SHAPING NEOLIBERAL PERSONS
AT A GAP YEAR ORGANISATION

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<td>Radio call sign and name of project group on ten-weeker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambassador</td>
<td>Alumni participating in Endeavour’s Ambassador Programme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Chief Executive Office (Alison)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Director</td>
<td>Responsible for finding projects and managing relationship with projects partners, as well as oversees expeditions in Costa Rica (Louis)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Challenge Workshop</td>
<td>Pre-expedition residential training and briefing for venturers in Britain</td>
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<td>Manages volunteer staff and day-to-day running of expedition (Callum)</td>
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<td>Radio call sign and name of project group on five-weeker</td>
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<td>Department for Education and Skills</td>
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<tr>
<td>DfID</td>
<td>Department for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>Endeavour</td>
<td>A youth development and education charity</td>
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<tr>
<td>Expedition</td>
<td>Trip abroad to work as a volunteer with Endeavour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldbase</td>
<td>Storage and office facility in Costa Rica and/or the volunteer staff who manage it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCV</td>
<td>Host Country Venturer, a young person from Costa Rica or Nicaragua</td>
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<tr>
<td>Induction</td>
<td>First part of expedition training for volunteer staff/venturers in Costa Rica</td>
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<tr>
<td>Partnership Venturer</td>
<td>Venturer from Partnership Programme (venturers from poorer socio-economic backgrounds)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase</td>
<td>Length of a project (three weeks)</td>
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<tr>
<td>PM</td>
<td>Project Manager, a volunteer staff member who travels and works on the projects with venturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wash up</td>
<td>Last part of expedition, for cleaning and reviewing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Venturer</td>
<td>Young person, aged under twenty four</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Staff</td>
<td>Aged over twenty five, run expeditions by managing young people “on project” as PMs and/or managing logistics and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development Weekend</td>
<td>Pre-expedition training and briefing for volunteer staff in Britain</td>
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**ABSTRACT**

This thesis is an organisational ethnography that seeks to make an original contribution to anthropological knowledge through an iterative interrogation of neoliberalism and personhood.

Endeavour (a pseudonym) is a gap year organisation based in the UK that runs trips abroad to Central America, India and Borneo for young people. A gap year is any period of between three months to two years outside formal education or employment, but often refers to a year-off preceding university. Endeavour is a registered charity committed to what it describes as “personal development”. It attempts this by organising young people into small groups to participate in adventurous challenges and work on charitable projects in community development and environmental conservation.

Using multi-sited ethnography, the thesis moves from the marketing, fundraising and recruitment in Endeavour’s Head Office to the implementation and management of expeditions in Central America. The thesis explores the daily workings, processes and practices of Endeavour and how these are influenced by and connected to the current political-economic climate in the UK as it works to produce a particular type of gap year experience and through this a particular kind of person.

In exploring the process by which neoliberal persons are shaped at a gap year organisation, the thesis considers different aspects of the organisation and how it interacts with and is shaped by its context. It argues that the demands of neoliberalism have shaped the organisational structure of Endeavour and its employees. The trips also prepare young people to cope with the conditions in a neoliberal labour market. The thesis investigates Endeavour’s relationship to the state and argues non-governmental bodies are increasingly taking on state-like roles. Equally, as Endeavour has had to professionalise and become “business-like” to compete in the gap year market, it must patrol its charitable ethos to ensure the organisation carries the moral weight that attracts its patrons. The thesis also considers the techniques used during the trips abroad to discipline and organise young people as well as how these encourage friendships and social harmony in line with Endeavour’s charitable goals. It explores the personal development techniques that form the basis of Endeavour’s model of personhood and how these are used to develop individuals who are good at making transitory social relations and can thrive in neoliberal circumstances.
DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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Thank you Andy, for your unfailing honesty, steadfastness and loving care.
INTRODUCTION

My thesis is an organisational ethnography that seeks to make an original contribution to anthropological knowledge through an iterative interrogation of neoliberalism and personhood.

Taking neoliberalism as simultaneously an ideology and a means of describing particular practices my thesis considers how market principles are coming to shape persons in the UK. I explore both pervasive aspects of neoliberal ideology and the ways in which my participants creatively adapt and negotiate ideas to achieve their own goals. This contributes to a burgeoning anthropology of neoliberalism that, rather than treating this concept as an implicit, taken-for-granted package of policies, practices and discourse, seeks to “examine the actual configurations” of neoliberalism within a specific ethnographic context (Hoffman et al. 2006: 10). My analysis of personhood describes both the ideas and ideologies that contribute to my participants understanding of what persons should be like, and details the practices by which persons are brought into being. My understanding of neoliberal personhood derives from my research with a gap year provider, a UK based charity that claims its programmes facilitate the personal development of its volunteers. My thesis describes and analyses the practices, processes and understandings of this organisation as it works to produce a particular type of gap year and a particular kind of person.

GAP YEAR ASSUMPTIONS

My fieldwork begins on a grey day in south London. I am standing just outside the boundary of a scout camp. I have paused to assess my appearance after a brisk walk from the station, worrying all the time that I was going to be late. I am always anxious about being late and subsequently I have arrived, as I usually do, early. I adjust my jacket, tugging it down back into its proper position from where it has ridden up. I do not usually worry much about clothes, but today I have chosen this outfit carefully. Earlier this morning I stood in front of a mirror. I saw a young, white woman (girl?). Hidden from the mirror are my southern English accent, northern English parentage and middle class upbringing. Instead, the mirror shows me my outfit. A deep blue checked jacket, defined tailored shoulders and a cinched waist. The fastened buttons trace a diagonal line across

1 A scout camp is a property owned by the Scout Association providing a space for outdoor activities and/or camping. They are often used by local Scout Brigades, but can be hired by outside organisations.
my chest and below my waist a series of pleats fall over my hips. It is smart, but has a quirky element. I hope that it represents something of me, studious and focused but not taking myself too seriously. This is also what I hope might be valued by my prospective fieldwork participants. I glance down at the heels my mum recommended to help me feel in control. They do not seem to be working yet. Aged twenty-three, I have had few formal interviews or meetings, and am nervous. I am about to meet the CEO of Endeavour, the organisation in which I am hoping to begin my fieldwork in a few months time. I try hard not to focus on the fact that if I mess this meeting up she might not agree to allow me access. I try even harder not to think that even if I remember all the things I need and want to say to explain my research proposal she still might not agree. Taking a deep breath that I know will not really calm me down, but that I know is what one is supposed to do before embarking on something difficult, I comply and walk through the gate towards the scout camp.

A woman emerges from the long, slightly run down, single story building. She looks how I expect an Endeavour person to look. Her shoulder length hair is tied back roughly into a ponytail. She wears an outfit only available in outdoor shops, sensible clothes made to keep you warm, cool or dry - essentially the opposite of how you would normally react to weather. She looks comfortable and at ease in her fleece and loose trousers. Her walking boots stride over towards me, a welcoming smile on her makeup-free face. I consider that I must look strange to her in my outfit. My uncertainty and self-doubt seem about to take over when I hurriedly remind myself that I am here to have a meeting, not climb a tree. I take some more deep breaths, thinking that people must tell you to do this because it focuses your brain on something other than your fear. I rouse myself from introspection as the woman is talking to me.

Woman: Hiya! Are you here for the weekend? We’re just having a break, there is tea and coffee in the end room if you want one before the next session.
Me: Oh umm no I err am here to see Alison, I’ve err got a meeting with her?

The woman frowns and looks confused. Shit! I think. Do I have the wrong day? Have I come to the wrong place? If it is the wrong place, I will definitely be late because there is no time to travel somewhere new.

Woman: Oh, right ok. I think she is probably in the break room. That one there. You can go in through the fire door.
Twisting round, she points behind her to the second to last row of windows at the far end of the building. Smiling, I thank her and clop along the path to the door ajar. Entering, I see a woman sitting on a plastic chair concentrating on her Blackberry phone. I see with relief that this woman is dressed for an office rather than walking. It must be Alison, the CEO. I pause at the doorway, should I interrupt her? Feeling too awkward to stand and watch her, I stride in.

Me: Hello, are you Alison? I’m Rachel Wilde.

Should I have used her first name? Is that too informal? The room is chilly, I am not sure if it is the temperature or my nervousness that causes the tremor in my limbs. Should I shake her hand?

Alison: Yes. Hello. Take a seat.

She does not offer her hand so I do not hold mine out either, but shakily sit down, somehow feeling like a naughty schoolchild about to be told off. Alison places her Blackberry on top of her bag on the table next to her. She looks at me with sharp eyes, giving nothing away to me in her expression as she takes me in. I have no idea what she thinks of me. I feel tongue tied, my brain sluggish, panicking that Alison will think I am not worth her time.

Alison: So, you want to do some research on Endeavour?
Me: Yes. I did my own gap year with Endeavour, and it’s something that has always stayed with me. It was a really powerful experience for me. I met quite a few people at university who had also done gap years and we found there was a noticeable difference between those who had gone away or worked before coming to university and those who had come straight from school. The gap year lot had lived in shared houses before, were able to cope with that better, just seemed more independent and mature than those who hadn’t. I thought that this was really interesting, so when I was thinking about starting a PhD, and started reading about gap years what began to interest me most was the organisations that make gap years happen.

Alison’s Blackberry beeps. Still in the middle of my story, I am unsure whether to keep talking as Alison reaches over and checks it. I stop, terrified of losing my place in my carefully prepared explanation, but wanting her full attention. She mutters something under her breath that to me sounds like “Ewan”. “Oh,” I say helpfully, trying eagerly to be
seen as accommodating and thoughtful “do you need to take it?” Alison puts the blackberry down again.

Alison: No. It’s you, I said. A reminder of this meeting.

Trying to ignore the feeling that I have made myself look foolish, I struggle to regain my patter.

Me: Oh right, haha, yes OK. Urrm. So that’s what my research is about, I want to understand the processes and daily work practices at Endeavour that go into making these structured gap year programmes happen. My focus is on the gap year organisation itself. So, because I’m an anthropologist, we do ethnography. Do you know much about anthropology?

Alison: Yes, I took a few courses myself at university.

A mixture of relief that Alison might at least understand what fieldwork entails, and a fear of being patronising while wanting to make sure she does understand what it entails murmurs distractedly in the back of my brain as I breathlessly continue.

Me: Oh really? That’s great! So, you know then that in anthropology, we get our data through ethnography, participant observation. I’d like to take part in the day to day activities, get involved and obviously, help out in any way that I can. And as I’m interested in the gap year organisation itself, I was hoping to split my time between Head Office and out on an expedition so I can follow the processes all the way.

Alison: Right. Ok. But we’re not a gap year organisation. We’re a youth development and education charity.

My heart sank and my ears buzzed in embarrassed realisation that I had unwittingly made a faux pas.

Despite my bumbled explanation, Alison did agree to my doing fieldwork with Endeavour. This passage illustrates that while I was filled with doubt concerning many things in fieldwork, such as what to wear, how to behave and what to say, I was sure before meeting with Alison that my research was about a gap year organisation. I thought I knew this because I “did” a gap year with Endeavour and had read around the topic.²

² Though grammatically one spends a year of time rather than “does” it, gap years are more commonly spoken of as something that is done. Colloquially, people also describe travelling to different countries as having “done China”. As I demonstrate in chapter four, charity is also considered a verb, something that people “do”.
According to Alison, this was not the case. In the moment of my first “fieldwork encounter”, I learnt that one cannot make any assumptions.

**GAP YEARS: THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY**

The term gap year often refers to the year preceding university, but Andrew Jones’ (2004) report conducted on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), finds it more useful to classify a gap year as any period of between three months to two years outside formal education or employment. The DfES commissioned the report on gap years to assess policy issues, investigate the benefits of gap years and how equal the provision of them is for young people from different socio-economic or ethnic backgrounds. Jones estimated in 2004 that between 200,000 and 250,000 people aged sixteen to twenty-five took a gap year, remarking that this is likely to be an underestimate. Jones’ research identifies a small majority of gap year participants as female, white, middle class, from southern England, with an overrepresentation of private and grammar school backgrounds. He proposes that the diversity of young people participating in gap years is increasing. Gap years do not have a fixed format, but often contain an element of travelling abroad, short-term employment or volunteering. Jones makes a distinction between what he calls “unstructured” and “structured” gap years. Structured gap years have a purpose such as volunteering, whereas unstructured do not and, according to Jones, are thus less desirable to university admission boards or future employers.

Endeavour was one of the first organisations in the UK to provide volunteering opportunities for unskilled young people. During my fieldwork, Endeavour’s founder visited their Head Office to retell the story of the charity’s origins to the employees. He told us that Endeavour began in the early 1980s. A group of military personnel were tasked with finding a creative means to counter the unrest caused by the recession. This group interpreted events such as the Brixton riots as evidence that young people were frustrated by the lack of access to challenging opportunities. Endeavour was born as a means to provide those opportunities. Now Endeavour’s aims of developing young people remain the core part of its charitable objectives, although these continue to develop and change in other ways.
Endeavour has several variations of its core programme, known as expeditions, which include three elements. Their ten-week expeditions are split into a week’s induction training, a three-week community development project, a three-week environmental conservation project and a three-week adventure. These different projects are known as phases. Participants are allocated into different groups for each phase and complete one of each type on the “ten-weeker”. In order to be more flexible, Endeavour now also allows participants to join for one or two phases and pick the types they are most interested in. Endeavour also run a summer five-week expedition that includes a week’s induction, a three-week environmental or community phase and a week-long adventure challenge which differs from the ten-weeker adventure by including daily tasks or “challenges” that teams compete in. Endeavour also run “bespoke” programmes for schools and businesses. Endeavour’s expeditions focus on the personal development of its volunteers and each of the phases is expected to allow participants to develop and experiment with different aspects of themselves. Jones would classify it as structured because participants are volunteering and said to be “improving” themselves while doing so.

Politicians have heralded the experience of structured gap years as beneficial for crafting better citizens and more employable young people. When Jack Straw was foreign secretary, he remarked that:

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, [and] decision-making skills (Hogg 2001 cited in Simpson 2005:453).

Jones’ report (2004) advocated that the government provide funding to help more young people go on them. In 2007 the Platform2 programme (run by three organisations; Christian Aid, BUNAC and Ctrl.Alt.Shift) received funding from the government Department for International Development (DfID) to provide places for young people from lower socio-economic backgrounds to go on a gap year. This programme ended in 2010 but Endeavour received similar funding in 2009. In 2011 the new coalition government trialled an updated voluntary National Service, rebranded as “International

3 Throughout this thesis, I refer to Endeavour as a social agent that has objectives, beliefs and a purpose beyond the individuals that make it up (see also Gellner & Hirsch 2001). My research participants frequently spoke of the organisation in these terms, imbuing it with agency or identifying actions, thoughts or phrases as particularly “Endeavour[-like]”. 17
Citizen Service”, managed by structured gap year providers in the charity sector. David Cameron was quoted as saying:

International Citizen Service will not only help the world's poorest communities, but it will be a life changing experience for our young people: giving them new perspectives, greater confidence and higher aspirations.  

The Development Secretary Andrew Mitchell further commented:

This is an important opportunity for young people not only to broaden their own horizons but also to have a life changing impact on others.

Sue Heath (2007) argues that although the claims made by gap year providers are largely unsubstantiated, gap years serve as a form of distinction for young people in labour markets. Despite these positive perspectives, which might have made Alison proud to call Endeavour a gap year organisation, gap years have also suffered criticism and ridicule.

While journalists are not subject to academic rigour, I find it useful to outline their different perspectives on gap years to gauge a little of the issues arising in public discourses. Some are neutral, treating gap years as a particular form of travel, giving advice about the best organisation or how to find funding for gap years in newspapers’ travel sections (Grenby 2004; O’Connor 2000). Other think more broadly about how gap years contribute to society, perhaps creating “global citizens” (Broom 2008). The value they can add to a CV (Fearis 2004; Leach 2004) is weighed against the use of public funds to “massage” unemployment figures and keep young people off benefits (Sugden 2009). Others warn gap year volunteers of continuing colonial attitudes and appetites (Barkham 2006; Boffey 2011; Frean 2006). The gap year market is a mixture of charities and businesses. Commercial providers have come under particular fierce criticism from the voluntary sector. VSO, a long-established and prestigious volunteering charity have accused gap years of providing “volunteer tourism” or “charity tourism” (Barkham 2006). These terms refer to “spurious” or poorly prepared volunteering projects that as VSO comment are “ultimately benefiting no one apart from the travel companies that organise them” (Ward 2007).


5 http://www.dfid.gov.uk/Media-Room/News-Stories/2011/Young-people-to-make-a-difference-to-the-worlds-poorest-International-Citizen-Service-opens/
Academic analyses have tackled similar debates. Kate Simpson (2004) provides a thorough and convincing critique of “volunteer tourism”. She argues that it reinforces colonialist stereotypes and a simplistic understanding of development issues, giving young people the view that they have the skills and right to be the “solution” to the problems of the “needy” third world. A particularly strong part of Simpson’s argument is her identification of the tendency to construct poverty as absolute and only suffered by a “foreign other”. Concurrently relying on “culture” to explain difference, these representations fail to acknowledge material (I would add structural) inequalities (Simpson 2004: 687–698). Less persuasively, Eliza Marguerite Raymond and C. Michael Hall (2008) posit that volunteer tourism is more reciprocal because both parties gain, and they argue it is therefore a more beneficial and sustainable form of travel. They note that poor management by the sending organisation can cause “cross-cultural misunderstanding” (2008: 532). Katherine Tubb, who is now the director of her own volunteering charity and organiser of international development careers events advocates in her MSc thesis (2006) that volunteering can be effective if it is directed in the right way. She reviews the dominant discourse of development, arguing development’s framing as “charity” requiring technical expertise is deeply paternalistic (2006: 5). She argues that if volunteer’s motivations and narratives can shift to incorporate more “inclusive interventions of participation” volunteering has the “potential to provide a central route towards a new global community” (2006: 15, 17). Thomas Griffin (2004) questions whether there is any available evidence that volunteer tourists benefit the communities they work in. He also identifies the noticeable lack of reports from host communities about how these projects affect them. He further criticizes the lack of acknowledgement on the part of volunteers of their own power and role in continued global inequality.

Journalists have accused gap years of being the preserve of a privileged few, citing Prince William’s participation in a gap year (O’Connor 2000) as evidence of the type of young person - rich in time and funds - able to take one (Geoghegan 2005; Starmer-Smith 2011). One of the historical precedents for gap years was the Grand Tour, an activity that a similar group of well-educated, privileged young men undertook to finish their education, improve their job prospects and increase their understanding of the world (Black 1985; Griffin 2004; Heath 2007; Trease 1967). One article states that “almost half of all private-school pupils take gap years, compared with about one in five students overall” (Barkham 2006). Gap years also have the reputation for attracting a particular kind of person who is interested in parties and drinking alcohol and for whom learning about another culture or
experiencing another place are fashionable rather than meaningful. A popular YouTube spoof entitled “Gap Yah” (VMproductionsUK & The Unexpected Items 2010) plays on this stereotype, showing a rich, privileged young man “getting a sense of the awesome power of nature and the insignificance of man” while on a “spiritual cultural political exchange thing” and “chundering everywhere”.6 Young people who go on gap years dispute this characterisation. Sami Kent writes in The Guardian;

…the depiction of gap-year students as simply wanting to go abroad to get pissed and stoned on the cheap and make themselves seem worldly in front of their Abercrombie & Fitch friends is a crass generalisation (Kent 2010). 7

The culmination of these representations and criticisms has led Endeavour to want to dissociate what it does from the label of gap years. They want to build themselves the profile of a serious and credible volunteering organisation in the vein of VSO. Endeavour respects what VSO does, because just as Endeavour used to, it has an extensive screening process for its volunteers who must have qualifications and particular skills. Endeavour does not require skills, but in order that the negative interpretations of gap years do not become associated with them, they make efforts in other ways to circumvent this. Alcohol, for example, is banned.

My thesis is not concerned specifically with these debates surrounding gap years for several reasons. A focus on the debates outlined above threatened to set the parameters of investigation too narrowly. These critiques, often made through analysis of marketing material or anecdotal evidence also make assumptions about gap year providers. While these debates do not frame my analytical engagement with my ethnographic material, they were certainly present in my mind at certain times. In truth, there are aspects of Endeavour’s work that I find troubling (see chapter three), just as there are aspects that I admire. While critiques such as those provided by Simpson (2004, 2005) and April Biccum (2007) are well-argued, considered and important, they do not make the crucial last step of explaining why gap year organisations function the way they do. I feel it is paramount to understand Endeavour’s practices, including the things that troubled me about them, in context and as part of wider trends in society and prevailing political

6 Yah meaning year but to represent an upper class pronunciation of elongated vowels and chundering meaning being sick from drinking too much alcohol

7 Abercrombie & Fitch is a high-end high street clothing retailer
context. Therefore, despite Alison’s desire to remove the label of “gap year organisation” I continue to use it because Endeavour is undeniably part of that market.

**STUDYING ORGANISATIONS IN THE CHARITY SECTOR**

Endeavour is also part of the charity sector, and thereby affected by the changes within this arena. The charity sector itself shifts in response to changing societal concerns and conditions. Charting a brief history of the development of the charity sector in Britain shows how important charities have been, and why research on these organisations is important. In the second part of this introduction, I outline my approach to studying organisations, drawing on literature from the anthropology of organisations. As the sector is so entangled with the changing political economic climate, I also spend time exploring theoretical approaches to the study of neoliberalism, as the dominant ideological basis for the current British political economy. Lastly, I reflect upon how an investigation into personhood can enable us to reflect upon political economy and how it operates through citizens, employees and persons.

Matthew Hilton and James McKay (2009) estimate that in 2009 there were 170,000 charities in the UK, employing 600,000 people, plus at least double that number of volunteers. Justin Davis Smith, Colin Rochester and Rodney Hedley (1995) estimated in 1994 that there were between 230,000 and 300,000 voluntary organisations. McKay and Hilton argue that understanding the charity sector is fundamental to understanding contemporary Britain because non-governmental organisations have been at the heart of every major “socio-political initiative of the post-war period” (2009: 1);

> We need to better understand the power of NGOs…as forces impacting upon the way in which society perceives itself, conceptualises its problems, and selects the solutions with which to address them. We need to appreciate and analyse the great themes that are played out within the stories of NGOs (Hilton & McKay 2009: 3).

The development of the charity sector in the UK has gone through many permutations. These shifts are linked to the financial affluence and social stability of the country and

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8This sector has a variety of names; voluntary, third, non-governmental, charity, philanthropic, non-profit or independent. I use charity to emphasise Endeavour’s own status as such, in contrast to many other gap year providers. A registered charity in the UK has a different and specific legal status to businesses or informal voluntary or non-profit organisations (see chapter four).
these in turn affect how “the poor” are represented (Kendall & Knapp 1996). Although the sector’s main income grew from the efforts of wealthy philanthropic individuals or families in the nineteenth century, Jeremy Kendall and Martin Knapp (1996: 1) note that mutual aid and friendly societies were active from as early as the first century AD (Davis Smith et al. 1995). Throughout the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries, a series of piecemeal laws established a variety of approaches to alleviating poverty. The 1662 Act of Settlement for example, that was aimed at discouraging vagrants, ensured those in poverty could only receive aid where they were born. However, the industrial revolution and a greater level of mobile labour saw the annulment of this localised practice of aid. In 1834, the New Poor Law centralised relief. Kendall and Knapp (1996) argue that this period was characterised by a severe moralism in approaches to poverty. Reflecting this, the New Poor Law had a greater emphasis on deterrence, forcing the poor into workhouses and abolishing outdoor relief.

The number of philanthropic organisations grew at such a rate in the 19th century that by the 1850s there were many duplicate groups catering for similar causes or needs (Kendall & Knapp 1996; Loch Mowat 1961). Davis Smith, Rochester and Hedley (1995) suggest that the rapid growth was due to previous forms of charitable aid becoming ineffectual as needs increased with the population, and with industrialisation and urbanisation. According to Kendall and Knapp, the sector was chaotic and confused, there had been no major changes to the law since the 1601 Charitable Uses Act had defined charitable activity (Davis Smith et al. 1995) and a series of bills hoping to increase regulation were defeated. In 1853, the Charitable Trusts Act finally established the Charity Commission, with further legislation in 1855 and 1860 to increase its powers. The Commission was intended to redirect charitable resources more effectively, but Kendall and Knapp report that it was not wholly successful.

In 1869, due to increased fears about the deployment of resources, particularly that “undeserving” poor may be receiving aid, the Charity Organisation Society (COS) formed to coordinate and remodel charitable giving (Davis Smith et al. 1995). They developed a form of testing needs they described as “scientific charity” (Kendall & Knapp 1996; Davis Smith et al. 1995). The COS founders believed that indiscriminate charity “demoralised” individuals, in the sense that it eroded their moral sensibilities, that it could lead to fraud and encouraged pauperism (Loch Mowat 1961: 2). For instance, COS opposed the 1908 Old Age Pensions Act and the 1911 National Insurance Act because they were
indiscriminate (Davis Smith et al. 1995). Charles Loch Mowat remarks that the history of COS is “the history of an idea…that of individual responsibility” (1961: xi). It is through this idea that Loch Mowat argues COS was “a movement to reform the spirit not only of charities but society” (1961: 2). Loch Mowat relates that COS was built on the presumption of a class system, but one in which, influenced by Christian teachings, the rich accepted a duty to the poor.

Similarly to the Charity Commission, COS failed to achieve all its aims (Kendall & Knapp 1996; Loch Mowat 1961; Davis Smith et al. 1995), but this period saw sporadic individual giving draw to a close, with charities firmly established in an intermediary role between donors and beneficiaries. The 20th century saw a steady increase of state involvement in social services provision. The 1940s saw the growth of the welfare state as a series of laws meant that education, health, insurance all came under government jurisdiction (Johnson 1992; Kendall & Knapp 1996; Kramer 1981). The National Assistance Act of 1948 replaced the New Poor Law and applied a generic means test to all applicants for poverty relief (Kendall & Knapp 1996). However, this did not signal the end of the voluntary sector, which has continued to play a significant role in UK society (Hilton & McKay 2009; Johnson 1992; Kendall & Knapp 1996; Kramer 1981; Davis Smith et al. 1995). Hilton and McKay (2009) note that although in actuality many voluntary organisations continued social provision (Kramer 1981) and it was accepted that the voluntary sector complemented the state (Davis Smith et al. 1995), the post-war period saw the sector taking a greater role in contributing to political and social debates. In the 1960s for instance, a new interest and concern with the “Third World” began an international dimension to British charity with the establishment of VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) in 1958 and the expansion of Oxfam (Deakin 1995). However, the voluntary sector reverted to pre-war characteristics in the 1970s, as I explain below (Johnson 1992; Kramer 1981; Davis Smith et al. 1995).

Norman Johnson’s (1992) account assesses the role of the voluntary sector in 1945 and the early 1990s. The 1940s saw increased government social provision, while in the 1990s, the government sought to reduce social provision in favour of support from the voluntary sector.

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9 McKay and Hilton (2009) note in particular that Dr Barnado’s provision of children’s homes and the Salvation Army’s supply of shelter and accommodation continued mostly unchanged. As another example, in the mid-1950s, 92% of local authorities relied on voluntary organisations to support deaf people (Kramer 1981).
sector.\textsuperscript{10} This trend began because of the oil crisis in the 1970s and the following world recession, but most significantly was due to the ideas of the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s (Johnson 1992). Ralph M. Kramer (1981) notes that the 1970 Local Authority Social Services Act, which reorganised the previously independent children’s, welfare and health services under one local administration also formalised reliance on voluntary bodies. The 1978 Wolfenden Committee’s report “The Future of Voluntary Organisations” enshrined the role of the voluntary organisations as one of the four sets of institutions for assuaging social needs, the others being the state, informal support from families or neighbours and the commercial private sector (Harris et al. 2000). Margaret Harris, Colin Rochester and Peter Halfpenny (2000) attribute the demarcation of voluntary organisations into a unique sector to the Wolfenden report. The report argued that state welfare provision had degraded morality, that it was ineffective, unresponsive and too bureaucratic (Deakin 1995). Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny argue that this “mixed economy of welfare” approach was a key part of Thatcher’s policy to “roll back the state”. The development of the charity sector then, adapts and moulds itself to changes in the state.

There is a variety of anthropological approaches to organisations. Studying organisational “culture” is one approach that has proved popular with organisations themselves. Gideon Kunda’s (2010) ethnography of a technology company explores how the corporation pursued a particular “corporate culture” as a means to govern and manage their employees’ behaviour. Erving Goffman (1961) examines organisations such as prisons or mental health clinics as “total institutions”, places that are isolated from the rest of society. Helena Wulff’s (1998) book on a ballet company and Richard Handler and Eric Gable’s (1997) study of a museum town similarly describe organisations that produce a complete social world, in some manner distinct or separated from society. Other approaches detail the daily workings within organisations, seeking to analyse that which is usually ignored, such as “work” itself (Born 2004; Harper 1998; Jackall 2009; Macdonald 2002; Orr 1996; Riles 2006). These ethnographies explore the workings of organisations to understand what matters to staff and how the organisation functions.

\textsuperscript{10} Equally, in 2011, David Cameron’s call to the Big Society demands that citizens should rely on themselves. For example, the recent closure of several local libraries in Manchester was agreed on the basis that local people would be supported to develop their own book exchanges.
While my research studies the daily workings, processes and practices of Endeavour, I want to understand how these are influenced by and connected to society. Other authors have sought to explore how organisations are part of society and how they use publicly circulating ideas and concepts to inform their work (Bornstein 2005; Davis 1997; Nauta 2006). Erica Bornstein’s (2005) work on faith-based NGOs, analyses the role religion serves in how projects are “received, interpreted and accepted...planned, conceptualised, motivated and instituted” (2005: 2). She spent time at WorldVision’s offices in the US and followed their “field staff” to projects in Zimbabwe. Bornstein argues that transnational organisations are located in multiple places, and require a multi-sited approach such as that advocated by George Marcus (1995, 1998).

Following Bornstein and Marcus, I designed my research to follow the process of making a gap year from the marketing, fundraising and recruitment in Endeavour’s Head Office to the implementation and management of expeditions in Central America. In doing so I explore the crossovers between ideas and practices, how these drive the aims and practice of Endeavour as an organisation. I spent six months in Endeavour’s Head Office in London, working alongside employees and learning about their daily work practices. I also spent seven months in Central America, one of Endeavour’s expedition destinations. The majority of my time was spent investigating Endeavour’s Costa Rican fieldbase, exploring their volunteer training, administration, logistics and volunteer management. I also included a mixture of short and more extended visits to several projects across Costa Rica and Nicaragua to understand how projects functioned. This multi-sited fieldwork allowed me to understand the organisation in its multiple locations and the relationships between these different sites. In seeking to understand the organisation, it is vital to understand the political economic context in which it operates. The changes to the voluntary sector as neoliberalism has taken a greater hold on policies in Britain have significantly affected how Endeavour operates.

**Neoliberalism and the Conditions of Society**

Kate Simpson (2005) argues that the gap year industry is a neoliberal market place. What does this statement mean and why is neoliberalism a useful concept to deploy in an investigation of the work of a gap year organisation? Neoliberalism has been used as the term to describe two parallel shifts, one in the relationship between labour and capital and the other in the relationship between the economy and the state (Gledhill 2004; Ortner 2011). Sherry Ortner (2011) explains that in the first shift, often referred to as Post-
Fordism (Harvey 1989), protection for workers was abolished to serve the needs of capital. Labour became “dispensable, disposable, and replaceable”. Short-term contracts, outsourcing and flexible work regimes became the norm. The second refers to the state deregulation of the economy, allowing markets to function without restriction (Ortner 2011). Both points will be expanded below. Neoliberalism is also associated with the “roll back” of state welfare provision, as identified above, and with the increase in liberal emphasis on individual freedom (Harvey 2005; Peck & Tickell 2002). Studies that use the concept of neoliberalism have therefore described a combination of state practices and policies (Gledhill 2004, 2005; Graeber 2009a; Harvey 2005; Narotzky & Smith 2006; Peck & Tickell 2002), how these have changed the labour market and forms of labour (Gusterson & Besteman 2009; Lyon-Callo 2002; Ong 2006) and how this is connected to new techniques of governing citizens (Barry et al. 1996; Biccum 2007; Cruikshank 1996; Hyatt 2002; Lyon-Callo 2008). Elsewhere these phenomena have been described as late capitalism (Lash & Urry 1987; Sennett 2006). Ortner argues that

If late capitalism and neoliberalism are two names for more or less the same set of changes in the capitalist system, the terminological shift from the first to the second signals – I suggest a change in the story or narrative in which the changes in question are embedded. The phrase “late capitalism,” which was the dominant term in the 1980s and 90s, was embedded in a narrative of “globalization,” a concept that had positive as well as negative aspects, while “neoliberalism,” which has become the dominant term since about 2000, is embedded in a much darker narrative, a story of a crusade powered by ideology and/or greed, to tilt the world political economy even more in favor of the dominant classes and nations (Ortner 2011). 11

Some commentators now interpret what was previously described as shifts in capitalist approaches and state policies as a broader ideological project. The texts cited above contribute to an on-going critique of neoliberalism, attributing increased inequality and unequal distribution of wealth to it, and others go further to make the case for neoliberalism as an intentional project to increase the power of economic elites (Graeber 2009a; Harvey 2005).

