moral development, and an attempt to distance the OBT from the 'martial' masculinity associated with war (Allin 2000; Brown & Fraser 2009; Freeman 2011). The idea of 'personal growth through adventure' increasingly came to the fore, conferring an impact on the individual rather than society as a whole.

In its current form, the OBT's pedagogical approach revolves around offering young people the chance to experience *authentic adventure* (OBT 2017c). This entails a physical journey (and expedition), challenging activities in the natural environment, pushing young people to the edge of their capabilities and ensuring progression across the time-span of the course (Ibid.). Authentic adventure is designed to act as a metaphor through which young people can "reflect on the skills attitudes and insights that helped them on their Outward Bound journey and how these will help them in the future" (OBT 2017b: 9). As their research outputs and promotional reports illustrate, this process is orchestrated to achieve a range of outcomes, including resilience and determination, self-discipline and planning, and team-work (OBT 2017c). Thus, we can see the, albeit refined and extended, individualistic rhetoric of the original Outward Bound movement clearly incorporated into OBT's contemporary process of authentic adventure.

As Hall *et al*. 1998 point out, despite the fact that the language of citizenship does not always feature in debates around youth work (See Mills 2013 and Mills & Waite 2017 for exceptions), it is well primed to prepare young people for some elements of citizenship. In particular, the nature of youth work as active and participatory resonates strongly with the politically popular 'active' construction of citizenship (Hall *et al.* 2000), where participation and responsible social action have become key markers of citizenship status (Davies & Evans 2002; Hall *et al* 2000; Mills & Waite 2017). Further, this type of education for citizenship has strong neoliberal connotations. Petersen and O'Flynn (2007) highlight the hegemony of neoliberal rationality in Western nations and educational programmes as vehicles of particular regimes of truth about what it means to be a good person and the desirable citizen-subject. These 'mainstream' ideas are not restricted to the highly governed spaces of schools (Gagen 2015), but seep into

seemingly alternative educational spaces (Mills & Kraftl 2014). The original aims of the Outward Bound schools, as outlined in the official declarations, were the development of insight, self-confidence, sense of discipline, spirit of service, perseverance and initiative (Carpenter 1958). In so far as these aims relate to engendering self-control (Gagen 2015), self-knowledge and understanding (Petersen & O'Flynn 2007), and a duty and moral responsibility (Hall *et al.* 2000), they speak to Foucauldian discourses on subjectification and 'technologies of the self' (Foucault 1988). Consequently, these early OBT messages align closely with more contemporary political discourses aimed at producing "'responsibilizing' active, entrepreneurial and individualistic citizens" (Pykett 2010b: 621).

An analysis of current published OBT aims paints a not dissimilar picture of outcomes for citizenship development. The Outward Bound Trust Social Impact Report 2017 presents the OBT 'Theory of Change' (OBT 2017c) (Figure 6.1), which details how through their courses, participants become "more aware of their capabilities and develop confidence and self-belief" (Ibid.). It suggests that course activities lead to better goal-setting abilities and foster personal responsibility. OBT participants are also expected to improve their social skills, such as leadership, teamwork and communication, and develop a stronger sense of perseverance and resilience (Ibid.). Ultimately, these outcomes are rationalized through their ability to equip young people with the skills to 'thrive in their education, training and work' (OBT 2017c: 13).

In line with this theory of change, 'The journey of a young person' (OBT 2017c) (Figure 6.2) outlines the positive upward trajectory that an Outward Bound participant experiences as a result of their OBT course. The young person at the beginning is pictured as being in 'deficit', in line with some contemporary frames of reference around young people (Mills & Kraftl 2016). Speech bubbles depict their inner most thoughts; *"I don't know how to handle my workload"*, *"I don't know what I am good at"*, *"I'm afraid of failing"*, and *"I'm worried about what people think about me"*. Tracing the infographic through the residential and adventurous experiences of the OBT, and back into young people's home and school environment, young people are shown to have greater access to higher education, apprenticeships and employment, and ultimately be more successful in these endeavours. The focus is no longer on preparation for war, but a clear orientation toward preparing young people to be 'adult citizens who can and will engage in paid work and take social responsibility' (Mayall 2006: 10). Although less explicitly conveyed in the title, parallels can be drawn with Mills & Waite's (2017: 69) work

on the National Citizen Service[15] (NCS), which they observe to be a scheme "powerfully crafted at the national scale". Despite a move-away from war time messages there is still a heavy emphasis on enabling young people to be contributors to British Society. The present day OBT continues to align with Foucauldian discourses, reflecting the importance of self-control, self-knowledge and moral responsibility. Moreover, this neoliberal rhetoric indicates childhood in its present tense as devalued (Ibid.), duplicating a future-orientated, children as citizens-in-the-making message that is reflected in other current youth work practices (Mills & Kraftl 2014).

In interviews with staff, participants in this research project felt that the key messages and the ethos of the organisation had not changed since its inception. What had changed, as indicated through the notion of *authentic adventure* above, was the deliberate structuring of experience through which the OBT sought to elucidate its ethos and key messages. As Stephen (Male, Operations Manager, 55-65) asserted:

> *"The key messages when I started were there were no key messages. It was very much a part of the great outdoors is good for you and there's some educational links but it's all very tenuous and now it's absolutely crystal clear."*

Lawey & Biesta (2006: 36) highlight the pre-eminence of a 'quintessentially male-dominated, able-bodied and paternalistic society' during the time of development of the OBT. If we consider that Outward Bound, in line with the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme[16] (DoE), predates the ascendency of hegemonic neoliberalism (Petersen & O'Flynn 2007), then we can see a youth movement grounded in 1950s societal values as opposed to a more purposeful agenda. Indeed, as Matless (1998; 2016) observes, in early 20th Century England rural pursuits took on a new scale and scope. Open-air leisure such as walking, camping and map-reading, made up an "'art of right living' whereby individual and nation might give form to itself environmentally, generating intellectual, moral, physical and spiritual health" (Matless 2016: 94). The formally unrefined messages of the OBT were clearly linked to the "complex social, political and cultural textures" of (rural) England (Mills & Kraftl 2014: 5).

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[15] The National Citizen Service is a short term voluntary scheme for 15-17 year olds delivered across England and Northern Ireland. It was formally launched in 2011 under the banner of the Conservative Party's 'Big Society' initiative (Mills & Waite 2017).
[16] The Duke Edinburgh Award scheme was founded in the 1950s, also by Kurt Hahn, 'to encourage and motivate young people over the age of 14 years to become involved in a balanced programme of voluntary self-development activities' (www.dukeofednsw.au.com/history) (Petersen & O'Flynn 2007).

THE OUTWARD BOUND TRUST'S THEORY OF CHANGE

OUR APPROACH... WHAT IT MEANS TO BE OUTWARD BOUND[12]:

AUTHENTIC ADVENTURE

Adventure provides opportunities for individuals to respond to challenge and uncertainty. When positively experienced, this encourages them to embrace, rather than avoid, challenge and uncertainty in the future. Research confirms that adventure in natural environments improves psychological outcomes such as self-efficacy, resilience and well-being[13].

IN THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

Wild and unpredictable environments, such as those in which we operate, provide optimum conditions for authentic adventure to take place. Learning that takes place in natural settings has been associated with outcomes ranging from increased knowledge and understanding, the development of skills, improved attitudes and behaviours to health and well-being and self-worth[14].

DELIBERATE LEARNING

Programmes delivered with specific outcomes and integrated into the curriculum have been shown to deliver stronger and more lasting outcomes[15,16]. Learning strategies such as goal-setting[17] and feedback[18] are effective at improving pupil outcomes. Instructors, qualified both as outdoor practitioners and to facilitate learning, work with participants for the duration of their course. The instructor has been shown to be an important factor in the effectiveness of outdoor learning programmes[19].

THE RESIDENTIAL EXPERIENCE

Research has shown that residentials impact on relationships between staff and students; develop resilience, self-confidence and well-being; and improve engagement with learning, behaviour, and preparedness for transitions into new environments[20].

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A COURSE:

Participants achieve more than they believe themselves capable of

Participants overcome physical and emotional **challenges** in the natural environment which require **sustained effort** and result in **emotional reward**

Participants approach tasks that require planning and team cohesion, and reflect on their performance

Participants **live and work with others**

WHAT THIS ACHIEVES:

Participants become more **aware of their capabilities** and develop **confidence and self-belief**

Participants develop **perseverance, resilience** and **problem-solving skills**

Participants become better at **planning** and **setting goals**; and develop **personal responsibility**

Stronger **relationships** are formed, contributing to the development of **social skills**, such as teamwork, communication, leadership and empathy

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:

Participants have higher **aspirations** and **expectations** for the future

Participants develop the **mental strength** needed to cope with setbacks and work towards their aspirations

Participants are better equipped to **plan** the steps they need to achieve their goals and **follow through with them**

Participants are better able to **work in environments** that require them to work **alongside others** to achieve their goals

The Outward Bound course acts as a **catalyst** for positive change. The positive results seen from small changes encourage further change, and thus young people continue to develop following their Outward Bound course.

YOUNG PEOPLE ARE EMPOWERED WITH THE ATTITUDES, SKILLS AND BEHAVIOURS THEY NEED TO MAKE POSITIVE CHANGES IN THEIR LIVES

YOUNG PEOPLE THRIVE IN THEIR EDUCATION, TRAINING AND AT WORK, AND THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES

The environment to which participants return after the course must provide opportunities for them to continue to develop.

Alongside the above personal outcomes, participants engage positively with inspirational natural environments, increasing their awareness and sense of personal responsibility towards them.

Figure 6. 1   The Outward Bound Trust's Theory of Change (OBT 2017c: 12-13)
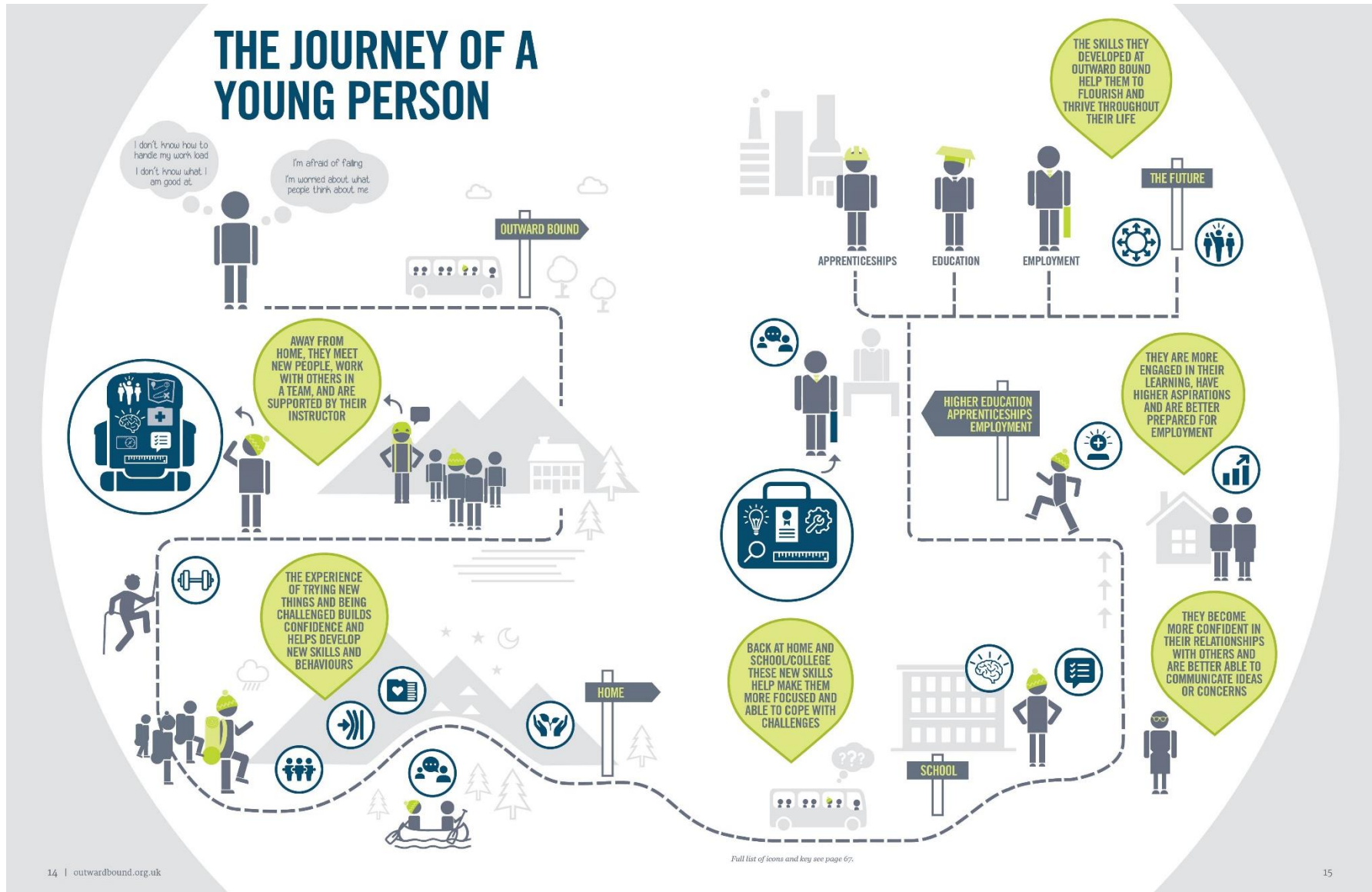
Figure 6. 2   The Journey of a Young Person (OBT 2018c: 14-15)

The increasingly structured nature of OBT activities is reflected in the changing working practices of the industry more broadly, discussed in section 5.4. Outdoor education is becoming commercialised and condensed (see section 6.4) under global pressures, which further evidences a neoliberal political rationality in an increasingly economistic education sector (Pykett 2010b). Petersen and O'Flynn (2007) use the example of DoE to argue that education programmes can converge with particular ideologies and come to play a part in the construction of neoliberal selves and desires. I argue that this can be seen in the communicated aims of the OBT, whereby (informal) education holds an important place in civil society as a training ground for participation at the national scale to compete in a global market. As Mills and Kraftl (2014) contend, spaces of informal education can be an extension of the institution of formal education in their ability to address the needs of the state and mobilise wider political discourses.

To some extent, the adoption of counter-cultural lifestyle sports (Wheaton 2010) as a means of pursuing the OBT's aims could mediate neoliberal tendencies. These activities put a cultural emphasis on participation and a step away from traditional sporting discourses, which have inherently dominant masculinities and ideals around disciplining the body, performance and competition. However, Wheaton points to a landscape of alternative sport which is also increasingly institutionalized and professionalized, as well as a values base and physical culture which ultimately dovetails with ideologies of the neoliberal consumer (Wheaton 2010; Heywood 2007). Bronwyn Wood (2016) employs Philo and Smith's (2003) work on 'macro-' and 'micro-politics' to interrogate the traditional binaries of young people's everyday politics. The distinction between macro/micro is useful here too. However, to move beyond the restricted political nature of Wood's paper, I employ the idea of macro-processes to encompass the formalization, commercialization and professionalization processes discussed above. These large national-scale effects have driven outdoor educational practice in a particular direction, but as I discuss in the forthcoming section, micro-processes allow greater fluidity below the surface.

6.2.2. *Adaptability and (ir)relevance*

In considering whether the outcomes outlined in the previous section are actually perceived as being useful to young people, OBT instructors commented during fieldwork on the continued relevance of their courses. Despite the longstanding messages of the OBT, the premise behind

it was not seen as old fashioned, but something that transferred across time and space. Jill (female, L&A Manager, 45-55) viewed it as "*skills for everyday life*" wherein the Trust was "*more about humanity really*", as opposed to a focus on British values and British citizenship. Jill expressed the idea that the OBT worked towards a "*humanity citizenship*", and Suzie (female, Instructor, 25-35) expanded on this idea of skills for everyday life in saying that:

> "*[Y]oung people have always needed to develop themselves, to come out of their families, to come away from home and prove themselves in a different space in a different time. That's never going to change because that's part of growing up. And I think that resilience is the main thing that Outward Bound fosters, and it's exactly the thing that young people need.*"

Suzie went on to discuss resilience as being:

> "*So, a little bit of grit. A little bit of keeping on trying when the going gets tough, a bit of figuring out what their coping strategies are when things get tricky, and the ability to see the benefits of trying harder and pushing through difficult times. And I guess I suppose, a way of looking at challenge as something positive.*"

Suzie and Jill agree that there is a discourse in the OBT regarding producing a particular kind of citizen and facilitating a process of growing up and 'becoming' adult (Valentine 2003). However, the conceptualization of 'humanity citizenship' immediately marks out this discourse as being malleable, and, in reality, instructors prescribed to diverse aims within their work. Owen (male, Head of Centre, 45-55) argued that although the OBT remained aligned to its core values, it had a great deal of flexibility which allowed it to be reinvented and remain current (although this was undoubtedly influenced by trends around youth development). Indeed, staff members discussed a range of outcomes they wished to shape in young people through their courses, including raising confidence and aspirations, building compassion and integrity, creating self-awareness, improving communications skills and gaining independence (discussed later in this chapter). Furthermore, for some of the instructors, they saw their role as purely delivering an experience, as Bevan (male, Instructor, 25-35) suggested:

> "*I think everyone will take something away from it, whether it's a memory, or an experience, or places they've been where they wouldn't normally get to go, or just spending a lot of time with people and making new friends. I think everyone will remember something from when they leave. And hopefully it will make them think a bit differently about themselves as well.*"

In addition, instructors sought to be adaptable to work with the needs of the group, as Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) suggests,

> *"I genuinely don't know what's going to work for somebody until I sit down and speak to them, you know and that could be 2 days after meeting them. Then actually I go 'ok what this person really needs is to just chill, relax and slow everything down a bit and stop jumping into stuff', or 'this person really needs to be built up in confidence'. You know it says [it's] all about their values and stuff but what they actually need is 'this' and that's going to make them better at 'that'."*

The intended learning outcomes of the course were therefore not only those that the school prescribed or what was proposed on the OBT website. They also were based on the individual instructor's values base and interpretation of outdoor education, and their judgement of the group of young people presented to them. This links to the instructor autonomy discussed in Chapter 5, and Suzie was almost defiant in the way she approached this, suggesting that *"you can wrap it up in a label, [but] I don't work to have a high adventure or a top right experience, I go with what's good for the group"*. Similarly, Mia (female, Instructor, 25-35) discussed this personal apprehension of outdoor learning and her distinctly individual approach, as she explained:

> *"[F]or me it's all about the values. It's about developing people's potential and giving them a chance to shine in an environment they haven't been in before or getting them involved in something they haven't done before and really inspiring them. And it's about developing their compassion and understanding for other people, and their personal integrity, wherever they want to go afterwards. That's what it means for me, I think for a lot of people it's just 'outdoor education', it's just being cold and wet and miserable outside. Which is only a really small part of it!"*

In Martin and Leberman's (2005) study of an Outward Bound New Zealand course, they concluded that prescribed objectives limit course outcomes. From the individualised approach that instructors took in planning their courses, the OBT seemed to navigate the line between specified courses and working toward individual needs. There was a negotiation between pre-given conceptualizations of citizenship, and the ideals of young people and instructors. Through the personalisation of activities, the OBT also aligned with the Positive Youth Development (PYD) framework which calls for individual experiences and learning about 'self' (Armour *et al.* 2012).

151

Jessica Pykett's (2010b) work is also useful when analysing the individualised approach of instructors. Pykett (2010b) utilises the concept of the 'pedagogical state' (Hunter 1994; Kaplan 2007) to question the neoliberal nature of educational reform and the constitution of neoliberal subjectivities through (formal and informal) schooling. A focus on pedagogy highlights both *constraining* practices of training and civilising, and *enabling* practices of skill development and teaching knowledge. Pykett critiques an overly romantic view of childhood and a pessimistic view of adult agency in Kaplan's (2007) interpretation of the pedagogical state and Bernstein's (1996) account of the 'totally pedagogised society'. Pykett suggests that these accounts neglect the nature of pedagogic power in allowing for enabling capacities, and overstating the controlling and constraining aspects. Pykett's paper draws on primary research wherein secondary school teachers adapted the curriculum to fulfil personal beliefs around social inequality and countering dominant social trends. As Pykett (2010b: 627) suggests, "neither teachers nor students are 'captured' by a 'totally pedagogised' society, though they do […] exist in circumstances which attempt to shape their behaviours, values and actions".

