The experiences of trans and non-binary participants in residential and non-residential outdoor programmes

Abstract

The degree to which policy, practice, and facilities accommodate trans and non-binary participants in outdoor programmes has been subject to limited research. The outdoors can be a heavily gendered space, demonstrative of both heteronormativity and hegemonic masculinity. This research explores current practices and the awareness, confidence and desire for inclusivity amongst outdoor practitioners. It adopts a *bricolage* approach involving composite vignettes with qualitative data obtained through questionnaires and interviews, and reports on the lived experience of trans and non-binary outdoor practitioners and participants, and expert inclusivity trainers in the UK. The data indicate that aspects of outdoor programming policy in respect of gender are unsuitable, outdated and incongruent with the opinions and aspirations of many practitioners and participants. The findings should encourage outdoor providers to review their policies in relation to gender and to strive for explicit inclusivity in respect of accommodating and welcoming gender variant participants.

Keywords: trans, non-binary, gender, outdoor programming, residentials, adventurous activities

Introduction

While research into the experiences of trans[1] and non-binary[2] people is not wholly new (Grossman, O'Connell and D'Augelli 2010; Mitten 2012; Wilson and Lewis 2012), it certainly is scarce (Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017; lisahunter 2017a; Warren 2016). Frequently amalgamated into 'LGBT+' (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans) literature, its applicability to trans people, non-binary people, or anyone of gender variance is not always evident (Mitchell and Howarth 2009). While 'outdoor' literature and research about LGB people often draws interesting, poignant, and timely conclusions (see Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Dignan 2002) the extent to which this literature and research is relevant to trans and non-binary people is unclear. This can be attributed to the apparent conflation of sexual orientations (lesbian, gay, bisexual) with genders (men, women, non-binary, and more). Likewise, research about gender in general, and within the outdoors, has mostly adhered to binary notions, often making conclusions about 'male' and 'female' people, when in actuality the results are only relevant to cis[3] people (Dennis 2018).

[1] Trans. Currently the most inclusive 'umbrella term' to describe a large pool of individuals whose gender is different from their gender assigned at birth. This might include people who are transgender, transsexual, non-binary, gender fluid, agender, and many more. Like much of the English language, this may well change in years to come.

[2] Non-binary. An 'umbrella term' for someone who does not identify as male or female. Colloquially referred to as 'enby', or 'nb'.

[3] Cis/Cisgender. Someone whose gender is the same as the gender they were assigned at birth. For example, if you had 'MALE' printed on your birth certificate, and in life you also identify as a man, then you are cis.

This research responds to the gap identified in the evidence base on "previously ignored genders and sexualities as well as new ones" (lisahunter 2017b, p. 22). It aims to explore current practice with regard to trans, non-binary, and gender variant participants in residential and non-residential outdoor programmes in the UK, with these programmes differentiated because overnight experiences may provide different and more sustained challenges for participants. It seeks to determine the current awareness, understanding, and confidence of outdoor practitioners in relation to working with trans and non-binary participants, and the frequency with which practitioners are privy to education and resources in this area. It is important to acknowledge that as cis females, we are not approaching this research from a position of in-depth personal experience.

The data report specific instances when practitioners have worked with trans and/or non-binary participants and the experiences of participants and practitioners who are trans and/or non-binary themselves. The data also examine the extent to which current practitioners require and/or desire specific training in this area. The research suggests best practice and policy for implicit and explicit inclusivity in residential and non-residential outdoor programmes, which can be applied globally.

Trans and non-binary participants in outdoor programmes: Current practice

Outdoor programmes are often heralded for the inclusive aspects of practice that are mindful, understanding and attractive to minorities who may have experienced marginalisation or exclusion in the past. However, it is important to examine such assertions in order to ascertain whether the current diversity in populations can be embraced by outdoor programmes and achieve the progressive social justice desired (lisahunter 2017b; Warren 2016). Despite the "taken-for-granted understanding amongst 'liberal' commentators" (Barnfield and Humberstone 2008, p. 39) that concepts such as homo'phobia' and trans'phobia' are no longer prevalent, or that the outdoors is a leveller (Dignan 2002), there has been much evidence over the last twenty years to suggest that the outdoors is a heavily gendered space, demonstrative of both hegemonic masculinity and heteronormativity (Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Clayton and Humberstone 2006; Dignan 2002; Humberstone and Clayton 2007; Humberstone and Pedersen 2001; Wilson and Lewis 2012). These dominant messages are likely to affect outdoor practice through lack of participation, unchallenged homophobia, and complicit silencing of minority groups (Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Carver 2007; Dignan 2002; Whittle, Turner and Al-alami 2007).