The state practices characterised as neoliberal constitute a “theory of political economic practices” (Harvey 2005: 2) that rests on the doctrine that individual freedom coupled with private property rights, free markets and free trade best serve human progression and well-

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11 As an online article, Ortner’s piece does not contain page numbers
being. It maintains that trade barriers be reduced so that each nation can utilise its own particular “competitive advantages” such as cheap labour or natural resources in a single global market (Graeber 2009a: 81). This doctrine attempts therefore to extend market logic into all aspects of life (Gledhill 2004). The role of the state is to secure the circumstances whereby these practices can flourish, but not to intervene once they are established as it can never be free of biased interests, nor gather enough information to anticipate prices or changes in markets (Harvey 2005: 2). This vision also dictates that markets can play an influential role in alleviating poverty. Government spending on social services is interpreted as interfering with the workings of the market (Graeber 2009a: 81), and the state is vilified for causing dependency among the poor through its support (Hyatt 2002). Therefore, state social welfare provision is discarded in favour of a combination of market-based institutions and non-governmental organisations (Gledhill 2004: 333).

Deregulation, privatisation and marketization are therefore associated with the neoliberal label.

Deregulation has had a profound effect upon the labour market. Hugh Gusterson and Catherine Besteman typify neoliberalism as “the aggressive, increasingly unregulated form of capitalism that has produced insecurity for a growing majority around the world in the contemporary era of globalization and high technology” (2009: 4). This “new economic order” forged in an era of deindustrialisation and failing power of the unions saw an increase in automated work, outsourcing, new financial instruments and faster flows of capital, which caused an increased disparity of income through declining average wages coupled with longer working hours, and greater levels of debt (2009: 4). Their book centres on the concept of insecurity as the predominant feature of current American life. As Aihwa Ong (2006: 173) notes, facing this uncertainty requires workers to become calculative, self-enterprising, acquiring skills and aptitudes to build their “human capital”. Employees must be “flexible” because these skills can become redundant quickly as technologies develop (Gledhill 2004: 340). In the workplace, it is necessary to form and dissolve relationships abruptly as work becomes organised around short-term project teams (Sennett 2006). Harvey argues that the “willingness to treat other human beings instrumentally and discard them when convenient is one of the hallmarks…of the neoliberal American workplace” (2005: 14).

Harvey, deepening his story, moves on to describe how neoliberalism has become a “mode of hegemonic discourse [that] has pervasive effects on ways of thought to the point
where it has become incorporated into the common-sense way many of us interpret, live in, and understand the world” (2005: 3). Similarly, the influence of Foucault on Barry, Osborne and Rose leads them to conceptualise neoliberalism as “part of the fabric of our ways of thinking about and acting upon one another and ourselves” (1996: 7). Harvey argues that neoliberalism has become dominant because of its appeal to individual freedom and choice as the fundamental values of society. Free markets and free trade supposedly assure these “compelling and seductive ideals” (Harvey 2005: 5). In presenting data that shows a correlation between increases in income disparity and neoliberal policies, Harvey argues this “utopian project” serves as justification and screen for the real intention of restoring power to economic elites (2005: 19).  

Agreeing with Harvey’s argument that neoliberalism represents a particular form of power, David Graeber notes “a crucial element of neoliberalism: that, while the poor are to be held responsible for poor economic decisions (real or imagined), the rich must never be” (2009a: 84). Graeber additionally shows how neoliberal ideas have enabled an administrative system of global scope through mechanisms such as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

By the 1990s one can genuinely speak of a system of global governance operating on neoliberal lines…it is the first administrative system in human history that actually has the power to enforce decisions on a planetary scale, since, after all, no empire ever spanned the entire world (Graeber 2009a: 85–6).

Graeber is not referring here to neoliberalism as a single global narrative, which as Ong (2006) points out, takes different forms, but the ways in which neoliberal ideologies become realised through administrative processes. He represents it as a series of tiers. Money traders involved in currency trading and financial speculation act as “an enormous disciplining mechanism”, able to “instantly pull money out of “emerging markets” seen as betraying neoliberal orthodoxy” (Graeber 2009a: 85). Transnational corporations and various trade bureaucracies such as the IMF, the WTO, the EU, NAFTA have the power to insist on particular policies that are amenable to the transnationals or countries run the risk of being refused foreign aid. Together with the increasing numbers of international and local NGOs providing services previously undertaken by the state, these organisations “constitute a single huge, de facto, administrative system”, or otherwise known as a bureaucracy (Graeber 2009a: 86). Graeber notes that the employees of this enormous

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12 The question remains as to whether class power was ever really lost, but Harvey is largely referring to the Reagan and Thatcher era when many of the protections union workers had were dissolved.
bureaucracy are the ones who reap the benefits from neoliberalism. Barry, Osborne and Rose (1996) also argue that the development of techniques of auditing, accounting and management – the practices that make up a bureaucracy – are fundamental to establishing expertise that enables markets in the public services.

Gledhill describes the rise of audit culture as one paradox of neoliberalism noting that although auditing is outsourced to private companies, its demand for systematic assessment actually represents a significant continued involvement with the bureaucratic state. Although states have deregulated labour and markets, and withdrawn social support, they have never completely withdrawn from these areas, rather how they intervene has changed (Gledhill 2004; Kingfisher & Maskovsky 2008; Peck & Tickell 2002). Descriptions of various forms of governmentality have therefore formed the crux of several anthropological approaches to neoliberalism. Kingfisher and Maskovsky argue that in this sense neoliberalism has helped to “make the crucial link between the broad economic changes often referred to as “globalization” and the actual ideological and political practices of governance that have prompted or emerged from those changes” (2008: 116).

Susan Hyatt's (2002) ethnography shows how deeply entangled the state is even with realms supposedly outside its remit, such as the creation of civil society. She uses neoliberalism to refer to new strategies of governance. She focuses on volunteerism as a new technology of governing that reconfigures the relationships between the state and citizen. The state’s role, instead of providing social services is to empower citizens to “rely on themselves and their own innate abilities” (2002: 202). Withdrawal of support is justified as the state is “vilified” for causing dependency which prevents citizens from “self-realisation” (Hyatt 2002: 223). Although civil society is conceptualised as an autonomous space, Hyatt argues it becomes the means of governing citizens by co-opting existing structures of support into low-level bureaucracy and enforcing “professional” conduct, which undermines their norms of reciprocity and loyalty. Susana Narotzky and Gavin Smith similarly note how neoliberal outsourcing of governance to markets and other organisations such as NGOs creates a “marketised civil society” whereby interrelations are recast as “contracts” (2006: 23).

Neoliberalism is often represented as an epochal change but it is essentially a particular manifestation of capitalism that exploits liberal doctrines. Although Harvey argues that individual freedom is the promise of neoliberalism, he neglects the fact that these ideas
derive from earlier theories of liberalism such those propounded by John Stuart Mill. In “On Liberty” (1982), Mill argued that the most innovative ideas come from individuals. For him, a well-developed human is one who focuses on forming their individuality, rather than capitulating to mass opinion or social norms. Given this, he argued individual behaviour that does not cause harm to anyone else should be outside state control. “Self-regarding behaviour”, as he termed it, is not an acceptable realm of government intervention. Just as the COS argued that charity could create dependency Mill felt individuals would become better, more reliant citizens if left to take care of themselves. With too much state intervention, citizens would not become active and ambitious. Unlike the approach of much of the nineteenth century charity however, and much of the neoliberal policies (Hyatt 2002; Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003; Lyon-Callo 2002, 2008), Mill argued that the state should not be able to control individuals, even for their own good. He argued that if their actions harmed no one they should be free to say and do what they desired. While this argument seems difficult to counter, I would argue that there is no such thing as a wholly self-regarding action, as persons are the product of the relations they form. For example, the desire to forego having a family to pursue a career for instance, is derived from the social status this choice may infer. Ethnographic studies concerned with neoliberalism have explored the detrimental effects of its individualising tendency. Rather than representing a form of greater freedom, they argue that neoliberalism has resulted in new forms of governance over individuals (Cruikshank 1996; Desjarlais 1997; Lyon-Callo 2002, 2008).

Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008: 117) assert that neoliberalism attempts to transform how persons, and relationships between individual and the market and the state are constituted. The freedom that Harvey (2005) argues is the promise of neoliberalism is restricted to an individual right to participate in markets, and of markets to function without regulation. The very notion of individuality masks the ways in which we are influenced, controlled, managed and shaped via our relationships with one another (for examples see Edwards 2000; Evans 2007, 2010; Toren 2006). This reification of the individual is what enables policies to be designed without reference to the structural, material and social relations that all persons are situated in. As writers such as Michel Foucault (1977, 2007) and Antonio Gramsci (Crehan 2002; Gramsci 1971) showed, the intricacies of how thoughts and actions are shaped through power and social relations is far more complex than Mill allows.
Foucault’s notion of governmentality has often been utilised in studies of neoliberalism to explore, as Ainhoa Montoya explains “how neoliberalism works through regulatory techniques that act upon individuals through discourses and practices of freedom rather than coercion and discipline” (forthcoming). Foucault’s lecture “Security, Territory, Population” charts the history of governmentality, a phenomenon he ascribes to a shift in the “objective of the exercise of power” (2007: 92). In the art of government, or governmentality, “those whom one governs are people, individuals or groups” (2007: 122) rather than a territory or principality. He argues this approach derives from the Christian Church and the metaphor of the shepherd who cares for a flock by tending to each individual sheep. “The shepherd must keep his eye on all and on each” (2007: 128).

Rather than a sovereign, whose interest in the exercise of power is to maintain his hold over his principality and territory, and only consequent ly its inhabitants, the art of government has as its target “men and things”;

…a complex of men and things…men in their relationships, bonds and complex involvement with things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence, and of course the territory with its borders, qualities, climate, dryness, fertility and so on. ‘Things’ are men in their relations with things like customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking. Finally they are men in their relationships with things like accidents, misfortunes, famine, epidemics and deaths (Foucault 2007: 96).

The purpose of government is to arrange these things, for a “suitable end”, which Foucault argues is the improvement of the population (see also Murray Li 2007). Because the “complex of men and things” is multifarious, these is also a “plurality” of suitable ends (Foucault 2007: 96, 99). Foucault argues that as government is concerned with the proper arrangement or disposition of things, imposing laws on men is not sufficient. Tactics must be employed to arrange things “so that this or that end may be achieved through a certain number of means” (Foucault 2007: 99). It is in this sense that the concept of governmentality presents an understanding of power as diffuse. Rose et al argues

…instead of seeing any single body—such as the state—as responsible for managing the conduct of citizens, this perspective recognizes that a whole variety of authorities govern in different sites, in relation to different objectives. Hence, a second set of questions emerges: Who governs what? According to what logics? With what techniques? Toward what ends? As an analytical perspective, then, governmentality is far from a theory of power, authority, or even of governance. Rather, it asks particular questions of the phenomena that it seeks to understand, questions amenable to precise answers through empirical inquiry (Rose et al. 2006: 84–5).
To take a governmentality approach then, is to focus on the diverse “tactics and techniques” (Foucault 2007: 106) of government that shapes persons. As Tania Murray Li puts it, “At the level of population it is not possible to coerce every individual and regulate their actions in minute detail. Rather government operates by educating desires and configuring habits, aspirations and beliefs” (Murray Li 2007: 5). She combines Foucault’s notion of governmentality with Gramsci’s concept of hegemony to provide a nuanced account of how power operates. Vincent Lyon-Callo also combines these two theorists arguing that “Foucault offers theoretical insights about how concrete actions produce the conceptual frameworks within which humans are made into subjects and how the processes of governmentality work together to produce hegemony…how concrete practices and thoughts produce particular human subjects” (2008: 17).

Gramsci, like Foucault, sought to complicate power and in particular show how it is far more intricate than a dichotomy composed of resistance and domination. However, Gramsci was adamant that “there really do exist rulers and ruled, leaders and led” (1971: 144). Kate Crehan’s close reading of Gramsci reveals that hegemony refers to a “whole field of power” (2002: 172), not just beliefs and ideas. Although hegemony is often used as a synonym for ideology, she argues that the concept goes beyond this (2002: 174). Hegemony does not merely describe a particular form of power, Crehan propounds that Gramsci’s real intention for hegemony is “as a way of approaching the problem of how power is produced and reproduced” (2002: 166). It is “…an approach to the question of power, that in its exploration of empirical realities – how power is lived in particular times and places – refuses to privilege either ideas or material realities, seeing these as always entangled, always interacting with each other” (2002: 200). For Gramsci, power is a continual negotiation between rulers and ruled, in which the rulers must win the “consent” of the ruled to lead. This is in part achieved by incorporating the interests of the ruled into the ruling group.

…the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed… (Gramsci 1971: 161).

Equally, the application of power over the ruled is masked, control is not obvious, and instead seems to be a “free expression of their own interest and desires” (Steven Jones 2006: 4). For Gramsci, it is not that the ruled are unthinkingly co-opted into the schemes of the powerful, or that they are “dupes” (Steven Jones 2006: 48).
Gramsci often utilised a distinction between civil society and political society to explore the different components of power. He related civil society, “the ensemble of organisms commonly called ‘private’” (1971: 12), to hegemony, the “spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group” (1971: 12). The other side of power, he related to political society to denote the “apparatus of the state coercive power” (1971: 12), the bureaucratic and legal functions of the state that could directly intervene in people’s lives. Gramsci uses this distinction to illustrate that there are multiple modes of power operating; ideological, which garners the consent of the ruled, and practical, which manifests as coercion. However, Gramsci argues that the ideology and practices of the state, civil and political society should be understood as deeply intertwined: “… a distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological” (1971: 160; see also Fontana 2008; Howson & Smith 2008).

The state is the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance, but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules (Gramsci 1971: 244).

Gramsci and Foucault share an understanding of power as diffuse, complex and multifarious. They are both useful for thinking with because they offer an approach to power based on the empirical that seeks to unpick the practices, tactics, techniques and ideas that shape persons. It is these insights that I take forward in my own work as I focus on the entanglements of practices and ideas within my ethnographic context to understand the current ideological movement of the dominant group – neoliberalism. However, neoliberalism is not simply an ideology that informs policies that affect people’s lives; it operates in multiple ways through individuals, groups, policies and practices via diverse tactics.

In seeking to carve a space for a particular anthropological analysis of neoliberalism, Hoffman, Dehart and Collier (2006) question Harvey’s depiction of “neoliberalism’s coherence as a hegemonic project, and its stability as a predictable “package” of policies, ideologies and political interests,” (2006: 9). While I would disagree with their reading of Harvey, who I understand to be showing how insidiously pervasive neoliberalism has become rather than arguing it only materialises in one particular way, the strength of ethnography is in being able to describe and explain particularities that may or may not
also be part of more general trends. Aihwa Ong and Stephen J. Collier (2005) emphasise that neoliberalism entails “novel relationships with diverse value orientations and political positions”. Their book investigates the “little lines of mutation that disarticulate and rearticulate elements, forming new assemblages”. Karen Ho (2009a) also emphasises the need to avoid undue abstraction of broad concepts such as neoliberalism and focus upon the everyday and concrete manifestations and effects of power relations. Rather than seeing neoliberalism as a culture or structure, Ong (2006) pursues the “mobile calculative techniques of governing” that it engenders. However, as Hoffman, DeHart and Collier note, anthropological studies that focus upon the effects of neoliberalism have a tendency to carry an implicit understanding of what neoliberalism is rather than scrutinizing it, meaning that these studies are concerned with neoliberalism instead of representing an anthropology of neoliberalism (2006: 9).

The problem with studies that are “concerned with” neoliberalism is that it can become a default concept used as a stand in for explanation. Biccum (2007) falls prey to this in her analysis of Live 8. Live 8 was a string of music concerts held prior to the G8 summit in 2005 to raise money and awareness about increasing aid for poorer countries. Live 8 promoted the Make Poverty History campaign that lobbied rich governments to commit to aid spending. Bob Geldof was the high profile spokesperson, who was also prominent in the earlier Live Aid concert in 1985. Biccum argues that these events are mere spectacles, successful only in marketing a particular form of development that she argues further and legitimises the “neoliberal agenda” (Biccum 2007: 1112). While her damning analysis stands out as one of the few critiques of charity and the ways it can be manipulated or co-opted beyond its stated aims, she does not explain what a neoliberal agenda entails in this context. This weakens the impact of her analysis.

Hoffman, DeHart and Collier seek to deal with the weakness of Biccum’s paper by calling for contextual explanations of neoliberalism. However, their analysis founders in the intricate specificities of individual fieldsites. It is not enough to produce a record of the myriad permutations of neoliberalism in each context. For me, this approach is still bound by a concern with neoliberalism rather than an interrogation of it. Peck and Tickell (2002: 382) caution against studies that focus “excessively” on the specific manifestations of neoliberalism and identify a need to recognise the “extralocal project” of neoliberalism without naturalizing or exogenizing it.
… we propose a processual conception of neoliberalization as both an “out there” and an “in here” phenomenon whose effects are necessarily variegated and uneven, but the incidence and diffusion of which may present clues to a pervasive “metalogic” (Peck & Tickell 2002: 382–383).

Harvey, for instance, is keen to show neoliberalism’s “uneven geographical development” and how local manifestations are related to broader trends (2005: 87).

Pursuing a similar balance, Kingfisher and Maskovsky (2008) aim to determine the “limits of neoliberalism”. For them, these depend upon the specific categorization of neoliberalism; they identify three. 1) For those influenced by Marxism, such as Harvey, the limits are the “unevenness of the global capitalist system or the ability of the subordinated, productive and subaltern classes to contest the terms of their exploitation and exclusion” (Kingfisher & Maskovsky 2008: 118). 2) For those that study governmentality, influenced by Foucault, limits are “discussed in terms of the geographical and institutional unevenness of these processes of subjectification and reterritorialization” (2008: 118–119). 3) Kingfisher and Maskovsky differentiate this from Ong’s approach, which draws on aspects of governmentality as having a particular focus on “contingency, ambiguity and instability” (2008: 120). Their approach combines elements of all three of these approaches to specify the limits of neoliberalism, which they represent as the “flip side” of Gledhill’s (2004) characterisation of the “apparent success” of neoliberalism as a diffuse and pervasive “system of power”. They argue that it is important to recognise that neoliberalism is not always triumphant. Ong presents an obfuscating explanation that even “exceptions” to neoliberalism can become part of and entwined with neoliberalism. Her ethnographic material does not get close enough to the ground to explicate exactly what she means by this statement. Clearly, it is contradictory, and this seems to be her point, that even that which first appears as exceptions to the neoliberal project can still work to further neoliberal goals.

Kingfisher and Maskovsky’s attempt to destabilise and question the pervasiveness of neoliberalism to highlight agency, adaptation and variety forms part of their analytical decision to focus on the concrete. They assert that they want to move past thinking about neoliberalism as a “thing that acts in the world” (2008: 118), as a “unitary external structural force”, characterised by policies and discourses that work on states, societies and individuals from above and whose agency becomes framed as acquiescence or resistance (2008: 120). In moving away from the abstract, they have a three-pronged
method for interrogating neoliberalism by treating it as a cultural formation, focusing on power and looking at governing practices. Through this neoliberalism can be explored not as an unchanging system or a fixed package but as a set of meanings and practices that relate “to the constitution of proper personhood, markets and the state” (2008: 122). It encourages “a set of questions: who does what, by what means, to what ends and with what institutional effects” and directs attention to the “dynamic and contested process” of governing (2008: 122). Kingfisher and Maskovsky argue this will “transcend a simplistic, totalizing narrative of marketization, privatization, individualization, deregulation and the retreat of the state” (2008: 122). The questions that Kingfisher and Maskovsky pose are useful and illuminating, particularly for thinking with ethnographic material because they are less abstract. However, there is a danger that an analysis (and therefore potential critiques) of wealth and power, how these are produced and maintained through capitalist relations of the appropriation of labour – which is what the structural adjustments that have come to be known as neoliberalism aim to facilitate – becomes lost due to an excessive focus on minutiae. This would I feel, be a loss we can ill afford.

There is a careful line to tread here between creating a litany of examples of different assemblages of neoliberalism and an overly abstracted concept. Similarly, an extensive focus on the successes or failures of neoliberalism to function in particular places misses the usefulness of the term. As Peck and Tickell note;

> Even if it may be wrong-headed to characterize neoliberalization as some actorless force-field of extralocal pressures and disciplines—given what we know about the decisive purposive interventions of think-tanks, policy elites, and experts, not to mention the fundamental role of state power itself in the (re)production of neoliberalism—as an ongoing ideological project neoliberalism is clearly more than the sum of its (local institutional) parts. (Peck & Tickell 2002: 401)

But equally it is important not to take the term for granted, “as if it explains anything in and of itself, and rather to treat it as something that needs to be explained in particular places and with reference to particular peoples, territories, states and cultural formations” (Kingfisher & Maskovsky 2008: 123–124).

While I think it important to interrogate the term, part of its usefulness is that it can aid in the description of broader trends and add another dimension to ethnographic description. For me, the interesting aspect of neoliberalism is its use as an analytical frame for connecting economic and labour practices, government policies, governing and auditing
practices with understandings of what and how persons, employees, citizens, states and relationships should be like. I see its ambiguity as a strength, allowing a dialogic approach between, not as Peck and Tickell (2002) characterise it as “out-there” and “in-here”, which perhaps binds neoliberalism to place too tightly, but between practices and ideas. This draws on Kingfisher and Maskovsky's (2008) desire to move beyond the binary agency/structure approach to neoliberalism to consider it instead as a process produced by people in their relationships with one another, through their ideas about the world and with broader changes to the economic and governing landscapes. In using the concept of neoliberalism in these terms, my contribution to the anthropological literature is to explain how neoliberal ideas and practices impinge on how Endeavour imagines persons and how it seeks to make them in this image.

**WHAT IS A PERSON?**

My theoretical understanding of personhood derives from the work of Marcel Mauss and Meyer Fortes. Mauss (1985) sought to denaturalise the idea of the person and explore the social history and trajectory of this concept. In particular he aimed to show how the notion of the self is recent and that it is socially constructed and historically contingent. The category of the self, he says; “Far from existing as the primordial innate idea, clearly engraved since Adam in the innermost depths of our being, it continues here slowly, and almost right up to our own time, to be built upon, to be made clearer and more specific, becoming identified with self-knowledge and the psychological consciousness” (1985: 20). I argue therefore that the notion of the self is itself a culturally specific form of personhood rather than an innate or natural phenomenon.

Using Mauss’ understanding of personhood as a social product Meyer Fortes (1987) argues that “every critical feature of the social structure is reflected in the definition of the person” (Fortes 1987: 283), the person is “the microcosm of the social order” (1987: 286). Using this insight and a theoretical approach to personhood as created by society through social relations, my thesis seeks to explore how Endeavour shapes persons and show how the desirable attributes Endeavour attempts to develop in persons are derived from the social order.

Fortes seeks to investigate the concept of the person, and the “conceptual scheme” that surrounds it, through people’s actions (Fortes 1987: 248). For instance, Fortes shows how different funeral practices equate to the conference of personhood on an individual. He
argues that because personhood is bestowed by society, it can even be given to non-human objects. He describes how the Tallensi believe that crocodiles in a sacred pool are their ancestors and therefore give them proper funeral rites. While the notion of exploring cultural ideas through activities or practices might seem generically anthropological, I want to emphasise it as my approach. I do so to highlight that I understand ideas and practices to inform one another iteratively but also to sometimes be contradictory. I argue in this thesis that although neoliberal ideas about personhood have come to have great influence over the ideas (and practices) at Endeavour, these do not fully encompass how persons are in practice. Following Strathern (Strathern et al. 1989), the notion of the individual, while it sits centre stage in neoliberal ideology and in Endeavour’s practices, masks the relationships that make up persons.

Mauss and Fortes distinguish two aspects to personhood; the outer and inner or objective and subjective. The outer or objective aspect of personhood is that which is “socially generated and culturally defined”. The inner relates to the experience or awareness of being a social person, “how the individual, as actor, knows himself to be – or not to be – the person he is expected to be” (Fortes 1987: 250, 251). Fortes notes that enquiries into personhood can approach it in either way, looking at persons as bearers of personhood or looking at the social expectations of persons. Fortes analyses moments and practices that fuse these two aspects together. Similarly, Desjarlais proposes a critical phenomenology which also seeks to incorporate cultural and political forces into an investigation of experience. In his ethnography he notes...

...any attempt to build effective theories of experience is complicated by the fact that people’s lives can entail very different ways of being. The category of experience is riddled with cultural assumptions, political tensions, pragmatic moves, rhetorical pitches and subjective vicissitudes (Desjarlais 1997: 10).

Desjarlais offers a critique of anthropology that upholds experience as the way to be “nearer” to people’s lives and prioritises “felt realities” over “cultural categories” (1997: 12). He argues that conceptualising experience as a “uniquely authentic domain” risks the loss of questions about the “social production of that domain” (1997: 12). Desjarlais seeks to readdress this problem and argues that...

...experience is not a primordial existential given but rather a historically and culturally constituted process predicated on certain ways of being in the world. Experience is the result of specific cultural articulations of selfhood (namely, a
sense of self as possessing depth, interiority, unity, stability and the capacity for transcendence) as well as certain social and technological conditions that foster and legitimate that sense of self (Desjarlais 1997: 13).

I approach experience as one of the ways through which personhood is created rather than as a wholly subjective reality. Therefore, rather than analysing gap year participants experiences, I focus instead on the ways in which Endeavour’s narratives, ideas and practices shape participants, based on Endeavour’s concepts of personhood. My ethnography seeks to understand what kind of person Endeavour is seeking to produce and how it attempts to do so.

The anthropological literature on personhood falls into two fields. One deals with ideas about individual/relational modes of personhood (Carsten 2004; Conklin & Morgan 1996; Kondo 1990; Marre & Bestard 2009; McHugh 1989; Spiro 1993). This division drew on the now discredited dichotomy between “the West” and “the Rest”. I argue that while the notion of the individual is of utmost importance to the continuing ideological hegemony of neoliberalism and of ethnographic resonance, it is a problematic concept because it masks and obscures the relationships that go into making up persons (Strathern et al. 1989). The second field considers how personhood is acquired, whether it is a given status from, or before birth, whether it must be accrued gradually throughout their life or a combination of these attitudes (Carsten 2004; Conklin & Morgan 1996; Edwards 2000; Fortes 1987; Hockey & James 1993).

I have found the work of Gillian Evans (2010) and Christina Toren (2006), who draw on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (1991), extremely useful for thinking with and for pushing further the debates concerning personhood. These texts explore the ways in which people become who they are. This is helpful because this is also the core component of Endeavour’s notion of personal development. Lave and Wenger argue that learning is about becoming a full participating member of social life rather than the internalisation of knowledge or information.

We emphasize the significance of shifting the analytic focus from the individual as learner to learning as participation in the social world, and from the concept of cognitive process to the more-encompassing view of social practice (Lave & Wenger 1991: 43).

One way to think of learning is as the historical production, transformation, and change of persons (Lave & Wenger 1991: 51).
Toren (2006) and Evans (2010) argue that all persons, all human beings, make themselves and make sense of the world in situated relations with one another.

We are individually social and socially individual, we are social beings in our very nature and it is because we are that the history of our relations with others inform who we are as particular persons (Toren 2006: 207)

Evans (2010) argues that the possibilities for what a child can become are dependent on how their peers, families and society imagine these possibilities. How they are situated therefore, in relationships with those around them determines what they can become. Their process of becoming is enacted through their being situated. Using these perspectives, I build an analysis of Endeavour’s concept of personhood to explore the ways in which personhood connects with, contrasts and informs neoliberalism.

ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS
This thesis is structured as follows. Chapter one, “Change as Development in a Flexible Organisation” shows how the changing economic landscape forced Endeavour to become flexible, constantly re-spinning their work and redefining their purpose. I argue that the demands of neoliberalism have shaped the organisational structure of Endeavour and its employees. The gap year market requires Endeavour to be flexible, responsive and continually developing. The economic crisis in 2009 led to several redundancies and consequentially a series of structural adjustments. The flexibility required of employees due to these changes causes a sense of transience and instability that affected their daily work practice. Although literature from the anthropology of organisations and on neoliberalism has shown how flexibility is valued over knowledge in “flexible organisations” (Martin 1994; Sennett 2006), at Endeavour, experience is seen as vital to the continued survival of the organisation. To counter precariousness, employees deploy the concept of “development” which reframes changes into a coherent and stable progression that draws the organisation’s history and future together. Experience of expeditions and specific “Endeavour knowledge” allows employees to make changes while preserving the essence of the “Endeavour magic”. While flexibility is necessary for the organisation, employees create a narrative that values strategic growth based upon experience and knowledge, upholding these traits as also necessary components of persons.
Chapter two “Employability and Flexible Persons” begins to build an argument towards understanding Endeavour’s notion of personhood, showing how personhood can be a status but is also a process of becoming. Using the trope of “employability”, this chapter draws parallels between depictions of the neoliberal labour market and life on expedition. Expedition life compels volunteers to be flexible and imagines them as being on a journey of continual personal development. This resonates with Emily Martin’s (1994) work on flexibility in the workplace. The way expeditions operate means that persons must learn how to cement and dissolve relationships quickly and to cope with instability and change. Personal development signifies that to become proper persons who are employable volunteers must engage in a constant process of learning how to become themselves.

Chapter two draws inferences from the way the employment market functions to what prospective employees are expected to be like. I argue that the skills volunteers develop on expedition and how they are expected to behave prepares them for a neoliberal labour market that exerts similar pressures upon workers.

Chapter three investigates one of Endeavour’s alumni programmes, “The Global Ambassador Programme”. This programme received funding from DfID to increase “development awareness” amongst Endeavour’s venturers and volunteer staff. The chapter considers the relationship between the organisation and the state, as well as how the auditing criterion that is tied to this government funding shapes what the programme can be. In a neat example of the third sector stepping in to take the place of a rolled back state, through this programme, Endeavour becomes a direct mediator for the state by promoting its messages and desired practices of citizenship to its ambassadors. This alumni programme highlights how the drive to create civil society functions as a further means to govern citizens’ conduct.

In chapter four “Charity vs. Business” I explore the moral weight that charity holds for Endeavour’s volunteers, employees and for the organisation as a whole. Charity is represented as something “worthwhile” that gives meaning to the lives of those who take part in it. Volunteers and some employees draw a direct distinction between charity and business, holding them as morally opposed. For other employees, the lines are less clear, and I show how Endeavour has had to professionalise and become “business-like” in order to compete in the gap year market. Extending my critique from chapter three that explores how Endeavour acts as a mediator for the state, I show how through its desire to regulate the exchanges that pass through it, Endeavour also takes on a “state-like” function.
Chapter five “The Importance of Being Silly” demonstrates the importance of humour and other silly activities on expedition. This chapter reflects on the variety of functions that this silly behaviour plays, and considers the significance of this for Endeavour’s concept of personhood. Silliness is a serious matter; humour, joking, banter, dressing up and skit performances all function as means to create sociality through shared experience and to cultivate traits such as self-awareness, positivity and a good sense of humour. Joking relationships create and maintain friendships and enable individuals to deal with conflict and irritations in a less confrontational manner, thus preserving social harmony. Jokes serve as a disciplinary method as venturers and volunteer staff learn how to “take a joke”. The chapter considers the techniques used by Louis and Callum to encourage group cohesion, and how they imagine that this will form the kind of person that is happy and comfortable on expedition.