In this project, OBT instructors evidenced their pedagogical power and enacted their agency on the learning process by interpreting these 'circumstances' in their own way. Further, the OBT represents just one of many non-state actors entwined in the process of citizenship education, which limits the idea of education for citizenship as a unified state agenda (Pykett 2010b). Here we can see the range of scales identified by Mills and Waite (2017), with OBT instructors educated at a variety of (international) institutions and bringing these variegated knowledges to their roles. Instructors therefore play a "hugely important mediatory role, and cannot be considered as either totally autonomous or merely automatons" (Pykett 2010b: 628).

Lawy and Biesta (2006) call for a more up-to-date vision of citizenship which moves beyond the parochial notion of *citizenship-as-achievement*. They propose the conceptualization of *citizenship-as-practice* which does not presume a predefined trajectory for young people but incorporates everybody as citizens navigating this social practice. This conforms neatly with Horton and Kraftl's (2006b) commentary on the 'ongoingness' and non-linearity of childhoods, where attending to the material and the mundane highlights how things come to matter and are implicated in everyday lives. Lawy and Biesta recognise this need for a more dynamic understanding of transitions through life, identifying citizenship as a set of ongoing practices embedded in multiple contexts through the day-to-day realities of young people's lives. OBT instructors understood that they presented just one dimension of young people's lived realities. They worked with the immediacy of the situation, and, despite the long-term rhetoric of

apprenticeships and employment, focused on the here-and-now through the creation of a positive experience in the outdoors. As Paul (male, Instructor, 25-35) commented:

"Genuinely I think the most important thing they can take away is if they have a good time, a fun time with other people, ideally their peers. And they associate the outdoors with fun and just having a good time. And I think that leads to a whole range of good things. Being outside is just a great thing for your physical health, and if you're just having a good time then you're building relationships. So I think that is the most important thing. Above and beyond any of the learning that we do."

As Paul suggests, through the flexibility and individual approach of OBT staff, OBT practices were able to subvert neoliberal agendas, and present a move toward *citizenship-as-practice*. The way in which instructors moulded the OBT's key messages to suit their own and their students' needs represented 'micro-processes' – the informal and personal practices relating to identity, agency and participation (Wood 2012). Here we can see citizenship enacted at different scales, and various interpretations of what 'citizen-subjects' might look like. As Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) contends, "*I don't think it will ever stop being relevant because it's about that connection to the outdoors*". For Tim, the OBT was grounded in something more environmental and spiritual, whereas Paul alluded to the relational aspects of enjoying outdoor spaces, and Jill strived for a commitment to humanity. As highlighted in the previous sub-section, educational programmes have the potential to converge with particular (neoliberal) ideologies (Petersen & O'Flynn 2007). It must therefore be the case that these programmes can be bent to the will of alternative messages and rhetoric.

Despite this, it is arguable whether the individual approach of OBT staff had any real impact on participants in the way that they intended. In this research project, responses regarding what young people had 'learned' on their courses were mixed, and often young people could see that it was designed to benefit their social and personal skills but struggled to identify specific areas where they had improved. More often than not, the practicing or achievement of physical capabilities was the most important aspect, as Buddy and Lawrence (both male, year 9, rural) illustrate:

Interviewer: Do you ever think about your week now and relate back to it?

Buddy: I'd say in Cadets when, we plan for expedition and stuff, 'cos we looked at maps, it's kind of that.

Lawrence: It's like when we did our [DoE] practice expedition, I just thought to push myself through it, like, you've done this sort of thing before climbing mountains [in OBT], so I can do it.

Conversely, some young people, especially from schools located in urban environments, struggled to relate their OBT experiences beyond the realm of their week, partly due to the perceived incompatibility between the places of the OBT and their home environments. However, that is not to say that they did not enjoy it or would not go back if offered the opportunity. As Lawy and Biesta (2006: 45) contend, young people "routinely participate in a range of different practices […]. These provide qualitatively different opportunities for learning-from-action". As a site of one of these practices, the OBT becomes "grounded in a complex myriad of experiences that are practiced in the day-to-lives of young people" (Ibid: 46). Through a series of 'micro-processes', the OBT are able to adapt and create their own discourses around youth development, which are both relevant and irrelevant to young people.

6.3. Residentials and relationships

For the young people in the study, spending time in their specified Outward Bound and friendship groups constituted a powerful aspect of their OBT experience. The importance of these peer group relations chime with Armour *et al*.'s (2012) observation regarding the prominent role of positive relationships in successful sporting interventions, in the context of an outdoor education programme. The residential element[17] is part of the OBT's learning process whereby young people can share "their lives for a short period of time" (OBT 2017b). In interviews, OBT staff highlighted the significance of spending extended periods of time with peers and its contribution to stronger friendships. The impact of the residential course was also discussed as a means of learning how to become more responsible and independent. Notably, it proved to be a source of conversation in the young people interviews; related to matters such as sharing rooms and group dynamics, eating the centre food, and getting up early every morning. As Loynes (2017) observes, residential experiences are experiencing a renaissance, with the value of the residential aspect adding further possibility to the gains of outdoor education as a pedagogic approach. Given the prominence of the residentially-based social interactions and situations in fieldwork, which occurred both in relation to and separately from

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[17] 'Residential' in this context is taken to mean an outdoor education experience which involves staying away from home for one night or more (Christie & Higgins 2012)

the outdoor activities, this section shines a light on some of these discussions to tease out the role of the residential experience in outdoor education programmes.

6.3.1. Building relationships & friendships

As section 6.2 outlined, much of the focus in OBT courses is on individual growth, and outward-facing messages revolve around pushing personal limits and developing a young person's 'resilience' (OBT 2017b). However, the idea of OB as an environment for building interpersonal relationships came across very strongly throughout the research process. Relationship-building was perceived by the staff to occur in three dimensions: through intra-group, peer-to-peer relationships; through relationships with significant adults; and through relationships with the natural environment (see Chapter 7 for a full discussion of child-nature relations).

The ability to engage and work effectively with group members was a desired outcome of specific OBT courses seeking to improve communication. A number of the instructors also placed a personal emphasis on improving these skills:

> *"I think I could run a whole course on communication. Looking at body language, tone, words, facial expressions, tone, volume… yeah. It's so powerful. […] And I find that at the end of many of my courses the best bit is that they sat and talked. And had real conversations and got to know each other."* (Gemma, female, Instructor, 25-35)

Gemma particularly valued work on communication skills in what she perceived to be *"a culture of social media and messaging in different formats"*. Similarly, Aoife (female, Instructor, 25-35), a group instructor during the ethnographic fieldwork, was of the opinion that the ability to work together as a team was so fundamental that there really was not much point in focusing on anything else during the week until they were working together relatively successfully. In addition, instructors commented that friendships had the opportunity to develop so much more quickly in the environment of the OBT, in contrast to school environments:

> *"[A]t the end of the course, the best bit for them was having time to get to know each other better. Because their school lives are so rushed and they don't get that time to sit and find out about each other in the way that we did. So they kind of grew together as a group, and they were just going off to transition together in their 6th year as a slightly stronger team."* (Lucy, female, L&A Manager, 35-45).

The young people in the study also focused on the OBT as an opportunity for socialising and strengthening friendships. Some of the reasons cited for deciding to go on the trip were being able to go with friends and wanting to make new friends. As Eva (year 7, urban) suggested, *"I wanted to go because I didn't have a lot of friends, and I wanted to meet new people. And I definitely did".* Indeed, one of the case study schools regularly ran an OBT trip at the beginning of year 7 as means of helping pupils make friends in their transition from primary school.

One of the most pertinent episodes to illustrate the importance of the social aspects for young people occurred during fieldwork with Woodland Academy. At one evening activity session, Aisha and Haani chose not to turn up. When we were discussing this in the interview, Aisha suggested that she found some the OBT activities fun, which was great because at home she was often bored. However, she also found some activities boring, and she couldn't be bothered to go (to the evening session). She said that some of her friends felt the same, and just *"wanted to sit in their rooms"*. She elaborated on this to explain that *"we wanted to sit in the room, but everyone was there so like, everyone just went into this one room"*. The incidence of 'truancy' appeared to be more about being able to spend free time with friends rather than desperately trying to avoid taking part. Aisha clearly valued the residential set up of the centres in providing a relatively unstructured time and space to be with friends, and pointed to the potential opportunities that young people had to socialise. She added that she chose to go because *"my friends were going so obviously we could do it together, because I don't go out with my friends because I'm not allowed"*. This is reflective of the Woodland Academy students, who commented that much of their free time was spent at Mosque or with their family, and they often did not see their school friends outside of the school day.

Bunnell *et al.* (2012) observe that friendship is as an extremely significant element in young people's lives and highlight schools as important sites of socialization. From Aisha and Eva's words above, and the experience of OBT instructors, it is clear that young people's socialization practices and opportunities to develop peer relationships vary across educational institutions and culturally-specific practices. Outdoor education can be viewed as an educational space which affords fundamentally different opportunities for fostering peer-to-peer relationships. The residential element and focus on group-based, unconventional tasks allowed young people to spend a significant amount of time with each other away from the distractions of social conventions such as school and technology. Further to providing space and time to strengthen existing friendships, young people also reported that they made new friends. Harry (male, year 8, rural) felt that his OBT course had significantly broadened his friendship group:

"I feel like our group may have been, at times, really bad, but I hadn't worked with them before in like a group kind of activity – but I actually really enjoyed it and I feel like, we're probably end up – I think we're all going to go to Scotland [OBT Loch Eil] next year, we're doing that one! […] Because honestly I try and keep to my own group of friends. I knew [group member] as a friend before, but I wouldn't really talk to him much. But after [OBT trip] I mean we talk all the time."

As Harry suggests, new friends included young people in their school who they did not formerly consider part of their friendship group. In the case of Meadow Grass Academy, who took part in a mixed-school OBT trip, new friendships incorporated young people from other schools too. Laura's moodboard (Figure 6.3) is illustrative of the role of relationships throughout her OBT course, where her school teacher is purposefully positioned in the centre, surrounded by a picture of herself and her friend Jade, and a picture of the group instructor and myself (researcher). In Laura's words, *"there's Jade, friendship – you [researcher] too, because you helped me through – do things, pushed me, but not outside my comfort zone, but it helped"*. She later reflected that *"friendship was a really key thing on this trip"*. Harry also suggested that he personally achieved more during his OBT course as a direct result of the support he felt he received through friendship. He successfully completed the trapeze activity[18] (Figure 6.4), having not managed to jump from the platform on two previous separate occasions (at OBT Ullswater on a weekend course in years 6 and 7). He described the differences in his experiences:

[T]he other times I did it, all my friends had been in other groups. But I felt like I got to know the people in my group a lot more – especially, I felt more relieved that this time I knew the people that I was with, quite a lot more than in year 7. […] And I probably would have managed to do it year 6, but I was basically with a bunch of year 7s who, I want to say [were] immature, but they weren't the best behaved and –

Interviewer: They weren't supporting you?

Harry: Yeah

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[18] The trapeze involves climbing to the top of a telegraph pole using the foot- and hand-holds, climbing onto platform at the top and then jumping to reach the bar. Participants are attached to a safety harness.
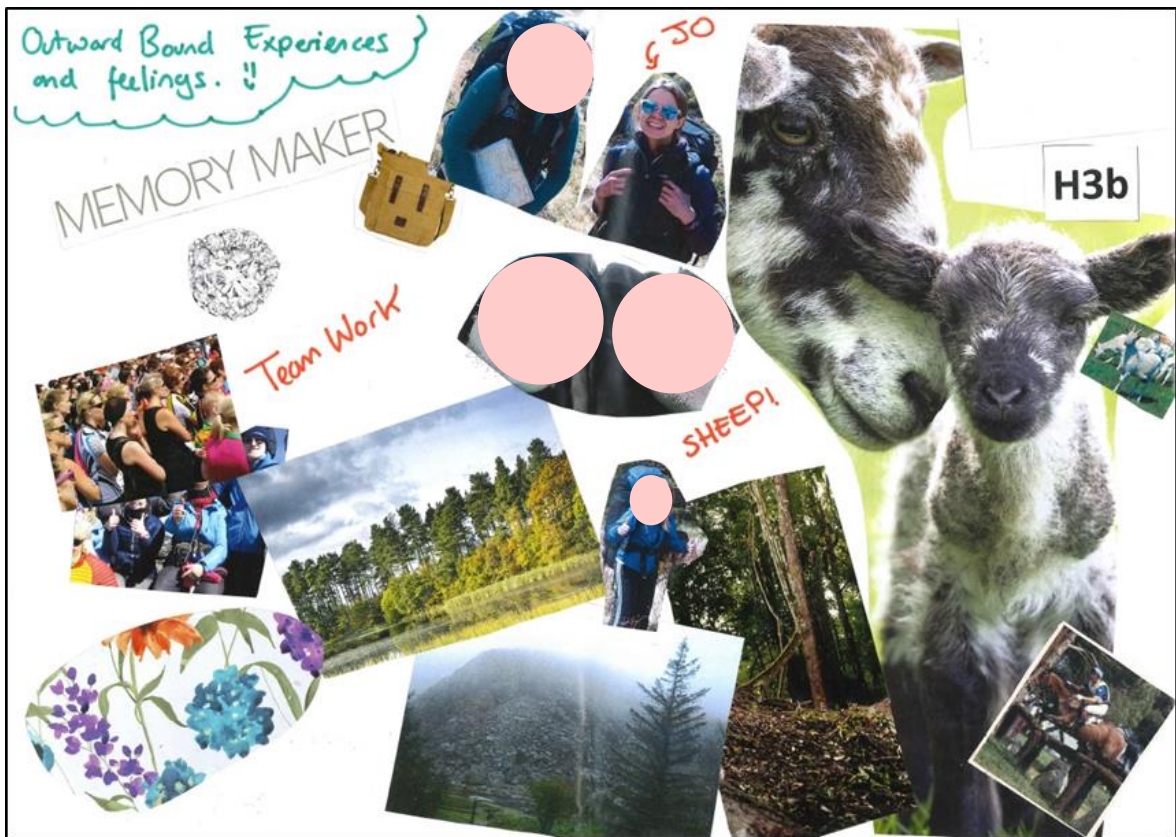
Figure 6. 3   Laura's moodboard

Figure 6. 4   The trapeze at Outward Bound Aberdovey (authors own photographs)

Laura and Harry demonstrate that friendship was a key component of young people's OBT experiences It was a primary source of fun and enjoyment, and also played a role in supporting individual achievements. This adds weight to understandings of informal educational settings as facilitating the development of positive interpersonal skills such as respect, affection, and team work (Hansen *et al.* 2003; Jeffs & Smith 2005). Inspired by the work of Bunnell *et al.* (2012), it is also worth noting that these new or strengthened friendships demonstrated different temporalities and geographies, with some participants suggesting that they continued to socialise with those in their group back at school, whilst others confined their social interactions to the space of the OBT. However, the enduring importance of peer relationships to OBT experiences is demonstrated by the fact that many of the young people suggested they would only go back to the OBT if they could go with their friends. Christie *et al.* (2014) and Kendall and Rogers (2015) highlight the residential process as a means through which young people see each other in new ways with a significantly positive impact on their relationships. Further, and supportive of the regular annual OBT trips run at Meadow Grass Academy, this effect is deemed to be greater when students go away with their own class through progressive and inclusive opportunities, and is also beneficial in bringing students together before their transition to secondary school (Kendall & Rogers 2015).

Relationships with significant adults were also viewed as an essential element of the OBT process. Many instructors commented on the role of school staff in ensuring OBT courses had some long-term impact:

> *"When they're back at school and they're confronted with something that's challenging, or they're confronted with something where they've got to support other people – if the teachers have seen them doing stuff at OB, they can then say 'can you not remember what you did when you were rafting', or 'rocking climbing and helping X on that difficult bit'. And that reminder 4 or 5 times over the period of a year, then it's reinforcing the learning and eventually becomes part of the child's psyche. I think it's important that OB isn't a stand-alone thing, and if the teachers weren't there then I think it's a missed opportunity."* (Len, male, Operations Manager, 45-55)

Certainly, during fieldwork the school staff involved became contributing members of the group, and often commented that they saw different sides to their students during the OBT trip. In general, the young people were positive about having teachers with them, noting that they were *"more chill"* on school trips. One student suggested that having a teacher in the group

improved their week; "*I think what made it really, really good was the fact that we could actually like talk to [teacher]. And we could have a joke with her and she actually made it better*". The group from Woodland Academy did not have a school teacher joining in with them during the week as there were more groups than school staff, and perhaps the young people missed out in this regard. Further, although the staff from Woodland Academy were positive about the overall experience, I would suggest they were not as engaged with the OBT process as other case study schools. They appeared less supportive of the OBT instructors and what they were trying to achieve, with particular staff members looking for opportunities to take a lesser role in the week and seeing it more as time away from school than a learning opportunity for their students. The fact that the girls from Woodland Academy were, in general, the least positive about their OBT experience in follow-up interviews adds weight to Len's words above.

For the instructors, it was necessary to try to build a relationship with the young people in their groups to ensure that they could tailor their courses: "*it's about having that time to build those relationships, to make it individual, and to be able to give someone an experience that they are going to remember for the rest of their lives*" (Tim, male, Instructor, 25-35). However, Aoife (female, Instructor, 25-35) acknowledged that creating a meaningful and reciprocal friendship over the course of just one week was challenging. She compared working for the OBT with a previous job where she would work with young people for between six weeks and three months, commenting that in that situation "*you would really get to know them and build a rapport with them*". Aoife suggested that you can start to build relationships with young people in five days, but it has limited impact:

> "*In [former employment] we would have one-to-ones after the course and they could call into the office – just drop in if they needed to and we would have a chat. And I could say to them like, 'you're being an idiot', or, 'what are you doing?', and it would have an impact, if I said I was disappointed in them they would feel guilty that they'd disappointed me. But if I said that to a kid here [at the OBT] they just wouldn't care.*"

Aoife expressed great enjoyment in getting to know the young people in her group better and building more effective relationships through the longer nineteen-day OBT courses, as opposed to the five-day courses that this project focuses upon:

> "*I love those, because you can see the person develop. And you can see the person change. I think the five-day courses do have an impact, we just don't see it.*"

Other instructors echoed this sentiment, highlighting the personal satisfaction and pleasure they derived from building a strong rapport with the young people they worked with:

"The best bit? When you get those groups that are fun to be around, and you're doing something fun with them, and you're able to take them and share that – it almost feels like you're all in the same thing, you're not just the instructor but you're part of the group. You're having as much fun as they are and you're sharing the experience with them, that you know, because you're going to remember it forever, and they're going to remember it forever." (David, male, Senior Instructor, 25-35)

Gemma also suggested that encouraging those relationships was something quite unique to the work of the Trust, noting that:

"Relationship and building up that journey and relationship and development with young people over five days is so special. I don't think it can be underestimated, and I don't think other places do that. Or certainly nowhere else I've worked in the UK does that in the same way. Or prioritizes those things in the same way."

Aoife, David and Gemma clearly perceived there to be huge value for both the staff and young people in developing positive relationships over the course of the week, and we can relate this to the idea of instructors as role-models, discussed in Chapter 5. There is also a significant body of work in the field of positive youth development, that highlights the role of youth-youth worker relationships; for example, through programmes such as Teaching Personal and Social Responsibility (TSPR) (Hellison 2003; 2011). Indeed, the four core values of the TSPR model – respect the rights and feelings of others, effort (participation), self-direction, and caring and leadership (Jones 2012) – can be seen to support the development of positive peer and participant-instructor relations. However, OBT staff acknowledged that this process could be challenging, and the variable nature of these relationships can be seen in the opinions of the groups regarding their instructors. Some young people enjoyed working with their instructors and were very positive, as Laura and Jade (both female, year 9, rural) indicate:

Interviewer: What did you think of [instructor]?

Jade: Aoife was amazing –

Laura: She was so friendly

Jade: I loved her. Her laugh was amazing!

Interviewer: Do you think she was a good instructor?

Laura: Yeah, even though we didn't get much talking with the other instructors, I think she was definitely one of the best.

However, others were less positive, as Aisha (female, year 8, urban) commented on her instructor that *"I just found him really boring, all my friends said about their group leader seemed way 'fun-er'"*. Armour *et al.* (2012) highlight that key outcomes of outdoor education courses are often relational in nature, and in particular indicate the important role of significant adults in these relationships. This supports the opinion of OBT staff in terms of the necessity of successfully engaging school staff in the OBT process, and the aspirations of individual instructors to build a strong rapport with their groups. However, this section has reflected on the challenges of effectively building these adult-young people relationships in a short time period. The experiences of the young people in the study also draw attention to the significance of peer relationships throughout the OBT process. I have therefore added value to Cartwright's (2012) observation that dialogue is essential to practices of informal education, as well as centring peer relationships in both the geographies of education and experiential learning literature. Clearly, inter-personal skills such as communication and effective team-working are desirable and targeted outcomes of the experiential learning process. However, the opportunity for peer-to-peer socialisation created by the residential setting and intimate group work was highlighted for its merits beyond these externalised goals. Furthermore, peer relationships appeared to be a potentially more impactful element of the OBT experience than youth-adult socialisation for young people.

