Broad Horizons?
Geographies and Pedagogies of the Gap Year

PhD thesis

Kate Simpson

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University of Newcastle upon Tyne

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Abstract

Leaving home and setting out to discover self and other is, for certain sections of British youth, a culturally embedded practice. The gap year offers both the mechanisms and legitimation for such journeys, and comes packaged with promises of adventure, discovery, exotic encounters and life changing experiences. However, it also comes situated in a specific history and geography, which, so far, have largely been ignored. This thesis draws together diverse discourses on development, travel and education, and combines this with ethnographic fieldwork with gap year participants in Peru, to offer a critical exploration of the constructed nature of the gap year, locating it both historically and geographically.

Enthusiasm for the gap year has been widespread. There has been strong and vocal support from institutions and government alike, all extolling the 'value' of a gap year. To date however, the basis and reasons for this enthusiasm remains largely unexamined. This thesis explores the inspirations for, and the institutionalisation of, the gap year 'industry'. It examines the knowledges of, and relationships with, 'others' that participants produce through international gap year experiences. A critical pedagogical perspective is used to argue that, currently, despite the educational claims made about gap years, there is a failure to engage with the processes involved in knowledge production across space and time. This failure undermines the radical educational possibilities of the gap year. In order to move debates forward, this thesis explores the potential for a pedagogy of the gap year, arguing that any meaningful social agenda or attempt to engage with global awareness necessitates a pedagogy based on social justice.

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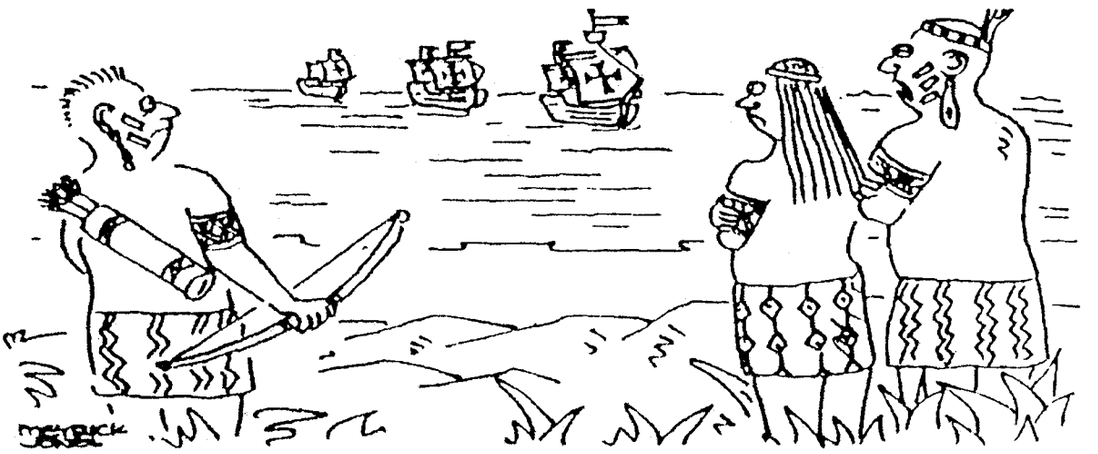
Chapter one:

A guide to the gap year



"Gap year kids, I expect"

(Private Eye 2003, p.13)

1. Where to go on a gap year?

In the year 2000 Prince William, Britain's future king, took a gap year and became a volunteer- tourist in Chile. The media eagerly followed his adventures, and the message was clear. Travelling was good for you, it was good for Britain's youth and it was good for royalty. Over the last ten years the gap year has expanded in both popularity and publicity, earning the endorsement of institutions of state, employment and education and in the process becoming a recognisable, commodifiable phenomenon.

In this thesis I argue that the phenomenon of the gap year builds on longer, and historically well-established, traditions of imperialism, 'The Grand Tour', and subsequent forms of modern tourism. While building from these traditions the gap year also promises divergence from 'normal' life, a gap in which to leave

the ordinary in pursuit of the extra ordinary. However, just as concepts of 'normal' and 'ordinary' can only be understood contextually, so the gap year must be viewed within an historical and geographical context, which to date has largely been ignored. Consequently, this thesis locates the gap year historically and geographically, while also bringing a pedagogical perspective to its practices.

Taking a 'gap year' predominantly occurs between school and university[1] and is a peculiarly British phenomenon[2]. A gap year can take many forms, but usually includes periods or work, which may be voluntary or paid, and travel. Over the last ten years the profile and popularity of the gap year has risen dramatically. The media, schools, employers, universities and the government have all become increasingly aware of the concept (see chapter five). Representations of the gap year in the public imagination are, at times, contradictory. As with the case of Prince William, the gap year has been heralded as an opportunity for young people to 'develop' and 'mature', to 'broaden their horizons' and 'experience life'. Yet, simultaneously, as the cartoon from Private Eye at the start of this chapter shows, the gap year is also associated, somewhat critically, with new and old processes of colonisation (see chapter two). In fact, this image encapsulates much of the often-ignored historical resonance that a gap year can have.

While the gap year is diverse, in this thesis I focus exclusively on international voluntary-work based gap years, located in the 'third-world'. There are many reasons for this focus. In the first place, international gap years are perhaps the most publicly visible, receiving a notable amount of media attention, the content and nature of which are interrogated in this thesis. In addition, third world

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[1] While the term 'gap year' has, in general, referred to a gap between school and university it is increasingly being applied to a 'break' taken at other stages in the life course.

[2] Structured travel opportunities for young people do exist in other countries (notably Canada, the USA and Australia) but tend to happen at different points in the life course and function in significantly different ways to the British gap year. One important distinction, for example, is that in USA and Canadian programmes international volunteer–tourism is generally part of structured college courses rather than independent of formal education (see chapter seven).

volunteer-tourisms bring into stark relief the power relations that exist between peoples of the developed and developing world. The unprecedented level of contact between tourist and host that volunteer work facilitates, further illuminates these unequal relationships. Finally, focussing on this specific area of the gap year is partially born out of my own experiences of working in this field (see chapter three). Through the experience of working within the industry I began to question not just the origins of public imaginations of the gap year, but also the nature of the experiences participants have, and the knowledges they produce, as a result of their gap year experiences. These combined academic and experiential interests remain the inspiration behind this thesis.

It is unclear when the term 'gap year' was first used. In addition, it has increasingly colonised a range of practices that might formerly have been termed a 'year off', a 'year out', a career break or even just a period of travel. With the growth in the numbers of people taking a gap year[3] has come an ever-expanding industry of organisations and support services. Table 1 (located at the end of chapter three) gives information on a cross section of gap year organisations all of which work in Latin America, and the majority of which have been established in the last ten years. These organisations sell a range of gap year programmes, offering participants voluntary work and travel opportunities. Programmes vary in structure and type. There are those that offer prolonged periods, up to nine months, on individual voluntary placements, while others offer group projects and / or periods of 'expedition' travel. Gap years based on both of these models are explored within this thesis, and the differences between the models are considered in chapter seven.

For a number of reasons the empirical interview data in the thesis (see chapters six and seven) concentrates on the group project model. Such gap years

[3] It is difficult to provide exact data for the number of people taking a gap year. However UCAS figures for deferred entry show a steady rise over the last 5 years. Likewise the Gap Year Report, compiled by the Gapyear.com also reports a rise in popularity (Hogg 2001). Finally the government Department for Education and Skills has commissioned a report into the gap year, aiming to gather data on the numbers involved, predominant activities and locations, however this report is not yet available (March 2004).

epitomise all that is particular to the gap year, in the sense that collective extended periods of volunteer tourism are otherwise unusual. In addition, the opportunity for, and access to, ethnographic work was greater with a group project than with individual placements. This thesis also focuses predominantly on commercial gap year organisations as it is this sector, as opposed to the charity or not for profit sectors, that has grown the most in recent years, and in so doing has largely precipitated the gap year's rising public profile.

The remainder of this chapter will now offer a 'guide' to this thesis. In line with the travel-based focus of this study, I have structured this chapter as a guidebook might be structured, offering condensed insights into the key territory and attractions of the thesis.

1. What to take on a gap year?

Before embarking on an examination of the gap year, it is important to introduce the key frameworks and actors that will be referred to throughout the thesis.

Introducing the industry

With the rise in the popularity and profile of the gap year, an increasingly well-recognised rhetoric has developed around its practice. Organisations and support services have developed and practices have become increasingly open to scrutiny. As I will argue, this has caused a formalisation and professionalisation of the gap year, so that what once may have been a disparate array of organisations, is now an industry. This thesis frames and introduces the gap year as an 'industry'. By framing the gap year in this way, I argue that it is informed and constructed by an identifiable network of organisations, practices and beliefs. Furthermore, this network is ultimately underpinned by the desire, for commercial or social purposes, to 'promote' the gap year. That is, to advance its positive perception in the public imagination. As an industry, the gap year has managed and promoted its public image in deliberate and strategic ways. In recent years, the gap year has received the endorsement of political figures, educational leaders, and universities together with extensive coverage

in the media. This attention, although not exclusively complimentary, has served to reiterate the 'value' of a gap year (see chapter five). As a result, the gap year as an industry has been able to establish itself in the public imagination in a way that both frames its activities and defines it as a distinct practice.

To date the gap year has attracted little academic research. What research there has been has subsumed the gap year within other larger categories of tourism, such as 'backpacker', (see, Sorensen 2003). However, as I shall argue, there are a range of issues and peculiarities that make the gap year distinct from other subsets of tourism. Furthermore, the research attention that the gap year has received has come predominantly from within the industry. Given the way the industry operates to promote the gap year, it is neither best placed to critically engage with its own practice, nor has proved eager to do so. Rather, there has been an almost exclusive emphasis on legitimising and 'proving' the 'value' of gap year programmes (see for example, Hogg 2001). Such research has come double barrelled with the industry's need to bind the practice of a gap year to certain commercial values; centrally those of 'structure' (discussed in chapter five). Despite the lack of research, the gap year industry makes many references to the 'known' and 'recognised' value of gap year programmes. This thesis attempts to explore the rationale behind these prophecies of value, and begin the process of developing an empirical and theoretical understanding of the gap year

Meeting the participants

Several groups of actors appear in this thesis. The 'gap year industry' has already been introduced and incorporates a key set of actors, who will be represented through publications and interviews. However, this thesis also seeks out the voices of those who participate in gap year programmes. There are many groups of participants, comprising both hosts and visitors, all of whom have encounters and experiences as a result of 'the gap year'. In the discussion that follows I have grouped actors roughly into the categories of either 'host' or 'participant' (visitor). While it is important to recognise that the term participant could well include both visitors and hosts, for the purposes of this thesis I use it

exclusively to refer to travelling gap year participants. This is partially a recognition of the elective nature of travelling versus the potentially imposed nature of being a host. The category of 'host communities' encompasses the people who live in the communities that gap year participants visit. The term 'host' has been used by other researchers in a similar way, (see, Tickell 2001; Heald 2003). The term 'host' does not imply invitation, but rather denotes a status achieved through *either* volition or imposition. The term 'communities' is used in preference to the singular of 'community', because the communities that host volunteers are made up of divergent groups. The host communities encountered in this study were those of San Gabriel, Lima, Peru, where the central case study programme for this thesis operated (see chapter three). San Gabriel is a poor urban community established through squatting and migration over the last thirty years. Therefore it is made up by a diverse group of communities that representing regional differences in Peru.

All of the gap year participants who informed this thesis were taking part in a travel and volunteer programme run by Quest Overseas (see chapter three). They were aged between 18 and 19, due to attend university and had generally been through the British school system; a short group biography of key informants is included in appendix three. Chapters six and seven draw heavily on interview and observation data with participants to examine the varied ways they construct and understand their gap year experiences. Throughout this thesis I emphasise the multiple ways the gap year is constructed, arguing that the divergent actors understand the practice in significantly different ways.

Telling the history

The lack of research or critical examination of the gap year has produced an industry reliant on an approach premised on enthusiasm and good intentions. As part of deconstructing this approach, and demonstrating its inadequacy, in this thesis I argue that the gap year has developed out of a range of highly pertinent historical traditions. Traditions that, though often ignored by the industry and participants alike, offer both a conscious and unconscious framework for the gap year.

The relationships between youth and travel, as well as the destinations of gap year programmes have historic resonance. Practices such as the 'Grand Tour', and later the opportunities offered through colonialism, have helped to establish a relationship between youth, travel and British identity. The gap year industry does not operate in a vacuum of values, but rather offers a continuation, and reinvention, of established socio, cultural economic and political traditions (see chapter two). Furthermore, though the gap year industry may actively seek to distance itself from *elements* of these traditions, it also calls upon historic imagery and language to promote its activities (see chapters two and four). Consequently, the industry's acknowledged relationship with history is, at best, ambiguous. As the cartoon at the start of this chapter demonstrates, the gap year is represented in public imaginations in distinctly historical terms, and specifically those of colonialism. So, although the gap year industry may distance itself from such associations, they are evidenced within both media and public imaginations[4].

Regardless of the ambiguity in the industry's recognition of history, the processes, traditions and images of travel and imperialism continue to frame gap year participants' experiences. Indeed, within Britain the culturally assumed value of gap year experiences appears rooted in the longevity of the acceptance of travel as an activity for young people. The historical nature of the gap year locates participants not only within a certain geography (one in which former colonies are strongly represented) but also within certain activities. The prevalence of third world volunteer-tourism in the gap year is, at least in part, a product of the way the relationships between the developed and developing world have been historically understood and constructed. Despite the use of historical imagery, language, and reference points, a critical historical perspective has yet to be applied to the gap year. In this thesis I seek to question

[4] In September 2003 my work attracted attention from the national media. Several papers discussed my work in the context of colonialism, and this elicited a strong response and denial from the gap year industry. Indeed the charge of colonialism, which was a misrepresentation of my work, appeared to be deliberately used to make the articles 'controversial'.

how the gap year industry reinvents and reinterprets older historical traditions, that in turn, frame participants' relationships and encounters with the visited 'other'.

Finding the geography

The gap year may be historically inspired but it also operates in, and constructs, a contemporary geography. In this thesis I bring together divergent literatures to locate the 'geography' of the gap year. Central are literatures on development and tourism. As a practice, 'doing development' is at the heart of the gap year. Through the 'doing' of development, participants are offered enhanced 'tourist' experiences which give them greater and seemingly more authentic contact with 'local' people. These practices combine to provide a geography within which gap year participants can travel (see chapter four).

The 'doing of development' (gap year style) offers the traveller a chance to explore both self and other. A chance to contribute to the 'future of others' while also contributing to their own development, so that through exploring other places, they can also explore alternative identities (see chapters five and six). Such constructions of the other, translate into a construction of geography; a construction where there are people to 'help' and where development is a simple process to be 'got on with'. The simplicity of the gap year industry's conceptualisation of 'doing' development is at odds with the acknowledged complexity of development theory and practice in academic and policy debates (see chapter two). Yet, as with the historical traditions already mentioned, the gap year industry distances itself from theories and practices of development, apparently preferring to rely on good intentions and enthusiasm. The nature of the geography of the gap year is discussed at length in chapter four, and I argue that it frames not only *where* participants travel, but also the *ways* in which they travel. Furthermore, the geography of the gap year enables certain practices and activities to be made available for tourist consumption. Even more significantly, within the context of understanding the way knowledges of others are produced, this geography is part of framing the values within which participants travel. It provides the imagined spaces in which encounters occurs.

The pedagogy

At the centre of the claims, rhetoric and rational supporting the gap year are concepts of learning and education. The often-cited notion of 'broad horizons' encapsulates the learning presumed to come from gap year experiences. Claims abound within the industry regarding opportunities for self-development, and learning about other cultures as well as, ultimately, for promoting increased 'global awareness' (see chapters five and seven). However, despite the many claims made about the educational value of a gap year, across the industry there is a notable dearth of either educational theory or practice. The dominant discourse appears to be one in which education is merely an inevitable outcome of experience. As a pedagogical approach this is limited, as I argue that it replicates approaches from the fields of outdoor and experiential education, which are now seen to be outdated (see chapter seven).

In seeking to bring a pedagogical perspective to the gap year I concentrate specifically on the production of knowledges about others, rather than about the self. While the gap year has an established dialogue with the concept of personal development, I argue, its perceived relationship to knowledges of others reinforces its social and cultural capital (see chapters two and five). A gap year confers authority on knowledge through the logic of the privileged view offered by the 'first hand' nature of experience (Heald 2003). Through the heightened reality of travel one is able to claim some form of authentic knowledge of the other (concepts discussed in chapter two). Consequently, the power of knowledge gained through experience is privileged, and for this reason its examination is imperative.

In order to question the presumptions that exist within the gap year about knowledge production, I apply pedagogies based on social justice and the work of Paulo Friere. Also, through ethnographic empirical work, I explore the knowledges that participants are producing and claiming as a result of their experiences (see chapter seven). Ultimately, this thesis proposes a pedagogy for

the gap year that takes account of the power, history and geography embedded in its practices.

2. The gap year: how to get there?

The remainder of this chapter offers a brief guide to the thesis structure, providing a 'route map' for the key sites of the thesis.

Chapter two offers a literature-based examination of the multiple traditions, practices and theories that collide in the gap year. I concentrate on locating the gap year historically and geographically. As I will argue throughout this thesis, the gap year is a situated practice; one that is located in both time and space. As such, it intersects with multiple discourses, yet these intersections remain largely ignored by the gap year industry and participants alike. The initial discussion in this thesis seeks to reverse this displacement of the gap year and resituate it within the discourses that inspire and inform its practices. Such a process of relocation demands an examination of diverse traditions of colonialism, development and tourism. Centrally, I argue that there is a 'gaze' informed by a particular understanding of all three that has defined the spaces, places and practices of the gap year. This gaze is in turn mobilised by participants, and the empirical chapters of the thesis question how this gaze conditions the experiences and knowledges produced through a gap year.

Chapter three offers an explanation of the methodology employed in the thesis. A variety of ethnographic and other empirical methods were used in data production, and the rationale and manner of their use is laid out in this chapter. Methodological questions are ultimately a combination of theoretical positioning, practical techniques and strategic limitations. Chapter three discusses the complex balance between these elements that helped produce a methodology that was rigorous, appropriate and possible.

Chapters four to seven focus on empirical data. Chapters four and five concentrate on exploring the spaces in which the gap year operates. Both these chapters draw on data in the form of representations produced by the gap year

industry and the media. The first of these chapters examines the ways the gap year industry engages with discourses of development, and mobilises a colonial gaze in the pursuit of a 'geography of the gap year'. The chapter argues that the gap year industry has created a geography that is represented in particular ways, which in turn legitimises particular practices. Chapter five continues this focus on the industry by examining the institutionalisation of the gap year. I argue that the gap year has been transformed from a practice for the disparate and rebellious few, into one with institutional acceptability. Where the gap year may once have been for rebels and 'dropouts' it is now the preserve of hopeful professionals and future kings. This process of institutionalisation has seen the gap year receive the endorsement of mechanisms of state, employment and education; it was even the subject of enthusiastic discussion in the House of Lords (see, The United Kingdom Parliament 2000).

Chapter six introduces the voices of gap year participants and examines how they envisage and understand their experiences. Central to this chapter is the argument that although the gap year industry may package their product in one particular way, this is not necessarily the product sought or consumed by participants. Indeed, in this chapter I focus on the divergence between what is sold and what is consumed. I argue that participants themselves are able, and even keen to sustain multiple representations of their gap years. The chapter focuses on issues of representation and identity, indicating how, despite some of the linguistic imagery employed by the gap year industry, the ways participants understand and represent their experiences are multiple and variable.

Chapter seven brings together both the voices of participants and those of the gap year industry, and concentrates on the nature of the knowledges produced about the visited other. In this chapter, I problematise the assumptions the gap year industry makes about how participants learn about those they visit. Within the industry there is an emphasis on an assumed relationship between travel and knowledge, as facilitated through the apparently indisputable authority of experience. I apply a critical pedagogical analysis to argue that this approach is severely limited, principally because it ignores any mechanisms for the transfer of knowledge across either space or time. By analysing discussions with

participants, I demonstrate that the pedagogical limitations, and historical and geographical dislocation of the industry, is represented in the knowledges of others that participants produce.

The final chapter of the thesis offers conclusions and discusses the future direction of gap year practice and research. In this final chapter, I propose a social justice based pedagogy for the gap year. Such a pedagogy would recognise the situated nature of the gap year and seek to engage with the very real issues of power that are embedded within it. If the gap year is to aspire to an agenda beyond enhanced social mobility for a privileged few, then it needs critically to engage with the processes through which it works, and the resulting knowledges it produces. I call for the gap year industry to realise its advertised promises. This means offering critically engaged experiences that do not merely use experience to turn innocence into ignorance, but challenge the way participants come to know the world, and thus offer the opportunity to broaden their horizons.

Chapter two:

Colluding discourses: Finding the gap year

Introduction

This is a thesis about travel and encounter. There are tales of travel across space and time, and through landscapes of knowledge, there are tales of encounters with foreign selves and familiar others. The gap year takes young people on journeys of both the self and of the geographical. In so doing, it engages with a physical landscape and also with a theoretical one. The gap year brings together disparate peoples from disparate parts of the world, and in the same way brings together diverse discourses and practices from across education, sociology and geography.

This chapter examines the theoretical landscape and practical context in which gap year projects operate. The aim of the chapter is to locate gap year programmes in their historical and geographical contexts. The following chapter questions the ideological basis of gap year programmes and proposes an alternative, pedagogical approach towards the gap year. First, I will argue that the gap year draws from a range of historical practices, which position both travelling and host participants. Travel has a long and political history which knits together colonial ambition, missionary zeal and the scientific pursuit and control of knowledge, all of which act to inspire today's gap year programmes. This history provides a context and a time frame within which programmes function. The second part of this chapter locates gap year projects geographically, seeking out the discourses that determine the places and spaces within which projects can exist. Discourses of development are central to international gap year programmes, as are the processes and traditions of tourism and globalisation. Therefore, the contribution of all of these discourses towards the production of the spaces and possible places of gap year programmes is explored.

1. An historical perspective

Travel provides access to land, resources, knowledge and potentially power. Over time, travellers have taken many forms and headed for many destinations, spurred on by diverse motivations. From the invasions of Genghis Khan to the explorations of Columbus; from the migration of Irish peasants to the cause of refugees the world over; from the beach towels and anti-globalisation protestors of today, travel has global and historic resonance. This thesis does not require a complete anthropological history of travel but rather a potted history of those events and groups whose traditions continue to influence the management and inspiration of the gap year. Consequently, I focus primarily on European travellers and the relatively recent past, examining the ways that missionary and colonial legacies continue to be mobilised and reproduced within the practice of the gap year.

Missionary enterprise

David Livingstone, the Victorian explorer and missionary, has become the archetype of missionary zeal and endeavour (Driver 2001). While such a representation is something of a caricature and the product of an exuberant press[5], Livingstone is a useful focus for this brief tour of the missionary influence on contemporary travel. David Livingstone can be seen to stand for the principle of travel as a mechanism for exporting and imposing a set of moral values; it is precisely in this way that he promoted his activities:

> "If Livingstone provided a symbol for pioneering missionary endeavour in Africa, this owed less to his success in converting Africans than to his energy in promoting the idea of a moral mission for the British in Africa" (Driver 2001, p.73).

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[5] Linvingstone's famed meeting with Stanley was an event funded and orchestrated by The New York Herald. The owner of the Herald, James Bennet recognised the potential for a 'good story' in the 'discovery of Livingstone', and therefore sent Stanley, one of the Herald's reports specifically to find Livingstone (Fleming 2001).

The values Livingstone exported were those of 'civilisation' with an incumbent association with Christianity. Contemporary tourists may have less explicit moral agendas but they are still exporting and importing value systems. Most notable of these systems is consumer-based capitalism. Indeed tourism and travel are, by their very nature, inherently capitalist (Hutnyk 1996). Tourism brings the values of a market-based economy into regions and economies that have remained remote from other forms of capitalism. In part it is tourism's ability to export market values and practices that has made it a popular development strategy with organisations such as the World Bank (Potter, Binns et al. 1999).

The missionary tradition also connects to the gap year through the relationship both have with systems of education. As part of their mandate to 'civilise', missionaries introduced not just Christ but also European style literacy to those they sought to 'convert'. For example, a fundamental part of Protestant missionary work, was teaching literacy (Dube 1999). Indeed, the missionaries own command of the written word, and often western medicine as well, were tools of conversion and a means of conferring their own personal power (Dube 1999). Gap year volunteer-tourists, like their missionary ancestors, also come packaged with literacy and medicine. The majority of gap year programmes involve some form of teaching, and medical work is also a growing area within the industry. Consequently, the role of the westerner as both a provider and modeller of formal education is maintained within the gap year.

Constructing the colonial gaze

Missionary activity accelerated during the era of colonialism, and the relationship between imperialism and missionaries remains a complex one (Dube 1999). The processes of colonialism and imperialism had a strategic and lasting impact on both the possibilities and rationale for travel. Consequently, a consideration of this legacy is imperative to any understanding of the historical roots of the gap year. The process of colonialism was not just a conquest of territory and resources but also a conquest of the way in which the world was

known; a construction of ideas as much as a construction of States. Edward Said defined this argument in his 1978 work *"Orientalism: Western conceptions of the Orient"*, in which he argued that the Orient was not a geographical 'fact' but rather an historical and cultural creation. A creation that reflected a distinct set of power relations and cultural imperatives, which told more about the state of Europe than it did about the nature of the area deemed to be the Orient (Said 1978). Language, imagery and vocabulary all helped to create a concept of the Orient that has remained pervasive, influencing how the region is understood and experienced. This is not a simple matter of imagination, but rather a conscious construction which articulates, legitimates and maintains power relations between regions:

> "Orientalism {...} is not an airy European fantasy about the Orient, but a created body of theory and practice in which, for many generations, there has been a considerable material investment" (Said 1978, p.6).

It is this investment that makes Orientalism ideologically robust and part of 'teachable wisdom' (Said 1978). Said's idea of 'place' as politically and strategically constructed, can be extended to the colonial process in general. The need to legitimate colonialism demanded a gaze in which colonisation became 'natural' and even desirable. Aime Cesaire angrily lists and derides such a rationale, demanding that we recognise colonialism as:

> "Neither evangelisation, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease and tyranny, nor a project undertaken for the greater glory of God, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law" (Cesaire 1972, p.173).

European colonialism itself has been largely dismantled and deservedly critiqued, however, the colonial gaze lingers on. In effect, colonialism established a discourse that constructed how what is now known as the 'third world', could be understood, and what 'truths' were able to exist. As a discourse, colonialism, like the discourse of development that succeeded it, "created a space in which only certain things could be said or even imagined"

(Escobar 1995, p.39). This process helped produce a set of 'truths' that continue to inform the way global relations are understood and practised.

Although travel, exploration and military invasions had been providing spaces for contact between peoples for several millennia, colonialism acted to establish a set of power relations between global regions that remain influential today. Colonialism effectively centred history on a western view of the world, defining 'all-else' in opposition, creating an endless logic of binaries (McClintock 1995). Dichotomies between civilised / uncivilised, Christian / unchristian, first / third world, coloniser / colonised were created not just to define the difference between the western (colonising) self and the foreign (colonised) other, but also to naturalise and legitimate colonialism. The creation of dichotomies between self and other may not be a process unique or new to colonialism, but the dichotomies of that era continue to populate understandings of other and indeed continue to be mobilised. It is this perceived divide between self and other that provides the legitimacy and the power relations that frame much of western tourism and volunteer work within the global south; so it is that westerners can claim both a right and a necessity to visit the 'third world'. A right conferred through their position as civilised, westernised and consumers; a necessity created through a lack of all of the above in their destination countries. This relationship is exemplified in the practice of volunteer-tourisms, which combine holidays with "aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society" (Wearing 2001, p.1). In this way, the practice of tourism becomes 'at one' with the practice of development work, a discourse similarly distorted by the colonial gaze (discussed later in this chapter).

Encounters occur in social as well as physical space, in what Pratt (1992) has termed 'contact zones'; namely:

> "...social space where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt 1992, p.4).

The similarities between the colonial gaze and the ongoing processes of development and tourism can be seen in the asymmetrical power relations

embedded within these spaces. First, the economic processes that allow people of the west to travel to, and in, countries of the south are the exact same processes that inhibit the reverse flow. Beyond economics, one only has to think of the popular discourse about refugees and immigrants to appreciate what a radically different reception travellers from the south receive, compared to those from the west. Indeed, while the UN declaration of human rights enshrines the right to travel (United Nations 1948), this remains a right to which only part of the world's population is entitled. Colonialism was fundamentally travel *for* exploitation of resources, of trade opportunities, of adventure and of personal ambition. This is a legacy that continues to influence, and to some degree structure, the ongoing relationship between first world tourist and third world host:

> "...tourism and charity in the third world represent the soft edge of an otherwise brutal system of exploitation" (Hutnyk 1996, p.ix).

Although the influence of the colonial gaze in contemporary travel is extensive, I shall make one final point here about issues of representation. A defining feature of the colonial gaze is the exclusion of the voice of the represented 'other'. Said (1978) shows how Orientalism was constructed about, and not in conversation with, the 'Orientalised' other. Though the voice of the 'Orient' was claimed and reproduced, it was rarely actively heard. Rather, what was 'known' to be 'typically oriental' was imposed upon those whom it was desired to be 'typically oriental. Similarly, Pratt (1992) argued that travel and exploration acted to produce 'the rest of the world' and then to define European identity in opposition to this. This global 'rest' has become increasingly available for consumption through travel. However, such increasing levels of encounter have failed to critique European produced notions of 'the other'. Rather, as I will argue later in this thesis, the process of the production of 'the other' remains prevalent within traveller practices. While the voices of the host may be represented, they are rarely heard. This is especially the case when these voices contradict what is already held to be known, or when there are multiple contradictory voices. Including the voice of 'the colonised other' is a project of

post-colonialism (Slater 1998), one with contemporary as well as historical relevance.

The conquest of knowledge

Colonialism was fundamentally an acquisitive process, one that encompassed land, people and also knowledge. Knowledge is a commodity that remains central to contemporary travel, and the colonial gaze is mobilised and reproduced in the ongoing relationship between travel and knowledge. The era of exploration, and the ensuing era of colonialism, were fuelled by, and fuelled, the European Renaissance's quest for knowledge and the professionalisation of science:

> "In the case of Columbus, the acquisition of geographical knowledge was thus both condition and consequence of his New World Experience" (Livingstone 1992, p.45).

Disciplines of natural history, geography, cartography, anthropology, ship building and astronomy, to name but a few, were all advanced and even produced through colonial exploration; they were also colonised. That is, those that could, and to some degree still can, claim authority over the knowledge produced through these disciplines were the colonisers. Science is produced from a social and cultural context (Livingstone 1992) and so the colonising nations took charge not just of territory, but also 'truth'. They defined what could be considered legitimate knowledge, who could possess this knowledge (mainly white males) and how such knowledge could be 'discovered' (via the scientific method). While whole treaties can and have been written on the production and control of knowledge, the important connection to make here is how the colonial gaze firmly tied the process of travel to the acquisition of knowledge; a relationship that the modern tourist sustains.

The colonial gaze continues to preside in modern tourism in several spheres. Modern tourism's role in the production and consumption of public geographies is much the same as that of Columbus and his fellow explorers and conquerors. In the same way that Columbus was led by the maps of cosmologists

(Livingstone 1992), so the modern tourist is led by the production of a new guidebook, inviting fictional films (for example 'The Beach'[6]) or a well-edited travel programme, all of which change the boundaries of the 'known' world. Tourism both produces public geographies and is produced by them.

The roles of knowledge and learning within travel retain if not a peculiarly colonial persona, then certainly a historically situated one; one invested in empiricism. That is, travel assumes an approach to knowledge production that privileges, above all else, that which can be experienced or observed personally (Livingstone 1992; Williams and May 1996). Indeed, empiricism presumes that only what can be observed can exist, and therefore theory is relegated in favour of observation. This presumption assumes that 'facts will speak for themselves', revealing themselves under observation. This approach to learning remains the basis for many of the ideas about travel and the access it provides to knowledge (see chapter seven). Through connecting an empiricist approach towards knowledge to the binary of tourism as 'not work' (Urely and Reichel 2000), travel seeks to maintain a fundamentally romantic and 'innocent' relationship with knowledge (Heald 2003). The traveller is allowed to be merely (innocently) seeking fun, observing the sights along the way with no requirement for the critical gaze of a learner, or the historical knowledge of a student. So, as the protagonist in '*are you experienced?*', a recent novel on gap year travel, argues in justification for his ignorance of India where he is travelling:

> "I'm just travelling here. It's only a holiday. I don't have to revise for my holidays. I get enough of that the rest of the year" (Sutcliffe 1998, p.37).

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[6] The film 'The Beach' was based on a novel by Alex Garland and related a tale of corrupted hedonism by a group of travellers in Thailand. The film proved highly popular and Thailand and particularly the area around the Phi Phi National park received an increase in visitors inspired by the idyllic tropical paradise portrayed in the film. However, in order to make this 'paradise' the area where it was filmed was manipulated with bulldozers in order the better create the 'ideal' of a tropical paradise (World Rainforest Movement 2000). Here, it would appear, that imagined geographies are pervasive enough to construct physical geographies, in their own image.

In this manner, the tourist becomes 'innocent' of their own history, and of the history of those they observe. The positioning of the traveller as an 'innocent abroad' is, however, also contradictory, for the traveller is simultaneously placed in a position of authority over knowledge. As Penck, cited in Livingstone (1992), observed in 1916 "Knowledge is power, geographical knowledge is world power" (Livingstone 1992, p.249). The relationship Penck observed is also discussed by Procida (1996) in the context of nineteenth century travellers in Tibet, for whom, she notes, the process of 'visiting' Tibet conferred on them the status of 'authorities' (Procida 1996). The ability of travellers to simultaneously sustain the positions of innocent and authoritative is common to both colonial and contemporary travellers. In effect, travellers are able to claim powerful knowledges yet are required to take no responsibility for the robustness, nor the context or consequences, of their knowledges. Jokien cited in Heald (2003) has suggested that it is this very lack of responsibility that defines the modern tourist, and I would add that it also maintains travellers' genealogical links to their ancestors' gaze. By maintaining their subject position as an 'innocent gazer', required neither to recognise their own subjectivity nor those of the peoples and places they gaze upon, travellers sentence themselves to producing knowledges that can only ever be, at best, ahistorical and, at worst, exploitive; knowledges inevitably based on superficial appearances.

Volunteerism

The final area to examine in this analysis of the historical influences present in the gap year is the historical character of the volunteer. Before embarking on this topic it is important to acknowledge the contentious nature of the term 'volunteer'. As discussed later in this thesis (see chapter six), the language of volunteering is complex, particularly for those portrayed as 'volunteers'. Despite the contentious nature of the language of volunteering, the concept remains an historically inspired influence in contemporary gap year projects.

Volunteering has significant military roots, with volunteer forces in evidence in various wars, including those for independence in several South American

countries (Brown 2004), the Spanish civil war, the American War of independence and the Boer war (Lowery 1999). These volunteer forces comprised international soldiers, for example, the Boer War included volunteers from Canada, New Zealand and Australia (Lowery 1999), while Irish and Scottish volunteers fought in the battle of independence in Columbia and Venezuela (Brown 2004). Volunteers were inspired by a mixture of idealism, expediency and opportunism; a mixture that continues to influence contemporary international volunteers. So, it can be seen that the international nature of volunteering is far from new; rather it is part of an established entanglement of idealism, conquest and travel.

The language of volunteering may originally be military, but the activity has also drawn inspiration from Victorian philanthropists. In particular, the groups of middle-aged, middle and upper class women of Britain, who during the 1800's, inspired by "a newly awakened consciousness of sin" (Lewis 1987, p14), gave large quantities of time and money to mainly evangelical Christian organisations engaged in voluntary work (Lewis 1987; Roker 1994). By the late nineteenth century these philanthropists provided more support to those 'in need' than did the state (Lewis 1987). This in itself is revealing, in so far as it highlights the way in which the voluntary sector has continued to be viewed in Britain as capable of taking over responsibility from the state (Lewis 1987). Indeed, volunteerism fits particularly well within a neo-liberal agenda of ever-reduced state involvement and social responsibility.

The modern era of volunteering has really been established since the 1960s, with a shift away from earlier philanthropic principles in favour of a more liberal and youth-centred understanding of volunteering (Roker 1994). In the UK, the state supported Community Service Volunteers (CSV) was established in 1962 to find placements for young offenders and other 'difficult' young people (Roker 1994). Although CSV's focus has shifted away from working exclusively with offenders, it continues to emphasise the value of volunteering to communities and individuals; a concept that is evident in volunteering programmes in other countries. For example, China boasts the world's largest number of volunteers, estimating that between 1993 and 1998 72.4 million

young people participated in domestic volunteer work (Siyu and Lili 1998). The enthusiasm for volunteering, in the Chinese context, is rooted in the belief that volunteering promotes both the development of the individual and 'social morality' (Siyu and Lili 1998, p.9). Given the country's communist system of governance, 'volunteering' fits within an agenda of contributing to the communal good. In their article proclaiming the value of China's youth volunteers, Jin Siyu and Cui Lili state that:

> "Public opinion holds that it {*volunteering*} is not only indicative of social civilisation, but also a powerful supplement to the new public welfare service and social security systems" (Siyu and Lili 1998, p.11).

In the Chinese context, the ability and readiness to volunteer is promoted as a sign of 'social civilisation'. That is, as a sign of a willingness to work outside capitalist systems of remuneration. However, like the Victorian philanthropists, volunteering represents an opportunity to take on, or at least supplement, the social obligations of the state.

Volunteering has also been popularised in the USA, particularly through service-learning programmes. These take place under the auspices of school and college education courses and entail a period of service complemented with an educational course, and in this sense they can be seen as processed educational experiences (Batchalor and Root 1994; Yates and Youniss 1998). As with the Chinese example, service-learning is championed for its beneficial influence on the 'outlook' of participants. So, as one web based career journal enthuses:

> "... you will find your horizons broadened. Service learning gives you work experience, academic advancement and living abroad all at the same time" (Chisholm 2001).

It is relevant to note the way volunteering compliments a socialist and a neo-liberal political agenda. Both perspectives emphasise the value of volunteering for developing one's sense of citizenship and community responsibility (Yates and Youniss 1998).

As alluded to in the quotations above, volunteering does not only take place in the domestic arena. Volunteer-tourism has become a recognised division of the categories of tourism and volunteerism, and is receiving attention from researchers in both fields (Hutnyk 1996; Wearing 2001). International volunteering, particularly flowing from developed to developing countries, grew in the early 1960s, principally through the establishment of state supported organisations. For example, Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) was established in Britain in 1958. Meanwhile, international volunteer programmes were also started in other countries. For example, Peace Corp was founded in the USA in 1960 at the bequest of President Kennedy, and in Canada the 'Canadian Executive Service Organisation' (CESO) came into being in 1967. While in Japan the 'Japan Overseas Corporation Volunteers' (JOVC) was established in 1965. All of these organisations focus on extended (two year) placements and on skills transfer programmes. For example, JOVC initially sought to provide agricultural knowledge and support based on their own post Second World War experience. However, since the 1980s they have shifted to a technology focus, again reflecting the country's changing industrial and skills base (Kin'ichiro 1985; Hiroshi 1999). These international organisations have been supplemented by a rapidly growing number of international volunteer-tourist providers, particularly based in Britain and aimed at the 'Gap Year' market. Such organisations, some charities and some commercial, primarily provide short-term volunteer programmes, extending from a week to several months and are aimed at young people between school and university. Unlike the organisations mentioned above, the focus of volunteer-tourist programmes tends to be that specific skills are not necessary in order to participate; rather, skills can be developed 'on the job' (an approach discussed in chapter four). Such an approach exists in stark contrast to organisations such as VSO, for whom the focus on skills transfer is central.

In conclusion, volunteering has a varied history. What unites volunteers through all these periods however, is the way that volunteering has offered access to alternative opportunities, be these travel or work. For military campaigners, volunteering enabled them to leave impoverished or threatened lifestyles, often for the promise of access to land or work in a newly-liberated state (Brown

2004). For Victorian women, volunteering became a way to escape the home and enter a public arena from which they were otherwise excluded (Lewis 1987). For volunteer-tourists, volunteering offers opportunities to develop skills and to access a level of community involvement not permitted to the average tourist.

In this section, I have argued that a colonial gaze has been manifested through various historical practices, and that this gaze continues to inform the practice of volunteer-tourisms. The reason that such a gaze requires critique is because of the power relations embedded within it, which set the conditions for encounter. It is the need for critical engagement that I wish to emphasise here, rather than the need for condemnation. At present, modern tourists and their supporting industries appear to fail to recognise the existence of a gaze, let alone its role in informing current practices. The rest of this thesis attempts to develop such a critique.

2. A geographical perspective

Just as gap year projects occur in a particular historical space, so they also occur in a carefully located geographical place. Identifying this place requires an examination of concepts rather than a topographical atlas. The gap year programmes examined within the parameters of this thesis, are all set within the so called 'third world'. In the following section, I develop a theoretical map for identifying the third world space of the gap year. While definitions of the 'third world', 'developing world', 'less developed world' etc. abound, I focus on the third world as a constructed geography within which the gap year locates itself[7], rather than attempting a definitive guide to identifying the 'third world'.

[7] This thesis is an examination of gap year programmes located in the 'third world'. Gap year programmes and activities also occur in the 'developed world', but are beyond the remit of this thesis.

Discovering development

For the sectors of the gap year industry examined within this thesis, identifying third-world spaces means finding places where the 'development phenomena' exists. Gap year programmes are premised on a proclaimed usefulness, worthwhileness and value to others, themes that are discussed in chapters four and seven. Despite the centrality of the practice of development to gap year programmes, the theory of development remains largely neglected.

Development exists as a highly debated set of practices and theories[8]. Despite this, the gap year industry largely operates outside these debates. Rather, the industry focuses on an approach to development based on values of enthusiasm and good intentions (see chapter four). In order to understand the way the gap year industry situates itself within, and produces, a particular form of development, and how this in turn identifies a geography of the gap year, it is necessary to take a brief look at the evolving discourses of development.

In the beginning...

Officially the era of development, in the sense of a global economic strategy, was inaugurated in the aftermath of the Second World War (Kiely and Marfleet 1998). An event at times credited to Truman and the launch, in 1949, of his 'Four Point Programme' (Narman 1999). This programme introduced the concept of structured aid, and with it the concept of a world divided round the measures of 'development'. Development was presented as a 'new' ideology, distinct and separate from historical, and particularly colonial, relations, and this story of development has proved both enduring and powerful (Escobar 1995). However, postcolonial analyses are increasingly recognising the historic continuities between colonialism and development, and on this basis interrogating development's hegemonic and apparently ahistorical status (Kothari 2004). Indeed, it is relevant to recognise that the rise of development in

[8] For examples of literature on debates within development see any of the following (Frank 1966; Illich 1971; Corbridge 1995; Escobar 1995; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Narman 1999; Nederveen-Pieterse 2000).

the early 1950s coincided with the end of formal colonisation in many parts of the world. Hence development needs to be critiqued on the basis that it is:

> "... an historically formulated concept, imbued with relations of power" (Skelton and Allen 1999, p.2).

The ideology of development was produced with reference to post-colonial states, and its foundations remain rooted in colonialism, trading patterns and historically established discourses.

Truman's modernisation model of development has proved so pervasive that it remains, despite heavy criticism, central if not dominant in contemporary development planning (Narman 1999; Sutcliffe 1999). Truman's plan rose out of both the practical needs of rebuilding and also the realisation of the economic interdependence that existed between states. There was a desire, primarily amongst countries of the west, for an organised system of international capital. A system that would ensure both global stability, and, ultimately, maximum capitalist prosperity, for it was realised that:

> "Genuine world prosperity is indivisible... It cannot last in one part of the world if the other part live under conditions of poverty and ill health" (Milbank Memorial Fund 1948, quoted in: Escobar 1995, p.22).

