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Jonathan Elphinstone.

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

The study presented here involved participants attending a summer camp programme in the USA. Throughout America there are a range of such camps, some are simply a single day activity to be done in the summer holiday from school, whilst others run for a period of up to two months.

Many of these are based around specific activities ranging from science to the learning of outdoor skills, some have a religious background, or focus more on education, whilst others are simply there to "enrich the lives of children youth and adults through the camp experience" which is the mission statement of the American camp association (ACA annual report, 2011: 7).

The area of particular interest to me and to this study, is how children attending such camps experience their natural surroundings, as in many cases they live the rest of the year in urban areas and may only experience nature and activities in the outdoors, during their time at camp.

I have worked on the chosen camp in the summer prior to the year in which I carried out my field work, teaching climbing and leading off camp trips. While this previous knowledge of the camp and perhaps more importantly the trust I gained from the camp directors, enabled me to gain access and the trust of my participants, my professional role also caused a number of issues which had to be factored in to the design of my study. These issues will be discussed in greater detail at a later stage of this thesis, to further explain the advantages and disadvantages presented and how possible negative impacts were dealt with.

Below I will provide an introduction to the camp its self, the participant group chosen and the inspiration behind my interest in this field, as well as providing information about the methodological framework used to investigate and collect data regarding the specific research question.

1.1 Introduction to the camp:

The camp on which my field work took place is based in the state of Maine, the most northern state on the eastern sea board of the USA and an area of predominantly natural surroundings, with lakes, forests and in the north of the state, more mountainous country. In this section I will endeavour to provide a brief introduction to the camp, highlighting the people involved, both campers and staff, as well as outlining some of the range of activities on offer.

The camp itself caters for children from 8-15, both male and female, many of whom live the rest of the year in the major urban areas of north east America, particularly Boston and New York. The camp has a Jewish background and so all campers' eligibility is based upon their Jewish heritage, whilst religion is not the main focus of the camp experience, religious events such as Shabbat (the Jewish Sabbath day) and some religious holidays are observed.

There are a wide range of activities available on the camp premises, ranging from Waterskiing and archery to ceramics, as well as what I will, for the purpose of this thesis, term "nature based activities" entailing off site hiking and camping trips and other outdoors trips such as to the beach. This phrase will also be used to include on camp activities such as climbing and abseiling, which are carried out in natural surroundings as well as having an element of challenge to them.

The full duration of the camp is seven weeks, divided into two sessions. Campers may choose to attend one or both of these sessions. In terms of on camp accommodation campers live with their adult counsellors in what are known as "Bunks", wooden cabins usually sleeping between twenty and thirty children, these are both age and gender specific with eight female and eight male bunks on the camp and are staffed by between six and eight adults per bunk.

Corresponding ages of male and female bunks are known as "Equivalents" and participate in some of the activities together, whilst this is not of great importance to the younger members of the camp it becomes increasingly so for the older campers and there are often great bonds formed between such equivalent groups.

1.2 Introduction to the participant group:

I chose to work with a participant group of 12-13 year old girls, as I felt that as a returning member of staff it was important that my participant group consisted of individuals with whom I had little professional contact the previous year.

This consideration was twofold, firstly as a male member of staff I live in a bunk with male campers and attend meals and some activities such as morning line up with other male bunks on camp. With this in mind and my consideration of distancing my research self from my professional self, I decided to work with a female bunk.

The second consideration was the age of participants, the boys bunk I work with were at the time of my fieldwork aged between 13 and 14 and so, consequently, were their equivalent female bunk who we often join in social activities. In addition to this, as part of my work the previous year I had lead some of the older female bunks on off camp trips. With this in mind I decided to work with a bunk younger in age than the bunk I work with. However I was still keen to work with those in and approaching adolescence specifically as I had decided to as this period is often seen as "a time of transition, experimentation and change" (Kudushin et al 2000:1).

I was interested specifically on how individuals in the transitional period reported experiences of activities which are out of the ordinary for them and in some cases challenging. With this in mind I decided to work with a group who were between 12-13 years of age.

Throughout the course of this thesis I will expand on the points made above, to provide a clear picture of the theoretical background to my study, data collection methods used and analysis of this data. I will then discuss the findings, presenting examples of participant's reported experiences. Finally I will close with suggestions of what influence these findings could have in terms of the themes and concepts involved in urban children's interaction with nature.

The following chapter will endeavour to provide a wider picture of what inspired me to carry out this study and how I developed the research question which lies at the heart of it.

1.3 Inspiration:

My inspiration and interest in the topic of this investigation comes from my personal experiences of working on the camp, in the year prior to my study. This presented me with the opportunity, of getting to know the type of young people who attended the camp, as well as providing me with experience of how the camp was run and the activities available to campers. The key defining feature which specifically interested me was the duality between these children's urban home lives and the natural surroundings which they found themselves living in during their summer. From these thoughts and experiences I began wondering how children attending the camp viewed their surroundings in terms of their lived experience.

1.4 Formation of the Research Question:

In terms of how I came to formulate the research question addressed in this thesis it is interesting to note the work of Richard Louv who suggests that "during the past two decades…the shift in our relationship with the natural world is startling" and that "a growing body of research links our mental, physical and spiritual health directly to our association with nature in positive ways" (Louv, 2008:2&3). From suggestions such as this I became interested in how these predominantly urban children experience the natural surroundings and involvement in "nature based activities" presented to them during their time at camp.

One of the key considerations within this question was a focus on how participants report their experiences in the present context. Therefore my interest lies not in a retrospective view but how participants report such experience in the context of the present moment.

1.5 Research question:

With these considerations in mind the research question under investigation is:

"How do urban children explain their experiences in nature?"

1.6 Methodological framework:

Methodologically the key aim of this study was to include participants in all levels of the data collection process. This was to be collected by utilising an ethnographic style of field work, both at the site of the camp itself and also on trips off camp, such as to the beach. My main aim with this in mind was to develop methods which would be able to be used in a range of different situations and that were both fun and engaging for participants, I was also keen that these methods were also open for development and addition by the group themselves.

This investigation stands firmly within the framework generally understood as the social studies of children and childhood, which places considerable importance on the maintenance of the balance of power between researcher and participant group and as such, on the active participation of those involved.

With the issue of power balance in mind participants within this paradigm are viewed "not as passive objects in the research process or in society in general, but as social actors" (Clark, 2005:30) and as such are valued for their actions and experiences in the same way as adult participants would be.

The theories which influenced the development of the data collection tools within this study will be discussed later in this paper, however prior to this I feel it is important to further illuminate the reader regarding the background of this study, including information about the fieldwork site and participant group. At this point I will also present an example of the type of data gathered during my fieldwork.

Chapter 2: Background

In this chapter I will provide an insight into the history of American summer camps, the social environment of participants in terms of their age group, religious views and socio economic backgrounds and will also provide information which discusses the interaction of children with nature, drawing on specific examples from my field work.

2.1 Summer Camps in the USA

The first organised summer camp in America was recorded in 1861, when Fredrick W. Gunn and his wife took the pupils attending their home school in Connecticut on a two week camping trip. This camp, due to its success, continued for a further twelve years and campers are reported to have "spent their time boating, fishing, and trapping", which shows the long history of interactions with nature within the summer camp philosophy. However it was not until a few years later In 1874 that the first girls' camp was organised by the Philadelphia YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) (American Camp Association, anniversary timeline 2010).

Throughout the late 1800's and early 20th century, many other camps were set up based on a range of different philosophies, for example Camp Kehonka, a girls camp in the state of New Hampshire which founder Laura Matoon is described as having created to provide "opportunities for her students to interact with the natural environment during a time in…society that did not believe this experience was appropriate for girls". (American Camp Association, anniversary timeline 2010).

In 1910 the concept of summer camp programmes became more official when the first camp association was founded, originally under the name 'Camp directors Association of America' (CDAA); however this later became what we know of today as the American Camping Association (ACA). The stated aim of this association being to create a "model and standardizing influence for the organized camp experience for the young". (American Camp Association, anniversary timeline 2010).

From this long history of summer camp programmes, the concept has developed, with 2,400 camps currently accredited by the ACA. The range of specialities available has also increased to cover an incredible range of different needs, from specialist religious camps, to those with a focus on weight loss or equestrianism. The activities available at more general camps have also been developed and judging by a quick look on the ACA website it appears it is now possible for a child to take part in a range of different activities, from Clowning, to Marine Science and Martial arts.

It is worth noting however that ever since the conception of the early camps there has been a similar formula in terms of the settings and surroundings in terms of location, regardless of the type of specialities available or central philosophies of the specific camp. This can be seen in the fact that many camps are situated next to lakes, in areas of woodland and with easy access to other local natural surroundings, showing the central importance that natural surroundings play in camp philosophy.

2.2 Background to the Fieldwork Site

The site chosen as the field work site in terms of this study was founded in early 1922 in the aftermath of the First World War, with the goal of creating a community where children would be able to grow and develop their Jewish identities, in nurturing and beautiful surroundings (information gained from the camp website). Whilst there have been obvious developments in the range of activities on offer and considerable growth in terms of the number of campers who attend annually, this goal is still maintained and has come to form a central theme of the camp.

As mentioned above, the proximity of nature is a key element to the majority of summer camp programmes and the fieldwork site is no exception. It is situated next to a large freshwater lake, has numerous sporting fields such as soccer pitches, tennis courts and baseball facilities and is surrounded by tall spruce and pine trees. This camp also offers a wide range of activities, such as sport, arts and crafts, fishing and water sports as well as what I have termed "nature based activities"

To provide further background to the fieldwork site I will continue below with a brief overview of the camp community providing a rough overview of the daily schedule experienced by members of this community.

Those attending the camp range in age between 7 and 16 years of age and usually number somewhere in the region of 350-400 campers per year, this number being more or less equally girls and boys. Campers can come from anywhere in the world with their Jewish faith being the only provision to be met in terms of attendance. However as mentioned previously the majority of campers come from the major urban areas of the North Eastern United States.

As mentioned previously this camp community, both staff and campers are organised into different groups known as "Bunks" both by age and sex, campers and counsellors living together.

In terms of staff there are roughly 160 people employed at the camp each summer whose role it is to work with the campers. This group can be further divided into general counsellors and specialists. The general counsellors come from Jewish backgrounds many of whom are previous campers themselves. Their role is to accompany their "bunk" to the array of activities on the daily schedule. As well as too accompany campers to the weekly religious services.

The specialist staff such as myself are generally from non Jewish backgrounds and are in most cases from outside the United States, with the majority coming from the UK, Australia and New Zealand. Their role is to run the various activities such as climbing, water skiing, tennis, sailing, dance etc.

Daily activities on camp work to a similar format Monday to Thursday. As can be seen below (information taken from camp website):

7:30 am	Wake Up
7:45 am	Line Up
8:00 am	Breakfast (two shifts, boys and girls alternating weekly)
9:10 am	1st Period (bunk activities)
10:10 am	2nd Period
11:10 am	3rd Period
12:15 pm	Lunch (two shifts again boys and girls)
2:00 pm	1st Elective Period (free choice)
3:00 pm	2nd Elective Period
4:00 pm	3rd Elective Period
4:50 pm	Optional Period/General Swim
5:45 pm	Dinner (two shifts divided by age, younger bunks eating first)
7:30 pm	Evening Activities
8:30 pm	Curfew Begins (varies by age)

On Fridays due to the forthcoming Sabbath (Shabbat) day which is on Saturday in the Jewish faith, there are only two afternoon activity periods, followed by a religious service and a full camp dinner. Generally Saturdays are a less busy day, with no activity periods, replaced generally by a later wake up time, religious services in the morning and various full camp activities taking place in the afternoon. Sundays either return to the schedule above or in some cases this day is taken up with full camp excursions such as the beach trip.

2.3 Background to Participants

As mentioned in the introductory chapter, my participant group consisted of a group of 12-13 year old girls, attending the summer camp programme. In this section I will endeavour to provide a background picture of the group as a general entity. I will not, therefore provide specific examples, merely an overview of the socio economic, religious and age based factors which are important considerations within this study.

The first element, that of age, I have discussed in my introductory chapter however to quickly recap, the age range of my participants has in many cases been discussed as a key transitional period in individuals lives and it was for this reason that I became interested

in investigating whether participants mentioned their interactions with nature related to changes in their lives in current, experiential terms as opposed to an after the event, retrospective view.

In terms of the socio economic backgrounds of participants, it worth noting that the camp on which this investigation took place is privately run and that families pay fees for their children's stay at the camp. These fees are many thousands of dollars per month and consequently it is fair to say that the majority of campers come from what can be considered comfortable backgrounds.

The location of the camp in Maine in the North East of the USA also makes it in easy reach of the two major cities on the eastern seaboard, New York and Boston. Therefore it is fair to generalise the group by saying that they come from predominantly urban areas.

This geographical situation also emphasises my interest in this participant group as many, due to this, have little or in some cases no, experience of natural surroundings apart from their time at the camp. Consequently I was interested to find out how these "out of the ordinary" experiences were discussed by members of my participant group.

Another key factor for consideration is the religious upbringing of participants. As previously mentioned, all participants within my study are Jewish. The camp as already mentioned, aims as part of its traditional philosophy to nurture the growth of campers Jewish identities, it is interesting therefore to consider the specific impacts that this identity has on individuals. For example it has been suggested that in the current age "Jewish youth have a particular dilemma" (Kadushin et al, 2000:1) They discuss this in terms of how young Jewish people define their faith, saying that "Young American Jews live in a society overfilled with material goods and devoid of the anti-Semitism that shaped their grand parents lives" (Kadushin et al, 2000:1) and that this lack of definition in its self is a form of struggle.