6.3.2. Independence and homesickness

In addition to providing an environment which fostered the development of inter-personal relationships, the residential centres and OBT courses were seen by participants (both young people and adults) to enable and encourage more independence. This was achieved through the centre layouts, the structuring of the activities, and the overall routine of the week. Instructors saw benefits in spending a week away from home, in addition to the potential for learning through the OBT's pedagogic approach. As one instructor explained:

"Whereas others don't really care as much [about the course and learning], they see it as just like a freedom from parents and away from home for a few days. But I think even that being away from home and having to make your own bed and have a room

inspection, and find your own asthma inhaler, it's huge! It's quite a huge wake-up call
for a lot of kids." (Ruth, female, Instructor, 25-35)

As Ruth suggests, the residential aspects of the OBT and outdoor education more generally – including looking after personal belongings, waking up and attending meals and activity sessions on time, and being responsible for eating and drinking adequate amounts – can be both challenging and valuable for young people and entail a learning process in their own right. Young people also referred to these aspects of their OBT courses in interviews, through discussions of trying and eating different foods, learning to ration their snacks to ensure they had enough energy, and having to get up early every day and remember to bring all the necessary equipment to their activity sessions. Some of the participants clearly saw the benefits of this process for their own personal development, as George (male, year 7, urban) explained:

"I think it was a real experience, because I think it taught everybody how to be more
independent of themselves. Not many people were that – they were more reliant on
maybe their mum and dad, or just the stuff they had around them. So like maybe, fast
food places and stuff…"

George also included the idea of independence in his moodboard (Figure 6.5):

"I think like one [picture] for independence and stuff, like it's not your parents that are
going to hang up your coat, you've got to hang up your coat. You've got to get yourself
up in the morning, you've got to do this for yourself, and you've got to make sure that
you keep up with the group. Like you make sure your group keeps up with everyone
else."

This notion of independence filtered through the residential programme to the physical sites of the centres and participation in activities, where participants enjoyed freedom of movement around the centre grounds and the surrounding landscape. The majority of the students from Meadow Grass Academy had attended a three-day OBT course at the Ullswater centre in year 7, which Eddie (male, year 8, rural) viewed as a more restrictive environment. He perceived Aberdovey to be *"more mature [because] You could go everywhere, […] you have your space and then go to other places. But with Ullswater you basically stay in that space. So very different"*. Similarly, Harry (male, year 8, rural) commented on the spaces of the Ullswater and Aberdovey sites as engendering different feelings:

"I feel like it was a lot more open [Aberdovey], because everything at Ullswater is quite locked away. 'cos, at the centre there was - basically everything was in, at least within 100m meters of each other, but here [Aberdovey] everything was more spaced out. […] It made me feel kind of more, like I was not locked away, I was doing something new. Because obviously I live quite near school. So I normally just take the same route everyday."

Figure 6. 5   George's moodboard, where the motorbiking pictures (centre and right), and fluid motion of water (bottom right) were used to show independence

Harry's interpretation of freedom and openness can be read as the 'affective' influences (Thrift 2004) of the centre site, as new and potentially unsettling, with an element of nervous excitement in his words. This sense of freedom and inferred independence was also significant whilst participating in OBT activities. Jade (female, year 8, rural) commented that the reason she enjoyed the climbing and scrambling was because *"we had more freedom with that – we could go all over the rocks where we wanted to"*. Jade indicates freedom through physical engagement with space, and relatively unrestricted mobilities across the places of the OBT, a

theme that will be explored in Chapter 7. Young people also expressed this freedom of movement as adding to the sense of adventure and 'danger' within OBT courses, through a perceived lack of surveillance from OBT staff and teachers. As Mark (male, year 7, urban) commented,

"It was more dangerous in Wales [Aberdovey], 'cos we were older you guys- you weren't always watching us. Like, you were looking after us well, but in [outdoor activity centre] you always went where an adult was. Like when we were back there [to the OBT centre] sometimes you could just go off."

In these varying aspects of the residential experience we see congruence again with Hellison's (2003; 2011) TSPR model. The model seeks to include young people, depending on their interest, and therefore allows children to be leaders and take other responsibilities not always involved with sport (Hellison *et al*. 2008). There is a process of gradual empowerment, which in OBT presented itself through young people organising themselves and the group to turn up on time, feeling confident and able to move freely in a wild space, and young people ensuring they were fuelling themselves adequately for their activities. Indeed, For Mark and the majority of young people in the study, time away from home and school, and the opportunity to act more independently, was seen as a positive aspect of OBT. However, a small number of participants suffered from homesickness during their course, and this certainly impacted on their enjoyment. For Ella (female, year 9, rural):

"I think going away from my family, that's the hardest thing I can do. 'cos even though I go out with my friends some nights, I do miss my family. I think the Wales trip – that was the longest time away 'cos I didn't have my phone with me. So I couldn't keep in contact with my mum or anything."

These feelings of homesickness often became apparent when trying new activities where the young people felt nervous and less confident. Although homesickness marked out individuals as struggling with the apparent independence, completing the course whilst coping with a longing for home appeared to have a significant positive impact on their perceived learning in regard to responsibility and independence. For example, Amy (female, year 10, rural) used the trip as a test, as she wanted to take part in World Challenge[19] with her school in year 10. After the course, she commented that she knew she had the confidence to stay away from home and

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[19] World Challenge is a UK provider of a range of overseas travel adventure programmes targeted at schools, with expeditions located in developing countries and lasting 3-4 weeks.

could definitely cope with a longer residential trip. Fahmida (female, year 8, urban), who also struggled with homesickness, admitted that taking part in an OBT course had a significant impact on her, commenting in the follow-up interview that:

"[…] the way I was at home, I used to just rely on my mum so much. And now that we went to the Outward Bound Trust, it made me more confident, and more like 'I can do it myself' and I do things myself. So I don't rely on others."

Importantly, Ellie, Muhima, and others who struggled during the week suggested that it was their friends who had the most influence on their mood and confidence. Teachers were key actors in managing homesickness by providing access to mobile phones to enable students to ring their parents. However, the young people consistently suggested that they turned to their peers for comfort and support, over and above teachers and OBT staff. This supports the arguments laid out in section 6.3.1 that relationships between peers held a greater significant in terms of moral support and had a greater influence on young peoples' overall course experience than youth-adult relationships.

6.3.3. Spending time and sharing experiences

Finally, the residential experience was seen as an important opportunity for young people to simply spend time together, socialising, bonding and creating 'micro-memories'. This was both considered as a core course component by OBT staff and highlighted by young people as significantly contributing to their enjoyment (as Aisha alluded to in section 6.3.1). As Sam (male, Instructor, 25-35) commented of the Howtown and Ullswater centres,

"I think the main thing is time for down time – I think both centres, that's an area of weakness. We're really good at managing them 9-5, and then in their evening session. But those times in between, there's not a lot for people to get on with and do. There's spaces for them to go, but they're not really comfortable spaces to relax […] where they can go and sit and chat with friends."

The young people commented on this lack of space too, which is somewhat ironic given the feeling of freedom that they expressed, discussed in the previous sub-section. As Julia (female, year 10, rural), who had attended a previous OBT trip contended, she preferred the Ullswater centre to the Aberdovey centre *because there was a big common room in there [Ullswater], and that's where everybody would sit. If you were trying to find someone that would be the first*

place you'd look". This perception of limited space related to a lack of places to relax and mix with each other, especially when they were not allowed in each other's dormitories. The centre at Aberdovey did have a hall with a pool table and sofas which participants could use in their free time. However, this was separate from the dormitory blocks and was a potential a source of conflict if multiple school groups were trying the use the hall at the same time. Rose and Olivia (female, year 8, urban) highlighted the value in being able to spend time with each other:

Interviewer: What is your main memory of the week?

Olivia: I think just like, being close with everyone. Like when we was – well it was with the adults, but when we was upstairs –

Rose: In the cabin.

Olivia: We were all like making jokes –

Rose: And getting to know each other.

Olivia: Even though we're in different years, like we got close with people that I didn't even know at the beginning.

The opportunity to spend so much time with peers was novel, and the OBT clearly provided an opportunity for a greater expression of the social behaviours demonstrated in school. This was especially so in relation to male/female mixing, where there were numerous instances of: wearing inappropriate clothing; girls and boys in each other's' dormitories without permission; and the playful pairing of girls and boys into 'couples' and subsequent teasing. These 'flirtations' formed a significant feature of Mark and Jordan's week (both male, year 7, urban) and were mentioned several times in interview, for example when discussing their time at the beach:

Mark: But then the beach was also annoying, 'cos they made couple names!

Interviewer: Ah that's cute, who were you coupled with?

Mark: No one!

Jordan: Eva!

Interviewer: How about you Jordan? I bet I can guess!

Mark: 'cos they were always together!

And in the cabin during their overnight expedition:

> *Jordan: It was really funny, because when we were in the cabin two people were sleeping next to each other in the beds and we could take the mic out of them. It wasn't you and Tom [to Mark].*

> *Mark: Oh yeah, that was funny. It was Rose and Solomon.*

> *Interviewer: You guys are so mean!*

> *Mark: No 'cos they had a couple name too! That was what made it funny. That's why I'm happy I wasn't anywhere near Eva.*

The attention given to male/female mixing and the subsequent stories that arose were part of a wider array of small and seemingly insignificant memories which acted to narrate young people's OBT courses. These were moments that occurred alongside the course activities, such as the episodes on the beach and in the cabin described above, but they were not directly related to the activities themselves. Indeed, young people frequently recalled favourite memories or funny moments that were tangential to climbing, walking, or canoeing, but which appeared to play a significant part in their enjoyment of the course. These included Harry rolling out of the group shelter and seemingly turning into an orange as one rolled into his place, Tamara falling into a bog up to her thighs and being dragged out, fearing that the group instructor may have 'fallen off a cliff' as he disappeared for a notable amount of time during camp, James getting Amelia's blanket stuck in his braces, Saffi trying to splash someone and falling out of her canoe, and Lucas leaving his 'Gandhi slippers' at the wharf.

In their Learning Away[20] evaluation, Kendall and Rodgers (2015) observe that a key ingredient in the residential process is the informal time that evenings and overnight stays provide. These are opportunities for unplanned activities, for the events of the day to be discussed and retold, and friendships to be developed. As Loynes (2017: 216) asserts, "this personal and collective narrative built up over the evenings maintains the emerging culture of the group and its ways of being and learning together". The 'micro-memories' explored above evidence this participation in shared experiences, the 'storying' of young peoples' OBT week and building of a group identity. These were the moments that included friendship and laughter, and more

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[20] Learning Away is a UK programme launched in 2009, dedicated to developing 'high-quality residential experiences' that can provide 'powerful learning opportunities' for young people. (www.learningaway.org.uk)

often than not came to the fore in follow-up interviews as young people began to remember their OBT courses. Their weeks were clearly punctuated and shaped by small and impromptu incidents, in addition to the more structured and prominent moments of the trip such as completing an expedition. These were the elements of the trip that the young people could relate to most vividly, and crucially they were *shared* memories which acted to bring the young people together in their experiences.

Furthermore, the prominence of the role of emotion in cultivating these narratives cannot be ignored. Firstly because, as Waite (2007: 334) suggests in relation to outdoor learning, "events with an emotional component are more vivid than neutral ones". And secondly, because children's emotional geographies has become a rich body of work in recent years (Blazek & Windram-Geddes 2013; Kraftl 2013c; Kraftl 2016). Insofar as there is a concern that outdoor education is neglecting specific experiences of place in favour of context-free learning (Wattchow & Brown 2011), these emotionally charged memories (through fun, laughter, anger and so on) act to anchor young people in particular time-spaces. As Cresswell (2004) attends, particular places are articulated through memory and emotional attachment, and we can see this in the narratives of OBT participants. The recounting of these micro-memories in the interviews transported them back to particular places – barns, canoes, and dormitories – and embedded those places in a reflective story of their week.

Finally, outdoor education environments allowed for a potentially different expression of emotions to more mainstream education settings. Work on institutional geographies highlights how particular built environments "seek to restrain, control, treat 'design' and 'produce' […] human minds and bodies" (Philo & Parr 2000: 513-514). Indeed, Kraftl (2016) draws attention to education spaces as a distinguished example of this management and production of emotion. In this study, young people expressed the social and physical spaces of the OBT as allowing considerably more freedom, to move and interact in fundamentally different ways that their school lives allowed. As is well documented and already hinted at in section 6.3.2, outdoor settings are not exempt from certain affective geographies (Urry 2016; Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2009) and the line between emotion and affect is not clear cut (Kraftl 2016). Urry (2016: 77) neatly outlines the way in which the specific historical-cultural construction of landscape structures "the emotional experience of place", and we cannot ignore the visceral affective responses embedded in rural landscapes (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010). Kraftl (2013a) observes how emotions embedded in alternative learning are conceived of in a 'combinative way', with *more-than-social* relations playing out in carefully choreographed spaces (in this case, barns,

canoes and dormitories). This creates moments that *matter*, but only in the context of emotionally and educationally choreographed practices. Given these considerations of emotions within geography, we can understand the formation of shared memories during OBT courses as opportunities to create attachments to particular places, and in some senses act out alternative relationships within educational settings. That said, places of outdoor education still apply manipulative forces on these emotional encounters, through the *more-than-social* (Kraftl 2013a; 2015) and the particular affective 'atmospheres' which pervade place and space (Anderson 2009). Section 6.3 has explored these dynamics of place across the spaces of the OBT to create time for relationship building, opportunities for independent behaviour and the formation of significant 'micro-memories'.

6.4. Learning through time

This section explicitly considers time, which is undoubtedly a common aspect of young people's educational landscapes and, as hinted at already in this chapter, featured regularly during the fieldwork and data analysis. For example, keeping time in terms of attending meals and activities, the logistics of sharing minibuses and 'pick-ups', the timings of high and low tide for jetty jumping, young people's perception of being busy or bored, the (in)adequate course length, the centre as a space which privileged slowness and 'taking time' (see Section 4.2.2.), and spending time with each other (as discussed in the previous section). The temporal elements of both learning in and interacting with the environment have been explored through the notion of 'ecopedagogy' (Dunkley 2018; Payne 2014) and 'slow pedagogy' (Payne & Wattchow 2009); through the problematisation of commodified approaches to outdoor education (Loynes 1998; Beames & Brown 2014) and the use of technology (Cuthberson *et al.*2004); and through the rise of 'slow adventure' (Varley & Semple 2015). This section unpicks the ways in which time plays a defining role in OBT courses. It draws together some of the seemingly disparate literature identified above to create a more coherent picture of the influences of time in outdoor education environments, and considers how it is implicated in the creation of the OBT experience.

6.4.1. *Methodological slowness*

OBT staff conceived the centres and their surrounding environments to be places where the pace of 'action' was decidedly slower and less busy (as Chapter 4 discussed). This was firstly

in relation to young people's everyday lives, where their attention is assumed to be divided between multiple tasks and media outlets in 'hypermodern society' (Auge 2008). Secondly, this perception was in relation to stereotypical outdoor centres, where activities were delivered at a much faster pace and involved more high-adrenaline participation. Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) captures the idea of such a methodological slowness in the pedagogical approach of the OBT:

> *"I think coming to the Outward Bound is quite a shock for a lot of people. When you go to those activity centres, they're fast paced, they're fun – primarily, and it's much more bang for your buck you're getting, really. Whereas an Outward Bound course can be quite slow. And it allows time for people to think and to reflect – everybody loves saying reflect! I always say to groups that fun is kind of a by-product of what we're doing. We are going to go and do some things and some of it's going to be really hard."*

An emphasis on thinking and reflecting indicates a style of delivery which is more personal and in-depth. Allowing participants time and space to have these private and individual moments correlates with the idea of 'slow adventure' put forward by Varley and Semple (2015). Here, Varley and Semple focus on the "importance of the temporal, natural, corporeal, and philosophical dimensions of being, *journeying* and living outdoors" (2015: 73, emphasis added). As indicated in Chapter 4, the OBT privileges the process of travelling through a variety of environments in order to take participants on a physical and corresponding metaphorical journey. These journeys are marked by time and physical interactions with and through places (see section 4.2.3). Slow adventure is that which engages in a "fundamental slowing down" to allow "explorations of and reconnections with" places and communities (Ibid. 2015: 78). This chimes with the OBT's notion of journeying and their broader pedagogical approach focusing on personal, experiential journeys (discussed at the start of this chapter) aided by continuous review and reflection (OBT 2017b). Varley & Semple also seek to re-centre the emotional content of human experience in interactions with the 'more-than-human-world' (Gelter 2000), drawing on the Nordic concept of *friluftsliv* which comprises a cultural practice and lived philosophy of 'outdoor experiencing' (Varley & Semple 2015). Indeed, we can see some of these interactions playing out in Kraftl's (2013a; 2015) related idea of the *more-than-social*.

Outdoor activities have been rapidly commercialised (Beames & Brown 2014; Gelter 2000) in correlation with the broader educational reforms outlined in this chapter's introduction. As Loynes (1998) argued two decades ago, residential outdoor programmes are increasingly

packaged and uniform. For Varley and Semple, this is akin to 'fast adventure' produced for a market place which prioritizes convenience, predictability and comfort. Here, adventurous activities are distilled down to their 'climatic moment' and the 'slow, uncomfortable and less attractive aspects' have been filtered out (Varley & Semple 2015:77). As Geoff (male, Senior Instructor, 35-45) describes the process of OBT expeditions, it is clear that these 'uncomfortable aspects' are at the forefront of OBT experiences:

> *"[D]uring a 9-5 day you can hide, you can just coast through. But if you take them on expedition, even a 24hr expedition, but also our 5-day expeditions and stuff, you can't really hide. You have to come out of yourself. And if you are struggling it will become apparent. And that's when you can truly challenge people and really show what people can do with themselves, and what they're capable of."*

Varley and Semple regard slow adventure as a counter-cultural response to commercialised forms of adventure (and outdoor adventure learning). They regard time as a core strand underpinning the concept, allowing "meaning to be generated and experiences and memories to coalesce" (2015: 79). They argue that modern temporo-spatial pressures leave little time for individuals "to anchor themselves ontologically with places, narratives and histories" (Ibid. 2015: 76). We can see the significance of time in allowing young people to construct meaning from their experiences through the memories they created and friendships they formed (section 6.3). Attempts to ground young people in specific places, narratives and histories are also outlined in Chapter 4 which detailed the regular incorporation of socio-historical sites and stories into OBT courses. This methodological slowness allows for a 'greater place-responsiveness' (Wattchow & Brown 2011) as participants are encouraged to spend time in, and physically and socially engage with, particular environments.

Further, slow adventure is based on an appreciation of the journey, through the qualities of *time, nature, passage* and *comfort*, which impact on the mind and the body (Varley & Semple 2015). Geoff's words above confer the extended timeframe and physical journey of the expedition as an opportunity to generate meaning and impactful experiences. The majority of instructors outlined the expedition to be the most impactful aspect of an OBT course, clearly aligning with their *authentic adventure* pedagogy and the idea of accessing the 'authenticity of experience':

> *"you've got a longer period of time in nature. And, it's not unstructured, but you've got that 24hrs out there, and you're not time constrained. So you've got the opportunity – if you get to the top of a summit and the sun's setting and it's this beautiful moment,*

you can sit for half an hour, and embrace the moment and get the most out of it.”
(Gemma, Senior Instructor, 25-35)

Evidently, the expedition represents methodological slowness *in action*, where time affords participants greater opportunities to engage with each other and with the natural environment. This acknowledges the direct engagement with natural materialities via movement through a physical landscape, which dictates an embodied journey “encompassing the navigation of self through time and space” (Varley & Semple 2015: 83). In this sense, geography, explored through the process of the expedition, becomes a field of opportunity for the experience to unfold, and adventuring 'slowly' is attentive to the narrative of the journey and the specific places being passed through.

In addition to slow adventure, the concept of 'ecopedagogy' (Antunes & Gadotti 2005; Kahn 2010), understood as progression within environmental education, has been drawn out by Dunkley (2018) in consideration of 'space-timeScapes'. In an exploration of how temporal and spatial aspects of informal environmental learning can advance the notion of ecopedagogy, Dunkley draws attention to 'slower-ecopedagogy' (Payne 2014). Here, knowledge is *embodied* through *time* and participants are allowed to establish affective connections with particular places, nurtured by visceral, sensory engagement and the storying of the landscape (Dunkley 2018). Despite the focus of ecopedagogy on ecological awareness over personal social development, there are obvious links to the inherent slowness in OBT practice which seeks to challenge the ''fast'Scapes' of human-environment encounters and relations (Payne 2014).