In pursuit of such a system, the institutions of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) were established. All providing the basis of a system that would instigate a "move from national-centred economic behaviour to internationally co-ordinated finance and trade" (Hewitt 1992, p.223) and hence, it was believed, bring about economic stability and global capital growth. International development, in the sense of the expansion and consolidation of markets across the world, was paramount in this process. So, the first and arguably still dominant modernisation model of development was born.

The impetus for an internationally controlled system of capitalism was never purely economic. It was also a response to a perceived threat, in the form of

communism, to the viability of the free market system (Escobar 1995; Narman 1999). This threat led particularly the USA, to adopt a policy of promoting the penetration of free market capitalism across the world. Economic principles however do not exist in a valueless vacuum; so:

> "The scene was set for an institutional structure to promote not only material welfare and socio-economic growth but also the universality in Western values " (Narman 1999, p.152).

The process of development has, from its inception, combined economics with social values, using them to promote and ensure one another. This is a reciprocal relationship that remains constant, even while models of development continue to evolve.

Truman's modernisation model of development is based on the principle that all nations are on a universal 'journey of development', with the state of modernisation as the ultimate goal (Sutcliffe 1999). This idea is perhaps best encapsulated in Rostow's 1960 model of economic take off, which shows five stages of development and argues that states are merely at different stages along this journey (Rostow 1960). The nature of this 'journey of development' was intended to be the transition from low productivity agriculture to high productivity industrialisation. Through the accompanying principle of 'trickle down' the economic growth stimulated by this transition, would raise general living standards and bring with it the benefits of education, longer life expectancy, urbanisation and democracy.

The underlying assumption of modernisation style development is that capitalist economic growth demands, and produces, western style societies. So, the imposition of western cultural and social norms and systems of organisation acts as both a condition and an outcome of modernisation. Hence, the concept of modernisation can be seen as synonymous with westernisation (Amin 1996). This principle has, over time, generated much criticism and has also supported the colonial era perception of 'traditional', or in other words non-western cultures and value systems, as 'backward'; as obstacles to be overcome in the path of development. For example, in 1952 Bert F. Hoselitz wrote a paper

entitled 'Non-economic Barriers to Economic Development' (reprinted in: Corbridge 1995), in which he called for social change in order to support economic change. He pointed out that although development was an economic system it:

> "....consists not merely in a change in production techniques, but also, in the last resort, in a reorientation of social norms and values" (Hoselitz 1952, p,17).

Hoselitz goes on to elaborate on the inevitability and desirability of social change as part of the modernisation process, and seems to be mystified by why anyone would resist this, concluding that, for development:

> "...there is no doubt that the obstinacy with which people hold on to traditional values, even in the face of rapidly changing technology and economic organisation, may impose obstacles of formidable proportions" (Hoselitz 1952, p.18).

Hoselitz's sentiments typify an approach to development that although now somewhat muted and criticised, remains prevalent. It is a view that enshrines the primacy of western values as an inevitable part of the development process, packaging them with material benefits and change. As is debated throughout the empirical chapters in this thesis, the role that gap year programmes play in exporting western values is contentious. The emphasis placed on non-local labour, and the quantity and speed of turnover of this labour, contributes to a significant cultural export component to these programmes. Yet, this aspect is rarely, if ever discussed, rather there is an almost exclusive focus on the material offerings of projects.

Questioning development

Development, as a discipline and a practice has continued to grow, in terms of theory and actions; an evolution that has included significant critique. The first major attack came in the 1960s with the advent of the structuralist and dependency schools of development, whose ideas were encapsulated in 1966 in Andre Gunther Frank's 'Development of Underdevelopment'. Frank argued that

the process of development had produced underdevelopment, and that the economic experiences of individual states could not be isolated from one another. Rather, capitalism was a holistic global system (Frank 1966). Franks's primary point was to dispel the myth that all nations had the same 'starting point' for capitalist development. Instead he argued that:

> "...neither the past nor the present of the underdeveloped countries resembles in any important respect the past of the now developed countries. The now developed countries were never *under*developed, though they may have been *un*developed" (Frank 1966, p.28).

In the context of such critique it is relevant to note that the gap year industry often frames the 'third world' in historical terms. Suggesting that through travelling to the 'third world' one is able to travel back in time, to somehow view the world the 'way it used to be' (see chapter four). As well as discounting the idea of a common history between developed and developing nations, Frank also contended that the developed nations had become 'developed' at the expense of the under-developed nations. He argued that the underdevelopment of the 'third world' was achieved through a variety of processes; directly, through the exploitation of primary resources, and indirectly through the saturation of local markets and the exploitation that is a part of free market trade. Frank, and the rest of the dependency school, therefore argued that if underdeveloped nations were to develop they needed to break free altogether of the exploitative relationships into which they were locked. Therefore, in this scenario, economic protectionist policies, the antithesis of the liberal free market trade of modernisation, are needed.

Although modernisation and dependency theories of development may initially appear dramatically opposed to one another, they have several key similarities. First, both approaches essentially believed in the same economic model of development (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996), they just disagreed on how it should be achieved. Development by either path was essentially a 'trickle down' affair where once the super structures of economics had been changed, individuals' lives would automatically improve. The significance of this is that effectively

modernism and dependency were operating and building a single discourse of development (Escobar 1995). That is, a single set of 'truths' about development, a dominant set of ideas about what development could look like, and what it could mean.

The second unifying aspect of dependency and modernisation was the way they positioned the supposed beneficiaries of development. Both theories relied on a conceptualisation of those to be 'developed' as passive and gave them little or no voice with which to speak and no authority to speak, from. Rather, 'experts' in the form of academics, theorists, economists and others, were relied on as the voices of development, as the people who could identify needs and define success. Escobar (1997) sees the relationships established in the pursuit of development as central to the entire process, arguing that:

> "...the system of relations establishes a discursive practice that sets the rules of the game: who can speak from what point of view, with what authority and according to what criteria of expertise" (Escobar 1997, p.87).

Ultimately, in modernisation and dependency models alike populations of developing nations are seen as powerless subjects of larger structures, attributed with little power to challenge, change or work within the structures that govern them (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996). In effect, in the modernist model of development the populous does not realise what is good for them (in that they need to change social and cultural traditions to the tune of development). While in the dependency model the populous do not know what is bad for them (in that their development is permanently suppressed by structures that are beyond their control). The view of the beneficiaries of development as 'passive' and reliant on external 'expert' knowledge is, to a certain extent, one maintained by the gap year industry (see chapter four). As I shall argue throughout this thesis, the emphasis within international gap year programmes remains firmly on the value of outside intervention.

Development has received significant criticism, in relation to both its methodology and principles. From the late 1980s there has been a schism in

development thinking with the emergence of a variety of 'alternative' approaches to development (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996). Such approaches have varied in methodology but essentially they have questioned the macro economic focus of development, and proposed instead greater agency for the beneficiaries of development:

> "AD {*alternative development}* emphasises agency, in the sense of people's capacity to effect social change" (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996, p.3).

Through the late 1980s and 1990s a plethora of alternative approaches to development arose, including grassroots development, sustainable development, gender and development and ethno-development, to name but a few. While these approaches varied in emphasis and methodology they represented a common approach to development. Central to all such alternative approaches was a re-location of the beneficiaries of development to the centre of the process (Gardener 1997; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997). That is, they were seen as the primary actors in development, able to make decisions and exercise control. Together such approaches were termed 'participatory', their objective being:

> "... to make people central to development by encouraging beneficial involvement in interventions that effect them and over which they previously had limited control or influence" (Cooke and Kothari 2001, p.5) .

The impetus behind the rise of participatory or, as it is sometimes called, grassroots development, were multiple, though the apparent failure of macro level development planning was paramount in prompting localised responses to local needs. Small-scale projects, often supported by Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) grew, with an emphasis on specific basic needs, as opposed to economic structures. This trend however also concurred with large-scale economic changes of the time. Through the 1980s and 1990s there was an enthusiastic global economic trend towards neo-liberalism. This translated into development that called for reduced state involvement, limited regulation,

increased reliance on market forces, privatisation and a general bid to 'roll-back the state' (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996).

Grassroots development manages to resist conventional, modernist approaches to development while simultaneously supporting them, by supplementing or even supplanting the role of the state. Regardless of such apparent contradictions the concept of local 'participation' within development planning and action has become pre-eminent, if not always evident, in development projects (Nederveen-Pieterse 1996). The gap year industry fits within the grassroots rhetoric of 'small is best', with programmes working in highly localised contexts and entering into little engagement at the political level. However, such a localised focus does not guarantee local participation, an issue that often goes unrecognised, primarily due to the gap year industry's isolation from broader theories and practices of development.

The grassroots participatory approach to development made the project of development and social change open to, and the responsibility of, everyone. As a principle this was exported from the recipients of development to the donors, so that *doing* development became a popularist activity. One of the earliest and most obvious examples of this was the work of Bob Geldof and the campaign to 'Feed the World'. This launched pop stars, athletes and actors into the public face of famine relief, and made the very act of giving and raising money a process of public participation and entertainment. This trend has certainly continued and grown. Events such as Comic Relief, and organisations such as the United Nations, rely on famous faces performing development or aid-based work. In effect, development has been deprofessionalised, turned into something that anyone can become involved in and for which everyone (including Geri Halliwell) has relevant skills. The gap year and eco or ethical tourisms are a product of this popularisation of development, and the 'doing of development work' has become a desirable holiday activity for people of the west. The rise of eco and ethical tourisms is discussed below, but suffice to say their proliferation is a product of the growing popularist approach to development.

The most recent shift in development thinking has been to mount a challenge to the actual validity of the concept. In his 1995 book 'Encountering Development' Escobar formalised, if not initiated, this challenge. He denounced the entire phenomenon of development as spurious, claiming that it had created the third world, problematised poverty and, ultimately, was based on the fallacy that everyone in the world could attain a middle class lifestyle (Escobar 1995). He claimed that the concept of development grew out of a particular era and a specific set of economic and social prerogatives, namely those of modernisation. For Escobar and others (for examples see: Latouche 1997; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Sutcliffe 1999) development has remained rooted in modernisation and therefore its sole function is:

> ".. to devise mechanisms and procedures to make societies fit a pre-existing model that embodies the structures and functions of modernity" (Escobar 1995, p.52).

Consequently, 'development' cannot be re-worked, but rather must be abandoned altogether. This call has been widely taken up amongst 'post-development' theorists, for whom 'development' for all is an impossible and contradictory attainment (Sutcliffe 1999). In addition, post-development analysis has critiqued development for it euro-centric and racialised origins. Noxolo (1999) argued that British development discourses privilege whiteness and use this as a means to confer authority on British discourses of development, at the expense of those of the third world. The racialisation of development demonstrates its culturally relative and unequal status, and the impossibility of its pandemic relevance[9].

To conclude, development thinking is complex, and its methodology and ideology have been widely critiqued. Gap year programmes enter into these

[9] Noxolo's research included an examination of her own experiences as a Black British VSO volunteer in Ghana. She argued that a form of 'honoury whiteness' was conferred on her, and therefore "the ambivalences of black identity as an access route into initiating dialogue with people in the third world" (Noxolo 1999, p.309). International volunteering, tourism and the gap year operate in a racialised context, one with echoes of colonial relationships, and while this has not been extensively explored in this thesis its significance should not be discounted.

complexities. Yet, as the discussion in chapter four indicates, the gap year industry remains largely outside of the discussions around the politics of development, choosing instead to prioritise an 'action over planning' approach. Paradoxically, as an approach, this positions much of the industry within early modernisation styles of development, wherein development is a relatively simple procedure and hence can simply be 'got-on-with'.

Tourism: brewed for export

Of the many discourses and practices that have inspired the gap year, tourism cannot, despite the attempts of the gap industry and participants alike, be ignored (see chapter six). In the following section I focus on those practices and approaches of tourism that have offered the greatest inspiration to the gap year. The following discussion is structured into three parts. The first offers a systemic view of tourism, examining its relationship to the processes of capitalism and modernity. Such a view is imperative for, however 'alternative' the gap year industry may style itself, it maintains, through its practices, a relationship with capitalism and modernity. Second I focus on tourism's relationship to identity and the role it plays in constructions of self and other. These issues are paramount for gap year participants (see chapters six and seven), and much of gap year rhetoric focuses on the ways participants will be able to better 'know' self and other through the practice of travel (see chapters four and five). Finally, I offer a discussion of ethical and eco tourisms, as this is an area of tourism theory and practice that has been particularly influential in the development of the gap year.

The initial motivation for tourists to embark on encounters with the self and the other may well be highly personal. However, when they travel, tourists pack not only their belongings but also their ideals and preconceptions, and so the process of tourism exports not just people, but also values. Throughout its history, travel has had a relationship with capitalism, trade and the control of knowledge, and it is these relationships that I now explore in relation to the gap year.

It is uncertain exactly when the process of tourism began, indeed distinguishing tourism from other forms of travel produces nebulous distinctions (Urry 1990; Hall and Page 1999; Duncan 2003). However, for the purpose of this analysis, and in the context of this thesis, I draw principally on work and definitions offered by, amongst others, John Urry (1990) and Susan Heald (2002). Urry concentrates on the element of 'leisure' to isolate tourism from other forms of travel:

> "Tourism is a leisure activity which presupposes its opposite, namely regulated and organised work" (Urry 1990, p.2).

While the concept of leisure can undoubtedly be useful in distinguishing tourism, focusing solely on this parameter precludes any travel where work, voluntary or paid, may be involved. Within the gap year, as well as in other related forms of travel, such as international study programmes, work is entered into in order to facilitate, or as an integral part of, travel experiences. Consequently, to preclude such experiences from 'tourism' due to the binary opposition of work, would be to ignore the varied ways that people choose to travel. It would also ignore the way such experiences are often 'sold' as tourism (see chapter five). I draw on Heald's (2002) work on international study programmes in which she offers a more graduated definition of tourism as 'travel for pleasure'. Such a definition allows tourism to include periods of work, when such employment remains essentially an optional experience, one pursued to enhance the opportunities of travel, as is the case in the gap year.

Britain has played a substantial role in the development of tourism (Maguire 2003). This is principally attributed to Britain's status as one of the first industrial nations, a status which provided the financial and social conditions for tourism's development (Maguire 2003). The Grand Tour is often cited as the first example of modern tourism (Lennon and Foley 2000). This was a tour, in general for aristocratic young men, involving an art and culture based journey around Europe. In the context of the gap year, 'The Grand Tour' is of particular interest for its association with youth and the principle that travel is an essential part of acquiring an adult identity (an issue explored further in the following section) (Desforges 1998; Lennon and Foley 2000). The legacy of 'The Grand

Tour' is not something lost from memory. It offers imagery and associations that can be directly called upon, as is the case in the following quotation from Teaching and Projects Abroad, one of the UK's largest gap year companies:

> "Teaching & Projects Abroad have put together a world package for our volunteers... inspired by the 'Grand Tour' you can visit several different countries learning about their culture whilst gaining valuable skills" (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003, p.28).

The Grand Tour was an expression of class, and inherently connected to the values of the era of imperialism. Through invoking this legacy, connotations of class and imperialism are also invoked.

Tourism, like colonialism, has an entangled relationship with the values of modernity, a relationship that is maintained by modern tourism. One of the primary purported exports of colonialism was 'civilisation'. Indeed, colonialism was in part legitimised by the supposedly uncivilised status of those to be colonised. The need to export the values of 'civilisation' was in itself a part of the larger agenda of expanding the mechanisms of capitalism:

> "It {*civilisation*} asserts its power over anyone or any place whose lifeways have been organised by principles other than the maximising, rationalizing mechanisms of industrial production and the manipulations of commodity capitalism" (Pratt 1992, p.153).

Tourism grew out of both the social and physical conditions of colonialism, and consequently adopted many of the same values; centrally, a relationship to modernity (Lennon and Foley 2000). Crick (1996) argues that tourism and colonialism alike have grown out of the same expansionist mind set, and so there are common values between the two processes. Cohan, cited by Crick, goes further to argue that what colonialism started, tourism perpetuates:

> "The easy-going tourist of our era might well complete the work of his predecessors, also travellers from the west- the conqueror and the colonialist" (Crick-1996, p.30).

Colonialism expanded the geographical reach of capitalism, with its incumbent values of modernity, and tourism continues this process and expands the possible commodities for consumption. Tourism makes commodities out of the previously uncommodified. It is the ability to consume a place, to observe and capture its essence, that is the central commodity for sale through tourism (Kaur and Hutnyk 1999).

As an industry capable of generating large quantities of foreign exchange tourism has been identified as a possible development strategy (Knox and Agnew 1988). Tourism is particularly valued for its ability to incorporate peripheral regions into the capitalist world economy (Knox and Agnew 1988; Escobar 1995). As a service based industry, tourism offers industrial growth without the heavy initial investment required by manufacturing industry. Tourism has also proved impervious to recent global recessions, in fact while other global industries have had to rationalise, tourism has continued to grow (Cooper, Flethcher et al. 1998). Consequently, tourism represents an industry of rapid growth, which often requires minimal investment and has a potentially global range. As such it has become a popular development strategy, promoted by both states and international organisations such as the World Bank (World Bank 2004).

Despite the enthusiasm for the economic opportunities that tourism offers, it is also recognised to have significant environmental, social and cultural impacts, and its rise to the status of the world's largest service industry (Ringer 1998) has not been perceived as unconditionally beneficial[10]. While there is neither the space nor scope in this thesis to fully explore the extensive critiques of tourism as a development strategy, it is important to offer a brief introduction to some of the key points.

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[10] For discussions on the critiques of tourism see any of the following (Amir and Ben-Ari 1985; Munt 1994; Crick 1996; Hutnyk 1996; Cooper, Flethcher et al. 1998; Hall 1998; Ringer 1998; Fennell 1999; Hall and Page 1999; Kaur and Hutnyk 1999; Bishop and Litch 2000; World Bank 2004).

The emphasis on tourism as a route to development has focused almost exclusively on the economic benefits it offers, an example set at least in part by the enthusiasm of the World Bank (see: World Bank 2004). This has led to a tendency to subsume or even ignore the cultural and social ramifications of tourism. Sreekumar and Papayil (2002) exemplify this process in the case of Kerala India. They argue, the expansion of tourism has resulted in an expansion in the commercial sex and drug trafficking industries, yet these negative factors are deliberately and strategically ignored, in order to support a favourable economic 'narrative' of tourism:

> "The objectification of tourism in the state *(of Kerala)* is articulated primarily in an economic narrative that is capable of silencing opposition and legitimising excesses in the name of development" (Sreekumar and Papayil 2002, p.530).

Thus, tourism as a development strategy often demonstrates an overtly economic vision, despite the well documented social impacts. Such a vision has been critiqued and there is an increasing emphasis on the need for 'sustainable tourism', exemplified in the advent of eco and ethical tourisms, which are discussed further on in this chapter.

Tourism's relationship with colonialism further compounds its contentious relationship with development. For some critics tourism represents little more than a mechanism of 'neo-colonialism' (Crick 1996; Hutnyk 1996; Hall 1998). So, although tourists may bring their money they also bring their values and self-fulfilling expectations:

> "...tourism is a form of leisure imperialism and represents the hedonistic face of neocolonialism" (Hall 1998, p.144) .

Such arguments have increased resonance when the colonialist history of tourism is also considered. The gap year has not been exempt from such criticism (see chapter one), and the industry's response, particularly in the context of the practice of 'development', is explored in chapter five. At this point suffice to say that the gap year offers an interesting perspective on tourism

as a development strategy, because, to a certain degree, it inverts the context of this relationship through offering development *as* tourism.

Though tourism may have a well-documented relationship to capitalism this relationship should not be seen as uncontested. Indeed, there are those for whom travel represents an attempt to escape from the pervasive forces of capitalism (Hutnyk 1996). However, while such motivations may challenge the relationship between capitalism and tourism, they do not necessarily defy it. Such travellers are predominantly from the category of tourist termed 'backpackers' (Sorensen 2003). This is the subset of tourists in which gap year participants are often situated (Sorensen 2003), though this categorisation is, for participants themselves a matter of debate (see chapter six). Backpackers are characterised in part by their rejection of many of the 'normal' signifiers of the tourist experience. Rather, they pursue an alternative set of signifiers, for example hardship, danger, and an avoidance of sites of overt tourist consumption. Sorensen (2003) identifies these signifiers in the accumulation of 'road status', which he argues is obtained through:

> "paying 'local prices', getting the best deal, travelling off the beaten track, long-term travel, diseases, dangerous experiences, and more. In total, it comprises hardship, experience, competence, cheap travel, along with the ability to communicate it properly" (Sorensen 2003, p.864).

Inherent in many of the attributes described above is a rejection of the 'normal' measures of capitalist success and status. Phillips (1999) argues that travel can often be used in an attempt to escape the inauthenticity of modern capitalism, by seeking out a more 'authentic other'. In rejecting western values, and the mechanisms of capitalism, backpackers are resisting tourism's proximity to capitalism. Yet, this resistance is somewhat paradoxical, for tourism is an inherently modern conception, one that both creates, and is created by, capitalist market expansion (Frow 1991; Wearing 2001). Indeed, the tourism and gap year industries have been able to commodifiy this rejection of the 'inauthentic' tourist experience to sell programmes and packages on the basis that they offer a more 'real' encounter with the other:

> "The product sold by the tourism industry, in its most general form, is a commodified relation to the Other" (Frow 1991, p.150).

This process is most evident within eco and ethical tourism, and is disused later on in this chapter. Despite the multi-layered processes of consumption and commodification within tourism, it is important to recognise that the relationship between tourism and capitalism is, in diverse ways, contested.

Travel is good for you(th)!

Structural and historic processes may well be an inherent part of tourism practices, but they alone do not account for what inspires individuals to travel. Identity exploration and formation are acknowledged as key elements of tourism practice[11]. Travel allows one to encounter not only the self but also 'the other', indeed one of the primary purposes of travel is to gaze upon, or at times engage with that which is other (Said 1978; Urry 1990; Frow 1991; Galani-Moutafi 2000). Part of this fascination with the other is the potential that it has to reveal aspects of self; the opportunity that it offers for self-reflection (Wearing 2001).

Geographical movement then becomes both a site for, and a metaphor for, personal transition. The process of identity formation has been argued to be a process of defining difference and other, as much as of defining self (Galani-Moutafi 2000). The association between youth and identity creation makes travel ideally suited to providing a physical expression of the need to define boundaries and ultimately the self:

> "... the process of identity construction is subject to the "game" of difference and presupposes the drawing of symbolic boundaries" (Galani-Moutafi 2000, p.206).

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[11] For examples and discussion of the relationship between travel and identity see any of the following: (Hutnyk 1996; Kaur and Hutnyk 1999; Desforges 2000; Galani-Moutafi 2000; Duncan 2003; Sorensen 2003; Ateljevic Unpublished).

Physical boundary crossing as a site for social transformation occurs in, and creates, specific geographical sites. The Grand Tour necessitated a geography of adventure, discovery and exotic encounter (Duncan 2003); by extension, the gap year functions in a 'geography of experimentation' (see chapter four). This is a geography that young people can visit in order to become tourists of their own identity. That is, through transgressing spatial boundaries one can tour through various identities, of either work (e.g. teacher, medical worker, journalist) or the personal. The process of crossing physical boundaries has become a metaphor for the crossing of internal ones, so that the movement of the body through space can been read as an expression for social and psychic transitions (Banerjea 1999). Whether the physical acts as metaphor or substitute for the social and psychic is debatable, however, it is clear that travel can be understood as a transformative experience. In the case of the gap year this experience of change is underlined by the way youth itself is also seen as a transformative period, with young people making the transition from childhood to the specified identities of adulthood (such as worker, man, woman, citizen) (Hollands 1990). Consequently, the association of youth and travel is built on the premise of transition and change; where travel becomes a process through which young people will metamorphose into their future adult selves.

Travel, and specifically travel to third world destinations, offers western youth not merely the opportunity to experiment with identity, but also the opportunity for the articulation of personal and national power. Returning once again to imperial ancestors, the relationship between travel and personal power is well established. For the generation of the Grand Tour and imperialism, the colonies presented themselves as places to explore self and territory, also places for the expression of identity. Pursuits such as big game hunting, mountaineering and epic canoe journeys all became ways of expressing one's personal and national prowess, and establishing identity:

> "British mountaineers... often saw themselves, and were seen by others, as upholders of the 'imagined sense of British imperial power" (Hansen cited in: Myers 2002, p.29).

In the twenty first century unconquered peaks may be rare, and big game hunting may have been replaced by the safari drive, yet such activities have outlasted colonialism, and retained much of their original status. These activities are often found within gap year programmes. They offer participants an opportunity to establish, and 'prove' an adventurous and intrepid personal identity.

A final point to make in this discussion of travel and identity is to note how volunteer-tourisms, such as the gap year, position the traveller socially. Volunteer-tourism places travellers in the position of 'expert', or at least as knowledgeable, by locating them in roles such as teachers, builders and medical workers. So the traveller is not only able to experiment with a new identity, but they are also presented to their hosts as 'experts'. Once again the traveller is able to articulate their power to the visited. This process is particularly evident in third world tourisms, which by their nature function through, and within, significant inequalities of power (Hutnyk 1996).

Throughout the preceding discussion I have endeavoured to unpack the relationship between historical and contemporary travel practices. I have argued that the role of travel and tourism for the generations of the Grand Tour and imperialism has evolved, and continues to be present in the modern practice of the gap year. The historical motivations for travel are not a forgotten legacy, rather they remain powerful and evocative, and therefore can be called on to inspire contemporary travellers. The following quotation is taken from i-to-i, a gap year organisation that works on a global scale, though this particular quotation comes from the opening to the Latin American section of their brochure:

> "Botanists have delved into the Amazonian jungles to pluck plants, explorers have canoed out of sight, and archaeologists have explored the burial rites of the Incas. Now it is your turn to explore Latin America for yourself" (i-to-i 2002, p.10).

The fact that imagery such as this has power in advertising suggests that it also retains a relevance to contemporary travellers. Given the power inequalities that

tourism to the third world functions within (Hutnyk 1996), the deployment of imagery based on colonisation, and rooted in an era of exploitation, emphasises the need for critical engagement in the historical position of travel and its contemporary reinvention[12]. The use of such imagery establishes the need to question the values that underlie the gap year, and to do this from a historical as well as political perspective.

The above quotation from i-to-i, models the contemporary gap year traveller on their colonial ancestors, suggesting that they take a similar approach to their travel adventures. The use of references to the imperial past, in the context of contemporary travel, is constant with Tickell's (2001) argument that the travel fantasies of modern travellers mimic those of colonial times. Through research on travel literature, Tickell argues that contemporary and colonial travellers frame the relationships between self and other, and the potential for adventure 'overseas', in similar ways (Tickell 2001). A further similarity between historic and contemporary travellers is in the positioning of the voice, opinion or knowledges of local people. As Said (1978) argued, such voices were silenced in the colonial productions of 'the other', and they remain equally silent in comments such as the earlier quotation. Indeed, apart from 'buried Incas' where are these local peoples? What is important to recognise here is the way a 'colonial gaze' can be an appealing perspective for the traveller to adopt, positioning them as powerful purveyors of modernity and owners of an epic adventurous spirit. Hence, calling on colonial imagery becomes a desirable marketing tool.

Getting ethical

The tourism industry has not failed to respond to the many critiques levelled at it. Key amongst these responses, and with direct relevance to the development of the gap year industry, has been the emergence of eco and ethical forms of tourism. Eco and ethical tourisms seek to combine the hedonism of a holiday with a moral or ethical agenda, and their rapid growth reflects several factors.

[12] See the section on Time travel in chapter four for further discussion of the use of historisised and romantic representation within the gap year.

First, development has been increasingly popularised (as discussed in previous sections of this chapter), which has motivated a growing awareness, and desire to minimise, the negative impacts of tourism (Cooper, Flethcher et al. 1998; Fennell 1999; Page and Dowling 2002). Simultaneously, the tourist industry has searched for new and varied tourist possibilities, in order to expand its market. These combined forces have produced eco and ethical tourisms.

Over the last decade[13], there has been a growing recognition within the tourist industry of the environmental and social impact of tourism (Munt 1994; Fennell 1999; Page and Dowling 2002). As a result, elements of the tourist industry have developed increased levels of reflexivity (Munt 1994). This reflexivity has led to an awareness of the multiple social, as well as economic, impact of tourism, and in some cases an associated sense of responsibility. In turn, this has produced the concept of 'ethical' or alternative tourisms, of which eco-tourism is the main manifestation[14]. In their simplest forms eco / ethical tourisms seek to minimise or even reverse the negative impacts of tourism. This results in activities such as fair trade commitments by tour operators, use of local produce and services, and environmentally sensitive practices. However, the remit can also extend to the tourists themselves acting as 'workers', aiming to contribute to the visited communities through conservation, advocacy or teaching work, indeed this can often be the central selling point of a holiday. This latter form of 'volunteer-tourism' is particularly relevant to the gap year. Volunteer-tourism offers:

> "... holidays that might involve aiding or alleviating the material poverty of some groups in society, the restoration of certain environments or research into aspects of society or environment" (Wearing 2001, p.1).

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[13] There is considerable debate over when the idea of eco tourism first emerged. The term was coined by Cebellos-Lascurain in the early 1980's, however 'ecotours' certainly existed prior to this (notably in Canada), and the principles of travelling for enjoyment of the natural world date back a century or more (Fennel 1999).

[14] 2002 was the UN year of Eco-tourism.

International third world gap year programmes predominantly fit within the above typology. Consequently, the rise and rationale of eco / ethical tourisms is of particular interest when understanding the evolution of the gap year. These types of tourism seek a different form of encounter with the peoples and environments visited. As Tourism Concern, a charity that campaigns for fair trade in tourism, states on their web site:

> "We believe that holidays can be fun and also offer the possibility of doing something positive".
> (Tourism Concern 2003)

Positive tourism, as advocated by Tourism Concern, attempts to unite multiple agendas, namely those of the tourist, the industry and to some degree the sites of tourist activity. This is to be achieved by providing tourism possibilities that meet the ethical concerns of the tourist, expand the market opportunities of tourism, and, hopefully, provide economic and development opportunities for host communities. 'Ethical' tourisms have become a means of providing travel with a social conscience, so that tourism becomes:

> "...a means of preserving fragile ecological landscapes and providing an 'ethically' enhancing encounter" (Munt 1994 p.49).

The rise of eco / ethical tourisms is both a response to the cultural and natural impacts of tourism and to the need to increase the possibilities of tourism (Munt 1994). As discussed earlier, travel and tourism have always involved more than geographical exploration. The ability to experiment and encounter alternative identities is also central to the travel experience. Through eco /ethical tourisms travellers are able to experiment with a diverse set of 'work' identities, from teacher to conservationist or scientific researcher. No longer do they even have to identify as a tourist at all, rather, as journalist and travel writer Dea Birkett (2002) sums up, they are able to disregard the now rather tarnished identity of 'the tourist' in favour of other more desirable identities[15]:

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[15] Questions of identity and representation, including the use of the term 'tourist', amongst gap year participants are discussed in chapter six.

> "One day, there will be no more tourists. There will be "adventurers", "fieldwork assistants", "exploraholics" "volunteers" and of course "travellers". But the term tourist will be extinct" (Birkett 2002, p.12).

Ethical / eco tourisms, provide an expanded range of tourisms, essentially offering travel opportunities that go beyond 'mainstream' tourism (Munt 1994). In effect, what is for sale is an enhanced 'authenticity', promising a more 'real' encounter with the visited 'other', and, as was debated in the preceding section, the pursuit of authenticity is an integral part of tourism (Urry 1990; Phillips 1999; Tickell 2001). Volunteer-tourism offers enhanced authenticity, through participation in 'volunteer development' work (Hutnyk 1996). Volunteer-tourism has allowed the gap year to access, if not create, its own economic market through a marketing language of 'purpose'. It is able to promise that travel adventures will not just be fun, but will also be worthwhile. Promises that are heard in statements such as Teaching and Projects Aboard's assertion that:

> "You will be needed. You will be in demand. You will make a difference wherever you go."
> (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003, p.1).

The marketing of the gap year and the way development has become a sellable activity is discussed at length in chapter four. What is significant here, is that the possibilities of ethical / eco tourism are a further indicator of the geography of the gap year, locating projects topographically and also sociologically. Topographical indicators are found in the way that certain environments are fashionable for conservation work, with rain forests and coastal marine environments predominant (for examples see Coral Keys, Teaching and Projects Abroad, Raleigh International listed in table 1, chapter three). The second form of work to dominate gap year programmes is teaching and childcare. Such projects draw volunteer-tourists not just to particular locations, but also to a particular population, wherein volunteer-tourists tend to populate a children's geography, appearing in locations such as schools, play schemes, and orphanages. This, in turn, positions them in terms of the nature of the cultural encounter they have, and how the host community encounters these volunteer-

tourists. It is certainly relevant to consider the prominence of the colonial discourse that located the foreign other as 'child' to the western 'adult' (Brantlinger 1986; Noxolo 1999), and to ask in what ways the gap year reproduces this discourse (see chapter four). These issues are discussed empirically in the following chapters (especially chapter four), and are all part of defining a distinct, and selective geography of the gap year, that sees projects produced in specific places and creating distinct spaces.

Think global

The global pre-eminence of tourism is, to a certain degree, an expression of processes of globalisation. Therefore, in endeavouring to explore the geography of the gap year, at least a cursory understanding of the context of globalisation is helpful. The concept and term 'globalisation' have become embedded in popular and academic discourses. Such popularity has resulted in a certain degree of variety in its usages; what I offer here is a short précis of globalisation in relation to geographies of travel and the gap year.

The idea of globalisation first appeared in the mid eighties, though when the process itself actually commenced is keenly debated (Waters 1995; Hoogvelt 1997; Kiely and Marfleet 1998). Certainly, initially the concept concentrated on an economic system, one, according to the United Nations statement of 1999 intended to create:

> "... a movement toward a world economy characterised by free trade, free mobility of both financial and real capital, and rapid diffusion of products, technologies, information, and consumption patterns" (quoted in: Safa 2002, p.141).

The concept of globalisation has expanded well beyond the realms of the purely economic and now encompasses a set of ideas around politics, society and culture. As a process, globalisation should not be confused with increased 'interconnectedness' (Kiely and Marfleet 1998); a function borne of the increased availability of systems such as international flights, communication systems and media that links distant places. As Robertson, one of the key

figures in the recognition of globalisation, and as quoted by Waters (1995), suggests:

> "Globalisation as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Waters 1995, p.4).

It is this intensification of consciousness that I intend to focus on here. 'Interconnectedness' in the sense of the availability of transport and the ease of communication between distant places has undoubtedly played a role in the expansion of the gap year, if only through making international travel increasingly possible and affordable[16]. However, it is not sufficient explanation for the way the gap year, in its construction as international travel, volunteer work and cultural encounter, has become accepted and normalised. Instead it is the way globalisation has spawned an increased consciousness of the world, that has helped crystallise the gap year phenomenon.

A global consciousness presents itself in various forms, from the availability of a diverse range of fashion and food, to a media that reports internationally, to the greater possibility of travel destinations available to consumers. The gap year industry relies on this sense of possibility, for it offers travel opportunities to a geography of safe, yet adventurous and exotic, countries (see chapters four and six). Globalisation, and the consciousness it has brought, has increasingly 'normalised' the process of travel, reinforcing its availability for modern, western youth.

With the process of globalisation has come the process of localisation. That is, local events and identity occur within a global context, so that Giddens offers a definition whereby globalisation is the:

> "... intensification of worldwide social relations which link localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by

[16] Significantly such interconnectedness should not been seen as pandemic. While globalisation may have produced interconnectedness for some, for others it has been a systematic process of marginalisation and exclusion (Skelton and Allen 1999).

> events occurring many miles away and visa versa" (Giddens 1993, p.181).

Waters (1995), drawing on Giddens, expands this idea to include the process of the local defining itself reflexively with respect to the global. Local identity is drawn from, and constructed with reference to, globalised spaces. Waters (1995) also specifies a 'global field' that describes a range of interactions that need to be considered in understanding the process of globalisation. The first of these interactions is that of the individual self, and this, I argue, is paramount in identifying the global geography of the gap year. Individuals can, like localities, define their identity in a globalised context. Indeed Walters comments on how such a global perspective is becoming increasingly expected by a range of actors. Whether it is environmentalists or corporate enterprise, the cry to 'think global and act local' is becoming a modern mantra[17] (Waters 1995). Participating in an international gap year provides participants with the opportunity to construct a globally situated identity. Through travelling to, and gazing upon, the 'other', participants are able to shape their own identity within a globally 'known' context. Consequently, the geography of the gap year becomes one where there is an identifiable, or desirable 'other' to explore, hence where there are opportunities for identity construction and affirmation.

Globalised identity offers opportunities not just to situate oneself in a global context but also for an apparently hybrid identity. One's identity can be built out of multiple influences, able to transgress at times apparently contradictory identities. One of the most obvious ways transgression is performed by travellers, from the colonial to the contemporary, is in the display of clothing. Colonial explorers such as Richard Burton, who claimed to have 'discovered' Lake Tanganyika, 'disguised' themselves as 'natives' to assist themselves in their travels; contemporary travellers equally use dress as a means to facilitate their journey in the discovery of both self and other. Adopting, what are seen as

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[17] At the time of writing, the bank HSBC has an advertising campaign focusing on the need to understand local cultural variance in the pursuit of successful global banking. The strap line for this campaign is 'We never underestimate the importance of local knowledge'.

'local' styles of dress, offers colonial and contemporary travellers alike the opportunity to selectively and often temporarily, construct a global decoupage identity:

> "...indigenous costumes gave the wearer the 'promise' of 'transgressive' pleasure without the penalties of actual {racial and cultural} change" (Tickell 2001, p.50).

In the same way that traveller's adoption of 'local' identity is selective, so too is the process of globalisation and with it the geography of the gap year. Potential destinations depend on the way they are 'imagined' by would-be travellers. Countries such as India with the allure of 'desirable otherness', or regions with reputations for danger and excitement, such as much of South America, have become the central geography of the gap year (see chapter four). Meanwhile, other areas such as Bangladesh, Panama or perhaps Siberia remain on the periphery of both imagination and hence the geography of the gap year. Globalisation creates a geography of possibilities but also a geography of desirability, one which operates a global spectrum of the included and the excluded.

In conclusion, theories and ideas around globalisation abound, and here the surface of possibilities has merely been scratched. However, what I have endeavoured to provide is a map to the way that globalisation is helping to shape the geography of the gap year. A geography that is uneven and partial, that illuminates and makes possible certain destinations, while obscuring others. This geography compounds desirability and also normalises, to the point of necessity, the activity of travel.

A capital idea; a class act

The activity of travel, especially international travel has, as I argued earlier, a role in identity formation. One aspect of this role is evident in the way travel can be used as a form of capital in social interactions. In this thesis I draw on Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and Urry's (1990) application of this concept to the field of travel. For Bourdieu, issues of class and capital go

beyond, though remain connected to, economics (Branson and Miller 1992; Robbins 2000). Bourdieu developed a theory of alternative forms of capital, which overtime evolved to include social, symbolic and cultural forms of capital.

Cultural capital, as conceptualised by Bourdieu and used in this thesis, takes three forms. The first is incorporated or embodied cultural capital, which is held by the individual and is a product of his or her education and experiences. Capital that is a product of what they can do and the knowledges they possess. As such incorporated forms of cultural capital can be increased through investment in self-improvement (Hayes 1997; Robbins 2000). Participating in a gap year programme offers opportunities for self-improvement, and an end to which programmes are advertised to appeal (see chapter five). An emphasis is placed on CV enhancement and skills development, (for examples see: The Year Out Group 2002; Venture Co. 2002; World Challenge Expeditions 2002). Thus, travelling gap year participants are able to pursue the acquisition of increased personal cultural capital. In turn, such capital provides access to other market places, including most notably the workplace, where travel experiences can provide a competitive advantage (Tickell 2001, p.49), an issue discussed at length in chapter five.

The second form of cultural capital identified by Bourdieu is the objectivated form, which he sees as encompassing objects such as paintings, books, and a myriad other physical objects, including travel souvenirs. Unlike the incorporated form, objectivated cultural capital is not necessarily tied to the individual, but rather has its own value and so can be passed between generations. However, its value is not fixed:

> "...the objectivated cultural stock accumulated in one generation can crash in the next" (Robbins 2000, p.25).

Travel opens up various possibilities for the collection of 'objects' of cultural capital, but often these may be forms with comparatively little economic value. The souvenirs, postcards, snap shots and writings of travellers are all products made available for consumption (Hutnyk 1996), and so can act as 'objects' of

cultural capital. There are plenty of opportunities for the display of such objects, from interior decoration to dress code, though the primacy of their value remains in the testimony they offer to the incorporated status of their owner.

Bourdieu's third form of cultural capital is its institutionalised form. He sees this as the primary site for the conversion of cultural to economic capital, with institutions acting to define forms of 'qualification' to establish who has, and therefore by default who has not, attained a specified level in cultural competence (Robbins 2000). Though Bourdieu traditionally focused on such official qualifications as educational certificates, I argue that this idea of institutionalised cultural capital can be extended more generally to the mandate of 'experience'. So, as discussed in more detail in chapter five, the gap year industry is continuously seeking formal recognition for the value of 'experience', while being careful to include such prerequisites as 'structured' and 'worthwhile'. Thus, it legitimises both the need for an industry and further establishes the value of the commodity that it is selling. These three forms of cultural capital are all evident within the practice of the gap year, and it is this Boudieuian understanding of capital that shall be used in the rest of this thesis.

Before moving on from Bourdieu I also wish to include his theory of habitus within the theoretical landscape of this thesis. I use his theory of habitus to frame the argument that, for certain social groups, gap year travel has become a cultural norm. Habitus is the taken for granted assumptions and dispositions, the 'embodied history' that an individual actor acquires as part of a social group or class (Bourdieu 1990):

> "The *habitus,* a product of history, produces individual and collective practices – more history- in accordance with the schemes generated by history. It ensures the active presence of past experiences, which, deposited in each organism in the form of schemes of perception, thought and action, tend to guarantee the 'correctness' of practices and their consistency over time, more reliably than all formal rules and explicit norms." (Bourdieu 1990, p.54).

Bourdieu used the concept of habitus to distinguish between those actions of which an actor is conscious, and those of which they are less than conscious. Actions born of habitus are born of internalised history which makes such actions appear 'normal', 'automatic' and 'obvious' and therefore do not necessitate conscious thought or decision making:

> "The *habitus* – embodied history, internalised as a second nature and so forgotten as history- is the active presence of the whole past of which it is the product. As such, it is what gives practices their relative autonomy with respect to external determinations immediate presence. {...}. The habitus is a spontaneity without consciousness or will. (Bourdieu 1990, p.56).

In the fields of both culture and economics habitus structures the values and norms held by a social group, influencing what is considered in good or bad taste, what is desirable and what undesirable, (Robbins 2000). For the middle and upper classes in Britain the logic of travel for young people has become a matter of 'embodied history', established since the days of the Grand Tour. Consequently, the gap year and international travel are incorporated into a habitus that means the value of such activity does not need to be constantly re-assessed.

Bourdieu's notion of habitus is far from a static concept; rather, actors of the dominant class are predisposed to seek to establish their habitus as the dominant set of values and norms (Branson and Miller 1992). Thus, the dominant class inherently seeks to further confirm their dominance by establishing the value of their own habitus, or in other words their worldview and cultural and economic dispositions:

> "... a dominant group can project its particular way of seeing social reality so successfully that its view is accepted as common sense, as part of the natural order" (Bell 1997, p.11).

The positioning of gap year experiences as of cultural and also 'corporate' value (a concept discussed in chapter five) is part of this competition for the dominant

habitus. The gap year has become increasingly normalised and institutionalised (see chapter five), as such those that have the cultural capital of such experiences are increasingly able to assert their social dominance:

> "...the travel stories of the enabled class amount to the new currency that transmutes all values" (Kaur and Hutnyk 1999, p.3).