It is with the above point in mind that I now progress to a question which I feel lies at the centre of my discussion of the importance of what I termed above "out of the ordinary" experiences, in terms of urban children's experiences in unfamiliar natural surroundings, 'are rites of passage still needed in society?'

2.4 Are Rites of Passage Still Needed in Society?

This section questions whether experiences such as camp, can provide what have been termed "rites of passage". These are usually seen as some kind of challenging experience and have been described as "especially important for adolescents making the transition from childhood to adulthood" (Lertzman, 2002:1).

There are many aspects of children's lives which enforce this period as transitional or "liminal" (Lertzman 2002:7) he goes on to explain that "Adolescence is itself a kind of liminal state, a time of immense physical and emotional transition. Adolescents are often told "don't act like a child" yet at the same time they are not treated as adults". (Lertzman 2002:7) a quote which I feel emphasises the paradoxical nature of this time in young people's lives.

This suggests therefore, that experience of a challenging activity, at a challenging time can become a valuable learning tool. In fact I believe it could be argued, that within the sociology of childhood view, which sees children as actors in their own lives, the power of challenging situations could well be magnified, as this considers children to be more aware and with greater responsibility over their own actions than the traditional view proposed in the developmental psychology paradigm.

The view of children as active and competent, is a central theme within this investigation and as such has influenced not only the considerations presented above but has been an important view maintained throughout the planning, field work and data collection stages. A consideration which will be presented and developed upon within the next chapter.

2.5 Religious Aspects of Camp Life

As previously mentioned, the camp on which this study took place was originally set up to provide a setting in which children could develop and nurture their Jewish identity and this religious foundation remains a part of camp in the present day. Here I will develop on this aspect of camp life, detailing the religious practices and traditions of the camp and how these influence the day to day life of my participant group.

It is important to realise that while the camp is specifically set up for Jewish children the focus of the camp is not specifically religious but that this forms more of a day to day philosophy around which the emphasis on fun and activity are based.

In terms of day to day practices, meal times are of key consideration, with prayers before and after eating. Regarding the question of meals the camp is strictly kosher and this ruling is maintained on off camp trips, effectively meaning that if eating out, campers and staff must adhere to a vegetarian diet as meat sourced from outside camp cannot be guaranteed to be Kosher.

Besides these dietary considerations and the singing of prayers there is little overt focus on religion other than the Shabbat dinner and services. However campers can receive individual religious education sessions if required, for example when preparing for bar/bat mitzvah. The coming of age ceremonies, for boys and girls respectively.

2.6 Concrete Examples from the Field

To provide an example of the type of field reports which highlight these issues I will provide the case of Sarah with whom I had a field conversation on a camping trip. The data presented below has not been analysed at this stage and merely shows a representation of the type of data gathered, however it does form a representative example of participant experience.

Sarah is a girl of 12 years old from Madrid in Spain, we had a conversation in the van on the way to the camp site which in this case is many miles away from civilisation including about an hours drive up logging tracks deep into the forest in Northern Maine.

I asked her if she was looking forward to the trip and contrary to many of her bunk mates she said that she really was, explaining that she had never been camping before as her family lived in the centre of Madrid and her Mother hated the outdoors and especially camping, preferring to spend her time according to Sarah shopping.

Later that evening we had a camp fire, cooking dinner of hot dogs and later marshmallows and I made a point of discussing with Sarah what she thought of the

12

experience so far, she said that she was having a great time as she liked just being with her bunk mates and getting away from the rest of the busy camp for a bit. I asked her what she thought of the area we were camping and she said that she loved the fact that it was so dark and that she could see so many stars as where she is from in Madrid the sky was always yellow with the light of the city.

When we arrived back at camp I was helping the staff who had been in charge of the trip to unpack the vans of all the campers bags and camping equipment when Sarah came up to me. She said that she just wanted to thank the staff for such a fun time and that it was one of the best things she had ever done.

The above example shows not only the way this individual reported her experience, but also provides a good example of the background of the type of participant, such as Sarah's lack of experience of the outdoors or activities set in nature, as well as giving an insight into her urban background.

It also provides a brief view into the type of activities available to the participant group while attending the camp and how such activities often present challenging experiences for those involved, both campers and staff alike. It also shows how such new challenges can be reported as being positive experiences such as when Sarah says; *It was one of the best things she had ever done.*

Below I will present a discussion of the theoretical perspectives which have influenced this study to enable the reader to grasp the value attached to the type of data presented above and understand how this raw data is seen in terms of its analysis

Chapter 3: Theoretical Perspectives

In this chapter I will present a number of theoretical view points which have influenced my approach to this study. This views children as social actors in their own right and consequently maximises participatory approaches, whilst also paying particular attention to the issues of power balance between the child participants and adult researcher involved. I will begin by discussing the process by which we have arrived at this "social studies of children and childhood view", which lies as the predominant understanding of the phenomenon of childhood, within the field of childhood studies. I will then consider how this view has affected the methodological concerns involved in the specific case of this study.

3.1 The Discovery and Development of Childhood

In his work "centuries of the child" (1962) Phillippe Ariès traced the portrayals of children and childhood through history with investigations of art and literature which brought him to the conclusion that "there was no place for childhood in the medieval world" (Jenks, 1982:31). Throughout his chapter entitled "the discovery of childhood" Ariès describes an increase in number and development in realism of childhood portrayals, which he views as a symptom of the development of a concept of childhood within society.

This idea of the social constructed nature of childhood is a central theme within the childhood studies view and can also be seen in the work of Ludmilla Jordanova who discusses the historically changing views of children and childhood from another angle, suggesting that "whereas in the past parents were repressive and sadistic, in more recent times they have been increasingly willing to accept the individuality of children" (Jordanova, 1989:11).

She suggests that the driving forces behind such development came from the middle classes over a protracted period of time, suggesting that "it was not that people suddenly changed their child rearing habits, but that a group of middle class professionals and intellectuals strove to rethink the nature of childhood" (Jordanova, 1989:14).

Examples of this can be seen in the increased popularity of breast feeding an increase of the understanding regarding hygienic practice in the care of children and reduction in out dated child rearing methods such as swaddling.

As well as child rearing changes there were also changes in terms of the place filled by children within the family, Vivianna Zelizer in her book "pricing the priceless child" (1985), suggests that children have gone from being a useful addition to the family economy to a drain on economic resources valued in the modern world only for their emotional input.

Zelizer suggests that "between the 1870's and the 1930's the emergence of this economically 'worthless' but emotionally 'priceless' child has created an essential condition of contemporary childhood" (Zelizer, 1985:3). She suggests that an important outcome of this was the "sacralisation" of childhood. With this phenomenon of "sacralisation" we can gain an understanding of how children transcended their original role of economic providers and attained their current position within society as emotionally valuable.

3.2 Pre "Social Studies of Children and Childhood" Constructions of the Child

In the above section we have seen a number of theoretical suggestions of how the social concept of childhood has been developed throughout the course of history, until the current position of children as a separate group has been reached. However there are still a number of considerations to take into account, in terms of what this concept of childhood actually entails.

Below I will present a number of considerations of what constitutes childhood, in an effort to clarify the route taken to reach the social studies of children and childhood view. Much of the information presented here is informed by the work of Chris Jenks (1996) and consequently I will utilise the same headings as he uses in his paper "constituting childhood" as I feel that these best describe the representations of childhood presented.

<u>3.2.1 The Child as Savage</u>:

This view sees the child in a similar way to that of the 19th century anthropologist on finding a previously unknown tribe. This is to say the child within this view is seen as "different, less developed and in need of explanation" (Jenks, 1996:4). Within this view the child adult continuum is taken for granted as the continuum between primitive and rational thought. However as Jenks points out social hierarchies such as this, which at one point are taken for granted often do not remain so and as he points out "the history of the social sciences has attested to a sequential critical address and debunking of the dominant ideologies" (Jenks, 1996:4). Suggesting examples of ideological change, such as changing views race. However he points out that the "ideology of development in relation to childhood has remained relatively intact" (Jenks, 1996:4) in that society continues to see children as less able than adults.

<u>3.2.2 The Natural Child</u>:

The main basis for this phenomenon is the attention to the physical changes involved in childhood and how these are taken as indicators of social transition. While this naturalistic view does not influence the social studies of children and childhood it is still a dominant framework with the field of social sciences, particularly so from a psychological point of view, in which children continue to be seen in terms of cognitive and biological development through concepts such as maturation. In contrast to this, sociology has come "to understand the problem of the child's acquisition of specific cultural repertoires through the largely one sided theories of socialisation" (Jenks, 1996:8).

This concept of the "The Natural Child" also has the effect of diminishing our view of the "strangeness" and "significance" of childhood and the analytical importance becomes "hidden beneath a cloak of the mundane" (Jenks, 1996:8). This tendency to ignore the important individualities of childhood is heightened further by societies close proximity to the phenomena, "being a child, having been a child, having children and having continuously to relate to children are all experiences which contrive to render the category as 'normal' and readily transform our attribution of it to the realm of the natural" (Jenks, 1996:8).

Perhaps what Jenks is suggesting can be seen as a case of society being unable to see the wood for the trees, especially in a case such as this were the concept in question is so widely proliferated through societal discourses such as the common view of children as "growing up" which only help to confuse the issue.

3.2.3 The Social Child:

The phenomenon of the social child is an important consideration within the theorising of how childhood is seen in society. The key to which, is the link between conceptualisations of childhood and maintenance of social cohesion. "It could be suggested that, in a strong sense, the very possibilities of difference and divergence contained within childhood, understood either as a course of action or a community, present a potentially disintegrative threat to sociological worlds. The issue is political." (Jenks, 1996:12).

To further elaborate on this point, Jenks suggests that both conscious and unconscious discourses within the social sciences utilise the concept of the child "as a device to propound versions of sociality". (Jenks, 1996:9) therefore suggesting that the type of naturalistic language used in the discussion of childhood, such as growth, immaturity and the consequent sense of "becoming" attached to these, helps to maintain the status quo, ensuring that the supposedly grown up, competent social world inhabited by adults "is not only assumed to be complete, recognisable and in stasis, but also and perhaps more significantly, desirable" (Jenks, 1996:9).

The more one considers the point, the clearer the issue becomes, the very fact of starting our consideration of the social world of children, from the vantage point of adults, in a society in which we have the majority of control, provides us with an understandably biased view. A view which leads Jenks to suggest that "although lay members systematically manage to establish childhood as a social category in its own right, most social theories, through their emphasis on a taken for granted adult world, spectacularly fail to constitute the child as an ontology in its own right" (Jenks, 1996:10).

3.3 Dominant Views of Childhood Before the Emergence of the Social Studies of Children and Childhood Approach.

In this section I will develop on two the major discourses, that of the social and natural child presented above, by discussing the major proponents of these views, to provide the reader with a more expansive understanding of what were, prior to the development of the social studies of children and childhood view, the most commonly held conceptions of childhood, both in terms of the general public, as well as from a research perspective.

3.3.1 Parsonian views of the social child:

In terms of the concept of the social child I will provide a brief discussion of socialisation theory as viewed from the Parsonian perspective, which utilises the metaphorical concepts of "organicism" and "the system" to describe the social world.

In this context Parsons uses the term "organicism" to describe the general, living content of the social world, utilising his phrase "the system" to refer to the inanimate, explicit and form related elements, "it is as if societies are conceived of as living organisms but are everywhere becoming machines" (Jenks, 1996:14). Beyond this it is possible to see how Parson's social system is made up at a deeper level of three sub-systems. The "physical", "cultural" and finally "personality" sub systems.

It is this final sub system of personality which is specifically concerned with children and the process of childhood socialisation as it "is presented with the un-socialised child as its focus and its primary reality" (Jenks, 1996:17). The aim of this system therefore is to produce an environment, within which, the individual child can be socialised and taught what the information and behavioural capacities they will need as an adult. This theories weakness lies at this point, as it does not address the socially constructed nature of childhood and society, instead assuming that childhood and society are naturally recurring and static in nature. Also, it ignores any sense of agency on the part of the child, viewing childhood only as a process of development towards adulthood, the responsibility for which lies solely at the feet of the adult world, in terms of the provision of appropriate socialisation experiences, such as formal schooling.

18

3.3.2 Piaget and the natural child:

One of the key views of childhood both in the past and still the main influence of understanding for the majority of society is that of the natural child, which as I have previously discussed is predominantly concerned with the kinds of physical changes occurring during childhood. The most well known model within the concept of the natural child is child development, which places a key connection between biological and social development.

The most famous proponent of this model, was the Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, who describes the development of children as occurring in a series of predetermined stages, which build towards what he saw as the final goal of "logical competence…the mark of adult rationality" (Prout and James,1990:11).

Obviously this concept of stages building towards adulthood and "rational competence", like the Parsonian approach, misses any considerations of children's social lives and in the view of Prout and James (1990) ignores any sense of agency on the part of the child. In short within this framework "children are marginalised beings awaiting temporal passage, through the acquisition of cognitive skill, into the social world of adults" (Prout and James, 1990:11).

This model of developmental stages is for all its failings still the predominant view not only within society but also within many of the social sciences and consequently " the scientific construction of the 'irrationality', 'naturalness' and 'universality' of childhood through psychological discourses was translated directly into sociological accounts of childhood in the form of theories of socialisation during the 1950's" (Prout and James 1990:12), and it wasn't until discussions around the socially constructed nature of childhood became more common, influenced by works such as that of Ariès that questions about these commonly held views became more common. It is this development in views of children and childhood that has in turn led to the development of the social studies view of children and childhood.