Tim Ingold's work on 'dwelling' and 'taskscapes' (1997; 2000) is useful here to combine the idea of slow adventure based on an appreciation of the journey, and a 'slower-ecopedagogy', effective through embodied knowledge of particular places. The pedagogical approach of OBT can be seen as incorporating both aspects of slow adventure and a 'slower-ecopedagogy', which involves the temporalities, spatialities and embodied mobilities that Ingold affords through his concepts. Importantly, I argue that a focus on slowness and reflection does not relegate embodied experiences, as Brookes (2000) suggests, but allows for the influence of the socio-historical, cultural and corporeal. This 'slow' approach to outdoor experiential learning requires a greater commitment from participants, demanding active engagement and an unconditional presentness (Varley & Semple 2015). In this way, outdoor education assumes a work-like aspect, attuned with the importance of work to dwelling in taskscapes (Ingold 2000). The methodological slowness of the OBT provides moments of dwelling both in land and landscape

(Macnaghten & Urry 2001; Urry 2016) which brings into focus the distinctive taskscapes of outdoor education, and this will be further examined in relation to 'nature' in Chapter 7.

6.4.2. Ebbs and flows of busyness and competing temporal rhythms

The pace and rhythm of the OBT's courses – essential to the OBT 'experience' – was dictated not only by the instructors' choreography, but also by a variety of institutionalized time-space arrangements, terrestrial temporalities (Edensor 2010) and the affordance of the physical landscape (to be discussed in Chapter 7). Therefore, despite efforts to stay 'true' to a learning process which privileged opportunities for thinking and reflecting, aligning with a counter-cultural pedagogic style often appeared challenging for the organisation. The centres, especially Ullswater and Aberdovey, could be very busy in peak-season, as Matt (male, Senior Instructor, 35-45) said of Aberdovey, *"twenty-two [groups] is our record I think! One school were hot-bunking, hot-booting and hot-cabining!"*. Similarly, Paul's preference for Howtown over Ullswater was due to the busyness of the centre, where *"Howtown feels a bit quieter, it's a bit more relaxed. Especially when there's about 10 groups on the other side [Ullswater] and you're having to fight through each other!"*. During Woodland Academy's OBT trip at Aberdovey, the challenge to find space was evident. Whilst trying to conduct the evening activities, groups were working very closely to one another or struggling to find individual space for team tasks. When coming back from playing games in the woods one evening, we had to move silently past another group who were still involved in a campfire so as not to disturb their discussion and potentially disrupt those highly valued reflective moments.

As the instructors observed, young people's experiences were always related to their personal starting points, and to this end the participants had very different interpretations of this busyness (and slowness). As George (male, year 7, urban) professed, *"when I came I didn't expect it to be like walking every minute, every second we had to spare!"*. Many of the young people also commented on how tired they were by the end of the week as a result of the relatively intense and physical nature of the course. However, this was interspersed with perceptions of the activities as '*relaxing*', '*boring*' and '*slow*'. Aisha's moodboard (Figure 6.6) depicts some of these conflicting interpretations of the OBT, in her use of the words '*horrible*', '*boring*', '*panic!*' and '*exciting*'. Although these words do not always relate directly to time or pace, they have temporal connotations. For example, '*panic!/exciting*' are suggestive of activities that are fast-moving and perhaps correlate with Varley and Semple's (2015) conception of 'fast adventure'.

Figure 6. 6   Aisha's moodboard

Clearly, OBT experiences were characterised by both periods of busyness with high intensity activity and periods of quiescence. Sometimes participants struggled to keep up with the pace of the week, to turn up on time kitted out and ready to go, and sometimes they struggled to know what to do with themselves and how to keep themselves focused during an extended activity. As Connor (male, year 8, rural) attested to during the expedition:

> *"Lucas and his riddles definitely kept us busy. Because that's what I was talking to some of the people in Group 2 – that's what their biggest issue was, not knowing what to do [to keep themselves occupied]."*

Connor is describing those moments where young people were forced to become aware of their presentness in the situation, and actively engage with and become comfortable dwelling in wild places. It is these ebbs in the schedule and pace of the week that as section 6.3.1 explored, provided critical junctures through which young people could come together and cultivate relationships and shared experiences. As discussed in Chapter 5, instructors played a key role in choreographing the OBT experience. Indeed, instructors had the pedagogical skill to create a shape and rhythm of learning in a less structured environment, making the most of

surrounding natural settings (Blenkinsop *et al.* 2016). Through the instrumental and choreographed dimensions of their work (Rokenes *et al.* 2015) instructors could accommodate fast paced exciting activities, such as gorging, and slower paced moments of reflection and extended challenge.

In addition to this choreography, Edensor (2010) draws attention to a variety of other rhythms which dictate interactions with the landscape. Edensor utilises the work of Henri Lefebvre (2004) who understands rhythms to originate through the interactions between place, time and energy expenditures. As a consequence, spaces and places "possess distinctive characteristics according to the ensemble of rhythms that interweave across place to produce a particular temporal mixity" (Edensor 2010: 69). These multidimensional and multiscalar rhythms of time-space are dynamic and ever-changing, composing the 'complex polyrhythmy of place' (Ibid.). Outward Bound courses were conditioned by the institutional rhythms of the working day, the working week and the annual school calendar, which exacted heavy scheduling and time constraints on the work of the Trust. The imposition of these rhythms is seen in Jack's (male, Instructor, 25-35) description of OBT weekend courses:

> *"Maybe they can't get the time off in the week. Or it's just the way that they work – come on Friday, leave Sunday. And generally they'll have half day dual-staff to get off site and do something, and the rest of the time you're on site. And I feel like it's a waste of time. I go through the motions but you don't have time to connect to the group, you don't really push them that hard, because they haven't got time to get tired, they're still buzzing off the excitement of getting here. Yeah I really don't think it's worthwhile. But, it's a revenue stream."*

Jack also draws attention to the financial pressures which act to maintain a faster pace in OBT courses. In order to remain financially viable, schools must be 'sold' a product and see that they are getting value for money, as Tim (male, Instructor, 25-35) explained:

> *"[W]e have to sell it basically. And to somebody sitting in London or in an office somewhere in a HR department, and they have to go to their boss and say 'look these guys are going to Outward Bound, it's going to cost you so much money, and this is what they're going to do and these are the learning objectives they're going to hit.' But what they're actually going to do is they're going to come here and have an experience and find out some stuff about themselves. That might be completely different from*

what's on the – and I would say in most of the cases it is. But we have to do that in order for us to get the work."

Here we can see evidence of outdoor education that is leaning towards the packaged and predictable with a distinctly neoliberal slant (as per section 6.2), aligning with the practicalities of fast adventure. Tim and Jack indicate that these institutional rhythms were often at odds with the slow pedagogical approach which the OBT sought to employ. Humberstone and Stan (2012: 184) argue that neoliberal ideologies have pulled informal educational practices "away from pupil-centred learning towards production and outcomes". Similarly, Loynes (2013) sees the characteristically organic culture of outdoor education as becoming dominated by institutions, and, I would add, highly conditioned institutional *rhythms*. In light of this, Beames and Brown (2012) warn against the dangers of leaving behind the cultural values highlighted in Chapter 5, those which are embedded in and gave rise to the field of experiential learning.

However, as Chapter 5 stressed, instructors felt that they were afforded a significant degree of freedom and trust to be creative in their practices. Their motivation and desire to carry out work which was both meaningful and impactful on an individual and collective level was evident. Although there was an acknowledgement that at times aspects of commercialisation started to pull at the cultural fabric of the OBT, there was also a strong resistance to these neoliberal pressures and rhythms. As Matt (male, Senior Instructor, 35-45) commented:

"[T]hat size [of the Aberdovey centre], and we make it work and get that many people through. Which before I started there if I'd known the kind of numbers, how many people go through and how many kids and how busy it is, I'd have the impression of feeling a bit of a factory and 'urgh' I don't want to work there. But it's kind of amazing and great that there's that many people around."

Matt pays testament to the fact that, despite the huge numbers of young people that come through the centre, it defies the 'production line' analogy whereby participants take part in the same activities week in, week out. Richard (male, Head of Centre, 35-45) captures this through his main aim for the organisation:

"That as many people as we can get through the doors can experience the magic that Outward Bound can give to people in a really quality way. So I wouldn't want to lose that by just cramming people through and it becoming a 'sausage factory', so it's important to protect the bits that we know make up that powerful experience and I think that we know OB as an organisation does that incredibly well."

177

It is evident that there are competing rhythms at work during OBT courses. Individual instructors seek to apply a methodological slowness to their practice, allowing time for the emotional content of human experiences to coalesce and create meaning for young people. However, institutional pressures compress and confine this pedagogical approach. Varley and Semple (2015) acknowledge that 'fast adventure' can involve slow moments of contemplation, and that in reality experiences are stretched along a continuum which is determined by qualitative, subjective and temporal aspects. This can be seen in numerous ways within OBT courses. For example, an intense and physically demanding rock climb can have moments of relative still, dangling on the end of the rope, or a sudden rush to get tents pitched before the heavens open can be quelled by a group around a campfire. David (male, Senior Instructor, 25-35) acknowledges these impromptu and instantaneous situations, and provides an insight into the 'magic' that Richard is alluding to above:

> *"[In] the expedition they're always going somewhere they don't know, somewhere they've never been before, they're away from home, away from civilisation, and it's just them, a tent, and their mates. So that's always great – I enjoy that they enjoy that, especially if you can get it where you're just sat in a circle, chatting and being silly or whatever. A campsite situation where everyone's having fun, playing games that kind of stuff."*

We can understand the practices of the OBT to fall somewhere along this continuum, fluctuating between the high-paced and fun and the slow and purposeful. The greatest testament to this is that the participants in this study across the four schools experienced both these conditions during their courses. Crucially, the 'micro-memories' explored in section 6.3.3 occurred in both the ebbs and flows of busyness. OBT courses incorporated many contrasts in pace and rhythm, which appeared important for the young people's enjoyment. As Askins (2009) observes, in rural spaces younger identities are often performed through dynamic bodily engagements incorporating adrenaline and excitement. The young people in this study highlighted that the faster-paced activities, such as the high rope options, were aspects that they enjoyed, alongside some of the slower moments, sharing riddles and spending time getting to know each other. Similarly, gorge walking was deemed to be an impactful and popular activity by staff, because it was dynamic, grabbed young people's attention through immediate physical engagement, and was relatively high intensity. Gorge walking was imbued with sensory stimulation (water), emotions and communication, as well as being very much out-of-the ordinary. This adds weight to Askins' (2009) observation, and indicates that a balance between

high intensity and slow adventure is important to engage and enthuse young people in outdoor education.

6.4.3. (Dis)engaging with technology

This section discusses the tensions in incorporating digital technologies into the OBT's pedagogical practice, which could be potentially disruptive to the residential and natural learning experiences of young people. In the research, a consideration of modernised practices and conceding to commercialised processes in the industry often ended in discussion around the use of digital technologies. If the intention of the OBT was to take people out of their everyday 'hyper-modernized' lives, then the incorporation of technology clearly seems at odds with this pedagogical approach. Indeed, it was a debated topic within the Trust, and something they are struggling to navigate at the time of writing, as evidenced in a recent presentation to senior management on this research project and subsequent discussions on the OBT 'experience'. Opinions across instructors during interviews were mixed, as Jack (male, Instructor, 25-35) suggested:

> *"Certainly there are instructors here, the younger ones, who think if we don't [embrace technology], then we should meet the kids half way. Say 'look we know you don't need technology all the time, but we'll use it for this...' and that's sort of talking their language a bit more. And there's others saying 'right this is a week away from technology – try it and see what happens'."*

As well as some indecisiveness on the topic, there was the acknowledgement that the OBT could be under pressure as other organisations begin to incorporate the use of more modern technologies:

> *"I was chatting to some of the other instructors, and they were saying one of the field study centres hands out Ipads to the teams and they do their presentations on that, and they have interactive white boards. Whereas here at the Trust we're still using flipchart paper."* (Tim – male, Instructor, 25-25)

As Tim suggests, the OBT very much dis-engaged with digital technologies in the delivery of their courses. During the fieldwork, there was only one observed instance of an instructor deliberating using technology to 'enhance' the participant's experience through the use of a star-gazing mobile phone app. Despite this general aversion to technology as a teaching tool,

Mia (female, Instructor, 25-35) contended that perhaps the Trust ought to engage more purposefully with some of these methods in an effort to speak young people's language:

"[S]o young people that use technology and are always on their phones or whatever, and that is a lot of young people now, [that] live that way – and a lot of adults live that way as well. And I think we alienate them a lot, because we have rubbish wifi and we don't really encourage them to bring their phones, and yeah I think we can alienate people in that what and sometimes make them feel like we're not part of the modern world."

In addition to the potential for a greater engagement with young people, staff acknowledged that there were frustrations with lack of available technology at the centres. The poor wifi connection limited the ability of school staff to share the experiences of the students over the School's social media platforms, and the amount of paperwork that the OBT produced was observed to be inefficient and not very environmentally friendly. Given some of the concerns staff expressed over the time-consuming and unnecessary systems and protocols which fractured their working day, investment in ways of 'working smarter' could be valuable.

Ultimately, there was a tension between continuing to attract and appeal to young people in contemporary society and staying true to the methods and messages of outdoor education praxis (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004) whereby *"the best experience we can give them [young people] is out there"* (Tim – male, Instructor, 25-35). Smith *et al.* (2016) acknowledge this growing pressure as outdoor educators seek to understand the role of technologies in their learning processes. Studies in outdoor education/pedagogy have argued that the uncritical uptake of modern technologies hamper the physical, cognitive and emotional engagements with particular places (the type of engagements sought in section 6.4.1) and act to politically structure outdoor experiences (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004; Wattchow 2001b). However, there is an acknowledgement that it can provide certain affordances and careful consideration of its use is beneficial (Cuthbertson *et al.* 2004; Misner 2012). Perhaps most critical here, is the observation that educational institutions, informal education included, must cater for a new generation of learners. These 'digital natives' (McLoughlin & Lee 2008a) have a sophisticated understanding of the technologies and learning environments best suited to their needs (Conole & Creanor 2006), and McLoughlin and Lee (2008a) call for models of teaching and learning to be revised in lieu of these learner-centric practices. Clearly, outdoor education moves beyond the textbook delivery-of-information model of higher education which McLoughlin and Lee are alluding to.

However, this does not deny the fact that there is an 'increasing gap between the formalized interactions that occur in educational establishments and the modes of learning, socialization and communication taking place in the everyday world' (McLoughlin & Lee 2008a: 11).

During the fieldwork, the majority of young people were apathetic to the classroom-based sessions that they engaged with during the week. OBT groups have personal 'learning rooms', where they often meet before activities, outline their plans for the week and review activity sessions. As discussed in Chapter 4, these learning rooms were intended to been less formal and classroom-like (as with the new 'learning pods' at the Ullswater centre) however the feedback from young people was that time in these rooms was an aspect of the week when they were most disengaged. As Jack comments (male, Instructor, 25-35), there is definitely potential to integrate technological learning tools into this aspect of Outward Bound courses:

> *"[T]here are certain apps that you can use for coaching, for our reviewing we get them to write stuff down, maybe we could do more with technology. So yeah I think we do need to evolve, we need to keep changing, otherwise we won't get anyone to come here."*

This integration of technology is promoted by Dyment *et al*. (2011), who present an interesting case for the incorporation of Web 2.0[21] into journal writing in outdoor education, in an attempt engage students with 'their technology'. They argue that Web 2.0 may have a strong allure for young people who have grown up with technology and "likely feel more comfortable with electronic forms of reflective expression" (Dyment *et al.* 2011: 140). In the above quote, Jack also acknowledges that to incorporate technology into the teaching and learning practices would be more congruent with young people's everyday experiences and interests (Dyment *et al.* 2016) and therefore remain relevant and meaningful for OBT participants. Brown and Fraser (2009) also remind us that the socio-political context within which outdoor education developed has long since passed, and therefore outdoor educators must consider how they can best assist participants to deal with the world that they live in. McLoughlin and Lee (2008:11) also contend that in such a digital world, there is a need to 'expand our vision of pedagogy' which necessarily involves recognising the value of Web 2.0 in the design of learning tasks, and in promoting learner autonomy and creativity.

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[21] The term 'Web 2.0' is regularly connected with online software applications, which assist in information sharing and collaboration on the World Wide Web (Dyment *et al.* 2016).

Outwardly, OBT continue to deepen their engagement with Web 2.0 and digital technologies through their marketing material in attempts to capture the attention of potential sponsors, schools and young people. They utilise videos, blogs, and vlogs, and regularly update their website and social media channels (Figure 6.7) to highlight the impact of their programmes, broadcast some of the 'extracurricular' work that their instructors do, and connect with other organisations within the industry. They present a public image of an organisation who are up-to-date and current in their methods of communication and seek to appeal to their target audience – the 'digital natives' and 'millennials' (McLoughlin & Lin 2008a). However, inwardly, there is clearly a disengagement with these technologies in their teaching practices. A key tenant of the OBT's pedagogy is ensuring that lessons learnt during their courses are transferable and applicable to the wider lived experiences of their participants. As several studies now attest, the influx of digital technologies in educational (McLoughlin & Lin 2008a; 2008b; Levy 2012; Reeves 2003) and workplace (Marjoribanks 2000; Hislop 2008) settings is considerable. Indeed, as Drew (male, Operations Manager, 45-55) observed at Eskdale, where they work with young people in apprenticeship schemes and workplaces,

> *"We've got really technical savvy youngsters coming through, jumping the gun with us – from social media, we've got high-tech companies coming here, particularly at Eskdale - and working with flipcharts and post-it notes you know?"*

If the OBT seeks to remain relevant to young people, it stands to reason that it should begin to turn its outward-facing 'tech-savvy' image inward, towards its internal pedagogic practices. Although on the surface this may seem at odds with the organisation's pedagogical approach, to disregard the role of technology in young people's everyday social worlds seems to contradict the aims of the Trust for young people in terms of readying them for training and employment (section 6.2). It seems logical, in light of Dyment *et al.*'s (2016) contribution, that an entry point for digital technologies could be through the reviewing and reflective process in the OBT. This approach has the potential to alleviate tensions around losing the true meaning and praxis of outdoor education and engagement with the outdoors, whilst seeking to communicate with young people 'in their language'. There is a greater opportunity to carry over technological mediums of reflection into school and workplace settings where they also engage with these technologies, and therefore improve the transferability and/or longevity of possible course outcomes. Dyment *et al.* do highlight some challenges to the integration of technology for reviewing purposes into outdoor education, which include generating feedback, limiting the depth of the reflective process, the opportunity to edit reflections, and ethical issues surround

storage and confidentiality. However, one of the most pertinent challenges is time and resource allocations. OBT staff alluded to the resistance to, and unfamiliarity with, technology amongst some of the staff population. The use of technology would require both the training and 'buy-in' of instructors, as well as suitable time in the course to make the most of these tools, which this chapter has demonstrated, is often limited during OBT courses.
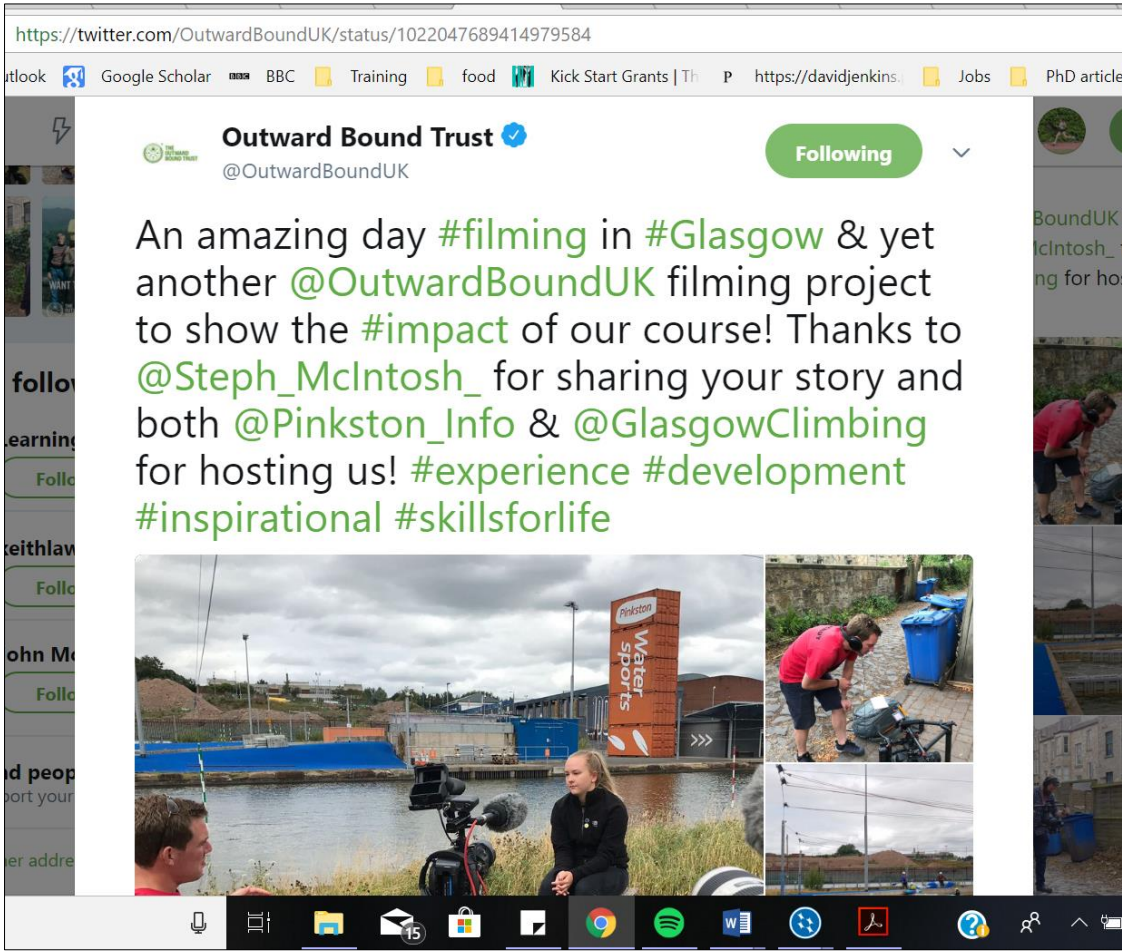
Figure 6. 7   A Tweet from The Outward Bound Trust UK twitter account on 25.07.2018, advertising an upcoming promotional video (twitter.com/OutwardBoundUK)

At present, the approach to the use of digital technologies in OBT courses is tentative, with some instructors 'dipping their toe in the water', whilst the majority stick to more traditional methods of teaching and engagement. The flexible working environment that the OBT operates, discussed in Chapter 5, provides an excellent forum for instructors to experiment with the incorporation of these digital tools into their courses, and current literature suggests that this may be worthwhile give the interests and experiences of their current target audience. There is

the potential for Web 2.0 technologies to be utilised in reflection and feedback, and this would help to ensure that the OBT's pedagogy aligns to its overall aims, as well as maintain a relevant and transferable OBT experience for young people.