In the UK, the maintained notions of what it means to be a 'man' or a 'woman' are not just societal, but are "considerable personal and political struggles" (Humberstone and Clayton 2007, p. 2). Trans and non-binary people have not only battled for legislative representation, but have also faced mass cultural stigma and misunderstanding, social ostracism, and violence (Bergman and Barker, 2017; Bradlow *et al.*, 2017; Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017; Whittle, Turner and Al-alami 2007; Wilson and Lewis 2012).

Although gender variant people are often perceived as a 'niche' community, Reed, Rhodes, Schofield and Wylie (2009) estimate that there could be between 300,000 and 500,000 trans people in the UK (between 0.48% and 0.80% of the population), which is projected to double every six-and-a-half years. In the absence of a suitable census instrument for obtaining information about trans and non-binary people (Office for National Statistics, 2019) these numbers may be higher and are "constantly shifting and almost impossible to measure accurately" (Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017, p. 6). A study by METRO Youth Chances in England (2014) also found that approximately 5% of young LGBT people identify as other than male or female (Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017, p. 5) and that identifying in this way is becoming more common in younger people. Moreover, Joel, Tarrasch, Berman, Mukamel and Ziv (2014) conclude that "the current view of gender identity as binary and unitary does not reflect the experience of many individuals" (p. 1) and further urge for gender to be re-conceptualised.

In respect of the recognition and accommodation of trans and non-binary participants in outdoor practice, there are reports of polarising reactions to people identifying as transgender (lisahunter 2017b). Close to twenty years ago, in 2002, Dignan challenged practitioners to "deconstruct their role in the reinforcement of heterosexuality as the norm" (p. 77). Mitten (2012) also warned that outdoor centres need to be aware of the demarcation or labelling of space or language by gender. The demand for accommodating trans and non-binary youths in outdoor programming is growing, with some summer camps in America offering trans and gender variant specific courses (Camp Aranu'tiq 2018; Mitten 2012; Wilson and Lewis 2012).

On a rudimentary level, many outdoor centres subscribe to binary systems, such as 'male' and 'female' tick-boxes on registration forms, and 'male' and 'female' changing rooms and toilets. Causation may be attributed to lack of funding to build more facilities, ignorance of exclusionary practices, or outdated policies. However strict binary systems arguably contribute and perpetuate heteronormative policies and have the potential to be exclusionary to those who are neither male

nor female, or experience gender fluidity (Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Valentine 2016a; Wilson and Lewis 2012). In respect of practical arrangements, Wilson and Lewis (2012) suggest that centres can provide "more gender-neutral single-occupancy restrooms" (p. 232), while the Outdoor Education Advisers' Panel (2016) offer the following possibilities, determined on a case-by-case basis:

> Access to disabled/neutral gender toilets; showers of the identified gender used by agreement at alternative times; a separate bedroom (although this may introduce other safeguarding/safety issues); shared bedroom with other transgender young people or with friends where there is trust and understanding; sensitivity around organising changing areas. (p. 2)

However, sensitivity towards gender variance in outdoor practice and specific policy responses do not only concern facilities. There is a further need to deconstruct the axiom that the outdoors, currently, is truly inclusive. Warren (2016) concedes that gender-related discussion has so far only been applicable to cis people. She posits that, "as outdoor educators better understand the lived experience of transgendered people, the more likely it is that the gender binary might be challenged in the outdoor field and trans-sensitive practices to support transgender youth and adults be developed" (2016, p. 365). We would challenge the lexical semantics in this sentence as 'transgendered' is not a verb and is now considered inaccurate, outdated and even offensive. But it is the ways in which better understanding might be achieved that is important and constitutes the aim of this research. This research examines current practice in residential and non-residential outdoor settings with regard to trans and non-binary participants through practitioners' perspectives, including those who are trans themselves.

Methodology

This study encountered epistemic issues in its attempts to fall neatly within the constraints of structured paradigmatic boundaries. Influences were drawn from the various criteria, forms of theory, and narrative types of several emancipatory paradigms, including queer theory, feminist approaches, and action research, respectively (Atieno 2009; Bernard 2012; Bryman 2008; Denscombe 2010). Elements of these were deeply influential; however, operating solely within the confines of any one epistemological monolith had the potential to constrict exploration of this under-researched topic. As a consequence, bricolage offered an appropriate approach.

Bricolage and methodological practice

While a materialist-realist ontology recognises race, class and gender in the real world (Denzin and Lincoln 2011), this study sought to cast the paradigmatic 'net' further in this emergent area of research (Guba 1990). As such, the "critical, multi-perspectival, multi-theoretical and multi-methodological approach to inquiry" (Rogers 2012, p. 1) offered by *bricolage*, was considered well-suited to the research questions.