Chapter six “Personal Development” explores the personal development techniques that form the basis of Endeavour’s model of personhood and how these are used to help individuals get to know themselves. I argue in this chapter that in order to be a good individual, Endeavour’s volunteers must be good at transient social relations. This chapter reframes the anthropology of personhood debates that have argued in the past that there are two opposed models of personhood; the Western individual, and the relational in the rest of the world. Following Bloch (2011) I argue that individuals and relations are continuities that reinforce one another. The chapter also unpicks the notion of “development” and shows how persons are considered to be in a constant state of becoming, a journey of self-discovery. Self-discovery and self-awareness do not entail simple introspection; instead Endeavour’s reviewing techniques gather feedback from others to help individuals reflect on themselves in relation to the social relations that they form.
CHAPTER ONE – CHANGE AS DEVELOPMENT IN A FLEXIBLE ORGANISATION

ONE BEGINNING AND SEVERAL ENDINGS

“Can everyone come gather round over here?” Trish calls to the different sides of the Endeavour’s London Head Office. The office is on the third floor of a dark brown block, which Endeavour rents from one of the three other charities that occupy the building. Trish stands in front of the door to the stairs. To her left is the tiny kitchen and on her right is the lift, which opens directly into the office. This frequently surprises visitors still adjusting their hair or rummaging in bags expecting to step into a vestibule rather than into a workplace. The weak spring sunlight peers through the large windows along the two short sides of the office. One side overlooks the main road that marches down to Waterloo station, and from the other you can check on Endeavour’s van in the car park. The office space is roughly separated into five areas that correspond to the different departments.

The employees drift away from their desks, saving their work on their individual computers, finishing a line in an email or encouraging a client off the telephone. The office has a small central thoroughfare in front of the two sole private offices. With roughly thirty employees, there is enough space for the employees to gather here. Trish positions four of the employees in a line across the door to the stairs and the kitchen. This is my second week of fieldwork. I still have not learnt everyone’s names. Unsure what is happening, I also move away from my desk to stand between Joe and Jivin, the head of finance and the accountant, whom I have been sitting near this week. The employees and I stand in a disordered circle around the thoroughfare, some leaning against desks, clustered almost indiscernibly into their different departments. I realise I have left my notebook on my desk. I kick myself, but feel unable to retrieve it, as the atmosphere cloaks me in tension and solemnity. I sense that it would not be appropriate to take notes openly at this moment, and console myself with writing down everything I remember straight afterwards.

Trish, the Head of Marketing and Recruitment waits until everyone assembles, and tries to rally the mood with her enthusiasm.

Trish: I’d just like to say a few words to celebrate four people today and acknowledge their contributions to Endeavour, as the team leader of three and on behalf of Renee for Alice, who unfortunately can’t be here today…. We’re very
sad to have to say goodbye to you, you have become close friends as well as work colleagues. You will all be missed, but I’m sure that you will go on to do great and wonderful things, wherever you end up.

Alison: Thanks, I’d like to reiterate Renee’s comments and thank everyone for their forbearance. This is a difficult time and we’ve had to make some difficult decisions. It’s hard for those leaving and for those left behind. We will all get through this. I think we’re all going to go for lunch together for a proper send off…?

Trish: Yes, everyone is invited to come along we hope you can all make it, but before we do, these are just some small tokens of our appreciation.

Gift bags and cards appear from behind the backs of various employees and are handed to Trish to pass on. She flusters, laughing awkwardly as she checks that each parcel makes it to the correct recipient. For the past week, A4 brown envelopes have been circling the office, passed from desk to desk for each employee to slip in a few pounds for a gift and to sign the card enclosed. Alice smiles her thanks wistfully and comments on the great team she is leaving behind. Annie looks morose, as she has done since I arrived at Head Office less than two weeks ago. Tegan looks incongruously positive; someone tells me later that she already has another job. Luc looks close to tears as he says thank you, and only just manages to say that he “can’t put into a couple of sentences how much Endeavour has meant” to him and promises that he will email everyone to say goodbye properly. The taut silence is disrupted by the hubbub of noise as people return to their desks to collect their bags for lunch or to settle back into their work. Unusually the majority of the office leaves to go for lunch together. Just a handful stay behind. Jivin asks me if I am going to go for lunch, but having already felt like an imposter throughout the ceremony and not quite understanding why all these people are leaving, I decline.

Several days later, once these employees had left, remaining employees confided to me that Endeavour’s financial situation had been severely affected by the recent economic problems. The senior management team (hereafter SMT), which is made up of the heads of each department and Alison, had chosen to make several redundancies and required several other employees to reapply for their own jobs. My fieldwork at Endeavour’s London Head Office began in March 2009, just as Britain’s economy was experiencing the effects of the recession. Somewhat cocooned while writing my masters thesis, I had been unaware of how significantly and directly the global economic crisis was affecting organisations and individuals in Britain. Newspapers predicted that “the economy was
facing the worst recession since the 1930s, with some strategists fearing that the country could slip into a depression” (Oakley 2010). By March, fear, anger and uncertainty seemed rife, with strikes and/or protests occurring in France, Iceland, Latvia, Estonia, Italy, Spain, Thailand, Indonesia, Philippines, Argentina Peru, and in the U.S. (Genova 2009). The situation looked to harm the poorest most, but all areas of business and public service in the UK were expecting hard times. The charity sector was not an exception, and the Charity Commission reported that 52% of charities were being affected by the crisis (Leather 2009). Redundancies were expected, and the situation looked bleak.

It was at a meeting during “country director week” in May 2009 when I finally understood in detail why the redundancies had occurred in March. Five departments make up Endeavour’s Head Office; Marketing and Recruitment, Business Development, Fundraising, Operations and Finance. Endeavour also has three other branches in Costa Rica, India and Malaysian Borneo. Head Office is responsible for all the background administrative and strategic planning. Officially, its jurisdiction reaches across all departments and branches, but practically is somewhat limited to Britain. The SMT at Head Office governs the strategic objectives for the charity, manages its finances and public image. The overseas divisions, known as “fieldbases” operate semi-autonomously in planning and managing the expeditions, projects and volunteers. Each fieldbase has two core employees, the country director and the country programme manager. They live “In-Country” for the majority of the year, only returning to London for a fortnight during “country director week”; a week of back-to-back meetings where Endeavour’s practices and aims are discussed and negotiated by the SMT and In-Country staff.

On the 13th May 2009, I crossed over Waterloo Road with the heads of each department - Renee, Trish, Joe, Barry and Jonjon - Alison the CEO, the country directors and country programme managers to use one of the conference rooms at a nearby venue. We arranged ourselves around a circular table and as this room had neither projector nor computer were given printed PowerPoint slides that Joe, as Head of Finance, talked us through. He began with an overview of Endeavour’s financial status explaining how the majority of funding comes from the money that volunteers “fundraise” for their place on expeditions. 13 Joe showed us graphs to illustrate how the number of volunteers for 2009 had dropped

13 Usually, employees made sure to make volunteers understand that they are not “paying” for expedition but fundraising for a charity. This meeting was one of the only situations in which volunteer money was referred to as a financial transaction. See chapter four for further discussion.
compared to last year. Of that figure, the number of volunteers paying the higher fees had also fallen. Joe advised that increasing the cost for volunteers would not make much difference to their finances, and Alison was loathe to do so for fear that their numbers might drop further. The greatest increase in expenditure between 2008 and 2009 was In-Country costs, which rose by £151,000 to £688,000. This significant sum was largely caused by fluctuating exchange rates. The fieldbases operate in local currencies, while Endeavour’s income is in British pounds. Endeavour Costa Rica is particularly complicated as the account is held in the United States in dollars, and then expedition costs such as transport for the volunteers, are paid in the Costa Rican currency of Colones or in the Nicaraguan currency of Córdobas. There was very little that Endeavour could do to mitigate against this effect, as the fluctuations of the exchange rates were difficult to plan for in their budgets. Endeavour’s assets were currently beneath the Charity Commission’s recommended level. Staff costs constituted the greatest expenditure at 40% so the SMT had decided redundancies were the best path to recover some cash flow.

In her review of organisational research, Susan Wright (1994) argues that early research often viewed organisations from the managers’ perspective. These studies therefore dwelt upon increasing productivity and efficiency, or on solving other organisational problems (Wright 1994). As Wright points out, this approach made little reference to the context in which organisations existed, leaving out analysis of social, political and economic systems and processes. To compare, she describes the Manchester shop floor studies headed by Max Gluckman in the 1950s and 1960s. This research aimed to use participant observation of factories to develop a social analysis of Britain. Analytically, by placing organisations in a broader context, Gluckman addressed the problem of “how to relate the details of a social situation to wider issues in society” (Wright 1994: 12). This chapter draws upon approaches such as Susan Davis (1997) and Sharon MacDonald (2002) that use organisations as an analytical tool and basis for making wider statements about society. I have explained the broader context in which my fieldwork at Endeavour began, and the managerial reasoning behind these redundancies. In the rest of this chapter, I look at the implications and effects of this decision on the remaining employees, how they make sense of it and what this might tell us about British society during this period of economic instability.

Employees’ responses to these redundancies highlight the expectations of what constitutes a “good Endeavour employee”. Employees articulate a joint desire to keep experienced
staff as well as to attract “fresh”, “enthusiastic” and “energetic” new workers. Employees feel the charity needs a core group of employees with Endeavour experience who “get it” to guide the wider aims of the charity, and a periphery of rotating staff to bring dynamism and youth to the execution of its aims. The turnover of staff causes frequent restructuring at Endeavour, with roles discarded as the specialist personnel who filled them depart and new roles are created to tempt prospective employees with other specific skills. The departments shrink and contract, requiring employees to constantly reform and adjust working relationships and reprioritise their workloads as work is reallocated.

Employees must also cope with continual organisational shifts in its broader aims, which requires them to adjust their understanding of the charity and adapt the language they use to describe it. Richard Sennett (1998) looks at the ways in which work practices and careers have changed in response to changing economic demands. He argues that labour is characterised by a greater level of change and transience. This requires both individuals and organisations to be “flexible” in order to respond to fluctuations in the market. In order to stay competitive in its own “market”, Endeavour undergoes periodic organisational shifts whereby departments are restructured and its guiding principles are realigned. Constant change can be difficult for employees to cope with, as each shift requires them to adjust their own practices and build different relationships with co-workers. Forms of instability appear at every level of this organisation, but employees are creative in searching for an overarching stability to make sense of change. Rhetorical techniques alleviate the disruption by locating these shifts in a coherent progression of organisational “development”. This echoes the model of personhood that Endeavour deploys which also emphasises development and progression, which I explore in the final chapter.

**ACHIEVING ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM THROUGH CHANGE**

I declined to go to lunch on the day of the redundancies because I felt like I was intruding on an intimate and distressing scenario. It made me uncomfortably aware of my status as an unpaid volunteer and I hoped that my offer to work in the office had not contributed to any of the decisions about how many redundancies were required. The atmosphere notably changed once the majority of the office left for lunch. After the intensity of the gift ceremony those remaining at their desks seemed to relax communally, the noise level rose as people began to chat and joke with one another again. There was a tangible sense of relief that made me realise how tense the earlier mood had been. Luc’s promised email
arrived in everyone’s inboxes later that day and seemed to me at the time to emphasise the sadness with which the staff had received these redundancies.

To: Everyone
Subject: Goodbye

It’s been amazing.

My experience as an Endeavour participant to Ghana in 1999 was the single most exciting and positive experience I ever had. It changed my life forever.

Since then, I’ve climbed Mount Kilimanjaro, taught English in the Sudanese desert, raised money for Endeavour on the Namibia and Borneo Challenges, visited the 1C Borneo expedition and managed a group of disabled people at sea on a tall ship with the Jubilee Sailing Trust.14 Last summer I took a sabbatical and joined the first 5 week India expedition (2F) as a volunteer manager. My project group was amazing we had a lot of fun and I’m really grateful to everyone on that expedition for an experience that I will never forget. In the U.K, I’ve delivered 253 school and university recruitment events, 30 Endeavour information events and 10 major exhibitions to a combined estimated audience of over 20,000 people. I’ve also really enjoyed working with 100s of alumni harnessing their enthusiasm and positivity to gain access to new schools and audiences. I was really pleased to have helped secure the School Bespoke expeditions as well.

But even more importantly than all this is the amazing friends I’ve made through my contact with Endeavour and the amazing colleagues that I’ve worked with. So keep in touch and see you at softball.

Email:
Mobile:

X
Luc

His email is an example of common sentiments expressed when people leave Endeavour. Emotional connection with Endeavour is a strong feature for employees. Gideon Kunda’s (2006: 7) ethnography explores normative control at “Tech”, a technology company that “engineers” a strong culture that not only specifies “required work behaviour” but also seeks to “marry” employees to the company. Kunda shows how Tech deploys procedures to teach employees “the rules for behaviour, thought and feeling…work techniques

14 These expedition codes refer to the chronological order in which they take place throughout the year.
designed to induce others to accept – indeed to become – what the company would like them to be” (2006: 7). New employees were given talks and manuals that dictated the ideal type of employee. Endeavour does not have the same codified system of techniques as described by Kunda. Nevertheless, their ideological ethos also permeates through the organisation, shaping employees and persons. When I started fieldwork with Endeavour, I was placed within the Fundraising team. Charlie, the alumni and individual donor manager, was tasked with looking after me. I asked her and Renee, the head of fundraising, to introduce me to Endeavour as any new employee would be. Charlie taught me how to answer the telephone and transfer calls, arranged for me to be given an email address, a personnel list and an organigram. These gave me people’s job titles and the department in which they worked. Charlie told me to make appointments with anyone I wanted to for an “induction” and to find out what they do in their jobs. She recommended a series of people across the departments whom she thought it would be most helpful for me to talk to.

Despite having a comparatively informal system of induction compared to Tech’s “bootcamp” (Kunda 2006: 6), there was still a consensus amongst Endeavour’s SMT and other employees about the required traits for “good and effective employees”. One expectation for applicants to Endeavour is that they are “committed to” and “believe in” what Endeavour does. The jobs are represented as a kind of calling, rather than a means to make money. Employees feel that a concern with money is antithetical to the ethos of the charity. Several employees remarked to me that they could earn more money in the private sector, but “believed” in Endeavour and therefore were content to earn less. In comparison, Karen Ho’s ethnography of investment bankers Wall Street shows how they justify being subject to flexible work regimes and job insecurity through the “exorbitant” rates of pay and had little loyalty to their companies; “knowing that Wall Street has no commitment to them, bankers are themselves constantly “jumping ship” for the next bigger bonus” (2009b: 185). At the charity, some form of emotional or spiritual connection to Endeavour through the work that it conducts is part of the essential criteria for prospective employees, and the staff consider it necessary in order to rationalize

15 See further discussion of work practices in chapter two and on the meanings of charity in chapter four.
working long and sometimes anti-social hours for what they feel are comparatively poor rates of pay.  

Employees have to be able to utilise this connection with Endeavour in their work and exhibit their passion as a convincer to prospective volunteers and funders. Energy and enthusiasm therefore are important traits for employees. A few weeks after the redundancies, I attended a “medics fair” at the London School of Tropical Hygiene and Medicine. As Pippa and I travelled on the tube, carrying promotional stands and magazines to set up a stall at a careers fair for medical students I remarked that it felt like a strange time to join Head Office, particularly with the redundancies and what seemed like a lot of changes. Pippa is the recruitment coordinator for the volunteer managers. Her role is managed under operations instead of the marketing team because the role requires strategic planning related to the projects and venturer numbers. The operations team was unaffected by the redundancies but Pippa told me that it tends to have a high turnover of staff in the expedition support roles. These three roles involve communicating with venturers and fielding questions and queries once they have decided to go on expedition. Pippa said most people in these roles did not stay for longer than a year, and she thinks that this is a good thing, because the jobs are not particularly challenging or varied. Similarly, roles in the recruitment and marketing team also tend to be repetitive and therefore can become wearing. To make her point she asked me;

How long do you think you could handle ten questions a day about how to fit a three-month supply of toilet roll into your rucksack? Luc had been in his role for six years! I don’t know how he kept it up for that long. Hmmm. Saying that though, I really think he lost all energy and enthusiasm for it. Tegan had been doing it for quite a while too. It’s a shame for Annie though; she hadn’t been here that long.

While Pippa felt personally sad that several of the employees had lost their jobs, and would miss them in the office, she also felt that the redundancies had been the right choice. I heard many similar responses. On a personal level, it was shame, but ultimately changing staff was a positive for the organisation as whole. Employees reiterated this more openly once Tegan gained employment from one of the other charities in the same building and Annie secured her dream job as marketing officer for the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art. Luc, Tegan and Annie all worked in the marketing and recruitment team. A

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16 According to Stirratt and Henkel (1997) this is common narrative amongst NGO workers.
large part of their role involves speaking to the public about Endeavour. There is a consensus at Endeavour that this needs energy and enthusiasm to be successful at engaging potential volunteers. If someone stays in the role too long, both they and their approach can become “stale”. New employees, often just graduated from university are thought to bring freshness and energy to these kinds of jobs. Sennett (2006: 95) argues that one defining characteristic of late capitalist labour market is that service and longevity in a company are not rewarded. Younger workers are perceived to be cheaper.

Roles in support and marketing require specialist Endeavour knowledge. To be able to recruit and engage new volunteers they need a thorough understanding of Endeavour’s work and preferably first-hand experience of an expedition. Employees in the entry-level jobs such as support coordinators often only stay for a year. Alison and Pippa told me they recognised that there is little opportunity for young people taking on these roles to progress internally within Endeavour. Alison saw the experience they gained at Endeavour as a starting point in their careers and was happy to let them move onto other jobs after a year or two. Tommy is an independent contractor who runs the training sessions in the UK for volunteer staff and venturers before they go on expedition. He has been involved with Endeavour for over a decade. He reiterated that recurrent turnover of staff in those roles is often a good thing, as they are not particularly demanding in terms of the skills and intellect required to fulfil them. He understood that people who had stayed too long in these roles in the past had become bored and in expressing their frustrations, had made working life unpleasant for other workers. Sennett states that “moving on rather than settling in” (2006: 2) is a further characteristic of modern careers. Instead of staying within the same company and moving up the internal hierarchy, workers are more likely to move to different companies.

The need for energy and enthusiasm cannot overtake professionalism however. Part of the marketing team’s job is to visit schools and colleges to promote Endeavour to pupils. I wanted to attend some of these events to hear how the team describe Endeavour in such a setting. I asked Trish when the next few visits were and if I could go along. She was happy for me to do so, particularly if I would go as an Endeavour alumnus and speak a little about my own expedition when I was a venturer. I agreed that this would be a fair exchange, but as she checked her own schedule to look for the next visits, she remarked “Hmmm…no I don’t think… that one wouldn’t be right. Is it ok if I check with the others where they are going and I’ll make sure they take you along on one of their visits?” I
agreed that this was fine, but was left wondering what “wouldn’t be right” about that particular school visit.

A week later Trish was out of the office for this visit. I had now moved desks to sit beside Charlie directly in front of the lift door. As Trish came out of the lift, she came over to my desk to explain about the school;

...It wasn’t a good one to go on because the head had previously not allowed external organisations to come in because he hadn’t approved of them. It was really important to dress smartly too, all the students there wear suits. I had to get a balance in the talk between the two audiences – the students and the head – and volunteers might not have had the skills to do this.

[Charlie interjects that there is quite a skill to it]

Well I was quite glad that Sally and Jenny [who are both new to their positions] weren’t doing it because they had a hundred and twenty, a hundred and fifty people in the audience. They need to build up their confidence a bit. I can’t imagine Luc going to this – wearing an Endeavour T-shirt wouldn’t be smart enough, and he wouldn’t have got that balance.

Sally and Jenny were new members to the marketing team, both young graduates in their twenties praised by other employees precisely for their energy and enthusiasm. While these particular changes to Endeavour Head Office were largely regarded as positive overall, other employee changes are more worrying for the charity.

THE STABILITY OF EXPERIENCE

The upset over the March redundancies settled after several weeks, particularly once Annie and Tegan are secure in their new jobs. However, soon afterwards Endeavour became subject to more significant changes. Jonjon, the head of operations announced that he would be leaving in the next two months. Jonjon is a charismatic figure; his team speak of him warmly and praise his approach of supporting and trusting them to get on with their work without “micromanaging” them. One of Jonjon’s biggest responsibilities is “crisis management”. Head Office and the In-Country staff are in contact every day. In-Countries send the “daily email” that details the locations and status of the project groups, including progression of medical issues among individual volunteers. The operations teams monitor this for insurance purposes and in order for Endeavour to control public relations with the media and with families, usually the worried parents of younger volunteers. However, very occasionally an emergency occurs. Someone breaks their leg in the middle of a trek,
for example, and because they are in a remote location, the only way to get them to a hospital is via helicopter. Or it could be tornado season in Costa Rica and a tornado seems to be moving in the direction of a group on the Pacific coast. Part of the “crisis management” protocol for the In-Country staff is to inform the Head Office “duty manager”. Jonjon shared this role on rotation with the CEO and Harrison, the operations manager.

The interview process for the new head of operations highlights the great degree of experience this job requires. Jonjon allows me to attend one part of the interview processes for his replacement. As well as a series of interviews with members of the SMT, an hour-long presentation and a written exam, candidates also have to take part in a role-play. Jonjon, Pippa and Inácio (the most experienced members of the operations team) take over the two small offices in Head Office to manufacture a likely situation where the candidate has to manage a crisis as the duty manager. Pippa, Inácio and myself are in the right hand office, and Jonjon and the interviewee in the left. Pippa and Jonjon are logged into their email accounts, which enables them to send instantaneous messages to each other without the interviewee knowing. Each room has a telephone through which this scenario will be played. A new email pops up from Jonjon “GO, GO, GO!” This is the signal for Inácio to call the candidate. He pitches his voice high and speaks in short quick bursts to simulate someone on the edge of panic.

This is Inácio from Borneo fieldbase. There’s been an accident. A vehicle on route from alpha two’s project site has rolled off the road. We’re not sure of the injuries. We know there are multiple casualties. The vehicle contained twelve venturers and three project managers. One of the venturers is an MP’s daughter. The medical consultant is on standby at the helicopter pad. The 4x4 is ready with the DEL and the fieldbase medic. Sunset is 18:45, its 16:00 here now.

Throughout the course of the scenario, Jonjon prompts Inácio and Pippa to call the candidate with new dimensions of the crisis to handle. Inácio updates on the conditions of the casualties, telling the candidate that the bus driver has died to see how he reacts and manages this news. Pippa pretends to be various characters – a journalist posing as mother trying to get a story from him, Reneé who handles the PR and Alison the CEO as the candidate calls them to update them on the situation and discuss releasing a press

17 DEL refers to the deputy expedition leader, a member of the volunteer staff who is in charge of the expedition, supervised by Callum.
statement. The scenario is designed so that Jonjon can judge how the candidates cope with the diverse number of things that the head of operations must pre-empt and how they deal with things they had not imagined could happen. The candidate must make decisions without knowledge of Endeavour’s protocol. But, Jonjon tells me “they should handle this with their level of experience.” The experience required for Jonjon’s job cannot be judged through an interview and CV. The rigorous interview process is an assessment of whether the candidates have enough experience to know intuitively what is the correct protocol and reaction.

Once Jonjon’s replacement has been secured, Barry, the head of business development, announces that he will also be leaving within the year. Fear of losing employees with “expedition experience” rebounds round the office. Jonjon and Barry had worked with Endeavour for many years, and as country directors In-Country before taking up their roles on the SMT at Head Office. Employees told me their worries about these departures especially because the other four members of the SMT had only visited expeditions after their jobs had started. Employees felt that visiting an expedition as part of your job is not the same as living on expedition. The practice of sending new employees onto expeditions in order for them to be able to do their jobs properly highlights the importance Endeavour places on expedition experience. Other appointments require expedition experience as essential criteria for applicants. Jonjon’s replacement, Mike, spent most of the first year of his appointment visiting each of the expedition countries in order to understand how the different fieldbases operated, the usual distances and conditions of the projects from medical assistance and to build relationships with the In-Country teams.

In stark contrast to Sennett’s assertion that “as a person’s experience accumulates, it loses value” (1998: 94, 2006), those employees of Endeavour who have the greatest stock of experience were often deferred to in meetings. In a presentation to Head Office staff, Alison introduced Brad who is developing an award scheme for Endeavour. Alison noted his expedition experience to emphasise his credibility. She said that his understanding of what Endeavour actually did would enable him to set up a scheme that would not destroy the “Endeavour magic”. Employees who are alumni several times over seemed to be able to speak for Endeavour with a greater depth of understanding than newer employees or those who had not had as much expedition experience.

Alison took up the role of CEO in 2007. She told me that before she began her job, Endeavour had floundered and been in very real danger of becoming bankrupt. She said
that this was because there had been leadership problems, where one CEO had left suddenly and been replaced by a series of temporary acting executives. This resulted in a confused and ill thought out vision for Endeavour’s future progression and development. Too much transient change at the top of Endeavour’s organisational structure had been detrimental to the whole organisation and Alison hoped to produce a stability and clarity of vision which would last. However, losing two key “holders” of Endeavour knowledge was a threat to her aim.

**STRUCTURAL REORGANISING**

Endeavour is a small organisation. The departure of an employee has a rippling effect across the team they leave behind. Pippa explained that “changes come in waves at Endeavour”: small flurries where the departure of employees results in the reorganisation of remaining work teams. Staff turnover can cause wider structural changes depending on the funds available for replacements and new recruitments. Each member of staff tends to have a very specific set of specialist skills, which means that when they leave the organisation their roles are often erased. The old position could significantly change in character or a new position with a different role may be created to recruit a someone with a different set of skills to fill the gaps left elsewhere. Since 2009, Endeavour has made significant structural changes. Some roles have been shifted from department to department, with employees being incorporated into new teams and having to adjust to a new line manager.

During my induction, May, Alison’s personal assistant, gave me an organigram, a diagram of the organisation that shows relationships between the employees, such as the lines of hierarchy and who is in each department. Both hierarchies and departmental divisions were not initially obvious to me as staff work autonomously from their team, line managers and heads of department day-to-day. I present two diagrams in the following pages, one from my first period at Head Office in 2009 (Figure 1 and 2) and another from my second phase of research in 2010 (Figure 43 and 4).

The lines represent the flow of power and responsibility, each box corresponds to a person and their job, and the different levels represent the status and seniority of employees. Alison, at the top, has the greatest level of power and responsibility, followed by the heads of departments (the SMT), and so on to the bottom. In the second diagram, the grey boxes indicate personnel that has changed or moved to a different department.
I find these diagrams useful for showing visually the constant destabilisation that employees were subject to. The organigrams symbolize the ideal version of the way the charity wants to organise its employees. The diagrams present the channels of communication and collaboration, the demarcation of particular duties into teams and the sharing of responsibility. However, teams changed so often that the straight lines and boxes are a model rather than reality, the performance of structure, rather than enactment of it. The employees do not reference the organigrams in their daily work practice and when I returned to Head Office in 2010 I was not given an updated version. Indeed, there were some hierarchies denoted on the first diagram that I never saw realised and did not seem to make sense in terms of people’s work responsibilities. For instance, Jamie is the partnerships manager. His role is to liaise with youth agencies who select, prepare and help to fund “disadvantaged” young people on expeditions. On the first organigram, Jamie is shown under the line management of Barry. Barry’s role focused on building a high profit arm of Endeavour to cater for corporate companies. These two areas are not related, and Jamie mentioned to me that Barry “left me to get on with it”, and I observed that Barry did not play a large part in Jamie’s daily work activities.

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18 For this reason the second version is reconstructed and only my sense of where hierarchies were, rather than the official line management structure.
Figure 1 Organigram 1.2 March 2009

Figure 2 Organigram 1.1 March 2009
Figure 3 Organigram 2.1 June 2010

Figure 4 Organigram 2.2 June 2010
The March redundancies and a series of staff changes in every department were the catalysts for significant changes that corresponded with Endeavour redefining its mission and aims. In 2009 the organisation was “top heavy” with nearly 25% of staff occupying higher management roles. Alison felt that for a small organisation this was too high, both in cost and in terms of what kind of work the organisation should be doing. She wanted less managerial roles and more workers to recruit people and funds. When Barry left, they did not replace him with another head of business development. Instead, they recruited Bert as a programme manager whose main role would be to manage a large corporate agreement that Barry had secured before his departure. Mark, the corporate fundraiser also left during this year. The SMT promoted Toby, one of the support coordinators, to an account executive to continue Mark’s work and to support Bert. Jenny had initially been employed as a support member on the fundraising team but she transferred across to marketing after the redundancies. Eve who had worked on funding from trusts had her hours reduced. Therefore, Renee had room to accommodate managing further personnel. When Barry left Endeavour, Jamie was incorporated into Renee’s team. Despite the fact that as Jamie noted, he had not really fitted into Barry’s team, and now he did not really fit into Renee’s either there was “space” here and so he was placed under her guidance. Renee was really excited about getting involved with him;

Although we spend all our time convincing funders about all the wonderful things that Endeavour does for young people, we are a little bit isolated from it all. We never really get to see how the money we fundraise gets put to use. So I’m really excited about getting more involved with Jamie and his work with the young people. I think it will help us to remember why we work so hard all the time.

Jamie’s daily work did not change significantly, but Renee wanted to understand more about his role. She was used to keeping in close contact with subordinates on her team and expected to do so with him as well. In turn, he had to adjust to a new boss who did not have much knowledge of how the programme worked, and she wanted to incorporate him and his experience into a team that pursued a very different type of work and had different concerns than he was used to.

Moving around staff altered the make-up and structure of the organisation, but had lopsided impacts on the work practice of employees. The fundraising team lost several employees in the redundancies and the marketing team changed nearly all its personnel. I was not present before these redundancies occurred so cannot assess how the change impacted upon people, but my sense from the way in which people discussed them was
that those left on the fundraising team had a massive increase in personal workload with a
greater focus on targets. In contrast, the marketing team experienced an uplifting change
in mood and rhythm. The operations and finance teams were left unscathed until the
announcements of Jonjon and Barry’s departures. The shifting around of staff was clearly
unsettling for everyone.

A year later, Pippa explained how staff changes have become even more frequent. The
expedition support coordinators in her operations team tend to have a higher turnover of
staff than other roles. However since the redundancies were made, new employees are
now only staying for as long as it takes to learn the job before they move on – usually after
several months instead of the previous year or two. Endeavour is willing for the starting
level jobs to rotate with fresh new employees, as employees who stay too long in these
roles might become drained of enthusiasm. However, the increased turnover in these roles
is also difficult. As Pippa told me, continual staff changes adds pressure for the managers
who must now engage in training and supporting new staff so often that their other work
commitments are more difficult to manage. It is also difficult for colleagues to have to
forge new working relationships each time someone new arrives. Julia, an alumnus from
one of the expeditions I participated in, joined Head Office as an assistant to Pippa in the
summer of 2010. By October 2010, she told me that it felt that “someone is always
leaving, something is always changing”.

**THE FLEXIBLE ORGANISATION**

I could interpret the March redundancies as an unusual blip in the life of Endeavour, but
my impression from employees is that change is part of the way of life at Endeavour.
Particular roles have high turnover but all departments experience dramatic changes in
their structure and make up which affects work practice. Endeavour has also undergone
significant shifts in focus since Alison has been CEO. One of Alison’s main aims as she
joined the charity was to develop a “sustainable business model” for Endeavour to ensure
its survival. She said to me that she wanted to achieve this without “fundamentally
changing what Endeavour does”. Employees remark on how Endeavour has changed since
Alison took over as CEO and even over the last year, despite her desire to create stability
and coherence. Ethnographic work on change in organisations reports how problematic
change can be for employees. It can, for example, create an aura of insecurity and
instability that lowers morale, increases competition between employees to the detriment
of work produced (Born 2004). At Endeavour, employees do feel that there are difficulties
that come with constant changes, but they seek to mitigate these difficulties by representing change as positive and necessary. Employees do not speak about change in revolutionary terms, nor in ways that imply only process. Instead, change is conceptualised as reinforcing and restabilising Endeavour’s original purpose, strengthening what it already does rather than altering it. This idea converges with the notion of personal development that entails growth and progress without fundamental change of essential being. Using the notion of development, employees create a narrative, which as the following example shows, reinforces Catherine Kohler Riessman’s argument that “narrative allows us to make connections and thus meaning by linking past and present” (1992: 232).

The development of an alumni programme for venturers and volunteer managers who have returned from expedition is a good example of this. Endeavour has over 30,000 alumni. When Alison took over as CEO in 2007 she hoped to re-establish relationships with this global network of people. Charlie, the alumni and individual donor manager, was recruited to manage this programme and began her role in 2008. Charlie is from Edinburgh and has always worked in the charity sector. Before joining Endeavour, she worked on fundraising for the NSPCC project Childline. Sitting next to her each day I was able to ask her more about her work than anyone else at Endeavour. A key part of her job is to “reengage alumni” in Endeavour. In doing this, Endeavour hopes that they will become long-term individual donors and/or volunteers. Charlie’s job is often an uphill struggle. If she contacts a hundred people she may only hear back from five who are willing to volunteer, and perhaps just one who has the desire and means to donate money.