6.5. Conclusion

Chapter 6 has outlined some of the key aspects of the OBT experience, from the point of view of both instructors and young people. Outdoor education is typically understood in terms of adventure, risk and challenge in the wild, and some of the underlying pedagogical processes are often masked from view. Through an exploration of the dominant and changing messages of the OBT, this chapter has shed light on the subtler aspects of outdoor experiential learning to provide a fuller picture of young people's experiences in the OBT.

Firstly, there is a continuing commitment to Kurt Hahn's original aims, which retain some distinctly militaristic undertones in a now neoliberal framework. Youth work has a propensity to align with the project of citizenship, and the OBT's discourse resonates strongly with an *active* citizenship agenda. In this chapter I demonstrated how contemporary components of the organisation's strategy for, and framing of young people are future-orientated, operating in the classic vein of young people as 'becomings' or 'citizens-in-the-making'. Accordingly, the OBT's pedagogical approach is increasingly structured, reflecting broader educational policy reform and is closely aligned with mainstream education institutions. The rhetoric of the OBT is driven by a national scale agenda and associated 'macro-processes' aimed at producing responsible adults who can contribute to society. Despite this, OBT staff showed adaptability in their work and an ability to bend these neoliberal aims to suit their needs. Staff interpreted the aims of the organisation in ways that affiliated with their own beliefs and values, and applied them to encompass the requirements of the young people they were working with. This chapter also highlighted the micro-processes, akin to Pykett's (2010b) observation of the enabling capabilities of 'pedagogic power', which allowed on-the-ground delivery of OBT courses to be 'in the moment'. In this way, the reality of OBT courses was orientated toward citizen-as-practice, with a privileging of experience and participation over achievement. Clearly, the citizenship rhetoric operates differentially at the local and the national scale, and there can be a mismatch between the broader messages of the organisation and the practices of OBT instructors on the ground.

Secondly, this chapter has discussed the defining role of the residential element of OBT courses. Residentials enabled young people to form and strengthen relationships with both peers and adults. These were skills valued by instructors and which they wished to instil in young people. The OBT provided a social environment that was fundamentally different from a school setting, and participants enjoyed the opportunity to spend more time with their friends. These peer-to-peer relationships were seen by young people to be influential in their success during the week. Adult-youth relations were also deemed important to ensure the OBT process was effective, but they were more challenging to build, due to time limitations. Residentials also offered a social and physical space for young people to practice being more independent, which was viewed as a valuable outcome by both staff and participants. A sense of independence was aided by a perceived freedom of movement across the centre and surrounding landscape, and the specific outcomes of the residential experience align closely with Hellison's (2003; 2011) model of TPSR. This demonstrates the wider application of outdoor residentials beyond the prescribed outcomes of the course, and makes an important addition to understandings of the value of the residential process in young people's outdoor education experiences.

Thirdly, this chapter examined opportunities for young people to make meaningful shared memories, which helped to narrate their OBT experiences and develop a group identity. The residential element, incorporating impromptu activities, evenings and overnight stays allowed young people to make more meaningful attachments to particular places. In this way, the specific places of the OBT are grounded in young peoples' memories through emotional experiences. Here, I showed how the space of outdoor education contrasts more formal educational settings and allows for a greater diversity of emotions, whilst simultaneously enacting affective forces and choreographed practices, constitutive of *more-than-social* relations (Kraftl 2013a; 2015).

Finally, Chapter 6 has offered an analysis of the commercialisation of outdoor education. This has created a process detached from the specific experiences of place, through a decontextualization "from the broader narrative of journey, dwelling and exploration" (Varley & Semple 2015: 77). I argue that to combat this, the OBT employs a certain 'methodological slowness', incorporating the concepts of 'slow adventure' and 'slower ecopedagogy' to allowed time and space for these immediate, embodied learning experiences to unfold. OBT courses were subject to many competing rhythms, which were often at odds with the slow pedagogical approach they sought to employ. However, I demonstrated that the flexible approach that the OBT operated through its staff allowed these multiscalar and multidimensional rhythms to be

absorbed into its working practices. The benefit of both the high-paced and fun, and the slow and purposeful, were acknowledged in this discussion of the OBT 'experience'.

Crucially, through an adaptable approach that valued the creation of shared experiences, and time to develop corporeal, natural, and psychological associations with place, the OBT allowed an experience which was grounded in particular places. In addition, there was clear evidence of the "emotional content of human experience" (Varley & Semple 2015: 78) forming a significant element of young people's courses. In line with a consideration of time, and creating meaningful experiences and relationships, the question of digital technologies in outdoor education is pertinent and the OBT are struggling to navigate this new terrain. However, to remain aligned with their aim of helping to prepare young people for their future and continuing to be relevant for young people, it would seem necessary to begin to engage with digital technologies in their pedagogical practice.

Overall, this chapter demonstrates that strong and enduring memories encompassed dormitories, barns, hillsides, canoes and beaches, and that learning experiences were embedded in particular time-spaces. These experiences were also heavily influenced by embodied mobilities through the landscape and 'mobilising nature', which will be the focus of Chapter 7. Taken together, Chapters 6 and 7 demonstrate the role of *process* in the construction, performance, and experience of the geographies of outdoor education in the OBT.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Mobilising nature through outdoor education

7.1. Introduction

The majority of Western contemporary outdoor education practice conceptualises the outdoors as an arena of challenge, which has a universal application for educational purposes (Brookes 2002). Nature is seen as both a physical and *ideological* space imbued with the virtues of simplicity and good citizenship (Neal 2002; Wattchow 2001a; Chapter 6), constructed in relation to 'authentic adventure' (Humberstone *et al.* 2003). It is widely communicated through public discourses that connecting to nature has a positive impact on health and well-being (for a good example, see Gelsthorpe 2017), and it is an often-accepted truth that young people's experience in outdoor environments will be positive, educational, and universally interpreted. Criticisms of this conceptualisation of nature are widespread and, as Dewey suggested, "the belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean all experiences are genuinely or equally educative" (1963: 25). *Experiential* learning (Nicol 2014) is a fundamental concept in outdoor education, but an interrogation of the differential, corporeal and material experiences of young people in these outdoor spaces is lacking (see Askins 2009 for parallel work on ethnicity and rurality). As Horton and Kraftl (2006a: 79) have suggested, "a closer apprehension of the bodily details of children's lives […] might give *more* fresh insights into the Children's Geographies that concern us". Accordingly, this final empirical chapter attends to the lack of research in geographies of education and geographies of children and youth regarding young people's embodied engagements and interpretations of educational nature encounters.

As Chapter 4 asserted, the natural environment and physical location lie at the heart of outdoor education practice, shaping particular 'centre geographies'. This chapter builds on the arguments set out in Chapter 4 regarding the primacy of particular places in the OBT, to explore young people's specific mobilities within, and embodied encounters with, these places. So far, this study has explored the extensive and diverse spaces in and around OBT centres that were utilised to create courses. It has also highlighted how young people's memories were embedded in particular places, and how these were purposefully navigated and choreographed to produce temporally variegated moments of fun, reflection, adrenaline and challenge (Chapter 6). Through this, we can begin to understand the significance that different spaces, both 'material'

and 'natural' (Howe & Morris 2009), hold for the production of young people's bodies in outdoor education and the consequently inherent geographical qualities of this educational practice. There are strong correlations here with Howe and Morris' (2009: 309) study of performance running, which is observed to be a "spatially extensive practice involving multiple sites, spaces, and places and […] a particularly close relationship with 'natural' spaces".

As Cresswell and Merriman (2011: 5) suggest, "mobile embodied practices are central to how we experience the world […] creat[ing] spaces and stories – spatial stories". In this chapter, I follow Howe and Morris' (2009) enquiry of the interrelationship between (performance running) bodies and natural spaces, exploring the ways in which young people 'produce' particular natures in their movements through the spaces of the OBT. Although the short-term nature of OBT courses does not allow for any in-depth analysis of impact on young people's bodies, the *co-production* of bodies and nature will briefly be explored here too.

From a phenomenological standpoint (Merleau-Ponty 2001), experiences are lived through the body (Zimmermann & Saura 2016) and outdoor activities necessarily incorporate kinaesthetic experiences which require an expansion of the knowledge which comes to us "through the body" (Atherton 2007: 48). As Wheaton (2010: 1071) comments of lifestyle sports, "there are few activities that are so vividly entwined with the acting, perceiving, thinking and feeling body". Therefore, in combination with a focus on mobilities, this chapter addresses young people's embodied experiences of nature. I draw attention to how the young people in this study encountered the spaces of outdoor education, and how this was implicated in their Outward Bound experience. In so doing, I open up a more fluid understanding of bodies and nature, which moves beyond the nature/culture binary to show nature as both constitutive in, and a constituent of, young people's interactions with it.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into 2 sections. Section 7.2 discusses how nature takes on purpose and meaning for the young people in this study though the production of particular 'taskscapes' (Ingold 1997; 2000). Section 7.3 re-centres the body in experiences of nature, by highlighting how young people understand their nature encounters in the OBT in intensely corporeal ways, and through a range of human and nonhuman things and flows. Finally, section 7.4 provides some conclusions regarding the importance of young people's bodily participation in outdoor education courses. Overall, this chapter addresses the continued focus on *process* that, in tandem with Chapter 6, completes this research projects exploration of the OBT's defining features, *people, place,* and *process.*

7.2. Outdoor education 'taskscapes'

Merriman *et al.* (2008: 192) assert a need to interrogate "how land/landscape is practiced, emergent through mobile and material practices, and how mobilities animate landscapes and places". In this study, young people's engagement with space and place acted to 'produce' a variety of forms of nature through the multiplexity of ways in which they passed through OBT environments. This simultaneously contributed to the (spatial) process of developing a particular 'corporeal schema' (Merleau-Ponty 2001) or 'bodily know-how', entailing the practical sense of being which comes through kinaesthetic experience (Atherton 2007; Crossley 2001; Lewis 2001). This 'bodily know-how' will be explored in section 7.3, whilst this section attends to the ways in which nature takes on purpose and meaning in outdoor education – namely as 'gymnasium' (Howe & Morris 2009), 'journey' and 'escapism' – through distinct modes of 'dwelling' (Ingold 1997; 2000). For Ingold, the notion of dwelling articulates the practical activity of ontologically engaging with the material environment (Wylie 2003). Dwelling focuses on relational involvement, such that the environment comes into being as inhabitants embed themselves within it through "regular patterns of activities, including work, travel and leisure" (Howe & Morris 2009: 314). As suggested in Chapter 6, the work-like aspects of dwelling evident in OBT courses align with Ingold's notion of 'taskscape', whereby 'tasks' are the "constitutive acts of dwelling" (Ingold 2000: 195), and thus taskscapes are as follows:

> *"[I]t is to the entire ensemble of tasks, in their mutual interlocking, that I refer by the concept of taskscape. Just as the landscape is an array of interrelated features, so – by analogy – the taskscape is an array of related activities."*

I argue that the concept of taskscape is particularly applicable to understanding the production of nature-spaces in outdoor education, given the industry's emphasis on physical challenge, cognitive learning and 'type 2 fun'[22] and thus linked to exertion and effort over a simple leisure experience. Following the example of Howe and Morris (2009), I identify the three forms of nature outlined above (gymnasium/journey/escapism) in OBT practices. I highlight how elements of both 'land' and 'landscape' (Macnaghten & Urry 2001; Urry 2016), as modes of dwelling associated with functional and visual forms of nature respectively, are relevant to

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[22] 'Type 2 fun' is a term commonly used in the outdoor education industry to refer to activities that provide retrospective feelings of enjoyment, nostalgia, despite being perceived negatively at the time.

understanding the distinctive taskscape of outdoor education, which becomes both a discursive construction and material entity as young people move through it.

7.2.1. Nature as 'gymnasium'

By its nature, outdoor education involves engaging in outdoor activities designed to stretch participants' physical skills. Unsurprisingly, the young people in the study regularly referred to the physical nature of OBT activities, both during their courses and in follow-up interviews. Alana and Lily (both female, year 8, rural) discussed the canoeing and the expedition in terms of physiological challenge and haptic environmental interaction:

> *Lily: It was too cold [the canoeing], and no one like, I think because it was getting towards the end of the week everyone was tired. And we weren't expecting it to be the way it was I suppose.*
>
> *Interviewer: What were you expecting?*
>
> *Lily: I was expecting it to be like –*
>
> *Alana: Not that far.*
>
> *Lily: Yeah, I wasn't expecting it to be as far, but I wasn't expecting it to be short. I dunno, I was expecting it to be fun so we could joke about, but when we got out on the water – it was just too windy and too hard. And we had everyone saying 'oh yeah we're here for support' but then everyone just stopped, and was just like, we're not moving we can't do it.*
>
> *Interviewer: And what was the worst bit about the expedition?*
>
> *Alana: Climbing up that hill!*
>
> *Lily: Yeah! Climbing up the hill, and probably – I think it was, the only reason it was hard was because we had the big rucksacks on, and it felt like you were carrying the weight of the world.*

Here, the coldness, long distances, steep hills and heavy rucksacks were explicit in young people's reflections on their OBT courses. Similarly, emotions and sensibilities were explored in relation to overcoming the physical elements of courses in young people's moodboards. As Anthony (male, year 9, rural) depicted his expedition (Figure 7.1) he explained:

190

Figure 7. 1   Anthony's moodboard, exploring his experience of the expedition

"This is like the start – so I knew what to do here. And then that was a challenge, and a lot of falling and helping people. And then, there's an arrow here, and it's lots of challenges, so this is showing we had to go up this thing, and then this is a part of the expedition where we had to go up hill – and this guy is saying 'finally downhill', and this guy is saying 'nope', we have to go back up! 'Unsure', because I wasn't sure how to feel at the start, and then overcoming the challenges finally. And then lots of rest and food, and two sheep. Oh and up here is trees and a person trying to crawl through the trees."

As Anthony's moodboard shows (Figure 7.1, top left, "knowing what to do" scrambling on the rocks), and section 7.3.1 testifies, young people also enjoyed having fun through physical engagements with OBT environments. As I suggested in the previous chapter, high-intensity, adrenaline-fuelled activities were evidently popular with study participants, and instructors used nature as a means of injecting entertainment into their courses. For example, during one fieldwork trip we played 'hide and seek/predator' in the woodland onsite behind the centre, as an evening activity, in the dark. This involved hanging all our headtorches on a 'safe' tree, which was consequently lit up, and the young people trying to get to the tree without being seen

or caught by their instructor. This was a really popular activity, and it clearly demonstrates the instrumental use of trees and darkness in facilitating a game.

Whether through challenge or play, these examples illustrate the use of nature as a tangible resource, exposing its dominant role as what Howe and Morris (2009) have termed 'nature as gymnasium'. For Howe and Morris, this constitutes the physiological affordances (Gibson 1979) of nature in relation to performance running (see section 7.3.3 for further discussion on affordances). I broaden this understanding to encompass the context of outdoor education, where different sites enable young people to somatically engage in play and 'work'. As Chapter 4 highlighted, having access to a range of outdoor environments in terms of variety of settings (mountains, forest, water) and level of challenge was deemed to be vitally important for instructors to create courses suitable for individual groups. In addition, this section demonstrates that young people understood *themselves* to be 'dwelling' in nature in a functional sense, beyond the intended actions of the course. We can see how the 'gymnasium' of OBT centres "affords a highly distinctive […] environment" (Howe & Morris 2009: 320) for the physical practices of outdoor education.

Howe and Morris (2009) place particular emphasis on the co-production of nature and bodies in understandings of dwelling and taskscape. Although there are discordant time-scales in the change of bodies and natures through these processes (Ibid.), we must remember that temporalities go beyond the immediacies of human memory (Massey 2006). As Ingold (2000: 203) contends, "people shape the landscape even as they dwell. And human activities, as well as the action of rivers and the sea, contribute significantly to the process of erosion". The effect of dwelling becomes evident in the outdoor education taskscape; for example, in the set-up of campfire circles on site (Figure 7.2), the networks of footpaths that OBT participants use, and the permanent climbing bolts on rock faces at climbing venues. Perhaps the clearest representation of "the taskscape made visible" (Ingold 2000: 204) are the maps on the walls of the OBT staff rooms, that have all the potential climbing, gorging and camping venues marked on them (Figure 7.3). There was also more transient evidence of dwelling associated with outdoor education: flattened patches of grass where tents have been pitched for and overnight expedition on Place Fell; footprints on the intertidal sandflats at Aberdovey which get swallowed up as the tide comes in; and perhaps some of the impacts of the wayfaring depicted at the beginning of section 7.3.1. We can also see the momentary effects of 'nature as gymnasium' on young people's bodies, through blistered feet, twisted ankles, and sore shoulders from carrying heavy rucksacks. Through these ephemeral consequences of dwelling

and work, both bodies and natures are produced not only over longer time scales but also 'in the moment', helping to destabilize hitherto fixed notions of child/nature through a process of emergent 'ongoingness' (Horton & Kraftl 2006b). This broadens the concept of dwelling to move beyond an implied "rootedness" (Howe & Morris 2009) or a "duration of inhabitation" (Wylie 2003: 145), to a way of being which is productive of "multiple spatialities and temporalities, longstanding and momentary, rural and urban, fixed and mobile, coherent and fragmentary" (Ibid.). As Wylie contends, Dwelling "must enable the register of the transient and fleeting as well as the enduring" (2003: 145).