The importance of economic status should not be ignored, gap year travel may well demand and confer social status, but it also requires a certain economic status. The financial cost of the majority of overseas volunteer placements is currently between £1500 and £4000 and potentially higher, depending on the length, region and activity involved. In addition, there are mounting economic pressures on students in tertiary education with rising tuition fees and increasingly uncertain employment prospects, all of which conspire to make an international gap year less attainable for many (Anon 2001; Staff and agencies 2002; Guthrie 2003). Consequently, travel-based gap years in effect demand a high level of economic confidence, if not actual wealth. Therefore, those 'consuming' such gap years are prestratified by economic as well as social status. Returning to Bourdieu's theory of habitus, such economic regulation of the access to cultural capital is an important part of maintaining the necessary inequalities of capitalism, in effect maintaining the class boundaries inherent in capitalism:

> "...the contours of social inequality are structured through patterns of unequal access to *symbolic capital,* through unequal cultural competence as defined, accorded honour / acceptance by those in economic, political and cultural control" (Branson and Miller 1992, p.41).

Bourdieu defines this process of exclusion as 'symbolic violence', a process that defines judgements of taste and of value. In this way, cultural or symbolic capital becomes a gatekeeper for access to economic capital. The ability to 'consume' gap year travel is mediated by both cultural and economic conditions, so that class becomes both a condition of, and is reproduced through, the process of consumption:

> "...differential cultural consumption both results from the class system and is a mechanism by which such classes, and other social forces, seek to establish dominance within a society" (Urry 1990, p.88).

So it can be seen that the gap year has a complex relationship with class structures. Inspired, as it is, by the class delineated activities of imperialism, premised on a 'gap' (primarily between periods of education) and demanding of both economic and cultural capital, the gap year is produced by, and a producer of, structures of social class.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter I have sought to locate the gap year historically and geographically, through an examination of diverse influences. First, historical influences and the central role of colonialism were considered. Colonialism, I argued, constructed a gaze that positions the traveller and the visited on a particular axis of power relations, and this gaze continues to inform contemporary forms of travel. Colonialism also ties the activity of travel to the acquisition of knowledge, conferring on travellers an authority acquired through direct personal experience of encounters with the other. Yet, despite the authority given to travel-acquired knowledge, travellers themselves are required to take little responsibility for this knowledge. The privileging of travel within youth development is an historic legacy and has helped to normalise the gap year, so that it has become part of a modern young person's transition to adulthood. The gap year has also been shown to have a particular geography, one created through the varied and interconnected discourses of development, tourism and globalisation. These forces have created a geography of possibilities, defining the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion for the gap year, a geography that keeps evolving at the dictate of fashion and desirability.

Chapter three:

Methodology:
Producing knowledge & inventing truths

"I'm stood in a pile of putrefying rubbish, refusing
to move until the senora and her son come out of
their house and call the dogs off - they are all laughing at me"
(5 October 2001, research notes).

Introduction

"We are right up on top of the hills, and though Lima's winter haze still distorts the light and the air we can see out across Villa Maria- to Miraflores, and the high-rise office blocks and out to sea. As always, the house door is kept shut and we stand outside in the rubbish, talking, with me keeping a nervous eye on the dogs (though I have, by now, dropped the rock I was ready to throw). I start to explain my work, then Elvis chips in and hurries the story on, while I nod. You can feel the dust in the air as you breathe in, and the rubbish has a thick smell; so that you expect to be able see it. By now both Elvis and I have tired voices, though he looks more enthusiastic than me, and his patter is sounding well practised. After we have discussed a few issues, the senora takes one of my questionnaires and we agree to come back in two days to collect it. Elvis then drags me laughing past the dogs and we are done for the day. We sit on a bench outside a small shack drinking coke and eating oranges, we have walked miles today and talked for hours. We have been through all the local communities hunting out *mothers* to talk to, waking people up, finding the community *organizadoras*. We have given out almost 20 questionnaires, my shoes are full of dust from scrambling up and down steep hill sides, and I am not sure if I am more afraid of the dogs or the chickens. Elvis is laughing at me, and reminding me that we will have to do it all over again in two days time".

This is the hot, dusty, peopled reality of doing fieldwork, this is what makes, for me, research worth doing, what makes me want to ask questions, and listen to stories. This is also the erratic- infinitely human, aspect of fieldwork that can so easily get lost in written methodologies. It is in combining experience and theory that I find both are illuminated, and what makes research not just possible, but also exciting. Consequently, in writing my methodology I want to integrate both the theory and experience of research, and to remember that these two informed one another in the process of data production. Indeed, research is a process that talks to itself, hears others, and changes as it goes along. In asking questions I found out about the ways I thought answers could be produced; in hearing answers, I thought of new questions to ask, and perhaps new ways to ask them. The endless process of thinking, asking and answering is a circular, at times illogical, and often erratic activity. Different people join in, either in body or text, some understandings come fast, and sometimes change is dramatic. At other times, research becomes like swimming through porridge, with no horizon line in sight. While this may be the reality of research, its erratic chronology is not necessarily the most helpful, or illuminating, way to write a methodology chapter. Consequently, like all good stories I have rearranged the events, dropped the unimportant bits and highlighted the exciting parts.

The following chapter details the various methodological considerations and method construction that were involved in building this research project. I begin with a general discussion of methodology, locating the principles of knowledge production from which this study comes. This is followed by a more pragmatic examination of the methods used in the research, including consideration of their implementation and adaptation. The second section of the chapter deals with the theoretical issues involved in locating the 'field' of research. That is, the social and geographical (in all senses) space of research, a space as much constructed as visited. In the third section, I discuss the practicalities of working and researching in the fields in this study. The process of 'work in the field' becomes the encounter between the well-polished ideals of research and the dusty complicated reality that is fieldwork. The fourth and final section of the chapter deals with issues involved in writing and analysing data, reflecting the

fact that it is important to recognise that the process of producing research is the process of producing knowledge, and creating a reality. Finally, it should be noted that several appendices are referred to in this chapter, and this is where specific details of questionnaires and interview numbers can be found.

1. Questions of methodology & methods of Questions

Methodology and methods are distinct concepts that are often conflated. The former, methodology, attends to the way that knowledge production is to be conducted, and what theoretical and philosophical framework is applied to that production. The latter, methods, are the tools to be used in the process and pursuit of knowledge (Gilbert 1994, p.92). In the following section I provide a guide to the methodologies and methods used in this thesis. Through the research process there has been an evolution in both these areas. In considering methodological issues, I developed an interest in, and yet reservations about, participatory research practices, which are discussed below. In terms of the methods used, I initially intended a broad spectrum of methods, including various tools for visual analysis. However, in practice many of these methods proved inappropriate or unwieldy, and in the interests of brevity I have omitted them from the following discussion and focused instead on those methods that were employed and therefore are relevant to the data produced.

Ethnography?

Ethnography, a methodology originally employed by anthropologists and taken up more recently by other social scientists, has been the subject of considerable theoretical debate (Hammersley 1992; Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Brewer 2000; Foley 2002). Central to ethnography is the principle that understanding people's lived realities, their everyday interactions and actions, is of primary interest in understanding social realities (Brewer 2000; Mason 2002). Ethnography proposes that the best way to produce data is through direct contact and familiarity with people's daily lives, to the point where the researcher becomes involved in those daily interactions (Brewer 2000). Such

broad intentions disguise the great variety of ways that ethnographies are conducted, and the types of knowledge claims they make.

Ethnography emerged in the early twentieth century and was predominately employed in the production of 'comparative' studies of primitive others. Such studies were premised on the idea of the objective researcher, able to observe without prejudice and record the practices of others. Such 'disinterested' research has now been largely discredited, both it terms of possibility and actuality (Vidich and Lyman 2003). Despite their claims to objectivity, these early ethnographies were produced in a specific political climate. The beginning of the twentieth century also coincided with the end of the British Empire. The drive therefore was to understand how pre-industrial 'foreign' others were to be incorporated into a new 'British family of nations' (Brewer 2000). Beyond the specifics of the political climate, the ethnographies of the disinterested observer of the early twentieth century have been critiqued for their inherent eurocentirc bias and methodological presumptions (Vidich and Lyman 2003). Ethnography, as practiced by Malinowski[18] and his peers, was premised on an inherently positivistic approach to knowledge production, the only available paradigm in which the objective observer could exist at the time. As a consequence of its positivistic outlook, ethnography received wide ranging and heavy criticism focusing on, amongst other issues, epistemology, the sites of knowledge production and the methods used (Brewer 2000; Vidich and Lyman 2003). In response to such criticisms however, there has not been a total abandonment of ethnography but rather an evolution of ethnography. Key to this evolution has been a post-positivistic reconceptualisation of ethnography's knowledge base, which has included recognition of the socially constructed nature of knowledges. The researcher is seen as positioned culturally, socially, politically and so on, and so themselves part of the web of social relations that they are

[18] Bronislaw Malinowski is credited with founding the functionalist school of social anthropology and published, in 1922, one of the earliest ethnographic anthropological studies 'Argonauts of the Western Pacific'. The book was based on ethnographic field work conducted with the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea between 1915-18 and is credited with initiating a new paradigm in research (Minnesota State University 2004).

studying (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995). Ethnography has abandoned the separation of the researcher from the research subject in favour of a recognition of the partial and fractured nature of knowledge. Furthermore, the role of research in influencing the social relations studied is also incorporated:

> "...it is important to understand that research on social relations inevitably *arises out of* social relations stretching between the field, the academy and beyond" (Cook and Crang 1995, p.7).

With this evolution in the epistemology of ethnography has come a corresponding evolution in the breadth of social subject matter available to ethnographers (Vidich and Lyman 2003). No longer is ethnographic research tied to its ideological and positivist roots in seeking to understand the incorporation of pre-industrial societies, rather:

> "... the points of view from which ethnographic observations may be made are as great as the choices of lifestyle available to modern society" (Vidich and Lyman 2003, p.95).

Modern ethnography continues in the tradition of valuing the everyday as a valid site for understanding social relations, and also maintains a commitment to the methods used. However, there has been a fundamental shift in the way that knowledge through ethnographic research, is understood to be produced, and with this a multiplication of the perspectives and subjects available to ethnographic research.

In this research project ethnography is understood using Brewer's (2000) definition:

> "Ethnography is the study of people in naturally occurring settings or 'fields' by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the researcher participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner but without meaning being imposed on them externally" (Brewer 2000, p.6).

The data produced in this thesis comes from three principal sources. First, extended periods of participant observation and interviewing with gap year students. Second, questionnaires and anecdotal observation with the San Gabrielle communities are drawn upon. Third and finally, extensive discourse analysis of secondary data in the form of gap year industry marketing and media discussion was conducted. It is only the first of these sources that is influenced by ethnography. I spent two periods with separate groups of Quest Overseas gap year student

An ethnographic approach, in Brewers (2000) sense of studying people engaged in their 'ordinary activities', was certainly important. However, though this study may have drawn on, and been inspired by, the traditions of ethnography, it does not conform to a classic, full ethnographic study. Primarily this is due to the relatively short periods of time spent with research participants, which although intensive was not necessarily extensive. Fundamentally therefore, the emphasis within this study is on the analysis of interview data, and though such interviews were premised on participant observation they do not equate to ethnographic data. Additionally this study draws on a significant amount of secondary data, in the form of gap year marketing and media representation. Consequently, while ethnography was influential in methodological design it was not the principal methodological techniques used, rather this study presents a discursive analysis of primary interview, and secondary data.

Discourse analysis

In addition to interview and observational work, empirical data was also produced through an extensive discourse analysis of the gap year. While I do not intend to give a detailed theoretical explanation of discourse, my approach requires a brief introduction to the key issues. The principle of discourse is that they define what it is possible to 'know'; that is, discourses determine the possible meanings that can be given to an event or experience (Wetherell, Taylor et al. 2001). Michael Foucault, a theorist renowned for his work on discourse, sees it as a system of social rules that shape what can be said and

thought, and ultimately what knowledges can be produced (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). The concept of 'discourses' denounces the idea of essential, disinterested 'truths', that is, that events and objects can be interpreted and known outside of historical and social processes (Danaher, Schirato et al. 2000). Rather, discourse "... defines {...} the elements of meaning at the disposal of speaking subjects in a given period" (Foucault 1969, p.53). Therefore, one does not interpret events and experiences in a vacuum of individuality, devoid of cultural or social frameworks (Arksey and Knight 1999). The 'truths' an individual produces are not the result of a unique set of influences, but rather are subject to socially referential systems of meaning. As Escobar stated, when critiquing development, discourse shapes what it is possible to know, what 'truths' can, and equally cannot, be produced (Escobar 1995).

The adoption of a discourse approach to this research project was an evolution of my original plan. In the initial planning stages I intended to concentrate on ethnographic data, conducting separate phases of ethnographic work with gap year participants and with host communities. However, in the first months of this study it became clear how little research or information there was on the gap year. Furthermore, the rapid evolution and growth of the practice was making its distinctions from other forms of tourism, and the ignorance that surrounded the practice, increasingly apparent. These realisations crystallised during the first research phase, (February – April 2001). When, through interviews and observation, it became apparent that participants framed their experiences in multiple and complex ways, which appeared to contradict the dominant representations produced by the gap year industry (see chapter six). The combination of the schism between the industry and participants, and the sheer lack of existing understanding about the gap year led me to reassess my research emphasis.

Reassessing my research focus produced a move away from a comparative ethnographic study of gap year participants and hosts, towards the production of a discourse based profile of the gap year industry. Escobar (1995) writing in the context of development, argued that understanding discursive formations was fundamental to understanding the nature of practices. He argued that

development could not be understood outside of the knowledges and mechanisms of power through which it is produced, and similarly it seemed neither could the gap year. In addition Escobar, building of a Foucoudian understanding, saw discourse as acting as a form of governance, providing an efficient system for the production of knowledge and the exercise of power (Escobar 1995). So that, he argued, practices are produced through the knowledges and systems of power that inform them, therefore to understand the origin and implications of practices one must look to the discourses that inform them. Watts (2003) offers an extended, and empirically based argument for the relationship between discourse and governance. Watts identifies various sites of governance emphasising that, while the state may be one site, there are multiple sites which act with common interest. These sites produce a "... complex triangulation involved in sustaining many forms of power put to the purpose of security and regulation" (Watts 2003, p.14). The gap year operates within, and produces, systems of class and capital and it intersects with economic and political systems of development (see chapter two). Consequently, in order to understand its practices, fully, the gap year needs to be situated within wider discourses, and its complicity with systems of governance, particularly those demanded by neo-liberalism, needs to be made visible. As stated above, when I started this research it became apparent that despite the public and institutional profile of the practice (see chapter five) the gap year had received apparently no critical examination. Consequently, its historical and geographical inspirations and discursive formations, were opaque. As a result of shifting the research emphasis towards producing an analytical profile of the gap year, time was drawn away from the initial comparative ethnographic study proposed. I did however spend a month in San Gabriel (September 2001, discussed below) conducting questionnaires and observations. This data provided a useful context, however it was not sufficient to produce a complex understanding of the ways host communities in San Gabriel positioned and understood the gap year. This limitation is discussed in chapter eight.

While there are many applications of discourse analysis, I intend to use it in a specific way. Within this study, the significance of discourse is, I argue, that the gap year industry, and participants alike, produce 'truths', be they about travel,

self or other, within a particular system of social mean making. As a result, participants' knowledges are not totally unique, nor are they disconnected from the knowledges of their peers and the historical and geographical processes that position the gap year. Likewise, the gap year industry produces representations of activities and others that are referenced to, and structured by, established, socially held 'knowledges'. As a consequence of such a discursive approach, I argue that because individual's knowledges are not produced in social and historical abstraction, one person's representations are indicative of more commonly held knowledges. The knowledges produced through gap years and travel, are knowledges produced through, and within, particular discourses (Hall 2001). They are historically and geographically constituted and, to the degree that all individuals are positioned by discourse, they are collectively held. It is through such a discursive approach that the qualitative nature of this study is validated, and can produce understandings of international gap year placements that have resonance beyond the specific case studies and individuals presented.

Reflexivity

Modern ethnography, and indeed contemporary social science research at large, demands a level of reflexivity. This practice involves recognising that knowledge production is not a disinterested process but is produced from 'positions', and as such is always partial (Rose 1997). Positions are held by the researcher and researched alike, some are individual, such as personal educational experiences, and some are structural, such as class, race, gender. The process of reflexivity is a process of both recognising 'positions' and accepting those beyond the view of the researcher.

Historically, reflexivity has been an enduring human practice, employed in some form or other by philosophers and thinkers from the Greeks onwards (Foley 2002). However, in the 1970's with the rise of critiques of the dominant paradigm of logical positivism, reflexivity began to emerge as a widespread practice for the social sciences (Foley 2002). These early forms of reflexivity asked that a critical gaze be cast over the researcher and their social position as a part of the research process:

> "Directing one's gaze at one's own experience makes it possible to regard oneself as "other." Through a constant mirroring of the self, one eventually becomes reflexive about the situated, socially constructed nature of the self, and by extension, the other" (Foley 2002, p.473).

As reflexivity has evolved in theory and practice, so it has also diversified (for a discussion of forms of reflexivity see: Lynch 2000), and in essence the research process is becoming itself an object of research. However, central to all concepts of reflexivity is a recognition of the partial and situated nature of knowledge production (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995; Rose 1997; Laurie, Dwyer et al. 1999; Brewer 2000; Foley 2002). With such recognition comes the need to be explicit; to be transparent about the social processes that produce particular research and knowledge:

> "Ethnographers (like social scientists generally) must locate their data in the context of the social processes that brought them about, and recognise the limits of their perceptions of reality" (Brewer 2000, p.43).

Much as reflexivity makes the research process itself an object of research, so too the researcher is also a focus for study. Indeed self-reflexivity is a key part of the process of seeking to be honest about one's own positioning in relation to the research, and acknowledging the partiality of one's own interpretations:

> "...production of knowledge is not permitted to be restricted to explorations of geographical and cultural Others. It is by necessity a project that demands self-reflexivity" (Swanger 2002, p.7).

Such a process of reflection can appear endless, and throw into question the entire production of knowledge (Lynch 2000). However, reflexivity is not, and should not be, an attempt to rise above, or to step outside of, social positioning. Rather, it is a challenge to acknowledge the partial view through which knowledge is produced:

> "Doing research {...} is a messy business. Researchers are entangled in the research process in all sorts of ways, and the demands to situate knowledge is a demand to recognise that messiness" (Rose 1997, p.314).

Indeed, it is a reflexive acknowledgement to realise that practically it is impossible for all forms of power, agency and social position to be made transparent (Rose 1997). Rather, the researcher must admit their own limitations in both self-knowledge and knowledge of 'other'. A reflexive interrogation, with its recognition of the partiality and limits of knowledge production, must not be confused with undermining the value of such knowledge (Lynch 2000). Furthermore, such acknowledgment does not suspend the need to be continuously reflexive in the ways, as a researcher, one produces, writes and represents others (Skelton 2001). Social knowledge will always be partial, there is no position from which impartial universal knowledge may be constructed. The value of knowledge is not in how close it comes to the attainment of a universal view, but rather, in the rigour with which our various knowledges are constructed. So, as Brewer beseeches:

> "... we should claim no more for the account than what it is, a partial, selective and personal version" (Brewer 2000, p.44).

It is ultimately through the multiple partial views of multiple social actors that a particular representation of reality is arrived at. In acknowledging the partiality of my own view, it is important to acknowledge that I myself had a gap year, which, although very different from those studied here, included international travel. Furthermore, I have worked in the gap year industry for a number of years, specifically for Quest Overseas, whose programmes feature within this thesis (this relationship is discussed in detail later in this chapter). In addition to these experiences, my first encounter with research involved conducting my undergraduate dissertation on Western Volunteer Teachers in secondary schools

in Malawi[19]. Although this project focused on long-term volunteers (on two year placements), and also concentrated on the experiences of the hosts rather than visitors, it remains an inspiration behind this thesis. As a consequence of these, and other experiences, I bring a certain perspective to this research. Indeed, this thesis is motivated by the positive and confusing experiences I have had in all of the above situations, and it is these experiences that have inspired me to attempt to produce a better understanding of the gap year, and to explore its geographies and pedagogies.

As well as the researcher's own reflexivity there is also a form of 'referential' reflexivity by research respondents (Adkins 2002). This is the process of respondents 'imagining' the researcher, of deciding what it means to be a social scientist, or whatever other role the interviewer is in. It is then to this positioned person that the respondent speaks and chooses what representation, truths and narratives to recount. Research becomes the space where these reflexively constructed people (interviewer and interviewee) meet. Adkins quotes May (1998) on referential reflexivity as:

> "the consequences that arise from a meeting between the reflexivity exhibited by actors as part of a lifeworld and that exhibited by the researcher as part of a social scientific community" (Adkins 2002, p.335).

These multiple forms of reflexivity combine to form a 'space' of research. To frame this in another way, when we travel physically we visit imagined geographies, places that we have ideas and preconceptions about. When we travel socially we meet imagined people (categories such as the fire-fighter, the single parent, the researcher etc). Research occurs in the spaces of these encounters between imagined peoples, how the researcher imagines the researched and vice a versa. The important point to make here is that reflexivity is not the privilege of the researcher, rather it is practised by everyone.

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[19] The full reference for this study is: Simpson K. (1997) Western volunteer teachers, modern day imperialists? Issues of education and language in secondary schools in Malawi, Department of Geography, University of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Consequently, the knowledges and narratives shared occur in the context of a constructed social space.

Finally, in this thesis the reflexive process is not solely encountered in questions of research methodology, but also forms a part of my critique of gap year projects. Gap year experiences purport to be sources of knowledge production, yet the means of this production and the nature of the knowledges produced remain unexamined. I argue that the knowledges produced through such experiences are in urgent need of examination. Central to this examination is the need to acknowledge the partiality and historical nature of the knowledges produced through gap year programmes. Consequently, if the supposed neutrality of gap year programmes is to be de-bunked, a process of reflexivity, for both the industry and individuals alike, is paramount.

Participatory Action Research

Methodologically one of my key concerns in this research was to establish an appropriate relationship with the research participants. This involved considering questions of power and interest, specifically in the context of how the research process would engage with people, and what investment they would have in it. Furthermore, the impetus for the research had grown out of my own experiences within the gap year industry (discussed later) and therefore I wanted to be consistent with these roots. This meant maintaining my ability as a researcher to communicate with the field of practice, and ultimately to offer action-based outcomes. As a consequence of both these concerns, I spent considerable time exploring and experimenting with methodologies of Participatory Action Research (PAR). This was a process at the heart of my methodology and so worthy of discussion here. In effect PAR proved even more complicated than the theory suggests, so ultimately I adopted some of the principles, and a little of the practice, of PAR.

As a methodology PAR has had a mixed reception in the social sciences. Questions have been asked about the validity of PAR's claims to actually constitute research, and about the way that it seeks to collapse the boundaries

between activism and research (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000). However, PAR has also been seen as a challenge to the universalising and disinterested methodologies that "evade the reality of peoples lives" (Gatenby and Humphries 2000; Marshall 2000, p.700). They do this, in part, by maintaining the elevated position of the researcher over the researched, and denying people the right or ability to interpret their own social realities. While PAR has evolved a complicated set of methodologies there are two aspects that lie at the heart of its challenge to traditional methodologies. First, PAR proposes that the distinction between action and research needs to be collapsed as both are essentially educative processes, therefore the purpose of research is to empower people to act for social change:

> "Both participatory action research (PAR) and feminist research have been developed by researchers aiming for involvement, activism and social critique for the purpose of libratory change" (Gatenby and Humphries 2000, p.89).

Second, by removing the distinction between the researched and the researcher, co-researcher status is given to all participants (Bartunek 1993). The principle here is that the groups about which the researcher wishes to gather knowledges, are best placed themselves (with the collaboration of the researcher) to produce this knowledge:

> "... as insiders participants are the best source of local knowledge that lends validity to the researcher's conclusions" (Bartunek 1993, p.1).

Such bold claims by PAR have brought about equally bold criticism, which has generated arguments about whether or not research should have a social change agenda. These debates have also raised questions about the role of the insider versus that of the outsider in the production of knowledge (for a discussion of these debates see: Mohammad 2001). Although these are ongoing debates, I do not intend to engage further with them here, but rather I focus on a more practical discussion of the role PAR played within this project.

As already stated this research grew partly out of action. That is, it developed from my role in running a gap year project[20] and my desire to ask questions, and ultimately to change practices. Throughout the research I attempted to hold onto these roots, consequently PAR with its emphasis and ideals based in action, proved an attractive methodology. One of the first concerns with a PAR methodology is the relationship with participants. Significantly PAR aims to reposition participants from the periphery of research to centre stage, the principle being to make participants' agendas and voices dominant. The theory is that participants move from being the passive objects of research to becoming its active subjects, so that research is done *with* and not *on* respondents (Goldstein 2000). Taken to an extreme this would mean research participants setting the research agenda themselves and defining the objectives of the research. There are several flaws with this position, both practically and theoretically. On the practical side, participants need to be involved with the research from its very inception. They need to be part of the planning and design stages, and most importantly of all, they need to be personally interested in the outcomes of the research. While there are undoubtedly settings where research will take 'grassroots' forms, this cannot be the case in all research, as it denies the possibility of anyone 'outside' a group initiating questions and research about the experiences or interactions of a group.

A second issue is that in arguing for the centrality of the researched to the research process, there is a risk of simply obscuring the true power and centrality of the researcher. Wherever research has been planned and designed by an 'outside' researcher, the researcher's agenda will be evident, however much the actual research process attempts to bend to the agendas of the researched (Gatenby and Humphries 2000; Goldstein 2000). Bending and

[20] Between 1998 and 2000 I worked (as a paid employee), on a seasonal basis for Quest Overseas, as a project and expeditions leader. This job involved managing groups of gap year participants and running (in conjunction with a local manager) a 'volunteer' play scheme project in South Lima. This experience, and the relationships established during this period of work, proved integral to gaining the access needed to conduct the research in this thesis; these issues are discussed later in this chapter.

adapting to the agendas and knowledges of participants opens up research possibilities that 'outsiders' may not be able to perceive otherwise, and is part of providing varied data. However, such adaptation should not be confused with a total abdication of power by the researcher, and certainly in this research the agendas studied remained predominantly my own.

PAR claims to offer empowerment, through consciousness raising amongst participants. This ideal fits well with Frieirian concepts of education as a process of *'conscientizacao'* (consciousness raising), a concept that sees all education as inherently political, and therefore 'critical consciousness' becomes the ultimate objective. (Shor 1993). PAR similarly sees all knowledge production, and hence all research, as inherently political (Gatenby and Humphries 2000). Consequently, PAR seeks to engage directly with this agenda through making critical consciousness and action the ultimate end goals of research. It aims to give participants an opportunity to rethink themselves and their social world:

> "{PAR} engages participants in rethinking themselves, their understandings, their practices, and their settings" (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000, p.490).

While the principle here may well be laudable, the practice demands further consideration; particularly concerning the issue of imposition. When a researcher has defined their own project, set the objectives and set the agenda they bring their own 'consciousness' to the research. If consciousness raising then becomes a further objective of the research, they risk imposing not only the process but also the nature of the consciousness raised (Gatenby and Humphries 2000). While it can certainly be debated whether consciousness raising is, or is not, a valid objective of research, what needs recognition is that this forms a further layer of the researcher's power. In a situation where researchers have defined the agenda, for them to then seek an educational and political role further complicates the relationships involved. Such an approach does not automatically absolve the researcher of power or re-centre the participants in the process however much the researcher may desire this. To maintain this position risks further disguising the power of the researcher.

A key part of PAR methodologies involves re-assigning some of the power in research from the researcher to the researched. This can be done in various ways, varying from including participants in the process of research design and write up, to questioning who conducts research. However, the differentiation between empowering participants and absolving the researcher of power needs to be carefully understood. There are multiple layers of power mobilised and embedded in the research process, whether it is the imposition of the researcher's personal or political agenda, the interruption caused by research or the fact that it is the researcher who in the end makes gains in kudos and cultural capital:

> "There is exploitation inherent in any research relationship; serious power differentials separate the researcher from the researched" (Goldstein 2000, p.521).

While Goldstein's language of exploitation is strong, she also highlights the issue of differentials of power. This is an important concept, for the researcher should not be automatically positioned as powerful and the researched as impotent. This would be a particularly patronising attitude, presuming, as it does, that the researched are devoid of any agency concerning how they represent themselves, the stories they choose to tell or the access to their stories that they grant. Questions of power demand reflexivity within the research process, they need to be explored and acknowledged, not hidden away and discounted.

In setting out to practice some of the principles of PAR, I found the research experience far from the clear-cut end positions of PAR theorists. In practice, the biggest issue with PAR was that my investment in the research was much greater than that of my participants. This translated into a resistance from participants to any sustained involvement in the research process; so that while they were happy to be interviewed, this was the limit of their interest. Without a deeper sense of ownership and an investment or at least a curiosity in the outcome of research, participants cannot be expected to mirror the researcher's interest. Indeed, it would have been presumptuous to demand so much in terms

of time and energy from participants. While PAR may promote 'participation' in the research process as a route to both emancipation and equality, if this is to be more than rhetoric it requires incredibly careful management. Indeed, it requires that participation becomes a primary goal of the research process, or else it risks, in Cooke and Kothari's (2001) words, becoming a further 'tyranny', where claims of participation are used to preclude discussions on power differentials, and where uniform notions of 'participation' disguise the ways communities are differentially represented within research.

Beyond the limits of PAR experienced in this study I would also add a cautionary word. PAR is a deeply involved methodology, and one that demands so much time and commitment from research participants that I feel it is truly limited in any research that is not totally grassroots in origin. This in turn raises a plethora of methodological questions about PAR's wider relevance in contemporary research, particularly in terms of PAR's total reliance on research issues arising always and only from *within* social groups. In conclusion, while the practice of PAR proved difficult, the participatory principles made a major contribution to this thesis. A PAR analysis illuminated the ways that participants could be marginalized and selectively ignored within the research process. As a result, interviews were, in particular, managed to give participants greater control, and be responsive to their knowledges. This approach proved both empirically rich and ethically comfortable.

Methods:

The primary data in this study was produced principally through interviews and participant observation. A range of other methods, including visual and mapping methods were initially considered and piloted. However, in the event they proved either impractical or unnecessary and consequently have been left out of this discussion.

The research for this thesis included a number of phases conducted between 2001 and 2003. Two periods of participant observation and interviewing with gap year participants were undertaken, both of which were with Quest Overseas

Overseas students engaged in volunteer work and travel in Peru. The first research period was between February and April 2001 and the second between February and May 2002. In addition to these two research phases I also spent a month (September 2001) in San Gabriel; interviewed members of the gap year industry and conducted an extended discourse analysis of the gap year industry. The detail of these research phases and the methods used are discussed in the following section.

Asking questions

In social science the interview, in all its various forms, is the dominant research tool (Cohen and Manion 1992; Arksey and Knight 1999). While the principle of an interview is, put simply, to ask questions, how such questions are asked and answered is far from straightforward. There are many ways to conduct interviews and multiple factors, such as word choice, body language and location, that all need to be considered. Interviewing requires divorcing from any idea that it is 'common sense' (Arksey and Knight 1999). Rather, it is a process that requires interrogation and pro-active decision-making. Interviewing is traditionally classified on a spectrum from structured to semi-structured and unstructured (Fontana and Frey 2000). While this crude classification disguises the many ways that the technique is understood and used, it provides a useful way to structure discussion.

I used semi-structured conversational interviews with the gap year participants included in this thesis. These interviews took the form of conversations on a series of themes (see appendix one). In designing these I drew on Flick's (2000) episodic interview technique. This technique is designed to explore both a respondent's concrete, event-based knowledge, and their abstract thoughts about a topic (Flick 2000). The key to this style of interviewing is that a topic is approached from multiple angles. Respondents are asked to recount experiences, and also to provide a conceptual analysis of a situation. The data produced is predominantly narrative in style, but unlike narrative interviewing it also asks for argumentative expression (Flick 2000). As a method, episodic

interviewing produces data that prioritises the ways that respondents interpret the social world:

> "It refrains from claims for 'true' data and focuses instead on constructivist and interpretive achievements by the interviewees" (Flick 2000, p.88).

This method was particularly appropriate for this thesis because the work presented here is an examination of interpretation. An examination of how gap year participants interpret the places they visit, the people they meet with and themselves.

In practice, interviews were mainly conducted in self-selecting pairs. I found this worked well, especially when respondents were considering issues that were new to them, as the paired situation allowed for a flow of discussion of ideas to develop. The content of these discussions, rather than their resolution, forms the bulk of the data presented in this thesis. Before commencing the research, and then again at the start of each interview, I made the time to discuss my research carefully with participants. Giving participants the genuine ability to opt in or out of the research process involves giving them sufficient information to allow them to make an informed decision (Skelton 2001). The majority of interviews were recorded as this allowed me to concentrate on the process of the interview, while still gathering verbatim quotes. The format of the interviews was predominantly conversational, though I had a set of questions / topic areas that I used in order to raise and explore particular subjects (see appendix one). In keeping with the episodic model, respondents were then able to construct their own narratives around these topics; to choose what experiences to include and what to leave out. Topics would include both the specific and the cognitive, thereby asking for both interpretations of experiences and abstract ideas.

During interviews there was often an element of 'reciprocal interviewing', where respondents would ask questions and interpretations of me. The interview was therefore a process of social interaction and conversation (Arksey and Knight 1999). As a researcher one's role in these conversations is not passive.

Rather, social relations, including the way respondents position the interviewer, act to affect the interview process (Gilbert 1994). During the interview I would often be directly called upon to include some of my own experiences and thoughts. This input needed handling with care in order to respect the need to maintain an environment of open enquiry with the participants. I could not, however, deny this input as, given my position of long term involvement with the project concerned, it was obvious that I did have relevant knowledge and experience. Indeed, to have attempted to deny this would have been to attempt to assume the passive non-role of the distanced researcher. The interview setting is artificial, in that it is contrived for the purpose of research. The researcher therefore affects this setting in many ways, from its construction onwards. If interviews are conversational in style then the interviewer, as well as interviewee, will have to take a role in that conversation.

The popularity of interviews within social science research must not be allowed to disguise their culturally-situated nature. Fontana and Frey (2000) make the argument that USA society has become an 'interview society'. The process and experience of the interview has become so common as to be unavoidable. Interviews dominate in the media, market research, political polls and consumer surveys. They have become not just the universal but also the omnipresent mode of inquiry (Fontana and Frey 2000). I would argue that an interview society is also evident within the UK, with the interview being similarly popularised and naturalised. In such interview societies the rules of interaction have become normalised and held as common cultural currency:

> "The interview and the norms surrounding the enactment of the respondent and researcher roles have evolved to the point where they are institutionalised {...}; rules and roles are known and shared" (Fontana and Frey 2000, p.647).

While the norms may be 'known and shared' in the 'interview societies' of USA and the UK, this is not necessarily a global phenomenon. The interview, as a research method, is culturally situated, expressing values and assumptions. When I proposed to use interviews in my work with communities in Peru, the method was rejected locally in favour of written questionnaire / interviews.

While this took me away from my methodological preferences, ultimately it was a matter of respecting the preferences of participants. The reasons for this rejection were numerous; however, what I wish to highlight here is that it illuminated my own 'normalisation' of the interview process. Indeed, this rejection prompted me to reflect on the methodological presumptions that had guided my research design. I had presumed on the level of 'participation' that respondents would want. Indeed participatory research has to be wary of the difference between participation as a route to *more* data, or as a route to providing respondents with more control over that data. The research project could never have been truly participatory, as there was never collaborative research design, local ownership or an orientation towards social action, all of which have been defined as integral to creating participatory research (Kemmis and McTaggart 2000).

I produced a self-completion questionnaire (see appendix two) for use in San Gabriel. There is great diversity in the way questionnaires are used (Oppenheim 1992) and in my questionnaires I wanted open-ended questions rather than structured closed-answer questions. This emphasis was constant throughout my methodology and reflects the desire to produce qualitative rather than quantitative data. Unlike an interview, a questionnaire has no interviewer able to re-phrase a question or pursue a particular answer, and so a questionnaire has to be carefully written with questions that are readily understood (Bryman 2001). Other disadvantages with questionnaires also include considerations about literacy and loss of control over who actually answers the questionnaire (Oppenheim 1992). In the event, the latter disadvantage dealt with the first. Questionnaires were distributed by hand, and I emphasised the possibilities for a collective approach to responding, hence answers could be written by one person (this often appeared to be a younger member of the family) while others contributed. A collective approach remained constant with my use of paired interviewing, and I felt it gave opportunities for informants to discuss the topics raised in the questionnaire.

The design of the questionnaire was simple, leaving plenty of space for answers, which were all open ended. Specific language and terminology were

adapted through local consultation and feedback. For example, initially I referred to the volunteers as 'British' but this was questioned by a number of people who identified them solely as English. Henceforth I changed the language from British to English as the former caused a great deal of confusion and left a number of people unclear about whom they were being asked. In the event the data produced through the San Gabriel questionnaires proved controversial and I have limited its use in this thesis, issues which are discussed further in chapter seven.

Participant observation

Participant observation is the method most closely associated with ethnographic research, and I employed this throughout my work with gap year participants. Such data then formed the basis of the interviews as well as corroboration and contradiction for these interviews. Observation is a common practice, in every day life and academic research:

> "Observation is fundamental to many activities, {...} so one needs to distinguish between observation done to accomplish everyday life activities and that done to understand them" (Brewer 2000, p.58).

Participant–observation, unlike other forms of scientific observation, demands that the observer is also a participant. That is, they participate in the daily realities of the lives of the people they study (Brewer 2000). Through such participation, the researcher is seeking exposure, to the point of immersion, in the full range of social experiences of the study group (Mason 2002). Successful participant observation is demanding. It is not a fast method, rather it takes a great deal of time to become socialised into the group studied and be present to experience a full range of social activities; thus making participant observation a labour intensive method (Brewer 2000).

To be a participant-observer, as a researcher, one needs to have a legitimate role, one that lets you be present and ask questions. Brewer (2000) draws a distinction here between the participant-observer and the observer-participant.

The former adopts a new role in an unfamiliar setting, while the latter has a familiar role in a familiar field, to which they bring the critical reflections of a researcher (Brewer 2000). Under this classification, I acted as an observer-participant, adopting a role that I had played previously in a situation that I knew. Specifically, I acted as 'project leader', for Quest Overseas, to a group of gap year participants (a more detailed discussion of Quest is found in the following section). This position gave me the access I needed for the study, and also provided the basis to form the relationships on which interviews were founded. Functioning in this dual role required that I was explicit with participants about my research. The research was never covert and I had a commitment to all the gap year participants to share with them any observations, specific to them, that I wished to include in my research. Indeed, this proved integral to the study, with many interesting conversations generated as a result of discussing and reflecting on both my own and participants' observations. Ultimately, in respecting this privileged role there are stories and incidences that have been left out of this thesis, as they were not intended to be shared as 'research'.

In both of Brewer's categories of participant-observer and observer-participant there are shortcomings, typified by the alternate positions of 'insider' or 'outsider':

> "While participant observation might reduce the capacity of the researcher to get 'insider' status, especially where it is covert, observant participation reduces the capacity of the researcher to achieve distance from the friendships, group ties and years of association" (Brewer 2000, p.62).

Achieving critical distance was certainly an issue for me, particularly when it came to considerations of organisational structure and function within the gap year. This was due to the established relationship that I had with Quest Overseas as an organisation. In addition, there was the ethical issue of how I used information about the organisation that was only available through my long-term employee knowledge, and would not have been available to an outside researcher. Ultimately, while these knowledges helped me to question

gap year practices I did not use any information that would compromise the established trust between Quest and myself; trust which made this study possible in the first place.

2. Finding the field

As a geographer the 'where' of fieldwork presents a number of questions. Traditionally, the research 'field' was treated as a predominantly physical entity, one specified by topography and identifiable by cartography (Nast 1994). More recently, with the rise of concerns around reflexivity and the positionality of the researcher, locating the 'field' of fieldwork has become a sociological and theoretical concern (Laurie, Dwyer et al. 1999). The 'field' is a social space, one that the researcher enters into in both a political and physical sense. The following discussion deals with the social and physical location of my fieldwork. First, in the form of a discussion based on locating the field, and then as an introduction to the primary sites of this research.

Becoming a stranger:

Locating the social space of the field

Pursuing a sociological definition of the field involves looking beyond topography to define the field. Nast (1994) offers an explanation of field-research as:

> "...research where researcher and researched directly interact in relationships that tend to be periodic, short and intense" (Nast 1994, p.54).

What is important about this definition is that it allows for the abandonment of the idea of the field as a neutral, physical space, in favour of a field that can include the entire research process. Processes from decision-making to methodological design and data analysis can be included in the social terrain of the 'field' (Laurie, Dwyer et al. 1999). The importance of this approach is that it acknowledges the multiple influences involved in establishing the relationships of research. Thus, the researcher does not move in and out of the field through

some form of physical mobility; rather they are found throughout, negotiating with the research process, and constructing the field. Identifying the 'field' involves realising that it is the space where academia and life outside the academy meet; 'the field' is found at this intersection. The field only exists as a field of study, through the process of study:

> "As academics we create, indeed invent, fields through our academic stories and projects; there is no reified field separate from our construction of it" (Staeheli and Lawson 1994, p.97).

Accepting the social nature of the field involves recognising the prominence of relations of power within that field. In this way the myth of a passive neutral place of research can be abandoned in favour of an actively constructed space, in which researcher and researched together create a social space.

Identifying the field of this thesis required a recognition of multiple fields which reflect the varying relationships, and therefore spaces, that existed between my research participants and myself as researcher. This range of spaces and relationships was a result of the use of diverse methods and researched groups. Three principle groups contributed to this thesis: the travelling gap year participants with whom I conducted interview based research, the members of the host community who participated in the questionnaire process, and, finally, the field of the gap year industry in which I conducted content anlysis of written sources and interviews with key members. The reasons for variation in methods are discussed in more detail in the following section. However, these different approaches, and the different groups involved, created different relationships, and hence different fields of research.

One of the key delineators, for me, in identifying these different fields was the different research relationships I had in each. Within the first field of travelling gap year participants, relationships were a key component in constructing that field. My relationships with the respondents were close and personal, so permitting for in-depth discussions of research issues. These relationships were complicated, though also legitimised, through my dual role as researcher and

project manager, discussed previously. The gap year participants were all white, roughly 65% female[21], predominantly middles class, predominantly British and had (mostly) attended the UK education system (see appendix three for short group biographies[22]). This placed them in many of the same social categories that I personally occupy, however this should not be confused with making this field 'at home', or with any claims to stand-point epistemology. In any research there is always work with people across difference, regardless of similarities in social background:

> "... we can never *not* work with "others" who are separate and different from ourselves; difference is an essential aspect of all social interactions" (Nast 1994, p.57).

Kobayashi echoes such a position, reminding researchers of the partial nature of commonalities that undermine assumptions of a shared 'standpoint'(Kobayashi 1994). The 'field' is the space in which the researcher and researched come together, it is no one's 'home'.

The effect of the researcher and the product of the field that is constructed through their presence is, in part, to make 'difference' visible. What makes research worth doing, what makes questions appear and be worth pursuing, is the question of how people who are not 'I' understand and interact with their social world. I make this argument as an elaboration of Cindi Katz's (1994) argument that as an ethnographer "One goes to the field as a kind of 'stranger'" (Katz 1994, p.68). Katz makes this point in the context of her research in both

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[21] Across the gap year it is estimated that roughly 60% of participants are female, and certainly of those that choose to travel with organisations, as opposed to independently, women are predominant.

[22] I have used homogenised rather than individualised biographies in order to retain a focus on what participants have said, rather than who, socially, they are. Within discussions of the gap year there many assumptions made linking the presumed class of participants to the experience they are assumed to have. In order to distance this work form such assumptions and instead offer an analysis of the knowledges participants produce, I have chosen to concentrate on what has been said, as opposed to the social profile of the speaker.

the Sudan and in Harlem, New York, establishing that through the status of stranger she is able to:

> "... ask questions that under other circumstances might seem (even more) intrusive, ignorant, or inane to those that answer them" (Katz 1994, p.69).