This programme has the dual purpose of reconnecting Endeavour with its “original” purpose:

Endeavour was founded on four challenges;
1. To be selected (today we allow people to select us too) 20
2. To raise the funds

19 NSPCC – National Society for Prevention of Child Cruelty is a registered charity. Childline is a free telephone line that children can call to report abuse.
20 When Endeavour first began, it had a selection process for all volunteers. Now the volunteer staff, partnership venturers and host country venturers also go through an assessment to ensure they are “ready” for expedition and understand what it entails.
The Fourth Challenge is a crucial part of the sustainable business model Alison is developing. Alison told me that she knows from speaking to alumni that many of them go on to work in charities or volunteer in their local communities. She told me in our first interview that all of the NGOs in Mongolia are run by Endeavour alumni. By maintaining contact with new alumni, and re-establishing it with old, Endeavour hopes to be able to document how their alumni go on to “make a difference” when they return from expeditions. This builds their credibility as a training place for those wanting to gain employment in development and legitimates the work they do.

At one of the post-expedition alumni training weekends, Tommy explained the reasoning behind the alumni activities. Endeavour has increasingly drawn on public funds, such as grants from different government departments. He said that in order to justify spending public money on taking young people abroad, Endeavour has to be able to show how it benefits wider society and not just the individuals who participate. The current problem with this programme, that Charlie often confided to me in moments of despair at the lack of engagement despite extended and persistent effort on her part, was that volunteers do not sign up to participate in Endeavour in order to be involved with it after their expedition. The expedition is the defining moment for them, and they do not expect to continue a social relation with Endeavour afterwards. Louis remarked that the paradox is that the kind of young people that Endeavour want to engage are those that have the initiative and drive to already be doing these kinds of activities independently.

Endeavour is constantly responding to the conditions in which it operates, and is reactive towards political and government policy concerns. Government funding is more lucrative and dependable than funding from trusts or individual donors. Endeavour frequently undergoes organisational shifts where it redefines or reemphasises the work that it does to gain further funding opportunistically. Sennett argues that in the late 1990s “institutional beauty consisted in demonstrating signs of internal change and flexibility, appearing to be a dynamic company…Stability seemed a sign of weakness, suggesting to the market that

21 Quote from website – not referenced to preserve anonymity of the organisation.
22 Endeavour ran expeditions in Mongolia in the early 2000s, and many local Mongolians took part in the projects.
the firm could not innovate or find new opportunities or otherwise manage change,” (2006: 40–1). Although the SMT recognise the need to be flexible and dynamic, they are also keen to re-establish Endeavour’s historical origins and develop stability through an “organisational memory”. During my first months at Head Office, Renee and Alison asked me to collate and organise Endeavour’s archive into a cohesive record of their past projects and achievements around the world. Brad remarked to me when I began working on this record how advantageous it would be. He said that he had realised that “this organisation has no memory”. For him this prevented it from establishing credibility and authority. Endeavour operates and competes in a business market of growing proportions, occupied by action adventure companies such as VentureCo, World Challenge and Trekforce as well as large travel agents such as “First Choice”, who own the gap year company “i-to-i”. Companies like these have reserves of capital that Endeavour can never aspire to. Endeavour’s desire to emphasise its longevity is part of an effort to “be competitive” in “the market” and demarcate itself from these other businesses.

Similarly, the shifts introduced by Alison and the SMT are attempts to react to what they see as a changing and growing market. Caitlin Zaloom (2005) describes how market traders objectify the market, separating themselves from social and affective realms in order to operate in it effectively while it simultaneously “disciplines” their selves and serves as the locus for their sense of personal and fiscal worth. Karen Ho distinguishes a similar process with the investment bankers of Wall Street.

The quickness of investment banks’ reactions signifies their absolute identity with the market; their sense of who they are, their cultural distinction, lies in their ability to channel the market, to convey the impression that the market acts through them, and they through the market, almost simultaneously. Of course, although investment bankers construct and drive the market, they are in turn shaped and constrained by it (Ho 2009b: 179).

Endeavour’s efforts to carve a space for themselves within the market shapes what the organisation has come to look like. Just as the market traders “train themselves to become embodied instruments for sensing the market and reacting to its every twitch” (2005: 254), Trish is also constantly keeping an eye on the market in readiness to change Endeavour’s focus in response. Zaloom describes the market as something uncertain and unstable, in constant change and motion. Her traders therefore have to be “flexible and reactive” (2005: 262). Endeavour employees also gave me the sense that their market was in flux, as something that could threaten their survival if they were not also flexible and reactive.
However, such calculated acts do not resonate with Endeavour’s charitable ethos, so while the market traders make “active efforts to break down the sense of continuity” (2005: 260) in order to mitigate their sense of loss and failure, Endeavour reframes each shift into a narrative of progression.

Ho (2009a, 2009b) discusses how investment banks work almost solely in the moment, without reference to planning and strategy. While Alison is attempting to create a plan for Endeavour through reviewing its charitable strategic objectives, the daily rhythms of the charity are still orientated to the present. As Jonjon told me, his job is “reactive rather than proactive”. When a crisis occurs everything else is put on hold while he deals with the problem. Similarly, Pippa plans and strategizes how many project managers she will need for each expedition, but often her careful planning has to be set aside as a new influx of volunteers sign up and she has to scramble to find the resources to accommodate them. While these are different kinds of cases to those experienced by bankers on Wall Street, the impacts on work practice and how this in turns shapes employees is similar. At Wall Street, Ho’s bankers are “structurally primed and motivated to “milk” as much out of the present as possible, whether or not these deals are ultimately “good” for the company by any longer term, even neoliberal, measure” (Ho 2009b: 186). This is not the case for Endeavour’s employees. Pippa and Jonjon would rather be working steadily with plans in place, but felt subjected to the market and other requirements of being reactive.

For Trish, working as the head of marketing and recruitment, it is more natural for her to be responsive to changing factors that she identifies as affecting the gap year market. She tracks youth unemployment and education levels, university attendance, deferral rate and fees figures. Just as the “investment banks see themselves as the “pulse” of the market, adapting more closely to its rhythms than the rest of corporate America” (Ho 2009b: 179), Endeavour prides itself on being more “in touch” with young people and their concerns than other businesses in the gap year market and being able to adapt to offer them what they want. An example of this is Endeavour’s introduction of shorter expeditions of five weeks so that students could complete an expedition in their summer holidays instead of taking a whole year out to fit in the ten weeks previously required.

Despite Endeavour’s disavowal of any identification as a “gap year organisation” it is inescapably part of the gap year market. The market’s permutations and revolutions shape and constrain what they do and how they represent it. Endeavour’s actions do not have the same extreme fiscal ramifications as the Wall Street bankers’. Endeavour’s focus on the
present is out of necessity to survive rather than a preoccupation with making money in the short term, but there is a still a sense of markets as “capricious forces of nature” (Ho 2009b: 182). Despite these differences, the predominance of the idea of responding to a market is evidence of the extent to which neoliberal ideology permeates not only financial organisations but also the charitable sector.

Even though Endeavour is trying to build a picture of coherent action and purpose, transient shifts in focus are part of its daily life. Charlie, who has been involved in several of the recent large funding bids, remarked to me that there is a sensation that the “goalposts are always changing”. In applying for each new funding bid, Endeavour’s activities and purpose must be presented in slightly different ways, emphasising personal development, career development, employability skills, volunteering, community development, conservation, leadership or teamwork experience. Tommy joked that it is like the joke about the Mexican restaurant. A customer is given a burrito, but complains that they ordered a fajita. Demonstrating with his hands, Tommy takes the burrito back, unfolds an imaginary tortilla and proceeds to wrap it in a different shape before holding out the new form. The meal still has the same elements but it is “wrapped up” or presented differently. Another metaphor developed by an outdoor education and experiential learning practitioner that Endeavour utilises is the idea that expeditions are a “buffet”. They offer a wide range of opportunities, including all those listed above. Participants can take what they choose, and leave the parts that do not interest them. Similarly, the funders are given the parts of the buffet that will best suit their tastes.

When I began fieldwork, Charlie was busy writing a monitoring and evaluation report for funding they had received from the charity V, which came with matched funding from the government. This initiative was to promote and encourage volunteering opportunities for young people. The funding allowed Endeavour to develop its alumni programme by setting up partnerships with other volunteer organisations such as the National Trust, which would offer volunteering opportunities to alumni. Up until this point, Endeavour had never done this. Although Endeavour describes itself as a youth development charity, which refers to its focus on the personal development of volunteers, for this bid it emphasised its Fourth Challenge and the support it could provide for volunteering opportunities. In the eyes of Charlie and Alison, Endeavour had not changed what it does or what it stands for, in reconnecting with its foundational values it was able to serve up the dish that the funders would find the most palatable. Bauman uses the idea of liquids to
describe modernity, because they are ready and prone to change shape. However, Endeavour did not change from being a youth development charity to a volunteering charity, it already incorporated both these elements and chose to emphasise the latter. Their actions are closer to Sennett’s description of the “flexible organisation” (2006: 48) that can alter its production chains and select potential functions as need arises. For Charlie, it feels as if the goalposts are changing because with each new successful bid, she has new criteria and targets to monitor, document and achieve.

In trying to produce coherence for itself, Endeavour not only becomes flexible, it also performs an act of selective memory – it implies that the Fourth Challenge has always been part of its practice, when in actuality it has not. In constructing a future trajectory, they were reinventing their past too. However, these transient shifts within a flexible framework were not merely about representation. This concept does not give the full story of how these changes were being undertaken and what impacts they had on the organisation as a workplace. As Susan Star and Geoffrey Bowker comment, “the concept of representation tends naturally to abstract away the ongoing work of individual or organizational agents” (1999: 266). Although Endeavour is frequently rebranding their work to suit particular audiences, it is not purely re-representation. These transient shifts, like the development of the alumni programme, make significant and observable changes to the structure of the organisation that in turn affect work practice. A new employee, Charlie, was recruited, pages were added to their website, new workshops before and after expedition were created and the language used to describe the charity changed to incorporate the four challenges.

Bowker and Star (1999) focus upon ways in which organisations forget by clearing or erasing information to streamline archives or to alter their identity. In some cases, Endeavour enacts modes of organisational forgetting. For instance, Endeavour marks its origin date at 1984, and held a twenty-fifth anniversary celebration in 2009. However, the autobiography of the Colonel who set up Endeavour notes that he began his work several years earlier in the late 1970s. Star and Bowker argue that one form that organisational forgetting takes is “the erection of a barrier in the past as a certain point” (1999: 257). Endeavour “forgot” this history, perhaps because Alison was keen to commemorate its twenty-five years, or maybe the Colonel’s activities before this date did not fit into the trajectory that Alison wanted to follow.
However, more commonly, an opposite process is occurring at Endeavour. The organisation is in a process of remembering, and revitalising their “original purpose”. This origin is mobilised for current, present purposes, and therefore it is understood and framed through the lens of the present (Bannon & Kuutti 1996). This serves to reassert links with the organisation’s forgotten history and to create an organisational memory. This creates continuity for the organisation as a whole, while the individual employees experience turbulent change due to these transient shifts. These shifts are justified by the SMT and understood by the employees through the idiom of development. Just as a person is not fundamentally altered from their essential being through personal development, so Endeavour does not lose credibility or become unstable as it shifts through different pathways. In its quest for organisational development consisting of sustainable growth and expansion, change is part of an on-going trajectory. While the employees themselves do experience instability and precariousness as these changes occur, change is naturalised through the idea of development.

**TRANSIENT FIELDWORK**

Transience and instability characterised my fieldwork. Just as the employees coped on a daily basis with the organisational structural changes and foci shifts, I also had to keep relearning who did what, how they related to others, what their work entailed and what “buzzwords” and bids were the current favourites. The venturers and volunteer staff were in tears at the end of a phase because they had to say goodbye to close friends and embark on new ones, and I also found it emotionally wearing to have to constantly need to build new fieldwork relationships. This initially made the analytical process seem insurmountable. How could I begin to see patterns, trends, themes and ethnographic categories emerging when these kept changing? The analysis was further complicated by my decision to undertake multi-sited fieldwork. As is common in anthropological practice, I realised that I had to make these problems the object of my analysis and incorporate the precarious feelings I felt as a researcher into the analysis.

I encountered a variety of locations and persons. My fieldsite was not spatially bounded. I did not reside in the same place with the same group of people throughout my fieldwork. This was partly through my analytical choices. I wanted to see the organisation in its entirety. I chose to conduct multi-sited fieldwork to follow the process of producing expeditions from their recruitment, marketing, fundraising and administration in London to their actualisation in Costa Rica and Nicaragua. This approach derives from George
Marcus’ (1995) original proposition of multi-sited ethnography, which is not a comparative approach but one that follows the unit of analysis. Simon Coleman and Peters Collins echo this, affirming, “Depth in analysis can be achieved through strategic lateral movement” (2006: 12). Some authors (Burawoy 2000) present multi-sited research as a transformation of the ethnographic method by releasing it from the static fieldsite. However, Coleman and Collins argue, “Fieldwork has never been dependent on fixed places as such”, (2006: 11). Ulf Hannerz agrees, reminding us “social anthropology, conceptually, is primarily about social relationships, and only derivatively, and not necessarily about places,” (2000: 29). This confirms Matei Candea’s assertion that fieldsites are not “discovered” but chosen through analytical selections (2007: 172).

The multiple locations I visited were also due to the nature of work at Head Office. Most of the employees spend time working outside of the office, and outside of normal working hours. The marketing and recruitment team visit schools to give presentations, set up stalls at careers and gap year fairs and visit different cities for open evenings. The distance they move has increased recently as they had previously only focused on London and felt they needed to market in the North of England as well to increase diversity of volunteers. The partnerships team meet with young people and their youth or social workers around the country. They also run five-day residential outdoor assessments weekends to assess whether “disadvantaged” young people are “ready” to go on expedition. The operations team are in charge of the “Challenge Workshops”, the introductory weekend for venturers before they leave for expedition. The alumni team run reunions and training weekends after expedition. To follow their work I also left the office. I even spent one evening handing out flyers with Jonjon in Canary Wharf, squinting while the lowering sun blinded me by reflecting on the glass-fronted offices as I attempted to catch the eyes of suited workers surging past me into the tube station.

In Central America, I was often travelling to and from different project sites, as were most of the rest of the fieldbase team. Part of their duties is to visit the treks with supplies of food, and the static projects with letters, treats and additional equipment. Within my first week in Costa Rica, I had visited three potential project sites for the summer five-week expedition in southern indigenous reserves and a national park. Once the expedition started, I went on three road trips within Costa Rica taking injured venturers to hospital, dropping them off at their trek once they had recovered and visiting their trek again for a food drop. I “deployed” with one of the community groups up to the Miraflor region of
Nicaragua, where I spent ten days working on building a community centre and staying with a Nicaraguan family. Louis, John and Jill then picked me up and we visited the other community project in Achuapa, Nicaragua. We were due to spend the night there and attend the Achuapan International Music Festival, but one of the ventureders developed appendicitis and Louis, medic Randy and I had to drive him to the capital, Managua for him to receive medical attention. Finally, I spent three weeks on the eastern coast of the gulf of Nicoya in Costa Rica on an environmental project.

During my second expedition, I visited all six projects. I went on an overnight and a five-day Costa Rican road trip where I visited the two environmental projects in the jungle and on the coast, and the trek. I went on a seven-day Nicaraguan road trip where we visited the two community projects in Miraflor and Achuapa. I also spent three weeks on another environmental project on the cape of the gulf of Nicoya. I describe these movements to show that I did not just visit different places; movement is a fundamental part of expedition life. My fieldsite expanded and contracted as I moved, sometimes it consisted of two other people in the interior of a Land Rover, and at other times, it was the whole of fieldbase, populated by over a hundred people.

Many of these journeys were last minute excursions, dictated by emergency need that added to a sense of impermanence and instability. Relationships and dialogues were often transient, short, and snatched among the pragmatic duties and problems that constantly arose. On each of these trips, and the time in between that I spent at fieldbase or on project, I was with a different combination of people. While I did build lasting relationships with many people in my field, the times that I spent with them was often short, and infrequent. Coleman and Collins note “if the ethnographer by necessity encounters increasing numbers of short-term relationships… such an experience is likely to be replicating that of informants” (2006: 12). Roadtrips were accompanied by a sense of urgency. Endeavour has a rule that vehicles cannot be driven after dark, as the roads are too dangerous. On most days, we woke before dawn so that we could start the engine and be on the move as soon as it was light. We often spent twelve to sixteen hours in a Land Rover, being thrown around as we sped over potholes on hard dirt roads.

To conduct fieldwork successfully in this setting, I had to be flexible, to be active in maintaining relationships in a limited timeframe. To move through my fieldsite with my participants, and be allowed to spend time in different locations – on project sites working with young people and project partners, in Head Office cataloguing the archives, out doing
school talks, at fieldbase answering the radio – I had to constantly re-skill to fulfil the
demands of these different situations. The next chapter explores the demands that
expeditions make upon the volunteers and how this translates into shaping them into
employable persons.
**CHAPTER TWO – EMPLOYABILITY AND FLEXIBLE PERSONS**

Young people are often the most vulnerable in times of economic difficulty (Furlong & Cartmel 1997). The recession in the UK has caused high levels of unemployment among young people, with recent newspaper reports suggesting it could be the highest since the early 1990s (Allen 2011; Allen & Mead 2011; Balakrishnan 2008; Elliott 2010; Seager 2009; Sedghi & Rogers 2011; Stewart 2011). As outlined in the previous chapter, Endeavour is constantly responding to the conditions in which it operates, and frequently seeks to orientate itself to political and government policy concerns. Capitalising on the dire situation that many graduates find themselves in due to the economic crisis, Endeavour has shifted its attention on this “target market”, and seeks to show how going on an expedition increases the “employability” of its participants. This chapter uses employability as a trope to uncover how the expedition way of life shapes persons in particular ways to prepare them for the current labour market. I concentrate on three aspects that emerge as significant for becoming employable. The first of these is an emphasis on “skills”. Endeavour identifies a range of skills that expeditions induce in persons that the SMT feel will help graduates find work. As Gledhill (2004) identifies, “marketing our selves” through reference to skills acquisition is evidence of the extent and reach of neoliberal ideology. I also consider how expedition life encourages a broader attitude in individuals and how this attitude might be useful in the process of applying for work. Secondly, I explore how the expedition way of life requires persons to be able to make and break relationships quickly. Sennett (2006) notes that this practice has also become more frequent in workplaces as employers opt for rotating teams on short-term projects. Lastly, I consider again the notion of flexibility and demonstrate how the levels of risk during expedition simulate the risk and precariousness of the labour market (Martin 1994, 1997).

**SKILLS**

In May 2009, Mark, the corporate fundraiser, designed a questionnaire to send to Endeavour’s corporate associates (Figure 5). The questions focus upon how an expedition increases the employability of Endeavour volunteers by making them “stand out” from other graduates. It also seeks to show how participating in a structured gap year programme is more appealing to employers. Heath (2007), using Phillip Brown’s (1995) notion of the “personality package” argues that as well as acquiring soft skills like communication and team working, becoming competitive in the labour market requires
students to think of themselves as “consisting of a combination of credentials, skills and charismatic qualities” (2007: 93).

1. According to government figures, in 2009 300,000 graduates will be competing for 30,000 graduate places. With many having excellent academic results, it will be non-academic achievements that will, for your company, distinguish the outstanding candidates.
   True
   False

2. Graduates who have done an Endeavour expedition are better equipped to “hit the ground running” in the working environment
   True
   False

3. An Endeavour expedition develops the following skills in young people. Please rate these skills in terms of their relevance to your graduate recruitment strategy.

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4. If a young person had spent three months doing an Endeavour expedition rather than travelling independently, you would find this:
   Less impressive
   More impressive
   Irrelevant

Figure 5 Employability Questionnaire
I was unfortunately not at Head Office when the results from this questionnaire came in. I assume that they gained positive responses to Endeavour’s perceived ability to produce “more employable” persons because while I was in Costa Rica, Endeavour was selected to receive funding from the government Department for Business, Innovation and Skills. This grant provides part funding for graduates to go on expedition specifically to improve their employability skills and CV profile. According to Endeavour, since returning from expedition, 91% of graduates from this scheme are now in employment.

Venturers learn many of these skills through the rhythms of expedition life and the way in which the In-Country staff organise and motivate them. Louis and Callum live all year round at Endeavour’s Costa Rican fieldbase where I spent half of my fieldwork. Fieldbase, a collection of ram-shackle converted farm buildings forms the hub of logistics and communications for Endeavour Costa Rica. Ostensibly, Louis, the country director is in charge of long term planning while Callum, the country programme manager manages the expeditions at their daily level. Despite the distinction of their job roles, Louis and Callum work extremely closely and switch seamlessly between tasks. Their close working relationship is highlighted by the tendency of venturers and volunteer staff to refer to them as a single unit – “louisandcallum” or “callumandlouis”. Whoever comes first depends upon who is “fronting” – doing all the speeches and the majority of the managerial work – for each expedition. I came to know Louis and Callum very well. At one point Callum was the only thing that stopped me from being swept down a fast-flowing river. Their personalities are suited to the work that they carry out and the lifestyle that goes with it.

Louis is English, but recently received Costa Rican citizenship. He is fluent in Spanish, has an ex-wife and daughter living in Costa Rica’s capital San Jose and has lived in Costa Rica for seven years. He had what he calls a “privileged upbringing”. At university, he studied philosophy and astronomy and represents himself growing up as intelligent but struggling with dyslexia. He told me that as a child he was often in the shadow of his older brother, who seemed to be brilliant at everything. Louis has travelled extensively through Latin American and Africa and has worked abroad in the charity and development sectors before working for Endeavour. Louis is a deep thinker, a specialist in his chosen field, and with him, I was able to discuss and debate my research ideas. Louis has a dark witty sense of humour that delights in juxtaposing the unexpected. He has a remarkable memory for facts and figures and therefore excels at pub quizzes and trivial pursuit, a game that tests general knowledge.
Callum is Scottish. His family are from Edinburgh and his parents worked in insurance. Callum says that during his youth he was wild and, like many teenagers, drank too much alcohol and took too many drugs. Unlike many of his childhood friends, he went to university and came out with a good degree. He has worked in a range of careers, and prides himself on being able to do anything he attempts with expertise. He is ambitious, driven and dedicated. He is usually the last person to go to bed each night – either because he carries on working into the morning, or because he is relaxing listening to music or forcing us all to stay up late to play endless games of cards. Callum is the problem solver, however big or small; he is full of inventive ideas for making life more exciting, challenging or successful. As well as having his own large workload, he takes on whatever problems others are struggling with and helps them to resolve them. He is dependable and astute, and expects others to live up to his exacting standards.

Expeditions can range from fifty to one hundred and fifty volunteers. As hard working and skilled as Louis and Callum are, it is not possible for them to carry out the expeditions alone. Head Office recruits volunteer staff to run the expeditions on a day-to-day level. The volunteer staff are often professionals on careers breaks or in the midst of changing occupation. Legally, Endeavour is not allowed to call them “staff” as this term denotes someone who is paid. However, the term staff often slips back into everyday language, for instance there is still a “staff room” at fieldbase. Staff is the preferred casual term used by In-Country employees, while “volunteer manager” appears on official documentation and is used at Head Office. There are many slips in language use between Head Office and In-Country. This is in part a resistance to changes that are perceived as unnecessary, as well as an assertion of autonomy by In-Country staff but also due to a habitual use of terminology. I use volunteer staff to refer to this group, to differentiate from paid employees and the younger volunteers who are known as “venturers”.

There are two categories of volunteer staff. A small group work in logistical and administrative roles. The rest are project managers, who are usually referred to by the shortened “PM”. Project managers work with venturers, acting as guides and mentors as well as overseeing the project work. The volunteer staff usually changes every expedition. Some end up “staying on” and complete subsequent expeditions, or return in the future. Although experienced staff are an asset to the expeditions, the Louis and Callum prefer having a new team because they feel it is easier for them to bond if they are all at the same stage of training and experience. I experienced this for myself on my second expedition. I
found it noticeably harder to bond with the new arrivals than I had the first time. Instead of “all being in the same boat” as Callum phrased it, I was frequently seen as an expert – partly because of my doctoral research, but mostly as I tended to know the answers to most enquiries because I had already spent several months “on expedition”. This meant I formed different kinds of relationships on my second expedition. Expeditions are split into different stages, each of which has a specific purpose (Figure 6). As new volunteers run each new expedition, the first activity is to train the new team. The fieldbase team arrives first. They stay at fieldbase for most of the expedition and do the groundwork for making an expedition happen. The logistics manager and the accountant make sure there is enough food, equipment and money. The administrator maintains a database that records venturers’ personal information such as their next of kin contact details or swimming ability. The photographer and the communications officer record and publicise the expedition through photographs and a blog for families at home. The fieldbase team manage the “behind the scenes” work of expedition. Individuals are quickly subsumed into the place so that “fieldbase” becomes synonymous with the people who manage it. Those at fieldbase may also spend some time out “on project” but this is negotiated around their responsibilities and duties at fieldbase.

A week later, the project managers arrive. Induction now shifts from pragmatic preparations to “soft skills” training. This includes how to manage a project, the relationships with the project partners and/or community as well as a group of young people. Once the volunteer staffs’ training is complete, the venturers arrive and have their own induction before they “deploy” for their first phase. An expedition is made up of phases and changeovers. A phase lasts three weeks. Every phase, venturers are divided into smaller groups of between twelve and sixteen under the guidance of two or three project managers. The diagram below shows the different stages of a five-week and ten-week expedition.
On each phase, Louis or Callum allocate the volunteers into different groups and send them out to projects across Central America. After a phase, there is a changeover of
between one and three days, where the volunteers return to fieldbase and are reorganised into new groups before departing for their next project. The groups on the ten-week expeditions are known as “alpha groups”. The term alpha comes from the phonetic alphabet which is used in radio communications and functions as the “call sign” – signifying who is talking on the radio - and is one of the remnants of the military beginnings of Endeavour. Groups from other expeditions, such as the five-week or bespoke, are referred to by different letters of the phonetic alphabet, such as “delta groups” or “whiskey groups”. Depending on the numbers of participants for each expedition, there will be a corresponding number of projects running.

For instance, on my first expedition there were just over fifty venturers. Endeavour try to average between eleven and fifteen venturers per group. This meant that they needed four alpha groups. For the first two phases, the alpha groups were either put on an adventure or community project, so there was two of each type, and on the third phase, all four alpha groups went on separate environmental projects. During changeover between each phase, the venturers are reallocated into new group combinations. The volunteer staff are also likely to be reorganised and work on different project sites. Hence, the alpha group call sign refers to the project site rather than to the group or the volunteer staff working on it at any particular time. Consequently there are three “alpha one” groups on every expedition.

During my second expedition, Callum decided that each phase would be known by different call signs so that each group “felt special” and unique; phase one was alpha, phase two was x-ray and phase three was zulu. At the end of an expedition is “wash up”, when the kit and buildings are cleaned at fieldbase. Wash up is also a period for the venturers and volunteer staff to reflect and celebrate their expedition achievements and to think about the future, post-Endeavour, by setting goals and targets.

According to Louis and Callum, each of these sections requires different behaviour, attitudes and skills from the venturers and volunteer staff. Volunteers complete a different type of project on each phase. Louis told me that the different projects offer venturers a range of opportunities for personal development and for learning skills. On a community phase, venturers live in pairs in a Nicaraguan household and provide unskilled labour in construction work. Louis said that as the venturers follow instruction from a local foreman and work alongside community members, they gain experience of working “cross-culturally”. On their environmental phase, venturers build their own hammocks and jungle camp from bamboo and work with park rangers on National Park conservation and
management. Louis feels that the environmental projects offer venturers the greatest opportunities for developing their leadership skills and initiative, as they are often left to carry out work independently while the overworked Park Rangers fulfil other duties. The adventure phase comprises three weeks of trekking with everything venturers need in their rucksacks. They navigate their way through the countryside and set up camp at a different site every night. Callum argues that this phase demands teamwork, mutual support, perseverance and endurance. While each project provides different “skill-sets”, a more general attitude is encouraged and to some extent expected of venturers and volunteer staff throughout all phases.

Wednesday 14\textsuperscript{th} October 2009
Venturer Induction
Second Ten-week Expedition
Fieldbase Classroom, Costa Rica

It is the night before the first groups depart for their phase one project sites. Louis and Callum gather the venturers in the fieldbase classroom. The venturers sit on rows of wooden benches, squashed up against one another and facing a small stage. They are noisy and the atmosphere is excitable. Tonight it is Callum’s turn to give the venturers’ a speech to mark their departure and give them some advice about how to conduct themselves during phase one. First, he summarises each project. This encourages the groups to stamp, cheer and clap when their project is mentioned. Callum seeks to promote competition between the groups by seeing who can make the most noise, asking which are going to complete their projects first, which will trek the furthest and which are going to be living in the toughest conditions. How “hardcore” a project is becomes a badge of honour for the groups, particularly for the boys but occasionally for the girls too. Claims and denials of relative “hardcore-ness” are used in joking relations and in teasing during exchanges of “banter”.\textsuperscript{23} The groups make up names for themselves based around the phonetic alphabet of their radio call signs. Example include: “The X-Ray Guns” (accompanied by kissing their biceps), and “The Alpha Dogs” (accompanied by wolf-like howls). Such names make reference to cult macho-movie Top Gun where the fighter pilots are identified by their call signs.\textsuperscript{24} Callum continues;

\textsuperscript{23} See chapter five for further explanations of joking relationships and humour.

\textsuperscript{24} Callum and Louis are fond of this film and always include it in the volunteer staff quiz the night before the venturers arrive.
It’s been an awesome induction. The vibe is set up perfectly for this to be an excellent expedition. You’ve all showed in this short time the amount you’ve come along and how much you’ll do over the ten weeks. So, before we get on the important task of partying, I have a few words of advice for you. Please make the most of every minute here. Get up and put a smile on your face. If you wake up saying that you will have a shit day, it will be shit. When you’re on trek, and have to put wet clothes on every morning, make a game out of it – put on those wet clothes with no expression on your face. Being hardcore is more than just going the fastest and hardest; ultimately, it comes down to P.M.A. – Positive Mental Attitude. So I’m going to teach you something. This is only to be used when you’re at your lowest point. When its pissing down with rain, you’re soaked to the skin, your hammock is like a piscina (swimming pool), your rucksack is soaked through, your sleeping bag is wet – you have no items of clothing that are dry, when your feet are covered in blisters and your shoulders are aching. When everyone is miserable, this is the time to “man-up”! This is what I want you to do;

Callum launches into a powerful and confident rendition of “Singin’ in the Rain” to which everyone eventually raucously joins in complete with hand motions. Being competitive, striving for the best and cultivating a positive attitude are ideal traits for dealing with the rigours of expedition, as in the future for other kinds of challenges, such as those in the labour market.

Figure 7 Speech on Terrace
Bonnie Urciuoli shows the prevalence of the idea of “skills” in education, to the extent that students have begun to think of themselves as “bundles of skills” (2009: 162). Education is seen to be the preparatory process for a career, where individuals learn to fit themselves to suit market needs, and “whose worth is defined by their possession and control of productive work skills” (Urciuoli 2009: 175). All aspects of the self, including knowledge, which is also represented as a “skill” are orientated towards production with an “ethic of entrepreneurial self-management” (2009: 162). While Urciuoli approaches persons as made up of skills, Heath (2007) shows how a person’s “personality” has also become a distinguishing feature for competitiveness in employability.

Sennett's (1998) analysis of working conditions argues that employees must constantly be improving themselves in terms of their skills. This is also evident in Born’s (2004) ethnography of the BBC. She describes how new technologies in programming required employees to learn new skills; “concepts of reskilling and multiskilling became part of the everyday lexicon as programme-makers were encouraged to think that technology meant they must never stand still,” (2004: 194). Non-permanent employees, those on a short-term contracts are responsible for their own professional development and do not receive training opportunities from the BBC. This is part of a further trend in society that holds the individuals responsible for their own future, education and employability. As Zygmunt Bauman notes, one is “told repeatedly that he or she is the master of his or her own fate” (2000: 39). Ulrich Beck (2002) supports this view arguing that individuals commonly look to themselves to sort out problems like unemployment rather than relying on collective support.

**EXPEDITION LIFE: FIELDBASE**

As well as providing venturers and volunteer staff with specific skills and personalities to boost their employability, the structure of the expeditions mimics the reality of the labour market and provides a space for volunteers to learn how to cope with instability and constant changes. Induction, changeover and wash up all take place at the expedition country’s fieldbase. In Costa Rica, fieldbase is on the outskirts of a small town, Alba, in the central valley. For most of the year, the climate is a balmy 25 degrees and each afternoon the rain hammers enthusiastically on the roofs of the converted farm buildings that Endeavour rent. Nightfall is prompt, and the dark takes over the landscape quickly, leaving only the pinpricks of darting fireflies and the glow of the town lights on the horizon. Endeavour rents three separate buildings from CATIE, *(Centro Agronómico*
Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, Centre for Tropical Agricultural Research and Education. Pronounced Cat-E-A) a pan-American institute, which owns a large amount of land in this area. As well as providing teaching and accommodation buildings for its affiliates, CATIE owns a working farm and dairy. Fieldbase is surrounded by coffee and sugar cane plantations, and from the windows of the staff room one can see dairy cows eerily queuing up in single file, without prompting, to be milked.