Denzin and Lincoln (2003a) characterise bricolage as eclectic, emergent, flexible, and of plurality. Researchers as *bricoleurs* work "between and within competing and overlapping perspectives and paradigms" (p. 9), piecing together different methods, tools, and techniques as they become relevant and available. There exist five variations of *the-researcher-as-bricoleur* (interpretive, methodological, theoretical, political, and narrative) of which this study is a blend. Significantly, the choices as to which interpretive practices to employ are not necessarily predetermined. This was paramount due to the somewhat controversial and culturally stigmatised nature of this topic, and the small and hard to reach population of trans and non-binary participants. Consequently, the research was angled initially towards surveying praxis rather than participants, employing an online survey to secure both a quantitative and qualitative 'panoramic' view of current practice (Denscombe 2010) and understanding amongst practitioners (Bernard 2012; Bryman 2008; Lester 1999). However, as avenues of communication unexpectedly materialised between the researcher and members of the trans community operating in the outdoors, the nature of the inquiry subsequently morphed to include different qualitative interpretive practices such as online interviews. Likewise, as additional practitioners volunteered their specific knowledge as a result of their interest in the study, in-depth telephone interviews were conducted by the researcher (first author) with individuals specialising in inclusivity training.

Data collection and analysis

Sampling was random from within a defined target audience of outdoor practitioners and developed into a 'snowball' sample as data collection evolved. The online questionnaire comprised closed questions on practitioners' experience, on knowledge and understanding of what it means when someone identifies themself as trans or non-binary, and on any training received in this area. Open questions requested narrative responses about the circumstances of working with these

participants, practitioner confidence in this area, and their desire for education/training. An open question requested further comments, and respondents were asked to indicate their age (range) and state their gender. Respondents were invited to give their contact details if they wanted to participate further in the research through interviews. The questionnaire was distributed via social media and direct email, with personalised emails employed to invite heads of residential outdoor centres for telephone interviews, in order to secure an in-depth understanding of policy (Bernard 2012). However, despite the personalisation of emails, they elicited a very low response rate (Krueger and Casey 2000) and thus, information in respect of policy was reported indirectly by practitioners.

Amongst practitioners however, the response rate achieved via social media was strong, with 140 responses received from practitioners (trans, non-binary and cisgender) via the questionnaire. The researcher conducted a further three semi-structured interviews with inclusivity practitioners/trainers by telephone; and with trans practitioners, a further two structured interviews were conducted online and one semi-structured interview face-to-face. The variety in interview formats allowed for a data set offering comparisons between participants and maintained discretion to follow in-depth leads and encourage free talking (Arthur and Nazroo 2003; Bernard 2012). Interviews with trans practitioners included questions which asked about their own and professional experience of outdoor activities, if experience of transition had shaped their coaching philosophy, their views on whether the outdoor sector is embracing the needs of trans and non-binary service users and any areas in which the sector needs to adapt and improve. The researcher also asked each interviewee whether they felt that it would be advantageous for instructors to have more resources and education available to them to be more trans inclusive, and, if they could make changes to outdoor centres in that respect, what these changes would be and why.

Employing a similar style of methodological bricolage to Wickens (2011), who explored LGBTQ themes, multiple analytical methods were necessary, such as initial open coding and theming (Côté *et al.* 1994; Côté, Salmela and Russell 1995; Strauss and Corbin 1998), 'wordclouds' (Depaolo and Wilkinson 2014), and composite vignettes (Blodgett *et al.* 2011; Spalding and Phillips 2007). The data set underwent a significant familiarisation process by reading and re-reading text (questionnaires) and listening and re-listening to audio recordings (interviews). Multiple researchers worked collaboratively to process the data sets using research logs to make written records and to manually create emergent open codes using the written and spoken language of the respondents. This

enabled consistent and holistic data interpretation through an iterative approach in order to reach data saturation (Ritchie, Lewis and Elam 2003; Schinke et al. 2016; Strauss and Corbin 1998).

The creation of two vignettes was undertaken to reflect both political bricolage – to "produce knowledge that benefits those who are disenfranchised by everyday taken-for-granted workings of neoliberal, capitalist, white, patriarchal, and heterosexist social structures" (Rogers 2012, p. 6) – and narrative bricolage as constructed from research journals, field notes, interviews and recorded conversations, fiction, and scholarly literature (Markham 2005). Vignettes were developed through creative writing that involved re-organizing and amalgamating fragments of experience, establishing links between themes and sub-themes, creating compelling characters, and developing meaningful stories (Smith et al. 2016). They were necessarily created through the lenses of the researchers (cis gender) and were fictional narratives (Mitten 2012; Wilson and Lewis 2012). The vignettes were composite in style, with insightful elements of various data woven into a powerful and embracing account (Schinke et al. 2016), instead of presenting individual stories as separate singularities. Ely et al. (1997) describe composite vignettes as "compact sketches that can be used to introduce characters, foreshadow events and analysis to come, highlight particular findings, or summarise a particular theme or issue in analysis and interpretation" (p. 70) – the portraiture followed in this study.