I would extend this argument to suggest that the existence of a researcher, ethnographer or otherwise, makes 'strangeness' possible to all within the field. That is, the researcher embodies the idea that what is 'known' by the researched, what is obvious and naturalised to them, may not be so for others; that strangers can indeed exist. This embodiment becomes particularly pronounced when the field may appear to be close to the researcher's 'home', and close to their own knowledge. This experience was certainly evidenced within my research. Gap year participants came to reflect upon their own knowledges through the process of the research. In this sense, my role in denying the 'common sense' or natural nature of these knowledges by asking questions and not holding the same knowledges, made strangeness a possibility for everyone involved. These complicated dynamics illustrate the constructed nature of the 'field', and the ways in which constructing that field also changes existing dynamics. The field in this research was neither static nor natural. Rather, it existed *through* the research, and the process of being part of that field was neither neutral nor passive for those cordoned within it.

The concept of the *possibility* of strangeness remains constant in all the research fields constructed in my study. My relationships with the fields of San Gabriel and of the gap year industry were fundamentally more distanced than those with the field constructed around the travelling gap year students. My position as stranger in these fields was perhaps more obvious, or identifiably foreign, and consequently the inanity of many of my questions less of a surprise to these research participants. In conclusion, fieldwork forms the centrepiece of this study, but recognising the spaces of this research is not a matter of cartography. Instead, it is a matter of politics and ultimately relationships. These relationships are not constructed in social abstraction, but in specific places. The

following two sections deal with the organisational and practical spaces of this study.

Introducing Quest Overseas

Late in 1998, I left a job with the Environment Agency and started work with Quest Overseas. This was my introduction to the organisation, to the gap year, to South America and ultimately to academia. Quest Overseas (Quest) is at the heart of the empirical work in this thesis, with a Quest project forming the central case study. Consequently, it is worth providing an introduction to the organisation.

Michael Amphlet, who remains the managing director, established Quest in 1995. Originally, the company worked only in South America and provided mixed three-month gap year packages which included a period of language learning, a month of 'volunteer' work and a six-week expedition. This format remains the mainstay of Quest operations; however, they now also offer gap year packages in East Africa, and a variety of shorter holiday and expedition options (see: Quest Overseas 2003). Quest is premised on offering structured placements to teams of up to sixteen participants accompanied by one or two leaders. As an organisation, it relies on long term relationships with 'volunteer' projects, returning to the same site over several years, and there is an emphasis on employing local staff and providing a material, as well as a labour, commitment to projects. At present, Quest have four projects in South America, two of which are in Ecuador, and one each in Peru and Bolivia. Of these, the Peruvian project, on which this study in based, is the longest standing; Quest began their involvement back in 1995 (specific details of this project are discussed in greater detail below). In 1995, Quest was one of a few organisations working in South America (Raleigh International and Project Trust being notable others). At the time of writing, in 2004, South American destinations are among the most popular and many organisations, including World Challenge, Teaching & Projects Abroad, Africa & Asia Adventure and Venture Co., offer South American packages (see table one at the end of this chapter for details). This rise in popularity is in part attributable to Prince

William and his visit to Chile as part of his own gap year in 2001[23] (Wilson 2002). For Quest, the arrival of other organisations to the region has resulted in increased competition and a corresponding need to offer a wider variety of programmes. As an organisation, Quest remains relatively small within the gap year market place, sending in the region of 250 participants a year; they are also one of the more expensive providers.

I have had a sustained relationship with Quest since starting to work for them in 1998. Initially I worked as a project leader, responsible for managing groups of students on the San Gabriel project in Villa Maria, Triunfo, Lima, Peru. From 2000 onwards I also worked as an expedition leader guiding trips around Peru and Bolivia. All of this work has been seasonal, spread between January and June. I have also provided staff and student training in the UK at other times of the year. It was through running the volunteer project for Quest that I first began to question what was being learnt from such experiences and why young people were so keen to have them. These organic questions formed the basis of my initial research proposal. Consequently, it is hard to identify exactly when my research started, what is included and what left out. Rather, many of the experiences that I have had, over many years, have acted if not to inform my research, then at the very least to inspire it.

Introducing San Gabriel

The majority of the primary data in this project is based in and on experiences in San Gabriel. This is the location for Quest's longest standing project, and the one I have been involved in over several years. San Gabriel is an area within Villa Maria del Triunfo, an area to which many descriptive words are applied, including the A'level geography speak of 'shanty town', the Peruvian government language of *Pueblos Jouvenes* (new towns) and also 'emergency' or 'temporary' settlements. Locally the term *Asientos Humanos* (human settlements) shortened to A.A.H.H, is used.

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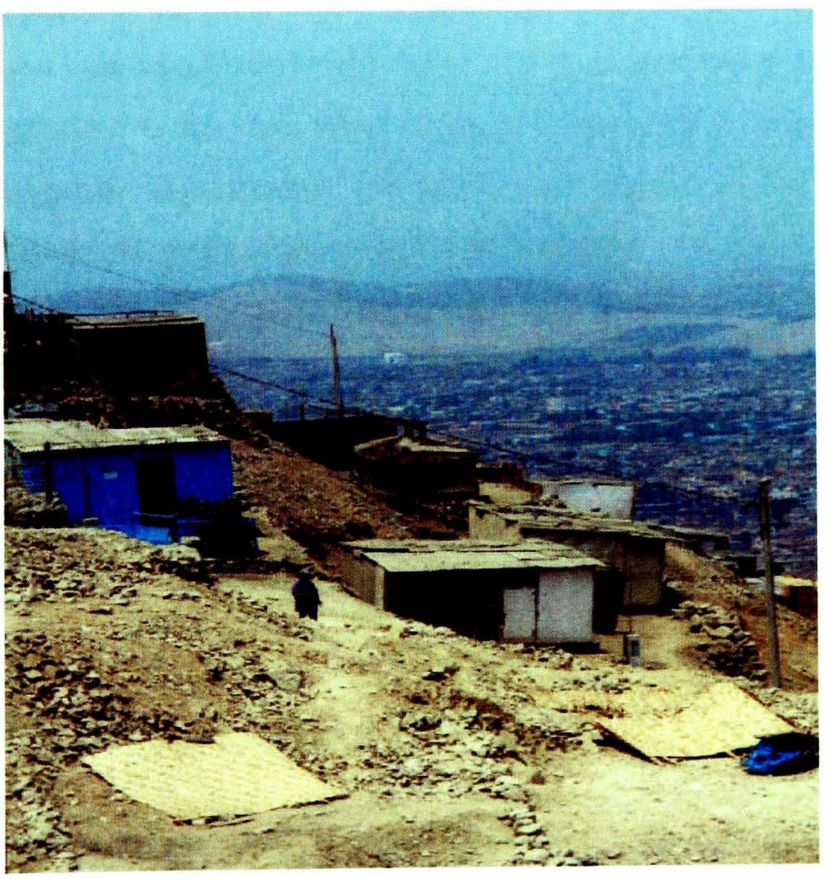
[23] In an interview with Raleigh International it was estimated that, for 2002 the year after Prince William's gap year, they recived a 200% increase in applicants for their Chile programme.

San Gabriel is in the south of Lima and like much of Villa Maria del Triunfo (VMT) has grown rapidly in the last thirty years as a result of massive migration from the rural areas of Peru. Migration has occurred for many reasons, including the terrorism of Sendero Luminoso (the Shinning Path), which was prevalent through much of the 1980s and early 1990s. Poverty, rural marginalisation and unemployment have also been factors. San Gabriel is divided into roughly twenty communities, each with their own internal systems of organisation. There is a great deal of differentiation, and often tension, between the different communities. One of the most notable divisions is in the distribution of services and resources. Those communities that have been settled the longest (such as Los Pinos, Buenos Aires and 30 de Agosto) have streetlights, some tarmac roads, houses that are at least partially brick built and some form of plumbed water. Climbing the hills away from the main road you come to newer communities, such as Villa Sol, San Francisco, Japon, with correspondingly fewer resources.

The photographs below show areas of San Gabriel.



The presence of the *Compleco de Deportivas* (sports complex) makes San Gabriel quite unusual within Lima. The sports complex was built in the early 1980s by the government of Alan Garcia. The idea was to provide a municipal public access sports facility in Villa Maria del Triunfo, which was seen as marginalized within Lima[24]. The complex now sits in the middle of the communities of San Gabriel, which grew up around it. The complex consists of two full-sized and one small swimming pool, several gravel football pitches, multi-purpose concrete volley ball areas, a gravel running track, two *polota* walls and a playground. The complex also acts as a centre for various projects and local initiatives. One such initiative is the involvement of the organisation CEDRO (Centro de información y educación para la prevención del abuso de drogas) an anti drugs NGO based in Lima. CEDRO has a variety of projects working with teenagers and young people, and aims to help those with drug problems, and to provide support, training and education as a means of increasing young people's opportunities.

One of CEDRO's outreach workers, Alejandro Menendez also developed a project to work with local children. This project aimed to discourage

[24] Garcia also planned an elevated railway to help link the area to central Lima. Stations were built, tracks laid and long sections of elevated concrete construction erected, however money ran out before central Lima was reached, and now though VMT may have its railway, the line comes to an apparent end with hanging steel above the motorway.

involvement in drugs, while also providing opportunities and entertainment for local children. Alejandro made contact with Quest Overseas with the idea of establishing a programme of summer activities for local children. This is the project that Quest have been involved in since 1995. The idea of the project is relatively simple, and uses groups of British volunteers, who live in San Gabriel, in a makeshift camp in the changing rooms of the swimming pool, for a month at a time, and provide a programme of sports and arts based activities on a daily basis. The project has grown over the last few years and now includes several year-round programmes. While these are funded by a contribution made by the British volunteers[25], they are staffed and run locally.

3. *Field*work & work in the field

As discussed at the beginning of the preceding section, the 'field', as a space of research, is theoretically mountainous. The field becomes the space where the ideals of research meet realities, where my agendas meet those of participants. The space where clean-cut methodological theory encounters the dusty, complicated multi-tasking reality of people's lives. As a consequence of all these 'realities', my methods underwent adaptation, which is discussed in the following section.

The field of gap year students

I conducted research with two separate groups of gap year students, both of which were involved with Quest's San Gabriel project. The first group included fourteen participants, and I was with them from mid February to April 2001. During this period they were travelling as a group in Peru and Bolivia immediately after spending a month in San Gabriel. I then spent three months in early 2002 with the second group. This group initially consisted of seventeen participants (one had to go home after the San Gabriel phase). In both groups certain participants emerged as either more willing to participate in the research or more articulate when they did so, I have identified such participants as 'key informants' and their comments and quotations are predominant in the relevant

[25] At present, each participant contributes £500.

empirical chapters. Appendix three provides a full list of participants' pseudonyms. The ethnographic work with both groups involved interviews and participant observation; appendix one provides a list of interview themes. Interviews were conversational in style and I used the themes listed to provide a guide to key topics that I wished to discuss.

Access to participants was provided through my role as a project / expedition leader for these two Quest teams. The duality of my role, as researcher and practitioner has already been briefly mentioned, and while it was a complicating factor it also facilitated the research, giving me access, and more importantly, allowing me to develop the relationships that were central to this research. As discussed earlier, being a researcher is not a neutral position, rather one inherently influences that which is researched. Consequently, the distance between researching a field and 'practising' within in it, in the sense of working in and constituting that field, are never fully distinct. The roles of researcher and practitioner necessitated encouraging participants to engage with their experiences in South America, with their construction of others and self, and, ultimately, with their reactions to, and practice during, their gap year. Conducting research helped me, as a practitioner, to engage students in reflecting on their experiences[26]. Indeed, several participants mentioned how the research, and specifically the interview process, had prompted them to think about new things or to think in new ways. Hence, the research process directly influenced their gap year experiences. As a practitioner, the process of research helped me to further engage my students in their experiences; as a researcher, being a practitioner provided me with the access and the relationships to conduct research; so, the distance between my aims as a researcher and practitioner appear ever narrower. Finally, it is also interesting to note that Quest, as an organisation, is reflecting on its own practice within projects. Part of the outcome of which has been the introduction of a series of workshops to

[26] The relevance of reflection on engagement with, and learning from, experiences is discussed in chapter seven. In attempting to a pedagogical approach to the gap year I argue that process of reflection are integral.

help students reflect on and understand their experiences in more processed ways. So, the research process has directly influenced practice.

The field of San Gabriel

The second field to consider is the one constructed around the San Gabriel host communities. It is important to reiterate that San Gabriel is not a single homogenous community, but rather comprises a diversity that represents regional differences, material differences and ethnic differences. In at least partial recognition of this diversity I carried out work across a wide range of local communities. Access for this work was provided through my established relationships with local people, and my regular presence in the area due to my long-term involvement with Quest. In conducting the research, I was fortunate in working with Elvis, a local intermediary, who acted as co-researcher, establishing my credentials as well as providing access to respondents. I have known Elvis for several years, initially through his involvement in the San Gabriel Quest project. At the time of the research he was seventeen, lived locally (in the community of Buenos Aires) and worked locally. I did not pay him directly for his role in the research, and he himself proposed that he help me. However, he has received support from Quest and I personally have funded his schooling for the last two years.

Questionnaires were distributed through the local communities and in person by Elvis and myself, and then collected in person two or three days later. With one exception all claimed respondents[27] were women, and most, though not all, were mothers. When we arrived in a community, we would either seek out or be referred to local *organisers* who had responsibility for matters to do with community organisation. These were nearly all woman, when I discussed this with Elvis he explained that *"Los padres no tienen ninos"* (fathers do not have children). In essence, the project I was researching was to do with children, and was therefore seen as the concern of women. This presents an obvious gender dimension to the work presented here. In addition, my previous involvement in

[27] While I cannot be sure who furnished the responses, all the questionnaires were given to women, while names were optional, all respondents included them and all bar one were women.

San Gabriel undoubtedly positioned me as connected to Quest, Alejandro Menendez and, to some degree, CEDRO. This association shaped the narratives that people offered me. Consequently, I read them in this context, assuming that people were representing themselves not to an unknown researcher, but to a known contextualised person.

Producing data in San Gabriel was difficult for a number of reasons. Consequently the data presented in this thesis (see chapter seven) is, I feel a relatively thin account. Having spent significant time in San Gabriel over the last five years I am aware that perspectives and opinions on the Quest project are complex and not homogeneous. The project crosses a variety of local divisions and there are local political issue involved in whom the project works with and how resources are distributed, issues which certainly in the past have caused tensions. However this was not the narrative I produced in San Gabriel. Rather the questionnaire data produced a relatively homogenous account and one that focused on the positive aspects of the project. This is certainly an interesting and important story, but it must be read as a partial and positioned account. The people involved in the research were all local women and most had a local community role, thus positioning them in particular ways. Furthermore, the people conducting the research, Elvis and myself, were also positioned and seen as closely related to the project. Consequently the narrative produced is one part of the story, and must be read in this way.

Other methodological limitations also need to be acknowledged, including the comparatively short research period (one month). In order to produce a more complex and deeper account of San Gabriel's relationship to the Quest project a greater period of time, and ideally including ethnographic work, would be needed. Furthermore, while I draw on anecdotal experience with local children the questionnaire data is from adults. The relationship to, and involvement with the Quest project is going to be markedly different between adults and children. If the role the project plays in producing understandings of others is to be understood, it is vital that research with local children as well as adults is conducted, though the ethical issues of such research would need careful consideration. In summary, the data produced through work in San Gabriel

cannot be directly compared to the data produced with gap year participants. Rather the San Gabriel data presents an important but partial view, one tempered by the relative thinness of the data. This data is analysed and discussed in chapter seven, and such a consideration of host voices is vital to ongoing gap year research.

A field of professional representation

The third field constructed in this research is one based on the sites of production of organised narratives and 'official' stories about the gap year. This field comprises the British media and gap year organisations, their representatives and their representations. As a field, this one is less bound in time or space than the other two, and is made up predominantly of written texts. In entering this field, I examined the way *The Gap Year*, as a capital lettered, titled, social space and activity, is produced. Or more specifically, how narratives and values are constructed around this social territory.

The texts analysed in this field were taken from the media and the gap year industry (print and web-based). Particularly with the text from the industry, there is a clear agenda and purpose to the representations produced; that is, to sell both the idea and a particular packaged form of the gap year. The purposefulness of the text makes this field a particularly interesting one with regard to the issue of representation. Through these texts, the gap year industry seeks to speak to people's desires and imaginations. Promotional texts provide representations that the industry wishes to introduce to public discourse. Therefore my interest in this data is an interest in how the members of the gap year industry wish to be perceived, the geographical imaginations that they produce and reproduce, and the aspirations of the young people whom they seek to engage with and shape. In analytically reading these forms of text, I seek to historicize and politicise the representations offered, and to place them into a wider context.

In addition to textual analysis, I also conducted interviews with members of this field (see appendix four). These were, in effect, interviews with elites, in the

sense that these people all exercised power and control within the organisations they worked for or ran (Arksey and Knight 1999). These interviews differed from those with gap year participants in that they were not premised on ethnographic data or relationships. As a result, these interviews were more formal and less discursive.

The final data source within this field is media coverage of the gap year. I have approached the media as a site of representation rather than of description or analysis. This approach recognises the role of the media in producing representations that reflect and inform public discourse:

> "A newspaper represents the world for a group of people in an accepted way, otherwise people would not buy it. In this context the newspaper becomes an indicator of their worldviews" (Bauer and Gaskell 2000, p.6).

In using the media in this way, I have accepted it as a powerful force within (British) public discourse (Frow and Morris 2000). Individual media representations may be contested and resisted, and often media representation can themselves be fractured and inconsistent. Regardless, the media is a key informer and reflector of public discourse, and therefore has been treated as a part of the field of representation about the gap year.

In conclusion, in introducing the multiple fields of this study I have, by necessity, made them discrete. However, there are multiple intersections and crossovers between these fields; for example Elvis, who lives in San Gabriel, yet works for a gap year organisation and socialises with gap year participants. Other individuals and groups similarly cross between the multiple fields of this research. Indeed, the people of San Gabriel construct their own ways of knowing and interpreting the gap year and the young people who come to their communities. Consequently, they too participate and have experiences that are products of the gap year. Hence, while I have introduced these fields as distinct, the point of this research is, at least in part, to examine the intersections between these fields, the ways they cut across and inform one another.

Locating the field of fieldwork has proved a task in theoretical cartography. There are multiple fields encountered within this research in which, as a researcher, I have varying relationships. In constructing and entering these fields I was simultaneously part of them and constituted by them. Separating out researcher, data and fields is a fruitless task, as they exist in their relationships to one another. Different research methods were used in different fields. The data produced offers an analysis of the discourses that underpin the gap year. These discourses are produced from different social positions which themselves are historically and politically constituted.

4. Producing knowledge, writing data

The final area of methodology to consider is the process of data analysis and presentation. It is through presenting research, a process predominantly done through writing, that knowledge is, in many senses, constructed (Bryman 2001). Writing-up is far from a simple or apolitical process. By writing-up, data is converted into knowledge to be recognised in the academy. Writing is the production of new knowledges through combining the many sources and fractured streams of data into new ideas, theories and arguments. Consequently, as the final section of this methodology I discuss the ways data was analysed, and some of the key decisions made in the written production of this thesis.

Data analysis

I returned from fieldwork with several forms of data, the analysis of which is dealt with in turn. The majority of data took the form of recorded interviews, which I transcribed verbatim. Transcribing was undoubtedly a time-consuming and laborious process, but also vital for data familiarisation. Turning spoken language into written language is not without its politics. Spoken language includes much that is unavailable to written language. For example, how does one account for changes in voice, expression, emotion, or volume? Equally, written language includes a grammatical system that spoken language does not have. Transcription is a process of decision making, of deciding what to record and how to do it:

> "Consequently, transcription is neither neutral nor value-free. What passes from tape to paper is the result of decisions about what ought to go on paper" (Arksey and Knight 1999, p.141).

In trying to stay true to my respondents' offerings, I transcribed as much as possible verbatim, adding no grammar, and including much of the repetition and many of the pauses that occurred. However, this raw form of data does not lend itself well to communication in the written form. So, when using direct quotations in the written work I have offered translation from spoken to written text through the addition of grammar and the omission of obvious repetitions or pauses. Analysis of transcribed interviews was undertaken in combination with the participant observation field notes using close reading. This involved extensive data familiarisation followed by grouping of responses under themes, looking for commonalities and differences.

The data from the questionnaires was in the first instance, translated from Spanish to English. While I was able to perform a rough translation, I wanted as complete a translation as possible, and so employed professional translators. Once translated, the responses were grouped and fed into a spreadsheet. The data set was too small and too selective to provide meaningful statistical anlysis, rather it provided indications of trends, common perceptions and opinions. As with the interview data, some direct quotations are also used in the analysis. These are provided in translation and used as indicative of general trends. The way in which the data was collected determined the scope of its use, so that the questionnaire responses were analysed from the perspective of chosen representations offered to a known and positioned researcher.

Conclusions

This chapter has dealt with the ways in which research has been conducted and data produced. It has been argued that such issues cover both practical and theoretical territory. Defining a methodological approach to research is a matter of defining one's beliefs in the way knowledge can, and should, be produced. In

this study I have recognised the inevitable partiality and fractured nature of the realities represented here. I have also discussed the ways a PAR methodology was incorporated into the study. While PAR offered an ethical high ground, it was a methodology that was practically unattainable within this work; although the principles, if not the practice, proved an inspiration. Beyond methodology there is the technical matter of methods, and the 'how' of research. Interviewing, participant observation and content analysis of text are at the heart of this thesis. These methods were employed in a variety of ways to fit with the different fields encountered and constructed during the research process.

This chapter and the preceding one have offered a guide to the theoretical, political and academic landscape in which this thesis has been produced. In the following chapters empirical data and discussion will explore *'the gap year'*. Questions will focus on how the gap year has become an industry and has established itself in public discourse. I examine how gap year programmes engage with development agendas and, in the final chapter, I bring a social justice and critical pedagogy perspective to bear on the gap year.

Table of Gap Year Organisations

Table one:

This table shows the major organisations that, in 2003 worked in Latin America. Personnel at organisations marked with '*' were interviewed for this thesis.

Key:

Description of key terms used:

Status	Denotes whether an organisation is 'commercial (profit making), not-for profit, or has charitable status
Activities Offered	Organisations offer predominantly either volunteer (vol.) activities and / or group travel 'expeditions' (exped.)
Other areas worked in?	While some organisations work in specific locations, others have a global spread, this has been indicated by a list of the continents organisations have programmes within
Type of programmes offered	There are two main types of programme offered, either 'projects' which involve groups with international staff working in specific locations, or 'placements' which involve individuals or pairs working alone. I have then included a rough typology of activities offered- grouped into 'conservation', 'teaching' 'children' (which includes sport, art and other activities run outside of schools) 'health', 'construction' and 'other' (which included business, journalism and other activities).

Name of Organisation	Status	Length of programme (weeks)	Length of volunteer phase (weeks)	Year started in Latin America	Other areas worked in	Est. # of participants to Latin America for 2003 (total per year)	Types of programmes offered in Latin America
Africa & Asia venture	Commercial	16- 26	16-26	2004	Asia, Africa	40	Projects: Teaching, environmental
Changing Worlds	Commercial	16	16	2003	Worldwide	11 (220)	Projects: Teaching
Coral Cay	Not for profit	2-12	2-12	1986	Asia South Pacific	250 (800)	Projects: Conservation
Gap Activities Projects	Charity	12- 52	12-52	1993	Worldwide	250 (1400)	Placements: All types
*Gap Challenge	Commercial	8, 24 or 36	8,24,36	1996	Worldwide	80 (500-600)	Placements: Teaching, children, health, other
Greenforce	Not for profit	6-10	4 con. 4 vol	1999	Worldwide	60	Projects: Conservation
i-to-i	Commercial	1-24	1-24	1999	Worldwide	1500	Placements: All types
MADventure	Commercial	8-12 (excl. overland trips)	6-8	2003	Africa	30-40	Projects: Conservation,
Outreach International	Commercial	12	12	2002	Worldwide	20	Projects: Conservation, humanitarian (NGO, children), expedition
Personal Overseas Development	Commercial	12-24	8-20	2001	Africa, Asia	N/A	Projects: Children, conservation, teaching
Project Trust	Charity	32-52	32-52	1989	Worldwide	70	Placements: Teaching,
*Quest Overseas	Commercial	12	4	1995	Africa	130 (250)	Projects: Children, conservation, other
*Raleigh International	Charity	10	3 projects at 3wks	1984/85	Worldwide	250 (1500-2000)	Projects: Construction,
*Teaching & Projects Abroad	Commercial	4-52	4-52	2001	Worldwide	N/A (1,800)	Projects: Teaching, health, children, other
Travellers Worldwide	Commercial	4-24	4-24	2001	Worldwide	Unknown (1000)	Projects: Teaching, conservation, other.
Trekforce	Commercial	8	8	1996	Indonesia	65	Projects: Expedition conservation , teaching
Venture Co.	Commercial	16	4	1999	Asia	80	Projects: All types

Chapter four:

A geography of the gap year

Introduction

Gap year programmes represent a collision of agendas. Personal development collides with social change, the capitalism of tourism crashes against the altruism of the volunteer, and values of a corporate world encounter experiments in youth identity. The coming together of these discourses and histories produces the spaces, social as well as physical, in which the gap year can exist. The following chapter presents an examination of the way the gap year industry creates, and functions within, a specific geography. This geography structures not only where gap year programmes operate but also the practices they engage in, and the ways encounters between disparate people are framed.

Central to the following chapter is an analysis of the ways in which the gap year industry engages with discourses of development and mobilises a colonial gaze in the pursuit of a geography of the gap year. I will argue that the industry promotes a particular conception of 'third world space', one within which gap year programmes fit into a modernisation based logic of development. Furthermore, I argue that the geographies of colonialism remain an inspiration to the gap year, which assists in producing spaces organised to allow the consumption of cultures and spaces of 'otherness'. Before starting this geographical examination, it should be reiterated that this, and the following chapter, focus exclusively on the gap year industry. Consequently, the empirical emphasis is on industry and media representations, and these are examined for their geographical and spatial dimensions. By comparison chapters six and seven explore the way gap year participants experience projects, offering alternative voices to the industrial representations.

The following chapter is split into two sections. The first considers how the geography of gap year programmes is represented by gap year organisations. In this section, I argue the industry attempts to produce a homogenous apolitical and ahistorical space, in which 'simple' explanations and solutions for social situations can be relied upon. Following on from this, in the second part of the chapter, I consider the ways the practice of development is represented by this industry, arguing that an emphasis is placed on the 'simplicity of action'.

1. Mapping the gap year

Although the gap year takes many forms and involves travel to many places, for a significant proportion of gap year participants the 'third world' is *the* place to go. Therefore this thesis exclusively focuses on third world volunteer-tourism gap years. Chapter two provided an examination of the historical and geographical context of the gap year; in extending the arguments made in chapter two, this chapter explores the ways that the gap year industry represents the geography of its practice. Specifically, I examine the ways that the 'third world' is identified, and created as a space that legitimises the practice of gap year programmes.

Location, location, location

The Year Out Group estimates 10,000 young people per year take part in structured volunteer placements in 'third world' countries[28]. The notion of the 'third world' is important in the popularity of these programmes. Indeed the very legitimacy of such programmes is rooted in a concept of a 'third world', where there is 'need', and where European young people have the ability, and right, to meet this need.

The overwhelming representation of destination countries offered by much of the gap year industry, is one that emphasises the 'simplicity' of travel. Essentially, travel is offered outside of geographical, historical, political and

[28] Figure taken from an interview in 2001 with Richard Oliver, chair of the Year Out Group.

social context. Homogenous descriptions of groups of people and cultures are relied on to produce evocative and recognisable imagery. The three quotations below are taken from different gap year organisations and offer descriptions of Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia, respectively:

> "This tropical paradise ignites the Western imagination like no other South American country, and the people of Brazil delight visitors with their energy and joy." (Travellers Worldwide 2003).

> "Often chaotic and sometimes infuriating, it is a beautiful country where the people are unfailingly charming and welcome GAP volunteers into their homes" (GAP Activity Projects 2003).

> "With a generally shy and gracious population, Bolivia is one of the safest Latin American countries to visit". (Travellers Worldwide 2003).

All three of the above statements seek to summarise entire nations of people in simple pairs of descriptors. This is a process of 'essentialising' others (Jackson 1989), the purpose of which is to create simple, recognisable categories through which such others can be 'known'. In the first of the above quotations, Travellers Worldwide makes a direct reference to the western imagination, which is effectively what all the above statements aim to appeal to. The need to create a simple geography, one that offers the opportunity for consumption, is integral to the global map created by the gap year industry. It is the availability of prescribed cultural experiences, and indicators of their successful consumption, that in part defines the geography of the gap year. This approach to geographical construction is constant with Said's 'Orientalism', a concept through which Said proposed Europe has created an 'oriental' space:

> "The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said 1978, p.1).

In a similar manner, the gap year industry creates a space populated by the existence of consumable experiences of 'the other'. So, whether it is the 'energy and joy' in Brazil, the invitations into Paraguayan homes, or the 'shy graciousness' of Bolivians, a gap year traveller knows what to expect and how to consume the experience. Through these essentialised, textual representations, which are supported by images, discussed later in this chapter the traveller is offered a 'known' geography. That is, they are provided with 'expectations' of the nature of their destinations, with no suggestion that these many not be universal. Thus, a geography idealised for the traveller is constructed. Based on the above statements travellers can expect spaces that are a 'delight to visitors', 'charming and welcoming' and, finally 'safe'. Such geographies are not offered as fractured or partial, but rather as the 'essential' nature of the places and peoples to be visited.

As a final point, it is worth highlighting the link made by i-to-i in the above quotation between the 'shy and gracious' nature of Bolivians and the safety of the country. With these words, i-to-i are effectively creating a stereotype to perform a particular marketing function. In this case, making the country, in one line, 'safe'. Stereotypes are nearly always created and used to legitimate particular social practices. The travel industry, and more recently the gap year industry, creates, maintains and trades in representations and imagery that have strategic value. As I argue throughout this chapter, 'strategic value', in this case, is the ability to both legitimate and make possible the practices of gap year programmes.

A geography of experimentation

The gap year industry offers a particular reinterpretation of the colonial gaze in its production of, what I term, 'a geography of experimentation'. During the era of colonialism the colonies became a place of otherness and experimentation. For the European colonisers, the colonies came to offer places where behavioural norms could be subverted and where different identities, which would not necessarily be tolerated at 'home', could be enacted. In 1907 Carl

Siger (quoted in: Cesaire 1972) referred to the 'new countries' of the world as offering possibilities for violent encounter. A form of expression he saw as necessary, yet that could not readily be sanctioned in the 'metropolitan countries':

> "Thus to a certain extent the colonies can serve as a safety valve for modern society" (Siger quoted in: Cesaire 1972, p.177).

While gap year travellers may not engage in the violent activities that Siger favoured, they do engage in other activities not permitted or available to them at 'home'. The gap year industry is able to market work placements that involve young people in, amongst other activities, teaching, medical work, and construction work. These are all professions in which, in the UK, one would not be allowed to participate without qualifications[29]. The freedom from qualifications can be used as an enticing attraction for such placements. For example, Travellers Worldwide, an organisation that offers placements in 16 countries spread across the globe, emphasises in bold type on the opening page of their website: "You don't need any formal qualifications" (Travellers Worldwide 2003). They then reiterate this point when specific placements are considered, for example:

> "You don't need qualifications to participate in a teaching placement in Argentina" (Travellers Worldwide 2003).

Travellers Worldwide seemingly imply that no one in Argentina is qualified to teach, thereby creating a situation in which gap year students can be sufficiently 'expert' to, themselves, become teachers. The supposed freedom from qualifications makes gap year placements accessible, and through these placements young people are able to access professional spaces not available to them in the UK. The gap year industry can therefore represent the gap year as both a time and a space in which young people can experiment with possible future professional identities. This process has become a major selling point for

[29] For examples of such placements see any of the gap year organisations included in the reference list for this thesis, and listed in table one, in chapter three.

the gap year industry, which is able to market placements on the basis of the opportunities they offer for professional and CV advancement (an issue considered in chapter five).

Producing a geography of experimentation, entails producing a set of social relations within the potential places of experimentation. In the colonies referred to by Siger (see: Cesaire 1972) such social relations were ones that permitted, according to the colonists, the violent encounters that Siger highlighted. In producing a contemporary geography of experimentation, the gap year industry must also claim a system of social relations that permits, and makes justifiable, such experimentation. The quotation below is taken from the brochure of Teaching and Projects Abroad (TAPA), a large gap year company sending an estimated 1,800 students per year on gap year placements. The quotation is from an unnamed student and actually manages to demonstrate a dehumanisation of those, in this case ill Ghanaians, who populated this student's geography of experimentation:

> "The practical experience I got was very rewarding. You can see everything and do see everything. A single patient in Ghana will often have many different conditions to advanced states, which make them textbook examples. Even though I had no experience, just a good deal of interest, I was allowed to be present in operations and to assist in the delivery of babies." (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003, p.10).

Though perhaps extreme, the above quotation is revealing because it articulates what for many gap year programmes remains un-stated. Namely, that an overseas trip will allow participants to 'practise' at being an adult and a professional (in this case doctor, though lawyer, journalist, teacher are other available professions). The gap year industry is, in effect, marketing a geography where young people can legitimately 'practise' with a group of people who can be learned 'on', rather than 'from'. However, in the same way that Siger's experimentation must have had its victims (those on the receiving end of his violent encounter), so contemporary travellers need to have people on whom to experiment; that is, those they can doctor, or teach, or those who can

bear witness to their new and 'unconventional' identities. The proprietorial gaze of colonialism legitimated Siger's right for violent experimentation, and this same gaze continues (however refocused) to establish the right of the western traveller to a geography of experimentation.

The gap year industry takes an active role in (re)producing the concept of places of experimentation. In so doing, it is marketing, as well as constructing, a system of social relations that conditions the geography in which young westerners travel. In its current incarnation this geography depends on an inequality in power, an inequality that permits the travelling westerner to view ill Ghanaians as 'text books' (see preceding quotation).

A geography of 'need'

"Mongolia, a land of desert and
mountains with a culture older than
Genghis Khan, needs you!"

(Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003, p.18)

A key concept championed within the rationale of gap year programmes, is need. This concept is treated in a largely uncritical way and forms part of the industry's over simplification of 'development'. In the following sections, I do not intend, however, to trivialise the genuine needs of many of the communities where gap year projects operate. Rather, my analysis questions how thoroughly such needs are identified, and how well they are met by the short term, non-specific skilled volunteers who form the bulk of the workforce on gap year projects.

Throughout gap year literature and publicity there are multiple references to the 'usefulness' of volunteers, and how they will be 'needed' by the communities or environments in which they work. The quotation at the start of this section, from Teaching Project Abroad, promises that "a culture older than Genghis Kahn needs you!" (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003, p.18). This statement, made seemingly without irony, implies that Mongolia is crumbling for want of a few British teenagers. Meanwhile, Venture Co. is keen to stress that:

> "We have carefully selected the projects that present the opportunity for you to be of genuine value to an indigenous community and to give something back" (Venture Co. 2002).

A point that Student Partnership Worldwide (SPW) similarly makes with their promise that:

> "SPW will not send you where you are not needed. You will not be doing a job that a local could do better than you" (Student Partnership Worldwide 2002).

Whatever 'genuine value' participants will be, or 'needs' they will meet, are never clarified. Indeed, there is a general vagueness that permeates much of the industry. Centrally, what is being promoted, and at times even created, is a 'geography of need'. That is, a pandemic series of communities who have *needs* that can best, or only, be met by gap year volunteers. It is such a geography that is able to legitimate statements such as the one below:

> "It's *(overseas volunteer work)* a great way to soak yourself in another culture; you may find yourself working with people who know only poverty, disease, hunger and monotony." (gap-year.com 2002).

In this quotation, the gap-year.com, which acts to promote a broad range of gap years, cheerfully advertise the possibility of visiting places of 'poverty, disease, hunger and monotony'. There is a presumption of 'otherness' here, in the presumption that the above geography will be that of 'another culture'. Volunteers are therefore able to transgress their own geography in search of this 'needy' other. The 'third world' spaces of the gap year industry become defined by needs. Needs which are described in terms that make them simple, requiring only the labour and enthusiasm of non-skilled volunteers. The 'third world' then becomes a place defined and marketed by 'needs', which are themselves perceived within a narrow, and somehow 'curable', spectrum. How this framing influences the ways in which host communities perceive themselves, is difficult to establish. However, it is relevant to note that the majority of respondents

from the communities of San Gabriel identified the area as 'needy' in the context of why British volunteers came (discussed further in chapter seven):

> *"I think because it is an area where there are many needy children"* (Sra. Fernandez)

Whether this self-perception exists independently from the gap year programme is unclear. Regardless, the way that the gap year industry constructs its geographies of operation in turn constructs its practices of development.

Danger!

While gap year participants may be keen for the opportunities and 'experimentation' afforded through travel, the risks involved cannot be ignored. The gap year industry has a paradoxical relationship with the issues of danger and risk. On the one hand, industry operators need to prove themselves as safe, yet danger is a marketable commodity, and one that many participants actively seek (see chapter six). Furthermore, the existence of dangers in travelling are part of what legitimises the existence of a gap year industry. That is, the industry can sell 'safety' from these dangers. Consequently, the role of danger within the gap year is at times ambiguous and certainly fractured.

Central to some of the ambiguity around danger is the difference between perceived and actual risk. The gap year industry offers many activities marketed as 'dangerous', with bungee jumping being the archetypal example. However, such activities are probably safer than crossing the average road in the capital of Ecuador or Peru. The prevalence of simplistic explanations and descriptors within the gap year industry reinforces the power of vaguely substantiated and often over-stated 'reputations'. For example, Latin America (seemingly all of it) has inherited a reputation for being 'dangerous'. What this reputation is based on says more about perception than reality. However, the availability of the universalistic and simplistic geography already mentioned makes such reputations easy to maintain. The statement below was made by the parent of a gap year student, and quoted in a recently published report on the gap year:

> "The world like ancient Gaul, is divided into three parts (well it is for gap year parents like me). The first part has food that can be eaten and hospitals that don't require you to bring your own plasma. This includes North America, Western Europe and Australia / New Zealand. The second part has none of the above but is gentle and civilized. This is India. The third part is like the second, except with violence complimentary. Here we're talking at least 80% of South America. Madeline, my seventeen year old daughter, set off for Guatemala, a country which seemed to me (and I may be doing it an injustice), to have civil war like Scotland has weather. If it isn't raining now, just wait twenty minutes."
>
> (Michael Torbert a gap year parent quoted in: Hogg 2001, p.12-13)

This parent manages to sum up whole continents under the neat labels of 'dangerous', 'safe' or 'gentle', he has effectively reduced the entire world to three categories. What such a process of categorisation is based on is unclear. However, such naïve and universalistic geographies become powerful through their influence on practice and their legitimisation in uncritical publications.

Gap year providers themselves may be happy to have their participants' parents perceive destination countries as dangerous. For this image justifies the need for an organisation to 'provide' a placement or trip. Gap year companies respond to this issue of danger by emphasising the safety precautions they take, indeed they focuses almost exclusively on issues of safety rather than danger. Many of the organisations mentioned in this thesis have specific sections of their web sites dedicated to safety. In the case of i-to-i this is euphemistically called a 'parents' section', and deals solely with the support and safety aspects of their placements. Meanwhile, Teaching and Projects Abroad on their website assert that:

> "Before we go anywhere countries must be politically stable and safe. If they are not, we don't go. We are in constant

> contact with the Foreign Office regarding stability and safety and, of course, we have the added security of overseas staff" (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2002)

In the geography of the gap year, danger is a market commodity while safety is a necessity. Gap year participants need to believe they will survive their experiences, while at the same time be able to introduce at least an element of doubt to their peers, parents and maybe even to themselves. Gap year providers need to convince themselves and parents that participants will survive their projects, while still allowing participants a sense that survival will be a struggle. Danger and struggle give currency, and 'authenticity' to gap year experiences, and are an integral part of the geography of the gap year.

The international classroom

Gap year projects take place in a specific geography, however, they also create a particular type of learning space. For the gap year projects discussed here being 'international' is at the core of their being, and at the centre of the education they claim to offer. Previous discussion in this chapter and in chapter two has examined the conditions that identify this 'international' space geographically. What remains to be understood is how this place exists educationally. That is, to examine the international *as* a classroom, and a bound place of learning.

International travel has long been imbued with the power to educate. When combined with the equally-championed educational value of volunteer work (Batchalor and Root 1994; Giles Jr. and Eyler 1994; Yates and Youniss 1998), the concept of international-volunteer work becomes an educational utopia. In the USA, there is an established literature on 'international service-learning'. This is a practice based in schools and colleges where students are able to select a 'service learning' project as part of their formal education (they usually receive course credits for it). While many of these projects are domestic, there is also a proportion based on overseas service, or, in other words, based in an 'international' classroom. Such projects have grown out of a post second world

war belief in the importance of international education in promoting understanding and, ultimately, peace (Crabtree 1998). As a result, the educational claims made for international service projects focus on their value in fostering global citizenship, social responsibility, and democratic participation (Crabtree 1998; Eyler 2000; Wade 2000). Consequently, the providers and pursuers of such experiences are able to create:

> "... an argument in favour of international experience as broadening sojourners minds, developing intercultural communication skills and offering opportunities for personal growth" (Crabtree 1998, p.183).

Effectively, the 'international' as a place that can be visited and 'experienced', is being credited with the ability to educate. Thus, an 'international' classroom is created, in the sense of a definable space that once the student has passed through, they will be able to lay claim to certain knowledges. The quotation below is from the opening page of the brochure for World Challenge Expeditions, a company that provides a range of international expeditions and volunteer placements. Notably, the brochure itself is entitled 'Journeys of a Lifetime', as if it were a book as opposed to advertising material:

> "... all our exciting programmes enable you to learn invaluable life skills, as well as introduce you to wider cultures and the genuine challenges of life survival. For people who want to succeed in life, there is no greater graduation" (World Challenge Expeditions 2001, p.1).

World Challenge is emphasising the point that not only does travel to 'international' spaces have the ability to provide the traveller with certain skills and knowledges, but that such experiences are necessary for 'success'. The reference to 'graduation' acts to formalise the learning within the gap year, a point that will be elaborated on in the following chapter, where the institutionalisation and professionalisation of the gap year is discussed.

Like US international service learning projects, the British gap year premises much of the education its programmes offer upon the international nature of its

placements. That is, on the supposedly inherent qualities of international space to provide learnings about self and other. Unlike many of the US projects, gap year programmes do not have any formal educational links. Consequently, there is rarely any expectation of reflection on an experience, nor are facilitators / teachers provided to manage and promote learning, or to provide alternative contexts for the interpretation of experiences. In contrast to this approach, research has shown that the learning value of projects is enhanced when a more structured educational approach is taken:

> "...programmes with more opportunity for reflection, substantive links between course work and service, and ethnic and cultural diversity have a stronger impact" (Eyler 2000, p.11).

This position is augmented by Crabtree's (1998) claim that a structured pedagogical approach is essential if participants are to learn anything of social value from service-learning projects. It is this issue of 'social value' that makes the question of education so pertinent. What is 'international' for the travelling participants of such projects, is national, local and 'home' for others. In seeking out an international space for learning, travellers also seek out a host community as a site for learning. So, the question of educational outcomes is not an issue of missed opportunities, but rather one of how international space is engaged with, and used, in the pursuit of the education of a visiting minority (issues of education and social value are discussed further in chapter seven).

Time travel

A final point to make in this attempt to map the geography of the gap year, is to note the historicized gaze that is used by the industry. As well as evoking landscapes, both social and topographical, the gap year industry also evokes a relationship with history. The places of destination become not just geographical spaces but also historical views on how the world 'used' to be.