Nearest to the entrance of the farm are the house and the venturer toilet block. The house has a wide porch on three sides that surrounds the small, single story building. Inside are the volunteer staff quarters. Depending on the composition of the volunteer staff, these are sometimes designated as “girls” and “boys” dormitories or as mixed. The dormitory at the front of the house has three bunk beds and a single bed and the back has one bunk bed and six singles. The front dorm has a shallow walk in closet and a sink, while the back has built-in narrow shelves and a chest of drawers. When there is more than fifteen volunteer staff at fieldbase, such as during the induction and changeovers, the porches at the side and back of the house are used as “overspill”. Here, the volunteer staff sling up hammocks or find space on cheap foam mattresses. The corridors are lined with cupboards for storing kit. There is not much space, particularly when all the volunteer staff are on site. The building quickly gathers dust, dirt and debris. Once the sun rises, it is stifling hot and airless. The windows are covered in mesh to prevent mosquitoes entering and bars to prevent theft. The furniture is battered, scratched and often needs persuading, in the form of a shove or kick, to open or shut. The bunk beds are rickety and creak. Other beds consist only of coca cola crates, wooden boards and thin mattresses. The one luxury is the two hot showers – although one knob fizzes with electricity under a wet hand and the other often has a lizard in the tub.
There are three more bedrooms for the permanent staff. These rooms are private. While I was there, there were no signs or official requests that people did not enter them, but the doors were always shut. They are the only spaces that the country staff have just for themselves, as the rest of fieldbase is a mostly open plan communal space. This was respected and understood, and volunteer staff took no interest in their rooms. I only saw Callum and Louis rooms because I occasionally picked up their laundry bags for them. It took me several months to figure out that Louis had his own ensuite bathroom, while the rest of us (sometimes up to thirty people) shared two toilets and showers.

As well as Louis and Callum, Endeavour Costa Rica has two other permanent employees; Adriana, and Don Miguel. Don Miguel and Adriana are Costa Rican. Don Miguel is a local and lives in Alba. His official title is logistics and security coordinator, which means that he is in charge of the upkeep of the buildings and equipment. He is always referred to using the respectful terms “Don” or “The Don”. 25 He speaks little English but is very

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25 This references the film The Godfather, although Endeavour’s The Don is far more amenable and kind than Don Corleone. Film references are frequently part of Endeavour terminology and also feature in the end of phase skits which will be discussed in chapter five.
friendly and welcoming, greeting all the women with a kiss and a hug in the mornings and the men with a handshake. He told me many times how wonderful he thinks Endeavour is, and that he turned down a job with the Costa Rican electricity board, even though it offered him more money, to work with Callum and Louis. Adriana is from a middle class family in San Jose, is university educated and speaks English fluently. She has her own room like Louis and Callum. Her role is to recruit and support the host country venturers from Costa Rica and Nicaragua. She has also set up a strong alumni network in Costa Rica. They come back to fieldbase to help the new Costa Rican venturers during induction and to run introduction weekends for prospective Costa Rican venturers.

When the venturers arrive, they have use of their own toilet block near the house, a basic building of concrete floor and corrugated iron walls and roof. The showers are cold and are regularly blocked and overflow. The venturers sleep in ten-man army tents in the field, affectionately and ironically nicknamed “hotels”. The field runs along the road up to the two other buildings used by Endeavour.

![Figure 9 "Hotels"](image)

The bodega (warehouse) backs onto this field, and contains all the equipment and food needed for the expedition. Next to the bodega is an old shipping container that now contains shelves and in which the venturers lock their belongings in. As fieldbase is set within a working farm and dairy there are many farm workers around the buildings. These
are often Nicaraguan migrants who are poorly paid. Louis and Callum warn venturers that thefts can occur if belongings are not locked up. Across the road from the bodega are the office and terrace. During the day, the house and the tents become uncomfortably hot and stuffy and people congregate around the office. At the front looking out onto the road are Louis and Callum’s office and the radio room with the communications equipment.

Beyond these rooms, the space opens out into a large office with a series of desk areas separated into small carrels. The office is officially out of bounds to the venturers, but they can occasionally be found uploading photos onto a computer or discussing a problem with someone in Louis and Callum’s office or in the medical room. The staff room is at the back of the building. Ostensibly, it is private from the rest of fieldbase but each wall from chest height upwards consists of windows that are empty of glass and instead covered in a double layer of insect proof netting and thief proof iron bars so sounds carries into and from it. Callum repeatedly reminds the volunteer staff of this, admonishing them for discussing (gossiping) about the venturers. The terrace has a large rectangular concrete floor with a high corrugated iron roof and open sides. This is where events, meals and announcements take place. On the opposite side of the office is “Volcano View” a gravelled area with plastic chairs and tables that faces east towards Volcan Alba.
During induction, changeover and wash up fieldbase is full of people. The buildings are not large, and when the rain comes down and everyone takes shelter, fieldbase feels like it is overflowing with people as well as water. During these parts of the expedition everyone is running on a schedule. Induction is “packed” and time is structured so that specific tasks are completed efficiently. These tasks involve preparing for the phases and/or reflecting upon the achievements of the past phases. The participants are divided into smaller groups so that tasks are more manageable. There is also time to play sports, visit the town to access the internet or stock up on supplies, chocolate and toiletries in the local town. All the participants have to cope with being confronted with a new set of people each phase. They also relocate to a new project site, and begin working on a different type of project.

GROUP DYNAMICS: MAKING AND BREAKING BONDS

Embarking on Endeavour-life is already a big change for many of the volunteers. Life is communal; all aspects of daily living are undertaken with or amongst others. One of the Endeavour rules is that you are not allowed to go anywhere by yourself. Louis and Callum tell the expeditions that this is because Endeavour has had incidents in the past where people had been hurt or attacked while they were alone and then struggled to get help quickly because they were incapacitated. They relate that one tragic event resulted in the murder of a project manager. It is a strictly enforced rule. I quite like being alone and sometimes struggled to cope with having to be around others constantly. Others said they enjoyed this aspect the most and missed it after their expedition.

Sleeping, eating, washing and excreting are all undertaken side by side with people you have just met. Personal space consists of a hammock, bunk or “basher bed” (Figure 11). A basher bed is made by two tall A-frames of bamboo between which a hammock is tied. The hammocks are specially made in San Jose, and have slots along every edge that bamboo poles are slid into. These four lengths of bamboo balance the hammock on top of the A-frames to form a makeshift basher bed. For a hammock, two short lengths of bamboo are threaded through the shorter ends, where head and feet will rest. A waxed canvas is hung stretched out in a tent shape above either your basher or hammock to protect from the rain. This constitutes “home” for three weeks. It is not sound proof nor waterproof, and one is always visible.
Figure 11 Bashers in La Cangreja Environmental Project

Figure 12 Group Cooking Area, La Cangreja
Each morning and evening one or two different members of the group cook in big pots and the group gathers round on communal tables to eat together. To take a shower venturers carry basins of water up a gravel path from a nearby river, and soap up and rinse off in the open air. This is easier with a washing buddy to pour the water, while the other keeps their eyes shut against the soapy water, instead of attempting this alone. The toilet, aka “the long drop”, is a hole dug into the ground, sometimes with a seat of bamboo. For hygiene reasons, it is located away from the main camp, down a winding path deeper into the jungle. When the sun sets at five in the evening the only light is from the stars, the only noises are the stirrings of the jungle animals, and the rustling of trees and undergrowth. The path is scary – so, again, venturers do not do this alone. One uses “the facilities” while the other waits nearby in case they lose each other in the night, the jungle not loud enough to cover up bodily noises. Not only does the presence of someone else calm (perhaps irrational) fears of what lies unseen in the dark (and in the case of what is down the long drop it is better not to see), they are also following the Endeavour rules, and if either of them step on a snake or scorpion there is someone to get help.

As with many similar initiation rites in other parts of the world, venturers are expected to endure these hardships stoically (Sasson-Levy 2008; Spencer 1965). Venturers’ “positive attitude” symbolises getting into the “spirit” of Endeavour. Orna Sasson-Levy (2008) notes that the close physical contact experienced by soldiers in the Israeli army, who also eat, sleep and wash together, increased the soldiers sense of camaraderie. Similarly, Winslow (1999) argues that initiation rites in the Canadian Airbourne Regiment mean that strong group bonding occurs very quickly. Many venturers comment on the strength of the friendships they make during expedition, referring to them as “friends for life”. This is interesting given the short time frame of phases – just three weeks. Volunteers attribute the expected longevity of their new friendships to the greater “intensity” that they experience during expeditions in comparison to their daily lives at home. Shared endurance of hardships, increased reliance on one another and close physical contact increases the degree to which venturers feel that they “bond”. Venturers are also encouraged to be forgiving of and emotionally open with each other. During the Challenge Workshops, the pre-expedition training for the venturers, Tommy tells them to be more accepting of people’s quirks or irritating habits than they might normally be. He advises that they adopt an attitude to “let it go” rather than “holding on” to slights or grievances. Daily reviews – meetings whereby group members can voice any behaviour they see as unacceptable or discuss ways of cohabiting more effectively – mean that venturers and
volunteer staff either talk through their problems or “get over them”. Disagreements between individuals that are not brought up at reviews but continue to cause problems for the group will be addressed by the project managers through mediation or social pressure from the rest of the group to behave “properly”. Behaving properly entails being positive, working hard, being considerate of others, making a contribution to the group on the worksite, in conversation, in games, during reviews and doing chores. They must ensure that they “pull their weight” in the team. When problems cannot be resolved, Louis or Callum remove problematic individuals from their project site and send them back to fieldbase. If Louis and Callum judge that their “attitude” is not appropriate, they may even be sent home. The threat of this sanction is usually enough to persuade individuals to change their behaviour.

Sharing these daily rituals, forced openness and constant reminders of how one’s actions affect others, as well as being unable to hide anything from your new team means that people create strong bonds quickly. However, each phase entails building new close and personal relationships with relative strangers. Although it can be difficult at first, the groups usually end up finding a rhythm that works for everyone. For instance, the “morning people” who are chirpy, chatty and communicative at breakfast separate themselves out from those who do not feel social first thing. Although harmony can be achieved, it is always short lasted. Even despite the gripes and arguments that come with living so closely, there is no potential for long-term stability because any settled pattern is upset after three weeks at changeover when the individuals reform into new groups. These changes were often especially disorientating for people who felt that the groups were only just reaching high performance as a team when they are divided up and changed.

Volunteers are required to make and then break relationships quickly. This mimics the demands made upon employees who are required to redeploy on short term work units.

At fieldbase in Costa Rica, I stand looking over the shoulders of Louis and Sam, the current volunteer deputy expedition leader. Spread out on the table before them are small passport photographs of the venturers. They are clustered roughly into four groups. They are doing “allocations” – sorting the venturers into their project groups.

“How does this work then?” I ask.

“We need a spread across the groups,” Louis replies. “So we’ve got a couple of

26 Chapter five will deal with peer disciplining through humour.
internationals in each group”, he points out the photographs marked with green dots. 
“Host-country venturers,” and he shows me the three or four Nicaraguan or Costa Rican photos marked with red dots in every cluster. “Partnerships” he gestures to the photos marked with blue denoting the category of “disadvantaged” young people from Britain.
There are two or three in each group. “And the rest of them.” He sweeps a hand over the table, referencing the majority of the photos which are unmarked and signify young people from Britain who have paid, fundraised or been sponsored to volunteer. They make up half of the total photographs. “Then we make sure that genders are equal in each group,” Louis continues “and that we get a range of ages too.”
“And then we need to consider all the stuff that happened last phase don’t we?” Sam chimes in.
“Yes,” Louis replies, “Who got it on, who hated each other, who are really close friends. We need to break them up because those kinds of relationships can really mess up the group dynamics.”
Louis is referring here to relations that he would define as “exclusive”. A romantic relation, a close friendship or an antagonistic relation entails a fixed bond between two people to the exclusion of the rest of the group. For Louis, “group dynamics” describe the form and flow that relationships take. At Endeavour, groups are defined in terms of the different roles that can be undertaken in one. Dynamic signifies both action and continuous change, and this was seen to be the essence of the ideal group. Personal development is best served by pushing yourself out of your “comfort zone” and trying a new role, a new way of being. This should be a daily occurrence for everyone in the group, and fixed relations are therefore detrimental as they can impede this. One of the reasons that the groups are reallocated every three weeks is to enable individuals to keep changing their role by placing them in a new “dynamic”. A good dynamic would be when individuals are in equilibrium with each other and are able to switch roles without this causing difficulties.

The most significant role change in the project groups is the day leader. Although each group has two or three volunteer staff to manage the project work and the venturers, they are intended to act as facilitators rather than managers, teachers, or supervisors. In Spanish, they are called guías (guides) which encapsulates how Endeavour wants them to
approach their relationships with the venturers. This means they should empower the venturers to take on the responsibilities for all parts of the project. The day leader is one way in which this is achieved. Each day a different venturer becomes leader and makes decisions for what the group will do. The volunteer staff or the group as a whole decide on how they are chosen – sometimes using a rota, or venturers or the volunteer staff picking them each day – but everyone must do it for at least one day during every phase.

The day leader, either through consultation with their team, or by taking an executive decision, determines the structure and form of their day. They decide what time the group will wake up, eat their meals and take breaks. It is usually their responsibility to wake everyone up, “chivvy” those who are late and holding up the day’s work. On environmental projects, where the project work is relatively straightforward, the day leader might decide the targets for what the group will achieve that day. On the community phase where the local foremen have a stronger role in directing the work, the day leader might communicate to the group what needs to be done and split them into smaller work groups to work on what the foreman has directed. On the trek, the day leader plays a big role in supporting and motivating the group to keep walking to reach their next destination. The day leader may allocate further roles in the group, such as an assistant day leader or tools officer. Each group decides which roles they want to have, and what their responsibilities will be.

The day leader system is upheld as one of Endeavour’s unique means of facilitating personal development. Endeavour deploys a model of experiential learning that rests on the idea that by experiencing something you learn how to do it. Therefore, the rule that everyone has a day as day leader every phase is supposed to ensure that all volunteers get a chance to learn how to be a leader by experiencing being one. Louis and Callum believe that they are “natural leaders”, people who automatically take on a leadership role in a group. By changing the day leader every day, it forces those who may not normally take on a leadership role to do so, and forces those who might normally lead to follow someone else. On project sites the individuals in the group deal with a new “dynamic” daily. This prevents individuals from being and doing the same thing each day. Not only must

27 Despite the assessments by Head Office and the training by Louis and Callum, there are sometimes volunteer staff who as both Louis, Callum and Pippa, the Head Office volunteer staff recruitment coordinator, told me, “Just don’t get it,” and struggle to achieve the balance between leadership and guidance, which can cause frictions on project site and complaints from venturers who feel patronised.
relationships between different individuals be reformed at each phase, the structure and “dynamic” of the roles and relationships on project sites changes daily.

Changing roles each day pushes volunteers out of their “comfort zone”. Callum explained this concept during the project managers’ training. Drawing three concentric circles on the staff room whiteboard (Figure 13) he explained that persons have three zones of experience – comfort, stretch and panic.

![Figure 13 Comfort Zones](image)

He noted that the “comfort zone” has become a common sense term in the UK. Callum told us that people inhabit a safe space consisting of their familiar daily routine. In this non-anxiety, non-risk comfort zone, if nothing changes learning and performance remain at a constant level. For instance remaining in a comfort zone would entail occupying the same role in a group for the whole phase. Doing things that are new, feel dangerous, risky or are difficult pushes the volunteers outside of this zone into their “stretch zone”. This is the optimum zone for learning. In overcoming these new and stretching situations and finding they are still able to cope and achieve without going into a state of panic, persons “learn about themselves” i.e. what they are capable of. Forcing individuals to take on a different role each day stretches them because it is different from their normal behaviour. According to Callum, “Pushing yourself out of your comfort zone makes you stronger, a more rounded person.” In Callum’s view, simply being placed within a new group of people every three weeks with whom you must live and work closely, puts many people into their stretch zone – which is good because here they learn the most. Sam echoes this sentiment as she writes the project manager training manual;

At many times over the course of the next few months, many of us will feel out of their comfort zone. This is a good thing because it is by pushing our comfort zone
that we progress, learn and develop, and this of course is the ultimate aim of Endeavour.

**FLEXIBILITY AND RISK**

Flexibility is a common ethnographic idiom in my fieldsite appearing in different situations in Costa Rica and in Head Office. It has several different senses. It often refers to coping with risk and the unexpected, but it also means that people need to be malleable and accept what is asked of them. This is particularly important when Louis and Callum allocate the volunteer staff to projects. Project allocation is a difficult task and involves a variety of factors such as volunteer staffs’ specialist skills. Personalities are also important – getting the “dynamic” right within the team was seen as crucial for the whole group functioning well. When Louis speaks to the volunteer staff about allocations, he frequently uses the phrase “please be flexible”. This plea asks them to accept the projects they are given. He does not explain the different factors that affect where they will be placed, but assures them that all the projects are “brilliant” and they will have a “fantastic time” on all of them.

Flexibility frequently came up during introduction evening talks at Head Office and on volunteer staff assessments weekends as an essential characteristic. When I asked Louis if flexibility was important for how he allocated PMs to the projects, he replied

Flexibility - I guess we definitely see it as a positive, if the volunteer staff is flexible. Sometimes I think we are more flexible and accommodating for the more awkward ones though! If someone was not being flexible they would go down in my estimation of them and I would be more concerned about their ability to be a good project manager, but I don’t think I would give them a “bad” project because of it. You want your best people scattered across all the projects and in the most challenging locations.

Not only does expedition demand that people become flexible, they are also expected to be flexible on arrival.

During expedition, the venturers and volunteer staff learn how to be flexible by experiencing situations which requires them to respond to new and different situations, rely on others and be malleable to demands made upon them. Emily Martin (1994) shows how a similar form of experiential learning is also prevalent in human resources management. She accompanied a company-training day, which took workers to a high
wires course. Workers climbed forty-foot high structures and trees, supported by a rope and harness held by their colleagues.

the experience models physically the nature of the new workers that corporations desire: individuals – men and women – able to risk the unknown and tolerate fear, willing to explore unknown territories, but simultaneously able to accept their dependence on the help and support of their coworkers. In a word, *flexibility.*

(Martin 1994: 214)

Risk is an important aspect of what Endeavour do. For Endeavour, risk and fear stretches a person outside their comfort zone. Risk was also prevalent in the paperwork necessary for every project in the form of “risk assessments”.

**Tuesday 23rd June 2009**

Jungle Camp
Volunteer Staff Induction
Thirty minutes walk from Fieldbase, Costa Rica

Every induction at Endeavour includes a few days “jungle camp”. This serves both to test out the volunteer staffs’ pre-existing survival skills such as fire building, camp construction and orienteering as well as providing the opportunity to learn for those who have no previous skills. Callum also wants to know how the volunteer staff work together or whether they take on leaderships roles to help him decide who to put on each project with the venturers. On my first expedition, he assigns all the volunteer staff to a group consisting of four or five other people. He gives each group a “kit list”, a suggested list of belongings to take with them, a map and directions, a tent and food. I accompany Elise, Glyn, Neil and Callie. With supplies packed as demonstrated by Callum, each group walks off, backpacks bulging, in different directions. Neil and Callie navigate for my group and we walk for thirty minutes or so. We climb a steep hill up a dirt road and as we reach the top, we unexpectedly converge with several other groups. We call out hellos to each other and wonder who has messed up their map reading. Through a thicket of long grass and bamboo, someone spots the top of the Endeavour Land Rover, Bravo Two. We decide we must all be in the right place, ready to face some challenge Callum has concocted.

We push our way through the undergrowth along a narrow path past the Land Rover, calling out to Callum and Louis but getting no response. We emerge into a more open space and spot the pair. Louis is perched on a large rock, gazing pensively across a deep ravine. Callum is balancing (so it looks to me) on the edge of an old, decrepit bridge that
skims the tops of trees growing beneath it (Figure 14). With my fear of heights, even the sight of them both so near the edge rushes adrenaline through my system and punches me in the stomach.

Figure 14 Risk Assessment Bridge Test

While the steel girders look steady enough, the wood is mottled with lichen, missing in places and worryingly cracked with age. Callum hops back on to firm ground and begins the training session of risk assessment.

Callum: Would you cross this bridge with a group of venturers? What things would affect your decision?
John: It looks old, but steady enough if you avoid the rotten wood.
Louis: How would you know which parts are rotten before you cross?
Anna: A high wind or rain would make it more dangerous.
Josh: Especially if everyone is wearing packs because they’d catch the wind and make them more unstable.
Me: I don’t think I could go across at all, I’m terrified of heights.
Glyn: You could use one of the river crossing throw ropes to make people feel a bit safer.
Callie: You could put those who were scared in the middle of the group.
Louis: Would you take everyone across at the same time? What if the bridge can’t take the weight of you all?
The volunteer staff discusses how they might cope with venturers who are scared of heights, whether they would try to find another route or how they would handle this if it were the only way forward. Initially, Callum facilitates the discussion without providing answers; Louis throws a few devil’s advocate comments in to challenge the group to think further. Once discussion had petered out Callum sums up the discussion;

Essentially, you are all correct. When you’re on project it is you who has to make the judgement call. If you don’t feel comfortable doing something yourself, you shouldn’t ask venturers to do it. However, we do have a system and protocols for helping you make these decisions. Ideally, you should discuss any decision you’re not sure of with fieldbase. You will all fill out a risk assessment form before you got out on project, but this is not the end of the process. We expect you to continually be assessing risk and to make changes to your forms throughout the project. That’s why golf in the SITREP is “updates to risk assessment”.28

For each project, the volunteer staff fills out a prescribed form that details any possible risks on a project site, or while travelling to a project site. Callum explained how to use a matrix to assess the severity of risks (Figure 15). “This will become so natural to you that you’ll be calculating this in your head even once you’ve left Endeavour. I get emails from people telling me they’ve started doing it automatically whenever they start doing something new!” Callum jokingly tells us before he explains. A risk rating is decided based on the likelihood of something happening, and how severe that occurrence would be. So for example, a road traffic accident could result in death and so is an extreme severity. On Costa Rican and Nicaraguan roads, accidents are common, but the control measures Endeavour require to mitigate this risk should make an accident unlikely to occur. This reduces the overall risk rating to high instead of intolerable. Endeavour are unwilling to undertake most activities that are high risk, but driving is a necessity and is strictly controlled.

28 Each day the project groups use radios to communicate with fieldbase. This is done using “voice procedure”, a shortened version of speech to make it easier to understand one another over long distance, and “radio protocols” such as a SITREP which stands for situation report. This has eight parts designated by the phonetic alphabet alpha to hotel (A-H). Each part has a specific piece of information, such as the weather or the group’s location. Knowing what you should be hearing can help you to figure out what the message is when “comms are bad”, and the radio signal is weak and voices sound garbled. See chapter five for further explanation.
The risk assessment forms are the formal measure intended to mitigate against the unknowable and uncertain. It requires the volunteer staff to think ahead and plan for every imaginable eventuality. However, Callum and Louis recognise that a form cannot stand instead of human judgement, and the volunteer staff must be responsive and flexible to meet each situation. Endeavour clearly want to keep all their participants safe. Callum noted that it was also important for projects, especially the adventure projects, to feel dangerous and risky to the venturers. Therefore, he and Louis play up the perceived dangers to the participants, whilst instructing the PMs on how to minimise and control risk. Simpson, in her analysis of the gap year industry notes

As the industry seeks to establish itself as professional, it has increasingly been required to manage the perceived risks of its activities. Yet, simultaneously, the industry has needed to recognise that to some degree danger is a desired element of its programmes (Simpson 2005: 455).
Without the risk, the projects are not challenging for people, they will not be able to step out of their comfort zone hence they would not get the personal development opportunities that Endeavour seek to provide.

In Martin’s (1994) research the company organising the high wires course directly correlated its training days with coping with the current labour market. Martin quotes their brochure “Our survival in the 90s depends upon our ability to change our ways of doing things…looking forward to change as a challenge, taking risks and innovating” (1994: 212). Martin continues “The bodily experiences of fear and excitement deliberately aroused on the zip line and the pole are meant to serve as models for what workers will feel in unpredictable work situations” (1994: 213). Andy Furlong and Fred Cartmel (1997) argue that since the 1980s the labour market has become more precarious. They identify that managing risk is a resource in “flexible workplaces”. Endeavour is never as explicit as Martin’s company were, that they are training the participants into becoming flexible employees. But employability has become part of their way of thinking about what they do. One reason that Endeavour does not explicitly say that it teaches particular skills or traits is because of their experiential learning model. According to this model, each individual will have a unique individual experience, meaning that they will not all learn the same things. This also tells us much about their understanding of persons as unique individuals. The notion of persons as individuals will be developed in chapters three and six.

On expedition, people must be flexible and be able to adapt to all different levels of transient changes – within themselves, within their relationships with others, in their locations and daily activities. They must cope with risk, uncertainty and danger. Numerous writers over the last thirty years have commented how contemporary life seems to be characterised by change, precariousness and instability (Bauman 2000; Born 2004; Furlong & Cartmel 1997; Harvey 1989; Lash & Urry 1987; Martin 1994; Sennett 1998, 2004). In expecting and demanding flexibility, Endeavour is firmly lodged within a corporate, postmodern capitalist and neoliberal way of thinking that permeates society in Britain today. Endeavour was established between the late 1970s - early 1980s just around the time when neoliberal policies began to reimagine what a person, an employee and a citizen should be. Endeavour interacts with and is influenced by ideas, concepts, and approaches in circulation among businesses, the government, other charities and society as
a whole. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the ways in which these influences – Endeavour’s context – become part of Endeavour’s organisational world-view.

The kinds of risks, uncertainties, transient changes and the method of dealing with these – flexibility – while on expedition simulate the risk, uncertainties and transient changes found in the “everyday” or “normal” life within the British labour market. As I showed in chapter one, Sennett (2004) argues that the “culture of new capitalism” is characterised in the workplace by several challenges for employees. He argues that long-term careers in which a person stays in the same organisation and in the same type of job are no longer the norm. In the same way that businesses were undergoing processes of “flexible accumulation” (Harvey 1989), which allowed them to frequently shift focus depending on consumer demands, employees had to become flexible and fit into a new pattern of work. Sennett argues that due to this, employees had to learn to deal with shorter-term relationships as they move frequently between different tasks, jobs and places. In the same form, expedition participants experience these kinds of changes at every changeover when they start a new phase.

Born (2004) discusses the impacts of these phenomena and the impacts of Thatcher and New Labour’s policies on the BBC. Born argues that the push from outside the BBC throughout the seventies to the present, towards it operating with a business- and market orientated way of working caused major changes for workers and subsequently for the creative programming output. During the eighties work became increasingly casualised. Permanent jobs because less common and short-term contracts increased. This was largely due to government pressures for greater “labour flexibility” in broadcasting which sought to “deregulate labour markets, reduce the power of the trade unions and break up the bastions of the large integrated producer-broadcaster” (2004: 180). Over the next decade, attempts to improve efficiency saw employees subjected to successive waves of downsizing, redundancies, outsourcing and casualisation. The changes were represented as being beneficial to the work of the BBC. The previous protection from the insecurities of the free market was re-envisioned as having stalled creativity. The new rigours of the market would revitalise the BBC.

However, Born shows that the short-term contracts introduced by the BBC created an atmosphere of uncertainty and instability. In direct opposition to the rhetoric of the new managing director, this was essentially detrimental to creativity. Employees had to be searching for their next job while working on their current project, preventing them from
steady focus and commitment to their work. Not only was this stressful for many freelancers, but the “intensified competition” (2004: 210) and transient working relationships were not conducive to collaboration. Born’s interview material shows that her participants were constantly undergoing personal adjustments as they moved between different teams and bosses and had to adjust to different personalities and methods of working. As a means of protecting their future potential for employability colleagues would not share ideas in the same way they had in the past; “Ideas are effectively privatised; they become a currency by which future employment may be transacted,” (2004: 191).

Never standing still and being in a constant process of learning resonates strongly with one of Endeavour’s foundational tenets: development. Endeavour is a “youth development charity” which focuses on the personal development of its volunteers. Persons are construed as in constant progression. Sennett argues individuals are in “a state of living in pure process” (2006: 22) which Bauman calls liquid modernity. “Needing to become what one is the feature of modern living” (Bauman 2000: 32). Although development implies change, persons are not considered to be undergoing transformation. Martin’s (1997) exploration of “self-management” argues that continuous improvement, through retraining and reskilling, is seen as vital for the survival and progression of the “nation”, the corporation and persons. The shift of production modes in late capitalism, the rise of flexible accumulation and the drive for capital to have unrestricted flow has emphasised an understanding of persons whereby (Harvey 1989, 2005; Martin 1997):

The individual comes to consist of potentials to be realised and capacities to be fulfilled. Since these potentials and capacities take their shape in relation to the requirements of a continuously changing environment, their content, and even the terms in which they are understood, are also in constant change (Martin 1997: 247).

Callum was quite clear with me, when I asked him, whether an expedition changed people. “We don’t want to change people. We help people become more themselves.” Although many participants talk about how their experience was life changing, I never heard them express that they themselves had become something new. One participant wrote on her blog that she had been on

a voyage of self-discovery…My experience of working with young people in Central America was amazing. I don't like overusing that word, which I have a
tendency to but there is no other word to explain how amazing my time there was. I found myself. It's cheesy but true. I'd kind of disappeared for a while but over there I found out who I am.

Her statement that “I found myself…I found out who I am” reemphasises the point that Callum was making. They do not want to change people, but rather help them become more themselves.

While much of Louis and Callum’s expedition rhetoric is normative, it is not their intention to create a set of people who are all alike, or to change what the essence of a person is. Endeavour can change behaviour, attitudes and the way people conduct their relationships with others can be significantly changed without changing the core of a person. The idea of personal development assumes a constant stability of the essence of a person that does not change fundamentally. As they encounter new challenges that force them out of their comfort zone, they flex their outward behaviour around their core essence. At birth, the person already contains all the potentialities and capacities that need to be “drawn out” and “developed” throughout their life, in an on-going process.

Endeavour often refers to the expedition experience as a “personal journey”, which encompasses this notion of development by referencing a sense of moving through life. Jeanette Edwards’ (2000) research in the North of England also emphasizes the necessity for persons to continue becoming after birth, arguing that while personhood is conferred at birth, persons must also be “bred” through upbringing and social experiences (2000: 246). Personhood will be explored in greater depth in chapter six, but Endeavour’s efforts to create employability through their personal development techniques imagines an ideal worker as a non-static, flexible, and constantly in the process of becoming by always learning new skills.

ACQUIESCENCE
Sennett (2006) and Born (2004) both discuss how disruptive the shift of the labour market to flexible working can be for employees. Implicit in their texts is a criticism of market demands upon the individual. While on expedition the volunteers also undergo these demands, but to a greater extent, with change being more frequent and more transient than it is likely to be in the labour market. Yet they commonly express what an “amazing experience” expedition was for them. A year on from the beginning of my fieldwork, my
participants’ Facebook statuses hark back to this positivity, and revitalise old jokes from the expeditions.

A year today i [sic] was half way round the world doing some amazing things, meeting some amazing people and having an experience that has changed my life forever and for that i [sic] am thankful!

to 2A and all the amazing times we had cheers people here's to the next adventure

Big up to 2A ♥

love to all my 2A bitches and gentlemen ³⁰

Haha great comment sue [sic]!! I too am thinking about Endeavour and all the lovely people all the time. Since it was a year ago we all started that amazing time together [sic]!! Xx

Why is transient change acceptable and manageable in this context, to the extent that people talk about their experience as “life changing” a year after its end? One comment Louis made to the volunteer staff during induction is pertinent here. He said that expedition was a safe space for the venturers to try things. For example, they can try teamwork or leadership but there are relatively few penalties if things go wrong. Your teammates may get annoyed with you if you make mistakes, or you may experience belligerence if you adopt an unpopular leadership style. Ultimately though, the expedition does not “matter” in the same way that these activities could while employed. You cannot lose your job, get a bad reference or damage your reputation. What happens on expedition has little formal impact upon lives back at home. Hence, it provides opportunities and possibilities to “test things out”.