Vignettes were important to this research as they enabled a synthesis of the wide variety of qualitative and quantitative data collected, acting as both analytical process and representation of data (Hazel 1995; Hill 1997; Hughes 1998; Hughes and Huby 2004). In conventional usage, vignettes could be presented to participants during data collection to explore their ethical frameworks about specific situations, elicit cultural norms, or explore sensitive topics. In this research they are constituted to leave readers space to define the situation for themselves (Barter and Renold 1999). Spalding and Phillips' (2007) assertion that "each reader's interpretation can be unique, adding a further dimension" (p. 958), is the aspiration for impact of the vignettes in this study.

Ethical process

Although Ely et al. (1997) state that the aim of vignettes is to support individual reader interpretation, poetic licence can influence a 'climate of doubt' in readers (Brauner 1995) and "problems of subjectivity, authority, authorship, reflexivity, and process" (Richardson and St. Pierre 2008, p. 962). It is undeniable that the vignettes are entwined in the data and inseparable from the

writers and the approach (Richardson and St. Pierre 2008) and thus might induce readers to be circumspect in terms of validity. However, Spalding and Phillips (2007) assert that these constant concerns about trustworthiness in the mind of the researcher, paradoxically, promote an enhanced motive to display accuracy and naturalisation. They stress that, "perhaps the questions to ask of a vignette are not 'is it true?' or 'does it provide an objective account?' but, rather, 'can I trust this?' and 'does it chime with my experience?'" (p. 961).

Appropriate to the nature of bricolage, the researchers acknowledge clear biases derived from the social privileges, sex, gender and sexuality of their own positions. As the study deals with a topic that is considered by some to be controversial in nature and the researchers were not positioned within the communities under study, guidance was sought in relation to word choice and phraseology, and a pilot study was conducted to gauge the tone and reception of the questionnaire (Bernard 2012; Wolcott 1995). The research ethics application was approved by the researcher's university, and the research had regard to ethical best practice for writing about the trans and non-binary community (Gendered Intelligence and Government Equalities Office 2015; LGBT Foundation 2017; National Centre for Transgender Equality 2014; Stonewall 2016a). A process of member checking was employed in order to clarify sections where choices about appropriate levels of anonymisation were made (Robson 2002).

Results and Discussion

The focus of this discussion is dictated and led by the vignettes, where the vignettes are an expression of the results of data analysis. We acknowledge that this prioritised our interpretation and overall meditations on the participants' lived experiences, planting the roots of discussion in the amalgamative real-world accounts of trans and non-binary participants who have shared their stories throughout this process. Our aspiration here is for the unfolding discussion to be reified by the narratives of fictional characters 'Amy', 'William' (both trans participants, identifying as female and male respectively) (Vignette One) and 'Ennis' (a non-binary person) (Vignette Two), attending residential outdoor programmes or adventurous activities on day visits. The vignettes are followed by discussion, which is supported by the wider data set from our research providing practitioners' responses to key issues highlighted in these narratives.

Trans participants' experiences and practitioner responses

Vignette One: Amy and William

Amy is 17 and is taking part in the National Citizen Service (NCS: a non-formal youth programme, funded by the UK government). She is excited to take on the next challenge on a residential experience with the new friends she has made on the programme. Unlike at school, no one here knows she's trans. Since being bullied at school, she's keen to keep it a secret this time.

William transitioned at 15. He goes to a relatively small secondary school where most people have known him since he was little, but thankfully most of them were pretty quick to switch his pronouns and call him by a different name. The school have been very accommodating, but William doesn't really like to tell strangers that he is trans. Today is his last day of term, and the school are taking them to an outdoor centre for a multi-activity day, including kayaking, raft-building, and high ropes, to celebrate the end of the year.

Amy has to make her own way to the outdoor centre, where she's going to be spending three days and two nights doing a range of activities. On the bus where she feels anonymous and unjudged, she's excited, but also nervous. She's never done any watersports before, and although she used to really like sports in school, since the other girls in the netball team started whispering about her before practice, she's not felt as confident joining in. When she arrives at the centre, she manages to locate a few of the new friends she's made, and quickly she starts to feel her nerves melt away although is concerned about the binary facilities and sharing a bedroom and bathroom.