Figure 7. 2   A permanent seating area surrounding a campfire, Ullswater Centre
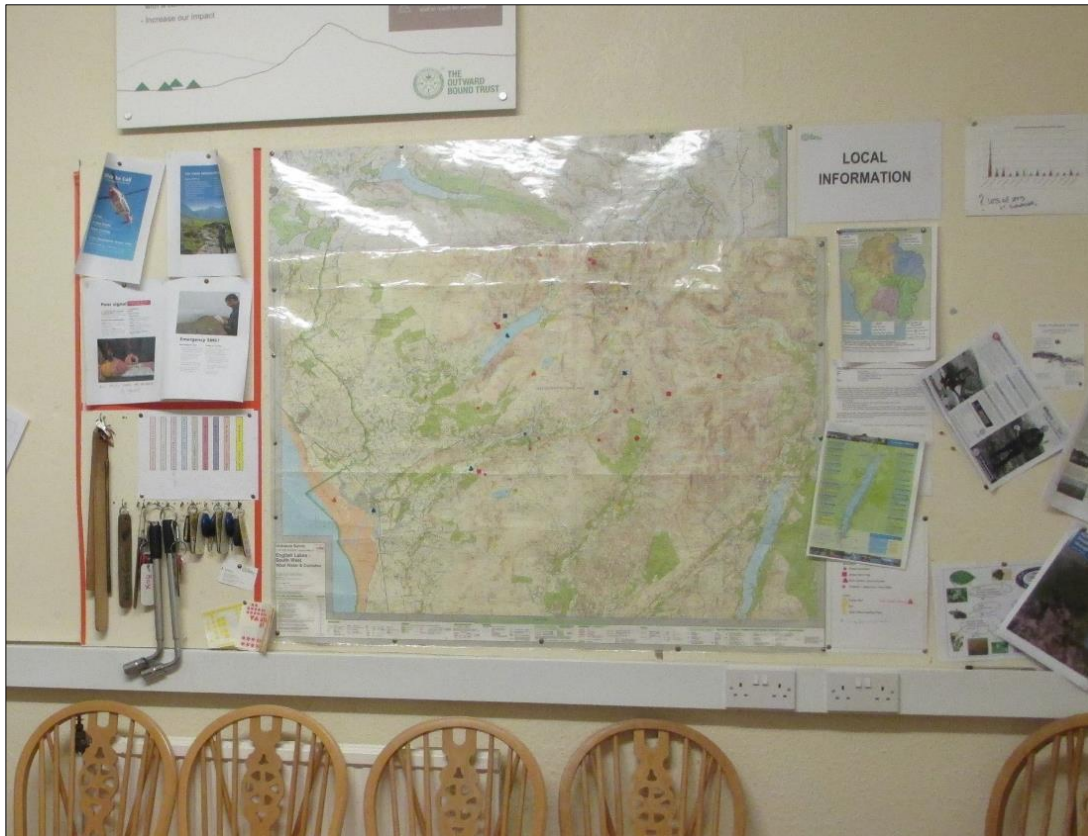   (authors own photograph)

Figure 7. 3   Map on the staff room wall at Eskdale, with camping, gorging and climbing
venues marked with stickers (authors own photograph)

7.2.2. *Nature as 'journey'*

The concept of 'going on a journey' was played out through the linking of, and travelling through diverse landscapes. As Chapter 4 outlined, this was seen as pivotal to creating a sense of progression throughout the week through a physical representation of "distance travelled" (Crabbe *et al.* 2006). In addition, the instructors' roles in choreographing experiences of land and landscape were also important (Chapter 5), to manage the ebbs and flows of OBT courses and to shape a journey into something meaningful and impactful for participants (see also Chapter 6). Participants were often tasked with canoeing from point 'A' to point 'B', or completing a hike and then swapping with another group at the water's edge to get into canoes. They were frequently physically challenged through the tasks, whether that be rock climbing whilst combating a fear of heights, or not believing they were fit enough to make it through a mountainous walk. In this regard, the textures and forms of the land created a journey – a particular task – to be completed. For Ella (female, year 9, rural), the biggest challenge in her OBT journey was coming down a scree slope during her expedition:

"Definitely Aberdovey was most scary for me. 'Cos we had to do this walking down all the slates [scree] [...] and it was really hard, 'cos all the rest of the group was like running down it. I was holding on, and at one point I just sat down. I was so scared I started crying. [...] All my friends were like 'oh come on you can do it!' and I just sat there crying!"

These physical journeys often culminated in a 'reward': impressive views upon reaching a summit, satisfaction in arriving at an overnight camping destination, or broad views of the landscape which enabled participants to tangibly see how far they had come. As Ella continued, *"when I did it I looked at it and thought 'oh my god I've just come down that' and felt so proud of myself"*. These moments of reward also incorporated opportunities for reflection, presenting a more passive mode of dwelling associated more closely with the visual form of 'landscape' (Cosgrove 1985) over somatic engagements with 'land' (Macnaghten & Urry 2001). In this regard, mountains become 'metaphors' for the journeys young people physically and emotionally navigate, and 'nature as journey' takes on dual meaning. For the young people in this study, the outdoor education taskscape became not only one where work was carried out, but where the emotional labour of that work was realised and their successes were perceived. Nature as formed in this way aligns with Gatrell's (2013) notion of 'therapeutic mobilities', linking mobility to physical and psychological wellbeing. We can observe this in Anthony's moodboard (section 7.2.1, Figure 7.1) where he portrayed not only the physical challenges encountered in his expedition, but also a sense of "relief" and achievement in overcoming these challenges. A number of other young people depicted a metaphorical sense of journey through their moodboards. For example, Jordan (male, year 7, urban) who had a fear of heights which became particularly evident when trying to scramble up a rocky section to reach a small summit, talked through his moodboard in relation to this incident, and completing his OBT course in general (Figure 7.4):

"We've got this lady, and she's looking back at all of it – whilst I was looking back at all of this, I think of this lady as someone whose been like 'woah I actually did this' [...] This was making me hallucinate [caterpillar and picture in nightclub]! Making me hallucinate at the top of the mountain and making me dizzy. This [man with duck inflatable] was like 'yay I finally did it'. But it's also saying 'I want to do this again', like at the start I'm ready to do this'. And this one shows that it's gone through a lot at that time, and it's got to its goal. [...] And I'm gonna do this [Mohamed Ali picture] because he's done it like 'Yeah!'."

Figure 7. 4   Jordan's moodboard

Both Jordan and Ella illustrate some of the emotional and psychological functions of nature. Clearly there are intense feelings related to the physical manner of the journey – as Jordan's suggestion of 'hallucination' indicates – but they also described less tangible feelings of pride and achievement through the use of 'nature as journey'. As such, elements of both land and landscape as modes of dwelling are necessary to understand this form of 'nature as journey'. In addition, as Howe and Morris (2009) observe in performance running taskscapes, multiple forms of nature can be incorporated into a particular outdoor education site. We can see the overlapping functions of a 'nature as (physical) journey' and 'nature as gymnasium' playing out in this section, as the outdoor education taskscape is "differently co-produced at different times" so that natural space may be initially experienced as a gymnasium, but can subsequently emerge as a journey taskscape (Howe & Morris 2009: 325). This again recognises how "natural spaces are by no means fixed and pre-given but are highly relational" (Ibid.).

7.2.3.   Nature as 'escapism'

Young people in the study felt a sense of freedom during their OBT experience in relation to other educational environments (see also Chapter 6). They often expressed a particularly aesthetic view of nature, as Fahmida (female, year 8, urban) suggested:

> *"It was so nice and sunny, it was just – the way it was, it was more free? 'Cos London has a lot of buildings and stuff like that, but in Wales it's nature. […] I just loved it. It*

was so nice, the beach and stuff, just looking – it's much different. And the beach, the
beach was my favourite. And the sunrise and stuff."

As we saw in Chapter 4, even participants in the study who came from more rural locations viewed OBT environments as distinctly different from their home environments. Many young people expressed feelings of peacefulness and an appreciation for the visual qualities of the outdoor education taskscape. It is here that the third form of nature emerges, strongly associated with 'landscape' (Macnaghten & Urry 2001) and providing a reprieve for young people through peace, beauty and solitude. Given the focus on tasks and group activities in OBT courses, 'nature as escapism' was perhaps the least dominant form of nature explicitly elucidated by young people. As Macnaghten and Urry (2001) observe, dwelling in *landscape* is often located in distinct 'leisure spaces' which are geographically and ontologically 'other' to work and everyday life. Fahmida hints at this idea of a specialized leisure space, foregrounding the visual tropes of landscape through her perception of the way the beach looks and observation of the lack of *"buildings and stuff like that"*. However, and despite the references throughout section 7.1 to the power of the visual, some young people identified this form of landscape through other sensibilities. For example, Amelia (female, year 9, rural) referred to the therapeutic effect of the OBT through its particular 'atmosphere' (Anderson 2014; Kraftl & Adey 2008). For Amelia, *"I think it was quite like, gets you away from problems. So, I have quite a lot of problems at home, so it got me away from that and helped me a lot to have a break from stuff like that"*. Similarly, Ella (female, year 9, rural) particularly enjoyed:

"...having time to myself. Because the morning we were in the cabin, I just went outside
and sat down and just looked at all the view. It just made my mind blank. It's just so
nice to have the opportunity to come out here and do all this stuff, 'cos if I was at home
we probably wouldn't have gone and done that."

We can read Amelia and Ella's words as encompassing not only the natural spaces of the OBT but also the material spaces of OBT courses (particularly Ella's encounter with the cabin), and the social activities that they participated in. Here, the outdoor education taskscape clearly becomes a discursive social construction, reproduced through contemporary social practice, and a material entity through Amelia and Ella's engagement with it. In this function of nature, landscape becomes a way of seeing or something 'external' to the experience (Wylie 2006), and acts to reproduce particular symbolic significations (Cosgrove & Daniels 1989) around what kind of body should dwell in these spaces. Understandably, young people had varied OBT

experiences. While the dominant picturesque mode of viewing landscape was reinforced through experiences such as those of Amelia and Ella, this was also challenged by other young people in this study. A more heterogeneous understanding of engagements with rural areas is discussed in section 7.3.3.

Finally, in exploring the multifaceted natures co-produced through the practice of outdoor education, it is impossible to ignore Howe and Morris' (2009) observation of the analytical challenge in understanding taskscapes. Environments of outdoor education are not exclusive and therefore it is not only OBT participants and staff who produce particular natures. As Howe and Morris assert, "it is difficult to disentangle the effects of [outdoor education] on the material changes to natures of the taskscape from the effects of the other activities that share some of its spaces" (2009: 326). Chapter 5 explored the OBT as a distinct 'Community of Practice', which overlapped and interweaved with that of particular lifestyle sports. Chapter 4 also commented on the different ways in which OBT staff were attracted to, and utilised, nature through *spiritual*, *natural* and *relational* perspectives (Hutson *et al.* 2010), which differed through their psychological and physical engagements with place. This section has highlighted some clear intersections between the taskscapes of outdoor instructors, lifestyle sports and outdoor education. Emphasising this overlap attends to Massey's (2006: 41) concern over the spatial-temporal confinement of Ingold's landscape perspective, where dwelling is associated "with a particular landscape, or place, itself". The 'dwelling body' is perceived of as too 'subject centred' (Wylie 2006) and self-absorbed (Massey 2006), whereby the active dwelling body becomes an intentional subject with the capacity to "synthesise, polarize and organise the perceptual field" (Wylie 2006: 521). Although I have foregrounded the subjectivities of young people here, I have also focused on the co-production of multiple natures (by virtue of mobile outdoor education practices), through multiple processes and groups of people. I have opened up the spatial-temporal confinements of land, landscape and dwelling, by presenting outdoor education taskscapes as produced over variegated time-scales (both 'in the moment' and the seemingly permanent), and through unsettling notions of fixed space via understandings of land and landscape as constantly emergent and ongoing.

7.3. Experiencing the outdoors

For the young people in the study, the forms of nature outlined in the previous section were often understood and communicated through multiple and immediate bodily encounters. Where nature is taken to include "not only flora and fauna, but also geographical features, aromas,

sounds and tastes, that which is felt, and not only that which is seen" (Hordyk *et al.* 2005: 574), we can understand the foregrounding of a multiplicity of corporeal interactions with spaces of outdoor education for the participants in the study. Further, to suggest that contemporary outdoor education decontextualizes and 'de-places' learning experiences (Brown 2009; Wattchow & Brown 2011) acts to reify the nature/culture dualism that pervades the social sciences (Hinchcliffe 2007; Jones 2009; Malone 2016b) and childhood sociology more specifically (Rautio 2013). Therefore, this section draws attention to the ways in which young people's experiences in OBT courses were not merely conceived of in cognitive ways, but formulated, extended and constrained by a range of human and nonhuman things and flows (Nairn & Kraftl 2016; Prout 2005). Urry (2016: 81) argues that visuality has "become central to the experience of place" and as a consequence nature becomes an abstract and disembodied quality. However, in the forthcoming discussion I move away from this visual currency, to re-centre haptic knowledges (Crang 2003; Paterson 2009), and the body as "the most immediate and intimately felt geography […], the site of emotional experience and expression" (Davidson & Milligan 2008: 523). I demonstrate how, through the OBT, young people experience an embodied immediacy of being embedded in landscape (Wylie 2005), and particular places are therefore central to outdoor education experiences.

7.3.1. *Embodied encounters*

In the follow-up interviews, young people frequently recalled particular places and moments of their OBT week that they had enjoyed. Pleasure was often described through the opportunity to move freely, in unconventional and novel arrangements and rhythms. Participants described some of their favourite parts of the week as *"sliding down the mountains or hills"* (Josh – male, year 8, rural), *"climbing over logs"* in the woods (Penny – female, year 8, rural), and *"exploring and making a fire"* on the beach (Eva – female, year 7, urban). Tom and George (both male, year 7, urban) were particularly enthusiastic about their day at the beach:

Interviewer: And then on Friday apparently you went to the beach?

Tom: Ah yeah! That was super fun.

George: There was massive… what are they called?

Tom: Sand dunes? With like, grass on them! And you could run down them it was so fun!

George: And you could roll and jump!

Participants encountered the woods, the beach and the hills through sliding, climbing, exploring, making, rolling, running and jumping. It could be argued that these somatic engagements are commonplace; there is often running and jumping in young people's everyday lives. But, in light of young peoples' increasingly restricted opportunities for outdoor play (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson 2014), it is pertinent to consider how often this might occur on a beach, or in a dense woodland. As Lewis (2001) states, we make sense of the world through our bodies, and a range of sensory interactions create embodied spatial relations (Askins 2009). The words of the young people above illustrate the fundamental ways in which we interpret and communicate our experiences of the natural world through *the body* (Lewis 2001). Despite my assertion that these are ordinary engagements in 'extraordinary' places, I also wish to highlight the 'everydayness' (Horton & Kraftl 2006b) in these embodied encounters, by attending to how these types of space are enlivened in participants' lives. Here we can see mundane interactions between human, nonhuman, more-than-human (Nairn & Kraftl 2016), and material things – namely sand, logs, fire, people – which overlap and contribute to the unfolding of these events and are constitutive of each other (Rautio 2013).

Crucially, in way of response to Horton *et al.*'s (2015) concern that much child-environment interactions are reduced to the sphere of education, I suggest that the nature encounters outlined above are not always interpreted by young people as education *per se*, but through the notions of play and enjoyment. This is supported by the fact that the study participants could relate the spaces of Outward Bound not only to previous outdoor education experiences, but also to less formalized experiences of natural environments. As Tom (male, year 7, urban) commented:

> *"I do a lot of climbing, when I go to France, 'cos my grandparents have a house in France. […] They've got their house and then there's like this little hill up somewhere. And then, from that hill there's this huge, I guess, this huge cliff which has water underneath it. So you can climb it, it's really cool and the water is really nice – perfect. So you can climb up and if you ever get stuck you can just jump."*

Similarly, Harry (male, year 8, rural) discussed how he went cycling with his friends in his free time, *"I do go outside, I normally go on my bike quite a bit. Just go out cycling, sometimes I've been to XXX with a few friends, cycled out to there. It's not too far"*. Potential classed-based differences notwithstanding, Tom and Harry, along with other young people in the study, related corporeal place-based experiences in the OBT to other outdoor engagements, drawing

attention to the manifold ways in which children and young people's lives are entangled with nature (Nairn & Kraftl 2016), which moves beyond educational concerns. These young people galvanized memories of places through their kinaesthetic experiences; beaches, trees and hills were contextualised through bodily movement and more-than-human interactions, which were central to young people's interpretations of place (Kraftl 2013a).

The ways in which participants physically navigated and passed through places also accorded them a level of agency in their engagements with nature. During one expedition, the instructor struggled to find the footpath, as my fieldnotes recall,

> *The first part of the route took us through Rhododendron forest, where deforestation meant that we couldn't find the path! Involved some serious tree hacking, crossing little rivers and climbing under/over fallen trees through thick woods.* (fieldnotes, Mountain Ridge High Outward Bound Trip)

This field diary extract is indicative of a physical interaction with the forest that goes far beyond the intended activity of following a footpath. The instructor did not know where the path was any more than the participants, and so young people wielded sticks to combat the dense undergrowth (Figure 7.5), beat back thick bushes, clambered over logs and fell into boggy streams that were disguised by leaf litter. We ambled through the trees shielding our faces as branches flung back and hit us, as if to say 'you shall not pass!'. Negotiating the forest took considerably longer than intended due to a lack of obvious route, and culminated in climbing over a drystone wall to 'escape'. In physically carving out this passage through the trees, young people acted to (re)interpret the place of the forest, (re)making relations with it and deviating from the regular and accepted social practice of following the path (Macnaghten & Urry 2001).

Kraftl (2013a) and Lewis (2001) draw attention to the importance of movement in outdoor education environments. Lewis' interpretation of rock climber's bodies considers how the idea of adventuring in the outdoors is endowed with kinaesthesis; there is an embodied state of awareness and sensation of movement through limbs and muscles. For Lewis (2001) adventure is embodied through the 'active body' or the 'body in motion'. Kraftl (2013a) furthers this assertion by identifying how spaces are animated through movement; the social and physical spaces of learning are 'lively' and imbued with specific bodily locomotion. Outdoor educational practices command a different set of kinesics and corporeal engagements, therefore movement is fundamental to experiences in outdoor education environments. The vignette above clearly identifies 'active bodies', which allowed for a perceived shift in the balance of power between

the 'expert' OBT instructor and inexperienced learners, as the instructor took on a passive role in the forest encounter. However, this could also be read as the instructor allowing the young people to take ownership and responsibility over the situation, in line with the desired social outcomes of the course.

Figure 7. 5   Carving a path through the forest (authors own photograph)

Moving through outdoor environments is informed by performative norms and values, and walking carries distinct forms of embodied practice (Edensor 2001). In this example, there are moments when young people were accorded time and space to subvert commonly upheld markers of walking in the forest. The human-nature dichotomy (Malone 2016b) was blurred through the intense entanglement of bodies, rucksacks, voices and trees (upright and uprooted)

as participants demonstrated their agency to act in the moment and remake the forest through their corporeal engagement with it. Further, the role of space in demonstrating 'alterity' (Kraftl 2015) is highlighted. Through smell, light and dark, wetness and tight spaces young people experienced a space quite different from school, allowing and emergent sense of 'alter-childhoods' (Ibid.). Here again we see the "relative agency of a range of actors" (Kraftl 2015; 227) in young people's engagements with branches, streams and leaf litter. To quote Kraftl (2015: 227):

> "this [is] not simply a "natural" space but a more-than-social one, constituted through human agents [the instructor and young people], nonhuman "natures" [branches and logs, streams, leaf litter], and nonhuman objects [branches as 'tools', rucksacks and boots]."

In this respect, it is possible to move beyond an individualistic understanding of agency to view it as something more 'congregational' (Bennett 2010), created through moments of intra-action between human and nonhuman entities (Barad 2007; Rautio 2013). Kraftl (2015: 235) tasks children's geographers to examine how children (and adults) may be "configured, positioned, empowered (or not), and enlivened (or not) in the production of alter-childhoods". Here, I expose both processes of empowerment and liveliness in a move toward alter-childhoods, as well as opening up outdoor education processes to a more fluid understanding of agency.

7.3.2. *Material encounters*

As section 7.3.1 suggested, young people's embodied engagements with particular places often involved engagements with 'nonhuman' 'things'; including particular items of equipment, outdoor accessories, and technologies that became integral to their OBT week. Although outdoor education entails numerous "mundane technologies", those which are invisible but instrumental to participants' relations with the natural environment (Michael 2001: 108), participants paid particular attention to their experiences of and with walking boots and waterproofs.