3.4 The Development of a New Paradigm

In this section I aim to show how the pre-sociological concepts presented above, have been developed upon within the social studies of children and childhood and how this has produced a new paradigm in terms of how we view children and their competencies, known as the "sociological view of children and childhood"

The key issue here, is to gain an understanding of the nature of childhood, a question which as Jenks points out in his book "The Sociology of Childhood" (1982) is not a new question, but one that has been considered since the time of Socrates.

The issue is however, the difficulty faced by ourselves as adults in achieving an understanding of a group which we used to be part of, but no longer hold membership. This gives us some level of understanding of what it is like to be a member of this group, however our view is clouded by the years since our experience and also, due to our current membership of another societal group, that of adults, "simply stated, the child is familiar to us and yet strange, he inhabits our world and yet seems to answer to another, he is essentially of ourselves and yet appears to display a different order of being" (Jenks, 1982:9).

Jenks (1982) also points to the paradoxical nature of the positions of adult and child, pointing out that whilst it is impossible to separate the concept of a child from that of an adult it is equally impossible to see the adult position without drawing on our conceptualised vision of childhood.

The key point however is that "childhood is not a natural phenomenon and can not be understood as such" (Jenks, 1982:12). He goes on to suggest that the transformation from child to adult is not related to physical growth directly, but that childhood is socially constructed and that therefore the movement across boundaries is regulated by forms of conduct relating to cultural settings.

Many boundaries encircling childhood are also enforced by strict institutions such as family and school and legal regulations such as minimum ages of employment and driving, which mean that the forms of conduct mentioned above may not be available until the adult governed society deems the individual worthy, such as at a certain age.

With this understanding of childhood as a social construction Jenks recommended in 1982 that "a sociology of childhood should emerge from the constitutive practices that provide for the child and the child-adult relationship" (Jenks, 1982:24). His hope being, to develop a more complete understanding, which would, "no longer abandon the child either to ignorance and secondary status or too radical difference and a bipartite world" (Jenks, 1982:24).

Below I shall describe how Jenks's recommendation came to life and how this has influenced the understanding of children and childhood and more specifically this current study.

3.5 The Social Studies View of Children and Childhood

Above I have discussed the ways in which children and childhood have been seen in the past, the key point of which has been to show how these views were arrived at and more importantly to highlight the ways that these theories failed to represent children appropriately.

In this section I will present an overview of the sociological view of children and childhood as seen from the view point of the social studies of children and childhood, discussing how this view allows both society and researchers, greater access to the voices of children and therefore to a deeper understanding of their experiences.

As Prout and James point out "the history of the study of childhood in the social sciences has been marked not by an absence of interest in children…but by their silence" (Prout & James, 1990:7). It is this access to the voice of children which lies as a central focus within the sociological view.

Below I will present the key features of the sociological view, this discussion being strongly influenced by a paper written by Prout and James entitled "A New paradigm for the Sociology of Childhood" (1990). I will then relate such considerations to my own specific study to enable the reader to see how such theoretical considerations have influenced my work.

- Childhood is understood as a social construction and therefore seen as separate from biological considerations
- Childhood is seen as a "variable of social analysis" (Prout and James, 1990:8) and therefore can not be separated fully from other variables such as class, gender or ethnicity.
- Children's relations and cultures are worthy for study in their own right
- Children are seen as actively constructing and determining their own "social lives, the lives of those around them and the societies in which they live"
- Children are no longer seen as merely passive subjects.
- The use of ethnography is considered particularly useful, as it enables children to have a greater say and to take part to a greater extent in research.

While not all of these points are relevant to my present study I nonetheless feel it is important to present a full list of features, of the view which influenced my work. In terms of my own study it is interesting to consider how certain points have played their part. For example a key consideration from the outset of my study was the belief that "Children's relations and cultures are worthy for study in their own right" and that in terms of the study of such a culture, the use of ethnographic techniques would be appropriate. Not least due to the view of children no longer merely as "passive subjects" but as social actors in their own right and therefore useful co-investigators of their experience.

This interest in working 'with' as opposed to 'on' children is its self influenced by the understanding of the concept of childhood as social constructed and therefore separate from biological considerations. A suggestion which leads work such as mine, to value the input of child participants irrespective of their age.

22

To conclude this discussion of how we have reached the view of childhood within sociology, I will once again use a quotation, which states that "where the sixties radicalism saw itself as liberating children from oppression, we now see practitioners of the social sciences more cautiously acknowledging the role of their disciplines in the production of childhood in its present form" (Prout & James, 1990:22). I feel this emphasises the importance of the position in which we now find our selves, as researchers within the comparatively new field of Childhood Studies.

In this section I have endeavoured to present a picture firstly of the process through which the phenomenon of childhood became conceptualised and then how this concept has been developed upon. I have highlighted the dominant discourses of the natural and social child and developed upon these by presenting the work of major proponents of these theories, finally presenting the reasoning behind and development of the social studies of children and childhood view, which I briefly referred too in terms of the affect this had on the approaches taken in my study.

In the final section of this chapter I will develop on the discourse of "children in nature" which is clearly relevant to my study, as I hope to provide a clear picture of the theoretical point of view from which I approached my research question.

3.6 Discourses on children in nature

My research question concerns the experiences of children in natural surroundings and with this in mind it is important to consider how such interaction is presented in common discourses. In this consideration I utilise the term discourse to understand how the issue of children in nature is represented and understood in society through the dominant modes of writing and speech, discourse in the sociological sense being explained by Ian Parker as referring "to patterns of meaning which organize the various symbolic systems human beings inhabit" (Parker, 1999: 3).

At this point I feel it is important to note that just as childhood can be seen as social constructed, our own concepts of nature are also influenced by society.

This is a view supported by William Cronin who states that "ideas of nature never exist outside a cultural context and the meanings we assign to nature cannot help reflecting this context" (Cronin, 995:33) cf. Nilsen (2008). Below I will consider how children's interactions with nature have been presented within a historical and welfare context. I see this issue as two sided, positive and negative discourses; I will present the bad news first as it were, with a consideration of negative discourses.

3.6.1 Negative discourses of Nature:

The concept of nature as a negative force can be traced back to a time when life was far less certain and definitely a lot less comfortable, in which areas of wilderness were seen as a danger and a threat to survival, such as in the early days of European settlement in America, Kelly Thomas (2006). While this point does not concern children specifically, the historical conception of nature appears to be a valid one, in that if ones survival hangs in the balance and families are living far from civilisation, there must have been very real fears regarding natural surroundings and the threat that they presented.

Interestingly the concept of threat, appears to have arisen once again in recent times, with concerns about the dangers of natural areas, however whereas at one time it was wild nature its self which was the cause for concern, in the present day it is more likely to be due to the perceived threat of dangerous people particularly in areas close to urban areas, with children discussing the possibility of being raped, or killed in natural areas, as well as discussing these places in terms of illegal activity such as drug dealing and usage. Peter Kahn and Batya Friedman (1995).

Such negative views of natural surroundings have been particularly used in regard to children in recent years. This has been especially focussed upon in regard to crimes involving children as victims. Such cases present an interesting example of how discourses such as this can quickly become embedded within the public psyche, as it is more the profile opposed to the number of incidences which appear to have the effect.

A prime example of this was seen in the case of the murder of Sarah Payne in the UK in which an eight year old girl was killed in an area of farmland near her home. Such high profile cases have lead too considerable media coverage and emphasis on the dangers confronting children such as strangers and indeed natural surroundings, which "with the media's pre-occupation towards the subject, has kept the issue to the fore of the public conscience" Mark William Thomas and James Found (2005).

3.6.2 Positive Discourses of Nature:

In terms of positive discourses there have been many examples of interactions with nature being discussed as an important childhood experience. In terms of historical representation the Romantic movement of the nineteenth century, such as the works of Blake and Wordsworth projected the image of the child as a natural being and consequently nature with its sense of freedom and beauty was seen as the proper place in which children should grow up. While this natural child model has now been rejected from the perspective of the social study of children and childhood, there is a gathering strength of opinion which suggests that experiences in nature can benefit children.

An example of this view in research can be seen in the work of Thomas in which she investigates the concept of the modern American childhood and discusses the fields of child development and education, stating that "researchers from these disciplines agree that play experience in nature is a crucial aspect of childhood" (Thomas, 2006:43).

There have also been recent debates regarding the therapeutic benefits of children spending time in natural surroundings, for example Dene Berman and Jennifer Davis-Berman (2006) suggest positive effects of outdoor educational programmes in terms of participant's emotional wellbeing and Louv goes as far as to suggest that "nature may be useful as a therapy for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (Louv, 2008:100). While these discussions of effect are not specifically a matter of concern within the sociological view of childhood, it is nonetheless interesting to consider the possible benefits of children's interaction with nature.

3.7 Cultural Differences

To discuss this issue in greater depth I will present a brief description of school based childhoods, not as a form of comparison but more as a simple consideration of different values. These institutions are both situated in the global north, one in Norway (where I have been living and studying for the past two years) the other in the USA (where I carried out my fieldwork and where the majority of my participant group came from).

While the levels of schooling in this discussion are not comparable, as the Norwegian example was carried out with children attending kindergarten and the American example regards those attending elementary schools, I nonetheless suggest that the very different ideas of children in nature and child rearing in general, described, makes this an interesting point of consideration. These differences influence and are influenced by, societal discourses, on what are important considerations during childhood and I go as far as to suggest that these may work at a deeper level, acting as indicators of how society in the USA and Norway conceptualise children and childhood on a more general level.

I will begin my consideration of this issue with a discussion of the Norwegian context. The key focus of which is a cultural belief in the benefits of nature and free, unstructured play and how these constitute "a good childhood" (Randi Dyblie Nilsen, 2008: 38). This belief pervades society throughout the country and has in turn led to a growth in so called "nature day care centres" which in Norwegian are known as "naturbarnhages". The basis of these centres is that from 10am until 2pm all activities are done outside, in any weather and at all times of year.

Even in more typical day care centres children spend at least two hours outside during the course of their school day. Another factor within this nature based focus is the idea that spending time in nature goes further than just conceptualisation of the ideal childhood, but that "special ideas about and a close relationship with nature are culturally dominant in Norway" (Nilsen, 2008:53).

In contrast to this, while Norway has a general discourse regarding the benefits of time in nature and is developing new initiatives to support this, the USA is increasing its educational focus on the improvement of test grades, despite the suggestions highlighted

above "that play experience in nature is a crucial aspect of childhood" (Thomas, 2006:43).

This has led to a more academic school life and an obvious, negative impact, on more physical forms of activity such as Physical Education (PE). Even more concerning is the effect that these changes are having on children's break times with "40% of American elementary schools either eliminat[ing] or…considering eliminating recess" (Louv, 2008:99).

Whether due to these educational changes or to other modern developments such as increasing use of TV and video games and concerns around safety, it would appear that there has been a considerable change in the last few decades, in regard to American children's interaction with nature Louv (2008). This was also observed in my study with many of the participant's involved, reporting little interaction with nature outside of their time at camp.

As can be seen from the section above there appear to be considerable differences in the way these two countries view children, childhood and what is emphasised in terms of educational importance. I question therefore whether these national discourses of the American child as an academic learner and the Norwegian child as a learner through experiences, in fact present a view of differing conceptualisations of childhood.

This discussion should be seen as a consideration opposed to a suggested finding, as I do not propose any comparative data, nonetheless I feel that such consideration is interesting within the wider theme of how childhood experiences in nature are viewed.

From my discussions above, the reader will see the similarities between the Norwegian concept with its emphasis on children's agency, learning through experiences and increased freedom to express themselves and the sociological approach, with its belief in the importance of individual children's views and its core belief in the process of children as "beings" in their own right opposed to "becomings" in a process of development towards adulthood.

The mention of the "being" versus "becoming" debate is highlighted by Alison Clark (2005) and is an apt point to move on to a discussion of the American school childhood as in this case it appears that there is more of a focus on testing and academic results. I question whether this is done from the view point of providing knowledge for future adulthood, more in line with the view of the social or natural child, which see childhood in terms of a process of growth and socialisation, with the final transition being the step into adulthood, a position seen within this paradigm as "complete, recognisable and in stasis, but also and perhaps most significantly, desirable" (Jenks, 1996:9).

In the next chapter I will discuss the methodological considerations which influenced my work and I hope that the reader will be able to see how these methods and the theoretical considerations behind them, lie within the social studies of children and childhood view with the attention paid to participation and the balance of power relations between participants and researcher.

Chapter 4: Methods:

4.1 Introduction to methods

My main consideration within the research question "How do urban children explain their experiences in nature?" is the emphasis on children's own lived experience. This chapter will discuss the methodological and practical elements of my study, with this introduction section providing a brief overview which will be developed upon as the chapter unfolds.

I began by investigating participatory methods such as the Mosaic Approach which while maintaining "the traditional methodologies of observation and interviewing" also adds "the introduction of participatory tools" (Clark, 2005:29). From this starting point I then developed a range of possible data collection tools, which I presented to the participants in the field. Some of these were kept, some discarded and new tools suggested and utilised by the participants themselves.

Below I will go further into considerations of my research role, the process of gaining access to participants and further methodological developments, which aimed at reducing the power imbalance and gaining as clear a view as possible, of the experiences of my participants from their own point of view.

4.2: Access

Access to my fieldwork site was granted by agreement from the camp director who acts as "parentis in locus" for all those attending the camp meaning that he has parental responsibilities for each individual child during their attendance, therefore he was able to grant me access without the need to contact each set of parents individually.