On the coach to the outdoor centre everyone is very excited, including William. It's due to be the hottest day in June, and he cannot wait to jump into the water. As William steps off the bus, the heat hits him. Today, like most days, William is wearing a chest binding. It used to be that he would wear two sports bras at the same time, to make his chest look flatter, but he found his t-shirts would always bunch up around the layers. Recently, he's been using special bandages instead, that wrap closely around his body, over and over. He's had no problem with them so far, but today in the heat it feels tight and restricting. He is anxious about how he will cope and how others around him, including the instructors, will react.

There are some data here to suggest a high likelihood that Amy and William will have a positive experience as trans participants in these different outdoor experiences, with confident, well-informed practitioners, who value inclusivity. Amy's past experience with bullying may reflect the

wider problem of trans'phobic' abuse, which we know is true for many trans and non-binary students in the UK, as described in the Stonewall School Report (Bradlow et al. 2017). While Amy is not 'out' as being trans, there is evidence from our wider data set to suggest that if she were, she would be met with a practitioner who understands the term and may even have had prior experience working with trans people in an outdoor setting. Specifically, when we, as researchers, asked respondents to the questionnaire, 'would you consider yourself to have a general understanding of what it means when someone describes themselves as 'trans'?' an overwhelming 96% of *(n*=140) respondents answered 'yes'. However, it should not be assumed that staff who work with young people are familiar with current terminology, for instance, Stonewall reports that 44% of LGBT students say that staff at their school "are not familiar with the term 'trans' and what it means" (Bradlow et al. 2017, p. 6). William, contrastingly, has been relatively lucky in that respect, and is one of only 36% of trans students who have not experienced bullying and one of 67% of trans students who is referred to by their preferred name when in school (Bradlow et al. 2017).

In the questionnaires just over half of the respondents (51%, *n*=140) had prior experience working with trans, non-binary or other participants of similar gender-variance. The broad categorisations of these responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Prior experience of questionnaire respondents in working with trans, non-binary or other participants of similar gender-variance (*n*=72)

Experiences	**%**
'experiences involving clients/participants'	83
'experiences involving colleagues/friends'	11
'experiences from personal life'	3
'other/unknown'	3

While previous experience is not necessarily indicative of good practice, it does provide a deeper understanding as to key areas that one might want to be mindful of, such as 'binders', 'periods', 'privacy', or those 'undergoing surgery' (wordcloud data). The presence of a knowledgeable and correctly informed outdoor practitioner could make a significant difference to the experience of someone like Amy or William, enabling them to feel understood and able to disclose any relevant information (Whittle, Turner and Al-alami 2007). The majority of respondents (88%, *n*=140) felt that

they would be confident in working with participants who identified as transgender or non-binary but exhibited a disparity in justifications for their responses. This could reflect response bias in respect of the demographic who chose to complete the survey.

Most questionnaire respondents' answers to short-answer questions exuded a sentiment of valuing inclusivity within their practice, but interpretations of ethical and inclusive behaviour were varied. Some respondents said that they "would not treat them any differently," while others asserted that gender is not influential to participation. "People are people," one respondent stated. "Your gender does not affect your ability to learn or to participate in outdoor activities." Another said they "would treat them the same as everyone else." Further detail was shared by another practitioner, who argued that they did not feel "gender fluidity confines or requires me as a practitioner to alter my delivery of outdoor activities," whilst also acknowledging that this may present "difficulties for residentials, when concerned with privacy policies and centres without gender fluid facilities."

However, research into experiences of women and sexuality has shown that gender can be linked with the participatory experience, displaying a variety of perceptual and subconscious constraints (Allin 2000, 2003; Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Evans 2014; McDermott 2004). While it might not seem relevant to the individual practitioner, it might be significant for the participant. The perceptual or confused contradiction is further illustrated by practitioners. One stated that "sexuality has no influence on the way I practice, everyone is equal on my courses and I would work with anyone no matter what gender"; and another, that participants "are just people. What gender people are is not a big deal to me. I treat people as individuals my work had nothing to do with sexuality. So, it's not an issue for me or at least so far it hasn't been." However, another respondent alluded to more challenging scenarios in respect of practice. "They often cause non-certain issues relating to their current sexual state"; while others acknowledged sexual preferences but said that they "don't matter as much as a competent operator/ instructor in the given activity."

However, even with the best of intentions, these responses are evidence that people do not completely understand the key differences between gender and sexuality, and thus are in danger of misunderstanding the individual participant or being unaware of the ways in which binary systems employed by outdoor centres can be problematic for trans people. While we know that hegemonic masculinity and resultant heteronormativity can negatively affect the participatory experiences of those who identify as trans and non-binary, there are key distinctions between the two, and practitioners might benefit from understanding the nuances of both in order to begin to dismantle

the systems that negatively affect people like Amy and William (Barnfield and Humberstone 2008; Dignan 2002; Evans 2014; Humberstone 2000; Humberstone and Clayton 2007; Evans 2014; Warren 2016). Other respondents employed a degree of autonomous decision making and a nuanced approach and described the ways in which they would behave more mindfully in certain situations, with one practitioner stating that they "mostly treat people as people. Ideally, I would've been informed by a member of staff. I had one tell me to refer to a participant as 'they' rather than 'he' or 'she'."