Volunteers frequently draw a distinction between “expedition life’ and “the real world”. “The real world” is conceptualised as something “big and scary” from which expedition provides an escape. Every day responsibilities such as paying rent or bills, earning the money to do so, and obligations to family and friends are taken away on expedition. Inside the “Endeavour bubble”, participants are emotionally safe. I propose that this therefore

²⁹ The expedition codes form part of a sense of communality and identity for volunteers.
³⁰ “Bitches and gentleman” refers to an on-going joke from one of the group’s phases.
means that the experience of constant change is not traumatic in the way that they could be in the “real world”. However, in other ways, expedition was more intense than “real life”. I argue the transient changes expected of participants replicate and amplify the precarity and constant change experienced by those in the labour market. Furthermore, undergoing transient changes that are a positive experience conditions these young people to be comfortable with transient change in their lives at home. It is through this that Endeavour expeditions have the potential to increase employability. This is to the extent that, according to Alison, 91% of graduates who were unemployed and received funding from the Department for Business, Skills and Innovation to go on an expedition are now in employment. As well as providing the opportunity to learn to be flexible by experiencing being flexible, the positivity of the learning experience means that they learn to like being flexible too.
This chapter describes one of Endeavour’s alumni programmes in order to explain some of the factors that influence an organisation operating in the context of the current UK charity sector. I will describe what is at stake in this programme and how it is negotiated and understood by different employees. The programme is part of Alison’s plan to ensure the charity’s survival, which I described briefly in chapter one. The programme aims to utilise Endeavour’s alumni to “create a community of active global citizens”. However, the programme is funded by the government. This funding comes with auditing requirements that ultimately defines what the programme can be like, and thereby delimits the practices of citizenship that are possible. These practices reinforce the idea that citizenship should take the form of individual responsibility for social problems, or “global issues” as Endeavour describes them. I argue in this chapter that Endeavour becomes mediator between the state and citizen, and audit acts as the mechanism for the redeployment of the state.

In 1997, Labour created a new government department, the Department for International Development (DfID) with the dual aim of managing overseas development as well as stimulating British support for development and aid (Biccum 2007: 1113). In 1999 DfID’s strategy paper specified its role as “monitoring public opinion” and “evaluating individual activities” in relation to international development (Biccum 2007: 1113). The institution of the Millennium Development Goals in 2000 and a series of public “spectacles” significantly raised the profile of development in public forums (Biccum 2007: 1114). In 2009, Endeavour received just under £300,000 over three years from DfID’s Development Awareness Fund (DAF) to set up and run the Global Ambassador programme. The Ambassador Programme teaches alumni about development and “global issues” so they in turn teach their peers and thereby raise awareness of the “importance and value of international development”. Any interested alumni can sign up to be a Global Ambassador. They attend a residential training weekend to learn about international development and develop communication skills to teach their peers about it. The funding covers every aspect of the programme; a new employee at Head Office, the global youth coordinator called Fozhan, part of Charlie’s salary, the costs of the programme such as the staffing, venue hire, food and travel for the training weekends, marketing materials, website expansion and IT, as well as finance and administration.

**ENGAGING ALUMNI**
Alison represents the Ambassador programme as part of Endeavour’s “continued commitment” to developing a stronger connection with its volunteers once they return from expedition. One of Alison’s main concerns throughout her time at Endeavour has been to foster Endeavour’s alumni as one of the struts that will support the charity and ensure its survival. She said to me at a meeting before I left for Costa Rica that if the alumni did not support Endeavour it did not deserve to survive. She meant primarily that Endeavour must keep alumni engaged by staying abreast with their concerns. She hopes this will ensure both financial support through donations (a number of Endeavour alumni are in the top 100 of Britain’s rich list) and assistance by volunteering on training and promotional events. As mentioned in chapter one, Endeavour’s “fourth challenge” is also significant in establishing the charity’s connection to volunteering in Britain, which could open up greater funding possibilities from trusts or the public sector. In order for the fourth challenge to work, Endeavour needs alumni to stay in contact with the charity and use it as a portal for volunteering opportunities. Alison felt that any inability to “engage alumni” means that Endeavour are not doing or saying the right things. Others have differing opinions. Louis, for instance, remarked that in any group of people, there is only likely to be a small percentage that have the initiative, motivation and drive to continue undertaking extracurricular activities such as continued involvement with Endeavour. His argument is credible, but not one, I imagine, that Charlie or Alison would be likely to accept, as it does not conform to their ambitions.

Charlie expressed to me that she faced a constant battle trying to “engage alumni”. She thought that while alumni felt very connected to the venturers and volunteer staff on their expeditions, and an affinity to those who had been to the same expedition country, they did not seem to feel a connection to Endeavour as an organisation or a charity. She asked me why I thought this was, what the “psychology”, as she termed it, was behind it. I suggested that perhaps this rested on the relationship that Endeavour builds with its alumni. Employees are careful never to treat the prospective volunteers as consumers with the rights of customers.\(^31\) Despite this, employees want to please. They provide a service, essentially, for which there is no obligation to return anything on the part of the venturers or volunteer staff who see their “fundraising targets” as financial remuneration. On expedition, venturers and volunteer staff form relationships with each other through their shared experience and continue to maintain these bonds after expedition. They never form

\(^{31}\) See chapter four for further discussion of this.
this kind of relationship with the organisation itself, they only have a distant connection with it, and so never seek to maintain a relationship with Endeavour. Endeavour as an organisation (which here read as Head Office) has not made demands upon volunteers. The efforts that Charlie steadfastly makes to request information and “engagement” from them is unprecedented, and the large majority do not respond.

Nevertheless, the Ambassador Programme was in part a response to alumni feedback that requested more centrally run Endeavour reunions/events. Part of the promotion for the Ambassador Programme training weekends stressed that it was an opportunity for a reunion with expedition friends, and to feel the “Endeavour buzz” again. Alumni feedback had recommended that Endeavour make more effort to combat “Endeavour blues”, a form of depression resulting from missing expedition life. Callum explained that expedition is an extremely “intense period”, filled with challenges, accomplishments and positive energy or “buzz”. After expedition, alumni return to their old lives, having “experienced so much, and most likely having “changed a good deal in themselves”. Their “old” lives in the “real world” may therefore be rendered dull, boring and depressing. Periodically, alumni from my fieldwork update their Facebook statuses affirming they are suffering from “Endeavour blues”. This usually prompts comments of other alumni agreeing they are suffering too. They often organise a reunion so they can relive their experiences via storytelling. The informal alumni network therefore acts as a form of emotional support. Callum and Louis encourage this, warning volunteers that their loved ones at home will soon grow bored of their expedition stories, and that they will need their expedition friends to help them remember and relive it. The Ambassador Programme training weekends therefore attracted alumni who missed expedition, and at one weekend, caused problems for Tommy because they were more concerned with recapturing the “buzz” and having fun, than focusing on the tasks Tommy was asking them to carry out.

As well as seeking to strengthen links with alumni, the Ambassador Programme also seeks to fulfil aspects of Endeavour’s mission statement. In having charitable status through their registration with the Charity Commission, Endeavour must have aims that the law judges as charitable. Endeavour has a lengthy document that details their “strategic objectives” and how these are linked into the specific “charitable purposes” the organisation is founded on. To make it easier for employees describing what Endeavour
does, this is condensed into the mission statement; “to create a community of active global citizens”.

The Ambassador Programme proposal to DfID states that;

Endeavour’s Global Ambassador programme will create a network of highly motivated, skilled and knowledgeable young people to promote awareness of international development issues including global interdependence and the role an individual can play in working towards issues such as poverty reduction.

Fozhan, the employee recruited to run the Ambassador Programme also described it to me as a means of support for Ambassadors. However, rather than emotional support she means in their capacity as global ambassadors. For her, a network allows Ambassadors to exchange ideas, encourage and spur one another on. She foresees this occurring via social media such as Facebook groups, and through “Regional Action Groups” who would meet regularly, perhaps organise things collectively or at least meet up to swap success stories. This is already happening to a certain extent among alumni, although without the rubric of raising awareness of international development. However, Endeavour is anxious to gain greater involvement with these informal networks. Charlie is aware that many alumni go on to fundraise for other charities after they finish an expedition. Periodically, she receives letters from alumni. Some of these thank Endeavour for inspiring them to raise money for other charities, which Charlie feels half-pleased and half-frustrated by, “It’s great that they are raising money for charity, that’s never going to be a bad thing – but we need help fundraising too! Why don’t they ever think of us?!” Other went as far as to request information to enable them to fundraise for other charities. For instance one alumnus wanted the maps and route cards of a trek he had done with Endeavour so that he could repeat it with a group to raise money for a related issue but a different charity.

The proposal states;

This network will be recruited from Endeavour’s alumni who have first hand experience of volunteering with communities in developing countries… Endeavour’s alumni have indicated that Endeavour needs to embed international development messages and information into all of its training and support to provide the necessary information, debate, discussion and desire to take action. Support and training is also required by the network in how to reach out to other young people through online, face-to-face and other media. As a result, Endeavour

32 Employees expressed that the phrase “active global citizen” was vague and they were not sure what it meant. In Endeavour’s 2012-13 strategy, this phrase has been dropped in favour of “global community”.

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will generate in-depth understanding of international development issues among a network of young people who can cascade that to their peers across the country.

However, implementing these stated goals is less simple than it first seems, as the programme has become the catalyst for disagreements over Endeavour’s objectives as various actors seek to mould the programme for their own purposes. Fozhan job title is “global youth coordinator” and her job description states that;

The post holder’s primary responsibility will be to plan and deliver our new programme. This programme, funded by DfID will target alumni and train them as global ambassadors to promote awareness of international development issues and Endeavour. The post holder will be responsible for identifying and bringing together educational materials and resources and for recruiting global ambassadors from the alumni network. The post holder will deliver the programme through training workshops, residential weekends and social media networks.

Her primary concern is the need to fulfil DfID’s criteria.

Fozhan: Setting up the Ambassador Programme has been tricky because it’s getting pulled in different directions. The target is to embed international development on the Endeavour journey. Training will be provided and added into the journey, and post expedition alumni will create a network to become advocates for development. The main issues to focus on are in line with DfID’s DAF, such as the MDGs. We’ve kept it broad. Endeavour works in line with the MDGs, they’re in our mission and it’s really about going forward from the MDGs.33

But, some employees at Head Office are dismissive of Endeavour’s collaboration with DfID and question why they are doing it. They argue international development is not why volunteers are on expedition and criticise that the SMT are doing it just “to satisfy a bid”. Tommy told me he saw evidence of this during one of Fozhan’s workshop trials during a challenge workshop.34 The young people did not seem to understand why they were having a session on development and not all of them were interested in it. Fozhan is in the middle of a host of other employees wanting her to fulfil a series of different desires and expectations

33 The United Nations established the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2000. They specify a series of globally agreed goals and indicators to counter poverty, an approach that has come under attack for oversimplifying poverty (e.g. Green 2006; Hulme & Green 2005).

34 A challenge workshop is the first introductory residential weekend that the venturers attend to meet each other and find out more about Endeavour once they have committed to raising the funds to go abroad.
Fozhan: Some people struggle with the idea, because they don’t see Endeavour as a development agency, and think that that’s not what people are signing up for. What we’re hoping is to trigger an interest pre-expedition, help them see a bigger picture that they may not have been aware of. During projects, the PMs can cascade some information and then the venturers can take that further if they want and become an ambassador…This is a new direction for Endeavour and it establishes it, and sets ourselves against other gap year organisations.

Fozhan was determined that she would concentrate on this in the programme, but the SMT also had its own ideas about how the programme could benefit Endeavour more broadly.

Fozhan: In terms of the organisational objectives, they are about the ambassadors doing advocacy work at schools etc, and raising awareness of development, but it’s about their experience on Endeavour.

For the SMT, their interests lie with ensuring the survival of Endeavour. They hope that the Ambassador Programme will contribute to this by raising Endeavour’s credibility through its association with DfID, and creating a distinctive charitable mission to other gap year projects. Furthermore, more trained ambassadors “out there” discussing international development and its connection to the work Endeavour does further “raises their profile” and concurrently provides another recruitment method. Endeavour’s most successful recruitment technique is what they call “word of mouth”, their alumni telling other people about their experience and encouraging them to go on expedition. They want to utilise alumni more effectively to increase this form of recruitment. While the Ambassador Programme is about communicating development, the SMT also saw it as another means to market Endeavour and to use the ambassadors as unpaid recruiters for expeditions, creating another recruitment stream.

However, recruiting for Endeavour was not why alumni became ambassadors. They are concerned with their own motivations for taking part; whether this is to improve their employability through learning new skills, seeing old friends from expedition or wanting to continue charitable work fighting “global issues” and poverty. During the second Ambassador Programme training weekend I attended in June 2010, several alumni challenged what they saw as a potential conflict between raising international development awareness and promoting Endeavour. For the SMT, this distinction is blurry, they want to do both and see the latter reinforcing and leading to the former. This is not the case for one alumna, who suggests that Endeavour is not being honest about their intentions, and therefore feels manipulated. She has completed two expeditions, one as a
PM and a second as a DEL, and questioned Fozhan on the Ambassador Programme’s purpose.

Ellen: (In an aggressive and exasperated tone) Are we being asked to promote Endeavour here?

Fozhan: It’s really up to you. If that’s what you want to do. We’re hoping that through your experiences on Endeavour you’ll be able to raise awareness about development. We’d like you to use those experiences to tell people yes, about Endeavour, but also about the development message.

This challenge prompted Tommy, the trainer, to raise a similar point to Charlie and myself as we got some fresh air away from the rest of the group during a break between sessions. He firmly advocates the ambassadors needing to engage with and talk to the public. He feels that to justify spending public money the programme has to benefit the public somehow. However, he noted that currently the message is blurred.

The programme is alternatively required to engage alumni with the charity to increase the likelihood that they will donate to Endeavour; emotionally support alumni in the aftermath of expedition to cope with “Endeavour blues”; to create an alumni network to inspire and spur discussions about development and “global issues”; function as a further volunteer recruitment method; and ensure some form of “public benefit”. Equally, in order to keep the funding for three years, Endeavour has to prove that it is fulfilling the requirements of the funding by providing a range of auditing data to DfID. Fozhan’s task of negotiating all these demands is not an easy one.

AUDIT AND ALUMNI

Audit has become associated with the neoliberal label, as Peter Pels puts it, “auditing and accounting have become the operational signs of the global spread of neoliberal values” (2000: 135). With its origins in financial accounting, audit is now a “taken-for-granted process of neo-liberal government and contributing substantially to its ethos” (Strathern 2000: 3). The example that I present in this chapter demonstrates the way in which the state diverts state functions via a non-state body, seemingly an example of the “roll-back” state whereby the state appears to recede and lessen regulation, but actually continues to maintain control (Peck & Tickell 2002: 388). It also shows the way in which this non-state body is both subject to and propagates “the accompanying rhetoric...of helping (monitoring) people help (monitor) themselves” (Strathern 2000: 4). It does this through
the auditing practices that it stipulates as the requirement for receipt of funding. Endeavour must prove continually that it is “hitting targets” and “achieving goals” or the money will be rescinded. This requirement for evidence shapes the programme, and accordingly shapes the practices of citizenship that it encourages alumni to execute. These emerge as individually orientated, advancing the neoliberal emphasis on individual responsibility as the states appears to withdraw.

At Head Office, I sit next to Charlie, the individual donor and alumni manager. She is surrounded by paper, tapping into a calculator, frowning, scribbling notes, scratching out notes, returning to the calculator and at last realises, that I am obtrusively watching her. Self-conscious at once, she sighs, “Sorry, you must think I’m crazy with all this mess, my desk isn’t usually this disorganised.” I ask her what she is doing and she explains that she is filling out “another” report for a funding body. It is a big part of her job and one that she does not enjoy, although she hastily informs me that she knows it is “really important”. Much of this requires long-winded calculations – which Charlie openly admits she barely understands herself. Her current state of disarray is due to her realisation that while doing a long list of calculations for the current report, she had referred back to one submitted previously to check some figures. In checking, she noticed she had done the wrong calculations. (I still do not understand exactly what she was calculating and in what way she had done it wrong). She is now horrified at her mistake, but even more horrified that the funders had not picked up on this. “These take me weeks to do, there’s no way we can get away without doing them, and they might not even read them!” she complains in exasperation.

Rose’s (1989) writing on governmentality, which draws strongly on Foucault, has been influential for many analyses of auditing practices. As I explained in my introduction, governmentality is a concept aiming to grapple with the growth of new technologies of government. These technologies focus on inducing citizens’ self-government, what Rose terms subjectivity.35 A key part of Rose’s argument rests on the idea that new modes of

35 While I am sympathetic to Rose’s analysis (and those that use him) I choose to focus here on personhood rather than on ideas of subjectivity. This is because, as Rose rightly points out, the notion of the self is something that has come into being, it is not a natural nor self-evident category. I argue that the notion of the individual self is itself a model of personhood. Looking at personhood instead of subjectivity allows me to foreground social relations rather than individuals’ inner thoughts or feelings. My focus is on neoliberalism as a social process. Rose’s weakness, as pointed out by Kipnis (2008), is that he doesn’t have ethnographic
governance occur “at a distance”, appearing as something other than direct domination by the state. Peck and Tickell (2002) refer to this as the shift from roll-back to roll-out state. In charting the historical transformations of neoliberal government, they argue that the initial form of neoliberalism evident in the reign of Thatcher/Reagan in the 1970s was characterised by the withdrawal of the state from social provision and an emphasis on deregulation. The recession of the 1980s triggered a transmogrification of neoliberalism as it sought to deal with the problems that it itself had caused (Peck and Tickell 2002). “Regulatory reform” and processes of “active state-building” ran alongside a “deeply interventionist agenda” around social issues such as crime and welfare (2002: 384, 389). This form of “roll-out” neoliberalism saw the voluntary sector becoming part of a devolved state apparatus in the “service of neoliberal goals” (2002: 390). This entailed new “technologies of government”, such as auditing. Suzan Ilcan and Tanya Basok (2004) argue a similar process has occurred in Canada whereby voluntary agencies have taken on service provision as public services are depleted through practices of outsourcing and privatisation. They argue that voluntary agencies emerged as ideal sites for the exercise of governmental strategies.

Governance at a distance does not just entail the state acting through intermediaries. In her analysis of volunteer counsellors, Liz Bondi notes that the professionalization of the psychology sector has also entailed a form of “governing at a distance”.

Professional status confers autonomy on practitioners who are deemed to have internalised and to embody the knowledge and the conduct required for professional practice. In doing so it recruits practitioners into modes of action that express autonomous, decision-making agency, at the same time as submitting to disciplinary mechanisms (Bondi 2005: 109).

This mode of self-management enables the state to withdraw from direct governance as citizens become imbued with a neoliberal subjectivity where it is natural for them to monitor and thereby govern themselves. Strathern argues of the government,

if they make explicit the practices whereby people check themselves, they can ostensibly withdraw to the position of simply checking the resultant indicators of performance. Their intervention has already taken place: in the social adjustment data to inform and enrich his argument. His work remains abstracted and removed from social life. I argue that focusing on personhood allows a grounded investigation of how neoliberal ideology and practices informs our understanding of what a person should be like in British society today.
which corporations, public bodies and individual persons have already made to those self-checking practices now re-described as evidence of their accountability to the state (Strathern 2000: 4).

In Charlie’s case, the funding body does not even have to check her monitoring reports for her to be deeply anxious about ensuring that they are correct and fulfilling her sense of individual responsibility to report her progress. Loïc Wacquant seeks to present a new way of analysing neoliberalism by converging two previously opposed analytical frames. He argues that analyses of neoliberalism as an economic ideology focus too exclusively on the entrenched relation between state, capital and markets. Work on governmentality, such as those described above, looks at governing techniques outside the state, emphasising “contingency, specificity, multiplicity, complexity and interactive combinations” (2012: 70). For Wacquant

these two conceptions converge in obscuring what is “neo” about neoliberalism, namely, the remaking and redeployment of the state as the core agency that actively fabricates the subjectivities, social relations and collective representations suited to making the fiction of markets real and consequential (Wacquant 2012: 68, original emphasis).

This chapter presents an example of Wacquant’s proposed approach. I look at how the state is being redeployed through Endeavour so that it no longer has to intervene. The Ambassador programme, subject to technologies of calculation that inform the approach of the programme’s designer, Fozhan, subjects its participants to these same technologies.

Sunday 28th March 2010
Day Two
Global Ambassador Training Weekend
East Grinstead Scout Camp, UK

The group is settled in a circle of chairs again. Helen (an Endeavour trainer), Charlie (alumni manager) and Fozhan (global youth coordinator) are at the apex, a slightly greater space between them and the others in the group marking their status as the facilitators. It is Sunday morning and I am struggling to stay awake. Yesterday was day one of my first Global Ambassador weekend. In the evening, I had to the chance to catch up with several

36 Helen works as a consultant for Endeavour, acting as facilitator at their training weekends. Endeavour always uses facilitators in their training to manage the group and encourage the participation of every individual. Fozhan is new to Head Office and has been recruited to set up the Global Ambassador Programme.
friends from Costa Rica who I had not seen in six months. We shared several cans of lager and stayed up until the early hours of the morning. A prompt start at seven this morning complete with a cooked English breakfast swimming in grease and a selection of favourite Endeavour “energisers” had sapped whatever reserves of energy I may have had left. I look around at the rest of the group; eight male and nine female, ranging in age from 18 to 60. Only three were volunteer staff, the rest are venturers, plus Helen, Fozhan and Charlie from Head Office. Over half of the group went on expedition to Costa Rica, spread across both the expeditions I participated in. Most of them also look bleary eyed. The giggles and laughter produced by an energiser in the rain which had us running around and then hauling each other into hugs when Helen shouted “stop!” has now dissipated. Everyone is quiet and listening to Helen.

Helen: I think yesterday was really great, we heard some really powerful and compelling stories about your experiences on expedition. I found them very moving. Day one of this weekend was all about plugging any gaps in your knowledge about development and global issues. Day two is going to be about action. We’re going to cover different skills, like presentations, and new media, which I am not an expert on at all, I’m sure you all know lots more about it than me. The aim is to think about what we’re going to do about what we learnt yesterday. Acknowledging that we’re only scratching the surface of these issues, how can you spread the development message, in a way that works for you. We don’t want to be prescriptive here but it’s important to think about what’s effective. So we’re going to do an impact matrix. Each group will get seven suggested actions on these coloured pieces of card, and two blank ones for you to put your own ideas on. We’d like you to put them in a diamond shape on the wall and rank them, the best at the top. Fozhan’s going to introduce you to the impact matrix so you can evaluate these actions. You can break them down by considering a set of questions.

Fozhan stands up next to the flipchart paper stand and grabs a marker pen, sketching out a version of the table below:

37 Although alcohol consumption is banned during expeditions, it is allowed for those over 18 at these weekends.

38 An energiser is a physical game that is supposed to “energise” by making the group move their bodies, laugh, touch and interact with one another. See chapter five for further explanation.
Fozhan: Ok, so, in an impact matrix you consider two things. The impact an action will have and how easy it is to do. For impact you think about high, medium or low impact as in how many people will it reach? The more people the higher the impact. And then the next thing to consider is what would you have to do to make it happen? Would it be hard, medium or easy? Actions that you can put into the top right category have the highest impact and are the easiest to do, so they would go at the top of your diamond. Ones in the bottom left category are hard to do and have a low impact so those actions would go at the bottom of the diamond. The ones in between you have to weigh up the impact against how easy there are to do, and whether the effort is worth the impact. Here’s some blue tack.

In groups of four, we huddle around our card sets, laying them out on the floor. My group sits on chairs and leans low with our hands on knees, propping up our heads as we study the writing on the cards. The actions ranged from starting a blog, to screening a film about a particular issue to writing something for a local newspaper. They fall into two broad categories: organising an event at which people listen and watch a film or presentation or writing something that people could read and distributing it through some form of media.

We sort ours quite quickly, and add two of our own. Emily, a venturer who I spent two days trekking with in Costa Rica mentions that although she learnt a lot yesterday, she feels like she needs to know much more to be able to tell other people about international development. I agree with her and suggest that maybe that could be an action, to make a commitment to keep learning about it. She kneels down onto the floor to write our suggestions on the two spare cards with a marker pen. For our other blank card, Naomi suggests something to do with Fairtrade. Liking the idea, Howie says “It would be great to let people know how many fair-trade products are out there - you could have a fair-trade
party where everyone brings a dish made from fair-trade food”. Naomi gets excited about this and says you decorate the venue with the flags and colours of the different countries where produce comes from. Our last card is decided. Now we order them. The group agrees that the first thing anyone would need to do is to make sure they know enough. This will have the most impact too because it will reinforce all the other actions. The others we assess in relation to the others in terms of the matrix.

Figure 17 Sorting Action Cards

Helen has been moving around the room listening to groups’ discussions. She comes over to our group to see what we have written on our blank cards. She asks about the first one: Commit to continue learning about international development.

Helen: Tell me about this card. Do you think it’s an action like we talked about with the matrix?
Emily: We felt it was, because it’s important to make sure you know all about development before you go and speak to other people about them
Helen: Well that’s what this weekend is for really, what we did yesterday was to help you understand all those issues.
Me: But you mentioned that we only really scratched the surface of those issues, and development is quite complex so we felt it was important to acknowledge the commitment needed to continue learning about it.
Helen: Well, ok, it’s your card so I don’t want to tell you what to put on it, but I
suppose we thought that’s assumed before you do any actions. We’re going to feedback to the whole group now so perhaps we can discuss it together.

Figure 18 Discussing Action Diamonds

All the participants gathered around each group’s diamond and one spokesperson from the group explained their decisions. The groups all ranked their cards differently, mostly because they had different ideas as to how many people each activity would reach. The activity was about being able to assess which would be the most “productive” action ideas. The other groups discounted our action because it did not fit the matrix.

Productive in the Ambassador Programme context means actions that disseminate information, either via an event or through some form of written or visual media in order to reach the maximum number of people possible. This links directly to DfID’s goal to raise development awareness amongst the UK public. Throughout the training weekends, in my meetings with Fozhan, and on the website, the Ambassador Programme reiterates that action is the goal – getting Ambassadors to do something “tangible” about “global issues”.

One reason for this is to make it easier for Fozhan to provide solid numerical data to DfID. For instance, by getting alumni to use sanctioned Endeavour social media, such as their
Regional Action Group pages and Facebook group, Fozhan is more able to track their activities and fulfil the requirements of the bid. Alumni engagement, an emotional support network and a network to inspire each other are supplementary goals to the programme, goals that emerge in the slim spaces between the numbers and data required to satisfy the funding proposal. Every aspect of the Ambassador Programme is orientated towards the DfID DAF proposal audit categories:

- Project Outcomes (what the project will achieve)
- Project Indicators (using measurable data to prove the project has achieved its outcomes)
- Project Activities (how the outcomes will be achieved),
- Project Inputs (what the project will need to achieve the activities),
- Monitoring and Evaluation (how the project will measure its own progress and who will be responsible for this)

The outcomes are to increase knowledge and understanding of international development issues. Questionnaires rating volunteers’ understanding indicate whether the Ambassador Programme achieves the outcome. Further indicators track the number of Ambassadors, and the number of people that Ambassadors’ reach. Project activities mainly consist of the training weekends, but include designing other workshops for different stages of expedition. Activities also covers making relevant resources available. Inputs are Fozhan’s job; managing the programme. Monitoring and evaluation includes tracking the type of activities and discussions Ambassadors participate in. Kipnis (2008: 282) argues that making the activities of individuals or organisations “visible and legible” are techniques to render subjects governable. Similarly, in tracing audit practices in higher education in the UK, Shore and Wright (2000) show how assessing “teaching quality” is more concerned with the production of evidence of concrete products, such as course outlines, than an academic’s ability to inspire students. Michael Power argues that these techniques demonstrate that

… what is being assured is the quality of the control systems rather than the quality of first order operations. In such a context accountability is discharged by demonstrating the existence of such systems of control, not by demonstrating good teaching, caring, manufacturing or banking (Power 1994: 15).
Despite the fact that knowledge and understanding of international development is the main project outcome, and increased knowledge is specified as an indicator, learning is not productive because it cannot be directly translated into the project’s monitoring and evaluation criteria. Learning is the preparation that takes place at the Ambassador weekend, rather than a continual process for the Ambassadors. The assumption is that the Ambassadors already “know” about development because they have “done” it. As Fozhan expressed it “they have witnessed development by going on Endeavour”.

For the Ambassador Programme, action is defined by whether it has a measurable output. Endeavour’s role is to teach their volunteers via the expeditions, and “embedded” training before, during and after expeditions (in the form of workshops or facilitated discussions) and then Ambassadors should go and do “actions” based on their improved knowledge and understanding. Ilcan and Basok (2004) report a similar process whereby volunteer agencies’ practices are constrained by the funding requirements from the state. In Canada, funding for social justice-orientated advocacy, one of the main roles of volunteer agencies, has dwindled, with the new focus being on service delivery. They argue that the shift in funding has meant the state has been able to change thinking about what it means to volunteer, and as such, represent a technology of governance that shifts responsibility for service provision from the state onto individual citizens through volunteer agencies. Endeavour is using the same techniques that the state applies to it, upon its volunteers.

Reaching the greatest amount of people is key. This is represented by the methods Fozhan advocates; “Update your Facebook status, tweet!” she urged us. The type of actions suggested by the Ambassador Programme, and the skills it teaches are orientated towards communications and raising awareness about development. The implicit ideology is that development is the solution to social problems, and therefore all that is needed is for more people to understand and support DfID’s work. Strathern notes that audits are supposedly to ensure “good practice”, to be effective and explicit about what an organisation is doing. Actually, she argues, audit “creates organizations responsive to the auditing process” (2006: 190). As shown by this example, the concern here is less about “good practice” rather the “right practice” – that specified by the audit criteria set by the DfID DAF in order to justify its own practices. The state and its goals are in evidence here, reinforcing Peck and Tickells’ (2002) notion of the “roll-out” state.

As well as fitting into DfID’s funding criteria, there are further reasons for this emphasis. One is due to Fozhan and her worries about teaching international development and her
perceptions of the alumni. Fozhan has concerns about the Ambassadors’ capacity to understand development in what she termed an “abstract” way. As a newcomer to Endeavour, the SMT felt that it was important for Fozhan to experience life on expedition. They argued that this would enable her to understand what the alumni experience and increase her knowledge of how Endeavour operates. During the last period of my fieldwork, Alison and Renee asked me to look after the programme and fill in for Fozhan while she spent six weeks on expedition in India. I was eager to do so as I had enjoyed learning about international development in my anthropology undergraduate degree and was excited about the opportunity to find “interactive” ways of teaching others about it. I was also initially impressed by Endeavour’s move to craft itself as a more credible development organisation through its affiliation with DfID. I saw the Ambassador Programme as evidence of Endeavour’s self-reflexive ethos and as a commitment to thinking more deeply and critically about international development, which I had previously felt was lacking.

I never intended my research to evaluate Endeavour’s practice in terms of its effectiveness or impact, even though Alison had asked me about contributing to this. I explained that I would have to design and undertake my research in a different way in order to achieve those research outcomes and they were not my primary concern. I was also uneasy about how that goal, which I would have to reveal to my research participants, would affect my working relationships and level of trust with them. Alison would have liked me to conduct some form of monitoring or evaluation. During the first phase of my research, we managed to negotiate a compromise, whereby I would go through Endeavour’s archive and compile a database of all the projects they had completed in the past, but would not undertake evaluative research on the current work Endeavour was doing. However, working on the Ambassador Programme challenged me on this issue in ways that I did not anticipate. Through my education at the University of Manchester, in particular Maia Green’s critical analysis of international development discourse (Hulme & Green 2005), I have developed strong critical views on the topic. Now I had completed three expeditions and spent time in Head Office, this highly valued experience, along with my status as a university researcher caused the SMT to appeal to me as a consultant whose particular skills that could help them.

39 This is common practice for new employees and a periodic reward for employees who stay on with Endeavour. See also chapter one for a discussion on the importance of expedition experience.
I was temporarily managing a programme that ultimately taught a version of international development that I felt troubled by, as I felt it masked the structural causes of poverty and simplified development as an easy solution to poverty (Biccum 2007; Ferguson 1990; Hulme & Green 2005). How could I work on a programme that I disagreed with, without in some way evaluating practice? This position now seemed both untenable and undesirable. At the time, I was perhaps less reflexive about accepting the role than I should have been. After everyone at Endeavour had given me their time and helped me during the last year, I felt a heavy weight of obligation, and was keen to repay my debt while I could. I therefore accepted whatever they asked me to do. While doing this research was difficult, and writing about it delicate, I do not regret that decision, as I did gain an incredible insight into how this programme functioned. The questions I raised with Fozhan, while they may have annoyed, upset or provoked her, meant that her responses went beyond the rhetoric of the funding proposal and the language used to frame the programme to alumni during their training. While I feel it important to acknowledge the discomfort that the Ambassador Programme incited in me, this thesis is not an analysis of development discourse. This chapter considers instead, how the states’ redeployment through this programme encourages a particular enactment of citizenship that privileges individual responsibility and self-monitoring.