My relationship with the camp was helped considerably by my status as staff member, both during the summer in which I carried out my fieldwork and more importantly in the year prior to this, meaning that I was known and trusted.

Thanks to the directors support, we also reached an agreement in terms of my role as researcher in the presence of my chosen participant group and consequently I gained

permission to act only as an observer/researcher when in their presence, such as when the group visited the climbing tower where I worked, or when on off site trips, which allowed me to maintain my chosen research role.

Once issues of access and research role had been agreed upon, I met with my participant group and explained the study to them. It was at this time that I also discussed the style of data collection that I was hoping to utilise and asked participants, if they were interested in taking part. In this initial meeting I also presented my proposed data collection tools, asking which, participants felt were useful and if there were any ideas of their own which they wanted to involve. I also discussed the ethical issues of taking part in research which will be further developed upon below.

4.3: Ethics

With access to my chosen group achieved, it was important to fully inform the participant group of the ethical considerations involved. Below I will present a number of issues, such as the responsibility to encouraging active participation and practical concerns such as confidentiality and the right to withdraw from the study.

Methodologically participation of those involved in the data collection process was a major consideration, Coad and Evans (2008) write that partly due to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, there has been an increase in children's participation since the 1990's, suggesting that children's participation in research lies not only in the research aim of gaining accurate and useful data, but also from the standpoint of children's rights.

However it is vital to consider the ethical implications of participation, is it always best for the children themselves, or can there be some suggestion that the drive towards empowerment and participation is simply another example of adults forcing ideas on children, hidden under the belief that we know best? Coad and Evans discuss issues regarding the effectiveness of this inclusion, based on their own work highlighting examples in which "children frequently added their own meanings and interpretations to the data analysis process and found the concept of objectivity difficult" (Coad and Evens, 2008:46.).

30

With the above points in mind I made the decision too involve participants to as great a degree as they desired, in the design and implementation of the data collection process, but to carry out the analysis process personally. However I was still keen for the group to be a part of the study to as great an extent as possible and therefore involved participants in discussion of my findings while at the fieldwork site, to enable them to have their say about how I had interpreted the data, these discussions being used as a catalyst for analysis and interpretation at a later date.

Practically speaking there are a number of ethical considerations which need to be addressed as part of any study. With this in mind I ensured that the participant group was made aware of their rights in terms of the research, prior to their active involvement. These included:

- The right not to take part
- The right to take part as much or as little as they wanted.
- The right to withdraw from the participant group at any time, including during the data collection stage, during analysis of this data or at any point up to the hand in of the finished paper.
- The right to anonymity, with this in mind only fictional names will be used throughout the analysis section and likewise only initials were used in my field notes taken whilst on the camp it's self.

4.4 Research Role

Regarding my role in the research I was keen to engender a sense of ownership over the investigation from participant's point of view, with this in mind; my own position within the study was an important consideration, both prior to and during the fieldwork stage.

To set the standard for the rest of the data collection period, I was keen to engage my participants as early as possible in the development of data collection tools, allowing them freedom to develop upon and discard my suggestions, as well as encouraging them to suggest and develop tools of their own, that they felt would be appropriate and effective for working with their age group.

This issue was especially important as children of this age have the ability to play an active role in the design stage, perhaps to a greater extent than younger children. Within this view I was keen that participants saw themselves as co-researchers during the fieldwork stage.

With the above issues in mind I considered my role in the field to be that of the "other adult" in that I aimed for my role as a counsellor on the camp to be redundant and participants to see me as being primarily involved as a co-researcher investigating with them, how they experienced the activities focussed on in this study, therefore removing myself from any sense of authority over them whilst in their presence.

4.5 Power Balance

As mentioned regarding my research role, one of the most important issues to be addressed was how I was viewed by participants, this was an especially important consideration in light of my split professional/research role. In many ways my professional role on the camp had considerable advantages as it also allowed me a good understanding of the way the camp works and the possible difficulties I would face carrying out research in this setting, such as the limited time during the normal day to carry out my field work. However I was concerned that my professional status could have a negative impact on my interaction with participants. In the section above I have discussed the basis of my chosen research role; however I realised that this would only be possible with careful consideration of the participant group chosen. And consequently chose to work with a group with whom I had little previous contact and who I would be able to appear to only in my research role.

My main focus and the reason why I wanted to equalise the power relations in terms of this study was that I was keen to engender a sense of ownership as I hoped that this involvement would make taking part in the study more worthwhile and enjoyable for participants, and also help me by maintaining an engaged group throughout the seven week fieldwork period.

4.6: Participation

I was very lucky in terms of the level of participation offered by my chosen group, as the whole group, not only agreed to participate, but showed considerable interest in taking part. This placed me in a difficult situation as I had not considered uptake of this level, however I decided that to honour the interest and observe the rights of individuals themselves I would not deny anyone the opportunity to take part. I was also keen that the group felt ownership over study and believe that this sense could only be improved by the involvement of the whole bunk, as well as offering all individuals the opportunity to have their voice heard in reporting their experiences.

Therefore I ended up with a participant group of twenty three, which while larger than my intended group size, I felt would still work effectively, a decision also influenced by a number of the data collection tools suggested by participants which focused on group conversations and written journals. Both of which, would if anything, be helped rather than hindered by an increased number of participants.

Within the group there were also differing levels of interest and participation. At the lower end of the spectrum individuals who were happy to be recorded as part of a group conversation but who did not want to write journals or take part in further engagement, whilst at the more participatory level, there were two individuals in particular who were very keen to take part to as great a degree as possible, even learning to use the Dictaphone and how to record conversational data themselves.

Again this spectrum of participation shows participant's autonomy over their decision making, proving them to be them, as suggested by the social studies view of children and childhood to be "competent, active, meaning makers and explorers of their own environment" (Clark, 2005 :29).

4.7 Selection of Research Methods

With the view of maximising participation vital within my study, the methods chosen became a key concern. My original starting point was to base the methodological style on the Mosaic approach developed by Alison Clark which "acknowledges the need to seek

to understand how children 'see' the world in order to understand their actions" this technique can be seen as a joining together of "the traditional methodologies of observation and interviewing with the introduction of participatory tools" (Clark, 2005:29).

While this method has so far been used primarily with young children, I felt that the concept of a battery of participatory methods could be useful in my study, both to offer a range of what I hoped would be interesting tools, but also to give my participants an idea of what kind of things they could incorporate into their own data collection. With this in mind I began considering a range of methods which I felt could prove useful with my participant group. Incidentally this was another point at which I realised the advantage of having worked at the camp the previous year and having some knowledge of the situation and type of individuals I would be dealing with.

I considered a number of possible data collection tools throughout my pre field work planning stage, such as photography and map drawing, both taken directly from the work of Clark (2005) as well as the use of a Dictaphone to record conversational material. I was particularly keen that data was gathered in situations in which participants felt comfortable and if possible felt a sense of ownership over, both in a tangible and intangible sense, for example, putting up a tent on a camping trip or just hanging out on the porch of their bunk. Below I will present a brief list of some of the data collection methods which I presented to participants.

- Photography: participants take pictures on camping trips and discuss the meaning of these on their return.
- Map making: participants draw maps of the camp and discuss these in terms of likes dislikes etc.
- Field conversations: participant's conversations recorded in informal situations such as on camping trips, or other off camp excursions.
- Porch conversations: like field conversations but on more of a regular basis and specifically in a location in which the participants as opposed to my self as researcher have a sense of ownership and control. In this case the porch of the bunk in which they live.

In the field, participants were extremely engaged and took an active part in discussing and developing data collection tools. This had the result that some of the methods proposed above, such as photography and map making were rejected, however participants were very excited about the opportunity to record their conversations and also proposed the idea of journal writing as a further tool.

This written element was a particularly interesting development as writing, both journals and letters home and to friends was something that I noted from my observations of the group. The other major development in terms of data collection was that a couple of participants were motivated to take a more active role particularly in terms of conversation recording. Therefore I trained these individuals in the use of the Dictaphone and explained the type of informal conversation I aimed to record.

This method proved very effective in practice and the data provided by these co-researchers, proved to be very useful, providing me with excellent data, which I have since used throughout this study. An example of their work was when they approached me on a trip to the beach and asked if I had the Dictaphone with me and if so, whether they could borrow it, I handed it over and watched as they headed back to the participant group, and began recording. This provided me with over an hour of audio material which was used during my analysis.

Such participation is strongly in keeping with the suggestion of Pricilla Alderson (2000) who suggests that children should be involved as researchers, stating that "the growing Literature on children as researchers suggests that children are an underestimated, underused resource" (Alderson, 2000:253). Indeed they helped me to collect data from informal conversations which it may have been impossible for me to collect myself, due to my status as researcher and an adult.

Alongside the data from recorded conversations and journal entries, I carried out a range of observations, both on off camp trips and while participants where taking part in on camp activities. For example in the early part of my research I carried out an observation at the climbing tower which provided me with an excellent opportunity to get to know my participants and to gain an insight into the types of data collection tools which could be utilised and in retrospect also the direction that my study was going to take, as it was

at this point that I realised the possible usefulness of written forms of data collection as I watched my participants who in many cases were far more interested in writing home to friends and family than climbing. Some members of the participant group did however take an active part in the climbing activity and provided me with a range of interesting data which highlighted certain themes which later became recurrent in terms of participants views and behaviour when taking part in physical challenges.

With this increased emphasis on the spoken and written word. I investigated the "Biographical method" proposed by Norman Denzin (1989), while this deals with individual, group and organisational accounts, I am specifically interested in personal reports, "a central assumption [of which] is that human conduct is to be studied and understood from the perspective of the persons involved" (Denzin, 1989:183) which is central to my study and also to sociological view of children and childhood.

To continue my outline of the biographical method it is worth noting that Denzin divides records into public and private types, in the case of my study I am interested in what he calls "logs" which he describes as "a record of events or happenings, a list of meetings, visits, trips and so on" (Denzin, 1989:194), these can therefore be both public or private however in the case of my data collection this public/private issue becomes confused, as they are effectively private collections of thoughts but which the writer, in this case one of my participants, knows will be read by another party, myself as researcher.

While this factor could be seen to confuse the issue it does solve one of the problems proposed that "logs taken alone are too depersonalized" (Denzin, 1989:194), I feel that I have been able to solve this personalization issue by discussing the topic of the study with participants and while what they write in form, content and structure, is purely of their own devising they are at least aware that it is their personal experiences and thoughts on outdoor activities which I am interested in.

In short I was looking for a log book in the style of the great explorers Scott, Nansen, Amundsen etc which detailed personal experiences of adventure but which were also publishable for the wider public.

4.8 Methodological Foundations

Nilsen says that "a major concern in qualitative research is how researchers convert everyday experiences into theoretical knowledge through researcher's interpretations and 'translations' of data into theoretical concepts"(Nilsen, 2005:117). This sentence acts as a useful phrase from which to start my considerations of the approach taken by this study. Firstly I am keen that this be in keeping with an ethnographic style, described by Martin Hammersley and Paul Atkinson who say that;

"In ethnography the analysis of data is not a distinct stage of the research. In many ways, it begins in the pre-fieldwork phase, in the formulation and clarification of research problems, and continues through to the process of writing reports, articles and books. Formally, it starts to take shape in analytic notes and memoranda; informally, it is embodied in the ethnographer's ideas and hunches" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:158).

This ethnographic style in which analysis of data, research design and data collection are so closely linked, supports the usage of grounded theory which enables emergent theories to be developed from constant analysis of and regular return to, the data gathered. Although my investigation is not strictly grounded theory, as much of this work has its foundations in previous work, it is however based on this style of open minded and flexible use of methods and interpretation.

An early example of this approach, was that I abandoned my original plan of investigating views specifically about challenging activities (such as climbing, abseiling), as it became apparent that the group as a whole, had little interest in these. I still used some of the data gathered during such activities as a way of giving greater insight into the participant group, however I realised that a simpler more general focus, on participant's views of being in natural surroundings was more appropriate for the situation.

This narrowing of focus throughout the investigation is a helpful influence of the ethnographic approach and follows the "characteristic 'funnel' structure" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:160), They even suggest that "it is frequently well into the process of inquiry that one discovers what the research is really about; and not uncommonly it turns

out to be something rather different from the initially foreshadowed problems"
(Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:160). This was certainly true in the case of my study as
can be seen both from my initial refocusing of the research question and became clear
later with what I have termed the subcutaneous theme, a phenomenon which lay beneath
the overt discussions found in the data and became unearthed only after detailed analysis.

Another key factor in support of the use of participatory methods in research is the
suggestion that "participatory methods were considered innovative, fun and suitable for
the study of children for, through their participation, children would be enabled to take an
active role and to talk about their needs".(O'Kane, 2000:139). Within this suggestion
however it is also important to understand "how the way we 'see' children informs the
selection of methods and techniques" (O'Kane, 2000:139).

The basis of my investigation was built upon the foundations of the view of the social
child. I felt it was vital to include participants as much as possible, especially in the data
collection period; however within this participation I was also interested in how these
data collections methods could be tailor made for the participants themselves.
My aim being to both enable the effective collection of data and if possible make
participation in the investigation an enjoyable and interesting process and something
which participants felt ownership of.

The interest in children's perceptions of their own lives was one of the main foundations
upon which my work was based, as a key focus was to investigate how participants
reported their experiences at the time, rather than in retrospect, for example discussing
with them their views of a camping trip while at that physical location.
In terms of influences, it is useful to note the work of Clark who explains the importance
of this focus, saying that "the question at the centre of the Mosaic approach has been:
'what does it mean to be you in this place now in the present moment" (Clark, 2005:35).