This illustrates a clear theme emerging from the interview and questionnaire data that participants and practitioners often do not disclose that they are trans, perhaps due to a societal lack of understanding, or previously negative experiences, such as Amy's (Bradlow et al. 2017; Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017). Thus, it may be unreasonable to assume that practitioners will be aware of unknown hazards or nuances, or know the best course of action, considering nearly half of the total respondents had not worked with trans or non-binary people previously. Their stated confidence may be misguided.

William's narrative alludes to the issues of privacy and unknown hazards. While practitioners might feel they are confident in this area, with some citing previous experience with participants wearing chest bindings in complex environments, it cannot be assumed that all practitioners will be as vigilant in the same way that they might be watchful of the symptoms of medical conditions. We know that William wears a concealed chest binding, but we are unaware as to whether this is a manufactured binding that is generally better tolerated or an elastic bandage that can be more problematic in hot and cold environments. The Outdoors People (2017) conducted a pilot study that tested the effects of wearing a chest binding whilst being exposed to cold-water immersion. Although conducted by a cis male who is accustomed to cold-water immersion, they described it as a "very alarming experience," where breathing ability was "massively restricted compared to what he would expect under normal circumstances," resulting in feelings of panic, prolonged chest pain and muscle fatigue. The Outdoors People (2017) stress both the considerable physical and emotional risks to participants, and warn that binding in this way is "very common, particularly for young trans people as the required materials are very cheap and easy to obtain." The written responses to the questionnaire, and the interview responses also corroborated that chest bindings can be uncomfortable and constricting when in hot climates, or when wearing a rucksack, with some respondents experiencing fainting and nausea.

In respect of practitioner confidence in working in the outdoors with trans and non-binary participants, some practitioners stated that they had, "limited confidence due to lack of experience." However, even past experiences are not indicative of practitioner confidence, as half of those who expressed a lack of confidence or uncertainty had prior experience working with trans/non-binary people. As one respondent stated, "I do not feel confident because I do not know enough about transgender or non-binary individuals to ensure I don't say something offensive or do something that is considered offensive." Even with a practitioner who declared that they were confident, there can be notions of uncertainty and concerns about "gender fluidity in 10-14 year olds; sharing bathrooms/bedrooms with other young members and dealing with parents' views" although they emphasised that "dealing with the individual is not a problem."

These questionnaire responses are representative of the anxiety some practitioners encounter as a direct result of their lack of experience or training. While we cannot say categorically that lack of experience or confidence would impact negatively on Amy as a 'closeted' trans individual, it is plausible that she could benefit from working with a confident, knowledgeable practitioner, operating in an openly supportive and trans friendly environment.

Non-binary participants' experiences and practitioner responses

In response to the question, 'would you consider yourself to have a general understanding of what it means when someone describes themselves as 'non- binary', in relation to their gender?' nearly 30% of questionnaire respondents answered 'no'; substantially more than the 4% who answered 'no' for the previous question regarding the term 'trans'. Gender non-binary people are "more common" (Richards, Bouman and Barker 2017, p. 6), "regarded as both 'young' and 'difficult'" (Bergman and Barker 2017, p. 37) and are "rarely acknowledged" (Vincent and Manzano 2017, p. 12). As it is estimated that 1 in 250 people in the UK define as non-binary when given the option between male, female, and 'other', some responses detailed confusion over terms and made reference to their own concerns about accommodating non-binary people in centres that were only fit for male/female participants, be they trans or cis. Again, it is important to be able to conceptualise these scenarios in a 'real-world' context, and correspondingly the second vignette initiates discussion through the narrative of Ennis, a non-binary person about to spend a day engaging in outdoor activities. Mark is a cis male.

Vignette two: Ennis and Mark

Ennis is 28 and works for a charity. Today there is a team-building day that has been organised to help integrate two of the charity's branches, who will be working together more closely soon. The activities include team-oriented tasks, and ghyll scrambling[4] with a guide whose name is Mark.

Mark is cisgender male and has two years facilitation experience in the outdoors. He has generalised knowledge of gender identity and fluidity but no training or prior professional experience, although like most outdoor practitioners, is committed to promote inclusivity in his work. Observant of Ennis's physical appearance, Mark is unsure how to address them or suggest which facilities to use.