> "Patagonia exists in a time warp intercepted by incongruous modern technology, for example the farmer dressed in

> traditional poncho urging on his oxen and reaching for his mobile telephone to check for messages".
> (Changing Worlds 2003).

Here an image is presented not of a twenty first century farmer proactively using technology as appropriate and accessible to him (be it an ox cart or a mobile phone), but rather as someone 'incongruously' caught between worlds. While the quotation from Changing Worlds suggests that emblems of historic style such as the poncho and the ox cart are to be admired, the admiration offered seems rather romantic[30] implying a simpler and slightly 'backward' existence.

Such a 'time warp' approach to the gap year geography reaffirms a notion of the need for development (see the following section) existing in 'backward' places. In turn, this conceptualisation fits within early modernist approaches, wherein development was the process of backward regions 'catching up' with the developed world (Frank 1966; Sutcliffe 1999). The focus on technology also emphasises a modernist approach towards development. Specifically, in the above quotation, a binary is offered contrasting the technologically empowered developed world with the 'simpler' developing world. Thus echoing modernist faith in technology as both the symbol and source of development.

In conclusion, the gap year industry offers a particular geography in which it can practice. This geography is based on simplified notions, where reductive descriptors, of 'home' and 'away', of 'self' and 'other', can be relied upon. The industry produces a geography inspired by older historical practices, which provides the social and moral justification for the projects it then operates. This geography also frames the social relations in which gap year students and host communities interact. The ways in which this geography is resisted, colluded with and reinterpreted in these interactions is explored is subsequent parts of this thesis.

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[30] See section 'Travel is good for you(th) in chapter two, for further examples of the use of romantic and historicized representations within the gap year industry.

2. The gap year and the spaces of development

The geography constructed by the gap year industry defines the places of operation, and also creates spaces of operation. That is, it creates spaces where certain practices are not just possible but also legitimate. In this section, I unpack the ways in which the practice of development is represented by the gap year industry. I argue that, in effect, the industry offers a simplistic understanding of development, one in which enthusiasm and good intentions prevail. This simplicity is, in part, a response to the simplified geography in which the gap year industry presents itself as operating: a geography of 'need', a geography of homogenous peoples, and a geography seemingly without history or politics.

Don't mention the 'D' word

Analysing the gap year industry's practices of development presents a paradox. For, the industry appears to deliberately avoid the language of (international) development. Searching through the websites and promotional material of various companies it is possible to find many allusions, but few direct references, to 'development'[31]. Rather, a language of 'making a difference', 'doing something worthwhile' or 'contributing to the future of others' predominates, as the following extracts from promotional material indicates:

> "You can be proud to contribute towards a brighter future for the people of The Lubombo Conservancy"
> (Quest Overseas 2002, p.7).

> "You will make a difference wherever you go"
> (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2001, p.1).

> "...worthwhile and rewarding gap challenge placement"
> (World Challenge Expeditions 2001, p.11).

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[31] The language of development that is adopted in most of almost all these organisations is that of 'personal' development, an issue that is discussed in chapter five.

A further example of such language use is found in Coral Keys, a marine conservation organisation which opens its website with a picture of a group of young people entitled 'the change makers'. This image is then accompanied with the claim that they, (the change makers) are:

> "Providing resources to help sustain livelihoods and alleviate poverty through the protection, restoration and management of coral reefs and tropical forests" (Coral Keys 2002).

i-to-i meanwhile ask:

> "Are you looking for a travel adventure with a purpose - one that gives you an experience beyond tourism and provides practical help to local communities? (i-to-i 2002).

A statement that they supplement with the slogan:

> "Develop people. Share cultures. Build futures" (i-to-i 2002).

Despite frequent references to 'developments' few organisations actually style themselves as specifically 'development' based. Rather, they emphasise a series of 'good intentions' as opposed to specific objectives or theoretical approaches, In this, they are reminiscent of the historical 'good intentions' of Victorian missionaries and colonists, such as Livingstone, who sought to offer Africa 'civilisation' and 'progress' (Brantlinger 1986). One notable exception to this avoidance of direct reference to 'development' is Student Partnership Worldwide (SPW), a charitable organisation, which describes itself thus:

> **"SPW is a true development organisation.** We will not send you on an exotic holiday where you can also indulge in a little teaching, or environmental work. You will know that if you participate in one of our programmes **you will be helping to make a real difference** - not only for your CV, but for the people you are working with."
>
> (Original emphasis: Student Partnership Worldwide 2002)

SPW's[32] forthright assertion serves to emphasise the omission of any direct statement about development by the other organisations. For example, in comparison to SPW, Venture Co., a commercial gap year provider working in Latin America and India, asks:

> "Does the idea of travel to far off destinations appeal to you? How about the adventure of joining an expedition into the world's greatest mountain ranges? And I expect you'd like to help a disadvantaged community and acquire new skills while working on an aid project.....At the same time you're probably thinking about how your Gap Year will fit into the broader picture, will it be something to impress future employers and how will it look on your CV?"
> (Venture Co. 2002, p.1).

The difference in priorities between SPW and Venture Co. is apparent in the ways in which they present their volunteer projects. For Venture Co., their 'volunteer' project is a *part* of an over-all trip. So that 'the project' is an activity along the way, comparable to trekking, but where the site to be viewed is a 'disadvantaged community', as opposed to a mountain range. For SPW the volunteer work *is* their project, and they make a clear jibe at would-be 'CV' collectors. This divergence emphasises the point that the gap year industry is not homogenous in either the way programmes are structured or represented. However, in this incidence, as in others, SPW provides the exception that helps to highlight how certain geographies have come to dominate the industry.

By avoiding the language of 'development', many organisations seem to imagine that they can avoid the inevitable questioning of such an agenda. However, whether the language of development is used or not, the agenda is there, thinly disguised in notions of 'disadvantaged communities' (Venture Co. 2002, p.1), 'change makers' (Coral Keys 2002), 'poverty, disease, hunger and

[32] SPW is unusual in the gap year market place it that it seeks to use both local and international volunteers in its placements, furthermore the organisation provides a month long 'in-country' training period for all volunteers, which is considerable more than other organisations do.

monotony' (gap-year.com 2002), or in the names of organisations such as 'Changing Worlds'. Consequently, questions need to be asked about just how, and to what ends, development is being mobilised by these organisations.

Getting on with it....

The language of development may be sparsely used within the gap year industry, but at the same time the industry mobilises its own brand of development discourse. The first point to make about this discourse is the way that 'development' is seen as something that can be 'done', and, specifically, done by non-skilled, but enthusiastic, volunteer-tourists. Hence, as discussed previously in this chapter, the industry is able to pursue a marketing strategy that emphasises the potential for anyone, regardless of qualifications or experience, to participate in gap year development projects. The industry offers a view that encourages a perception of development as a 'simple' matter, and one that should be just 'got on with':

> "We provide the materials and get on with it, alongside local people" (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2001, p.6).

The dominant ideology within the gap year industry appears to be that doing something is better than doing nothing, and, therefore, that doing anything is reasonable. A particular type of 'development' activity is targeted, one where the emphasis is on end products such as 'teach the child', 'conserve the forest', 'build the bridge' (clinic, well, library etc). Questions about long-term strategy, along with questions about the appropriateness and impact of volunteers, appear to be missing from the majority of gap year programmes.

The 'get on with it' attitude fits with a presumption of westernisation as integral to the development process. The people enticed 'to get on with it' and assumed to have the skills to do so, are western volunteer-tourists. Development as westernisation is intimately linked to modernisation models of development. It suggests a universal 'journey of development' (Sutcliffe 1999) on which all nations are presumed to travel, with developed western nations simply further on this journey than their developing counterparts. Development is therefore

presented as a process of becoming 'more like the west', promoting the universality not only of western economics, but also of western social and cultural value systems (Hoselitz 1952; Narman 1999).

Though dominant after the second world war westernisation / modernisation approaches towards development have been heavily critiqued, in terms of both attainability and desirability (Frank 1966; Escobar 1995; Latouche 1997; Rahnema and Bawtree 1997; Sutcliffe 1999; Nederveen-Pieterse 2000). Such critiques have coincided with the rise of grass-roots and participatory approaches to development which have emphasised a re-centring of development. That is, approaches that advocate a shift of focus away from economic modes of production and towards people (see chapter two for a discussion of changing thinking in development). Despite such fundamental criticisms, gap year projects appear to continue to function in line with westernisation principles of development. This paradigm then produces projects based on outside intervention, for example the provision of teachers, and on the production of highly visible end products.

The use of volunteer-tourists, often as the primary or only resource available, establishes an 'externalisation' of development. That is, the impetus for change, and hence development, is based *outside* stakeholder communities. Like westernisation, this is a conceptualisation of development that, although assumed for many decades, has come under increasing criticism (Gardener 1997; Cooke and Kothari 2001), especially in the light of participatory approaches towards development. Conceptually, such approaches have emphasised the need for consultation and participation by stakeholder communities if development processes are to be successful and sustainable. Thus seeking:

> "to make 'people' central to development by encouraging beneficial involvement in interventions that effect them and over which they previously had limited control or influence" (Cooke and Kothari 2001, p.5).

Participatory approaches towards development raise the question of 'who holds the power within development projects?' This issue is seen as so important that, from the World Bank to local NGOs, the mantra of participation has come to dominate development policy and practice, (Cooke and Kothari 2001), so, serving to challenge the paradigm of development as donor-led and donor-driven. By comparison, gap year organisations remain rooted in an essentially externalised conception of development. This model is based on the assumed value of the enthusiastic British (western) volunteer, who becomes the central, and often only, agent of development. In this sense 'active' participation is perceived as limited to the external, visiting, volunteer, rather than being a local prerogative.

Images of development

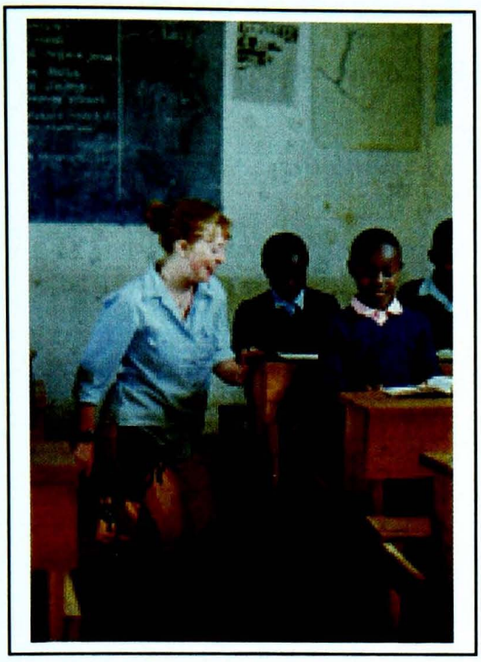
In this final section, I wish to draw together the geography and the development practices of the gap year through a brief examination of the ways in which the industry represents these places and practices pictorially. Images, like text, are produced in an historical context (Nederveen-Pieterse 1995), and so the representations they present make broader statements about the nature of 'otherness'. Imaging otherness is an integral part of the tourist industry, and makes available, and attractive, possibilities for consumption; hence, images are an important marketing tool (Hall 1998). Pictures are a powerful medium, capable of simultaneously bold and complex statements:

> "On the one hand images are situated in the midst of historical processes, of ideas and discourse; on the other, they tend by their visual character to be bold, telegraphic evocations by which many layers of meaning and cross-references are conveyed" (Nederveen-Pieterse 1995, p.10).

In addition to complexity and boldness, pictorial imagery is also able to make the unknown known and even familiar (Lidchi 1999). Thus, knowledges of the unexperienced, such as famine or war, or the unvisited, such as the desert island, become commonplace, familiar and hence available for consumption. Consequently, in examining the ways in which the geography of the gap year is

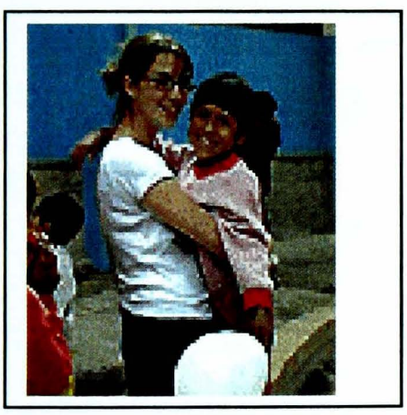
constructed, it is worth taking at least a brief tour through some pictorial representation. The following discussion offers a brief examination of some of the imagery used by the gap year industry (see following examples). The aim of this examination is to highlight a further site of representation within the industry, one crucially linked to the marketing of gap year programmes, as opposed to offering an in-depth analysis of development images more generally. In this discussion, I focus on the historical and geographical arguments already mentioned in this chapter, although it should be recognised that image analysis of the gap year could be worthy of an entire chapter, if not a thesis, in its own right.

The images displayed on the following page offer a sample taken from some of the major gap year organisations already mentioned in this thesis. The images used are indicative of much of the pictorial representation produced within marketing material in the industry. While there are undoubtedly alternative representations, and organisations that consciously or unconsciously resist the forms of imagery exemplified here, these images remain prominent and remain historically and socially situated.



(Africa & Asia Adventure 2003)

(Teaching & Projects Abroad 2002)



(i-to-i 2003)

(Personal Overseas Development 2003)

The images on the preceeding page are dominated by the theme of the 'white adult' with 'the black child'. The pictures featured, depict white adults cuddling, teaching, and caring for 'appreciative foreign' children. The prominence of such imagery is consistent with older colonial metaphors that used the parameters of childhood and parenthood to explain the relationship between the coloniser and colonised (Noxolo 1999). For example, David Livingstone, the Victorian explorer and missionary, represented Africans as both 'savage' and 'child like' (Brantlinger 1986). Such representation legitimated his emphasis on the 'need' for missionaries and colonialists to 'civilise' Africa, and to 'open Africa up' through "commerce and Christianity" (Brantlinger 1986, p.197). By representing the relationship between Africa and Britain through the metaphor of child and adult, Livingston and his contemporaries established the basis for a paternalistic view of Africa, one that could in turn legitimate imposed intervention. While I do not propose that the gap year industry deliberately recycles such imagery and motivations, their resonance remains powerful. Furthermore, in the context of the way that the industry constructs a 'geography of need', it is relevant to highlight the way that contemporary images of 'need' appear to reference a colonial construct of need.

A second point to highlight, is the way in which imagery within the gap year connects to traditions of representation within international development. The issue of representation by development organisations, and specifically NGOs, first received attention in 1977 in *'The Politics of Altruism'* a research thesis by Jorgen Lissner (Lidchi 1999). Lissner argued that organisations relied on a narrow range of images in which the spectacle of the 'malnourished child' was predominant (Lidchi 1999). As with images of colonialism, children remained a powerful signifier of the developing world, a representation that serves to offer an 'infantilised' construct of place (Campbell 2003). The gap year industry maintains the status of the 'child' as the figurehead of Africa and the developing world at large (see preceding images). However, the 'malnourished child' has been replaced by the 'smiling happy' child, a transition that demonstrates an evolution, though not a revolution, in imagery.

The media response to the Ethiopian famine of 1984-85 propelled Africa, development and NGOs into the western public domain, and had a seismic effect on the popularisation of development (discussed in chapter two) (Lidchi 1999). One of the outcomes of the Ethiopian famine was an examination amongst many NGOs of the way in which they had used imagery. Although the 'starving malnourished child' managed to locate the Ethiopian famine in the Western public purse and conscience, it also reinforced powerful negative images of Africa[33]:

> "By opting for money over truth they *{NGOs}* had privileged a *negative* image of Africa" (Lidchi 1999, p.92).

Negative images became the predominant representation of Africa (within the West) through the colonial period, prior to which a more 'positive' veneer had been applied (Nederveen-Pieterse 1995). The invention of specifically negative imagery can be directly linked to the strategic needs of colonisation, and the maintenance of such imagery can equally be argued to be the maintenance of colonial power relations (Campbell 2003). The rise of development as a concept, a practice and a way of viewing the world, coincided with the end (in the majority of the world) of direct colonisation (Bernstein 2000). Consequently, the continuity of imagery, and specifically the reliance on 'negative' imagery, reflects, if not a continuity, then certainly a cross-pollination, of values. In the course of post-Live Aid and post-famine reflections, many NGOs came to revaluate the power relations implicit in much of the imagery that they used. Specifically, there was a rejection of the over reliance on, and endless reiteration of, imagery in which:

> "African *subjects* were represented as the passive recipients of aid - *objects* of development - who had no voice, no identity and no contribution to make during the crisis. The West, in contrast, was constituted as being full of active subjects, development workers, fundraisers or world citizens" (Lidchi 1999, p.93).

[33] Lidchi (1999) acknowledges that through the 1980s Ethiopia became synonymous with Africa.

While NGOs have demonstrated a desire to move away from representations that style the developing world as passive and the developed as active, the gap year industry has not reflected this shift. The preceding images demonstrate a relationship of 'help', with the dynamic of child and adult illustrating *who* occupies the role of helper, and who of helped. Such imagery is born out in textual representations (see the rest of this chapter), and encapsulated in the comment from gap-year.com in which they offer the opportunity to work with "people who know only poverty, disease, hunger and monotony" (gap-year.com 2002) a comment which is discussed further below.

As a final point, it is possible to ask what images are missing from the gap year. Where are the images of young westerners 'learning' from their hosts? Where are the 'local' adults? Where are the non-white westerners? Through its images, as well as its language, the gap year industry is reproducing, and so perpetuating a particular discourse of first / third world relations. I would not argue that gap year organisations are consciously reproducing particular imagery. Rather, historic and geographical traditions embedded within the practice of the gap year are *exemplified* through the imagery used; as such, children, predominantly in the position of receiving 'help', occupy a prominent position. As with textual representations, such imagery should not be viewed outside the context or politics in which it is produced, and through which it frames the geography of the gap year.

In conclusion, throughout this section I have argued that although the language of development may be consciously avoided by the gap year industry, the 'good' intentions are not. A clear mandate of 'change', of 'worthwhile contributions', and a view on the future of others, is evident across the gap year industry. Such an approach, and such language, illustrate the gap year industry's understanding of development as a simplistic process, one demanding primarily enthusiasm and labour. Consequently, the industry aligns itself with modernist and westernisation development models, espousing the third world to follow the West's example, and offering volunteers to set that example.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the geography of the gap year industry. I have shown that the industry constructs space and place in particular ways that legitimise its practices. Simplistic constructions of places and 'needs' dominate the industry. These simplifications allow the practice of development to become something that can be 'got on with'. In so doing, gap year programmes concur with earlier, and by now heavily criticised, approaches towards development. In itself, a 'get on with it' approach does not mitigate against valuable work, however, as long as the broader world of development planning and action remains ignored, such value can only ever be relatively arbitrary. The simplification of places as well as processes, constructs spaces in which western young people are permitted to travel, explore and experiment. However, this simplistic packaging and effective marketing deny voice and diversity to the communities who 'host' these experiences. Currently, the gap year industry relies on 'good intentions' and political innocence to explain the motivations and management of its projects, such justification however is insufficient given the political, cultural and social complexities within which the gap year industry functions. Indeed, a failure to engage in the debates around development, risks turning the industry's political innocence into practical ignorance. If gap year organisations wish to engage in a meaningful way with overseas host communities, then they must accept that this is complicated. Just 'getting on with it' will not be enough.

Chapter five:

Institutionalising the gap year

Introduction

Gap years were once about abandoning institutions and rejecting the traditional trajectory of education and employment, now they are a part of this trajectory. The gap year has evolved from an alternative activity inspired by tales from the hippie trail and dominated by the charity sector, into an industry of commercial companies and a regime of economic, social and cultural capital. So what was once an act of rebellion, is now a market place.

The process of defining 'The Gap Year' has harnessed a significant sector of youth travel to the neo-liberal marketplace. The gap year has allowed youth travel to be formalised, industrialised and organised, so that expectations can be defined and hence demanded, and a dynamic relationship between producers and consumers introduced. With such formalisation has come an increasingly bound notion of what a gap year can and should be. This chapter examines this bounding process. The first section explores the institutional rise of the gap year. I offer an analysis of representations produced about the gap year industry. Through this analysis I will argue that institutions in the form of the state, universities and industrial employers have, over the last five years, been increasingly prepared to endorse the value of the gap year. I argue that this endorsement has led to an institutionalisation of the gap year, helping to bind the concept to a particular set of values. The second section of the chapter examines the product that forms the gap year. I will demonstrate that the gap year is selling a package of knowledge and experience, which it is claimed promotes participants' competitiveness in the job market.

1. The birth of an industry

"I wanted to get out and see a bit of the world...

as well as helping people"

Prince William

(Hardman 2000, p.2)

Somewhere back in time, tangled up in imperialism, religion, commerce, culture and war, 'seeing a bit of the world' became a 'good thing', especially for Britain's youth. As discussed in earlier chapters, travel has been credited with a range of powers, including broadening horizons, 'making you a man', doing something worthwhile, being part of a civilising mission and even advancing the boundaries of the 'known' world. History may have provided the cultural acceptance of youth travel, but contemporary thinking has shaped it. In the following section, I offer an analysis of the way in which the gap year has been championed by various institutions, most notably, the state and the university system.

Supporting the gap year

The rise of the gap year in media discourses and in the public imagination has been accompanied by an apparent increase in state and institutional recognition. This has manifest itself in several ways, including public endorsement by government ministers, statements from educational and university organisations and even discussions in institutions such as the House of Lords. There are two key aspects to this growing institutional recognition of the gap year. First, the expressions of support and endorsement, and second, the way the gap year industry responds to and reproduces this recognition. These aspects will now be dealt with in turn.

Over the last five years the prominence of the gap year has risen in both political and public spaces. In July 2000 the issue of gap years was raised in the House of Lords during a debate on voluntary service for young people (see: The United Kingdom Parliament 2000). During this debate Baroness Warwick of

Undercliff, the chief executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors (now Universities UK) and also the chair of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) expressed her support for the gap year:

> "For those thinking of applying to university - again I must declare an interest as chief executive of the Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals - it is essential that they know that a gap year experience, so long as it is well structured, will be warmly welcomed" (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1574).

Other peers, for example Lord Lucus, expressed support for the gap year in similar terms:

> "... a good gap year is worth a couple of years of relatively menial employment and enhances an individual's opportunities thereafter." (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1576).

In the same debate Baroness Andrews expressed comparable sentiments:

> "In respect to young people, I would argue that a structured gap year has the power to change lives" (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1581).

Despite the enthusiasm shown here for the gap year it is unclear upon what evidence or research such statements are based. Indeed, in researching this thesis it has been notably difficult to find research directly related to the gap year. Furthermore, what research there is has tended to be conducted by bodies with a direct interest in promoting the gap year (see: Hogg 2001). Consequently, there is a need to question the premise on which such institutional enthusiasm is being expressed.

In the context of the above discussion in the House of Lords, the gap year was spoken of synonymously with volunteering. The discussion itself was proposed by Baroness Warwick of Undercliff who, as the chair of VSO, has a mandate to promote volunteering. Several references were made during the discussion to

the government agenda of promoting volunteering especially amongst young people[34], and enthusiasm for the gap year can certainly be argued to be in keeping with these other agendas.

Beyond debate in the House of Lords, state support for the gap year has also come directly from government ministers, most notably Jack Straw, at the time the Foreign Secretary:

> "Taking a gap year is a great opportunity for young people to broaden their horizons, making them more mature and responsible citizens. Our society can only benefit from travel which promotes character, confidence, decision-making skills" (Hogg 2001, p.1).

This statement was apparently made for the gapyear.com and is used prominently by many providers and promoters of gap years (for examples see: Lancaster University Department of Geography 2002; the leap 2003). Jack Straw's support for the gap year has extended to making specific statements of endorsement to several organisations (see for example: Student Partnership Worldwide 2002; GAP Activity Projects 2003). Throughout his comments on the gap year Mr. Straw has emphasised the values of 'citizenship' and international 'understanding' that he perceives to be part of gap year experiences:

> "I fully support the work of GAP. It plays a vital role in helping young people to experience life and work in other countries, and by doing so, helps foster understanding between different nations and cultures. In this age of global interdependence, exchange of this sort can only contribute to stability and understanding in an increasingly complex world" (Jack Straw quoted in: GAP Activity Projects 2003)

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[34] The government think tank The Institute for Public Policy Research, held a one-day conference (29th October 2003) on the theme of fostering volunteering amongst young people. During the conference, Fiona McTaggart, the Charities Minister, offered governmental endorsement of volunteering, particularly in the context of encouraging active citizenship.

As is the case with the comments made in the House of Lords, it is unclear on what evidence Mr. Straw bases his belief that citizenship and international understanding are engendered by gap year experiences. In effect, Mr. Straw is presuming on the logic of a simplified version of Allport's 1954 'Contact Hypothesis'. This hypothesis proposed that merely through contact with one another, disparate social and geographical groups would better understand each another. The limitations of this theory and its application to the gap year are discussed in chapter seven; suffice to say at this point, that there is scant evidence to support the theory, especially in the context of the gap year.

What Mr. Straw does offer in his many statements endorsing the gap year, is an increasingly defined notion of what can and should be gained from a gap year, while also identifying its perceived value to the state. Indeed, the gap year fits with several government agendas. As already mentioned, the government aims to promote 'volunteering' activity, especially amongst young people. In order to achieve which goal, they have committed to spending £300 million between 2001 and 2004 (National Centre for Volunteering 2003). The gap year offers an ideal space in which young people can become involved in volunteering, either in the domestic or an international context.

In addition to the government's agenda on volunteering, it also has a citizenship agenda. These two agendas have been repeatedly linked in many areas, and especially in the case of the gap year. Jack Straw has made specific reference to the way gap year experiences can develop 'mature and responsible citizens'. Meanwhile Fiona Mc Taggart, the Charities Minister, during her address at the National Volunteering Convention (16 September 2003), stressed the role of volunteering in promoting 'rights and responsibilities', an idea closely aligned to the government's agenda on citizenship (National Centre for Volunteering 2003). It would appear therefore, that the states enthusiasm for supporting the gap year is rooted in its malleability to fit within larger state agendas.

As well as support from institutions and key figures of state, the gap year has received endorsement from the educational establishment. Tony Higgins, the Chief Executive of the UK's University & College Admission Service (UCAS), recently stated:

> "UCAS believes that students who take a well-planned structured year out are more likely to be satisfied with, and complete, their chosen course. The benefits of a well-structured year out are now widely recognised by universities and colleges and cannot fail to stand you in good stead in later life." (The Year Out Group 2001).

Further educational sector support for the gap year has come from Baroness Diana Warwick, the chief executive of Universities UK (formerly the Committee of Vice Chancellors and Principals). The following quotation is taken from the Universities UK website, and formed part of a speech given by Baroness Warwick at the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' (NCVO) conference in 2001:

> "Gap years can help address the pressing need to improve skills of graduates entering the workplace. Universities generally like to take students who have done a gap year because they are more mature and a step ahead of the rest" (Universities UK 2001).

In her position as chief executive of Universities UK, Baroness Warwick is effectively offering the endorsement of the entire UK university system. However, it remains unclear on what evidence such endorsement is based. As with other commentators, she repeats the theme of maturity, also mentioned is the principle of competitive advantage. This leads on to the question of what it is that these champions of the gap year see as so important, a question that is addressed later in this chapter.

The final point to make in this section is to reflect on the gap year industry's response to its growing institutional popularity. I would argue that the gap year industry has been far from passive in promoting its public rise. The industry has

actively sought such endorsement, particularly through the activity of the Year Out Group (YOG). This group was formed in 1998 by twenty of the self-identified 'key players' in the gap year market, with the express aim of:

> "The Year Out Group is an association of leading year out organisations that was formed in 1998 to promote the concept and benefits of well-structured year out programmes, to promote models of good practice and to help young people and their advisers in selecting suitable and worthwhile projects." (The Year Out Group 2003).

The group has now grown to around thirty members and has played a significant role in seeking and publicising institutional support for the gap year. YOG material, both web and published, makes prominent use of the statements of endorsement that the gap year has received from institutional figures. The YOG home page is dominated by quotes from Tony Higgins, the chief executive of UCAS, and Margaret Hodge, as Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities. Indeed, the gap year industry, through YOG, has actively sought such institutional recognition. For example, YOG received several direct and complimentary mentions during the July 5th 2000 debate in the House of Lords, such as the following quotation from Baroness Andrews:

> "Like my noble friend, I particularly welcome the formation of the Year Out Group. It is a remarkable start in creating new standards and opening new opportunities" (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1580).

An outcome of such active pursuit of institutional support, has been the production of an increasingly bound and formalised notion of what a gap year is, and why it is of value. This process of formalisation has, in turn, resulted in a professionalisation of the gap year, with the emergence of an increasingly identifiable 'product' and the growth of a specific market in which to sell it.

Binding the gap year

A bound conceptualisation of the gap year has grown out of the values repeatedly ascribed to the gap year by those who seek to support and promote it. It is hard to be clear to what extent such valuation has been a conscious construction by the gap year industry, and to what extent an evolving organic growth. Whatever the case, the values attributed to the gap year have become a normalised part of its discourse, acting to bind it in certain ways and to certain activities.

The principal of 'structure' appears in the majority of the endorsements offered to the gap year. Jack Straw mentioned it in his statement to the gapyear.com, similarly Tony Higgins from UCAS stressed the need for a "well-planned, structured year-out" (The Year Out Group 2001). While for the Year Out Group, promoting structured gap years is a key part of their mandate (The Year Out Group 2001). Baroness Undercliff affirmed the value of structure during her address to the House of Lords:

> "Young people who do something beneficial, and who can show that there is some structure in the way they have gone about it, are highly sought after by recruitment agencies, employers and universities" (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1574).

Structure, in the context in which it is understood by all the above advocates for the gap year, implies planning and organisation. This represents a move away from the association of youth travel with the 'hippie drifter', a figure who sought freedom and mobility through travel as a rejection of western market driven consumerism (Ateljevic Unpublished). The promotion of the gap year as a 'structured' experience fits into a broader agenda of making the gap year a market compatible commodity. With the need for structure comes, in part, the need for an industry to provide such structured experiences. Furthermore, a hierarchy of gap year experiences can be formulated, with those experiences that demonstrate structure valued, by the state and educational organisations, above those that do not. No longer does one simply take a year off from formal

education / employment, now one takes a 'gap', with its bound notions of value and purpose.

In endorsing the gap year, commentators have needed to state *what* value such experiences have, and to whom they are of value. One group purported to benefit from the gap year is employers. The gap year, it is suggested, provides prospective employees with an additional skills base, for example, the already mentioned maturity, but also problem solving abilities, leadership skills and teamwork experience are all credited as outcomes of a gap year. A recruiter for Price Waterhouse Coopers underlines these values in the following statement to the gapyear.com:

> "We very much encourage gap years, believing it puts a young person ahead in terms of confidence, maturity, the experience of the world of working. It really does make a difference on an application form and will significantly strengthen a CV. We have thousands of applicants and we need something to differentiate people, to help us decide whether to invite them for an interview." (Hogg 2001, p.12).

Valuations, such as that implicit in the above statement, allow gap year participants to accrue 'corporate capital', a concept I use as an extension of Bourdieu's notion of cultural capital (see chapter two). Corporate capital, like Bourdieu's incorporated or embodied forms of cultural capital, is held by an individual in the form of experiences and education (Hayes 1997; Robbins 2000). Thus, those with the capital of a gap year experience are able to claim a competitive advantage in the work place (discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

The corporate capital available through the gap year may be embodied in the individual but its value is seen, by some, to extend to the institutions in which such individuals work. Turning once again to Baroness Undercliff's speech in the House of Lords, she listed, amongst the many values of volunteering, the competitive advantage that such individuals brought to the business sector:

> "Resourcefulness, innovation and creativity characterise such volunteers and these are the very qualities that make business competitive" (The United Kingdom Parliament 2000, column 1574).

The gap year is increasingly perceived as of value to the corporate sector. Whether it is in the form of making gap year participants individually more competitive in the job market, or in bringing a competitive advantage to the businesses in which such people work. The corporate compatibility of the gap year is an integral part of binding the gap year more closely to employers and employment. Consequently, the gap year can more readily be endorsed by the commercial sector, and its nature, and the values embedded within it, become increasingly defined, and the experience ever more tightly bound.

In conclusion, the rise in public and institutional recognition of the gap year has produced a bound and recognisable product. This 'product' represents a transformation of the gap year from a symbol of hedonistic youth travel, into a training ground for future professionals. Simultaneously, this has made the gap year not only institutionally acceptable, but also market compatible. For, with institutionally recognised value, comes something to sell. So, the mythical values of 'structure' 'maturity' and the oft-mentioned 'broad horizons' (see Jack Staw's comments quoted earlier in this chapter) have become products for which there is a commercial market, and no shortage of sellers.

2. Roll up, roll up

So far in this chapter I have focused exclusively on the representations produced about the gap year industry. The preceding discussion has charted and analysed the rise of the gap year, from marginal activity to institutional acceptance. Through the following section, I examine the nature of the product that the gap year industry is selling. Though this may be the product the industry sells, it is not necessarily, or always, what gap year participants are buying. The gap year market place is complex with multiple consumers, including those who go on gap years as well as their parents / guardians.

Consequently, the product that is the subject of this section is one that is contested, subverted and reinvented. These alternative representations are discussed in following chapters (see chapter six), here I focus on the gap year product as understood and sold by the providers of international, third world gap year placements and projects.

An alternative experience?

Central to the gap year product is the concept that it is an 'alternative' product. That is, alternative to normative experiences, and crucially an alternative to tourism. The gap year industry has a complex relationship with tourism. While the industry may essentially be selling tourist experiences it is keen to distance itself from 'mere' tourism. This is supposedly achieved by offering experiences that are beyond the scope of traditional forms of tourism, and are therefore more 'authentic'. Consequently, the gap year industry focuses on experiences that offer greater contact with local communities, or opportunities to do or visit that which the 'average' tourist cannot:

> "Your project will be rewarding and stimulating, you will learn new language skills, make new friends, travel to unusual places and work with communities that few travellers or tourists would ever visit or meet." (Outreach International 2003).

However, such an emphasis on travel beyond the mainstream does not remove the gap year from tourism discourses, but rather, locates it firmly within discourses on alternative and eco tourism. The development and diversity of tourism was discussed in chapter two, where the growth of volunteer-tourisms was highlighted. For a large proportion of the gap year industry, volunteer-tourism is at the centre of the packages on offer. Volunteer-tourism presents the opportunity for direct involvement with communities and environments that are not normally regarded as sites of tourism (Wearing 2001). This heightened involvement, in turn, confers value on such experiences, confirming their status as 'alternative', and legitimating claims that they offer access to a 'real' other. Susan Heald (2003), in her work on American and Canadian service learning

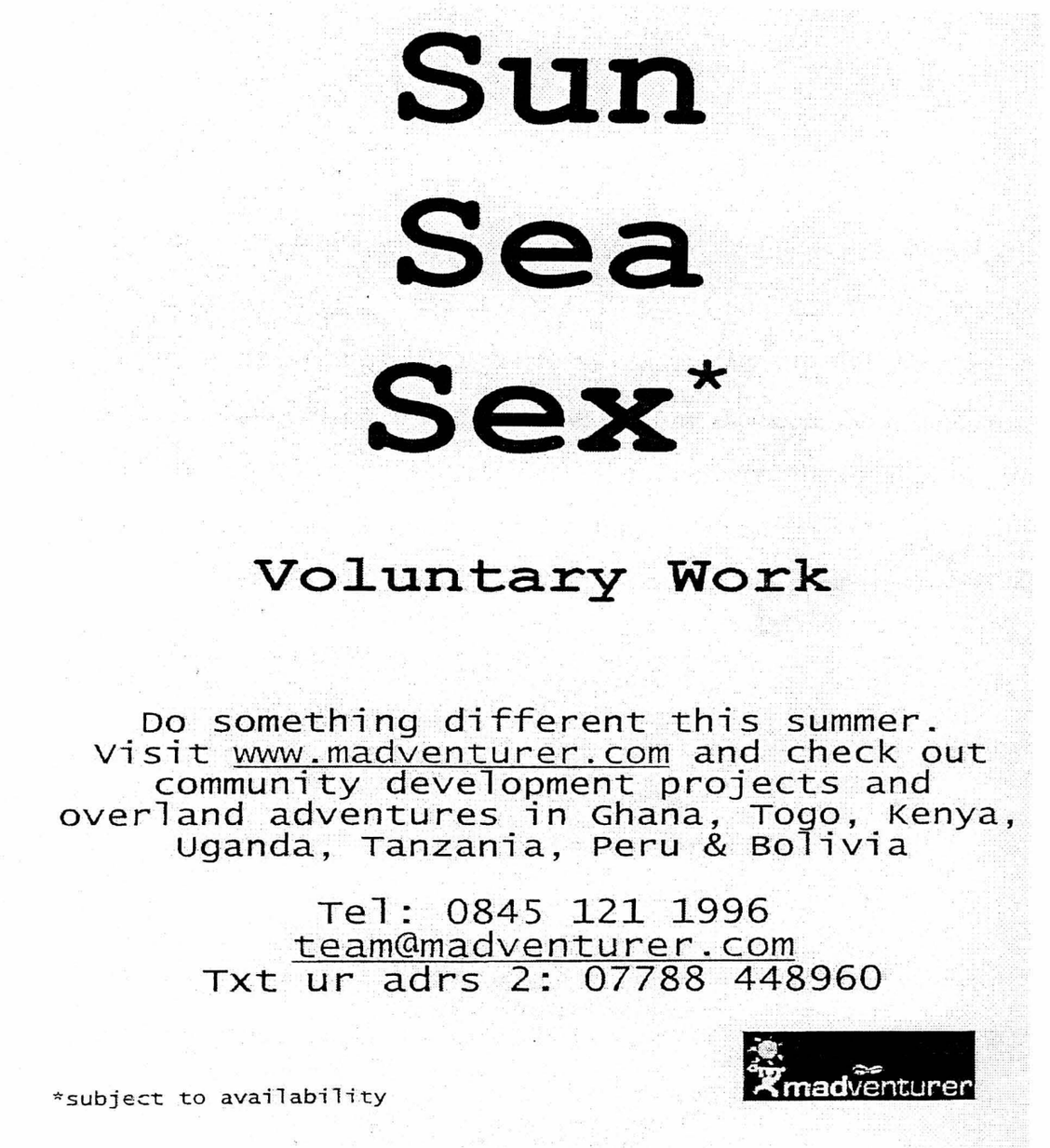
programmes, has examined the issue of how the status of 'first-hand knowledge' offers validity to the claim to know a 'real' other (Heald 2003). The first-hand nature of the experiences sold through the gap year industry confers just such value on these experiences. Consequently, the industry is able to sell the authenticity of the experiences it offers.

Seeking out a 'real' other, one not supposedly available through conventional tourism, is a difficult challenge. Tourism is now one of the world's largest industries (Potter, Binns et al. 1999), and its influence is almost pandemic. In seeking to offer an alternative travel experience, the gap year industry has had to seek out alternative and marginal geographies. The nature of these geographies was discussed at length in the preceding chapter; however, I wish to make one further point here. In trying to provide 'alternative' spaces of travel, many in the gap year industry appeal to imagery (textual and pictorial) based on past notions of travel. Examples of this can be seen in Teaching and Projects Abroad's revival of 'The Grand Tour' (Teaching & Projects Abroad 2003), in Changing Worlds evocation of the 'Patagonia time warp' (Changing Worlds 2002) or i-to-i's romantic catalogue of botanists, explorers and archaeologists wandering in the Amazonian jungle (i-to-i 2002)[35]. The alternative travel product offered by the gap year industry is one that evokes past notions of travel, when the traveller could be the 'bold explorer' or the 'discoverer' of new places, species and peoples. Therefore, through partaking in (buying) a gap year experience, participants are able to travel in a manner, as well as a geography, not available to the average tourist.

Despite the gap year industry's promotion of 'alternative' experiences, there is an apparent paradox in their use of often-traditional forms of tourist advertising. In many cases, this takes the form of a reliance on 'classical' imagery, such as the palm-fringed beach, or key sites such as Machu Picchu. In the following example, there is a more blatant reliance on the tourist industry commodities of 'sun, sea sex'. Madventure is a company based in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, which offers travel and volunteer work in several countries in the developing world.

[35] See chapter four for full quotations and discussion.

As a company, they have aggressively targeted students at Newcastle University, by sponsoring a variety of sports teams and advertising heavily around the campus. An advertisement displayed prominently on the campus during 2003 is displayed below. In this, Madventure package 'Sun, Sea, Sex' with voluntary work (in a smaller font), then beseech the reader to 'do something different this summer'. The company simultaneously offer the 'pleasures' of a holiday, with the credibility and kudos of an alternative travel experience.



Through their promises of 'Sun, Sea, Sex', Madventure seek to evoke a pleasure-based conceptualisation of travel, one typical of mainstream tourism. Yet, they combine this with participation in voluntary work and community development projects. Susan Heald (2003) has questioned the role of 'pleasure' in third world voluntary-tourisms. She asks how the pursuit of personal 'pleasure', with its associations "...with comfort, with familiarity, with having your expectations met" (Heald 2003, p.2), can co-exist with the personal disruption needed in order to engage with, and develop solidarity with, an unfamiliar 'other'. Travel, she argues, that is premised upon the uncritical pleasure-seeking right of the traveller, contributes to the creation of an imperialistic sense of entitlement (Heald 2003, p.5). In seeking to offer an alternative travel product the gap year industry emphasises alternative spaces and practices for tourism. However, it is unclear how 'alternative' the practices, or expectations of those that travel and the organisations that send them, actually are.

Offering an 'alternative' form of travel tourism is central to the gap year product. However, despite the gap year industry's attempt to market a product that differs from tourism, it relies on generic and traditional tourist imagery and text. Consequently, the gap year, as a marketed product, ends up offering an uncomfortable alliance between touristic 'pleasure' and exposure to non-tourist sites and experiences.

Selling knowledge

Central to the international 'third world' gap year product, is the idea that through participation one will gain experience and knowledge of the world. This promise is encapsulated in the concept of 'broad horizons', and summed up in statements such as the following from the website gap-year.com:

> "Voluntary work abroad is one of the most rewarding ways of spending all or part of a gap year.....Away from Western influence, you will see the world from a different point of view". (gap-year.com 2002).

This statement presumes that an escape from western influence is both possible and desirable, and will inherently provide participants with an alternative gaze through which to consider the world. The assumptions buried in this short statement are manifold, including the presumption that the reader is indeed 'western'. There is also the separation of the gaze from the gazer, presuming that the western reader can, through travel and voluntary work, step out of their gazing position and into another. Despite recognising these many possible critiques, in this chapter I focus solely on the way the gap year industry sells 'knowledge' as a part of the gap year product, as it is this relationship that is intrinsic to the power the gap year has in corporate and popular discourse alike.

The statement above is representative of similar statements and promises found across the gap year industry, which suggest a necessary link between world travel and world knowledge. For example, when asked why he wanted to take a gap year in Chile with Raleigh International, Prince William exemplified this sentiment, stating:

> "I wanted to get out and see a bit of the world at the same time as helping people {....} It was a good way of getting in with the locals" (Hardman 2000, p.2).

The links between 'seeing' and 'knowing' the world are once again established in Prince William's comment. However, the automatic link between these two practices needs further examination. The principle that knowledge comes from experience (in this case, travel) can claim various philosophical roots. Roots which are encapsulated in the theory and practice of Experiential Education (Crosby 1981; Lund 1997; Hunt 1999). Therefore, in deconstructing the gap year industry's proffered link between knowledge and experience, I offer a critique from the perspective of Experiential Education.

John Dewey, the American philosopher and educationalist, is often credited with introducing experiential education and defining its cornerstone principles (Beaudin and Don 1995; Adams 1997; Wurdinger and Priest 1999). Dewey contended that people's primary interest in learning was not in some quest for 'truth', but rather in understanding their lived experience (Dewey 1916 (1966)) .

He therefore proposed that this interest be harnessed by shifting the emphasis of education away from the abstract and cognitive, towards the experiential. In practice, this philosophy, seeking to centre learning on action-based experience, has taken many forms. Dewey himself was careful to expand his notion of 'experiential education' to include both theory and experience. That is, he believed that in order to learn from experience there had to be theories or ideas to test, and, vitally, reflection on the experience of testing such knowledge (Wurdinger and Priest 1999).