The equipment was intended as a facilitator in the practice of being in the outdoors – the young people were given walking boots and waterproofs for the week to enable to them to (hopefully) walk long distances and stay dry, without ruining their own clothes. The clothing was a source of much conversation, often featuring on participants' moodboards and discussion of their content:

"The boots were really uncomfortable. I brought my own because my aunty is a PE teacher, but on the first day I was quite shy to say that I had my own because I didn't really know XXX [the instructor]. And I didn't like the clothes at all, they were really ugly!" (Eva – female, year 7, urban; describing her moodboard)

"This reminds of the clothes I didn't like [picture of walking book], it was like a uniform. […] I didn't like the uniform [waterproofs] because it smelt" (Aisha – female, year 8, urban; describing her moodboard)

Michael (2001) discusses walking boots as objects of 'semiotic consumption', relatively plain in style to signify a concern with function over form and marking out an individual as a 'serious walker'. However, the wearing of boots and other clothing as a means of distinction in outdoor environments was of no concern to Eva and Aisha. Other participants insisted on tucking their waterproof trousers into their socks as an expression of good fashion, despite this allowing water to run into their boots more easily. Some arrived for evening activities in leather jackets instead of clothing that may have been warmer and more suitable. One young person even brought a blanket on the expedition, despite this meaning that items of group kit then would not fit into her rucksack. In addition, waterproofs and boots were regularly lost, mixed up or 'stolen', providing a source of entertainment, frustration and, more often than not, time wasting. Young people struggled to tie the laces of the walking boots, as observed on many occasions in the field diary, one day simply noting that *"walking along the road at the end… three sets of laces undone!"* (fieldnotes, Wallflower High Outward Bound trip).

These trivial, incidental and everyday occurrences relating to using equipment were acknowledged by some instructors as a feature of the Outward Bound 'experience':

"I guess a big part of the experience is the fact that the grounds not level, there's rocks, so even walking, with these strange boots that they've given you – and you can't tie them like trainers, you have to tie them all the way up, otherwise it's really uncomfortable and you get blisters… that whole stuff that's implicit – it adds to the experience." (Tim, male instructor, aged 25-35)

Despite the use of technology being critiqued for diminishing the contrast value and feelings of immersion in nature environments (Wattchow 2001b), Tim viewed the equipment as an important element of OBT courses. In addition, the voices of the young people in the research support Becker's (2003) notion of a sliding scale of perception; the incorporation of technology and equipment did not detract from an appreciation of their immediate environment as natural

and immersive. In general, the young people perceived the location of the centres, the venues for activities and activities themselves to be adventurous and taking place in a wilderness setting, in contrast to their everyday lives. There were several contributing factors to this, including feelings of (spatial) freedom and independence, facilitated by the instructor. As Milly (female, year 7, urban) suggested:

Interviewer: Ok great. What did you expect [instructor] to be like?

Milly: I expected him to be really like, overly safe and overly protective. So I thought we weren't going to be able to do adventurous things. But we were. And he was quite laid back as well.

Interviewer: So what was really adventurous about it for you?

Milly: That we kind of had to figure it out for ourselves, instead of him telling us. So like, when we did the head torch game where we had to answer questions and get a head torch if we got it right, we were all quite scared because we knew that he wasn't just going to give us a head torch.

An awareness of isolation and immersion was also recognised as a wilderness factor. George (male, year 7, urban) commented that *"when we went to the cottage, you couldn't really have guessed it was there. Like it was in the middle of nowhere, not many people lived [near] by"*.

This feeling of being out there in a 'real' and authentic environment is summed up by Rohan (male, year 9, urban), when comparing his OBT week to experiences with another outdoor education provider:

"Because with [alternative outdoor education provider], [...] It's not the same but it's kind of based on the same thing. So you're always wearing a harness, clipping yourself up and going maybe up something, or down something, or down a zip wire. So, it's not boring, but it's basic stuff – a place to have fun – it's like a fun fair but bigger. But with Outward Bound, you do wear harnesses sometimes – maybe to get somewhere. But like, climbing the mountains, it's a different experience, more amazing. And when you get there, you're like 'oh I achieved something', you didn't just get to the top of a tower."

Rohan acknowledges the use of mundane technologies such as climbing harnesses in the OBT. However, he validates the role of the equipment in facilitating a purposeful activity – *"to get somewhere"*, in an outdoor setting which evokes visceral feelings and meaningful experiences. The physical setting allows the activity to be perceived as authentic and real through bodily

sensibilities, which directly contrasts with fabricated tasks and settings such as a zip wire or climbing tower. As Tim (instructor, quoted above) suggested, the technologies involved in creating outdoor education are often subsumed into, and become part of the outdoor education experience.

In addition, there was an awareness that clothing made the activities more possible and comfortable:

> *Rohan: I've never actually been in that before. 'Cos in my mind, all I thought water coming onto me, and then coming straight back off, and like –*
>
> *Interviewer: You mean when you were wearing waterproofs?*
>
> *Rohan: Yeah yeah yeah. So say like, if it starts raining, I put my hat on, I'm fine!*

However, young people's comments still reveal close sensory participation with tangible elements of outdoor environments, where *"it was really muddy, it was really rainy, […] We had to go through different places, like we had to go through puddles, ponds, and my foot got wet. There was also mud, my trousers were muddy as well"* (Eshan – male, year 8, urban).

Although Rohan felt more comfortable wearing his waterproofs whilst out in the rain, they did not protect Eshan from getting muddy and wet. This supports the idea of mundane technologies as actants in outdoor environments, extending young people's capacities in Outward Bound activities. Furthermore, in individual and subtle ways, the young people utilised, modified or actively rejected the clothing they were given, which created a range of alternative sensory engagements with outdoor environments. Dickson (2004) suggests that technology can create a barrier to bodily, sensory experiences of place. However, I argue that although material accessories, seen here through the examples of walking boots and waterproofs, influence how young people experience and interpret the outdoors, they do not act as a barrier to the haptic and bodily knowledges of outdoor environments. These mundane technologies acted as enablers, a source of conversation, and an opportunity to personalise outdoor experiences through embodied expressions of identity (Cook & Hemming 2011).

The voices of these young people do articulate a certain politics of power into the use of technologies in outdoor education. Payne (1996; 1997, in Wattchow 2001b) suggests that acknowledging how the artificial and material are used to structure an authentic experience exposes this "hidden moral and political work of technology" (Wattchow 2001b: 20). Young people's interactions with the equipment marked them out as inexperienced and unskilled in

their engagements with the outdoors; deviating from the normalised, well-equipped bodies that are deemed 'acceptable' in these spaces. The difficulty they encountered tying laces, the 'incorrect' use of waterproof trousers, and a regular propensity for dressing inappropriately marked their bodies as 'out of place' in outdoor environments. As Edensor (2001) comments, we must 'learn to walk'; walking, and indeed other outdoor activities require a particular set of bodily techniques and equipment, and are governed by distinct knowledges and body discipline. This can be problematic for young people who lack experience or the appropriate 'bodily know-how', and for those with mind-body-emotional differences (Holt 2010), who could be further marginalised in this educational space. Evidently, the complex interaction between young people, (unfamiliar) outdoor environments and (unfamiliar) equipment can act to accentuate particular relations of power in outdoor education experiences.

7.3.3. *Affective encounters and the affordances of taskscapes*

Just as young people found enjoyment and agency in the unregulated bodily sensibilities afforded by outdoor places, negative experiences of outdoor education were understood through undesirable physical encounters. For participants from Woodland Academy, the gorge walking activity marked one such encounter. In no uncertain terms, they disliked gorge walking because *"it was hell! Mud everywhere, water in my shoes, my clothes got dirty, my hands got dirty"*. (Nuria – female, year 8, urban). As well as being muddy, *"it was cold, and I really hate being cold, so I hated that. And I hate that it was dark as well so I didn't know where I was going"*. (Priya – female, year 8, urban). Nuria and Priya highlight some very distinct sensory experiences of many nature settings; mud, dirt, coldness, and darkness. For these young people, this confrontation with the outdoor environment bears no resemblance to the de-contextualised experiences of self-development suggestive of outdoor education practice (Wattchow & Brown 2011; Harrison 2010). These are responses to intense and immersive haptic and visual knowledges. We can see an emergent affective geography in the encounters with the gorge; the embodied states or energetic outcomes which result from encounters with other people and place (Conradson & McKay 2007). The gorge activity elicited a strong emotional (and unfavourable) response from these young people, which again acts to highlight their agency to undermine normalized relationships with outdoor environments (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010).

Askins (2009) recognises the inseparability of consciousness and corporeal practices; the physical countryside is understood through a range of sensory interactions, but these are embedded in embodied social relations which creates a 'politics of position' (Bondi 2002) in

our experiences of these spaces. Relationships with nature are undeniably influenced by social and cultural discourses; influenced by personal life, socioeconomic circumstance, geographical location, and age (Askins 2009; Macnaghten & Urry 2001). As Crang and Tolia-Kelly (2010: 2316) suggest,

> "[d]ifferentiated affective energies are created through relationships between geography (site situation, and spaces), places (how they are encountered, experienced and felt), [and] the body (race, citizenship, and positioning)."

Macnaghten and Urry's (2001) notion of 'sensescapes' is useful here as the young people who experienced the gorge activity were a group of Muslim girls who attend an inner-city school. Connections with nature are reconciled through the bodily sensations of coldness, muddy hands, wet feet and darkness, as well as these socio-cultural sensescapes which signify certain narratives and regulate understandings of place. In this way, young people's embodied performances are involved in being *in* nature and in (re)producing natures. We must ask, how are these participants' encounters with the gorge entwined with their female, Muslim, urban identities? In this regard, we must be mindful of falling back on a reductive urban-as-multicultural and rural-as-monocultural paradigm and stereotyping ethnic minorities as 'rural others' (Neal 2002; Askins 2009). As Askins reminds us, although nature and outdoor environments are understood through 'cultural filters', these can be "as much embedded in age, gender, and socio-economic class positions as ethnicity" (2009: 369). That said, we can understand 'traditional' English landscapes, such as the Lake District National Park as *heritage sites* (Crang & Tolia-Kelly 2010), where complex organisations, institutions and practices come together to preserve English culture (Hall 2005). They operate within an institutionalized field of practices, with expected emotional interactions and responses. Consequently, power and a politics of difference still play out across these nature spaces. There are powerful social reproductions regarding what the rural is, what it means, and appropriate responses to it (Askins 2009).

A consideration of young people's previous experiences potentially helps to re-balance the focus on ethnicity by drawing out the affordances of particular taskscapes, 'bodily know-how', and a 'geopolitical positioning of the body' (Rose 1993). Several participants had encountered these types of outdoor activities before, or could relate to outdoor environments in some way. This may have been though previous experiences of outdoor education, for example Solomon (male, year 8, urban) referred to his previous OBT trip, commenting that *"like it was last year,*

I got used to it and I knew what to do – I knew how to put on my backpack and I knew all of that. It felt really easy this time. Last time it was really hard 'cos I hadn't done that before." He expressed a familiarity in his environment and therefore a confidence in his engagement with it. Similarly, Amelia (female, year 9, rural) could relate the physical spaces of the OBT to her everyday life:

> *"Where I live, it is kind of like fields and woods and stuff. There is like loads of hills and loads of places that is kind of like the same [as the OBT]. But there's not mountains and stuff like that. but it's like, if I was out with my friends, I would do the kinds of things I did on the trip. 'cos it's kind of walking a lot, and climbing and stuff. But it's a bit different."*

In addition to Solomon and Amelia, other young people had taken part in similar activities on family holidays, or visited relatives in more rural locations and hence were able to connect with the physical environments they encountered in some small way, or have confidence in their embodied capabilities and learned body pedagogics (Shilling 2016). In contrast to Solomon and Amelia, Haani (female, year 8, rural) struggled to make links with what she did at the OBT and other outdoor centres, where *"we did easier stuff, like we didn't have to go mountain climbing, we didn't go on the mountain, and we didn't have to do jog and dip"*. When I asked Nuria (female, year 8, urban) about her typical weekend routine, she responded *"bed, TV, phone, sleeping!"*. Despite the fact that Haani, and other members in her group had been to various outdoor activity centres before, their lack of experience and confidence was evident in their bodily dispositions, which can be read as a limited 'bodily know-how' (Atherton 2007; Crossley 2001; Lewis 2001). Nuria's lifestyle was representative of the young people in the group from Woodland Academy, who did not regularly engage in 'nature' environments in their free time.

As Rose (1993) suggested, bodies are placed 'geopolitically', marked by specific and geographical circumstances and becoming relational and territorialized in certain ways (Nast & Pile 1998). In line with this, opportunities and engagements with place (or taskscape) – what it can *afford* us (Gibson 1979) – are both objective and subjective (Macnaghten & Urry 2001). A perception of what the environment offers comes through engagement with it (Ingold 2000) and a reciprocity between the environment and individual. As Macnaghten and Urry (2001: 169) contend, "affordances constrain behaviour along certain possibilities, connected to bodily capacities and limits of the human organism". Nuria and Haani's lack of experience in nature

environments can be translated into a limited bodily capacity to seek affordances in the outdoor education taskscape. Taking heed of Askins' (2009) work, we must acknowledge that this could be as a consequence of their inherited cultural traditions, their geographical location in an urban environment, their limited access to outdoor environments as a result of socio-economic positioning, or a shifting combination of these demographic factors. As Edensor (2006) remarks, physical interaction with the materialities of space lead to sensory experiences which shape apprehension of such spaces. This highlights not only how spaces "possess an agency to impact upon the sensibilities of those who dwell" (Edensor 2006: 30), but also the ways in which the affordances of particular places are informed by practical engagement, and therefore a lack of sensual familiarity hinders a practical sense of "what to do" (Ibid.). This diminished 'practical sense' was evident in some young people, for example, in not knowing how to walk on uneven ground or navigate steep muddy slopes. However, the root cause of these differential "corporeal schemas" (Merleau-Ponty 2001) was not always clearly distinguishable, as categories of social differences intersected and came to the fore in different spatial-temporal moments of OBT courses.

With reference to section 7.2, and in highlighting a geopolitical placing of young people's bodies, I address a concern that the notion of dwelling dismisses issues of power, inequality and social relations that play out in the construction of particular taskscapes (Massey 2006). Massey suggests that Ingold's (2000) writing on landscape and dwelling "does not question an essential harmony of rhythms and resonances – a *coherence* of landscape" (2006: 41). As I have demonstrated, experiences of nature and landscape are not coherent, and the affordances of the outdoor education taskscape are shaped by our perceptions of it. I have utilised the work of Askins (2009) and Macnaghten and Urry (2001) to highlight tensions between structure and agency in experiences of nature. Bodies help to materialise social practices in the natural world, shifting between the freedom of immediate haptic knowledges and the coercion of regulatory (educational) spaces (Holt 2007). As such, despite the discourse of decontextualized learning, this chapter has shown how spaces of outdoor education are not exempt from 'power-geometries' (Massey 2005). Taking part in outdoor education *in the UK*, which operates through and finds meaning in these heritage sites, therefore has significant consequences for encounters with nature. As the previous sub-sections have indicated, active and dynamic engagements with place are encouraged and reinforced in this educational environment. Those who do not engage in positive physical ways can be excluded, in what is often assumed to be a neutral space of learning. Finally, this raises questions for how young people with mind-body-

emotional differences (Holt 2010) might access these educational spaces, where normative modes of physicality are privileged, and agency is often realised through corporeal engagements.

7.4. Conclusion

This final empirical chapter has considered young people's experiences of nature and outdoor environments in the OBT. In so doing, it has moved beyond a consideration of the OBT's process conceptualised as the creation of an Outward Bound 'experience', towards the *process* through which young people understand their experiences of the OBT. The outdoors is often employed with universal application for educational purposes, whereby specific experiences become disembodied and the learning experience becomes de-placed. To counter this narrative, I have employed the concepts of 'dwelling' and 'taskscape' to illuminate how nature takes on particular forms in outdoor education. I have explored the ways in which nature is variously produced as 'gymnasium', 'journey', and 'escapism' by young people, and how these forms of nature can be co-produced at different times. Accordingly, the outdoor education taskscape materialises through young people's particular engagements with it, entailing both 'land' and 'landscape' modes of dwelling, incorporating the physiological, visual and the sensual.

In emphasising the spatial-temporal fluidity of nature and its simultaneous influence on young people's bodies, I have carved out a more relational understanding of the nature/culture binary. I have also released the notion of 'dwelling' from its implied 'rootedness', to allow the concept to register "the transient and fleeting as well as the enduring" (Wylie 2003: 145) through the mobile practices of outdoor education. I have purposefully foregrounded young people's bodies in accounts of dwelling and taskscape, but acknowledge that the forms of natures which make up outdoor education taskscapes overlap and interweave with the taskscapes of other activities that take place in these environments.

A consideration of how young people understand and articulate their bodily participation in natural environments has highlighted the distinct ways in which corporeal sensibilities contribute to experiences of place in outdoor education. For the participants, enjoyment, disgust, and connections to place were all mediated through embodied encounters. I have shown how young people come to understand outdoor education practices through experiences which are personal, engage multiple senses, and centre the body in the learning process. In highlighting clear entanglements of human agents, nonhuman 'natures' and nonhuman objects,

211

I open up a more fluid conceptualisation of agency in outdoor education spaces. Nature encounters can be understood as *more-than-social* (Kraftl 2013a; 2015) opportunities for alterity, incorporating the relative agency of a range of actors. In addition, paying attention to material interactions reveals the role of equipment in creating the Outward Bound 'experience': as actants, conversation starters and bodily markers of identity. The young people still perceive Outward Bound as wild and adventurous, despite the material structuring of the experience. Through a focus on bodily engagements with (outdoor) places, this chapter also identifies some tensions between structure and agency in the learning process. Through bodily movement young people have the opportunity to act upon places and (re)create them, but these actions are also clearly bounded by socially and culturally mediated sensescapes, as well as a 'politics of position' (Bondi 2000) and normalised narratives of outdoor bodies. Young people in this study carried with them different experiences of, and relations to, natural environments, and this acted to influence the affordances that natural land and landscapes offered them.

This discussion of embodied, place-based encounters has re-centred the (natural) physical environment in work on geographies of education, and contributed to a corpus of work advocating a post-humanist perspective of child/nature relations. I argue that scholars should not lament a lack of place-basedness in outdoor education practice – it is possible to focus more purposefully on the first-hand, personalized accounts of participants, to understand where interactions between the body, mind and place become foregrounded in outdoor education experiences and produce particular natures. This chapter has contributed a combined focus on educational spaces and wider geographical debates regarding landscape, (outdoor) mobilities and embodiment, as well as considering notions of in/exclusion in nature.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This thesis has taken the Outward Bound Trust as a case study, to explore the specific socio-cultural and physical spaces that outdoor education in the UK operates through. I have sought to embed work on outdoor education within debates in geographies of education and geographies of children and youth, through a critical consideration of constructions and experiences of place in outdoor education practice. The Trust's pedagogical approach advocates the importance of three distinctive features – 'people', 'place', and 'process'. This study has broadly mapped these elements in its research questions and through four empirical chapters. However, in agreement with the Trust, people, places and processes are always overlapping and emergent in accordance with one another, and cannot be discussed in isolation. This chapter therefore seeks to reunite them in providing both a summary of the chapters' key contributions, and wider reflections on these themes.

In this concluding chapter, I discuss how this thesis contributes towards existing theory and knowledge in disciplinary human geography, and consider the ways in which it deepens our understanding of outdoor education practices in cognate fields. The following section provides concluding comments, and discusses the empirical chapters' contributions to the study's research questions and the Trusts three 'P's. As a useful reminder, the research questions were:

1. How are the social and physical spaces of the Outward Bound Trust constructed and used to produce an outdoor learning experience?

2. How are the key concepts of the Trust embodied in its staff, and how does this contribute to the outdoor learning experience?

3. How do young people experience nature and the outdoors through Outward Bound Trust Programmes?

8.2. People, Place, Process: chapter summaries

Chapter 1 introduced outdoor education in the UK, placing it in the wider context of informal learning, and stated the intended aims of this research project. Chapter 2 provided an overview of the relevant theoretical and conceptual debates that informed this study, reviewing extant literature in the fields of citizenship, education, and nature. Chapter 3 outlined the methodological framework and methods utilised in this research. This chapter also shed light on the particular issues that arose in conducting research with young people, and included a personal, reflective account of undertaking the study.

As the first empirical chapter, Chapter 4 examined the *places* through which the practices of the OBT are grounded. I highlighted the variegated nature of these pedagogical sites, and how they were constructed and utilised, which was necessary in order to begin to understand young people's specific experiences of them. In addressing the first research question, the concept of 'centre geographies' was proposed to encompass how the physical site of the centre and the surrounding environment were utilised to create an outdoor learning experience, which occurred in four key ways. First, the physical locations of centres were essential for attracting employees, as suitable spaces for instructors to both work and 'play'. This necessarily incorporated the social space of the centre, which introduced the implications of an appropriate working environment for creating an outdoor learning experience. Second, the immediate visual impact of centre buildings and settings, and the spatial-temporal contrasts to young people's everyday lives were deemed to encourage behavioural change. Third, easy access to a range of environments and landscapes was essential for instructors to be able to upscale and downscale activities according to need, and enabled the construction of physical journeys. And finally, the purposeful (re)design of centre buildings was used to encourage 'flow' and opportunities for independence, as well as embedding spaces of reflection and immersion in nature within the centre sites. Through Chapter 4, I clearly demonstrated that specific places matter in outdoor education, beyond merely the assertion that this type of practice takes place 'outside'.