A further influence that the Mosaic approach had on my work, was the question "who is
the documenter?" (Clark, 2005: p42), adding that the advantage of this approach is that it
allows both the researcher and participants to be "co-documenters". All of the above
factors, participation, children's rights and the view of childhood its self, are all products
of the overarching sociological view of childhood.

38

Despite the previous focus on how children are included in the data collection process, there is another factor of key importance, "how are the subjects and their lives represented in the theoretical concepts researchers choose to apply and/or generate?" (Randi Dyblie Nilsen, 2005:118).

Nilsen goes on to suggest that " in the social studies of children and childhood/the sociology of childhood there is an increase in (self) reflexivity concerning methodological questions; as for example, what type of representations of children and their lives researchers produce". (Nilsen, 2005:118). This reflexivity is vital when it comes to gaining an understanding of how our position as researchers affects our eventual findings.

With this in mind I maintained a two way discussion with participants to evaluate how they considered my understanding of the data, generally this involved me approaching participants to discuss how I had interpreted each set of newly collected data, questioning them about "what did you mean when you said/wrote this" to ensure that my interpretations were as close to the participant's meanings as possible.

In conclusion to this section, it is possible to see how the development of the sociological view of children and childhood has informed the methodological considerations of my study. For example how the view of children as active members of society, places them as valued co-researchers and places them as being equally worthy, yet occupants of a different area of society than adults, this highlights the need to increase this participation in a structure with as little power imbalance as possible.

This current understanding of the position of children within society is a direct result of the development through history of how children are viewed and treated, finally culminating in the removal of children from the work place in the era of post industrial revolution and the consequent "sacralisation" of childhood and children as different.

This view of children's difference from the rest of adult society can be seen as a forerunner of James's (1995) four-fold typography and consequently in the current social studies of childhood view of children, which enables ethnographic and participatory research methods to be developed such as those which I utilised in my investigation.

The next section regards the analysis of data collected in the field and will I hope show how the development of our understanding of childhood and the methodologies discussed here were used to gain a representative picture of participant's lives.

4.9: Theories involved in data analysis

In this section I will develop upon the process of analysis and the theoretical works which influenced my investigation.

My initial point of consideration was the role played by myself and my participants in terms of analysis. As mentioned earlier I felt that while I was keen to maximise participation in data collection but that I was not going to be able to maintain this level of participation during analysis. This was both due to geographical distance in that I would be returning to Norway to complete the analysis but also in part due to the suggestions "that involving children in data analysis was challenging given that the process is a highly complex and technical area of research even for professional, experienced researchers" (Coad and Evans, 2008:46).

Coad and Evans (2008) continue later in the same paper suggesting a pragmatic framework when considering such levels of participation involving increasing stages of participation. Within this framework I feel that my own investigation both at fieldwork stage and in terms of analysis is in keeping with their framing in which an;

*"Adult research team plan and analyse the data but involve children in the data collection process through the use of more participatory methods. Children may help to verify adult researcher's understandings of the data" (Coad and Evans, 2008:*44)

While I involved participants to a greater extent than this framework suggests, in terms of the planning of the data collection period, I feel it adequately supports my study, as while I have endeavoured to analyse the data personally, I also did so at the field work stage by continuously communicating with my participants, to ensure that my readings and interpretation of the data were in keeping with their experiences.

40

In terms of the discussion on participation, I believe it is of related interest to consider the issue of triangulation. This comes in two forms in my study, both respondent validation, as described above, in terms of participant consultation during field work analysis and also method triangulation, which Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) describe as the process by which data produced in different ways is collected and compared.

This method triangulation is aided by the ethnographic roots of this study, a methodology which "often involves a combination of techniques" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007:184), in this case these assumed the form of written, spoken and observational material providing a number of different angles from which to approach the research question.

Beyond participation, come further questions of how best to attain a clear representation of participant's experiences. Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln suggest that "three of the most engaging, but painful, issues are the problem of voice, the status of reflexivity, and the problematics of postmodern/poststructural textual representations"(Guba and Lincoln, 2005:209). They suggest that the concept of voice is a multilayered problem, as it can mean a number of things to different people, however they suggest that voice in the modern context, means not only the input of the researcher but also the inclusion of participant's opinions Guba and Lincoln (2005). My attention to increased levels of participation and consultation with participants, in terms of the data collected was a consequence of this concept.

As with the consideration of voice, I feel it is important to consider listening as a further theme within the analysis of data. Sigrun Gudmundsdottir suggests that "we have to listen at three levels" (Gudmundsdottir, 1996:301) she suggests that these levels comprise the "content", the "words" which have been selected and finally to create a "picture" of what we, the researcher sees as the meaning behind these words.

"We must learn to get behind the words and silently translate the informant's language so that we understand using their dictionary rather than ours" (Gudmundsdottir, 1996:301. It was for this reason that I was keen to discuss my data with participants while still in the field. This ability to begin investigating data while still in the presence of my participants

offered me a great opportunity to hone my understanding of the meanings they were attaching to their experiences.

In conclusion, it is important to return to what I aim to achieve from my analysis. This is to utilise a background of ethnography, to investigate the real time experiences of a small group of individuals, ideographic work such as this has been described as "the intensive study of one case, with the attempt being to formulate lawful statements that pertain only to that case" (Denzin, 1989:200).

With this small individual focused study, it is vital that the analysis which follows has been carried out in a way which maximises the voice of participants and that this voice is heard as clearly as possible through this analysis.

4.10: Process of Analysis

The data collection carried out in the field was divided into a number of different forms outlined below.

- Journal entries (written)
- Observations (notes from visual observation)
- Bunk conversations (audio recordings by participants)
- Field conversations (audio recordings by researcher)

In terms of the analysis of this data, all data, whether verbal or written, was typed up and printed out to create working copies. These written records were then read, and re-read to draw themes from within the data.

Throughout this analysis and within the current discussion of findings, I will focus on the themes as opposed to the form of data collection tool in which they became apparent. This is not to say however that form is irrelevant and throughout the discussion I will relate and discuss the forms through which the data was collected, as this could be influential in the production of data.

Below I will develop on the concept of themes further and introduce terminology to describe the types of thematic issues encountered during analysis, in the hope that through this explanation I can clarify for the reader how I feel that the themes themselves and perhaps more importantly the position of the these themes throughout the data, can be seen to affect the experiences described by participants.

Chapter 5: Analysis

5.1 Themes

In a consideration of the themes developed, it is important to note that some were more immediately obvious than others; some being mentioned directly, while others were more elusive, being buried within and beneath participant's responses.

For clarity I will term the directly mentioned themes "surface" themes and the more hidden theme, which came out of thematic analysis, the "sub-coetaneous" theme, the basis of this term coming from the pairing of the Latin words, *sub* "under, close to" and *coetaneous* "relating to or affecting the skin" as defined by the Oxford English Dictionary. The phrase therefore meaning "beneath the skin".

In the usage of these terms I hope to illustrate a picture of how these themes fit within the data. With "surface" themes being those commonly and directly mentioned, while the "sub-coetaneous" themes, specifically one individual theme, lie hidden beneath the hypothetical skin of other terminology or explanation.

However this sub-coetaneous theme, represents I believe one of the key findings of the entire study, as once identified I believe it can be seen as a continuous undercurrent pulsing throughout participants reported experience, like an vein, dimly visible, at times completely hidden, but nevertheless present and important at all times. As this theme only became apparent after analysis of the surface themes I will wait to discuss it until the next chapter.

The following sections will discuss the surface themes and will be structured in terms of these themes, to provide a picture of participant experience. Below I will list each theme individually before continuing with a discussion of the theme, presenting examples from the data, to highlight how participants discussed the theme in question.

5.2 Surface themes

I will begin by discussing the more obvious surface themes, these were;

- Access to nature outside camp

- Natural surroundings

- Physical challenges

- Tradition, Time and Repetition

5.2.1 Access to nature outside camp

This theme deals with the experiences of participants outside their time at camp, in terms of their everyday family life and specifically in terms of experiences in natural surroundings. In terms of this there were a range of different experiences mentioned by individuals, for example Denise says that her family holidays often have an emphasis on interaction with nature and physical activities, saying that;

"my family has a house in Aspen so we go out there a few times in the fall and winter to go skiing, but its not like camping or anything, we just ski in the day and then go out to dinner or something at night"

Apart from holidays other participants reported day trips, for example Sophie who says that; *"We don't camp out but sometimes we go hiking in the west [of] Massachusetts as a family"*

However others clearly had little or no natural interaction apart from their summer camp experiences. In terms of this Sarah provides an excellent example, representative of many of the other individuals who took part in this study. This information being taken from my field conversations with Sarah while out on a camping trip.

Sarah is a 12 year old girl from Madrid in Spain; we had a conversation in the van on the way to the campsite, which in this case is many miles from civilisation.
She explained to me that this is her first year at camp. I asked her if she was looking forward to the trip and contrary to many of her bunk mates she said that she really was, explaining that she had never been camping before as her family lived in the centre of Madrid and [that] her mother hated the outdoors…especially camping, preferring to spend her time (according to Sarah) shopping.

As with the case of Sarah, above, it is interesting to note the effect that parents have on urban children's access to nature and whilst this is not all together surprising, it is worth noting that the vast majority of participants mentioned their time in nature outside of camp in terms of their parents. It is also interesting to note how parental attitudes appear to affect participants, such as Angela who says;

To be honest my family don't really like going out into nature, we live right in the middle of New York so its kind hard to get into any real nature, unless you travel for a long time" I asked if she ever went to central park and she answered that "we go through it sometimes but mainly just on our way somewhere else. There's nothing to do there anyway".

It is however worth noting that some participants discuss their time in nature in ways which suggest that they value their time in such surroundings. This was especially mentioned in terms of togetherness, for example Lauren says in a recorded bunk conversation that;

"When I was younger I didn't really like it but now I guess its ok. Its cool to hang out as a family cause I guess if we're in the city then we all kind of split up, my brothers and my dad maybe play basketball or something and then me and my mom go shopping or have a coffee, you know what I mean, like we're not really together all at once"

5.2.2 Natural Surroundings

Another major theme which appeared through analysis of the data was the mention of the natural surroundings of the camp it's self. I will further dissect this theme into three separate sub themes to improve the clarity of my analysis. These are;

- Quiet and natural noise
- Darkness
- Bugs

Below I will present examples relating to and supporting these sub themes before returning too a consideration of the overall theme of Natural Surroundings.

5.2.2.a) Quiet and Natural Noise

This was mentioned in a number of different ways, for example some participants mentioned the lack of urban noise, such as Jane who says that; *"It's nice not to hear cars all day long"*

However natural noises are also mentioned both in positive terms such as Tori who says that;

"its so cool to wake up and hear the birds in the morning" and *"waking up, although its cold sometimes is great, you can hear the birds outside and that's how I tell what the weather is like, cause they close the shutters at night.*

As well as in more negative terms such as Rachael who says that that; *"I don't like camping trips because there are all these noises in the trees, and the birds always wake me up early in the mornings and then I can't get back to sleep"*

5.2.2 (b Darkness

As with the issues of noise presented above, the lack of artificial lighting was also discussed in terms of positive and negative elements. For example Lauren says that;

"Sometimes I find it scary at camp, especially on trips where there are no lights anywhere and it's so dark, what if there are animals out there"

However Sophie emphasises the positive side of this lack of light discussing a special treat that her and her bunk mates were allowed;

"The other night we were allowed to stay up late and go star gazing on the basketball court, you could see so many stars, it was amazing. I even saw a shooting star and I've never seen one before so it was pretty special for me."

It is interesting to notice the duality of feelings in terms of the two subthemes discussed above; participants find both positive, but also negative aspects to their natural surroundings.

5.2.2 c) Bugs

With a title like this it is hardly surprising that the reports from participants in terms of this subtheme were less than dualistic and considerably negative. For example Sam describes playing a card game on one of their camping trips saying that;

"on our last camping trip we were trying to play a game of mafia by the camp fire but these huge moths kept flying into the lantern, one even hit me in the head, I'm a bit scared of bugs but its even worse here because they are so big and there are so many of them"

This opinion is also highlighted by other participants such as Lucy who also mentions bugs in terms of camp fire attendance although this time the camp fire within the friendship circle on camp grounds, here she says that;

"I get really eaten by mosquitoes, I don't know why they like me more than my friends, but I always get bitten. My little brother…got an infection in his leg last year cause one of the bites went bad"

These bugs are not only mentioned in terms of being outdoors but are apparently a part of indoor camp life as well with Denise describing how; *"we have these horrible flies in the bunk now, they kind of hang around my bed and sit on my feet when I'm trying to write and stuff"*

5.2.3 Physical Challenges

The theme of physical challenges was one that appeared many times throughout the data. This is perhaps unsurprising as these challenging activities play a large part in camp life and are often activities which participants only experience during their time at camp,

adding both a sense of importance but also a certain apprehension. This fear of the unknown will be expanded upon at greater length in the next thematic section, however at present I will describe only data concerning the physical activities themselves.

These activities took many forms throughout participant's time at camp however I will mainly concern myself with data collected from my observations at the climbing tower and from both written and recorded conversations regarding the various hiking trips which participants were scheduled to take part in.

One may notice here that I do not say *took part in* as some of the most interesting data was gathered prior to and again after, the cancellation of, a proposed trip to climb Mt Katahdin, which would have been arguably the most physically challenging trip in my participants time at camp.