Ennis is non-binary, wears a chest binding, and has been taking testosterone for nearly 18 months to help improve their gender dysphoria. They are pretty nervous about how today is going to go, because people frequently misgender them, and it can create awkward situations. Ennis is regularly made to feel that their gender is invalid. People often find it confusing and offensive that Ennis gets changed in the women's changing rooms when they also have visible facial stubble.

Trans people might objectively experience fewer obstacles regarding binary systems due to their binary transitions. However, people such as Ennis who are non-binary or experiencing fluidity might find the typical male/female structure in residential outdoor centres to be exclusionary, riddled with complications that erase their gender/genders entirely.

Mark as a practitioner could be someone who, like the 30% of respondents mentioned previously, is unconfident in their knowledge of non-binary genders. Moreover, just like 86% of (*n* =140) respondents, Mark has never received any training; although like almost 70% of respondents, he would value training in this area. At this stage he has no idea that anyone in the group he is expecting to meet and work with is not cis male or cis female. During the course of the morning, Mark mistakenly misgenders Ennis on several occasions, not picking up on Ennis' colleagues' use of Ennis' they/them pronouns. While Ennis is used to this – an experience homologous with the 32% of non-binary people surveyed by Barker and Lester (2015) who recalled "constant misgendering by others in relation to pronouns, titles, and everyday terms" (p. 1) – they make no effort to challenge this in the group situation in front of colleagues they do not yet know or trust. This style of scenario is addressed by Boddington (2016), who posits that "the dominance of the gender binary … results in frequent misgendering by others in everyday situations, as it is assumed a person is either male or

[4] Ghyll scrambling (also known as gorge walking) is ascending a stream. It may include negotiating natural obstacles in the stream bed or edges, climbing waterfalls and/or jumping into pools of water.

female and this will be determined by their physical appearance" (p. 68). In Boddington's study, "toilets, changing rooms and other binary gendered environments … were difficult to negotiate for the participants" (p. 68).

While this is an example of practice that is unintentional, it is clearly significant to non-binary people, as when surveyed, they highlighted "an increased level of knowledge about their identities as the highest priority for ensuring greater inclusion in services and from employers" (Valentine 2016b, p. 10). From Mark's perspective, his approach could manifest any one of a number of statements from questionnaire respondents which are highly relevant to Ennis' scenario as described in the vignette. One respondent reflected on the difficulties that they need to overcome in appropriately addressing non-binary participants on their outdoor programmes: "I think it would be hard to for me to do so because of the way I address participants in general. As in if it were a female I would say 'name' then love, then again if it were a male I'd say 'name' lad and I would find it difficult to break a habit as not to offend people. Bad habit by me, don't do it." Some respondents stated that they had 'medium' confidence in working with non-binary participants with positivity towards inclusion and diversity but with concerns about facilities, such as "questions about changing rooms and I don't know what might or might not be offensive to say." Another practitioner was open and honest about their lack of knowledge stating that they had "heard some of the terms but don't really understand them."

One of the interviewees in this research had conducted their own survey of over 10,000 trans and non-binary people in the UK regarding their opinions on participating in climbing activities, either indoor or outdoor. They found that concerns and anxieties were a key factor in participation rates. For example of the 10,000 people surveyed, over a third of respondents said they would not visit indoor or outdoor activity providers, even if they were more inclusive, and attributed their worries to: "being stared at," "called by the wrong pronouns and not allowed to use the bathrooms of my gender," and "scared of how people will react, or they will misgender me." The significance of this is further corroborated by Valentine (2016a), who similarly found that non-binary people were most likely to avoid spaces that are often gender-segregated, such as public toilet facilities (55%), gyms (42%), and other leisure facilities (33%).

If we assume that there has been no space so far for Ennis to disclose their pronouns via a written form or an ice-breaker session, and while Ennis may not desire for any special treatment or attention, their confidence, self-efficacy, and locus of control are directly affected by how their

colleagues perceive their presentation and gender. Considering there is a strong evidence base to suggest outdoor adventure and learning can impact both proximal and distal outcomes in relation to confidence, group cohesion, self-efficacy and esteem, teamwork skills, and locus of control, any negative experience Ennis has may adversely affect the group cohesion as a whole. Mark's role as a facilitator is to cultivate a well contained and resolutely linked group (Ringer, 1999) who are ready to take on the adventurous activity of ghyll scrambling both physically and emotionally. Ennis will need evidence from Mark that they will be "safe to interact in the group without undue fear of being attacked, ridiculed, ignored or abandoned" (Ringer, 1999, p. 3). For Ennis' experience as an individual within a group, this might require a simple but critical acknowledgement of who they are as a person, through correct use of their pronouns by the facilitator. If Mark was to take the time to learn about genders outside the binary, this could not only help address the gender-normative consciousness that informs the systems that are challenging for non-binary people, but his attention to detail could promote the necessary trust between the leader and the group-as-a-whole (Scottish Trans Alliance, 2013).