Chapter 5 focused explicitly on *people*, attending to the ways in which the OBT operated through its staff, from individual thoughts and motivations to collective action. This research builds on the work of Barnes (1999; 2003) in identifying outdoor instructors as being driven by personal progression and opportunity, and a 'culture of mobility'. This chapter addressed the second and third research questions, extending Barnes' ideas by employing the notion of 'Community of Practice' (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991) to understand the development of a

particular culture within the OBT. The OBT is characterised by its goal of developing people, and this chapter outlined how employees adopted a distinct *praxis* – informed, committed actions which embody certain qualities – in working towards this goal. It was this commitment to a common goal, the 'flat hierarchical' structure which they employed, and the way in which engagement with the OBT provided a sense of identity for instructors, which marked out OBT as a CoP. Evidently, in building a CoP, the OBT created a social space conducive to producing an outdoor learning experience.

Chapter 5 also explored questions around what it is that instructors 'do' to make courses more impactful for young people. Specifically, I drew attention to how OBT staff embodied their position as role models through 'embodied social capital' (Holt 2008), and utilised play, performance and choreography to engage young people. This demonstrates where instructors embodied the organisational culture, and how this contributed to young people's learning experiences. A focus on the role of the educator in the production of particular learning spaces contributes to a growing body of work on the *cultural* geographies of education (Mills & Kraftl 2016), through considering performance, identity and emotion in this educational space. Finally, in this chapter I revealed changing patterns of spatio-temporal mobility across OBT staff, and the outdoor community more generally. There were clear tensions between instructor's broader motivations and aspirations, and the opportunities that being employed in the field of outdoor education affords. In response to the commercialisation and marketization of the industry, permanent contracts with the OBT, that offered a regular income with flexible working arrangements, made it possible for staff to carve 'alternative versions of adulthood', which both conformed to, and contradicted, traditional mobilities related to lifestyle sports and outdoor instructors. In negotiating Barnes' 'culture of mobility', outdoor instructors continued to embody the ideals of the organisation, for personal progression and growth, whilst the employment packages made it possible to allow these identities to be embedded in OBT courses.

Chapter 6 attended to all three research questions in different ways, exploring how 'people' and 'place' come together through *process*, specifically through the Outward Bound 'experience'. The chapter explored how instructors embedded their own ideas and sensibilities in courses, the role of relationships in making young people's experiences meaningful, and how this was grounded in particular times and spaces. The historical context of the Trust was introduced, and the synergies and divergencies with contemporary discourses within the OBT were highlighted. I identified both 'macro-' and 'micro-processes' that produced particular and sometimes

discordant citizenship discourses in the OBT, which mapped onto the individual motivations and identities of instructors identified in Chapter 5. Ideas around citizenship were also built into the physical and social space of the centres, where both instructors and young people perceived greater opportunities for independence. In this chapter I also identified the prevalence of peer-to-peer friendships as an important source of enjoyment for participants. This was particularly striking in relation to the residential aspects of OBT courses and opportunities to make memorable moments and shared experiences. Here we can understand how young people experienced nature and the outdoors as a social space, as well as a physical space. In addition, specific places of the OBT were grounded in young people's memories through emotional experiences, and the spaces of outdoor education contrasted with more formal educational settings. They allowed for a greater diversity of emotions, whilst simultaneously enacting affective forces and choreographed practices, constitutive of *more-than-social* relations (Kraftl 2013a; 2015).

Furthermore, in Chapter 6 I argued that to combat processes of commercialisation, the OBT employed a certain 'methodological slowness'. This incorporated the concepts of 'slow adventure' and 'slower ecopedagogy' to allow time and space for immediate, embodied learning experiences to unfold. I explored the competing rhythms of OBT courses and places, demonstrating how multiscalar and multidimensional rhythms were absorbed into working processes and incorporated into OBT 'journeys'. This chapter focused on the dimension of *time* as a key facet of the OBT process, from the broader temporal narratives of citizenship education and 'developing' young people, to the small-scale and individual spatio-temporal daily practices of instructors. This further contributes to answering the first research question, highlighting how the physical spaces of the OBT were constructed and 'temporally ordered' to produce a particular type of outdoor experience.

Finally, in Chapter 7, I attended to young people's specific experiences of nature, place, land and landscape through OBT courses, which directly correlated with the third research question in this study. I employed the concepts of 'dwelling' and 'taskscape' (Ingold 1997; 2000) to demonstrate how young people produced particular natures in the context of their OBT courses. Crucially, this chapter contributed to understandings of how (young people's) mobilities animate landscapes and places (Merriman *et al.* 2008), and explored the embodied details of outdoor education programmes. I destabilised the nature/culture binary by showing how the outdoor education taskscape materialised through young people's particular engagements with it, entailing both 'land' and 'landscape' modes of dwelling and incorporating the physiological,

visual and the sensual. In so doing, this chapter moved beyond a consideration of how young people experience nature, towards ideas about how nature comes into being through young people in outdoor education programmes. I also revealed some of the distinct ways in which corporeal sensibilities contributed to experiences of place in outdoor education. Engagements with nature spaces and outdoor environments were fun, scary, 'disgusting', personal, engaged multiple senses, and centred the body in the learning process. In addition, young people experienced nature as a space for agency and alterity, but also as a politically and culturally bounded space, which acted to individually differentiate experiences of nature in OBT programmes. Importantly, material interactions shaped experiences of OBT courses, but outdoor education environments were still deemed to be adventurous and wild, despite a significant material structuring and choreographing of the experience.

Through offering answers to the proposed research questions, I have focused explicitly on the three 'P's. The notions of *people*, *place* and *process* as key elements in the creation of OBT courses has been explored in detail. I have outlined the symbiotic relations between these key features, which overlap and interrelate in different times and spaces, to demonstrate their roles in producing an outdoor learning experience in the OBT. In the forthcoming section, I will provide some broader comments on the implications of this research project for wider debates in the geographies of education and geographies of children and youth.

8.3. Contributions to knowledge and future directions

The findings of this study enhance understandings of outdoor education practices by revealing how particular social and physical places matter, how outdoor education instructors embody and convey key concepts of outdoor learning, and how young people experience nature through outdoor education programmes. As discussed in Chapter 2, much research into outdoor education has been outcome-orientated, or inspired by a historical, educational or international perspective. A wider consideration of the particular geographies of outdoor education and how its environments are implicated in outdoor education practices through the processes of mobility and time, as well as through social relations and affective encounters, addresses a significant gap in work on outdoor education. Given the substantial contributions of children's geographies and geographies of education in acknowledging the spatial and temporal dimensions of children's (learning) experiences and the politics of educational spaces (Holloway & Jöns 2012; Pykett 2012), this field is well positioned to further interrogate the 'place' of outdoor education. Following a geographical line of enquiry, supplemented by

debates in education and learning theory, this research provides a timely contribution to the literature in three key areas, which are outlined below.

First, this thesis had centred young people's bodies in outdoor informal educational spaces. Young people's embodied experiences have been explored at length in the institutional space of the school (e.g. Holt 2007), but have largely been neglected in the context of outdoor learning. Where outdoor education has traditionally been conceived of as relating to cognitive and disembodied outcomes, this thesis has demonstrated the critical importance of (physical) interactions in particular places in shaping outdoor experiences. This marks out outdoor educational practice as deliberately embedded *in-place*, in comparison to Wattchow and Brown's (2011) concerns over 'placelessness'. Further, this research has elucidated young people's embodied experiences of outdoor environments in both an educational and broader context. Given the move towards post-humanist approaches to child/nature encounters (Shillington 2014) that is evident in recent work by children's geographers and childhood studies, this study is original in its consideration of secondary-school aged young people's educational entanglements with the more-than-human. The focus has hitherto been on primary school and nursery aged children (e.g. Merewether 2018; Mycock 2018), and through the perspectives of older participants, this empirical work has afforded a more nuanced understanding of nature and society, particularly in the spheres of geographies of education and children's geographies, where a nature/culture division still remains firmly embedded to normalised discourses. It has revealed the complexity and multiplicity of participants' encounters, working toward deconstructing the nature/culture binary which dominates outdoor education learning models.

The research has helped to illustrate the role of young people's bodies in animating spaces of outdoor education, where these spaces provided opportunities for more bodily freedom, encouraged social interaction in fundamentally different ways, afforded spaces for relationship building, independent behaviour and the formation of significant 'micro-memories'. Consequently, this thesis makes a valuable addition to understandings of young people's corporeal engagements and interpretations of educational nature encounters, as well as embedding young people's mobile embodied practices in the production of nature. Furthermore, the research has drawn attention to how young people's nature encounters brought both positive and negative experiences, making an important and original contribution to the intersection between geographies of education and children's geographies. The participants in this study provided a snapshot of these dynamics across a range of social demographics and, as

Chapter 7 outlined, there was a socially structured placing of young people's bodies in these outdoor encounters. Social differences along the lines of ethnicity, religion and culture were observed more strongly than the impacts of gender or class, although the relative significance of these demographics was not always clear cut. Further research could interrogate outdoor education experiences which focus on specific categories of social difference, to ascertain more clearly how these impact on young people's outdoor education experiences. Indeed, this is an area which the OBT are increasingly interested in through its own research and evaluation activities.

Second, this research has made a significant contribution to existing knowledge regarding the interplay between formal and informal education spaces. Young people understood the spaces of outdoor education as fundamentally different to their school-based experiences. The OBT became a space of 'alterity' (Kraftl 2015), where both young people and 'things' were empowered in a more relational understanding of agency and 'nature' (Bennett 2010). As indicated above, participants' physical and social engagements were influenced by this informal learning space to produce new experiences of and in place. Conversely, the project has highlighted the ways in which outdoor education operates in tandem with mainstream educational practices. The OBT attempted to align its communicated outcomes with school programmes and curriculums, and was to some extent controlled by particular institutional rhythms and 'macro-processes'. The instructors in this study sought to do something different for young people, in providing individual and meaningful experiences influenced by personal values and motivations. These 'micro-processes' highlight conflicting spatial scales of citizenship practice in outdoor education, and bring to the fore Lawy and Biesta's (2006) tensions between 'citizenship-as-achievement' and 'citizenship-as-practice'. This study has therefore demonstrated how, on the ground, individual moments of 'mattering' were privileged in outdoor education experiences and there were opportunities for informal educational practices to 'navigate the line' between prescribed outcomes and individual need. Mills and Kraftl (2014) observe that spaces of informal education can be an extension of the institution of formal education. The outdoors has long since 'counted' as an educational space (Holloway *et al.* 2010), but this study has drawn attention to the nuances within this space, exploring the multiplicity of temporalities, places and mobilities that substantiate the outdoor education experience, and how these both conform to and dispute wider political discourses and practices.

Third, and relatedly, this research has brought the field of outdoor education into conversation with debates around life-course transitions and navigating adulthood. Outdoor instructors'

personal narratives highlighted changing practices within the outdoor industry, which increasingly conformed with broader processes of capitalism, whilst simultaneously continuing to provide a context within which 'alternative versions of adulthood' could play out. The outdoor industry presents a means of employment and a lifestyle choice, and this study has begun to paint a picture of (changing) patterns of mobility with this field. This is important in understanding the role of mobility, (in)stability and personal motivations in career trajectories of outdoor educators, disentangling how these trends are tied to particular physical and social places, and comprehending their implication in the production of outdoor education experiences for young people. This project focused on a small, specific sub-set of outdoor practitioners (working for the OBT). What is now needed is a cross-sectional study in order to explore patterns of mobility across the industry more broadly. Some existing research has highlighted gender-based experiences of employment in outdoor education (Allin 2000; Allin & Humberstone 2006), but a larger, geographical study would contribute towards a deeper understanding of the differentiated practitioner mobilities in the field of outdoor education.

In conclusion, by exploring outdoor education through a geographical approach using the example of OBT, this study has contributed to a greater understanding of its core interlocking components: 'people', 'place', and 'process'. This thesis has addressed its aim of investigating how the particular social and physical environments of outdoor learning programmes are constructed, how they are 'consumed' by participating young people, and how these experiences intersect with axes of social difference. Public discourses have acted to reinvigorate calls for engagement with the outdoors in the UK, not least through initiatives such as the English Outdoor Council's 'Outdoor Citizen' campaign (IOL 2018), which frames nature as a necessity in childhood. The longstanding rhetoric between youth and nature continues to be employed in policy to prioritise learning 'through the outdoors' and as means of inculcating the ideals of citizenship in young people. As such, this research provides a timely exploration of the *spatialities* (Kraftl 2013a) of particular natural environments as learning spaces. In so doing, this study has revealed the roles of those three core components, engaging with scholarship around outdoor cultures and practices, educational spaces, and wider geographical debates regarding landscape, (outdoor) mobilities and embodiment, as well as considering notions of in/exclusion in nature.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: OBT experiential Learning Model (OBT 2017b)
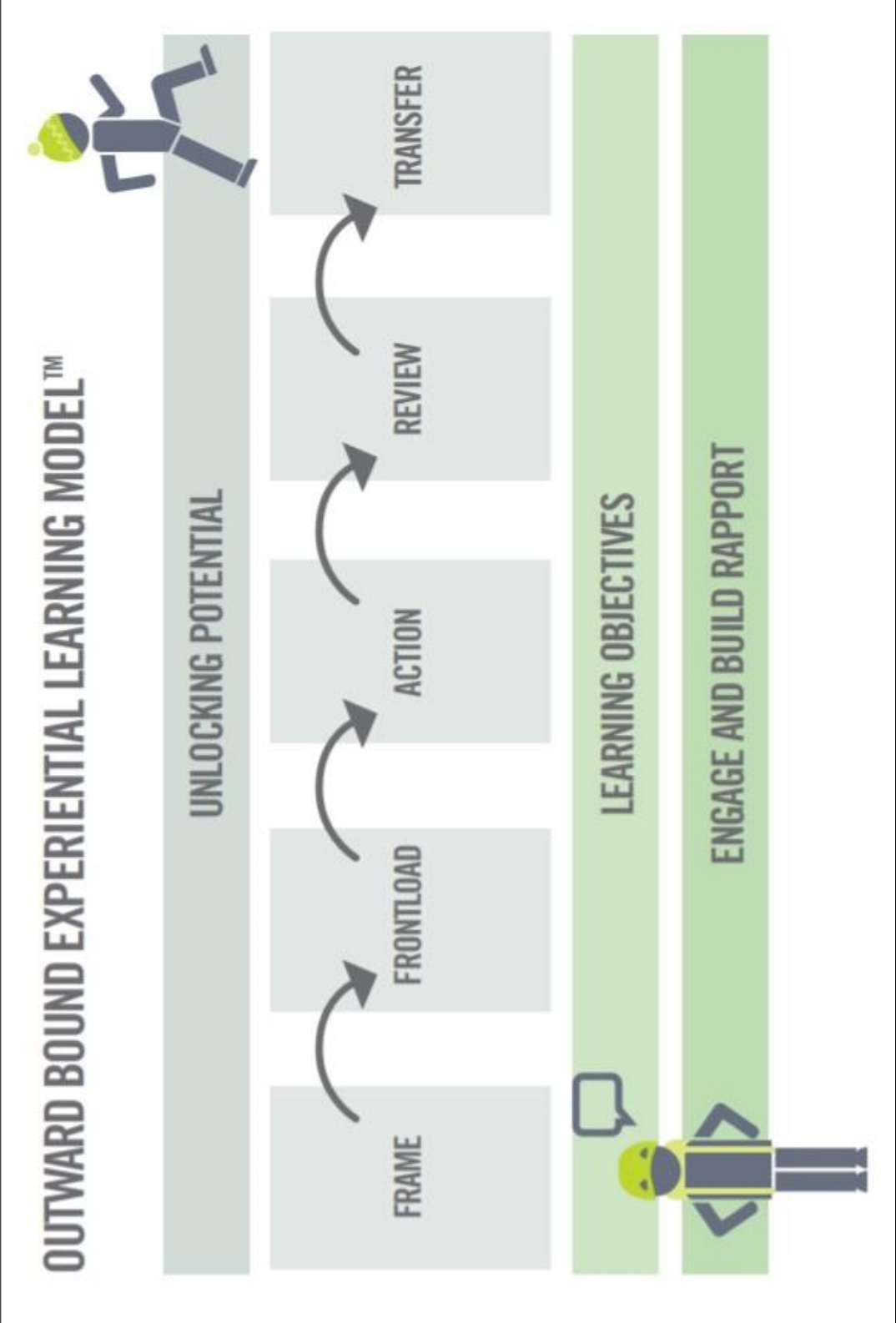
FRAME
- Creates a context for learning.
- Links to the participants own experience of home, school, work and social life.
- Links to previous course experience / learning.

FRONT LOAD
- Shares the reasons for doing the activity, setting the agenda, opportunities and expectations with the participants.
- Focuses on the individual as well as the group.
- Possibly supported by a theoretical model.

ACTION
- This could be a single task, activity, expedition or the entire course.

REVIEW
- Purpose is to reflect and analyse in order to draw out the learning.
- May be mid activity or end of activity, inside or outside.
- Uses open questions to encourage thought and consideration.
- Consider using active and creative methods.
- Possibly supported by a theoretical model to assist learning and understanding.

TRANSFER
- Explanation of how the learning or conclusions can be related to individuals own lives and / or the rest of the course.
- Link back to the framing of the experience.

Appendix 3: Interview guide for OBT instructors

OBT instructor context	Basic demographic information Can you tell me a bit about how you came to be involved with the Outward Bound Trust and how you got this job? Where do you seen yourself in 1/5/10 years time?
OBT experiences	What did you think working as an OBT instructor was going to be like? Does it live up to your expectations? What is the best part of OBT? What is the worst part of OBT? What is it you want to get out of working with the OBT? What if/what would you change/what is missing?
Role of OBT instructor / teaching	What are your main roles as an instructor? What kind of training have you done/been given in order to be an instructor? What is your favourite part of being an OBT instructor? What is your favourite part of OBT programmes and the most important aspect for young people? What do you consider your role to be in terms of the young people you work with?
The OBT centre	What is your favourite part about working at this centre? How important is the location for the OBT courses and the impact they have on young people? How is centre laid out to facilitate OBT courses? Would you change anything about the centre if you could?
Active citizenship and learning	What are the most important skills that young people learn in OBT programmes? What is the main message you want young people to take away from their OBT experience? Do you think OBT provides life-long learning? Are you familiar with the term *active citizenship?* What does it mean to you? Can you explain a little bit about authentic adventure?
Key principles	What does the OBT mean to you? / stand for/symbolize? Most important OBT principle? How do you build their guiding philosophies and principles into your teaching? What makes OBT different to other outdoor adventure programmes?

Appendix 4: Interview guide for young people

Young person context	Basic demographic information Can you tell me a bit about any youth organisations or extra-curricular activities you did before OBT?
Motivations for OBT	Had you heard about the OBT before this course was offered to you? Why did you decide to go on the OBT course? What did you think it was going to be like?
OBT experiences	Did the programme live up to your expectations? What was the best part of OBT? What was the worst part of OBT? What was your favourite activity? What did you think of the classroom-based sessions? In what ways did the OBT trust programme challenge you? Tell me about your camping experience… Would you change anything about the OBT course if you could?
OBT instructors	What were the main jobs of your instructor? What did you expect your instructor to be like? Did they meet your expectations? Did you build up a good relationship with your instructor? Do you feel you could speak to your instructor if you found something difficult or needed help? Did your instructor challenge you and push you out of your comfort zone?
Space and landscape	Do you enjoy being in the countryside? What did you expect the centre to be like? Did it live up to your expectations? Have you been to a mountainous/coastal area like this before? Did you enjoy the outdoors and scenery during the programme? How did it make you feel? What was the best part about being in the countryside? What was the worst part about being in the countryside? Do you think the outdoor activities were essential to your OBT experience? What are your main memories of the outdoor activities?
Young peoples' learning experiences	Did you feel motivated to get involved with the OBT activities? Did your attitude towards the programme change throughout the week? How would you compare what you learn in OBT to school citizenship lessons? Would you do OBT again? What would you say to one of your peers who was thinking about doing an OBT course?

Impact	What did you learn from OBT?
	Which element of OBT had the biggest impact on you?
	What is the main message you have taken away from your OBT experience?
	How will you apply what you have learnt in OBT to your everyday life?
	Has it changed the way you approach challenges/ decisions/team work?