

Prince, Heather and Hayes, Tracy (2017) Evidencing atmospheres and narratives: measuring the immeasurable? In: European Institute for Outdoor Adventure Education and Experiential Learning (EOE) International Seminar, 28 June - 2 July 2017, University of St Mark and St John, Plymouth, UK.

Downloaded from: <http://insight.cumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/3103/>

Usage of any items from the University of Cumbria's institutional repository 'Insight' must conform to the following fair usage guidelines.

Any item and its associated metadata held in the University of Cumbria's institutional repository Insight (unless stated otherwise on the metadata record) may be copied, displayed or performed, and stored in line with the JISC fair dealing guidelines (available [here](#)) for educational and not-for-profit activities

provided that

- the authors, title and full bibliographic details of the item are cited clearly when any part of the work is referred to verbally or in the written form
 - a hyperlink/URL to the original Insight record of that item is included in any citations of the work
- the content is not changed in any way
- all files required for usage of the item are kept together with the main item file.

You may not

- sell any part of an item
- refer to any part of an item without citation
- amend any item or contextualise it in a way that will impugn the creator's reputation
- remove or alter the copyright statement on an item.

The full policy can be found [here](#).

Alternatively contact the University of Cumbria Repository Editor by emailing insight@cumbria.ac.uk.



Heather Prince

University of Cumbria

heather.prince@cumbria.ac.uk

Evidencing Atmospheres and Narratives: Measuring the Immeasurable?

As outdoor educators and researchers, we face many challenges. Not least of which is the need to evidence the impact of our work. How do we do this with something as ephemeral and tenuous as *Hauntings or Aesthetics or Atmospheres* – what about when we *sense a presence* that is not physically present?ⁱ Can we really claim that narratives and storytelling are valid forms of research? What about being *robust*?ⁱⁱ Whilst we welcome initiatives that highlight the importance of spending time outdoors, and seek to nurture young people’s connection with nature, we believe that many research projects are attempting to *measure the immeasurable*.ⁱⁱⁱ It is one thing to co-construct a way of thinking about our outdoor practice so that new understandings of atmospheres and narratives engender curiosity, raise cultural sensitivity and enrich our outdoor practices. It is a very different thing to show how this is achieved. Given the increasing importance of ‘impact’ in relation to both academia and practice, we ask a number of questions, including: a) What does impact really mean, and who is ‘impacted’? b) How do we want our research to be used, and who do we want to read/act on it? We will explore the apparent need to measure, quantify and statistically signify concepts that are arguably better suited to interpretative practices. We will discuss the contentious nature of the word ‘impact’ and propose that ‘influence’ is preferable for concepts that change with each situation, individual and environment. Is this type of work truly *measurable*?

i Loynes, C. (2015) Email to Tracy Hayes, 27 March.

ii Bragg, R.; Wood, C.; Barton, J. and Pretty, J. (2013) Measuring connection to nature in children aged 8 - 12: A robust methodology for the RSPB. Essex: Essex Sustainability Institute and University of Essex.

iii Chia, J. Measuring the immeasurable? Diss. Bond University, 2006. Available from: <http://www.pria.com.au/sitebuilder/resources/knowledge/asset/files/2/measuringtheimmeasurable-joychia.pdf> Last Accessed: 17/01/2017.

Goleman, D., ed. (2008) Measuring the Immeasurable: The Scientific Case for Spirituality. Boulder, USA: Sounds True Inc.

Author Biography

Heather Prince is Associate Professor of Outdoor and Environmental Education and Principal Lecturer in Collaborative and Experiential Learning at the University of Cumbria. She is particularly interested in innovative and inspiring pedagogies to enhance student experiences through active outdoor and experiential learning with research connected teaching.