As with the "Natural Surroundings" theme above I will break this current theme down into a number of sub themes to improve the clarity of my explanation of the theme. These sub themes will be;

- Negative/Defeatist language and talk.
- Worst case scenario
- Peer support
- Retrospective View

5.2.3 a) Negative/defeatist language and talk

This sub theme became apparent early on in my study, with the first piece of data collection that I undertook in the field. This was an observational study of my participant group while they took part in the climbing activity at the camp. I noticed that participants began using this type of language even while preparing for the activity (for example while putting on their harnesses) so their attitude appeared to be fixed, prior to them actually beginning to climb. For example Kate appears to make excuses for why she can't climb saying that; *"I haven't been on the climbing wall since [name of bunk three years below them]"*

I also observe participants talking in the same way amongst themselves such as Alice who says to a friend that; *"I've never got to the top of the tower"*

Similar defeatist language prior to physical activities can be seen in the data collected regarding the forthcoming trip to climb Katahdin such as the journal entry by Sophie in which she writes

"I don't think that any of us can even get to the top, it took the boys 10 hours, there's no way we can even walk for that long, especially [name removed for confidentiality] she couldn't even do the swim test cause she said her asthma made it hard for her to breath"

This view of the hike is also supported in Laura's journal in which she says; *"if we can't finish the hike what is the point in them taking us, it will just be a waste of time and someone might even get sick, I think that's dangerous"*

Similar data is also collected from recorded bunk conversations, in this case when I was present as I was interested to find out how participants explained their views of the upcoming trip. Here it is interesting to note Martha's argument based on a previous hike the year before, in which she says that; *"last year we did Big Spencer and only 7 of us actually made it to the top, that's a short hike right…how can we do Katahdin…we'll never even get half way"*

To return to the observational data from the climbing tower one of the most interesting findings in terms of this negative language use was that it was not only evident prior to the activity but also during the activity, perhaps this is not surprising if one considers the challenges that these types of activities present, however I was interested to note that many participants were saying they were *"stuck"* and that they couldn't *"reach any holds"* even while continuing to climb without the need of any advise from the instructor below them.

This would appear to suggest that participants were capable of completing such challenges physically? However their negative thinking and language use regarding such activities remains part of group culture within the bunk.

50

5.2.3 b) Worst Case Scenario

It could be argued that this subsection is yet another part of the negative/defeatist language theme discussed above, however from the data presented, I believe that this can be viewed in its own right, not necessarily in terms of language but more related to participants focus on a negative outcome.

As was the case of the subtheme above, data supporting this view was collected early in the study, in fact within the first few minutes of participants arriving at the climbing tower on the first day of observation.

Presented here is an entry from my field notebook which illustrates this point. T*here is a discussion between two participants while preparing to climb (putting on harnesses, helmets etc) about someone they had heard of, one of the girls friends, who had fallen when climbing and had hit the ground, one girl says "the guy holding the rope wasn't looking and didn't stop the rope in time.*

Similar discussion of worst case scenarios were also mentioned in terms of the Katahdin trip especially in terms of the risks of medical dangers such as Lauren's journal entry, in which she writes that;

"I don't really want to go on this trip, I spoke to the guys in [equivalent male bunk] and they said it was really hard. They said that David and another kid had to stay behind at half way as they couldn't do it and they felt sick with all the walking"

The sister of one of the male campers mentioned above was in our my participant group and unsurprisingly his difficulty on the hike was mentioned in terms of her fears prior to the trip in a recorded conversation in which she says that; *"I'm really scared that I can't do it, David [her brother] went last session [a few weeks earlier] and he had an asthma attack and had to stay back for three hours with his counsellor, while everyone else went to the top"* I later, asked her, in reference to this conversation, if she too had asthma and she said that she didn't but; *"he's my twin, what would happen if I had an attack at the same place"*

So far the data presented in terms of physical activity has generally been fairly negative, however physical activities and the challenges these present can also have positive influences, the next subtheme will investigate the subtheme of peer support to show how participants report their experiences in these situations

5.2.3 c) Peer support

A wider reaching discussion of data collected with the theme of peer relations, will provide the bulk of the "subcutaneous" theme discussion a little later in this paper, however at this point I feel it is important to discuss data relating to intra group support, specifically in terms of the challenges of physical activities.

The data for this discussion was gathered during my observations at the climbing tower.

This support took a number of forms such as singing, cheering for one another and comforting each other in difficult or scary situations. In terms of singing I note from my field observation book a specific example in which; *a group of girls who are getting ready to climb, begin to sing the chorus from the Eminem song 'Not Afraid' which repeats the refrain 'I'm not afraid, I'm not afraid' they continue to sing while being tied on to the ropes prior to climbing and even break into song half way up the wall*

Later in my observation the strength of peer support was shown when one of the participants, after reaching the top of the tower froze, refusing to go down the Zip Line (the usual way back to the ground).

Below is an excerpt from my field notes describing my observations;

One girl freezes at the top of the tower, saying she is too scared to go down the Zip line. The instructor explains to her the range of safety features of the equipment involved…the instructor also points out that 'loads of other people have done it already and they had a great time'

However this encouragement appeared to have little effect, the next excerpt from my notes describes what happened next;

The other girls, who up until this point have been sat in the Gazebo, now rush out into the sun and stand at the base of the tower to offer encouragement to their friend cheering 'lets go [participants name], lets go' to the typical American sporting chant rhythm.

This encouragement appears to have the desired effect and; *After a number of 1,2,3 counts by the instructor, the participant steps off the tower and slides down the Zip Line, screaming but grinning at the same time, with all the other participants still cheering"*

All the above, shows the power that the participant group had in terms of the support given and gained from one another, as previously mentioned this aspect of peer relations in relation to the subcutaneous theme, will be discussed further at a later point in this thesis.

5.2.3 d) The Retrospective View

The final sub theme in this section discusses the retrospective view of activities, not only in terms of completed activities but also when discussing activities which they were unable to take part in, specifically in this case I am thinking of the aborted Katahdin trip.

As previously mentioned in a number of the sub themes presented above, the trip was seen by participants as the most challenging and consequently loathsome activity proposed during their stay at camp and many were very keen not to take part, either hoping for the trips cancellation, or attempting to get out of having to take part due to physical complaints, as seen in the journal entry from Kate who mentions that one of the other participants; *"Was crying she was so upset, she even went to the infirmary to try and get out of the trip, but the nurse there said that even though she said she had a bad knee, she should still go"*

Eventually these participant's wishes came true and the trip was cancelled due to a forecast of storms on the mountain, this turn of events provided me with an interesting opportunity to return to the participant group and find out how they viewed this cancellation.

Unsurprisingly many participants were very pleased to avoid climbing a mountain, such as Lauren who said that; *"I was so happy when we were told the trip was cancelled that I was dancing round the bunk, I even got told off for jumping on my bed cause I was so excited"*

Interestingly though some participants seemed upset now that they knew they wouldn't have the chance to do the hike *"I didn't really want to go last week, then I was so happy we weren't going, but now I feel like we will miss out if it doesn't get put back on again"* Denise

Sophie agreed with this comment saying that; *"I didn't want to go either but now I wish I had, my brother went and even though he didn't finish I guess at least he tried"*

Similar sentiments are echoed in participant journals with individuals noting in their writing, the duality of their feelings between their happiness regarding the cancellation and the sense of missing out on something, Mary says for example that;

"The funny thing though is that the more I think about it the more I feel kinda sad that we didn't get to go, the guys in [equivalent bunk of male campers] said that getting to the top was actually a good feeling even though they said it was really tiring".

To conclude this consideration of the theme of physical activity and in accordance with the previous theme of Natural Surroundings it is possible to see a duality within the data collected, with participants reporting both an initial fear and reluctance of these types of activities whilst at the same time and particularly in retrospect seeming to recognise the positive aspects of undertaking such challenges, even to the point of a certain degree of disappointment when thinking back after the Katahdin hiking trip was cancelled.

5.2.4 Tradition, Time and Repetition:

The final theme which I will present, concerns reports of a sense of tradition, time and repeated experiences. This theme came up a number of times both in participant journals as well as in the audio data, recorded. As with a number of other themes presented, there is an element of duality to this theme, with both positive discussions of traditions and

pride at the amount of time spent at the camp in terms of belonging, as well as a more negative view of repeating experiences. With this in mind I will separate this duality into separate sub themes, presented below.

5.2.4 a) Tradition and Time

It appears from analysis of the data presented, that participants are keen to mention the amount of time spent at the camp, in terms of the number of years they have been in attendance, for example Angela when discussing her climbing ability during one of my observations, says that; *"I haven't been on the climbing wall since [mentions the bunk three years below]"*

Similarly Rachael, as part of a bunk conversation regarding the natural surroundings of the camp, discusses years of attendance in terms of her sense of belonging saying that; *"Camp feels like a second home, I've been here since [name of the most junior bunk], that's like 5 years"*

Even when writing about what are otherwise perceived as negative experiences such as the beach trip journal entries such as that by Laura, support the reminiscent value of such traditions when she says that; *"The strange part I like about it is the apple juice cups and donuts. They just remind me of how excited I was to go to the beach…my first year"*

5.2.4 b) The Negativity of Repetition:

As the title of this section suggests and to use a common phrase 'familiarity breeds contempt' which is to suggest that those with a long history of camp life, do not always appreciate some of the annual trips. This is particularly clear in the case of the beach trip which is described by many of the participants in negative terms, for example Sarah writes in her journal prior to the trip that; *"It is a very boring day to wake up early for"* This negative aspect of prior knowledge is also clear in the case of the Big Spencer camping and hiking trip, which the group had also been on the previous year.

There are many examples of this sentiment which were expressed during recorded bunk conversations, for example, *"I really hate Big Spencer; we went last year so I don't know*

why we have to go again. That's the one where you have to drive down all those dirt roads for ages, isn't it" Jane

As well as this negativity being caused by prior knowledge of what they had to expect, participants also expressed a dislike of repetition on a more general level such as Lauren who writes in her journal that; *"Once we found we were going to Big Spencer I was a little bummed considering we climbed it last year"*

The information presented above suggests that not only did participants not enjoy the trip the previous year, but perhaps more importantly; they relished new experiences and were disappointed to have one of their trips away from camp repeated from the year before as opposed to going somewhere new.

To conclude this section I believe that there appears to be a duality in terms of participant's reported experience. It would seem that while they take pride in their time spent at camp and this provides them with a sense of belonging, there is also in negative terms, a sense of some activities being repeated from previous years.

While in some cases aspects of repetition such as Laura's comments regarding the apple juice and donuts can lead to a pleasurable reminiscence, there are also times when repetition is seen as negative, either because this provides participants with prior knowledge of what is in store for them, or simply because they would rather have new experiences, opposed to reliving those of the year before.

Chapter 6: Discussion of Themes, the Uncovering of the Subcutaneous Theme

During my analysis, an underlying subcutaneous theme became apparent, this I distinguish from the surface themes mentioned above due to its regular, yet more covert position within the data. I also feel that while this is more discrete, it represents a continuous, pulse of experience beneath the more transitory, more direct experiences of, for example, partaking in a particular activity or star gazing on the basketball court.

In terms of this position within the data, I feel it is important that I clarify what I mean. Obviously for this subject to become a theme it has to be mentioned or at least insinuated by participants, however I feel the theme in question presents itself differently from the surface themes, as it is never discussed by participants as an issue in its own right, instead being discussed as a yard stick of how useful certain activities proved to be, or observed in participants interactions with one another and therefore can be seen as a current running beneath the other themes.

The theme in question is concerned with the building and development of a strong social group. Below I will present findings to support its position in my study, as well as attempting to clarify my reasoning and justify my belief that this theme is central to the experiences described by participants.

6.1 The Formation and Development of a Strong All Inclusive Social Group:

This theme is mentioned in a number of different forms throughout the data; here I will present examples to illustrate this point. I have highlighted certain words within the quotations to emphasise my point. You may notice that some of the quotes used have been previously used in the discussion of surface themes; this I feel highlights the position of this theme as related too but differently represented within the data, for example in the inclusive vocabulary used in references to the group, such as when Laura describes the happiness on hearing of the Khatahdin trips cancellation, saying that.

*"**Everyone** was really happy, jumping around the bunk, cheering they were so happy"*
And before this cancellation wrote in her journal that; *"**All of us** in the bunk hope the trip gets cancelled"*

In reference to the beach trip despite the flies and the cold water which are also mentioned by participants as negative aspects, one of the most striking comments was made by Lauren in her journal in which she says that;

*"Mostly I don't like the beach for the experience. **Most trips we go on our bunk either bonds or you learn things about each other we never knew** …the beach we just sit in the sand…and play cards…it is a very boring day to wake up so early for"*

The theme of a missed experience is further supported by data gathered regarding the cancellation of the Katahdin hiking trip. This sense as well as being considered in terms of the missed personal challenge was also turned towards the group its self and the possibility of what could have been missed in terms of bonding and increased coherence in more of a unitary sense. This was obviously influenced by reports from the boy's bunk of equivalent age to the participants. For example Laura writes in her journal that;

*"the funny thing is that the more I think about It, the more **I feel kinda sad that we didn't get to go**, the guys in [male equivalent bunk] said that getting to the top was actually a good feeling…[and] **they felt more bonded as a bunk when they got back to camp**"*

Other participants also show their disappointment but place it in terms of the group rather than themselves as an individual, such as Sam who in a recorded porch conversation says that; *"I didn't really want to go last week, then I was so happy we weren't going, but now **I feel like we will miss out if it** doesn't get put back on again"*

This conversation appears to have got participants thinking and Denise sums up the general mood of the group when she says that;

*"**maybe we did miss out in a way, I guess it could have been good for bunk unity** to do something hard like that, I mean I'm not sorry that I didn't have to do the hike cause I know I would have hated it but **some of the [Equivalent bunk] said that they felt great afterwards and they feel like they are stronger as a bunk now**"*

As I have explained in my introduction to this theme, I feel that while mention of the issue lies embedded within other thematic discussions, this acts to strengthen as opposed to weaken the importance of the theme within the data. In short I conclude that it would appear in terms of participant experience, that one of the key experiences and as such, one of the major concerns within their time at camp, surrounds the building and development of peer relationships inclusive of the whole group within the bunk.