Practitioner confidence and training in working with transgender and non-binary participants

Although the questionnaire data illustrate confidence amongst practitioners in working with transgender or non-binary participants (86%, *n*=140), the same proportion indicated that they had received no training in this area and nearly half of the respondents had not actually worked with such participants. These findings point perhaps to more generalised knowledge assimilated outside professional practice and a pervading ethic of inclusivity amongst outdoor practitioners. 70% of questionnaire respondents would value training in working with transgender and non-binary participants. There was some evidence from the expert inclusivity trainer interviewees of the effectiveness of such training in relation to improving practice, where such training has taken place. This includes, for example, 'Inclusivity Ambassadors' in outdoor centres, who are confidantes for clients and other staff on particular situations as well as promoting and advertising a mindful and inclusive all gender approach, and minor practical adjustments such as single cell changing facilities. However, it is evident that training is limited and there is much still to do.

Many practitioners expressed concerns that outdoor centre policies and facilities are outdated and that they would appreciate more guidance on operational aspects such as sleeping arrangements, appropriate language including pronouns and terminology, managing parents/carers and safeguarding. Moreover, while many respondents self-identified as confident and experienced in

working with trans and non-binary people, the majority did not identify or consider the unexplored hazard of chest bindings and outdoor activities, perhaps because this is not a practice well known amongst cis people.

Conclusion

Increasingly outdoor education is expected to provide evidence and measure outcomes, impact and legacy. While residential traditions in the UK and elsewhere are considered a valuable, educative experience, to what extent can the residential outdoor sector truly say that its practices recognise full inclusivity beyond the binary?

It is evident that, beyond the focus on overnight accommodation, current practices and the provisions made, or not made, for trans and non-binary participants in residential outdoor programmes, are as applicable to day visits and adventure activities. While this study has provided groundwork and data, more work is needed on potential solutions available to practitioners wishing to improve the inclusivity of their practices, as many practitioners are only just beginning to comprehend its importance. Support could include the development of guidelines, codes of practice or protocols for service providers such as those developed for trans children in Spain (Mosquera and Roblé 2019), which should be regularly reviewed with respect to participant experience. The myth that residential services which cater for primary school children are exempt from necessary policy changes in this area must also be dispelled, not least because there are increasing numbers of trans children, but mostly because perceptions about gender stereotypes and heteronormativity that are detrimental to *all children* can either be constructed or deconstructed in childhood.

This study suggests that there are various areas where adaptation is required in outdoor practice. The evidence from this research demonstrates that individual outdoor practitioners display commendable levels of awareness, self-identified confidence, and inclusive aspirations, although the extent to which they desire training and the likelihood of receiving it may be poorly aligned. Whilst some practitioners could easily source solutions with regard to outdated sex-separated facilities, concluding that binary trans people can and should be able to use the facilities of their choice, this does little to address the needs of non-binary people. As discussed, there is a direct link between non-binary people's use of services, and their perceptions about the service awareness of non-binary genders. As more and more people feel increasingly comfortable to come out as non-binary,

more and more services will be out of date, unless their systems develop to accommodate all participants. There are many small changes that outdoor providers can and should make to be outwardly inclusive, approachable, and accepting of non-binary participants. It is evident that the participatory experience may be affected by the ways in which the participant views and presents themself, even in situations where practitioners consider themselves to promote inclusivity in their practice. Equally, the lenses through which this research was conducted by cis female researchers must be acknowledged.

A significant recommendation accruing from this research is that education and training in some format is paramount to helping solidify best practice, especially by identifying and redressing areas that are not so familiar to cis practitioners. Although some residential outdoor providers might perceive financial barriers in altering their binary facilities, the attitudes and explicit inclusivity practices of knowledgeable and trained staff will make a considerable difference to the overall experience of trans and non-binary participants. This has global resonance, and much could be gained from shared policy and practice.

Future efforts must include working to respond to requests from trans and non-binary people, in the UK and elsewhere, for trans-only programming, thus emulating efforts made in parts of the world where this is already the case. In addition, it would be valuable to examine policies developed by providers to ascertain frameworks for best practice. Moreover, outdoor education researchers involved in augmenting the evidence base related to the practical experiences of participants, should evaluate to what extent their findings and conclusions are applicable to trans and non-binary people, and direct their research proposals to venture beyond the binary that has so far largely been upheld within academia.

Note

This research is reported in yyy *thesis.*

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