18th June 2010
Endeavour Head Office
London, UK

40 Perhaps the anthropologist and the development worker are inevitably at odds. The entanglement of anthropology and development has been much debated in anthropology (e.g. Gow 2002; Lewis 2005). Development has even been described as anthropology’s “evil twin”, inextricably and antagonistically linked to it (Ferguson 2005). Though many anthropologists work in development, I find it difficult to see a way in which the approach of an anthropologist and a development worker may elide. I am not what Lewis (2005: 472) describes as an “antagonistic observer” with a “basic hostility” for development ideas and motives, but nor am I wholly convinced that it is unquestionably a good thing either. The position of an anthropologist, at least in my opinion, is to ceaselessly question what is taken for granted. This is a privileged stance that not everyone can afford. Fozhan may also have questions or worries about development, but, as I show in this chapter, her position is constrained within the arena of the funding bid that inhibits critique and challenge.

41 Equally, this is the appropriate attitude for working at Endeavour. As I described in chapter two, part of being a flexible worker is acquiescing to managerial demands and cultivating compliance.
I meet Fozhan at Head Office, and she suggests we go downstairs to the meeting room to talk. We sit opposite each other on fake black leather sofas with cups of coffee. Fozhan has scheduled two hours for the meeting, so that we do not feel rushed, but mentions to me that she does not think it will take that long (we will emerge from a tense but polite discussion because someone needs the room in three hours time). I had attended two training weekends at this stage, where I had felt worried by the “development message”. I tentatively raise this with Fozhan, conscious that she has built this programme from scratch, and might already been feeling apprehensive about having someone else take it on while she is in India.

As the discussion in our meeting at Head Office intensified, Fozhan becomes defensive. I mentioned that from my perspective, it felt that the Ambassador Programme did not display enough complexity or cover any critiques and theories about development.

Fozhan: The workshops get them to consider the issues they’re working on on expedition, the wider issue surrounding it and what they can do about it when they go back to the UK. It gives them a hook to what they can change at home, so they can take action and raise awareness. There’s a perception that development is academic, that you need all this knowledge, and people are afraid to get it wrong. Even some of the country directors are terrified! I think we lose people if we go the academic route. People have different knowledge backgrounds. Our approach is to take personal things, have conversations. They don’t need to know definitions, they don’t need to know about the IMF or World Bank, they don’t need to be academic. On the weekends, there’s been interest, but also some fears about talking about it. The point to get across is that they have witnessed development by going on Endeavour. They have an opinion, they’ve lived with communities. This is valid, they are able now to have a conversation.

What became clear from my conversation with Fozhan is that we were thinking with competing definitions of international development, therefore we differed on what constitutes and “generate[s] in-depth understanding of international development”. Furthermore, Fozhan was concerned with what the Ambassadors needed in order to peer-teach. In part, I wonder whether her use of the term “academic” and her strong view here was a reaction towards me, as the resident academic. Fozhan is right to implicate me in being overly “academic”, a charge Ferguson (2005: 148) notes is often levied at anthropologists by development workers who are more focused on the pragmatics. Both a theoretical and critical approach and a practical focus are necessary but while the aim of both might be in alleviating poverty, the underlying assumptions of them are distinct, making collaboration and understanding perplexing. For Fozhan, practical actions are a
way to keep Ambassadors engaged and to help them feel that the programme and international development is accessible. It also creates a clear purpose for people, annulling confusion over what the Ambassadors are supposed to do due to the lack of clarity concerning the concept of “global citizenship”. Another employee told me later that on the first ambassador weekend, Fozhan had tried some more cerebral activities with a group, and they had struggled with it, neither really understanding why they were doing it or wanting to engage with it. He suggested that as Fozhan had not had much experience with delivering workshops, this knocked her confidence and made her afraid of tackling too much.

A further reason why the Ambassador Programme is constructed around the idea of “action” is due to Endeavour’s perception of its volunteers as “doing people”. Alison told me that Endeavour attracted “doing people – people who are active, people who do things.” One of the sessions that Tommy ran at the volunteer staff training weekend was based on David Kolb’s (1984) learning cycle. This model presents four parts to learning. Tommy marked the four corners of the room as corresponding to each of the four stages.

Tommy: The cycle represents the different stages that we go through when we learn. You’ll probably go through each stage at some point, and not necessarily in this order. But everyone generally has a preference for a stage. Place yourself at the stage which best fits how you like to approach things.

![Learning Model](image)

*Figure 19 Learning Model*
The majority of people ended up in the “do” corner, with the next amount on “plan” and only Louis and I on “apply”. Tommy laughed and said that do-ers tend to dominate Endeavour volunteers. Much of Endeavour’s marketing reflects the predominance of action. The website refers to expeditions as a “Call to Action”, and Louis’ end of expedition speech exhorts volunteers to go home and, using a quote he attributes to Gandhi, to “be the change they want to see in the world”. This notion of action infers the appropriate practice of citizenship – active – that Endeavour is promoting.

**INDIVIDUAL CITIZENSHIP**

Shore and Wright argue, following Foucault, that while at first glance, the “transfer” of auditing practices from the financial sector to other arenas may seem “dull, routine and bureaucratic” these kinds of practices often have “profound effects on social life...Audit technologies...are not simply innocuously neutral, legal-rational practices...they are agents for the creation of new kinds of subjectivity: self-managing individual who render themselves auditable” (2000: 57). The Ambassador Programme feeds directly into Endeavour’s mission statement: to create “a community of active global citizens”. The aim for this programme is to teach participants about appropriate practices of citizenship that they can enact. Ambassadors are expected to take responsibility as individuals to change their behaviours to enact both social change and their citizenship. I argue that this programme, in its support of international development and in the model of citizenship it promotes to its volunteers furthers a neoliberal agenda (Biccum 2007: 1112) because it relies on the notion of individual responsibility. This is not the primary intention of the Ambassador Programme, rather it is how things “turn out” (Ferguson 1990: 19).

At the final session of the weekend, we gather again in a circle. Fozhan explains that as we have completed the training weekend we are now Ambassadors and that it is time to make a pledge, to pick an action that we are going to carry out. Helen hands out sheets of paper, and passes round pens. The forms have Endeavour’s logo at the top, a place for the Ambassador’s name and “As a global ambassador I pledge to...” written across the top with space underneath to write. Helen asks for silence as the Ambassadors fill out their slips. These are read out before everyone leaves. Most of the Ambassadors pledges refer to making small changes to their own, individual lives. A few examples are; buy fair-trade when available, turn the tap off while brushing my teeth or while soaping up in the

42 See chapter six for analysis of categorising and typologies at Endeavour.
shower, ask my mum to buy local produce instead of products flown in from other countries. One pair decides to make a film of different people's interpretations of development, but they are the only ones to suggest anything beyond making a change to their own individual existence. Although this is not explicitly stated, Fozhan keeps a record of the pledges to follow up on them to see if anyone requires help and check if people really do them, so that she can record the numbers of people that are being “reached”.

My aim in this chapter is not to define active citizenship, but to analyse the “tacit, underlying structure of assumptions” (Graeber 2009b: 361) that inform it. Endeavour does not articulate a clear idea of what kind of citizen they are aiming to create. The actions they encourage consist of making changes to the way Ambassadors live their own lives, to tell others to make similar changes to their lives and promoting the importance of international development. What do these practices tell us about the “underlying structure of assumptions”? Joel Westheimer and Joseph Kahne (2004) analysed a series of educational courses in the United States that seek to teach students about democracy and citizenship. Their aim is twofold. Primarily they explore the different kinds of citizenship that these courses propagate, exploring both what citizenship is and what citizens should do. Concurrently they seek to highlight the political nature of citizenship teaching, and particularly the kind of democracy and society that different practices of citizenship entail. Their three-tiered model is effective for thinking more deliberately about what kind of citizenship model the Ambassador Programme promotes, and how this connects to Endeavour’s broader ideology.

From the courses they analysed, Westheimer and Kahne (2004: 239) distinguish between “personally responsible”, “participatory” and “justice-orientated” citizens. Personally responsible citizens locate their citizenship in their own individual actions and solving social problems rests with each individual. Participatory citizens focus on civic engagement, becoming involved in community organisations or interacting with government agencies. Solving social problems occurs through participation in existing structures and systems and students learn strategies for working collectively. Justice-orientated citizens are concerned with critically analysing social, political and economic structures and are taught how to effect systemic change because solving social problems is achieved by changing the established structures and systems, which are seen as inherently unjust.
If participatory citizens are organising the food drive, and personally responsible citizens are donating food, justice-orientated citizens are asking why people are hungry and acting on what they discover (Westheimer & Kahne 2004: 242).

Westheimer and Kahne argue that while these different types overlap, and that courses may include different elements of all three, they reflect three distinct underlying assumptions and goals. They conclude that context is extremely important for determining the kind of citizenship that is encouraged.

Other ethnographies have remarked upon the neoliberal tendency to individualise political issues, crafting the individual into a locus of governing technologies and state intervention. Lyon-Callo (1989) shows in his ethnography of the homeless-sheltering industry that efforts to help the homeless centre exclusively on the deficiencies and deviances within individual persons as the cause of their poverty. It is up to the individual to change in order to change their circumstances. In Hyatt’s (2002) ethnography of volunteering in the US, she shows that the state is vilified for creating dependency of the poor that is said to prevent them from “self-realisation”. As the state withdraws provision, it is up to individuals to rely on their innate abilities to survive. Hyatt shows how the state’s efforts to foster civil society through the professionalization and bureaucratization serves to disrupt and annul informal practices and local norms. Daily survival methods utilised by lower income communities such as sharing food and childcare that are built into norms of reciprocity and community loyalty are not counted by the state. She argues that despite the state’s attempts to further individual responsibility, its interests and presence emerge through these processes;

Civil society and relationships and the institutions it fosters do not exist in some sort of autonomous self-regulating sphere, they are intimately coupled with the actions and interests of the state (Hyatt 2002: 204–5).

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43 This resonates with the attitude to charity that Endeavour pursues. Callum used a metaphor to explain the different kinds of charities. “Imagine a river” he said, “which has babies floating down it. Perhaps the kneejerk reaction would be to scoop them out. That might be the role of a disaster relief charity - that’s dealing with the immediate situation. What Endeavour does, is to go upstream, to discover why the babies are in the river, to deal with the underlying causes.” An underlying cause, however, is open to interpretation. Endeavour does not question why there is no public sanitation in India, for example, and instead builds them in place of the state.
What is being communicated through the ambassador programme is that it is the responsibility of individual citizens to change their behaviour, and to encourage others to change their behaviour while the state, via development projects, will look after the bigger issues. This has parallels with “New Managerialism” and “Total Quality Management” which seek to forge the “responsibilization of the workforce” (Shore & Wright 2000: 69). Ilcan (2004) and Kipnis (2008) also present example of this move to make individual employees responsible for both the quality of service offered, and for managing their own conduct in order to ensure that they achieve it. This might seem empowering, something that Bondi (2005) notes is a key idea in counselling, to make people responsible for themselves and thereby in control of their own lives by being able to exercise choice and freedom. However, these promises of neoliberalism are ultimately hollow. In describing “neo-liberal governmentality” Shore and Wright say;

By this, we refer to a wholesale shift in the role of government premised on using the norms of the free market as the organizing principles not only of economic life, but of the activities of the state itself and, even more profoundly, of the conduct of individuals. The key to this system of governmentality lies in inculcating new norms and values by which external regulatory mechanisms transform the conduct of organizations and individuals in their capacity as “self-actualizing” agents...These regulatory mechanism act as “political technologies” which seek to bring persons, organizations and objectives into alignment.” (Shore & Wright 2000: 61)

What Westheimer and Kahne show is that the choice of action is a political decision based on an ideology and vision of society, and therefore of what citizens should do. The Ambassadors promote DfID’s work and look to make individual changes. Their actions emerge as serving the needs of the state as it is redeployed via Endeavour, allowing it to appear to be retreating.

Empowerment is another method of control, just as “Audit is essentially a relationship of power between scrutinizer and observed: the latter are rendered objects of information never subjects in communication” (Shore & Wright 2000: 59). Via Endeavour, the state is shaping and regulating the domain of citizenship, not the citizens themselves. The concentration on individual behaviour means that the structural causes of poverty and the wider debates surrounding international development are not engaged with.

The mobilization of development awareness in the UK attempts to produce a subjectivity particularly appropriate for a globalising world, that is, a “Global
Citizen” who advocates development under neoliberal terms…Rather than signalling the success of global civil society in making development as issue for national debate, these popular spectacles and subject-producing mobilizations have operated as a theatre of legitimation for the neoliberal agenda, a stage-managed simulation of democracy “at work” (Biccum 2007: 1112).

Neoliberalism operates on a promise of individual freedoms in return for citizens taking on individual responsibility (Harvey 2005). In this case, individual responsibility for “global issues” means making changes to individuals’ own lives, to become personally accountable for our actions, to audit our own behaviour. Responsibility has another meaning to it, one of obligation to others. This sense of responsibility as obligation to others seems to be lost in neoliberal ideology, but this affective motivation, a cathartic desire to connect with others is an oft cited reason for why volunteers work with Endeavour. The next chapter will continue this discussion by exploring the significance of charity.
CHAPTER FOUR – CHARITY VS. BUSINESS

The concept of charity and the role of NGOs has changed and responded to shifting societal, political and economic conditions, as I explained in the introduction. Who should be responsible for doing charity, and who charity should be given to involves “moral valuations” (Martin 2009: 100) At Endeavour, charity has a myriad of meanings and is a significant notion despite its mutability. Charity is a noun, describing the legal status of the organisation. It is also an ideal. Complexly tangled with morality, charity feeds into understandings of worth, both individuals’ feelings of self-worth and judgements about the worthiness of particular actions. Being a charity has great significance to Endeavour because it lies at the centre of its status (legally and morally), its work practice at Head Office and In-Country (legally, morally and pragmatically), and conceptually in terms of how those who work and volunteer with Endeavour represent and understand what Endeavour is and what Endeavour does. Charity emerges as a concept that continually informs, constrains and facilitates life at Endeavour. In this chapter, I show how charity matters to those involved with Endeavour, how it represents for them a different way of life. As a system of value, charity seems at times opposed to the ideology of business, markets and profit making. Despite this distinction, I show in this chapter how the boundary between charity and business is elided.

This chapter begins by exploring the value of charity to Endeavour’s volunteers. For some participants, charity is fundamental to their motivations for working with Endeavour. Charity represents something that is “worthwhile” and “meaningful”. Buried within these narratives is a dissatisfaction with a kind of life that revolves around consumption, money making and meaningless employment. Volunteering with a charity to “do charity” is seen as a means to “reconnect”, get “back to basics” or even a way of “living the dream”. This also features in employees’ narratives of why people volunteer. The volunteers expect a great deal from their experience. While part of the appeal of charity is to help others, volunteers also anticipate a return from their acts in the form of personal development and life changing experiences. While this may appear to be an unresolved tension, it is not represented as such by the volunteers or by Endeavour.

Next, I explore how money is a problem at Endeavour. The legal status of being a charity means that Endeavour’s income enters the organisation as donations or funding grants, which determines the way it is used within the organisation. Unlike market-transactions, this money stays tied to the giver, imbued with their “spirit” (Mauss 1966). This informs
the relationships Endeavour has with its volunteers, who “fundraise” for their expedition place rather than pay as customers. Although legally charities are “non-profits”, making money is necessary to Endeavour’s continued existence. Finding money is the daily concern of the fundraising team at Head Office, as well as to the In-Country staff and the SMT. Endeavour’s status as a charity, and the moral weight this carries, must be carefully patrolled as dirty money has the potential to sully the purity of the charity. Despite being concerned with maintaining a charity, the language used by these money finders draws on metaphors of consumption and markets more normally associated with business. In fact, Endeavour also has a business arm - the Endeavour Development Consultancy - attached to and interlocking with the main charity. In their efforts to professionalise their practice with new business clients, neoliberal ideologies seep into the charity. Finally, I present a further analysis of the relationships between state and charities. Although the state claims to be receding and reducing regulation, new technologies of government represent extension of the state (Desjarlais 1997; Gledhill 2004; Hyatt 2002; Kingfisher & Maskovsky 2008; Lyon-Callo & Hyatt 2003; Peck & Tickell 2002). At Endeavour, the concern that money might pass through the wrong channels causes Endeavour to regulate exchanges between volunteers, donors and recipients closely, despite their language of personal empowerment and participatory development towards their volunteers and “project partners” in receipt of charity.

**LIFE CHANGING CROSSROADS**

Saturday 16\textsuperscript{th} May 2009  
Volunteer Staff Development Weekend  
East Dulwich Scout Camp, South London

Tommy has stacked the chairs up in the corner, dimmed the lights and arranged a circle of tea light candles in the centre of the room. He beckons us over as we return from dinner. We hesitate at the change in the room, which was brightly lit when we left. In a hushed voice, Tommy asks us to sit on the floor around the candles. We all do so, lulled into quiet by the still gloom.

We’re going to practice a review technique called Life Maps. This is the sort of thing you might want to do with venturers towards the end of a phase, to help them reflect on their experience and themselves. The best way to understand a process is
to try it out on yourself so that’s what we’re going to do. I’ll do my Life Map first to give you the idea. And in true Blue Peter fashion – here’s one I made earlier.  

Grinning at us, Tommy reaches behind him and picks up a sheet of flipchart paper, angling it to the light so that we can see. The page depicts a series of drawings that Tommy tells us represents the different stages in his life. Pointing to one, he explains

This one is my life before I got involved with Endeavour, the picture is supposed to be a crossroads, no laughing at my drawing skills. I think it’s quite a common feeling among those of us who come to Endeavour, many of us have got to a point in our lives where we have choices to make, different paths we could take. Or as my mum puts it, “You Endeavour people, you’re all the same, not able to hold down a long term job or a meaningful relationship”.

The majority of those in the room titter appreciatively; it sounds like Tommy’s mother may have made an apt assessment. In volunteers’ narratives, life crises often prompt a search for meaning. Doing charity provides this because it gives the volunteers a purpose and enables them to feel they are contributing to something they define as worthwhile. Simultaneously, an Endeavour expedition also promises personal development and thereby the opportunity to make changes to the life they are unhappy with.

My research has sought to explain the “behind the scenes” (Macdonald 2002) of a volunteering experience rather than the volunteers themselves. However, the stories that people told me about their lives and how they see their involvement in charity are worth exploring for how they help us reflect on the meaning of charity at Endeavour. The literature on volunteering often focuses on the volunteer motivations, but what it lacks is an understanding of how organisations like Endeavour understand the motivations of their volunteers and as the organisers of charitable projects, how they seeks to fulfil those perceived motivations.  

Endeavour and the volunteers reproduce a narrative for each other through the stock phrases. They appear on the Endeavour website and in the recruitment talks under the “Why volunteer?” section, feature on the expedition application forms and in conversations between volunteers (or with me) as to why they

44 Blue Peter is a children’s TV programme that includes a craft demonstration. The Blue Peter presenters always have the different stages of whatever they are making pre-made, and so their catchphrase of “Here’s one I made earlier” has become a running joke amongst the generation who grew up watching the show.

45 This thesis does not represent, therefore, a contribution to the literature on volunteering. This would have required a different research design in order to focus on the volunteers instead of on the organisation.
wanted to volunteer with Endeavour. I find these statements difficult to grapple with. When I questioned people on what these phrases meant to them, they would usually respond with another, similarly vague slogan. I heard them so often, and with so little qualification, that I began to see them as empty marketing ploys, ultimately meaningless. This however, misses the significance to those who utter them. What the phrases really refer to is charity, and the inherent good that this embodies for them. They say that they want to do charity to “help those in need”, “do something meaningful/worthwhile”, “make a difference”, and “give something back”.

Tommy’s joke that all the volunteer staff are at a crossroads in their lives may have been tongue-in-cheek, but his metaphor is quite accurate for many of the volunteer staff I met. Many of them had been made redundant, had chosen to leave jobs they were dissatisfied with, and/or had parted from a significant other. In assessing their lives, many of them spoke about how they felt that their jobs, relationships, the ways they approached their lives were meaningless or worthless. They were unhappy and dissatisfied. Expeditions provided an escape, a physical separation from discontent. Charity provided the meaning and worth they felt they lacked.

Expedition can also prompt further changes in people’s lives, as volunteer staff reported they felt they had a different perspective on their lives afterwards. Sam took a sabbatical from her job as a human resources manager at the top end of a large British communications company to go on expedition. Sam was not unhappy in her job, she was good at it, it used her skills effectively and she had continued to advance her career. However, Sam felt guilty about how much she earned and about the lifestyle of horse-riding and dinner parties that this money enabled her to live. Endeavour was a way of assuaging this guilt. Once she finished expedition, she decided to tithe a portion of her salary to charity every year. After returning to work after her sabbatical, she soon applied for a new post in a company she considered more ethical, and broke off her engagement to Endeavour employees recognise that many of their volunteer staff are undergoing large changes in their lives or experiencing emotions of loss and unhappiness. Part of the point of the volunteer assessment weekends is to judge that volunteers are stable enough to cope with expedition. For instance, on one weekend I attended, an woman who had recently lost her father after a long illness dissolved into tears during a Life Maps session. She was not accepted on expedition, because Pippa was worried about her being able to cope with the emotional stress of expedition and recommended that she reapplied when she felt stronger.
her long-term partner. Elise had been working as an estate agent, a career path that did not seem to match her bubbly character and positive outlook on life. She had left her job and spent several months travelling alone before staying for two expeditions in Costa Rica. She speaks of her experience as “life changing”, and is now a secondary school languages teacher. John got his place on expedition through the Ministry of Defence who run a competition for their employees to take a career sabbatical. While on expedition he split up with his long-standing girlfriend, and on returning home, requested a transfer to a different city and department in the Ministry.

Within these “life changing” narratives is an implicit discontent with the kind of lives that people are living at home. Constrained by the need to make money, the temptations of consumption and becoming more reliant on technologies such as mobile phones and the internet were all aspects of their lives that volunteer staff spoke of in negative terms. While venturers were worried about missing the luxuries they were used to during expeditions, alumni comment on how they ended up enjoying this aspect the most. Expeditions represent a different way of life. This kind of life, one that gets “back to basics”, is one where money is not the central concern. On expedition, everyone’s material needs are taken care of by Endeavour. There are no worries about rent or mortgages, bills or meals. Charity is set in opposition to consumption. This is something that Callum advocates, particularly in relation to reducing reliance on technology. During my second expedition, he had been looking through Endeavour’s 25th anniversary magazine, reading about past expeditions. In his speech at the beginning of the last phase, Callum spoke of how struck he was by them and how it made him reassess what they were doing on the expeditions now. 47

It’s amazing what Endeavour has done around the world. But it made me sad and question the way we do things around here. The expeditions in Ghana and Kenya would not had access to any technology. No internet, no phones for the whole ten weeks. It got me thinking, are the day trips to towns to email your mates that we’ve been doing really right? Is this the experience you wanted? This should be an organic experience.

Callum represents expedition as the chance to shift the emphasis of life. Therefore, charity represents not just the opportunity to do good, but also to live a good life.

47 The locations of Endeavour’s expedition has changed for a variety of reasons throughout the years.
The “good” volunteers attribute to charity is an abstract ideal. Deepa Reddy’s (2007) ethnographic project with an Indian community in Houston explored their perspectives on the donation of blood for the purpose of genetic research. Despite the variety of meanings that her participants attributed to genetics and the giving of bodily substances, the underlying notion of good remained a constant. Whether donating blood was seen as an ethical dilemma, an individual gift or a contribution to the community, her participants shared ideas about the value of knowledge and that genetic research would contribute to some form of “larger good”. This sense of a “common good” remained loosely defined. Reddy asks, “What are we to make of such apparent commitment to sketchy, abstract, seemingly ill-defined conceptions of the good?” (2007: 435). Reddy relates this notion of the greater good to the work done by Parry (1986) and Mauss (1966) on the “free gift”; that some gifts should not have an expectation of reciprocation. However, she extends their work beyond the usual characterisation of gifts given from a particular person or group to another person or group; in her field, the notion of the free gift encompasses an idea of

… the “commons,” in which the gift is given to nobody in particular, but is held in common for the good of all… The donation, then, is simultaneously a free gift that transcends the interested and disinterested exchanges of the market and a free gift that seeks precisely to circumvent the pressures of market–model exchange (Reddy 2007: 435, 436).

We might think of charity in the same way, some volunteers and employees explicitly see charity as a counter to their previous morally problematic market and consumerist relations. Equally, as I shall explore in more depth in the final part of this chapter, the charitable exchanges taking place at Endeavour are not direct as the cases described by Parry and Mauss. Though volunteers meet and live with some of the charity’s recipients, Endeavour mediates their interactions, most significantly the exchange of money. While charitable giving may transcend the model of market exchange, it cannot be understood as a free gift. The volunteers’ expectations of what charity can give them – meaningful and worthwhile lives – are massive. This is part of Endeavour’s promise for volunteering. As Louis said to the volunteer staff during induction, “I know you’re volunteers, that you’ve fundraised, sacrificed. You will get out double what you put in.” They do not expect something back from the people that they do charity for – the communities and environments on expedition – instead they make demands upon Endeavour to fulfil their “dreams” of what charity can give them and do for them. Perhaps volunteers do not see a
tension between charity being selfless, and wanting charity to change their own lives because the exchange is derivative and nonlinear. It is not a direct reciprocation between two social actors but needs Endeavour, as the charity, to give theirs actions meaning.

**PATROLLING THE BOUNDARIES OF CHARITY**

Endeavour is a registered charity. This is a legal status.

Charities must provide benefit to the public…Their aims, purposes or objectives have to be exclusively those which the law recognises as charitable. A registered charity will usually be given a special tax status and benefit from a number of tax exemptions and reliefs…Registered charities have to obey a number of rules and regulations set out in charity law.48

The Charity Commission, a “non-Ministerial Government Department” and part of the Civil Service registers charities.49 It is independent from the government and from the charity sector and judicially it has similar powers to the High Court. I was never aware of a particular presence of the Commission at Head Office, although I knew Endeavour had to submit periodic financial reports, which are published online and publicly available. Charities have to be transparent about their money and are externally audited so that funds are used as defined by the law for charitable purposes. Money usually enters the organisation by means of a donation. A donation made to a charity has a different legal status to a fee paid to a company. A donation, if made to a non-profit charity is not subject to income tax. Charities can claim back “gift aid” – tax paid by UK workers – increasing the value of the donation.

Charities or CASCs take your donation - which is money you’ve already paid tax on - and reclaim the basic rate tax from HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) on its ‘gross’ equivalent - the amount before basic rate tax was deducted.50

Each charity is given a registration number to use on promotional material such as flyers and posters as proof that the organisation is authorised. Being registered confirms that a charity is “providing benefit to the public” and that it will use any donations according to this aim.

48 [http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Start_up_a_charity/Set_up/default.aspx](http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Start_up_a_charity/Set_up/default.aspx)

49 [http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/About_us/About_the_Commission/Our_status_index.aspx](http://www.charity-commission.gov.uk/About_us/About_the_Commission/Our_status_index.aspx)

50 [http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/gift-aid.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals/giving/gift-aid.htm)
Laws concerning donations determine how the charity can spend money. Charlie explained to me that a general donation to a charity, such as the funding targets for expedition, can legally be used however the charity wishes. However, if a donor, which can be an individual, a government department or a charitable trust, specifies what they want the money to pay for (such as a specific item, programme or purpose) the charity must legally comply. This is known at Endeavour as “restricted funding”. Although gaining funding from the government or large corporates has a prestigious value attached, restricted funding is less desirable because it is not as flexible. Donors expect particular results from the donations, and to ensure this they specify what the money should be spent on. As I explained in chapter three, monitoring and evaluation reports must be submitted regularly to account for spending and to track targets and results.

Venturers and volunteer staff often ask what “their” money (what they “fundraise” in order to go on expedition) is spent on. They are able to ask this information because of the organisation’s status as a charity, because charities are obliged to be transparent about their use of money. As they have often fundraised from friends, family and sponsors, they want to ensure that the money they have been given is not only going to “a good cause” but is being spent directly on the fulfilment of this good cause. This common question has prompted Endeavour to pre-empt it with a section on their website; “Where your money goes”:

72% of the money you raise goes towards the cost of running the expeditions. This includes:

- Staff, accommodation and support costs in each country
- Host Country Venturer programme - while extra funds are raised In-Country for the HCV programme, this only covers about 15% of the full cost of involving HCVs on expedition
- All transportation In-Country, including vehicles, fuel, hire costs when needed
- All safety equipment, including radios, satellite phones, medical equipment etc
- All accommodation and food costs while on expedition
- Transport and collection from airport In-Country
- Training workshops in the UK in preparation
- Recruitment of volunteers, vetting of applications, selection of volunteer managers
- Insurance costs for health and medical care and/or repatriation
14% is fundraising and marketing, which includes liaising with charitable trusts and government departments that provide funding for disadvantaged youth, engaging with our alumni support groups, maintaining our website and other publications

13% is the cost of Head Office overheads including monitoring and evaluation, finance, HR

1% is the cost of the governance for running a charity

The above is defined as in the public benefit because Endeavour’s charitable objectives include the personal development of its British venturers and volunteer staff. The expeditions are the means by which this is achieved, thereby the costs of running an expedition can be delineated as charitable. Unlike in the past, when charity was directly defined through giving to the poor, legally charity now encompasses a much wider remit. However, the “moral valuation” (Martin 2009: 100) that employees, venturers and volunteer staff make of what counts as a charitable action is multifaceted and contentious. Keir Martin’s (2009) ethnography on “kastam” (custom), traditional practices of reciprocal exchange in Papua New Guinea, similarly shows how this important contextual concept is mutable. Martin shows that the “moral valuation that is placed on katsam as a category can vary widely” (2009: 100). Kastam is rated positively when it embodies “ongoing mutual reciprocal interdependence” (2009: 96). It is often seen as opposite to commercial and Western notions of greed and exploitation. However, Martin shows that when it is co-opted into commercial or business interests, its meaning and significance alters. Specifically, it is when money becomes involved that the practices of kastam are no longer seen as morally good.

What is referred to by the word kastam is clearly context dependent….instead of just being a word that refers to a certain set of practices or actions, kastam is often used as a means of evaluating the morality of people’s actions (whether the speaker’s or others)…One can express moral disapproval of an action or sentiment by declaring it to be non-customary (Martin 2009: 108).

As in Martin’s case, the category of charity is also one that varies depending on context and who is doing the valuing. Similarly, as I will illustrate, the category of charity is also involved in moral valuations.

Endeavour use a particular language to talk about the donations given by volunteers. This money, which accords a place on expedition, is never referred to as a price, payment or...
fee. Instead, it is called a “fundraising target”. This specific term has several purposes. Firstly, it changes the status of the money from a fee to a donation, enabling Endeavour to claim gift aid on it. It also confers the status of “volunteer” onto those who donate it, rather than that of customer, client or consumer. Thirdly, it enables Endeavour to differentiate themselves from their business competitors in the gap year, eco-tourism and adventure travel markets, as I reported in chapter one.

As we're a charity we talk about fundraising rather than costs…We do encourage fundraising, not only because it raises awareness of our charitable work but we believe it gets you into the spirit of Endeavour. In many ways this is the beginning of your Endeavour adventure, so start as you mean to go on.  

Charity is the “spirit of Endeavour” and language associated with business and markets threatens this purpose. Furthermore, emphasising Endeavour’s use of “volunteers” instead of “customers” further distances them from the lexicon of business. As I will show later in the chapter, the differentiation of these volunteers to other participants that Endeavour does identify as clients is significant.

Endeavour’s legal status as a charity is granted by the Charity Commission, but as a broader moral project, the boundaries of what counts as charitable are carefully patrolled at Endeavour. One might expect that the marketing and recruitment team at Head Office would be the group who are most allied to notions of consumerism as their work focuses on “selling” Endeavour to prospective volunteers. Adopting a term from the business arena, the recruitment coordinators use Endeavour’s charitable status as one of its “unique selling points” which differentiates it from other competitors in the gap year, adventure travel and eco-tourism markets that are typically businesses. Conversely, members of this team are those who hold on most fiercely to the moral value of charity. Several of them mentioned to me that they could earn higher wages outside of the charity sector, but that they put up with lower pay, long and often anti-social working hours because they “believe in Endeavour’s charitable work”.  

R.L. Stirrat and Heiko Henkel (1997) note

51 Quote from Endeavour’s website

52 According to one employee, Alison commissioned an assessment of Endeavour’s wages, which found that the average wages at Endeavour are lower compared to the rest of the charity sector. The employee told me this to emphasise the degree of commitment that employees have in their decision to stay working at Endeavour.
similarly that NGOs’ moral claims are dependent on their identification as different from state agencies motivated by politics or businesses motivated by profit.