Dewey first advanced his ideas in the late 1930s and experiential education has subsequently proved its popularity. Indeed, it has become something of a 'bandwagon', with claims made that almost any form of 'experience' can be deemed to be educational in nature. However, in many instances, including many gap years, it is the 'experience' aspect of experiential education, to the exclusion of the 'reflection' aspect, which is emphasised. Such an approach contradicts both Dewey's principles of experiential education and the extensive research that has been conducted on the topic (Joplin 1981; Wurdinger and Priest 1999). Experiential education is a *process,* that is, experience is a part of a process of learning, not the sole element:

> "Experience alone is insufficient to be called experiential education, and it is the reflection process which turns experience into experiential education" (Joplin 1981, p.18).

The gap year industry champions the educational value of the experiences it offers. Yet, as will be explored in chapter seven, there is little indication of how raw experience will be turned into education. Without including the reflective as well as practical aspects of experiential education, the industry is, in effect, proposing a reliance on an empiricist approach towards knowledge. Such an approach was discussed in chapter two and is premised on the notion that what is 'real' can merely be observed, or in this case experienced. This is an approach to learning advanced in the early days of experiential education, where outdoor settings were favoured, and so known as the 'let the mountains speak for themselves' model of learning (James 1980; McKenzie 2000). The principle of this model is that experience does not need reflection to provide meaning, but

rather that meaning is innate and obvious (if specific) to the individual learner. This model is now seen as rather outdated within experiential education pedagogies (McKenzie 2000), which instead advance greater levels of educational processing, facilitation and reflection. Despite this, much of the gap year industry retains an empiricist 'let the experience speak for itself' base to knowledge production (the implications of which are discussed in chapter seven).

Knowledge acquisition is an intrinsic part of the gap year product. With knowledge come a variety of claims to power, and the relationship between geographical knowledge and geographical power was highlighted in the discussion on colonialism in chapter two. This relationship was neatly summarised in the already mentioned quote by the German geographer Peneck:

> "Knowledge is power, geographical knowledge is world power" (quoted in: Livingstone 1992, p.249).

Though Peneck was writing primarily in a military context, the sentiment remains pertinent. Those who have travelled are able to lay claim to a variety of powerful knowledges which can be mobilised in social as well as work environments. Thus, the gap year industry is able to sell experience and knowledge, confident in the ability of these products to offer social stratification.

Selling a capital experience

"a year out can say as much, if not more about you as an individual, as any set of exam results ever can!"

(The Year Out Group 2002)

The preceding section offered a critique of the 'knowledges' for sale as part of the gap year product. In the following section I consider the cultural and corporate capital available through participating in a gap year. A gap year can represent a shrewd investment. Consequently 'capital' has become one of the

primary products the gap year industry can sell. The following discussion concentrates on the gap year industry's, and to a lesser degree the media's, representation of the value of a gap year. In chapter two I offered a discussion of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital, and I wish now to extend this to include an empirical examination of the gap year industry.

Bourdieu's understanding of cultural capital included a market orientation. That is, he perceived culture as operating in a market of exchange in much the same way as financial capital, whereby it was possible to trade in cultural capital in order to elevate one's social position (Robbins 2000). Travel and gap year experiences work as a currency for purchasing enhanced social status. The quotation at the beginning of this section, taken from the Year Out Group, states clearly that taking a gap year says something about the 'sort' of person you are. Travel has a long association with enhanced social status, exemplified through the discussion in chapter two. Part of the gap year product is access to the social status of being 'experienced' and of being travelled. The cultural value of these commodities is expressed through various and multiple media, literary and industrial sources. For example, the following quotation is taken from an article published in The Observer:

> "It is also hard not to become more interesting after a year of travel. During those first few terrifying days at university, no matter how often people tell you their totally cool and totally identical stories about trekking through Nepal on acid, they're still more fun to talk to than those – how young they seem! - who are having the conversation about what A' levels they got" (Merrit 2000, p.2).

The idea that travel makes you a more 'interesting' person exemplifies the cultural capital embedded in travel and gap year experiences. The sentiments of the above quotation are not isolated, and similar examples can be found in a wide range of media sources (O'Connor 2000; Anon 2001; Bedell 2001; Stephany 2001; Various 2001; Amodeo 2002; Hislop 2002; Barrett 2003; Special 2003). William Sutcliffe's 1998 novel 'are you experienced?' takes an ironic look at the way travel is used and consumed as a cultural commodity by

young people. In the novel, David, who is on a gap year and does not particularly like travel, persuades himself that he really should make a trip to India. He proceeds to have a relatively miserable time, but returns home able to claim the status of 'experienced' (Sutcliffe 1998). Sutcliffe's ironic take on the gap year and the concept of being 'experienced', is testimony to how established such an understanding of the gap year has become in popular discourse. Regardless of ironic novels (and academic critique) the gap year industry retains the ability to sell the cultural 'investment' of their programmes and experiences.

As well as social value, cultural capital has significant economic value. Bourdieu argued that elevated social position results in an elevated economic position (Branson and Miller 1992; Robbins 2000). Travel, and the conferred status of 'experience' can act to elevate social status:

> "This cultural capital *{of travel}* is then used as a form of self advertisement, and converted into economic capital, or at least leverage in specific job markets" (Tickell 2001, p.49).

The gap year industry has shown itself to be acutely aware of the power of the relationship between travel, cultural capital and the job market. Placements and experiences are often advertised to appeal in exactly this way, with ample references made to CVs and job market skills:

> "Your placement will be an excellent entry on your CV" (Travellers Worldwide 2003, p.3).

> "Taking a well structured gap year is a fantastic opportunity for you to gain a sense of self-reliance, confidence and a CV or UCAS form that will stand out from the rest. But more importantly, it's a once-in-a-lifetime chance for you to gain a broader perspective of the world and a true sense of achievement." (World Challenge Expeditions 2001, p.2).

This quotation above from World Challenge, one of the industry's largest providers of international expeditions and placements, and the parent company

of Gap Challenge, clearly states the 'value' a gap year will have. World Challenge are offering 'capital' that will allow the individual to compete in the corporate sense as well as providing with the cultural capital of a 'broader perspective on the world'. The media often reinforces the gap year industry's claims about the corporate compatibility of a gap year. For example a recent article in the Guardian proclaimed:

> "Well-structured gap years can improve your employment prospects, indicating that you are self-reliant, resourceful and able to solve problems" (Freeman 2003).

Taking a gap year it is argued, by the media and the industry alike, will give one competitive, corporate advantage, will increase one's social status and make one a more interesting person. These attributes have now become the commodities of the gap year market place.

A discussion of differential capital would be incomplete without an acknowledgment of its relationship with class (see chapter two). Drawing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, I have already argued that, for certain social groups and classes, gap year travel has been incorporated as a cultural norm. (Krais 1993; Cuff, Sharrock et al. 1998). The ability to 'consume' gap year travel, and reap its attendant benefits in terms of the job market, is mediated by cultural, social and economic conditions. Increased cultural capital is not benign. Those who have the cultural capital of a gap year and travel are, as the media and the gap year industry so enthusiastically states, more suitable to, and better able to compete in, the job market. Those with the cultural, and ultimately economic, capital that results from a gap year are therefore able to claim a form of social dominance, in this case related to their increased global knowledges and personal skills. World Challenge brutally summarise this status in the opening statement of their 'Journeys of a Lifetime' brochure, promising that their programmes will:

> "...enable you to learn invaluable life skills, as well as introduce you to wider cultures and the genuine challenge of life survival. For people who want to succeed in life there is

> no greater graduation" (World Challenge Expeditions 2001, p.1).

Consumption of a gap year is mediated by, and reproduces, class dominance. Those with the social and economic access to a gap year will subsequently be given the social and economic access to the employment and education markets. So, the gap year, with all its promises of adventure, travel and experience is far from socially benign, rather it is, in part, a mechanism of social stratification.

Qualifying the gap year

The final point to make in this consideration of the gap year product is to look at one of the ways in which the gap year industry appears to be developing. The emergence of an increasingly bound notion of the gap year has generated the need to differentiate between those experiences that qualify as valid gap year experiences, and those that do not. To some extent, such qualification can be measured using the already mentioned attributes of structure and corporate compatibility. However, the potential for a formal 'qualification' as part of a gap year has also been recognised.. Several organisations already offer gap year 'courses' ranging from learning to be a ski instructor to secretarial and cooking skills, but these are specific rather than generic qualifications. By contrast, in mid 2003 'Gap Profile' launched a 'City and Guilds Profile of Achievement' (Gap Profile 2003). The aim of this is to offer gap year students, for a fee of £250, the opportunity, to formalise their gap year and receive a qualification at the end. Gap Profile introduce their package thus:

> "A learning programme that is designed to
>
> - Help gap students manage and maximise their learning and development, no matter how they choose to spend their time
> - Ensure that their learning achievements are recognised and add tangible value to their CV's through the award of a City & Guilds **Profile of Achievement**"
>
> (Original emphasis: Gap Profile 2003).

Gap Profile's package highlights how the gap year is becoming increasingly formalised and professionalised. The need for 'qualifications' to bear testimony to the value of the experience, no matter how participants choose to spend their time, is indicative of the gap year's evolving corporate compatibility and professional status. Furthermore, as the gap year becomes increasingly bound to certain values and valued in specific ways, a hierarchy of gap year experiences emerges. So, as those participants with a formal qualification become more highly valued than those without, the gap year, like school grades, university location or type of degree studied, can act to stratify young people. With the introduction of a qualification, comes the potential to 'fail' a gap year. No longer can the gap year be separated from the mechanisms of formal, assessed, education and employment, now it seems it has become an extension of those mechanisms.

Introducing a formal qualification into the gap year product connects with a particular interpretation of the educational value of the gap year. It implies an 'education' which, like the school model, is validated through assessment and qualification. Though in Britain this is the dominant understanding of education, this does not make it the only viable one. Ivan Illich argued that 'institutions' and commodities have come to replace ideas (Illich 1971). So, health has become synonymous with hospitals, thirst has been replaced by 'needing a coke' and education has come to mean schooling and qualifications:

> "... products and institutions shape our conception of reality itself"(Illich 1971, p. 99).

Validation of a gap year through a qualification is part of its growing institutionalisation. The process of institutionalisation involves asserting the dominance of a particular discourse about the gap year. Discourse, in this sense, structures the way the gap year can be interpreted and understood, the ways it can be known and the ways meanings can be attributed to it (see chapter three for a fuller discussion on discourse). A qualification-based approach reflects a particularly narrow pedagogical understanding of the gap year. One that assumes that learnings will happen in a discreet time frame, will have measurable expressions and will conform to a particular set of 'known'

outcomes. Such assumptions are open to serious criticisms, which are explored in more detail in chapter seven, where possible alternative pedagogical frameworks for the gap year are discussed. For now, in the context of this chapter, the addition of a gap year qualification stands as further testimony to the growing institutionalisation of the experience.

Conclusion

Prince William's arrival in Chile in 2000 announced the institutional acceptability of the gap year. No longer were gap years for 'rebels', 'dropouts' and 'people with nothing better to do', now they were for hopeful professionals and future kings. Institutional acceptability of the gap year has been achieved through a combination of popular enthusiasm and the realisation of the potential economic value of youth travel, with the 'gap year' bred as youth travel's marketable form. This process has involved applying a set of marketable values that are acceptable to institutions, and can be bought by young people. The application of such values, and the need to define the gap year's very existence, has demanded an ever more bound concept of what a gap year can, and should, be. As the gap year has grown and entered a competitive neo-liberal market place, it has needed to define and package its commodities for sale. This process of definition has occurred in a variety of spaces, including the commercial, the media and the governmental. What has emerged is an increasingly cohesive set of 'values' and commodities that can be used to identify a 'gap year'. Venture Co., a commercial gap year provider working mainly in Latin America, summarises these values neatly in the following statement:

> "Does the idea of travel to far off destinations appeal to you? How about the adventure of joining an expedition into the world's greatest mountain ranges? And I expect you'd like to help a disadvantaged community and acquire new skills while working on an aid project.....At the same time you're probably thinking about how your Gap Year will fit into the broader picture, will it be something to impress future employers and how will it look on your CV?"
>
> (Venture Co. 2002)

The values listed above are overtly individualistic, offering a combined package of new skills, a competitive CV and adventurous travel. As such, the gap year has become highly compatible with neo-liberal economic and social values. Neo-liberal commercialism has become part of the gap year industry, however this process does not go uncontested. As the following chapters indicate, gap year participants themselves demonstrate a nuance-rich relationship with their gap years. The following two chapters examine how gap year participants understand and interpret their experiences.

Chapter six:

The gap year experience

"Over the course of my big trip, I had matured so much that I was almost a new person. (...) I would be able to begin again as the new me- not Dave the mediocre North London School boy, (...) but as Dave the traveller"

(An extract from 'are you experienced?' a novel on the gap year by: Sutcliffe 1998, p.235),

Introduction

Companies, schools, universities and the royal family have, in the previous chapters, proved to have a specific concept of the gap year. In this chapter I consider how gap year participants[36] themselves understand their experiences. I also question how they fit their gap years within wider concepts of travel, education and identity. Early on in my research it became apparent that gap year participants conceptualised their gap years in very specific terms, associated with particular types of experience. Indeed, the expression *"that's so gap year"*, became a currency amongst participants to sum up, describe and give value to specific experiences. This chapter aims to unpack the nature and identifiers of these experiences in order to understand what a gap year means for those who choose to take one. In contrast to the preceding chapters that explored the ways the gap year industry is marketed and packaged, this chapter explores how participants interpret and represent their experiences. I will argue that despite the bound and corporately aware product that the gap year industry sells,

[36] The term 'participants' is used here, as in other chapters, to refer to those who choose and travel on a gap year. It should be recognised that those who 'host' gap year projects also participate in these programmes, however in the interests of clarity 'participants' refers solely to the travelling members.

participants are, in fact, buying a quite different product, one more closely aligned to traditional ideas of youth travel as a time of escape, experimentation and contrast to 'normal' routines and expectations. Multiple gap year 'products' are able to co-exist with points of contradiction and reinforcement, and as will be discussed later in this chapter, participants themselves interpret and frame their experiences in multiple ways.

This chapter is predominantly based on empirical data produced through interviews with gap year participants on a multi-element gap year in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. A short group biography of the key informants in the thesis is included in appendix three. The following discussion is structured in two sections; the first deals with the way in which gap year participants understand and construct the gap year product; while the second section explores the ways identity is negotiated and represented within a gap year.

1. Just *so* gap year!

This section examines the ways that participants make choices about their gap year and the nature of the experiences that they seek out.

Where in the world?

In the preceding chapter I argued that the gap year industry produces a particular geography, and in the following discussion I examine the ways participants respond to this, and produce their own, geography of the gap year. For participants the 'third world' spaces and places of the gap year appear to represent access to a specific set of experiences; to unfamiliar places and unfamiliar contexts. For those interviewed in this study, South America[37] represented a possible space of third-world travel, and hence was framed in this context. When choosing where to travel many of those interviewed in this study

[37] The application of the term third world to the entire of South America should not be seen as uncontested. However, in this study I am examining the modes of representation used by gap year participants, and therefore will use this term, however cautiously in reference to South America.

mentioned how little they knew about South America and how unfamiliar it was. It was a place that they would not 'normally' go to; somewhere others they knew had not been to. In this sense, South America represented an attractive 'unknown':

> **Kate** **"What made you want to come to South America?"**
>
> **Kathy** *"South America always felt like a far off land, big, big dreams, big Amazon you know {....} and it is just so diverse, and just like nothing you would ever come across in Europe. I had been other places, I had been to India when I was little and stuff, I just, it seemed totally different to anything I had ever done".*

Difference, it appears, is an important part of location selection, representing an escape from 'normality', an issue discussed at more length in the following section on the 'anti-holiday'. It is also important to recognise that few participants chose a specific place or country to visit; rather, they identified an idea in the form of a continent that they wished to experience. In the above quotation, Kathy talks of dreams, of the Amazon, and of a big difference to anything she has known. It is the spaces that she associates with these 'mental maps' that she comes to experience, rather than any specific place. In this sense, it is a geography of 'other' that she seeks. The following quotation sums up the priority given to 'difference' as a defining geographical quality and a necessary part of a gap year:

> **Diana** *"I'd feel really cheap and cheating if I did my gap year in Europe because it is just too similar".*

Where in the world is perceived as 'different', 'exotic', 'other' and attractive to gap year students, changes over time and reflects shifting fashions in the gap year market. Latin America is, at least at the moment, a highly fashionable destination, and the Gap Year Report claims that for 24% of potential gap year participants, Central and South America are their preferred destinations, making them more popular than either African or Asian destination (Hogg 2001). In the

following quotation, Sarah explains why she chose to visit South America, comparing it unfavourably to Asia:

> **Sarah** *"I think South America is slightly better to go to than Asia at this point, because Asia is just full of a bunch of English public school gap year people".*

Sarah herself was from an English public school, and her rejection of this type of traveler further demonstrates how gap year participants seek to reject what they perceive as 'normal'. Paradoxically, despite her apparent aversion to 'English public school gap year people' she ended up, not entirely accidentally, in a group predominantly made up of such people. This suggests that a bit of 'normality' in an unfamiliar setting remains desirable. Like Sarah, others expressed a deliberate rejection of certain gap year destinations, with South East Asia seen as 'passé' or, as in the above quotation, full of gap year travellers, while Australia was portrayed as 'boring':

> **Jane** *"The idea of, well there are so many people who have gone off to Australia to work for six months or whatever, and I just can't see- I would see that as a wasted gap year because I don't see that as my idea of what I would like to do".*

> **Julia** *"yeah when I think of Thailand all I think of is a bunch of backpackers taking drugs. Well that's kind of a generalisation"* (laughs).

The destinations mentioned are all, at least in part, victims of their own success. Films like 'The Beach', as well as a history of youth and alternative travel (such as the public school students mentioned), have made destinations such as Thailand appear commercialised, 'common' and hence undesirable. It is also important to recognise that all of the quoted participants focused on large-scale geographies; that is, they compared homogenized continents to one another. These amalgamated geographies illustrate that place, in any specific sense, is of minimal value within the gap year. Rather, the geography of the gap year is one

constructed from large-scale ideas and imagery, where the world can be divided by a reliance on simplified large-scale imaginings[38].

Prince William's 2000 gap year trip to Chile is credited with some of the recent rise in South America's popularity as a gap year destination (for example see: Wilson 2002). Raleigh International, with whom he traveled has reported an estimated 200% increase in applications for their Chile trips (data taken from an interview with staff at Raleigh International, 2001). A further example of the rise in popularity of South American destinations is evidenced in Teaching & Projects Abroad (TAPA) programmes. TAPA a large commercial operator, started to offer a series of placements in the Urabamba Valley, Peru[39] in 2001, and within only eighteen months had eighty volunteers placed in several small villages in the area. These figures represent fast growth, which raises a number of questions about impact, and also illustrates the growing popularity of South America, particularly Peru, in the gap year industry.

There is an apparent contradiction in South America's ability to exist as both an unconventional and a popular destination; as both different and common at the same time. I argue that this paradox is emblematic of the divergences that populate the gap year. For, while participants seek 'different' locations for their gap years, such difference must not be so radical that the location's value and desirability is not recognised. Participants simultaneously seek that which is different and has value through its unconventionality, whilst also seeking the support and tacit approval of their peers through their acknowledgement of the desirability of where they are going. Hence, a country or region can simultaneously be 'unusual' and popular:

> **Clarissa** *"I didn't get any of the why are you going out there* (to Peru), *everyone I spoke to was like totally jealous, and you know like the year above us everyone I know went to*

---

[38] For a further example of this simplified geography, see chapter four, 'Danger' and the quotation from Torbet in Hogg (2001).

[39] This area is also know as the 'Sacred Valley' and stretches between Cusco and Machu Picchu.

> *Australia and Thailand and this year 4 of my best best friends are here in South America, and loads of people I know are going to South America so it kind of seems like a complete craze this year, to go to South America".*

Clarissa's choice to visit Peru exemplifies the double discourse of different yet 'known' destinations. People were jealous, her friends also wanted to go to South America, and so the value of Peru as a gap year destination was recognised. Yet, at the same time she was making a break from the conventions of her older peers who all went to Australia and Thailand. So a double discourse or desirability and obscurity is simultaneously expressed.

Clarissa went on to express how much of a 'culture shock' she experienced upon arriving in Ecuador at the start of her time in South America:

> **Clarissa** *"I kind of got it wrong, I got quite a culture shock when I came. I just kind of thought "oh they speak Spanish it will be just like Spain" (...) I hadn't thought about it at all and it is not like Spain obviously it is just so different I mean like it is a third world continent and things like that, so you know, it is kind of like different to how I had expected"*

Despite Clarissa's enthusiasm to visit South America she acknowledges she had not researched, or even thought about, where she was going with any depth. In essence Clarissa's decision making about where to go on her gap year appears to be primarily informed by the patterns of her peers and the fashions of the gap year as a market place, rather than by any particular knowledge about, or attribute of *where* it is she is going.

The final point to make in considering *where* participants choose to go on their gap year is to consider the 'geography of experience'. That is, participants identified wanting to go to places where it would be possible to do certain things; activities not intrinsically linked to place. For example, the availability of certain volunteering opportunities, or as in the first quotation below, an opportunity to acquire language skills:

Kate: **"Was there any particular reason you chose to come to Peru?"**

Sophie: *"Ummmm no. To be honest. Spanish for a start, I am doing my degree in Spanish and French so language wise .... And because when I looked at Quest Overseas I wanted to do the programme that they set out, and that included going to Peru, so there was not a particular reason for Peru".*

From a separate interview:

Samantha *"Because it was my gap year I wanted to go far away to experience things"*

The identification of a geography of experience partners the gap year industry's promotion of 'a geography of experimentation', as discussed in chapter four. Participants are selecting places to visit on the basis of what they will be able to *do* in the new and different spaces that these places present. The industry has specifically crafted such a geography, one that offers alternative and new possibilities to would-be gap year travellers. Hence, both the bought and sold gap year product produces a particular notion of geography. Indeed, the geography of the gap year has less to do with place, and more to do with the spaces created. Spaces that offer particular activities, opportunities and an exposure to 'otherness'.

The anti-holiday

As discussed in earlier chapters, the gap year's relationship with tourism is complex. One of the issues that confuses this relationship further is the way participants, at times, reject the label and even the perceived practice of 'tourism'. Rather, as explored in this section, they claim non-tourist, 'anti-holiday' experiences, seeking to differentiate in name and practice their gap year experience from other forms of travel.

An integral part of the gap year experience is its anti-parent, 'anti-holiday' status. Hardships, difficulty and the types of location were all issues discussed by participants as qualities that distinguished a gap year from tourism, and made it an 'experience' rather than a holiday. This process links to what Sorensen, (2003) identified as 'road status' (discussed in chapter two). Backpackers and gap year participants alike use such assessments of 'status' to establish a separation between different modes of travel. Significantly, road status is predominantly based on factors that contradict standard assumptions about tourism; for example, a preference for hardship over luxury. In the context of the gap year, the rejection of tourism and the claim of alternative, and by implication more 'authentic', travel experiences, presented itself in the dismissal of the concept of a 'holiday' with all the leisure, luxury and ease this implied. Several participants made direct comparisons between their gap year and a holiday, and some even talked of needing a holiday after their gap year.

One of the manifestations of the difference between a holiday and a gap year is the perceived difficulty of accessing, physically and culturally, the 'third world'. This difficulty gives allure to such destinations, and further establishes gap year travel as an 'anti-holiday' experience, where the ease of tourism is replaced with the difficulty of travel. In the quotation below, Sarah shows a particular construction of both the type of travel she associates with a gap year, and why that makes the 'third world' attractive:

Kate: **"You** *{mentioned before that you}* **wanted to come to a third world place on your gap year. Why was that?"**

Sarah: *"Because you can go to Europe or America like anytime you... just well, you know it is very easy, but to come somewhere like here, well you can't just pitch up and say 'right where am I going to stay?' Because you won't last very long, right"*

Kate: **"So it was the inaccessibility that was attractive?"**

Sarah *"No not that, but just you don't get a chance to do this that often, you can't just be spontaneous. Like "I am*

going to go to a shanty town", it has to be organised and it is not something you are going to experience.. well like France is quite, well not literally, but similar to Germany or Spain, whereas this is a lot different, you are never going to go on a family holiday to San Gabriel!"

From a separate interview Gill uses the issue of access as a reason for her to choose the more 'difficult' South America, over the easier option of Africa. It is relevant to note her focus on large-scale geographies:

Kate: **"What made you choose to come to South America?**

Gill *"I had been to Africa before and like we have got these friends out there, we have got these friends who run a game reserve out there and it is going to be easier for me to go and teach there"*

In the first quotation Sarah clearly defines San Gabriel in opposition to possible family holiday destinations, and in this way sets her gap year apart from a holiday. Despite her rejection of the attraction of inaccessibility, in the first part of the conversation she juxtaposes the ease with which one can go to Europe or America with 'somewhere like here'. This again establishes the gap year, at least for her, as occurring in a geography that is other to the 'easy' geography of holidays. Diana, in a separate interview, put this idea somewhat more bluntly. The following quotation is taken from an interview involving a discussion between three participants on why they had chosen to come to South America:

Diana *"It* (South America) *is the sort of place I would never go"*

{....}

Julia *"yeah it is not the kind of place you would go on holiday"*

{...}

Kate **"Why do you reckon it is not somewhere you'd come?"**

Diana *"on holiday?"*

Kate **"yes"**

Diana *"Because I tend to go on family holidays which are just disgustingly European"*

Kate **"are what?"**

Diana *"Disgustingly European. I don't know we just never think of South America as a holiday destination especially somewhere like Ecuador".*

What exactly Diana meant by 'disgustingly European' was never quite clear, and though I brought it up with her again later on, she could not really elaborate. What is evident from the above conversation is that both participants set their gap year destination apart from holiday destinations. This 'anti-holiday' construction is part of what gives value to the gap year, establishing the experience as 'exclusive'. This differentiation and exclusivity is furthered through the way gap year participants reject the category of 'tourist' for themselves, which is discussed in greater detail in the second part of this chapter.

A further element that contributes to distinguishing a gap year experience from a holiday, is seeking out experiences that are alternative, if not antithetical to, a holiday. To some extent, volunteer 'work' can be argued to be the opposite of a holiday (see chapter two). That is, the leisure of tourism exists in opposition to 'work', therefore tourism is, by definition, 'not work' (Urely and Reichel 2000). Consequently, in selecting travel experiences that include a period of 'work', participants are again distancing themselves from tourism and holidays. Another way that participants distanced themselves from tourism was in the expressed pursuit of experiences that would, at the time, be difficult, undesirable and even unpleasant. This contradicts the principal of a holiday as a leisure experience, and one in which expectations are supposed to be met (Heald 2003). The desire for the undesirable was summarised quite neatly by Julia when she explained what sort of experiences she wanted from her gap year:

Kate **"One of the other things I am interested in is this idea of 'a gap year experience"**

Julia *"Variety... I reckon"*

Peter *"yes, good word"*

Julia *"yeah I am quite proud of that! Variety. You don't want to do the same thing, you want to do somethings that you want to do and somethings that you don't want to do, because there is no point just doing things you want to do"*

Kate **"So why do you 'want to do things you don't want to do'?"**

Julia *"because it is a challenge, you'd get bored if you didn't, well I would anyway... and then I don't know I think the whole thing about a gap year is that you do things that you wouldn't normally do and you wouldn't necessarily get the chance to do again".*

Doing a gap year, for Julia, means doing things that she does not find easy and at times does not even want to do, but this is part of what makes it a 'gap year experience'. This preference for experiences that might be 'hard' and will certainly not be 'normal', was expressed in many forms. In some cases there was an issue of material deprivation, with being away from hairdryers, 'normal' clothes, 'normal' toilets and 'normal' food all cited as difficulties to be faced. In effect, it is the loss of 'normality', as Julia mentioned above, that becomes a key definer of the gap year. However, while a holiday may be a change from 'normal' routines and places, what defined a gap year and gave it value were the hardships involved in the loss of 'normality'. In the following conversation, which occurred during an interview, two participants are reflecting on why they preferred to talk about their 'bad' and difficult experiences during their gap year:

Kate **"What about when you go home and you are talking about this, is there any particular story, or anything particular that sums up your experiences here?"**

{...}

Clara *"In all honesty I think that what will happen is that to my friends, if you are talking in a pub you will be sharing your complaining stories, your "oh my god you will never guess what we lived in, oh my god you would never guess about the loos" and this and that and that and the other. {...} And then when you are sitting down with the old father figure and he is going "tell me about the good bits" or a friend and you are sitting talking about relatively ... I don't know yeah like for a long time, I think that is when you will say "yes it was really nice when the little kids did this ... or whatever"*

Kate **"Why won't you talk about the good bits with your mates?"**

Sarah *"I think it is a bit of a competition thing who had the toughest time"*

Clara *"Yes partly, and partly it is so much funnier hearing about the bad bits {...} but more because it is something that you don't have in England because in England we are so used to having flushing loos and electricity and no parasites in our tummies"*

Sarah *"and a kitchen"*

Clara *"and a kitchen, so therefore to be given something completely, on the most basic level OK, but then we have the kids on top of that, but on the most basic level it is something that we are not used to and that is part of why we are talking about having the shits so much because we are not used to having them, if we had them all the time in England then we wouldn't be discussing it"*

Sarah *"God that would be my biggest nightmare".*

Half way through the above conversation Sarah acknowledged that there was a certain level of competition around experiences of 'hardship'. This principle links to the discussion in the preceding chapter on cultural capital. However, while the gap year industry may be selling predominantly 'corporate' capital,

that is cultural capital specifically aimed at becoming competitive in the job market, for participants there is also status to be won amongst their peers. The hardships endured as part of a gap year distance it from tourism, therefore making it an 'authentic experience', one in contrast to the packaged pleasures of tourism.

Clara, in the above conversation, reinforced the value of the difficulties and the 'bad bits' of a gap year, identifying them as funnier and of more interest than the 'good things'. She used the binary of 'normal' and 'not normal', and overlaid this with the good / bad distinction. This raises questions about how she is choosing to represent the, for her, non-normal 'other' that she has come to visit. An endless emphasis on the negative and the deficiencies of the 'non-normal' constructs a particular view of 'global others'. The issues involved in such a construction are considered at greater length in chapter seven, particularly in relation to how a gap year experience allows participants to claim and construct global knowledges.

In conclusion, gap year participants juxtapose the easy hedonism of a tourist's holiday, with the hardship and 'authenticity' of a gap year experience, creating an 'anti-holiday'. A gap year therefore is a time to seek out what would not normally be found on a family holiday. Such a search brings with it the desire for alternative, non-tourist activities and destinations, the realisation of which is then turned into capital in exchanges with other travelers and peers. Imagined places such as the 'third-world' and 'South America' provide a physical expression of the differences sought, and the rejection of the 'holiday'. Physical distance and difficulty therefore become a geographical articulation of the difference between the 'normal world' and the 'non-normal world'.

Danger!

"What gives value to travel is fear"

(Camus, quoted in Philips 1999, p.81)

A sense of danger is, for many, an integral part of a gap year experience[40]. The ability to 'survive' the experience and successfully negotiate risks and fears are all part of establishing one's credibility, and acquiring the 'life skills' supposedly learnt through a gap year. In chapter four, I discussed the ways in which the gap year industry marketed and managed issues of danger and risk. In this section I explore the ways participants relate to these issues.

When discussing with participants why they chose particular destinations, issues of risk, difficulty and danger were often expressed. It is important to recognise here that what is being discussed is perceived risk and perceived danger. Indeed participants, in part, recognised the role of perception and labelling in defining where was considered 'dangerous'. The following conversation was a follow-up to a comment made by Peter who described South America as 'kind of dangerous':

> **Kate** **"So why does it** (*South America*) **feel kind of dangerous?"**
>
> **Peter** *"Because it is always hyped up in the newspapers"*
>
> **Diana** *"you never hear the good things"*
>
> **Peter** *"Yeah actually some parts of Columbia now are dangerous, but the rest of the country, because I was talking to a Columbian chef the other day and he said it is not that bad it, is actually very nice, but people just think that Columbia is dangerous. And now they think Argentina is really dangerous but it is not at all"*

[40] Sorensen (2003) also discusses danger as part of the 'road status' of backpackers.

Diana *"They are all really labelled, probably they are not like their labels at all but no one has really explored it enough to change those labels"*

Julia *"It is third world so people think that is dangerous"*

In this conversation, it is acknowledged that a dangerous image is probably just a question of labelling and misinformation by the media. Yet, despite recognising this, the participants still reproduce this image of South America as dangerous. Further, despite the dangerous label, none of them had researched this any further before arriving in Ecuador (where they were at the time of the interview), suggesting that they did not perceive such dangers as 'real' or likely to affect them. Rather, danger was all part of making Ecuador and Peru desirable gap year destinations.

Dangers, and the ability to survive them, are an intrinsic part of establishing the cultural capital of a gap year. The following is a letter published in The Times newspaper in September 2003, and written in response to some coverage of my own work on the gap year (for the original article see: Smith 2003). The writer describes a series of dangerous situations he was in, before going on to denounce 'packaged' gap years:

"*From Mr. Emile Simpson*

Sir, during my gap year I taught English in Nepal, alone in a remote school two days' walk from the nearest road. There was no electricity and I never saw any foreigners. I spent £4 in two months there.

I was woken by armed Maoist rebels, interviewed by their leader in tense circumstances, and on two occasions a rebel band slept in my house and I shared a room with their district commander.

Later, I jumped off the roof of a moving bus which had hit a car, the bus rolled off the cliff and killed around a third of the 50 passengers. My friend and I had to deal with the injured

> for 25 minutes until the emergency services arrived. Learning Nepali was essential.
>
> Yet my gap year was primarily a cultural experience of infinite value.
>
> A mania for "employability value" generates a culture of endorsing pre-packaged gap years after which the correct "leadership" and "character building" boxes can be ticked; this stifles the notion of encouraging independence and promotes the myth of "sanitised colonial tourism" that you report" (Simpson 2003, p.21).

It is unclear exactly why Mr. Simpson's list of dangerous situations is relevant to his denouncement of 'packaged gap years'. Furthermore, Mr. Simpson proposes some form of binary between his experiences and those that 'promote the myth of sanitised colonial tourism'. I interpret the writer as juxtaposing the dangerous authenticity of his own experience, with the sanitised skills-orientated nature of 'packaged'[41] gap years. Regardless, the writer evidently gives value to the dangerous experiences he had, and uses these to validate his opinions. Danger confers authenticity on travel experiences, making them apparently more 'real' (Phillips 1999). Indeed, both Philips (1999) and Sorensen (2003) argue that suffering and not spending money are key markers that backpackers use to attribute value to their experiences. Both of these markers are to be found in the above letter from Mr. Simpson.

The cultural status and valuation given to danger has caused it to become a commodity within the gap year. Hence, as discussed in chapter four the industry is in the complicated position of both selling danger and selling safety. Earlier in the conversation quoted at the start of this section, Julia stated that it was better to go to South America 'with someone who knows where they are going'.

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[41] It is not clear what the author means by 'pre-packaged' gap years, however it certainly appears that he did not consider himself to be on one. This represents a further and internal level of cultural hierarchy within the gap year, where certain experiences can be claimed to be of greater value than others.

Danger gives value and desirability to a destination, but the safety and security of going 'with someone' is a key part of the product bought. As a final point, danger can also help to distance the gap year from the security of a family holiday. Participants are able to establish their independence by rejecting the security and 'normality' of where their parents go on holiday, in favor of a 'non-normal' and even dangerous alternative.

2. Identity and representation

"I have to go on a long haul trip, otherwise
I am not going to be the sort of person
I want to be"
(Backpacker, quoted in Deforges 1998, p.175)

Packing one's bags and ideas and heading 'out there' has always been as much about exploring the self, as exploring the foreign and other (Said 1978; Banerjea 1999; Galani-Moutafi 2000). Gap year rhetoric includes many references to the need to define oneself, and the ability to acquire an identity through travel (see chapter five for examples and further discussion). Notions such as "broadening your horizons" (The Year Out Group 2001) and "seeing a bit of the world" (Hardman 2000) embody the relationship between seeing the 'other' and knowing the self. Travel, in the historical as well as the gap year context, is not only about defining identity but also about acquiring one. Indeed, historically travel conferred not just riches but also identity:

> "When white adventures first set eyes on the opulence of 'the East' their overarching desire was acquisitive. Treasure would serve as a tribute to their seafaring prowess, boldness of vision and loyalty to that idea of identity and to their propertied status" (Banerjea 1999, p.20-21).

The value ascribed to travel is not static or predetermined; participants negotiate the value of their gap years, opting to represent and display their experiences in variable ways. In the following section, I offer an exploration of some of the

ways in which participants identify and describe their experiences. I argue that the processes of identification are more complicated and nuance-filled than perhaps the gap year industry appreciates. Indeed, gap year participants mobilise, contest and create meaning for themselves and the gap year in many complicated ways.

Travellers, tourists or volunteers?

The ways that gap year participants identified themselves and one another proved to be both highly conscious and variable. Key to this variability was the audience for whom categorisations and representations were produced. During interviews, there were regular and prolonged conversations about the issue of categorisation. Participants demonstrated a keen awareness of the differential value attributed to various categories and showed a willingness to apply these identifiers accordingly. The major categories used were those of traveller, tourist, volunteer and the rather more distinctive 'ethno yah'. The latter is a term discussed later in this section, and one generally used in a derogatory way to identify gap year participants with public school backgrounds and over-emphasised traveller identities.

The category of 'volunteer' proved the most contentious, with gap year participants almost unanimous in not identifying in this way:

> **Jane** *"I still don't see myself as a volunteer*

From a separate interview:

> **Charlotte** *"Volunteers are much much- we are not worthy of volunteers... because it was fun, I don't know, I see volunteers as someone who goes and works with battered wives".*

While a volunteer was generally seen as someone who offered a greater level of commitment than a person on a gap year, there was also the issue of personal gain. Participants freely acknowledged how much they were 'getting out' of their experiences, and that they had 'fun'. By comparison 'volunteering' was

connected with arduous work (such as with the 'battered wives' mentioned above), or with sustained and 'selfless' work (see the comment below). In effect, participants appeared to juxtapose the hedonism and pleasure of their own experiences with the altruism and self-sacrifice apparently necessary to be a volunteer:

> **Kathy** *"I got so much out of this trip and the whole experience.....I think it would be a bit, it would be, it wouldn't be correct to say I was just a volunteer, I expect a volunteer to be someone like a doctor who goes and spends two years of his* (sic) *life working with poor people in Africa and stuff and being totally selfless".*

From a separate interview:

> **Julia** *"I mean it is a good thing if you are a volunteer and you have a good time, but they don't come out to have a good time they come out to help; we came out, we paid to come out, and have a good time"*
>
> **Dianna** *"they* (volunteers) *come out to help, where we came out to experience"*
>
> **Sarah** *"Volunteers are aiming to help other people where as we are kind of aiming to do that as well, we are, but we at the same time we are almost in it more for our selves than we are for them"*

Amongst themselves, participants did not perceive either each other, or themselves, as volunteers, feeling that their level of self-interest and their lack of commitment precluded this. However, the very process of deciding that they were not volunteers gave value to the idea of actually being volunteers. Many comments were made about how big a commitment a true volunteer made, how selfless volunteering was, and admiration was expressed for people who could dedicate themselves to something that must, by its very nature, be 'un enjoyable'. Even though the majority of gap year participants did not see themselves in this context, having created such an image of volunteers, they

were prepared to identify in this way when it was valuable to do so; a fact that they were amazingly candid about:

> **Susan** *"I don't classify myself as a volunteer. Now I didn't say that when I was applying for money, cos actually that is the problem if I hadn't of stretched the truth at all in the fundraising I wouldn't have been seen as a volunteer either".*

During a separate interview involving several gap year students, there was a long conversation about travellers and volunteers. All the interviewees agreed that certain ways of presenting a gap year sounded better than others, depending on for whom these representations were produced. Peter succinctly summed up this attitude:

> **Peter** *"To universities I said I was doing three months charity work, to everyone else I said I was going to South America"*
>
> **Kate** **"Why did you say to the universities that you were doing three months charity work?"**
>
> **Peter** *"It sounds much better to say I am doing three months charity work with children in Peru, than saying I am going to see Ecuador and Peru and spending rather a lot of my parents' money doing it".*

Though participants excluded themselves from being volunteers, they recognised the value that such a label has and were prepared to use it where it was culturally, or more often corporately, valuable to do so. Indeed, while hardship and danger may be integral to establishing peer group acceptance, the accolades accorded to 'volunteering' give this form of representation status to other audiences, such as the universities and funding bodies mentioned above. In using the category of 'volunteer', participants are supporting the industry-promoted image of gap years; an image that seeks to emphasise the 'worthwhile', 'valuable' and altruistic nature of gap year projects (see chapters four and five). Participants are also able to lay claim to the corporate value of a

gap year through representing themselves in the ways that the institutions which support the gap year are so keen to champion[42].

Despite their ability to recognise and manipulate the values applied to a gap year, participants also appeared unconstrained by these expectations. So that, rather than significantly change their practices, they changed the modes of representation. For example, as Clara (see previous section on hardship) explained, she would tell her friends 'down the pub' and her father different stories from her gap year. So it is that participants are able to produce and maintain multiple, and even contradictory, representations of their gap years. These multiple representations are encapsulated in the quotation below, which is taken from an article in the Observer newspaper promoting the value of a gap year:

> "...people are more likely to give you money if they think that you're teaching poor children how to read than if they think you're spending it on skunk and tequila (not that you can't do both)" (Merrit 2000, p.2).

Implicit in the above advice, is the idea that you can say one thing while doing another. Effectively, this is the way gap year participants are able to access the multiple and differential value of a gap year; value, that needs to be recognised differently if it is to appeal to peers, education intuitions and employers alike. Hence, the issue of identity within the gap year is not as simple as one of self-perception; it also concerns the way in which the consuming 'audience' of an identity is interpreted as validating that identity.

Identity amongst gap year participants is not solely for external consumption. It is internally, within groups of gap year participants, that questions of identity appeared to be most keenly debated and carefully applied. This debate is exemplified by the distinction made between the categories of 'traveller' and tourist'. Amongst those interviewed, there was a strong perception that there

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[42] See chapter five for a discussion of the ways the gap year has been championed and endorsed by various political and educational institutions.

was a distinction to be made between the two. A value judgement was also evident with 'traveller' proving the preferred, though not always conferred, identity:

> **Sarah** *"I think tourists go and do things like still in your own country, whereas if you are a traveller you join in more"*
>
> **Peter** *"Tourist is also rather derogatory"*

From a separate interview:

> **Kathy** *"I wouldn't like to see my self as a tourist, although we obviously are! I'd love to be a proper traveller. "*

Participants perceived tourists as people not to be associated with, as people who travelled at a superficial level, missing the more authentic experiences of the traveller[43]. In part, this rejection of an identity of tourist can be connected to the pursuit of an 'anti-holiday' as already discussed. In seeking out 'experiences' as opposed to a holiday, in rejecting the destinations and activities of tourism, it becomes necessary to also reject the identity of 'tourist'. Despite this rejection and the desire to be 'other' (than a tourist), participants were unclear about how to define the difference between a tourist and a traveller. The following conversation demonstrates some of this ambiguity, with the interviewees struggling to clarify this. In the end, the difference appears to lie in the *way* travel is pursued. Also, at the start of the conversation Charlotte mentions that this is an issue that participants have discussed independently amongst themselves, demonstrating an internal awareness of the complexity of identity:

> **Charlotte** *"Ellen was asking me about that* (the distinction between traveller and tourist)*, and I said I don't think we are tourists because tourists take suitcases and nice clothes and wash their hair lots and take their hair dryers. Travellers and backpackers look like shit and live like shit"*

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[43] See Deforges (1998) for further discussion of self-perception amongst young tourists / travellers and questions of authenticity and travel experiences.