6.2 The Interaction of Surface and Subcutaneous Themes

The above chapters present the thematic findings from the data. In this section I will discuss the three dimensional nature of these themes, before moving on to develop on them further with the process of concept development.

In many of the themes presented above, there is often an element of duality, as positive and negative view points are often found within the same thematic heading, for example the fear of the unknown, yet wonder described within the "Natural Surroundings" theme.

Yet another third dimension is occupied by the "Subcutaneous" theme, which appears to pulse beneath other elements of the data and is concerned with, the importance to my participants regarding "The Formation and Development of a Strong and all inclusive Social Group".

In short while the data presents evidence of a number of positive and negative themes, the key experience which I would argue presents the most important finding of this study can be seen in what I have termed the "Subcutaneous" theme and concerns participants interaction with each other and the importance placed by them on developing this group bond through shared experiences.

Next I will develop on these themes further with the development of analytical concepts.

Chapter 7: The Development of Analytical Concepts

7.1 "The Formation and Development of a Strong and All Inclusive Social Group"".

As can be seen from the discussion above, whilst much of the overt discussion concerned the concrete topics of natural surroundings and physical activities, in a covert, yet consistent way, the theme of friendship and group bonding has risen above the surface themes to become seemingly the most important theme of all. With this in mind I will develop upon this theme specifically, in terms of the development of concepts appropriate to the data.

Theoretically speaking, the work of Nilsen (2005) has presented much of the foundation of this section of my study, with this in mind I will utilise quotes from her to support my discussion of this topic. Firstly I feel it is important to highlight the importance of the development and discussion of concepts. The aim of which is to "lift the empirical experiences in serving the important task of providing insight and understanding" (Nilsen, 2005:119).

Nilsen also emphasises the importance of this element of analysis, saying that "a major concern in qualitative research is how researchers convert everyday experiences into theoretical knowledge through researcher's interpretations and 'translations' of data into theoretical concepts" (Nilsen,2005:117). In terms of this consideration of "how" the conversion of experience to theory is achieved, she asks that reflexivity is applied by researchers, regarding how the concepts chosen represent the lives of participant's. Nilsen (2005).

With the above consideration in mind I have worked closely with the data, in terms of the investigation and consideration of themes and particularly those which discusses participant's social group.

In regards to this investigation, reflexivity is understandably important, as concept development is the final step of the analytical ladder and especially in cases such as my study, which has aimed at maximising participation, it is vital that the researcher

60

appreciates and returns to the issue of presenting participant's views in a way that is representative of their voices and experience, throughout this conceptualisation stage.

Development and explanation of concept is the first section which steps away from a direct discussion of participant's words, Nilsen suggests in relation to this issue that "in making theoretical interpretations of data the researcher is facing the challenge of 'translating' or rather reconstructing the concrete and many sidedness of the social life of the actors to the language of theory and research" (Nilsen, 2005:119). Such translation can be seen in my interpretation of the subcutaneous theme in terms of the discussion of peer relations by William Corsaro (2005).

Regarding theories which influence the way such translation is achieved, it is worth returning to a consideration of top down and bottom up approaches to analysis. Bottom up refers to the development of new concepts based on the findings of the data gathered, whereas top down theorising uses existing concepts to discuss and analyse the data. Nilsen (2005). I will utilise both of these approaches, as I hope to anchor my study within wider theory, through its attachment to existing concepts. However from a bottom up approach I will also be discussing the phenomenon of "whole group unity" as I felt it necessary to tailor make a conceptual element specifically for my participant group, to maintain the clarity of their voices.

I view this chapter therefore as having the funnel shape, suggested as the ideal ethnographic format and consequently will begin with a wider top down consideration of the concept of Friendship in peer culture, before working from the bottom up angle to tighten the focus of conceptualisation more specifically for my participants.

7.2 Top Down Conceptualisation

With regard to the concept of peer relations I will draw heavily on the work of Corsaro who's studies of children's peer cultures has added much to our understanding of the building, development and maintenance of these cultures. He suggests that "friendship concepts and skills do not arise solely or even primarily as a result of cognitive development or children's individual reflections" suggesting instead that "friendships are collectively constructed through children's active involvement in their social worlds and

peer cultures"(Corsaro, 2005:144). These cultures being defined as "general subcultures of a wider culture or society such as the United States" (Corsaro, 2005:133).

In many ways I believe that the above quotes get to the heart of what participants are referring too from the data. In which they are often focused on the activity or trip particularly in terms of how these may build or further develop the bond between members of the bunk and this itself can be seen as the development of a stronger more coherent social world. An example of this kind can be seen in Lauren's journal entry in which she says that;

*"Personally I don't want to go to the beach. Its not because the water is cold, the water is cold cause of our location [Maine the northern most state on the eastern sea board of the USA]. Mostly I don't like the beach for the experience. **Most trips we go on our bunk either bonds or you learn things about each other we never knew."***

This sense of formation of peer cultures suggests that children initially enter and start to develop such cultures as they move away from family orientated spaces and into the general community, "it is through intensive, everyday interaction in this hub that the first local peer culture develops and flourishes".(Corsaro,2005:134).

Statements such as that presented above, can be seen to be relevant not only in the educational setting in which Corsaro carried out his study, but also in a range of different social situations throughout children's lives and more specifically and relevant in this case of course, also in terms of camp surroundings. This sense is discussed by Rachael in a bunk conversation saying that: *"**camp feels like a second home**, I've been here since bunk 1, that's like 5 years. It's an amazing place for so many reasons and **there are some amazing people here**"*

This gives an idea of the sense of belonging felt by participants in regard to the camp, but also provides an indication of the age at which participants first attend camp, in this case around the age of seven. As many of these participants started at the same time it is understandable that besides other key life events such as the first day of school etc, the first year at camp can be seen as a very important time in terms of the development of their own peer culture.

It is also interesting to consider whether the more relaxed atmosphere of a summer at camp, as opposed to a school environment, could in fact prove to be even more of a catalyst to the development of a strong peer culture. As well as if the importance of this culture, is magnified by its separation from the everyday lives of individuals, outside their time at camp.

I suggest that it is this understanding of the importance of peer culture and more specifically the maintenance of this culture which drives participants to favour new experiences over repeated trips, for example Jane who wrote in her journal that; *"I really hate Big Spencer, we went last year so I don't know why we have to go again."*

This sense even appears to be present in the case of the cancelled Katahdin trip (all be it from a retrospective viewpoint) with Denise saying in a bunk conversation that;

*"maybe we did miss out in a way, I guess **it could have been good for bunk unity** to do something hard like that, I mean I'm not sorry that I didn't have to do the hike cause I know I would have hated it but **some of the [boys equivalent bunk] said that they felt great afterwards and that they feel like they are stronger as a bunk now**"*.

Interestingly my suggestions are also supported by other works from within a camp setting, for example findings that "At the end of camp, campers reported that camp helped them to make friends, and work together in a spirit of cooperation" (Arnold et al, 2005:8). As this section has shown therefore there are elements of data collected during my study and supported by the work of other researchers in similar situations, which support the concept of peer culture such as the suggestion that "(1) children make persistent attempts to take control of their lives, and (2) they always attempt to share that control with each other" (Corsaro, 2005:134).

7.3 Developing the Phenomenon of "Whole Group Unity"

While I feel that the data fits well with the above concept of friendship within peer culture, there is at the same time the opportunity to attempt further conceptual development from a bottom up approach, with the creation of something more specifically tailored to express my participant's views.

This aim is supported by Nilsen who illustrates "how a critical attitude to certain established approaches… might be involved in the generation of a new concept grounded in one's research" (Nilsen, 2005:129).

While it is perhaps overly ambitious to attempt to develop a full concept from my data, I was still interested in investigating if there were phenomena present, which could be enlarged upon. With this aim in mind I set out to explore my data and develop if possible, a conceptual framework to act as an analytical tool, in further discussion and interpretation of participant responses. The result of this was my development of the phenomenon of "whole group unity".

What I am suggesting here is that while Corsaro is predominantly concerned with friendship and peer relations within the wider concept of peer culture, I am focusing in greater detail and suggest that the issue here is participant's desire to create cohesive bonds specifically within their social group. Not merely in terms of individual friendships but at a grander level encompassing all members of the group in this case the bunk. A further consideration is that Corsaro's work predominantly focuses on young children whereas my participant's lie in an interesting age range somewhere between childhood and adolescence.

I suggest that this age difference could be the deciding factor behind the increased inclusivity seen in this phenomenon. Below I will present data gathered during my fieldwork to provide examples of this inclusive peer culture. Highlighting certain words and phrases in bold as in my discussion of the subcutaneous theme, to emphasis the type of language used. Such as seen in Laura's journal in which she writes in regard to the proposed Khatahadin trip that: *"**All** of us in the bunk hope that it gets cancelled"*

Views regarding the trip to Big Spencer were similarly negative yet show again how even in terms of these negative events, participants consider activities in terms of the whole group, for example Sam, when I asked if there had been any positive aspects to the trip answered *"No"* but then continued by saying that *"Singing the songs on the bus, I guess that was fun. **We had all of us singing at the same time**"*

It was not only participant reports which mention this group unity. It was also something which I implicitly noted in my own observational field notes, below I will present an example which I noted our full camp visit to the beach:

*Interestingly **the whole group sets up an area together**, this is not required but **they appear to have discussed where they want to be as a group** and so the area chosen is near the far end of the row of three sun shelters that have been put up for the visit. **This allows those who prefer shade to stay out of the sun while those keen on sun bathing can lie outside but still the whole group is obviously in ear shot of each other.***

Another factor which influenced my interpretation of this phenomenon was the participant's awareness of their interest in creating coherence as an entire group. This theme was mentioned a number of times by participants such as Laura who wrote in her journal regarding the cancellation of the Katahdin trip that:

*"The funny thing though, is that the more I think about it the more I feel kinda sad that we didn't get to go, the guys in ... [equivalent bunk of male campers] said that getting to the top was actually a good feeling even though they said that it was really tiring, also **they said that they felt more bonded as a bunk** when they got back to camp even with the two kids who had to stay at the half way point".*

While so far all the data, regarding trips that I have presented has been fairly negative there are some advantages mentioned by participants such as Sarah who as previously mentioned in this paper enjoyed her first ever camping experience during the summer.

While she was positive about the whole trip and seemed to enjoy everything about it, including the storm, one of the experiences that she specifically mentioned, when I asked her while we were sitting by the camp fire how she was enjoying the trip was the opportunity of: *"**Just being with her bunk mates** and getting away from the rest of the busy camp for a bit".*

7.4 Considerations of the Concept of "in group"

From the examples presented above, it is possible to see how "whole group unity" stands alone; separate from the related, yet more general concept, of friendships within peer relations. However I also compared this phenomenon to the concept of "in group". In a sense this can be seen to be far more positive and inclusive than "in group's" focus on the formation and maintenance of individual's power within "cliques" and of course by its very name the suggestion of an out group, as discussed in the work of Patricia Adler and Peter Adler (1995). However I will also discuss possible similarities regarding the importance that both "in group" and the phenomenon of "whole group unity" place on the strength of relationships.

Firstly I will discuss the differences. While the concept of in group deals with power relations and popularity, the phenomenon of whole group unity is concerned with how individuals build an all inclusive peer group. My reasoning behind pushing this forceful distinction between "in group" and "whole group unity" is to clarify in the mind of the reader the level of inclusiveness which I found within my participant group, as this was one of the most surprising aspects found within my study.

However I also find it interesting to consider whether my findings can in some way be related to "in Group" concepts. One of the terms used in Adler and Adler's study is the idea of "cliques" which they describe as "friendship circles, encompassing a high likelihood that members will identify each other sociometrically as mutually connected" (Adler & Adler, 1995: 145). I believe that quotes such as this could suggest that what participants are concerned with in their attention to building a strong all inclusive social group is not that far from such ideas and that perhaps the participant group as a bunk represents such a "clique" but that while in Adler and Adler's explanation, such phenomena are viewed as "hierarchical …being dominated by leaders and are exclusive" (Adler & Adler, 1995: 145) it would appear that what my participants are discussing, is a wider more inclusive group which contains the entire bunk as "in group" members and is exclusive only in the sense that only members of the bunk can be in possession of membership.

66

In summary what I suggest here is that if my phenomena of "whole group unity" is seen through the frame of "in group" concept, there may be a suggestion that the in group is represented by the entire group (in this case the bunk of individuals chosen as my participant group) and therefore that the group remains exclusive only for girls in this particular bunk. This I feel can perhaps explain the reason for the strength of feeling expressed, in terms of building a well bonded and inclusive relationship among group members.

To conclude this chapter I hope that the reader has gained a deeper understanding of the data, both in terms of my discussion of Cosaro and Adler and Adler's work, as well as, following my reasoning in the creation and development of a phenomenon specific to my study, to provide more specific details of my findings and provide a more accurate expression of my participant's words.

In the next section of this paper I will present a brief summary of my findings before concluding the thesis with some final considerations.

Chapter 8: Summary

The aim of this study has been to investigate participant's lived experiences, regarding a range of different themes and activities all based around the topic of natural surroundings.