Bella *"They go for different reasons"*

Charlotte *"Yeah they* (tourists) *stay in one place"*

Bella *"Tourists go for the sun and the"*

Charlotte *"to buy their little knick knacks spend a couple of weeks and then go home. I don't think you could be a tourist when you are on a traveller budget and moving around so much and ... I don't know"*

In this conversation, a clear value judgment is made, with tourists portrayed as having a superficial experience and not seeking to experience 'difference' (by leaving their hair dryers at home). By comparison, travellers are represented as seeking out greater difference, and hence inherently having more 'authentic' travel experiences.

As well as adapting traditional identities associated with travel, gap year participants also proved adept at inventing their own internal systems of categorisations and valuations. A primary example of this is the 'ethno yah' (also known as the 'ethno rah'). An 'ethno yah', it was explained, was generally from a public school and identified someone with pseudo 'ethnic' pretensions. As an identity, it appeared to be specific to the gap year and was generally used in a slightly derogatory way, with people unwilling to self-identify in this way. I first encountered the 'ethno yah' through overhearing its usage by gap year participants, and the two following extracts are taken from interviews in which I specifically followed up this idea:

Charlotte *"yeah it* (ethno-yah) *is taking the piss, but you know exactly what I mean"*

Bella *"what is it again?"*

Charlotte *"People who sort of look like you* (indicating Bella) *but with a bit more jewellery. They dress like they have picked up one piece of clothing from every stop".*

Bella *"Oh"*

Charlotte *"You know like in England when you are walking along the road and you know full well someone has*

been sitting in Hammersmith all their life but they look like they've travelled to India for five years or something.

From a separate interview:

Ellen *Ethno yahs are the people who come back claiming to have seen it all*

The comments above demonstrate a negative identity associated with the 'ethno yah', with an element of pretension identified by both Charlotte and Ellen. The 'ethno yah' then becomes a way of policing the 'authenticity' of gap year experiences and identities. The invention of the 'ethno yah' and its apparently exclusive relevance to the gap year, demonstrates how the peculiarities of the gap year are demanding new ways of identifying new categories and internal systems of valuation. Finally, the 'ethno-yah' hints at the complex processes of valuation and positioning that go on within the gap year. Processes that attribute status, in subtly different ways, to the pursuit and accumulation of the mythical values of travel.

Categories, like those of tourist, traveller and volunteer, are all part of a symbolic value system that those using these terms are well aware of, and around which they negotiate their own identity. As categories, they are not passively applied and accepted, rather they are actively constructed, sought after and eschewed. Within the gap year, 'others' are not just those of the host country but also members of the mobile gap year community. So, one can be the undesirable 'other' of tourist, while striving to become the desirable 'other' of traveller while also, where it is valuable to do so, adopting the 'other' of volunteer. In the gap year context, there are multiple 'others', with the degrees of separation determined flexibly and according to perceived cultural value. By applying different labels to what they do, gap year participants create different value systems for travel. So, while the gap year industry markets itself as developing students' skills, and while institutions applaud the personal development of gap year participants, the young people themselves are having more varied travel experiences, with a more complicated system of value attributable to them.

The gap year as a 'rite of passage'

Transitional periods happen throughout our life course. Youth can be seen as a particularly active transitional time, with young people making the transition from childhood to the specified identities (such as worker, housewife, man, woman) of adulthood (Hollands 1990). Travel acts both as a physical and metaphysical transformation. With, as Banjera (1999) argued, the act of physically crossing state boundary lines allowing one to also cross social and psychic boundaries. Perhaps because of these transformative powers, travel has, since the seventeenth century, had a particular association with youth (Desforges 1998); a tradition continued by the gap year.

The expansion of the British empire in the eighteenth century gave British people an explosion of travel possibilities and destinations[44]. For many British men the colonies became a giant adventure playground in which to play out the excitement of exploration and discovery[45]. Travel and the adventures it entailed, such as big game hunting and mountaineering, also became a way to assert one's own and one's national identity:

> "British mountaineers (...) often saw themselves, and were seen by others as upholders of the 'imagined sense of British imperial power" (Hanson quoted in: Myers 2002, p.29).

A 'colonial tour' acted, generally for men, as a 'rite of passage' and an opportunity to assert their sense of belonging to a national power (Myers 2002). Travel had become, for a certain class of young men, a transitional experience

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[44] See chapter two for a fuller discussion of the effects of empire on the enterprise of travel and tourism.

[45] Discovery was itself always something of a fantasy, as illustrated by Mary Louise Pratt's description of the 'discovery' of Lake Tanganyika, "As a rule the "discovery" of sites like Lake Tanganyika involved making one's way to the region and then asking the local inhabitants if they knew of any big lakes etcetera in the area, then hiring them to take you there, whereupon with their guidance and support, you proceeded to discover what they already knew." (Pratt 1992, p.202).

through which they could move from being subjects of the empire to being its purveyors, and so define their identity as men of power.

The gap year presents a somewhat more egalitarian, though far from fully inclusive, opportunity for 'travel as transition' than did the 'colonial tour'. Personal change was an issue that many gap year participants mentioned. Predominantly expressing an expectation that they would be 'changed' by their experiences:

> **Clarisa** *"I know that this year will change me and change my views and stuff, and will affect everything..... and I know this will be a major factor in my life and my views".*

Rarely were participants specific about how they would change, though 'broadened views' were mentioned, as were vague concepts of experiencing other cultures. Despite this vagueness about the nature of change, there was a clear perception of travel as a necessary path, with many seeing it as an extension of their education and a process of experience to develop their life skills:

> **Kate** **"What sort of experience are you looking for in your gap year?**
>
> **Lucinda** *"You want to do something completely different {.....} basically having that time between school and university where you are not studying where you are not constantly living with people of the same age as you, and you have the chance to find out other things about yourself that education doesn't tell you, that school doesn't tell you."*

Experience, as a period of skills acquisition and a bridge between education and employment / further education, has often been an important part of youth transitional periods. Hollands (1990) argued that within the male working class, the mastery of manual skills was the transition not just to the position of worker, but also to that of adult male identity. Thus, becoming a 'man' (or adult) was a cultural identity tied to specific knowledges and experience of certain skills:

> "...the transition to adulthood took the form of a cultural apprenticeship rooted in the inheritance of a patrimony of skills" (Hollands 1990, p.14).

The gap year is hardly a manual training scheme (though it may include an almost voyeuristic experiencing of manual labour[46]). However, in the same way as work experience amounts to 'time served' for the working classes, the gap year acts as 'work' experience for the middle classes and the transition to the life skills of being an adult. The principle here is that via practical experience one passes through the transition from child to adulthood, acquiring along the way the skills necessary for a new 'adult' identity.

Finally, simply surviving a gap year is, in itself, a transitional process, an initiation into adulthood. Danger (be it emotional or physical), as mentioned earlier, is a powerful component of the gap year. By putting themselves in precarious positions and surviving them, young people are able to demonstrate their transition from the dependencies of childhood to the independencies of adulthood. Danger, and the risk of death, also confirms the authenticity of a travel experience and the escape from the securities and safety nets of western cultural protection (Phillips 1999). Gap years act as transitional periods for many young people. They allow them to experiment with identities, they demand survival, and, supposedly, teach 'life skills'. In this way, they fit into a tradition of youth transitions which range through class and time, and include the aristocratic colonial tour of the eighteen hundreds as well as the Youth Training Scheme of the 1980's.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the ways that gap year participants understand and represent their experiences. It has been argued that these representations and

[46] Prince William was shown-off to the nation in a series of frame-by-frame shots of him cleaning a toilet (accompanied by puns on the theme of royals and thrones); other photographs depicted him engaged in labouring as a builder (Kerr 2000).

experiences are not necessarily consistent with those that the gap year industry markets. Rather, participants are able to manage and market their experiences in ways that exploit the symbolic value afforded to them in different market places. The desire to escape that which is considered 'normal' is an important motivator for gap year participants. This escape takes the form of prioritising alternative destinations, activities and motivations for travel, and produces an 'anti-holiday' rhetoric within the gap year. Participants specifically rejected experiences seen as akin to, or available through 'holidays'. In turn they also rejected the identity of 'tourist' in favour of identities seen to confer greater authenticity on their experience and its value. Gap year participants also interpret and categorise their activities in ways that have more nuances, and are more varied, than is perhaps suggested by the industry. Indeed, their rejection of the status of 'volunteers' indicates a rejection of the earnest need to 'do-good' that appears in much of the industry's publicity. In this way, the divergences that exist in the gap year product, whereby the industry is able to sell one product while participants simultaneously buy another, are exemplified. Participants proved capable of maintaining multiple representations of their gap year, yet were primarily motivated by the need to have diverse, different and unusual experiences. The individualised nature of the experiences they sought were, however, not solely focused on the need to acquire skills, or on a sense of CV enhancement for future competitiveness. Rather, participants prioritised unclear and undefined concepts of change, of new experiences and even of unwanted experiences. The desire to encounter and explore the unknown is an intrinsic part of these experiences, and it is this relationship with the unknown, and the way it becomes 'known', that will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter seven:

Seeing is knowing

Encountering difference, producing knowledge

Introduction

A gap year is a period of exploration: of geographies, of cultures, of others, of self and above all of 'difference'. Indeed, one of the purposes of a gap year is to seek out difference, to leave the ordinary in search of the 'extra-ordinary'. As has already been discussed throughout this thesis, travel, encountering difference, and the processes of experience, all have a relationship with knowledge production. In this final empirical chapter, I seek to combine the voices of the gap year industry, gap year travellers and gap year hosts in order to problematise the way the gap year industry approaches the mechanisms of knowledge production. Specifically, I consider how the industry understands the way participants learn about the visited 'other'. In order to problematise the current understandings within the gap year of the relationship between travel and knowledge production, I draw upon critical pedagogy and social justice frameworks. I offer an empirically based critique, arguing that the current dominant approach towards knowledge production through gap year experiences, creates few possibilities for linkages of knowledge, of people, or of experience across either space or time. Consequently, the relationship between experience and future action proves to be tentative. As a result, gap year participants acquire understandings of the 'others' they visit that are predominantly descriptive and time-place specific. Understandings, which, I shall argue, emphasise the situated rather than systemic nature of issues such as 'poverty'.

The following chapter is structured into three sections. The first offers an analysis of the gap year industry's approach to promoting 'global awareness'. In the context of this discussion, I understand 'global awareness' as the

understanding of global systemic links. That is, that actions, practices and individuals are not spatially isolated, but rather exert influence across both space and time. The first section is based around a review of data in previous chapters, together with interview data taken from two gap year organisations (the characterisation and significance of which are discussed below). Through the analysis of this data, I offer a critique of the gap year industry's approach to global awareness from a critical pedagogy and social justice perspective. The second section of the chapter offers a limited exploration of the perspectives of those in San Gabriel who host a gap year project. Through analysis of anecdotal and questionnaire data I ague that currently there is little understanding of the ways host community members position, and produce knowledge about their visitors. However, if the impacts of gap year programmes are ever to be understood then host community perspectives, how ever partial, cannot be ignored. The final section of the chapter argues, empirically, that the approach towards knowledge production taken by the gap year industry frames the nature of the knowledges produced by participants. As a result, participants produce time-place specific knowledges. I will demonstrate this argument through an exploration of participants' interpretations of specific encounters with others, and their understandings of the theme of 'poverty'.

1. A bit of fun, a bit of social responsibility

"The benefits {of a gap year} go far beyond the obvious satisfaction of making a contribution and sheer enjoyment."

(Changing Worlds 2003)

Many grand claims are made about gap years. Participants, the media and the industry alike, promise, as the quotation above exemplifies, that a gap year will combine fun with adventure, and altruism with education; a gap year lets the hedonism of travel meet the idealism of development work. This chapter explores the ways understandings of others and of the world are partnered with gap year experiences. Specifically, I critique existing understandings of these

linkages for their lack of any clear or intentional mechanism for the development of a systemic understanding of global awareness (as defined above).

A social agenda?

There are multiple agendas embedded in gap year programmes. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, programmes seek to offer travelling participants' personal development, while simultaneously offering 'development' to host communities. They offer fun, adventure and the opportunity to explore one's identity; they offer access to cultural capital and the potential to increase one's corporate competitiveness. In addition to all of these agendas, many gap year organisations, through their programmes and placements, also promote a social agenda, specifically aimed at encouraging a sense of social responsibility in their participants.

Below are quotations from representatives of two different gap year organisations. Both quotations are from senior members of staff, and both exemplify the role the speaker perceives that his organisation plays in developing participants' awareness of the world and their potential influence within it. There are significant differences between the two organisations presented here, differences that exemplify the range of interests covered by the gap year industry[47]. The first quotation comes from Chris Brown of Teaching Projects Abroad (TAPA), this is a large commercial gap year organisation which sends an estimated 1,800 people per year on gap year placements every year. They operate on a flexible 'placement model' whereby participants can chose where and when they wish to travel. Placements are then offered on an individual basis, though often there will be a large number of placements in a single area. TAPA operates worldwide and has established itself rapidly in

[47] See table one, chapter three for information on key gap year organisations which work in Latin America and the various typologies that they display.

Latin America since 2002. The second quotation comes from Quest Overseas[48]. Unlike TAPA, Quest runs team-based combined projects and expeditions. Quest is smaller than TAPA, with currently five projects in Latin America and two in Africa, which in total cater for an estimated 250 participants a year. The 'team-based model' determines that participants apply for a specific project that operates at a specific time. They then form part of a team of up to 16 participants who work and travel together.

One of the key differences between the individual placement and team project models, is the speed with which programmes can be established. The former structure allows for a higher turn over of destinations and placements according to the demands of the gap year market. Team-based projects require greater set up time and expenditure, and therefore organisations[49] will run only a few such projects over several years. These models are a key difference within the gap year industry, and are exemplified by the two organisations quoted here. Quest and TAPA are both commercial organisations and both are currently expanding the types of projects and placement that they offer and the demographics that they target. The following quotations were taken from separate interviews, both of which I conducted and audio recorded. Speaking for TAPA is Chris Brown who is a senior member of staff. Quest Overseas is represented by Jonathan Cassidy[50], who has worked for the company since 1998 and is currently South America Operations Director:

> **Chris Brown** *"Well the most important thing we do is something that we don't advertise.....We have sent the best part of 10,000 people, who are middle-class young people, many of whom will have significant jobs in the years to come and they will have lived in a third world country, they will*

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[48] Quest is the organisation that I have previously worked for, and on one of whose projects I conducted ethnographic fieldwork. See chapter three for a fuller discussion of Quest and my relationship to them.

[49] Examples of organisations that run project based programmes include Raleigh International, Trekforce, Coral Key, Africa and Asia Venture, and Venture co. amongst others (see table one).

[50] Jonathan Cassidy has read this section of my thesis and given permission for his real name to be used, Chris Brown is a pseudonym.

have had that experience of the developing world and not just of the beaches of Gambia, not just a bit of backpacking but they will actually have lived, and worked in a third world country. And I think, actually, that is the most important factor, that there is a generation now that are going through, because of us, a generation that are going to go through and run banks and run big companies and what not, for whom the third world is not strange and out there and who will have friends in the third world. That I think is the prime most important thing.....

*If we look at the way my generation looks at the third world it is something 'out there', and is far away and is very threatening, mainly through immigration. It is threatening also now because of September the eleventh and everything that is associated with that, and it is threatening because we can't cope with all the hunger and poverty and shanty towns and all the things that come on our screens from time to time on our TV screens, and it is just terrifically foreign. And the results are that we end up with a tendency towards policies of closure, because people don't want to leave Europe and North America. It also means that I think a number of companies {*are led*} towards exploitative relationships with the third world and unsympathetic ways of dealing with the third world. I mean how much better it might have been if all the ummm all the people who are middle and high management of Shell had spent some time in West Africa for example, an idealist example, but how differently they would have treated the Ibo people in Nigeria?"*

Here, Chris Brown makes a range of assumptions about the knowledges that TAPA participants will produce as a consequence of their overseas experiences. He draws a link between visiting and knowing the 'third world', suggesting that it will seem 'less foreign, and far away and threatening' for those who have 'been there'. Significantly, he then connects this knowledge to future action, so

assuming a linkage of experiences across time. He suggests that participants will, in the future, act in ways that will be less 'unsympathetic' or 'exploitive' than if they had not travelled. Furthermore, in the context of the discussion in chapters four and five on the gap year product, it is worth noting that, although Chris Brown feels that developing an empathetic relationship with the third world is the most important thing TAPA does, he is also clear that they do not advertise their placements in such a way. In doing this he is making a value judgment about what it is that his customers (participants and parents alike) will want to buy. He is judging that 'social responsibility' or 'awareness of others' is not the product being sought, and therefore relegates this perceived benefit to an unadvertised sub-agenda.

The second quotation is from Jonathan Cassidy of Quest Overseas, who like Chris Brown, discusses a social agenda that he perceives Quest's projects to have:

> **Jonathan Cassidy** *"I remember when I had my interview with Michael* (founder and director of Quest Overseas) *all those years ago in 1999 walking through a field in Warwick, in a suit, the second time I'd ever worn one. And he was saying you know, working with students many of which are from very wealthy backgrounds many of which could well sort of have very very influential jobs in years to come, you know could become director of Mobil, Shell or prime ministers god help us, who knows mm....* (laughter) *and if they are sat there one day and Mobil have just found a whole new reserve of oil in North West Ecuador and, or anywhere for that matter, and they can look back for a split second to that month they spent working with people on the ground playing football with them or whatever, and think "no lets not just plod through it because you know there are people there", then that's enough".*

Like the first quotation, the second also expresses a sense of a long- term social agenda in gap year projects. Indeed, there is an obvious parallel in the way both

Chris Brown and Jonathan Cassidy use oil exploration as an example of a situation in which gap year participants might, in the future, hold power and choose to use it responsibly. Like TAPA, Quest are also connecting the process of 'seeing' to that of 'knowing'. Both organisations recognise a need, and express a desire, to redress the distance in difference between people of the developed and developing world. Likewise, both commentators hope that their participants will develop empathy towards the 'others' they visit, an empathy that will influence their future actions. The very existence of such a social agenda within gap year programmes offers a potential route for the development of greater global awareness. However, realising such an agenda, as I argue in the following sections, requires a targeted pedagogy, one that promotes active and challenging engagement with participants' imagined geographies and taken for granted assumptions.

Understanding and contact

The quotations in the preceding section expressed a desire for a social agenda, one that would see gap year participants learning about those they visited. Despite the desire to promote learning, neither organisation has a defined educational methodology for stimulating such learnings, a status common across the gap year. Rather, there is an almost total reliance on the mechanisms of 'contact'. That is, the assumption that through meeting 'others', one will come to better understandings of, and with, them. In addition to contact, there is also a reliance on the power of 'experience', in and of itself, to act as a sufficient educational methodology. I wish to now critique these two assumptions.

The primary mechanism through which gap year participants are presumed to learn about others is by the experience of 'contact' with said 'others'. Contact, in the sense that it is experienced through the gap year, is predominantly understood in a political and moral vacuum, so that projects and placements are allowed to function without any reference to broader social, political and historical context. Indeed, without questioning *why* such projects 'need' to exist at all. Such a learning model is encapsulated in Allport's 1954 'Contact

Hypothesis' (Pettigrew 1998), in which Allport advocated the theory that through contact between different social groups prejudice could be reduced and tolerance increased (Amir and Ben-Ari 1985; Pettigrew 1998; Wittig and Grant-Thompson 1998). The assumption here was that experience alone (in the form of contact) would be enough to cause a change in values. However, over recent years the Contact Hypothesis has received much criticism, at the heart of which has been a questioning of the presumed positive nature of contact, and also of the way in which experience is processed.

Allport's 'Contact Hypothesis' is based upon the assumption that contact automatically deconstructs false stereotypes and prejudice. However, Allport specified four preconditions for such contact. Namely, that there would be equal status between the contact groups, that there were common goals for achievement, that the groups would need to co-operate, and finally that there was authority support for contact. This last condition translates into some form of shared value system between groups (Pettigrew 1998). These criteria are in fact relatively taxing, particularly the last, and there is no evidence of their application within gap year programme. Consequently, the situation is one where mere contact, under any set of conditions, is assumed to produce positive relationship outcomes. This notion contradicts research that suggests that far from challenging pre-held views, contact experiences may in fact accentuate such views (Amir and Ben-Ari 1985; Pettigrew 1998). Stereotypes, in the form of generalisations and simplifications about groups of 'others' (Nederveen-Pieterse 1995) can be deeply entrenched, established over prolonged periods of time, and, consequently, robust. To assume that a short period of contact with the stereotyped 'other' will automatically contradict, and hence unseat, such stereotypes is, at best, naive. Indeed, stereotypes by their very nature are based on cultural assumptions taken to be natural, and indeed neutral (Bell 1997). Consequently, over-turning them requires direct and conscious challenge. The risk otherwise is that people merely experience that which they 'expect' to experience, and the practice then becomes confirmation of the pre-held beliefs.

A further perspective from which to critique the reliance on 'contact' as a source of knowledge, is the way 'contact' gives primacy to that which is visible.

As mentioned above, the power of stereotypes comes from their assumed 'naturalness', this is turn often makes conflicting evidence hard to see. Furthermore, social and historical structures are not simple to observe. The radical Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1970) argued that it is the invisibility of social structures that makes oppression both possible and powerful. Freire also went on to argue that oppression becomes so naturalised that people are able to observe it without necessarily recognising it:

> "One of the gravest obstacles to the achievement of liberation is that oppressive reality absorbs those within it and thereby acts to submerge human beings' consciousness" (Freire 1970, p.33).

In practice, this means that people are able to observe oppressive actions without recognising them as such, and, furthermore, able to perpetrate them without consciously intending to do so. Indeed, oppression needs to be appreciated as both a conscious and an unconscious system (Freire 1970; Bell 1997). Within the context of gap year projects, an analysis that seeks to make visible mechanisms of oppression needs to ask questions that go beyond contact. The power relations within projects and placements need to be questioned, as does the issue of *why* such projects exist (Crabtree 1998), and why volunteers from the developing world are not coming to the developed world. Relying on contact alone, promotes understandings where 'culture' is allowed to explain all differences at the expense of attention to fundamental structural historical and material inequalities (Mohan 2001). Global awareness, in the sense of a systemic understanding, is precluded in favour of a descriptive knowledge of 'difference'. Oppression is a relationship that traps and dehumanises both the oppressor and the oppressed (Freire 1970; Freire 1974; Freire 2002), and in so doing becomes invisible to both. Acting to change the world requires that injustice, oppression and inequality become first visible, and second unjustifiable. Thus, if gap year programs are to breed social responsibility, then they need to directly engage with structural issues of inequality and oppression, in both their global and their localised forms, rather than to rely on the mythical power of individualised contact.

The experience will speak for itself

The second perspective from which to critique the gap year's reliance on 'contact', is a pedagogical one. A reliance on 'contact' to stimulate learning has also become an abstracted reliance on 'experience'. That is, experience is presumed to stand and speak alone as an educational process. To refer back to the discussion in chapter five, experience is not treated as part of an educational process, but as an education in, and of, itself. Such a limited pedagogical approach, in turn, limits the learning possibilities of gap year experiences. However, in order to fully understand this argument it is necessary to clarify the way in which I intend to use the term 'experience'.

Experience, as an educational concept, fits within various pedagogical traditions, including those of social justice, experiential education and the work of theorists such as Paulo Freire and John Dewey (also discussed in chapter five). Though these pedagogies tend to follow the Dewey line of viewing 'all learning as experiential' (Adams 1997), they make a distinction between educational pedagogies that focus on the process of learning and those that focus on its end product (Adams 1997). According to experiential education theorists, experience is more than just a set of physical interactions, and is, instead, part of a process of interpretation and critical reflection. By comparison, within the gap year, as well as other forums[51], the concept of experience has been simplified and transformed from a pedagogical process to a method. So that 'experience' alone, in the sense of physical interaction, is promoted as an entire educational process in its own right. Through the rest of this chapter I intend to problematise such a usage of 'experience'. I therefore consider the term in the way in which it is used by the gap year industry. That is, to denote contact based interactions, rather than to identify a pedagogy of learning.

The relationship between experiential, or action-based, learning and the development of a sense of social responsibility has received research attention; most specifically, in the USA and in the context of service-learning projects

[51] Some adventure and outdoor education activities would serve as an example.

(Bell 1997; Crabtree 1998; Wade 2000). Much of the research into service-learning and social responsibility or justice, is supported with reference to the work of Paulo Freire, who argued vociferously for education linked to action (Freire 1970; Freire 1974; Freire 2002). For Freire, education had a fundamental role to play in the processes of both liberation and oppression. Indeed, it was the manner of the education that decided which of these two processes it supported. As was discussed in chapter five, experiential education involves a process of both action and critical reflection, however within the gap year, action, in the form of experience without reflection, is invariably the sole educational element. Consequently, as with Allport's Contact Hypothesis, the processes through which participants learn about others remain predominantly ignored. In contrast to this approach, recent research on cross-cultural interaction and service learning projects has argued strongly for the management of the various processes involved in inter-group contact (Adams 1997; Bell 1997; Crabtree 1998; Pettigrew 1998). Such processes include learning about one another, generating effective links, and inter-group reappraisal (Pettigrew 1998). These principles are further supported by the work of groups such as the Association for Experiential Education, who emphasis the need for experience to be part of a cycle of action and reflection (Krnas and Roarke 1994). However, despite evidence from both research and practice current in other educational forums, such active processing is woefully missing from gap year placements. Instead, there is an almost total reliance on over optimistic assumptions about the generic power of experience and its ability 'to speak for itself'; a presumption ultimately based on a belief in a single, objective truth that simply reveals itself through contact.

Experiences are an important mechanism for learning. However, the flaw in gap year programmes is that they are being abstracted from other forms of learning. As a consequence contact-based experiences come to be viewed as unproblematic portals to a certainty of knowledge. If a social agenda is to be incorporated into gap year programmes, then experiences need to be critically engaged with, rather than assumed to be in the privileged position of revealing 'reality'. Indeed, experiential education and educators recognise the need for reflection, the need not to rely, uncritically, on 'experience' to speak for itself

(Krnas and Roarke 1994; NSEE 1997; Wade 2000; Swanger 2002). Practically, introducing an effective social agenda to gap year projects necessitates introducing a more critical approach towards learning, drawing on sources beyond the fact of experience, to place such experiences into a wider historical and geographical context. Wade (2000), writing about the possibilities for service-learning projects, argues that there are three steps to providing a social justice education. First, there is personal experience, then critical reflection and, finally, action. Gap year projects have the potential to operate within such a model of social justice education, but in their current form they ignore the second and third steps in this process, presuming them to be automatic outcomes of the first. The quotations at the start of this chapter exemplify this process, for neither speaker identifies any process beyond that of contact experience, and yet both presume this to be a sufficient catalyst to learn about others.

A further pedagogical limitation of an unprocessed reliance on experience is the issue of how 'independent' experience ever is. One does not travel in a vacuum of either values or knowledge, rather pre-held knowledges and values frame the way experiences are interpreted and understood. As was argued in chapters four and six, the gap year is sold, and understood, within particular frameworks. Examples of these frameworks can be found in the above-mentioned chapters, however, to take a specific example, it is worth considering the section in chapter four on 'A geography of experimentation'. In that section, I argued that through a gap year, participants are able to 'experiment' with alternative identities and professions without meeting the qualifications such activities might necessitate at 'home', nor the sanctions they might encounter. Frameworks such as this, construct travel and encounters with 'others' as the discovery of seemingly less-regulated spaces, in which young westerners can 'experiment'. However, there is an at least potentially exploitive dimension to such frameworks, with the entitlement of the traveller to 'experiment' positioned over the rights of the host. As Susan Heald argues in her writing on the possibilities for a social justice pedagogy for travel study programs:

> "Travel also heightens our sense of entitlement to the world, to enjoy our fun on our terms regardless of the needs, desires

> and safety of those who live where we play" (Heald 2003, p.5).

It is through frameworks such as 'experimentation', that experience will be interpreted. These are the imagined geographies in which, and to which, participants travel. Consequently, the education offered by experience cannot be divorced from these frameworks. If gap year organisations wish to promote a social agenda, one that encourages responsibility and promotes future action, then they need to develop ways to engage with the knowledges participants bring with them, and produce, through their gap year experiences.

The final point to make in this section, and one that will be picked up at the end of this chapter, is to question the ability of experience to reveal issues at a structural level. Experience, by its nature, is premised on the ability of the participant to interact with a reality, to witness and to observe; it is inherently empirical. As was discussed in chapter two, while empirical experience may be a valuable part of knowledge production, it is limited when it is the only element. An empiricist approach prioritises that which can be observed over that which cannot. So, in the context of learning about others such an approach negates much that is of a structural nature, and therefore not 'obviously' visible. As I argued at the start of this chapter, becoming globally aware is a process of recognising the systemic links that connect geographically disparate places and people. Consequently, a solely empirical experience based methodology will have severe limitations. As I will discuss in the final part of this chapter, developing a pedagogy that promotes in participants an understanding of social responsibility and justice, requires an appreciation of social structures as well as social experiences.

In conclusion, the gap year, as exemplified in the earlier quotations from TAPA and Quest, seeks a social agenda. However, at present this agenda is based on an optimistic faith in the power of experiential contact between different groups of people. Consequently, organisations do little to include any educational methodology, beyond experience, in their programmes. Rather, there is an over-reliance on experience to provide adequate stimulation for learning; such a

'pedagogy', limits organisations to focusing on one single source of knowledge (experience), to the exclusion of all other sources. This favours that which can be seen, observed and interacted with, and therefore obscures the social, economic, political and historical context in which gap year programmes function. Consequently, structural and systemic issues, questions of how and why situations exist, remain largely ignored. In the following section, I unpack the knowledges and understandings of 'others' produced by gap year participants. I use this discussion to argue that the pedagogy discussed above frames the way participants come to 'know' those they have visited, and in turn, the ways they interpret the world.

2. Hosting the gap year

Throughout this thesis I have focused on the gap year as seen from the perspective of those who travel on, and those who sell, such experiences. Obviously however, international experiences inherently involve those who are visited as well as those who visit. While gap year programmes claim to offer opportunities for encounter between people, the voices of those who host such experiences have largely been ignored. This is a position that is concurrent with Said's (1978) post colonial argument that the exclusion of the voices of the represented is a condition of the colonial gaze (see chapter two). In researching this thesis I attempted to include these marginalized voices, to seek out the perspectives and opinions of those who were visited as well as those who visit. The practicalities of doing such research were discussed in chapter three, and suffice to say that, for a number of practical reasons, I did not manage to produce the depth of data for which I would have hoped. However, whilst acknowledging the relative thinness of the data, and particularly that it cannot be compared in quantity or quality to the data produced about gap year participants, I do not wish to ignore these data. For, to ignore the responses of those in San Gabriel who took part in my research would be to further silence, and once more marginalise, the voices of a host community. Consequently, I offer below a limited and tentative analysis based on my own anecdotal experiences and questionnaires. While the questionnaire included a number of items (see appendix two), the following discussion concentrates on two key

areas. First, how those in San Gabriel perceive and value the impact of the Quest Overseas project, and second why they feel gap year participants choose to come to San Gabriel.

Visitors welcome?

Of the 21 returned questionnaires (out of 22 distributed) all the respondents were aware of the Quest project and demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the purpose of the project. It should be recognised that all the respondents were women and mostly with some form of organisational role within their community; consequently, it can be assumed that they were reasonably well informed about community activities. It should also be remembered that the Quest project has been in the area since 1995, and, certainly when I was first in San Gabriel in 1999, there was a notable level of confusion and uncertainty about just what the purpose of the project was (discussed below). Within this context of a reasonable awareness of the function of the Quest project, the project was seen in a relatively positive light, with all 21 respondents stating that they appreciated the project:

> "*Yes I like it* (the Quest project) *because they are very friendly with the children, they give them cuddles, affection and they are very thoughtful with the children"* (Sra. Mamani)

> "(I think) *that it is very good and amusing and I think it is good that they play with the children without minding their social class"* (Sra. Lopez)

Reasons for appreciating the project varied, but focused on aspects of affection and amusement, with only two respondents identifying learning outcomes as a reason to support the project. It should be borne in mind that my access to these respondents was through Elvis who acted as a gatekeeper (his role is discussed in detail in chapter three). He selected people he perceived as likely to give us time and responses, and he, like me, is closely associated with the Quest project. Consequently these responses must be seen as positioned and it should be recognised that the reasons for these responses may be complex, including

perceived access to funds available through the project. However, this positioning does not mitigate the predominantly positive nature of the responses.

When the questionnaire responses are combined with anecdotal evidence the project does seem popular; however, its 'importance' is perhaps relatively minor. That is, in the context of the majority of people's lives in San Gabriel where the availability of both water and employment are erratic, the children's play activities provided by the project are a relatively superficial service. Indeed, while respondents were positive about the project they predominantly framed it in terms of short-term childcare and a pleasant distraction for their children, rather than in terms of any lasting change. Quest deliberately sets out to provide services that are additional, rather than essential, to people's lives. For, as an organisation they feel that they cannot offer security to their projects, as there is the risk that they may have to pull out of a project should the company not be able to sell the trip. Paradoxically, offering 'additional' as opposed to 'essential' services may offer a route to balancing the gap year industry's relative ignorance of development practice and theory with its enthusiasm for overseas volunteer work. However, while I may wish to argue that the non-essential nature of the Quest project is, given the inexperience of the volunteers and the company's status as a holiday rather than development provider, a positive factor, such non-essential services also represent a certain distance from the lived reality of people's lives in San Gabriel. That is, in a context of pronounced poverty and marginalisation the concentration of the considerable resources, financial as well as labour, of the Quest project into non-essential service provision, may not be the most influential use of these resources[52].

The gap year industry's cursory understanding of development issues raises questions about how appropriate projects are identified and whose needs they

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[52] Since conducting this research Quest have started to fund a pre-school in San Gabriel. The school was the idea of Sr. Menendez (the Quest permanent outreach worker) and is run year round and by local Peruvian staff, including a qualified teacher.

are perceived to meet. In the context of which, the provision of non-essential services can been argued to provide hosts with some degree of choice over whether or not they engage with, and use, such services. There are a variety of accounts from across the industry of projects that have been imposed on communities, or whose local impacts have been far from uniformly beneficial. For example, the anonymous organisation who decided to paint the houses in a village in Northern Ecuador, unfortunately without fully consulting those that lived in the houses. While this might be an extreme example, the principle, one of good intentions and imposed enthusiasm, is not so uncommon within the gap year. What allows a project like this to even happen is a presumption that local needs can be simply observed by the interested outsider, and in turn can be solved through simple and practical action, a presumption that is common to many projects. Indeed, there is an almost colonial assumption here that is possible to 'solve' problems, and that the altruistic outsider 'knows what is best'.

As a final point in analysing the positive local response to the Quest project, it is important to reflect on the peculiarities of the project. Unlike many gap year programmes the Quest project in San Gabriel has a relatively long history, with a relationship dating back to 1995. By comparison, many gap year programmes may only exist for a few months or maybe years. When I first arrived in San Gabriel in February 1999 there was definite evidence of local tension and even antagonism towards the project. In part this appeared to stem from confusion over what the project was actually doing, and why groups of volunteers would be in San Gabriel[53]. In response to these suspicions some basic outreach work was undertaken, which included inviting parents and local organisers to observe project sessions and running sessions in local communities rather than remotely, so that the groups and activities could be observed. In addition Sr. Menednsez is now employed fulltime as a project co-ordinator and works year round in San

[53] A common misunderstanding was that the volunteers were missionaries with an evangelical role.

Gabriel on a variety of projects[54]. Consequently the profile of the project has been significantly raised in recent years and there is a permanent, rather than seasonal, involvement. All of these conditions are important in putting into context the responses of San Gabriel residents to the Quest project. Particularly as these conditions are not common to the majority of gap year programmes, which, as discussed earlier, tend to operate on a relatively short-term basis with the emphasis on predominantly, if not exclusively, international labour. In summary, the Quest project appears to be well received by local residents, for whom, though it is not as a major influence on their lives, it is a welcome distraction for their children. However, such a welcome has to be understood within the context and conditions in which the Quest project operates, rather than as a statement about gap year volunteer programmes in general.

Here to help

In addition to analysing the reception of the Quest project I was particularly interested to explore *why* people in San Gabriel felt volunteers came to their communities. As I argued in chapter four, the gap year industry has constructed a 'geography of need'; that is, it offers participants the opportunity to travel to, and so consume, places where 'need' is a supposedly defining characteristic. The significance of such geographies is that they in turn frame practices. Asking those in San Gabriel *why* they feel volunteers come to their communities is an important step in evaluating the impact of such geographies. In 1996 I conducted research on volunteer teachers in secondary schools in Malawi (Simpson 1997). One of the most interesting outcomes of this work was the awareness of the way hosts perceived the motivations of volunteer teachers. Overwhelmingly the view was that volunteers came because either they could not get work in their home country or because they had personal problems that meant they needed to leave home for a while. The constant theme was that the hosts were helping the visitors at least, if not more than, the visitors were assisting their hosts. As a consequence of this work, and the geographies of

[54] The year round projects do not use international volunteers but are predominantly funded by Quest Overseas, the most recent project has been a pre-school for local children employing a local teacher.

need offered by gap year programmes, it was important to explore how the people of San Gabriel positioned their visitors.

Responses to the question of why volunteers came to San Gabriel varied. However, the majority of respondents identified the help that volunteers could bring to San Gabriel as the predominant reason that they came to the area:

> *"To give support to the children who need it"* (Sra. Sanchez)

> *"Because they come to make us play and go to the swimming pool for free because they have lots of money"*(Sra. Gomez)

> *"Maybe because it is a community that needs help so the children don't develop any addiction, maybe they think the same and* (so come to) *help the children"*(Sra. Ccosi)

Many of the respondents described San Gabriel as a 'needy place'; while this term was not particularly well explained it does reflect a geography concurrent with the 'geographies of need' offered by the gap year industry. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to establish what constitutes this self-perception of 'need', or to unpack what role the Quest volunteer project may play in such a construction. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge this aspect of self-description by those in San Gabriel, particularly in the context of exploring the difference between framing gap year programmes as either opportunities to help others or as opportunities to learn from others. As long as the geographies of need, and images such as those discussed in chapter four, dominate the gap year industry, programmes will continue to be framed by notions of the 'helper' and the 'helped'. This is a framework not of equals encountering one another across difference, but rather a framework wherein the international volunteer comes to the assistance of the host, acknowledging little received in return. Such a framework fails to acknowledge the motivations of travelling participants (see chapter six) and subjects hosts to a particular colonial gaze that positions them as un-powerful recipients of aid. Within this context, the ways host communities perceive their own roles and 'needs' within gap year programmes is an important area for further study.

While all respondents identified what San Gabriel might gain form Quest volunteers, five respondents also identified benefits volunteers might gain from coming to San Gabriel:

> *"To share and to experience new things from the reality of our country"* (Sr. Ticona)

> *"I suppose it is part of the project to help the more needy people* {...}(they also come) *to study, to practise in the community, to know other sorts of realities"* (Sra. Ramirez)

> *"I think the reason* (the volunteers come) *is to learn Spanish and to be fluent in it. To see how the far communities from other countries are so they can give support to those kids and give them some healthy entertainment so they can do sports and take exercise and keep them away from drugs or bad habits"* (Sra. Pucar)

Recognising that the volunteers gain from their experiences in San Gabriel would suggest a reciprocal relationship within the programme. As I have argued in other parts of this thesis, developing a reciprocal framework for gap year programmes is fundamental to making such programmes more equalitarian and less paternalistic. That is, making such programmes opportunities for diverse people to learn about and interact with one another across geographical boundaries, rather than opportunities for people from the developed world to further assert power and authority over those from the developing world (see discussion in chapters four and five). As with the comments made in the preceding section, the above comments need to be read within the context of this particular programme. So that, once again the significance of the longevity of the Quest programme and the prominent role of Peruvian employees should not be underestimated.

In addition to recognising what volunteers gain from gap year programmes, it is also paramount to recognise the complex local impacts of gap year

programmes. Anecdotally I have seen in San Gabriel tensions and conflict resulting from the Quest project, predominantly as a result of perceived inequality in the distribution of resources. As a further example, it is worth considering the case of an organisation working in Southern Peru providing teaching placements. In this programme participants were housed with local families who received payment from the organisation. This caused a great deal of local tension with families competing to house volunteers. In addition, some families gave up other forms of economic activity to become dependent on hosting volunteers. This particular project had grown very rapidly and the project co-ordinator was deeply concerned that such growth could not be sustained, and that through becoming financially dependent on the programme families were making themselves economically vulnerable. As this case exemplifies the impacts of gap year programmes can extend into many aspects of people lives. Consequently, it is vital that, however well intentioned they are, the full ramifications of gap year programmes are assessed when considering their impact and value.

As a final comment in this analysis of residents' responses to the Quest project it should be recognised that the questionnaire data comes predominantly from adult members of the community. Adults have a relatively limited involvement with the project, and consequently it would be interesting to see what children who actually participate in the programme feel about it. Such research was beyond the scope of this thesis and the ethical issues of doing such research would need careful consideration. However, this would be an important avenue for further research. Indeed, understanding the role the project plays in shaping identity and understandings of self and other amongst the children who participate is a vital component in understanding the impact of such a project.

In conclusion, the data and analysis presented here represent a cursory examination of the perspectives of a host community. In the case reported here, of a project that has been established for a number of years and a project that deliberately provides non-essential services, the local perspective appears to be a positive one, but one where the importance of the project is seen as relatively limited. Given the already discussed (see chapter four) relationship of gap year

organisations to international development practice and theory, working to provide non-essential services may well be an appropriate role for gap year programmes. That is, services that local people can exercise choice over whether or not to use. However the questionnaire data drawn on here represents a relatively superficial examination of the issues, and when combined with observational evidence it is apparent that the story of host community reactions is complex and multi-layered. It is vital for ongoing gap year research that a greater understanding of host community interaction with programmes is established, and such understanding will necessitate further in-depth, and preferably, ethnographic fieldwork.

While it is interesting, and valid, to note the responses of residents of San Gabriel to the Quest project, the research so far offers little to help understand what hosts gain from, or learn about, their visitors. Through the latter part of this thesis I have sought to critique gap year programmes from an experiential education and critical pedagogy perspective, and I would suggest that such a perspective should be brought to bear on the experiences of host communities. Indeed, if gap year programmes are to offer the claimed opportunities for intercultural contact and learning then the pedagogical aspects of this cannot be solely considered from the perspectives of the visitors. Rather, just as contact alone cannot be assumed to teach visitors a great deal about their hosts, so it equally cannot be assumed to teach hosts a great deal about their visitors. The experiences of host communities need to be further explored and understood from a critical pedagogical perspective, with the radical possibility that gap year programmes could, ultimately, offer multilateral, rather than unilateral educational opportunities.

3. Knowing me, knowing you

In the following discussion, I explore participants understandings of others by focusing on a combination of specific incidences and broader themes (notably, poverty). I have selected these incidences and themes on the basis of the issues and experiences that participants raised and discussed during interviews. In exploring the specific understandings and knowledges of participants, I argue

that there is little evidence to suggest that they are making links across either space or time. I then ask how more interconnected learning could be supported within gap year programmes.

Look who's different

Encountering 'difference' is an integral part of gap year travel experience. An important reason identified by participants for wanting to travel was to have encounters with 'different' people. Below, I analyse some of the ways in which participants interact with such 'difference' when it is encountered. I argue that participants are principally constructing binaries of 'them and us'. So that, rather than finding areas of similarity and difference, and rather than realising that maybe it is themselves who are 'different', they are projecting 'difference' onto the encountered 'other'. I will make this argument from two perspectives. First, I concentrate on an incident where a participant identified a 'difference' between herself and her hosts, and in so doing demonstrates a particularly Eurocentric perspective of knowledge. Second, I take the theme of 'poverty' and explore the ways in which participants explained and understood this material 'difference'.

The quotation below is taken from a discussion about 'differences' engaged in while in San Gabriel, Peru. In the quotation Liberty, a gap year participant[55], discusses her surprise that a child in San Gabriel had not heard of William Shakespeare:

> **Liberty** *"it is so weird when you realise how removed these children's lives are from us. Because I said something the other day to a girl who is very intelligent, about 12 years old, and* (she) *wants to be a doctor- yeah* (her name is) *Isamia her mum's a nurse. And she said 'what do you want to study at university?' And I said I am going to study books you know like Shakespeare and she said 'who's Shakespeare?' and she hadn't even heard the name ever, and there is no reason why she should have but that really shocked me"*

[55] A short group biography of research participants is available in appendix three.

Kate **"They have probably all heard of Vargas Llosa"**

Liberty *"of who?"*

Kate ***"Vargas Llosa's, a big Peruvian writer"***

Liberty *"there is no reason they should have, you just think everyone has* (heard of Shakespeare)"

The significance of this comment, for me, is that although Liberty recognises and reflects upon the way she 'expects' everyone to hold certain knowledges, she does not apply this reflexively to herself. While she recognises that others' knowledges maybe 'incomplete' according to what she considers to be 'normal', she does not recognise that her own knowledges may be comparably 'incomplete'. Hence, she sees no obvious comparison in exchanging Vargas Llosa, an internationally acclaimed Peruvian writer, for Shakespeare.

Travelling gap year participants may be able to identify the different nature of knowledge and experience amongst those they visit, however, without a level of critical reflexivity it is difficult for them to recognise that 'different' is a subjective position, one that they too may occupy. Consequently, in encountering 'others' the concept of 'normal' is not itself being deconstructed, rather, increasing deviations from 'normal' are discovered. Thus, the relative nature of 'normality' is ignored in favour of absolutist constructions, and consequently the boundaries between 'self' and 'other' are reinforced.

Constructing and knowing poverty

While the preceding section unpacked a specific experience and subsequent understanding, I now wish to shift to a thematic focus. Engaging in travel to, and volunteer work in, the 'developing world' is intrinsically linked to perceptions of, and even encounters with, 'poverty'. As argued in earlier chapters (see especially chapters four and six), the gap year industry mobilises a particular representation of the 'developing world', one tied to bleak notions of "people who know only poverty, disease, monotony and hunger" (gap-year.com 2002). Consequently, gap year participants can often be on a peculiar journey to

observe, and even interact with, the phenomenon of 'poverty'. The critique offered here asks how they actually understand poverty when it is finally 'found'.

'Poverty', as represented by both the gap year industry and participants, was predominantly seen to be both absolute and an experience confined to the foreign 'other'. Participants are encouraged, by their imagined geographies and the gap year industry, to gaze upon this 'other' and produce an objective knowledge of 'poverty'. Consequently, participants present an understanding of 'poverty' as something that defines difference between the developed and the developing world. So that, while there is a recognition that 'poverty' may well exist in the UK, participants felt this to be less 'real' than in South America. In the conversation below, Paula, a nineteen year old gap year student who had been travelling and volunteering in Peru and Bolivia for the previous 3 months, identifies two experiences of 'poverty':

> **Paula** *"In England you have so much support and stuff, from charities and stuff"*
>
> **Liberty** *"we do"*
>
> **Paula** *"I mean if you are like homeless and stuff and you go and plug into a charity and stuff and you really make the effort to pick yourself up and get yourself off the streets and get yourself a job, I think there is quite a lot scope and potential for doing quite well. Whereas here you are.... like that little kid in Rurrenabaque who was working in that restaurant where there were the amazing pancakes with banana and honey, by the river, he is going to be doing that for a long time, he is probably not even going to school, it is so narrow"*

There is a contrast here in the way in which poverty in the UK is represented through a category, in this case homeless people, while poverty in Bolivia is given an individualised representation. This difference may come from a simple case of encounter, wherein, paradoxically, Paula may well have only encountered homeless people in the UK as a distant homogenous category and

never individually. While, by comparison, she has encountered Bolivian individuals she deems to be 'poor'. Regardless of this distinction, in neither case are systemic questions about *why* people might be poor, homeless or working long hours in a restaurant, asked. Rather, descriptive caricatures are relied on, with a fatalistic appropriation of blame. So, in the case of homeless people in the UK it is their own fault, while for the Bolivian child it is just the way things are. The absence of a structural or systemic perspective on 'poverty' makes the possibilities for linkages of this knowledge across space or time, limited. For example, without a systemic perspective it would be hard to relate different individual experiences of poverty to one another. Or, furthermore, to recognise that the production of 'poverty' in one time space local may be linked to actions in another.

Appreciations of such linkages are the foundations on which concepts such as fair trade are laid. In the case of the quotations at the start of this chapter, perceiving these linkages is the presumed basis on which future oil executives for Mobil will remember their games of football in Northern Ecuador and, many years later, choose not to 'just plod straight through that village' (see quotation from Jonathan Cassidy, Quest Overseas). However, if such linkages are not established, as they appear not to be for the participant quoted above, then it is difficult to see how gap year experiences will influence future action, especially when many years are presumed (as they are in the quotations at the start of the chapter) to have elapsed between the time of 'experience' and the time of 'action' (this point is expanded on later in this chapter).

The participants quoted above portrayed western poverty as involving less genuine 'need' than South American poverty. In the discussion below, two gap year students debate the relevance of poverty in the UK. Unusually, in comparison to similar discussions, one of the students defends the existence of 'real' poverty within the UK, while the other remains sceptical:

Barney *"Even the poorest people in England look rich compared to some of the people we have been working with"*

Dave *"Yes and no, you get some real poverty in parts of Britain"*

Barney *"Poverty but not in comparison to here"*

Dave *"I don't know you do get people who don't eat enough and stuff like that"*

Barney *"But there are institutions set up in Britain to deal with that stuff."*

The key point raised in the above conversation is that, rather than finding commonality between the developed and developing worlds, participants are emphasising hierarchies and establishing a dichotomy of 'them and us'. Poverty is allowed to become a definer of difference, rather than an experience shared by people marginalized by resource distribution. Poverty becomes an issue for 'out there', something that can be passively gazed upon rather than actively interacted with.

Chapter four discussed the gap year industry's relationship with 'development', and one of the issues in this discussion was the ways in which the industry represents host communities. The representation of 'poor-but-happy' is one reproduced throughout much of the industry. For example, the following quotation is from web site advertising by Travellers Worldwide, a gap year organisation:

> "It's a poor country, but rich in scenic splendour and cultural treasures". (Travellers Worldwide 2003, p.11).

In part, what such a statement implies is a trivialisation of poverty; that somehow people do not really *mind* living in poverty. In effect, poverty is romanticised into an equation where material deprivation equates to social and, or, emotional wealth (Nederveen-Pieterse 2000). In the conversation below Susan reflects upon some of the assumptions with which she came to San Gabriel. She was an unusually reflective student who recognised the inadequacy of assuming that a lack of material wealth led to social cohesion:

Susan *"I have often thought that yeah OK the people that are really poor don't have, don't have the money that we*

have and don't have the facilities that we have in England, the NHS that we are lucky in having. But I had always assumed that the families were stronger. That was an assumption I had gone out with, that because of that people were stronger and had to pull together and so they did. And I had always assumed that, you know, perhaps they would be more grateful because, not grateful, but they would appreciate their surroundings more than we do with ours. {.....}

The kids seemed happy enough when they were with us but I can imagine it not being as pleasant at home as perhaps I'd thought it would be. Because from the children we talked to they got beaten and that's why they didn't go home if they hadn't sold their ice pops, and that was something I hadn't expected. I don't know, maybe because I can stand back from it I had expected them to say "well times are hard and people don't have the money to go buy ice pops". But that is perhaps because of the upbringing I've had, but, that is what I came out expecting and it wasn't like that at all. So to me that would be more of a poverty that I had imagined."

In my experience, the student quoted above is anomalous in her reflexivity. The more common story is one of students confirming, rather than challenging, their assumptions. So that, paradoxically, experiences of encountering issues such as 'poverty', often provided evidence for its justification. In the following quotation, Sarah comments, after a month in San Gabriel, upon both the material status and the perceptions of local residents:

Sarah *"The people here, because they don't have so much, for us we expect a lot, but [.....] here they don't have TV's but it doesn't bother them because they don't expect one, I think they are a lot more grateful for what they get, like we take for granted we have nice houses, carpets, TV's, lights, loos, kitchens, clean food... oh please take me home!"*

This statement is factually dubious, as many people in San Gabriel do in fact have televisions. More interesting, however, is the basis upon which she asserts that not having televisions 'doesn't bother them'. Without discussing this with local people (and there was no evidence that she had) she is left merely asserting the assumptions with which she had arrived in San Gabriel. Only now, with the added authority of 'experience'. In effect Sarah, and she is not alone in this, is reinforcing rather than challenging what she 'knows' about the world and the encountered 'other'. Freire (1970) writes of the 'circle of certainty' where one is able to use new experiences to continuously reinforce that which is already 'known'. He warns of the debilitating nature of such 'certainty', which makes alternative beliefs and actions an impossibility:

> "..the radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a "circle of certainty" within which reality is also imprisoned" (Freire 1970, p21).

Gap year programmes offer opportunities for practical encounters between peoples of different communities. However, the limited critical engagement demanded by gap year programmes ensures that students are able to confirm, rather than challenge, that which they already know. Hence, a rhetoric of 'poor-but-happy' is turned into an experience of 'poor-but-happy'; maintaining the 'circle of certainty' and posing few questions about the nature of, or reasons for, issues such as poverty. This, in turn, allows material inequality to be excused, and even justified, on the basis that 'it doesn't bother them'.

Learning to be lucky

Gap year participants may not be relying on structural or systemic perspectives to explain the differences that they encounter, but this does not mean that they are ignoring these differences. Rather, they rely on alternative 'explanations'; explanations in which 'luck' proves important. In the following conversation two participants express how 'lucky' their experiences in Peru made them feel:

> **Barney** *"It makes you feel, how can I say it? Aware of how lucky you are"*

> **Dave** *"I don't feel guilty. You feel lucky in a way to have this kind of thing, you feel fortunate that you are not in the same position as them to a certain extent. But it's, I mean if they were in our position they would be exactly the same so I don't think it is a guilty thing so much I just think it is luck really."*

In effect, their experiences of radically different standards and conditions of living are leading participants to reflect upon their own lives, and to recognise their own good fortunes. While such reflexivity is interesting, it is also important to question its focus.

Participants are concentrating on their own position, rather than that of others, and, are able to ascribe some form of what Quinby (2000) describes as 'lotto logic', to the disparities that they observe. 'Lotto logic' is, according to Quinby (2000), used to replace discussions on social justice with an acceptance of the 'justice of the luck of the draw'. Gross material differences can then be explained through a fatalistic faith in the 'luck of the draw', rather than in structures and systems in which we all participate. Structures and systems which are, ultimately, open to change. In the following quotation Liberty focuses on a system of random luck to explain the difference in livelihoods between herself and those in San Gabriel:

> **Liberty** *"I haven't done anything more than these children* (in San Gabriel) *to deserve where I have been born, it is just a random accident what situation you are born into it is nothing to do with what you have done"*

Learning that living conditions and life are products of a randomised process of luck, sets particular parameters for the concept of social justice. Parameters in which wealth and poverty are not part of the same process, but are considered to be independent of one another:

> "A "lotto logic" of social justice [...] elevates the luck of the draw regardless of whether one is born lucky or buys the right ticket. On this view, avarice is not regarded as a vice - no one

> is injured when a winner hits the jackpot". (Quinby 2002, p.236).

In a system dominated by 'lotto logic' constructing a socially just world through action becomes a peripheral issue to the simple question of luck. Social responsibility and action are allowed to languish in favour of an optimistic belief in the justice of fate. As long as gap year programmes fail to engage with the structural relationships between communities of the developed and the developing world, they are likely to retain a myopic concentration on situated individuals. So that, rather than concentrating on mechanisms for increased global understanding or greater engagement between communities, the focus remains on individual advancement. Paulo Freire (1974) vehemently critiqued education that offered only individual advancement at the expense of collective transformation, and further saw such education as compounding structural inequalities (Aronowitz 1993; Heaney 2001). While Freire's critique existed well before the gap year, his analysis remains apt. For, it questions the presumption that travel to, and encounter with, 'others' will be sufficient to generate structural changes and engender cross-community understanding.

In conclusion, in this section I have sought to explore some of the ways in which 'knowledge' is produced through gap year experiences. Centrally, I argue that gap year experiences allow participants to encounter 'difference'. From these encounters they produce relatively descriptive understandings of 'others'. That is, the emphasis is on the ability to describe and observe that which is different, seemingly without producing questions about *why* such differences might exist. Consequently, participants reflect on the lack of knowledge of Shakespeare amongst children of San Gabriel, without asking what knowledges they themselves may be 'missing'. In a similar way the issue of 'poverty' becomes observable without being explainable. Ultimately, such 'descriptive' knowledges emphasise 'the local' over 'the collective', and they highlight divergence not commonality by allowing participants to rationalise, rather than engage, with inequality.

Some day, far away

In addition to the issues related to the non-systemic social agenda promoted by the gap year industry, there is also an issue relating to *when* it is anticipated that social action will occur. Referring back to the statements from TAPA and Quest at the beginning of this chapter, there is vagueness in both regarding just *when* participants are expected to engage in socially responsible action. Both statements mention a time when former participants will have powerful jobs (for example, bank manager, oil tycoon, prime minister) through which they will be confronted with the opportunities for socially responsible action. There are multiple assumptions embedded here, and the vagueness of the time scale is key. Social action is presented not as an issue for everyone in their everyday encounters, but as an issue for the few, and for the future. The lack of apparent linkages to connect current experience to future action, is reflected in the knowledges produced by participants. The quotation below exemplifies the way the gap year industry projects social action as an issue for the powerful few:

> **Liberty** *"I would like to think that I would {*do things differently*} but I just can't think of anything practical that I am going to do that might be different, except perhaps become a teacher which I wouldn't have before".*

Despite her experiences in San Gabriel, Liberty is unable to see any linkages between her life at 'home' and her current experiences. Consequently, she perceives no possibilities for changing her own action, nor does she recognise that action in one place influences another. While the gap year industry is seeking to promote an agenda of social responsibility, it has failed to identify who the actors within this agenda might be. So that rather than focusing on their own participants, they are concentrating on generic and unknown actors who hold identifiable power. Instead of waiting until participants become oil tycoons before asking them to act in a socially responsible manner, why are organisations not suggesting that they drive their cars a little less, recycle a little more, and so use our oil reserves more efficiently? Gap year organisations are, in effect, abdicating any direct responsibility for converting experience into action in either the short or long term. Similarly, they assume an emphasis on

macro over micro level changes, so that action becomes the responsibility of a few powerful individuals, rather than of the powerful masses of the developed world.

To take experiences from one setting and have them produce action in another, requires a high degree of reflection; an ability to see the structural linkages across both space and time. However, as already shown, gap year programmes eschew engagement with structural concepts, and consequently, become heavily time-place specific. A cycle of action and reflection is an important and acknowledged part of experiential learning (Freire 1970; Krnas and Roarke 1994; Wade 2000). Indeed, Paulo Freire argued that, "authentic reflection can not exist apart from action"(Freire 1974, p.20). Wade (2000) puts this cycle of action and reflection into the specific context of service-learning and social justice education, arguing that linking current experiences to future action is an integral part of such education. Despite the need for such linkages, just as gap year programmes operate without acknowledged reference to history (see chapter two), they also fail to make reference to the future. This, in turn, makes it hard for participants to connect their lives and practices to those of the people they are visiting and 'experiencing'. This failure to link current experience to future action is a further indication of the historical and geographical abstraction on which gap year programmes are based. They offer few linkages between peoples over space or time, and limited connections between individual's actions and lifestyle in one country, and potential impact in another. If gap year programs are to become more than short-term theme park experiences, then they need to move beyond their time-place relativity, and engage directly in the possibilities and mechanisms for action.

Finally, the extended time scale over which social action is supposed to occur promotes the idea that the experiences young people have on their gap years are of an infinitely lasting nature. The empathy developed playing football with a group of Ecuadorians (see quotation from Jonathan Cassidy of Quest) it is assumed will endure over the years. These memories of past encounters are then expected to prove more powerful than concerns of the present such as financial return, job security, ease of living etc. Such assumptions place young people on

some form of life-course treadmill on which they move from one set of experiences to the next, taking an inevitable set of learnings from each. The assumed indisputable objectiveness of such learnings means that their weight or significance does not change over time. Hence, a sense of social empathy developed in a specific context, and at a specific point in one's life, becomes comparable to learning one's times tables, an unforgettable, if seldom applicable, set of factual relationships. Thus, a lasting sense of social responsibility, that will influence decision-making later in life, is optimistically, and rather simplistically expected to come from one set of experiences.

Conclusion

In conclusion, in this chapter I have argued that despite the gap year industry's aspirations to a social agenda, the lack of attention to the social, political and historical context in which their programmes are situated, severely limits the potential for such an agenda. In their current form, gap year programmes are structured around offering, host and visitors, a contact-based experience of 'others'. Experience is then considered to be an adequate educational methodology to promote learnings that will produce future socially responsible action. As I have argued, theoretically and empirically, such an approach is both outdated and inadequate. The primary reason for this inadequacy is the limited scope for experience that fails to incorporate the processes of critical reflection, to promote learnings that make linkages across space and time. Consequently, gap year participants are producing situational knowledges based on individualised experiences of 'others'. The disregard for critical reflection artificially elevates the empirical 'fact' of experience to the status of an educational methodology. Freire (1970) warned of the 'circle of certainty', which, in effect, allows one to experience that which one expects to experience. When these two conditions are combined, experience assumes the authority to convert innocence to ignorance, as, what was *believed* to be true becomes, through experience, *known* to be true.

The experiences offered by international gap year programmes not only create visitors but also create hosts. Understanding the experiences of these hosts is

is complex and requires a great deal of further research. In this chapter I have offered a limited exploration of the reactions of a host community to their gap year visitors. Initial indications were of a relatively positive response to the local gap year project. Though this response has to be read in the context of the longevity of the project and the significant level of decision-making held at the local level. Perhaps more significantly questions have arisen over the type of project work undertaken by gap year participants, with the potential to differentiate between essential and additional services. In the case of the Quest project studied here, what is offered are additional services, which, precisely because they are non- essential local residents can exercise choice over their use. In recognising that gap year organisations are not development organisations, providing non- essential, as opposed to essential, services may be a way to mitigate some of the potential negative impacts of gap year programmes. As a final point, I have argued in this chapter that if the gap year is to provide opportunities for intercultural interactions and learning, then a pedagogical perspectives needs to be brought to bear on both visitor and host experiences.

For travelling participants the gap year industry's social agenda is dominated by the concept of 'future good'. An approach constructed on the principle of future powerful individuals using their power in a magnanimous, responsible way. Not only does this shift the onus for action away from the present, but it also presents a model where power is not to be redistributed, but remains the preserve of a privileged few. Such a model of 'social responsibility' does little to make visible or challenge the systemic nature of inequality or oppression, and as such makes scant provision for a 'justice' based agenda. Indeed, the lack of regard for structural conditions, means that this is an agenda of social responsibility in lieu of social justice. Furthermore, without direct reference to future action social responsibility is neutered. Effective education for social responsibility, and even justice, necessitates both a recognition of, and engagement with, social change (Bell 1997; Crabtree 1998; Wade 2000). If the gap year industry is to truly pursue an agenda of educating for social change, then it will need to adopt a pedagogical approach focused on global awareness. A pedagogy for global awareness would facilitate structural, as well as

experience-based perspectives, and so promote learnings that would allow participants to ask *why* as well as *how* inequality exists.

Chapter eight:

Conclusions

Introduction

This thesis started with the academically un-known practice of the 'gap year'. I have sought to bring historical, geographical and theoretical perspectives to the practice and so begin the process of making known the unknown. The process of unpacking the diverse influences that inspire the gap year, and, ultimately, of leading to a better understanding of the phenomenon that is the gap year. The pursuit of such understanding has necessitated establishing the gap year as distinct from, but also related to, other practices of travel, international development and education. The gap year is a space where divergent practices intersect. These intersections produce tensions and encounters peculiar to the gap year, which, because of the dearth of research on the gap year, these have, to date, been little understood. In researching and writing this thesis, I have attempted to initiate a drive to understand these intersections that inform the gap year, and to frame the encounters with 'others' produced through such an experience. This thesis has drawn on ethnographic and other forms of data, and consequently offers one of the first empirically based studies of volunteer-tourism gap years.

In this thesis, I have offered a journey through the gap year. This final chapter provides a review of the key sites encountered on this journey, and a summary of the central arguments made. In addition, links are offered between the multiple parts of the thesis, and suggestions are made for future research perspectives. Finally, in concluding this thesis I make the call for the development of 'a pedagogy of the gap year'. Such a pedagogy would, I argue, provide at least the mechanism for the evolution of the gap year into a more critically-engaged, analytical experience.

The production of the spaces of the gap year

Integral to the rationale for this study has been the argument that the gap year functions within distinct spaces. Such spaces are historical, social and geographical, and are distinguished by the specific nature of the influences that construct them, and the practices engaged in within them. Multiple historical practices collide within third-world volunteer-tourism gap year programmes, and colonialism is significant amongst these practices. As I argued in chapter two, colonialism constructed not only a set power relations but also a gaze that continues to have contemporary resonance for the gap year. This gaze positions the traveller and the (third world) host on a relational axis of 'helper' and 'helped', of 'provider' and 'needy'. These relations produce the conditions in which volunteer-tourism becomes a possibility.

Colonialism is not the only historical practice to have created the contemporary context for the gap year. Missionaries, international volunteers and several generations of exploration, have tied the concepts of travel and knowledge to one another. Hence, through travel one is expected, and even assumed, to learn more about both oneself and others. The supposed authenticity of travel confers authority on the knowledge claims of travellers (Heald 2003), and it is because of this supposed authority that the relationship between travel and knowledge is in need of greater critical engagement. I argue that the assumed unproblematic relationship between travel and knowledge production that the gap year exemplifies, must be abandoned altogether. Currently, the gap year industry functions in an historically-inspired context whereby travel is assumed to produce authentic and unproblematic knowledges of others, while simultaneously providing an enhanced sense of self. Therefore, the knowledge claims of gap year travellers need to be made available for critical engagement, so that, as with other types of knowledge sources, their nature and mode of production can be interrogated.

Across gap year spaces the voices of the visited others remain, if not apparently silent, then certainly quiet, thereby reflecting a situation consistent with previous historical practices. The gap year industry provides many promises

about the nature and needs of those who host programmes (chapter four) yet there is little evidence that these 'hosts' contribute significantly to either identifying such needs or participating in addressing them. I would question if it is actually possible for short-term placements, without any form of sustained or long-term commitment on the behalf of the gap year organisation, to operate in any meaningful, participatory way. The gap year industry, through its many programmes, offers primarily external intervention, premised on what is already 'known' about others, about poverty and about development. Such an approach is concurrent with many of the historical traditions mentioned within this thesis, which offered external 'salvation' be it in the form of trade, religion or governance. The gap year industry remains framed by these historical legacies; legacies, which have made volunteer-tourism geographically possible and apparently socially desirable.

The spaces of the gap year are produced geographically as well as historically. Chapters two and four sought to locate, empirically and theoretically, the geography of the gap year. The dominant geography, I argued, is first and foremost a 'simple' one. That is, a geography based on idealised binaries of the 'exotic' and the 'unusual', where classical tourist imagery of beaches, friendly people and the pleasurable unknown, prevail (chapter four). These classical appeals to the western imagination are then combined with a geography of 'need'. A geography where places, with supposedly identifiable deprivation, be it environmental or social, are used to legitimate volunteer programmes. It is this 'needy' geography, constructed through ideas that the third world is some how 'back in time' (chapter four) which is supposedly able to offer spaces where the western volunteer-tourist is inherently needed, and 'useful'

In addition, the geography of the gap year is one of experimentation. Spaces are offered where the traveller can try out new identities of work and of self, without the sanctions found 'at home'. Therefore, the gap year seemingly operates in spaces ungoverned by the constraints and qualifications of westernised spaces; so travellers are able to adopt identities not otherwise available to them. This creation of spaces of experimentation produces, I have

argued, a problematic geography in which the knowledges constructed of others are framed within particular power dynamics.

A further condition of the geography of the gap year is its paradoxical relationship with safety and danger. Third world gap year locations are construed as having the allure of danger, yet the certainties of safety; as spaces that can be managed without appearing to be so. This paradox is evident in the ways in which the gap year industry markets its products to its divided consumer base of participants and parents / guardians. For the former, there is an offer of excitement and adventure, while for the latter safety and security. So, the geography of the gap year is one of places that can sustain a duality of desirable danger and manageable safety. The geography of the gap year is one dominated by imaginations, which are sustained, and where necessary created, to produce global spaces of desirability and accessibility.

As I argued in chapter four, the gap year industry has a tense relationship with development, and this is a further condition of the geography of the gap year. However, there is an inconsistency in this relationship. The majority of the industry avoids any direct mention of development, yet programmes express and pursue apparently developmental aims. Such activities fit within the geography of need already mentioned, so that locations and populations with apparent development 'needs' become the sites for gap year programmes. However, in eschewing the language of development, organisations also appear to avoid both the critiques and the accountability imposed on development projects. Hence, concepts such as local participation remain minimal, as do mechanisms for accountability to host communities. Instead, the approach favoured is one where 'alleviating poverty', 'contributing to the futures of others' and 'providing practical help to local communities'[56] can simply be 'got on with' (chapter four). Such an attitude demonstrates an overwhelming reliance on the integrity of 'good intentions' and the achievements of 'enthusiasm'. Attributes which, I have argued, are inadequate for understanding

[56] These phrases are taken from gap year organisations and are discussed in detail in the section 'Don't mention the D word' in chapter four.

the complex realities of development work. Such simplifications of development are an integral part of locating the geography of the gap year, that is, defining the possible spaces of operation.

In developing a better understanding of the impact, as well as operation, of the gap year, it is imperative that future research turns attention to the experiences of those who host these programmes. At present within research and practice alike the voices of host communities remain obscured, an approach not dissimilar to that of colonialism, in which hosts may have been represented they were rarely heard. Issues such as how hosts interpret gap year programmes and participants, how programmes integrate, or not, with local development plans and projects, and the role programmes play for host participants in the construction of categories of self and other, all need examination. These issues need to be addressed if the current imbalance between understandings of visitor and host perspectives are, in turn, to be addressed.

In summary, in this thesis I have proposed a series of conditions that determine *where* gap year programmes occur. The production of such spaces is an historical as well as contemporary process, and one that has very real social and physical expressions. The re-invention of older patterns and conditions of travel frames not just *where* participants go but also *how* they travel, and, as argued in chapter seven, ultimately frames the encounters with others that travellers experience. Thus, the geography of the gap year is one defined by, and also one that produces, simplistic notions of others. It is a geography of simple problems and obvious solutions, a geography constructed through the confirmation of popular imaginations of others. This is a geography that can be sold, and one that is far from benign. It is a geography that shapes and conditions participants' encounters, and consequently becomes a geography of experience that produces relationships and practices. Perhaps the final endorsement of the existence of an identifiable and marketable 'geography of the gap year', is that it now has its own Lonely Planet guidebook (Hindle 2003). The availability of such a guidebook acts as testimony to the emergence of distinct, recognisable spaces of the gap year, that one can visit and hence 'know'.

The gap year as an institution

In this thesis, I have also argued that the gap year operates as an industry. That is, that an identifiable network of organisations act to promote, manage and define the gap year in increasingly specific ways. Much of the impetus for this promotion has come from the growing number of commercial organisations that provide programmes and support services for gap year participants. This has generated a highly competitive market place for gap year products, with a corresponding need to establish ways of qualifying and quantifying the value of the products sold. This process of valuation has resulted in the 'professionalisation' of the gap year.

Professionalising the gap year has brought a fundamental shift in what a gap year can and should be. The gap year has evolved from a disparate set of practices, incorporating any form of time off, or out, from traditional mechanisms of employment or education, into an increasingly bound and formalised practice. Indeed, the gap year has become part of, rather than an escape from, institutions of formal employment and education. Part of the process of professionalisation has been the emergence of the industry organisation 'The Year Out Group', which actively seeks to publicise and promote the gap year. In addition, a range of commercial 'independent' promoters, for example the gapyear.com and gap-year.com have also emerged. These organisations demonstrate how promoting, and to some degree policing, the gap year industry is, in itself, a commercially viable profession.

The evolution of a competitive market place for the gap year has resulted in an increasingly rigorous set of criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Such criteria allow the gap year to be bound into a sellable product. The key attributes of 'the gap year product' include a 'structured' experience, one that can provide individual personal development skills (chapter five). Such attributes make for commodifiable marketing. No longer do the individuals construct their own experience, now they buy a 'gap'. Participants are offered an opportunity to buy experiences which, they are promised, will enhance their competitiveness in the job market, and so offer them cultural and 'corporate capital'.

The rise of the gap year as an industry, has seen it come to be recognised by other institutions, principally those of education and employment. As discussed in chapter five, the gap year industry has actively sought and promoted the endorsement of other industries and institutions. Consequently, it has generated a significant media profile, and attracted the attention of government, universities and employers. What is of particular interest here, is the way many bold claims about the benefits and values of a gap years have been made by high profile figures as diverse as Law Lords, employment recruiters, and University Vice Chancellors (see chapter five for examples). Almost without exception, these claims have focused on the 'benefits' of a gap year, with many references to the 'known' and 'proven' status of these benefits. Given the limited research in the field, the almost universally positive terms in which the gap year is discussed demonstrate how effectively the gap year industry has colonised the popular and institutional imagination.

In questioning the basis for the enthusiastic institutional support for the gap year, I have highlighted how little research there actually is on the gap year. One of the obvious omissions is any form of verifiable quantitative data. At the moment it is unclear how many people take a gap year, where they go and what they do. Various estimates do exist, mostly produced by the industry, but there is a need for a substantial body of quantifiable data to support further research on the gap year. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has recently commissioned a report into the gap year, aiming to generate some of this information, but at the time of writing (2004) this research is not yet available and its scope remains uncertain. A clearer understanding of the demographics, scale and geographical scope of the gap year would support further research on its implications; as such this is an important priority for future research on the gap year.

While the gap year may have become professionalised, formalised and publicly recognised, its products are not uncontested. As I argued in chapter six, the ways in which gap year participants understand and interpret their experiences do not reflect a uniform acceptance of the product sold. Participants

demonstrated an ability to represent their experiences in multiple ways, depending on the audience for whom these representations were produced. So, while they were aware of, and prepared to use, the 'structured' and 'personal development' criteria of the industry, these were not the only, or indeed the primary, terms in which they related to their experiences. Rather, these were terms used when it was deemed 'valuable' to do so, for example to parents or universities. Amongst themselves, participants demonstrated variable and subtly expressed forms of representation. Categories of volunteer, tourist, traveller and the more original 'ethno yah' were all used selectively to denote differential status. For example, despite the industry-used category of 'volunteers' the majority of participants did not identify in this way. However, they recognised the value that the category had, and were therefore prepared to use it when strategically advantageous. This readiness by participants to use the categories promoted by the industry, even when they did not represent their 'reality', serves, in part to sustain the validity of these categories. Amongst their peers, participants predominantly rejected the commodified and corporate emphasis of the gap year, in favour of experiences that concentrated on 'adventure' and experimentation in identity. Therefore, in this thesis I have argued that the gap year product is not uniform, rather a tension exists between the product that is sold and the one that is consumed.

As a final point, it should be noted that amongst these multiple representations the voices of the host communities, and the representations that they produce, are currently missing. This omission again highlights an area of research that needs urgent attention. The voices, experiences and understandings of gap year programmes produced by host communities remain largely ignored by the industry and researchers alike.

The production of knowledge

The third theme in this thesis has been the production of knowledge, specifically in the context of experiential learning and the process of travel. Knowledge production and travel have a long history (chapter two), and whilst I

have sought to uncover these historical roots, I have focused on knowledge production from a predominantly pedagogical perspective (chapter seven).

While the gap year industry is dominated by bold claims about the educational value of travel and volunteer-tourism programmes, there is little evidence of any form of pedagogical understanding. Rather, there is a reliance on the seemingly indisputable 'reality' of experience as a provider of adequate education. As argued in chapter seven, such an approach contradicts work in the field of Experiential Education, which emphasises the importance of a cycle of action and reflection. In addition, I suggest that an uncritical reliance on experience is a return to empiricist approaches to knowledge production (chapter two), and furthermore a rejection of the validity of other sites of knowledge and ways of knowing. Ultimately, the gap year industry's reliance on unprocessed experience is a product not of a pedagogical rationale, but of the default setting of a non-pedagogical approach.

The lack of a pedagogy has meant that the educational nature of the gap year has, to date, simply not been understood. Instead, there is an unquestioning belief in the assumed relationships between 'contact' with others and 'understanding' of others; between visiting a place and knowing a place. These assumptions are best encapsulated in Allports's 1954 'Contact Hypothesis', which has been thoroughly critiqued (Pettigrew 1998; Wittig and Grant-Thompson 1998). Indeed, the learnings about others generated through experiences of contact and encounter, are far from simple. As I propose in this thesis, the current educational assumptions are woefully inadequate for understanding, let alone promoting, participants' learning experiences. Furthermore, the lack of a pedagogical approach is concurrent with the a-historical and apolitical way in which the gap year industry frames its programmes, which results in programmes attempting to operate seemingly outside of wider theoretical, political and historical contexts. Consequently, in this thesis I make a call for the development and application of a 'pedagogy of the gap year'.

In calling for a pedagogy of the gap year, I specifically address the theme of social justice. As demonstrated in chapter seven, many gap year organisations aspire to a social agenda whereby participants will develop empathetic relationships with the third world. However, while the intentions here are laudable, in chapter seven I argued that the achievement of such an agenda remains dubious, primarily because there is little evidence to suggest that gap year participants are linking their experiences across either space or time. In order for such linkages to occur, the structural nature of situations such as 'poverty' needs to be made visible, otherwise it becomes difficult for experiences generated in one time-place setting, to be linked to experiences and actions in other contexts.

Developing a pedagogy of the gap year has, I argue, to be a priority for future practice and research alike. Without such a pedagogy, the gap year remains blinkered and predicated on an over-optimistic faith in the empirical 'fact' of contact. Developing a pedagogy for the gap year will require the industry to broaden its theoretical perspectives and seek out influences from practices such as adventure and experiential education, service learning and other travel-based programmes such as the Peace Brigade and VSO. Fundamentally, the skills base of the industry will need expansion, and incorporating people and perspectives from education and development work will be integral to this.

Just as the industry needs to expand its perspectives, there is also a need for expanded research perspectives. In this thesis I have offered a combination of discourse analysis and ethnographic work. While I have produced arguments that are a reflection of the discourse of the gap year, these arguments need empirical examination in a broader range of organisations and geographical contexts. In addition, crucial to the evolution of research and practice in the gap year is the need to look to other, similar programmes. Asking how knowledge of others is constructed by participants in longer-term volunteer programmes, for example VSO, or in solidarity tourism, or indeed development and relief work, would help to further contextualise the experiences of gap year participants.

The establishment of a pedagogy for the gap year, framed within social justice, would be a hollow gesture if the principles of gap year programmes remained framed in their currently exploitive and experimental practices and geographies. In seeking to develop an appropriate pedagogy of the gap year, the current geographies of simplicity and isolation need to be abandoned in favour of geographies of interconnectivity and complexity. Such a geographical framework would seek to make visible the interconnections between peoples, places and time frames, and to embrace the complexity of practices of international development.

If the gap year industry wishes to offer programmes that generate meaningful understanding between geographically distant groups of people and do not exacerbate established inequalities, it first needs to abandon its attempts to operate in theoretical, historical and political isolation. In addition it needs to broaden its perspectives and skills base, and establish a research and justice based pedagogy. That is, a pedagogy that engenders critical reflection and helps participants to interrogate their own knowledges about the world; a pedagogy in which, in the words of Ira Shor:

> "...students learn to question answers rather than merely to answer questions" (Shor 1993, p.26).

Appendices

Appendix one

Interview themes

Interviews with gap year participants were conducted in an informal style, and recorded using a mini disc player. The interviews were predominantly 'conversational' in that they followed the flow of topics and ideas introduced by participants. However, I also used a prompt sheet to introduce key themes that I wished to discuss. These themes are laid out below, and do not represent exact questions asked, but rather discussion topics.

1. Thinking about South America

Why did you take a gap year?
Why did you choose to come here (South America / Peru / Bolivia)?
What do you / did you know about the area / country / region before you came?
Where do you feel you had learnt about the area / country / region from?
Why did you want to come here?
Is there anything you are particularly excited to see or do while you are here?

2. Thinking about San Gabriel

What made you choose the San Gabriel / Villa Maria project?
What did you / do you imagine we will do there?
How do you think the local communities feel about the project?
What do you feel you have got out of participating in the project?
What do you feel the local communities have got out of the project?
When you go back home is there any particular story you would tell that sums up or exemplifies your experiences here?
On a daily basis what motivates you to keep working on the project?

3. Thinking about categories

What do the different categories of tourist, traveller and volunteer mean to you?
How would you categorise yourself?

What does the idea of a 'gap year experience' mean?

4. Thinking about the global

What differences do you feel there are between your life and lives here in Peru / San Gabriel?

How do you feel South America is viewed by people in Britain?

What does the concept of poverty mean to you?

Have you experienced or seen anything you'd describe as poverty here, or elsewhere?

Do you feel there are any changes you would make to your life or actions after this gap year experience?

Additional topics were added when specific incidences or comments presented themselves.

Appendix two

San Gabriel questionnaire

Buenos Dias

Gracias por su ayuda. Soy una estudiante de Inglaterra y para mis estudies estoy haciendo una investigación acerca de la experiencia de la gente de San Gabriel. Estoy especialmente interesada en sus experiencias y opiniones acerca de los proyectos que CEDRO tiene con algunos grupos Ingleses cuando los grupos de jovenes Ingleses vienen aquí y trabajan con los niños de San Garbiel Villa María.

El objetivo de mi investigatión es, en parte, para mis estudios, y en parte para ayudar el futuro del proyecto de Quest y CEDRO en San Gabriel. Asi que estoy interesada en todos sus opiniones (buenas o malas) y tambíen en sus ideas para el futuro del proyecto.

Sus respuestas son confidenciales, y pueden responder a la encuesta en grupos o solos, depende de ustedes. Tambíen pueden escribir much o poco como quieran.

Muchas gracias para su tiempo

Kate Simpson (katesimpson@yahoo.com)

(In the questionnaire used in San Gabriel the following questions were separated with an average of one question per page to provide space for responses).

Nombre (s) (optativa):

Communidad:

Preguntas:

1.

a. ¿Conoce a los grupos Ingleses /gringos que vienen aquí cada verano?

b. ¿Qué sabe acerca de ellos?

c. ¿Qué hacen ellos cuando están aquí?

d. ¿Por qué razón piensa que ellos vienen a San Gabriel, Villa Maria?

2.

e. ¿Qué significado tiene la palabra 'voluntarios' para usted?

f. ¿Los gringos / Ingleses son voluntarios? Son turistas? Y por qué?

3.

g. ¿Usted tiene hijos? Sus hijos van a jugar con los gringos / Ingleses?

h. ¿Qué piensas acerca del proyecto? te gusta? No te gusta? Y por qué?

i. ¿Cuál grupo te parece que trabaja mejor? Y por qué?

j. ¿Cual grupo te parece que trabaja peor? Y por que?

k. ¿Hay algo que le guastaría que hicieran los voluntarios / gringos?

l. ¿Tiene algunas otras ideas o sugerencias para el projecto de voluntarios / gringos?

San Gabriel questionnaire

Good day

Thank you for your help. I am a student in England and am conducting a study about the experiences of people in San Gabriel. I am specifically interested in your experiences and opinions about the CEDRO projects where English groups come and work with the children of San Gabriel.

The objective of the study is, in part, for my research and part to help the future of the projects Quest and CEDRO have in San Gabriel. So I am interested in all your opinions (good or bad) and also your ideas for the future of the project.

Your answers will be treated as confidential and you may respond either on your own or in groups, depending on which you prefer, and feel free to write as much or as little as you want.

Many thanks for your time

Kate Simpson
katesimpson@yahoo.com

Name (optional)

Community

Questions:

1.

a. **Have you heard about the English groups that come here every summer?**
b. **If so, what do you know about these groups?**
c. **What do the groups do when they are here?**
d. **Why do you think the groups come to San Gabriel?**

2.

e. **What significance does the word 'volunteer' have for you?**

f. **Do you feel the groups are volunteers or tourists and why?**

3.

g. **Do you have children? If so do they play with the 'gringos' / English**

h. **What do you think about the project? Do you like it? Or not like it and why?**

i. **Which group do you feel has worked the best and why?**

j. **Which group do you feel was the worst, and why?**

k. **Is there anything that you would like the volunteers / English to do as part of the project?**

l. **Do you have any other suggestions for the project?**

Appendix three

Gap year participant biographies

Group One: 2001

Group one consisted of 15 participants all aged between 18 and 20. The group was made up of 10 women and 5 men all of whom were white; I conducted interviews with 13 members of the group, although not all are quoted in the thesis. Ten of the group had attended private boarding schools, and the other five a mixture of comprehensive and grammar state schools. The entire group had confirmed places at university and mostly at 'red-brick' universities. For reasons of anonymity I have not included details of university or course with individual names. Generally students were going on to study in the arts, humanities and languages, though there was one medical student and one engineering student in the group. Below are listed the pseudonyms of those respondents quoted in the research:

Kathy, Charlotte, Susan, Ellen, Bella, Sophie,

Group two: 2002

Group two initially consisted of 17 participants but one of the women had to return to the UK for medical reasons after her time in San Gabriel. The group was made up of 11 women and 6 men, all aged between 18 and 20, all of whom were white. I conducted interviews with 15 members of the group, although as with group one not all individuals are quoted in the thesis. In this group, all but one of the students had attended a private boarding school, and all but one was going on to study at university, and as with group one subject choices were in the arts, humanities and languages. Pseudonyms have been used.

Jane, Julia, Sarah, Liberty, Diana, Dave, Peter, Barney, Clarissa, Paula, Clara, Gill, Samatha

Appendix four

Interviews themes with gap year organisations

Organisations:

Raleigh International

World Challenge Expeditions

Teaching & Projects Abroad

Quest Overseas

Sample interview script

The organisation:

What do you feel is the main aim of your organisation, how would you describe your primary activities? (talk about this a bit, emphasise expertise, objectives of the organisation- any educational aims)?

Type of trips (numbers, places, aims)

The participants

What motivates people to come on XX organisation (why this organisation over others?)

Perceived priorities of participants?

How is selection carried out? (Rejection rates, who chooses placements?)

The industry

Thoughts on the Gap year?

The Year Out Group

Has XX organisation seen a change in the market (discuss changes)

The projects:

What countries do you choose to work in, and why?

(Particularly interested in South America- notions of third / developing world)
How do you go about finding volunteer projects, how are needs / wants identified?
Does XX organisation have a preference for certain types of projects, or criteria in finding them?
What sort of commitment, in terms of time, labour and capital do you aim to make?
How are negotiations and relations handled with host communities- (location of decision making, employment- who controls projects, how is this shared between local and overseas workers?

Volunteers & voluntary

XX organisation uses the term 'volunteers' on the web / publications, and I am interested in how you understand volunteers, voluntary work- and how these ideas fit within XX organisation

How do you feel your participants approach this- do they seem themselves as volunteers / tourists / travellers?

For the participants, how do you feel they prioritise the project aspect of their time with XX organisation (versus travel / adventure etc)

Training / running projects

How to you structure and run training sessions. Interested in what you seek to include in briefings, particularly interested in how you manage / your ideas related to 'cultural awareness'
(Amount of training, de-briefing, who runs these things, general student reaction)

How are the projects received within the host communities?

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