The participant group involved comprised young people predominantly from urban areas, staying at a summer camp in Maine. As such, these individuals were living in natural surroundings and often involved in activities in these natural elements.

Regarding these participants there were some key considerations which I needed to address, specifically in terms of how I was seen by my chosen group. This concern was particularly important as I had worked on the camp the previous year and was also a part of camp staff during my field work. To counteract this problem I specifically chose a group with which I had little contact before and also who I could work with only in my role as researcher. With these considerations in mind my chosen group was a female bunk whose members were between twelve and thirteen years of age.

In terms of data collection I gathered information in a range of different ways and during a range of different activities, which have been discussed throughout the course of this paper. I also continued the data collection and reflective process on off camp excursions both multi day trips such as when camping and hiking and day trips to the beach.

My methodological foundations came from the participatory work of researchers such as Nilsen who says that "a major concern in qualitative research is how researchers convert everyday experiences into theoretical knowledge" (Nilsen, 2005:117). To gather data I began by basing the development of tools on the work of Clark, whose Mosaic Approach applies "the traditional methodologies of observation and interviewing with the introduction of participatory tools" (Clark, 2005:29). Later also involving Denzin's Biographical Method.

In terms of my study I was also keen to develop upon the concept of participation, by supporting my participants in the development of their own data collection tools.

This led to the inclusion of journal entries and to the training of members of the participant group in the use of the Dictaphone and their consequent independent recording of conversations.

This participatory approach, as well as providing participant's view points more directly, is also in line with children's rights as suggested by Kjørholt, Moss and Clark (2005) who write that "Listening to children today is often inscribed in rights discourses" (Kjørholt et al, 2005:175) from Kjørholt (2001, 2004).

As well as this justifiable position within the children's rights discourse, the concept of participation is also firmly embedded within the ethnographic techniques which lie as another key anchoring point for this study.

Whilst maximising participation does reduce the researcher's authority over the research process, it also allows participants a greater say in what is investigated and while in some cases this could be seen as a hindrance and defocusing of the issue, it is worth returning to the quote used earlier, from Hammersly and Atkinson (2007) who discuss ethnographic work, suggesting that such studies should have a 'funnel' shaped structure which becomes increasingly focussed through the course of the study.

This participatory approach did affect my study, with participants discarding a number of data collection tools, whilst also proposing a number of their own, moving the focus away from the visual representation of Clark's (2005) Mosaic Approach to a more written and spoken word based methodology, which in turn caused me to investigate and utilise Denzin's (1989) biographical method. This funnelling and tightening of focus can also be seen in my early decision to abandon my original research question regarding activities and focus more on experiences in natural surroundings.

These methodological frameworks were used in the field, involving participants in the development of data collection tools, the data collection its self and my discussions with them regarding the data gathered, to ensure that I was able to sketch out as true a picture of their experience as possible. From this data, themes were developed and concepts suggested, presenting a representation of participants experiences in their natural surroundings.

In terms of the findings of this study the first theme I identified was the consideration of participant's experiences in natural surroundings outside their time at camp, generally this appeared to be minimal, due to participants living in urban areas and also in part due to their reliance on parents to transport them to more natural surroundings. Others did describe activities in the outdoors such as skiing, which it could be suggested presents a manicured version of nature. What became clear however is when taking the whole group experience into consideration; many had little or no real interaction with nature outside their time at camp.

With the focus of this study it is unsurprising that the second theme is connected with participants experiences in natural surroundings as part of their camp experience, such as the theme of darkness within which they discussed both the beauty and enjoyment of a night spent star gazing, while at the same time discussing their fears of the unknown such as when they hear noises at night while out on camping trips. Such dualistic discussions became a common thread within a number of the themes mentioned and being seen in similar circumstances in discussions of the noises of the camp surroundings.

The third surface theme which became apparent was that of physical challenges, which again demonstrates a sense of duality, while participants generally described such challenges in terms of negative language. They also demonstrated a strong element of peer support and from a retrospective view after the cancellation of one of the most challenging trips of the summer showed both a sense of relief yet also described feelings of regret at having missed out what they felt could have been a good experience for group bonding.

Again this dualistic sense can be seen in the final surface theme discovered which is concerned with participant's discussions of time and repetition within camp life. The majority of my participants had spent many years at camp and consequently this time gave them a considerable sense of belonging, whilst on the down side also led to a sense of repetition at times.

Interestingly in some senses participants still described these repetitive experiences, as a time for reminiscence and that this in its own way lent to a sense of enjoyment due to the increased sense of belonging which it gave.

The most valuable finding from this investigation was the discovery of what I have termed the subcutaneous theme. This is concerned with discussions of peer bonding and inclusivity which lay within the data, while as I have discussed above, these were not mentioned specifically they form a continuous thread which lies beneath the more overt data which as I have suggested forms a view of the most important element of participant experience.

This theme is signified by the use of inclusive language such as the use of the word as seen in participant's reports. I argue that this sense of inclusivity suggests a phenomenon apart yet related to the concepts of "Friendship in Peer Relations" and "In Group" which I have described as "Whole Group Unity".

Below I will present a conclusion to this thesis suggesting what I have learned throughout the study and possible directions that this kind of work could take in the future.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

The key finding of this study was that the building and development of relationships within the participant group, are positioned as the most important element of participant's camp experience.

My own personal experiences of this study have also been very informative. As I was employed as a member of staff at the camp while carrying out my field work and had also worked at the same camp the previous year. This past experience proved very useful, both in terms of gaining access and agreement from the director to carry out my field work, but also as it gave me knowledge of the day to day running of the camp and provided me with prior knowledge of the type of participants I would be working with, as well as issues, such as time constraints that I might come across during my data collection period.

Interestingly I feel that my experience of working as a researcher and the writing of this thesis, has provided me with a view of children attending the camp, which I had never considered as a member of staff. In this sense while I was obviously aware of the importance of relationships to children in general and perhaps girls in the age range of my participants specifically, I had never considered or indeed been aware that the inclusivity of such relationships would form the most important element described.

Such knowledge could be utilised further should I return to work at the camp as this would appear to suggest that this focus of building a strong and inclusive bunk relationship would, in participant's opinion be aided by more new experiences during the summer. Perhaps most importantly in terms of such new experiences, my research has provided me with food for thought regarding the way certain activities are introduced to campers.

For example as seen in the data, there was a very negative opinion displayed regarding the Katahdin hiking trip. I would be interested to see if this opinion could be improved with more focus placed on the bonding experience it provides, such as getting older campers to present their experiences to those about to go on this trip.

This discovery of previously unconsidered elements to my participant's experiences was only made possible by the implementation and consideration of the social studies of children and childhood approach. Which provided the foundation for this study, providing participants with the opportunity to take an active role in the data collection regarding their own experiences, while providing me with direct explanations of such experiences directly from the participants themselves.

In terms of the development of this approach a number of historical developments have been proposed which suggest how we have come to the current social studies understanding of children as different from adults, but at the same time as active within their own lives and within society as a whole. With this in mind it becomes clear that the way children are viewed is decided not in relation to their physical development but instead with how they are conceived by society. Regarding such views as these Jenks (1982) hoped to develop what has now become the childhood studies view, which enables children to have a say about their own experiences, in a situation which allows them to do so and which sees such views as viable explanations, in the same way as adult opinions are viewed and respected.

To achieve such a shift in the position of children in research, it is necessary first to view children as having agency and consequently as being active in the creation and understanding of their lives as opposed to passive objects acting in line with their institutional place within society. Theoretically therefore, with this understanding as a basis for research with children, we are not only able, but required, to involve children to as great an extent as possible and most importantly to respect the data gathered, as being an answer to the question of how children experience their lives which essential asks children "what does it mean to be you in this place now in the present moment, in the past and in the future" (Clark, 2005:35)..

From a research perspective working within the social studies of children and childhood approach allowed me to include my participants to the high degree that I did. As I hoped that such emphasis would encourage my participants to have a sense of ownership of the data collection and also allowed me a realistic representation of participant's voices and experience in situations outside adult influence.

Within the next section of this conclusion I will present a consideration of how the data gathered during my field work has been understood through the process of analysis and how this can be seen to answer some of the questions proposed earlier in the thesis.

One such question proposed earlier in section 2.4, regarded the importance of rites of passage in contemporary society. Such experiences are defined as "critical turning point experiences" (Denzin, 1989:198) and my interest was whether my participants discussed their time spent in natural surroundings in similar terms. In fact I considered this point to be of such interest that it informed my original research question, which was centred on participant's experiences of what I termed "challenging activities". While this original research question was dropped early in the field work, as I felt it was not representative of my participants interests, I still feel that themes developed from the data would appear to corroborate such a suggestion and these I see as a link between challenging, rites of passage type experiences and what I have termed in this study the subcutaneous theme "The Formation and Development of a Strong All Inclusive Social Group".

This linking theme can be seen in section 5.5.3 which discusses "peer support". This is concerned with how challenging activities, can act as experiences which call for members of the group to support one another and can therefore be seen as positive experiences in terms of the building of strong peer relationships.

This finding therefore returns to my originally proposed research question and in some sense, also answers the question regarding to the importance of rites of passage experiences, as it would appear to show, that by addressing such challenges together, a sense of bonding is created.

This is slightly different from the concept of rites of passage, which is often discussed in terms of the individual, however it would still appear to suggest that challenging experiences, while perhaps unpopular with my participants at the time, could in fact provide the opportunity to develop the type of relationships, which lie as the most important consideration of participant's camp experience.

While as the key theme, which I have termed the "subcutaneous theme" found within my analysis, concerned participant's focus on the creation of a strong and inclusive social group, the research question which also formed the focus of the surface themes described was how my participant group explained their experiences in nature, with this in mind a further theoretical consideration within this thesis has been the a discussion of the influences of various discourses on natural surroundings. Both positive and negative, as I feel it is the competing action of these discourses which plays a large part in the dualistic nature of participant responses in terms of such themes.

As I mention in the consideration of this issue in section 3.6, just as the concept of childhood is a social construction, there can be no consideration of discourses on nature without the realisation that the way such surroundings are discussed and viewed in society are influenced by certain historical and cultural constructions. Such as the commonly held view of nature as a place of danger, in part influenced by media representations of high profile cases such as the Sara Payne murder in the UK, or on a more positive note the concept of nature being a key component of "a good ...childhood" (Nilsen, 2008:38). Which is engrained, she suggests in Norwegian culture.

Below I will present a number of considerations regarding the major theme uncovered concerning the building of strong relationships; however I am particularly interested in the aspect of inclusivity within this theme and will present a number of questions which could be developed upon in future studies within this area.

Firstly I feel it would be interesting to investigate further, what children describe as their experiences regarding what would appear to be a very healthy culture of interpersonal relationships. As this was a finding within my study as opposed to a research question.

Are such relationships seen as different from those encountered in a school setting and if so what do participants explain as the cause of these different experiences. Could this be, for example described in terms of a release from the confines of the class room and the more relaxed, natural surroundings of camp?

If so could nature based schools such as the "naturbarnhages" described in Nilsen's (2005) paper be a way forward for the teaching of a wider range of ages? An especially pertinent question in terms of the suggestion, that nature can have a positive influence for individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Louv (2008). However perhaps the formation of such relationships could be described by participants as being experienced for other, more abstract reasons, such as specific camp philosophy, or the increased independence of being away from parents and teachers.

Beyond my participants specific camp experience I question if the type of all inclusive relationships discussed in this thesis, could be found outside the camp in which my field work took place, is it a more general summer camp experience, is it related to the age of these participants, or is it a more general finding in an American context.

Finally in terms of future research I believe it would be interesting to consider interpersonal relationships from the viewpoint of gender. Data from other camp settings suggest that camp experiences help children to feel positively about themselves and learn to work together, such as the work of Arnold et al (2005) which is consistent with my findings, however there are also suggestions that there are specific sex differences in such relationships, for example Shulman et al (1997) suggest that there are differences in the levels of intimacy within adolescent friendships and that girls are closer than boys especially in terms of self disclosure. With this consideration in mind it would be interesting to carry out research into male camper's experiences to investigate whether the phenomenon of whole group unity is found to be as important, as it appears to be for their female counterparts.

To sum up, throughout this thesis I have been influenced by the social studies view of children and childhood which sees children as having agency in their own lives and therefore as active subjects within research.

To overcome my status as a member of camp staff and reduce any power imbalance i aimed to work with one specific group and decided to work also with a group that were unknown to me from my previous summer at camp.

On first meeting with this group the uptake of participants was far more positive than I could have expected, however it quickly became clear that they had little interest in the type of activities I had originally planned to investigate and consequently I was forced to reconsider the proposed research question, coming up with a more general consideration of how participants experienced natural surroundings.

In terms of data collection tools I was strongly influenced by participatory methods specifically the Mosaic approach proposed by Clark (2005) in keeping with this participatory approach I discussed the battery of tools with my participants who rejected a number whilst also proposing less image and more word based methods. The outcome of this discussion being the introduction of journal writing and the use of recorded conversations as the main methods of data collection and the consequent investigation of Denzin's (1989) biographical method.

Through the process of analysis I identified a number of themes which I divided into two key groups, surface themes which dealt with the concrete discussions of participant's experiences in natural surroundings and what I terms the subcutaneous theme which was more covert, as I see it being hidden beneath the surface themes. This subcutaneous theme was specifically concerned with participants focus on the "building of a strong and inclusive social group" and from this I developed the phenomenon of "whole group unity" and utilised the existing discussions of peer relationships to help explain my findings conceptually.

In terms of future research I feel it would be interesting to investigate this discussion of relationships further, to discover how specific or general it is within childhood peer groups.

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78

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