Endeavour employees draw a stark line between their charitable status and their business competitors. In the spring of 2009, I accompany the marketing and recruitment team to a lifestyle fair in London where one of Endeavour’s business competitors, i-to-i, has set up a large stall. As they offer Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) courses, they have created a faux classroom, complete with tables, desks, blackboards and posters. To indicate the “exotic” locations their participants can go to they have also ringed their stall with fake palm trees. These fairs are expensive for exhibitors to attend, especially when they take place in central London, and i-to-i have a larger plot than many other exhibitors, which is double the price. I mention to Grace, one of the recruitment coordinators, how elaborate i-to-i’s space is. She is disparaging of her competitor’s efforts. “Their marketing budget is probably like 70%, whereas we’re a charity, 70% of our budget actually goes on the expeditions”. I do not know whether these statistics are correct. However, Grace’s assertion of them is revealing. Although she worked on the marketing team, Grace felt that spending too great a proportion of Endeavour’s funds on activities that are associated with business, such as marketing, is not a proper use of donated money. This is not limited to Endeavour, according to Charlie and Renee, it is very uncommon to get charitable funding – grants or donations – that can be spent on administrative or marketing costs. While these costs can be defined as part of the charitable cause, they are unlikely to be funded because they do not have the same moral valence as more direct or visible acts of charity such building a school. Any activity that is too business-like (Tuchman 2011) threatens the moral weight that the status of charity affords them.

Endeavour employees often told me stories about what they saw as the inappropriate behaviour of their competitors’ employees and related accounts of volunteers’ negative experiences on competitors’ trips. These stories focus on what Endeavour employees see as their competitors’ moral decrepitude. A particularly common one is the claim of sexual relations between the project leaders and their younger charges – something strictly forbidden at Endeavour as volunteer staff have a “duty of care” towards the venturers.53

53 The fact that it is forbidden does not mean that they are not also rumours of it happening on Endeavour expeditions. I never knew of any substantiated incidents. However, Endeavour does not “tolerate” it, and any volunteer staff breaking this rule is immediately sent home from expedition. The employees’ implication is that their competitors do not care if it happens.
Employees also criticize their competitors’ screening of their project managers, arguing that they would “take anyone”. They seem particularly affronted that some of these project managers are paid temporary employees instead of volunteers, as if this were proof of their lack of worth, rather than a recompense for their labour. They attribute this moral inferiority to the competitors’ statuses as businesses. The Endeavour staff’s understanding of the difference is that a business’ main concern is making a profit, not the success of the projects, or the volunteers’ experience. Endeavour, as a charity, is non-profit and prides itself on having charitable objectives instead of being motivated by money. Grace’s perception that i-to-i spent a majority of funds on their marketing is a moral assessment of their intentions and interests. Endeavour employees saw the charity as morally superior to business. The assertion that they could earn more outside the charity sector, but choose to stay, reiterates for them, their “belief in what Endeavour does” and the moral superiority its status as a charity provides. Being a charity confers a degree of principled action and carries a moral weight.

THE PROFESSIONALISATION OF CHARITY

While the marketing and recruitment team can be thought of as Endeavour’s value-holders, there are other employees’ at Head Office whose daily preoccupation is how to make money. Mark was the Corporate Fundraiser when I arrived at Endeavour Head Office in 2009. Mark’s job was to establish relationships with “corporates” and convince them to work with Endeavour. This might result in a corporate giving “donations in kind”, such as pro bono work or advice, or giving monetary donations. Mark also wanted to make commercial agreements with corporates. He was keen to approach travel and outdoor shops to become exclusive kit suppliers. The shop would receive more commerce as Endeavour would promote their products and Endeavour would receive a percentage of their profits. Unlike many of the employees at Head Office, Mark’s professional background is not in the charitable or public sector. He told me he had worked in the music industry and later in the travel industry as a sales manager with responsibilities in marketing, staff training and sales. He found these industries “shallow”, Endeavour was his first role in the charity sector, which he hoped would be different from his previous posts. When explaining his role at Endeavour to me, he said they were two main factors to

54 This role no longer existed when I returned to Head Office in the summer of 2010. Relationships with corporates have been incorporated into several new jobs that manage specific clients and accounts, which is a more common practice in the business arena (see chapter one).
consider when approaching a corporate – how ethical they are, and how well their brand fits with Endeavour’s brand. His role spanned both ideas of charity (through his focus on ethics and morality) and business (in matching brands, thinking up moneymaking strategies and working with corporates).

When I asked Mark to expand on what he meant by the “moral question of who to work with” it became clear that for him, the moral distinction between charity and business, which other employees deploy to give meaning to their work, was not as simple and transparent. “My girlfriend says I’m morally flexible” he joked.

Take Nestle for example. They had a really bad reputation after the whole powdered milk thing, but because of that they’ve worked hard on changing their image. 55 Their CSR strategy is now arguably better than most. But does that mean we should work with them? Or with British American Tobacco? 56 Morally, as a charity, should we be seen to be taking their money? All companies are unethical. And as an organisation we’re not whiter than white. If you trace the money back, no one is. It came out recently that the insurance company supporting the Red Cross have been involved in arms liquidation. You know, you have to prepare for chinks in the armour. But it doesn’t legitimise taking money from companies flagrantly in disregard of communities, the environment and ethics. You have to think about PR too. You have to take things on a case by case basis. Different people have different opinions about who we should or shouldn’t work with. Alison is really against companies that make alcopops. 57 Renee isn’t too keen on the tobacco industry. But if their money goes to support something like Endeavour…? Ethics isn’t black and white. You have to navigate the grey area.

In their ethnography of a new media company, Monique Girard and David Stark (2005) show how each type of employee at the company has their own standard of value. Each employee has a different work role, and therefore different aims and outcomes. These “competing metrics” (2005: 294) were “creative abrasions” (2005: 316) that created a company “perpetually “under construction” (2005: 294). Disagreements of standards of value were only temporarily settled in order to achieve a particular aim, such as finishing a project on time. Girard and Stark argue that the constant dialogue employees engages in

55 Nestle was criticised for promoting powdered milk as safer and healthier for babies than breast milk, in countries where it was extremely difficult to get clean water to dilute the powdered milk.

56 British American Tobacco covered up the link between smoking and cancer.

57 Alcopops are flavoured alcoholic drinks that used a marketing strategy that was criticised for its appeal to underage drinkers.
kept the company flexible and dynamic, allowing it to take advantage of new opportunities and keep pace with a rapidly changing market. A similar, although less intense and discursive process occurs at Head Office. Despite the moral distinction that Grace made between charity and business, these are both strategically mobilised at Endeavour. While those on the marketing team draw a clear line between business and charity, for Endeavour’s money finders this distinction is not as clear. Part of the role of the fundraising team is to solicit funds from “corporate companies”, from business, and relies on them for a portion of their income. For Endeavour’s money finders, “right and wrong are defined and articulated in practice rather than as given opposites” (Garsten and Hernes 2009: 196).

Mark’s moral flexibility lies in his ability to traverse between clear-cut lines, such as that between charity and business, to “navigate the grey area” and make judgements about how far along the spectrum between good and bad something is. Being part of a charity however does affect how he makes these judgements. The key phrase that he uses “as a charity” emphasises this status is important. In some senses, he is less flexible than he claims. For him, “all companies are unethical”. The other employees, like Alison or Renee have particular products they disagree with. Mark’s dilemma is that if all companies are unethical, is all their money by association bad? What does it say, of a charity, if they are “seen” to be talking money from an unethical company? Does Endeavour’s acceptance of black money launder it, make it white and convert it to something good, annulling the bad association? Stirrat and Henkel confirm that although part of an NGO’s hesitancy over who to take money from lies in the limits this puts on their “freedom of action”, underlying this is the “more fundamental question of whether such forms of funding undermine NGOs claims to occupy the moral and ethical high ground” (1997: 70). Mark is navigating between two standards of value that are based on different intentions. He operates on a case by case basis, also taking into account how these associations will affect Endeavour’s public image. One of the reasons that making money is such a concern at Endeavour is because it is imbued with morality. Endeavour is unable to be fastidious because it needs money from somewhere. Stirrat and Henkel argues that “What starts off as a counterpoint to the logic of the real world (gifts versus markets) ends up as part of that real world” (1997: 74).

The money finders at Endeavour are caught between two systems of morality. Equally, Endeavour saddles these two realms. Its status as a charity is immensely important for
how employees understand their work and themselves. Being a charity enables Endeavour to receive donations from benefactors and corporate companies, to bid for funds from the government. Endeavour was a forerunner to the gap year phenomenon. The market sprung up around them in the early 2000s. Their unwilling co-option into competing in this market has led them to use their charitable status as a “unique selling point” and part of their “brand”. Harris, Rochester and Halfpenny (2000) argue that since the Thatcher era, the voluntary sector has needed to increase its commercial value and professionalism, resulting in an increase in market language. Charitable status can also be constraining, reducing their autonomy over where money is spent. Endeavour employees feel this is a hindrance in comparison to their business competitors who have more funds for marketing, and can offer a greater degree of “choice”. For Endeavour, while they disparage the morality of business, their inability to act in more business-like ways, puts them at a disadvantage.

To produce more unrestricted funding, Endeavour set up the Endeavour Development Consultancy (EDC) in 1995. This company is linked to the charity. Any profit made by EDC is invested into the charity. The business arm represents a source of freedom and flexibility to Endeavour that Alison hopes will allow them to develop a more “sustainable business model” to produce a surplus that could be used however Endeavour wanted. Alison hopes that this flexibility will allow them to provide a greater level of choice for their volunteers, perhaps with a series of different funding targets at different times of the year or for different locations, to stay “competitive” with the rest of the market. EDC represents the professionalisation of the charity. Employees treat the clients from the business side of Endeavour differently, as neoliberal subjects rather than volunteers. In the introduction to their edited volume, Liz Bondi and Nina Laurie argue “processes of professionalisation form an integral part of the production of the globalised spaces of neoliberal governance” (2005: 1). Their collection explores “how neoliberalisation incorporates, co-opts, constrains and depletes activism, and how professional(ised) subjects inhabit and sometimes subvert the opportunities neoliberalisation opens up” (2005: 2). While the processes of professionalisation are an opportunity for Endeavour to produce more income, it changes the nature of their broader charitable project.

One part of Endeavour’s business arm has been approaching schools and offering them tailor-made expeditions that can supplement aspects of the curriculum such as citizenship, cultural awareness and personal development. The “bespokes”, as they are known, are
usually just one phase, and the school and pupils fundraise for their places and for the projects they will work on. Although Endeavour still uses the language of fundraising, funding targets and donations associated with charitable activities, the schools are considered to be clients and the Head Office employees approach to them is significantly different. This is evident in the different style of marketing.

We listen to and understand your specific objectives and develop itineraries that work for you…to ensure a superior quality, outcome-led expedition (Schools, Youth Groups and Membership Organisations Leaflet)

We run our unique expeditions through the year to fit your study or work patterns. But be warned, our expeditions are no holiday. We like to think of them as a crash course in life! … Making the decision to join an expedition is a big one and may not be right for everyone. (Venturers Leaflet)

The language and tone of the first excerpt emphasises the work that Endeavour will do for the prospective clients. It also emphasises outcomes as the driver for structuring and tailoring an expedition. This is opposed to Endeavour’s emphasis on “the journey” over an end point for venturers on expedition (see chapter six). The second leaflet meant for venturers on the main expeditions does suggest a level of flexibility towards volunteers’ lives, but it also cautions prospective venturers to think carefully about whether an expedition is “right for them”.

Laurie and Bondi argue, “neoliberalism defines subjects as self-governing individuals who exercise economic and political choices as citizen-consumers” (2005: 5). A key phrase used by all the recruitment employees, and in the training sessions at fieldbase is “managing expectations”. This refers to making sure volunteer staff and venturers are realistic about the living conditions on expedition for instance, that they will not have electricity, running water or a bed to sleep on. It also refers to Endeavour’s inability to “guarantee” participation on particular kinds of projects. Not everyone can do the popular turtle projects in Costa Rica. This approach is the opposite to Endeavour’s competitors’ who allow their customers to pick where they want to go, for how long and what they will do there. “Managing expectations” therefore is concerned with reinforcing the participants’ status as volunteers who cannot make demands, who must learn to self-govern in non-consumer manner. This too then, is the “spirit of Endeavour” which one should “get into” from the beginning. The clients, on the other hand, are encouraged to stipulate their choice and are treated as consumers. Through their professionalisation,
Endeavour becomes more business-like and thereby reproduces more aspects of neoliberal ideology.

Many of the schools that Endeavour target are wealthy, enabling Endeavour to charge higher rates than for their core expeditions to make a profit on the bespoke. In recognition of the higher fee, Callum insisted that the bespoke projects “got the best”. During the summer, the Logistics team had to manage both a ten-week expedition with four groups, a five-week expedition with three groups as well as a bespoke programme with two groups. Allocating food and equipment for nine project sites is a massive task, and Callum insisted that the kit for the bespoke had to be the cleanest, newest and in best repair, including no rusted tools, or leaking tents and tarpaulins. Checking and comparing all of the kit created a far greater workload for the logistics team, but Callum insisted that it was necessary.

Callum had the opposite attitude to the complaints from venturers on the ten-weeker (the volunteers) that their tents leaked. Here Callum mobilised charity to deal with these complaints and as an explanation of deficiencies. The tents are old, and many have lost their weatherproofing. Louis has tried to fit new tents into their budget for several years but has not been able to. Callum was determined to keep using the tents until they fell apart, arguing that a bit of water was good for the venturers because it would toughen them up and make them appreciate sleeping indoors. He justified the condition of the tents and other equipment by saying “We’re a charity”. His attitude was that the volunteers on the ten-weeker should put up with the leaking tents, that it would be “character building”. He would not submit to their moans and laughed at their complaints. Volunteers represent the charity’s moral form, isolated from business and the market, and taught to embody values of perseverance, flexibility and being “hard core”. Callum’s shift in attitude to the bespoke can be attributed to what Simpson describes as a “revolution in the values

58 Tarpaulins are woven plastic, and even very expensive ones are never fully waterproof. They rely on being hung very taut and at sharp angles to make rain run off instead of puddle and seep through the material. Hung in this way, the weaving is under tension and is prone to unravelling and tears.
59 He said that it made sense to buy a new set instead of sporadically buying replacements. As tents bought at the same time are likely to wear out at the same time, buying sets should help to reduce the work load of maintaining them – when one needs weather proofing, they all will, reducing the need to check each individual tent. He thought he might be able to negotiate a larger discount for a “bulk buy” but this did require a larger financial outlay which they had not been able to afford.
associated with youth travel, producing an increasingly corporate focus and professional, self-governing, careerist persona for participants” (Simpson 2005: 54).

In contrast, he was anxious that the pupil-clients on the bespokes were “looked after” and felt that they had got “value for money”. He arranged for the bespoke to spend their final few days in a hotel by the beach. When I mentioned that this did not sound very “Endeavour”, he agreed with me, but reasoned that they had paid a lot of money and will expect something more than tents or bashers. 60 Perhaps at play here also was that the majority of the bespoke participants were girls, younger than the venturers, only fifteen or sixteen, and thus seen as less resilient. His attitude towards them was noticeably different. As one of the first bespoke expeditions, it was important that the participants had a good experience so that the school would be inclined to do one every year. This could be a big boost to Endeavour’s income. Callum wanted to make sure that he did everything he could to make their experience positive. Although the bespokes use the same fieldbase team as the core expeditions, the project volunteer staff for bespokes are paid instead of volunteers. These are always alumni who have completed expeditions, usually several as project volunteer staff, and considered exemplary by the country staff. Getting onto the bespoke staff list is considered very difficult and exclusive, requiring both excellent mentoring and facilitation skills as well as a good relationship with the country staff who champion those who they are friendly with and rate as the best. The school participants’ status as consumers instead of volunteers changes the relationship that Endeavour enters into with them. Volunteers and clients are treated differently, and are expected to behave in different ways.

A further level of professionalisation is evident in Endeavour’s Development Consultancy bespoke programmes for corporates. These tend to focus more explicitly on leadership skills. Barry, the head of business development told me that Endeavour’s particular “expertise” was in facilitating personal development. This was fourfold; improving teamwork and leadership skills and increasing global and environmental awareness. Like the schools bespokes, they are usually one phase, but may constitute a longer commitment with a company who send subsequent groups to work on a series of projects dealing with a

60 Endeavour is supposed to be fun, but also it is supposed to be tough. The groups compete as to how “hardcore” (tough, difficult, challenging) their projects and treks are. Callum’s previous comment that leaky tents will make the ten-weekers appreciate sleeping inside is also part of this. See chapter two for further discussion.
particular corporate social responsibility concern. Barry said that facilitation is usually “heavier”. He meant that because there is less time for people to gradually “discover themselves” the (paid) volunteer staff will play a greater role, running more activities and encouraging more reflection and feedback from participants. Barry saw these bespoke programmes as the “perfect partnership”. The corporates are undertaking corporate social responsibility through the project work (either environmental or community based) while increasing their employees “employability” and “transferable skills”. Furthermore, Barry felt that the project act as kind of “external audit” because they “put the pressure on”.

These corporate contracts entail both the professionalisation of Endeavour, and thereby the extension of neoliberal governance and subject formation (Laurie & Bondi 2005). Endeavour had two large contracts while I was doing my fieldwork with them. When I returned to Head Office in June 2010, Barry had left and Bert and Aaron had taken over a single corporate account as Programme Manager and Account Executive, respectively; a bespoke environmental programme with Airbus, a company that manufactures aircraft that has an engineering centre, training centre and several customer services centres in India. Aaron had previously worked in Head Office in the operations team as a support coordinator. When he got his new post, his new line manager demanded he change his usual attire from Endeavour t-shirt and jeans to shirt, tie and trousers. His new clothes reflect his new, more professional role. I mentioned to Tommy that it must be a big change for Endeavour to now be working with corporates. He surprised me by informing me that Endeavour has had several similar partnerships over the years. Tommy said that corporate money has allowed Endeavour to continue operating when it was on the verge of going bankrupt. It was also corporate money that allowed Endeavour to set up their most recent fieldbase in India. Setting up a fieldbase, I was told, was extremely expensive, and they would not have been able to do so without money from the insurance company Aviva. Aviva, like Airbus, have several call centres and offices in India. They provided funds for a purpose built complex (such luxury was jealously denigrated by Callum and Louis “making do” with converted farm buildings in Costa Rica).

While the money for these programmes comes from the arena of corporates and business, and the prices charged by Endeavour enable them to create a profit to circulate back into the charity as unrestricted funding, the ideal of charity remains at the core of why the money comes in. If Endeavour were not legally a charity, the corporates would not want the partnership with Endeavour because they could not claim that their money was going
toward “corporate social responsibility”. Charity emerges at Endeavour as a multiple, mutating and inconstant concept. It is part status and part ideal. First meaningful because it is distinct from business and does not involve making money and then used as a brand and deployed as a means to make money.

REGULATING EXCHANGE

Literature concerned with charity or donations has often used the idea of gift exchange as a basis for analysis (Browne & Milgram 2009; Garsten & Hernes 2009; Rajak 2009; Reddy 2007; Steiner 2003; Stirrat & Henkel 1997; Titmuss 1972). Some literature focuses on the rules of reciprocal exchange concerning donations, exploring ideas about the free or pure gift where no return is expected, and compared this to the Maussian gift that entails reciprocity (Laidlaw 2000; Venkatesan 2011). Others have explored how objects can shift between the status of gift and commodity (Appadurai 1988), or how these statuses affect the formation of relations (Gregory 1982). Chris Gregory’s work (1982) contrasts commodity-exchange and gift-exchange through the kinds of relationships they form. He argues gifts result in interdependence whereas commodities entail independence. In the context of my fieldsite, these approaches are hard to apply because it is not always clear who is giving what to whom.

Louis describes expeditions as a “two-way exchange”, whereby the volunteers gain personal development and a way to make their lives meaningful through their contribution and the destination community benefits from something they need, such as running water. Louis makes a point of emphasising to the volunteers that they are not there to “help the needy”, but to work with the communities. “Helping the needy” was a phrase that Louis found particularly irritating as well as inaccurate. He felt it was arrogant to assume that Nicaraguans and Costa Ricans were “needy” and that the unskilled venturers and volunteer staff would be the ones able to provide help. It was something he made a point of mentioning at the project briefings. Explaining to the volunteer staff during the volunteer staff training weekend Louis said

Poverty Tourism, it’s a massive issue, the venturers’ perception about the differences between themselves and the communities, and the assumptions they will make is far from reality. We have to work hard to get them to see beyond own their cultural paradigm... It can be hard for the venturers to understand this. They feel that they have raised all this money to come and help people. You need to make sure you explain to them that the community projects are about learning about each other, working alongside each other. Managing the expectations of the
venturers is key. Projects don’t always run smoothly, things go wrong and I’ve had some venturers saying things like “fucking Nicaraguans, no wonder they’re poor”, which is upsetting and untrue.

Louis sees expeditions to be about mutual learning, and he is therefore adamant that the form of charity Endeavour does is not concerned with the rich helping the poor in a paternalistic relationship. Despite his attempts to emphasise this, as Margaret Willson (2010) notes, charity immediately implies an unequal relationship. Stirrat and Henkel argue

While the gift is given in ways that attempt to deny difference and assert identity between the rich giver and the poor receiver, a gift in practice reinforces or even reinvents these differences (Stirrat & Henkel 1997: 69).

They further remark that there is “continual effort to reinterpret transfers in such a way that the asymmetry of the situation is denied or at least neutralised” (Stirrat & Henkel 1997: 76). This is also attempted at Endeavour, via sharing food, goals, games, jokes and living space. However, when the volunteers leave, the tentative equality established through these exchanges falls apart. The volunteers’ ability to leave and fly home reveals the inequality that was always present but never mentioned. There are no longer ways to maintain these relations, and they lapse into a connection, just a memory of the sociality they shared. These relations have a clear endpoint, when the project concludes, and the relation can be cut. Just as the relationships between the volunteers themselves are temporary and not meant to last (see chapter two) so are the volunteers’ relations with the project partners. As Stirrat and Henkel put it, in a charitable exchange, in contrast to the examples Mauss (1966) or Parry (1986) explain, “the obligation is to give, not to maintain a social relationship” (1997: 72). While Endeavour employees, venturers and volunteer staff do not see a tension between personal development and charity – wanting something for themselves while they help others – they do acknowledge a tension concerning who gets the most out of the expeditions.

Scout and I are at fieldbase making coffee for everyone. She rinses the coffee sock, sets the fabric tube into its metal frame and ladles in heaped spoonfuls of fresh coffee. As I fill the heavy metal kettles at the tap and place them on the gas stove, I catch the rich scent of chocolate characteristic of Costa Rican coffee beans as Scout replaces the lid on the coffee tub. We have volunteered to make coffee to escape the bedlam outside for a few minutes. Today all the venturers and project managers returned from their first phase. Tents,
rucksacks, spades, wheelbarrows and people have suddenly overrun the usually tidy and quiet fieldbase. As we wait for the water to boil, I ask Scout how her three weeks as a PM on a water project in Nicaragua went. She said:

It was great. It feels strange though, being back at fieldbase again. You build all these close relationships in Nicaragua. Living with your new family, eating, joking and working with them intensely for three weeks and then the project is finished and you just leave. It’s so unlikely that I’ll ever see them again. I’d love to, and if I’m back in Central America in the future I will definitely go and visit. At least I speak Spanish, but it’s not like they have email there. Most of the volunteers don’t even speak Spanish though. I had to translate a letter for Fiona from her Nicaraguan sister on the bus after we left. It was a bit naughty actually.

“Naughty?” I asked, “What do you mean?”

Well the gist was that her sister was saying that they’d become like family during the project, and that she would miss Fiona a lot. As they were so close, the sister was hoping that Fiona could help her. It had always been her dream to become a doctor, but there was no way she’d be able to afford the school fees. She asked if Fiona could give her some money so she could fulfil her dream. I had to tell Louis because they aren’t supposed to ask the volunteers for money. It’s one of the rules that Endeavour and the Cooperative have, individuals aren’t supposed to ask and if volunteers want to make donations, they should buy tea or whatever from the Cooperative shop instead.

While the community as a whole receives what has been agreed between Endeavour and the Cooperative, individuals are left with desires and dreams unfulfilled by their interaction with the venturers. Scout told me that Fiona reacted to the letter with a self-referential attitude. Fiona said that the letter made her realise how lucky she was to have so many opportunities in the UK.

This example reveals several things about appropriate modes of behaviour for venturers and recipients as well as how charity is controlled and governed at Endeavour. Endeavour sits in the centre of a matrix of heterogeneous transactions. Volunteers contribute some money in order to be able to work on the projects abroad, but the majority of funds come from external donors who will never meet the recipients. Endeavour works with other NGOs and state agencies who manage the project money for all the communities in a particular region. All things - including the intangible such as emotions, ideas, or prestige as well as money, gifts or commodities - have to pass through these organisations. It creates, as Stirrat and Henkel describe it “a chain of transactions” (1997: 68). This filtering
can change a thing’s status as well as obscuring the pathways of exchange. Multiple transactions occurring between numerous actors mean that exchanges and things are in flux. Given this, Endeavour’s role takes shape as one of regulation and control. The elements that make up charity, donors and recipients for example, become something Endeavour must manage carefully in order for charity to take place. Jonathan Parry argues that in India “the merit of the gift is thus contingent on that of a worthy recipient” (1986: 460). At Endeavour, charity is not only contingent on a worthy recipient, but also on having worthy volunteers, and worthy donors too.

Relations must be conducted appropriately. Endeavour puts rules in place that ensure relations are only maintained through itself. For instance, individuals in the communities are not allowed to ask for money and the volunteers are not supposed to give it. If volunteers want to help the community, they are advised to donate to the Cooperative or to buy products from the Cooperative’s shop. This ensures that any wealth is shared, as per the rules of the Cooperative, rather than particular individuals benefiting through chance that a benefactor lodges with them. On-going relations between individuals can cause problems for the community as preferential treatment causes jealously; this causes problems for the Cooperative who must mediate disputes and this can cause a problem for Endeavour – if the Cooperative feel it is ultimately too disruptive to have Endeavour’s volunteers working on projects they will pull out of the arrangement. This would be very damaging for Endeavour’s reputation and could harm the viability of their projects elsewhere in Nicaragua. The relation between Endeavour and the Cooperative is the important one to maintain.

One of the arguments of neoliberalism is that to ensure individual freedom and choice, the state should desist from market regulation (Harvey 2005). This has been applied to other areas of the state as well, such as welfare. NGOs have stepped in to take the state’s place (Stirrat & Henkel 1997). However, as Peck and Tickell (2002) argue, this does not signify a real retreat of the state, and has resulted in the creation of new forms of governing practices (Laurie & Bondi 2005). I argued in chapter three that Endeavour acts as a conduit for state interests through its Ambassador programme, an example of the seeming withdrawal of the state that masks new forms of control and influence. This chapter has shown that instead of being a mediator between state and citizen, through its regulation of exchange Endeavour directly takes on state function. Rather than regulating markets, at
Endeavour this takes the form of regulating the charitable exchanges as well as the relations that form around exchange.
CHAPTER FIVE - THE IMPORTANCE OF BEING SILLY

This chapter explains a variety of “silly” behaviour. During expedition, volunteers participate in short plays, fancy dress, games and forms of joking. A particular sense of humour runs through these activities, establishing an important part of the “expedition experience”. For Louis and Callum, these types of interaction are crucial to help the volunteers build relationships with one another and create a sense of shared experience. They see this as necessary for the groups to function well. The notion of the individual is a fulcrum in Endeavour’s notion of personhood. However, rather than the aggressive form of liberal individualism based on lack of obligations and self-interest, it is sociality and the ability to behave well in a team that are also seen as aspects of personal development that Endeavour hopes to cultivate. This has a larger stress on conditioning for compliance and self-control. By addressing humour, other forms of silliness and the roles they play in creating sociality and social conformity, I investigate the nature of social relations that the volunteers form during expeditions and thereby the kind of person that these relations entail. I look at the techniques used by Louis and Callum to encourage the formation of relationships and how these induce the kind of person that excels during expedition.

HUMOROUS APPROACHES

Academic approaches to joking and humour have predictably followed disciplinary shifts and therefore changed over the years. In the 1940s, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (1940, 1949) considered joking relationships in line with the structural-functionalist approach of the time. His work explored how particular kinds of relationships, such as those between a grandparent and grandchild take the form of joking to preserve “friendliness” in the face of “divergent interests” and therefore potential conflict (1940: 196). This form of “permitted disrespect” is one mode of maintaining good relationships, Radcliffe-Brown describes another as “avoidance” (1940: 196). His approach seeks to find the function of joking, as well as commenting on the kinds of relationships and persons that are involved in it. In the 1960s, Mary Douglas proposed analysing jokes as a “mode of expression” in accordance with a shift in anthropology from the “analysis of social structures” to the “structural analysis of thought systems” (1968: 361). Douglas questions the assumptions of philosopher Henri Bergson and psychologist Sigmund Freud that humour has particular characteristics that mean we can identify it as humour. Douglas argues that identifying a joke requires understanding the “total social situation” (1968: 362) but that all jokes have
a “subversive effect on the dominant structure of ideas” (1968: 364) and are “a play upon form” (1968: 362).

Despite this, Douglas draws on Bergson and Freud, in particular noting her appreciation of Freud’s definition that a joke entails the relaxing of the conscious mind in favour of the unconscious. John Carty and Yasmine Musharbash’s introduction to a special issue on humour pursues various slants, but the articles are united in seeking to understand “what jokes say about the people who make it, how they make it and more specifically, about the circumstances (social, historical, gendered or colonial) in which they and their sense of humour are situated” (2008: 211). Although some of the collection draws on Freud, they seek to avoid an overly psychological analysis or a universalising cross-cultural format.

The different approaches to humour may also be explained by a varying definition of what humour is, or rather, by focusing on different aspects of humorous activities, such as ridicule, joking relationships or jokes. Nancy Bell (2007) critiques Michael Billig (2005) for equating laughter with humour, and ridicule as the central tenet of humour. Equally, Douglas (1968) notes that provoking laughter does not necessarily make an utterance a joke, nor the lack of laughter mean something is a not a joke. Graeber (2007) also argues that joking relationships are not essentially about humour, and instead focuses on the kinds of relationships that they entail. Similarly, Katherine Smith (2012) explores how jocular abuse is less about the specific jokes made and more an expression of the longevity of a friendship. While I acknowledge a problem in conflating different types of amusing forms, this chapter locates joking relationships, laughter and humour alongside play, fancy dress, and performance and inserts them under the rubric of silliness to convey a broader way of being that expeditions engender. I feel this is fruitful for my aim of showing how these forms of silliness explain something about the nature of social relations evident on expedition and the type of person that these relations mould.

Therefore, my intention in this chapter is not to define “joke” or “humour”, nor is my research concerned with the cognitive processes involved in joking. Instead, this chapter draws on the approach set out by Radcliffe-Brown and explores the functions of joking and humour. This chapter begins by explaining nicknaming on expedition. This is a form of jocular abuse that emphasises important friendships. Nicknames have the simultaneous function of marking someone as unique and particular as well as embodying the relationship between the bestower and bestowed. I then explore the practice of “banter”, a further form of jocular abuse, drawing on Radcliffe-Brown (1940, 1949) and Graeber
(2007) to argue that joking relationships help to preserve harmony amongst a group of people with divergent interests.

Joking and humour can also serve as a form of social control and disciplining. Jokes are often used to signal to individuals that they are not behaving appropriately. Having a “good sense of humour”, being “good humoured” and able to “take a joke” embodies many of the traits seen as desirable on expedition because it has a key role in maintaining social cohesion. Many of the silly activities on expedition are aimed at group bonding. The pre-phase allocation skits, short performances by the PMs aim to create a sense of fun and excitement around the potential anxiety of becoming part of a team of strangers. These lively events are seriously silly. Drawing on references from popular culture, they inscribe a narrative of the kind of people needed to carry out each project. These silly practices enable volunteers to act with licence, dress up and play other versions of themselves. By presenting ethnographic examples, I seek to show in this chapter how the importance of being silly rests in the cultivation of particular personal traits.

Nicknames

The five-weeker volunteer staff are due to arrive just before the ten-weekers leave for their first phase. The two expeditions have a slight overlap. I am at fieldbase when Pippa emails through the names of the five-weeker volunteer staff. Elise, John and I crowd round Callum’s computer to read them. One of the interpreters has the same name as me. Callum notices and remarks, “We can’t have that we’ll have to call one of you Raquel”. He says this like a challenge, so I laugh, as if it is not important and tell him my university friends already use that nickname for me. Apparently, that settles things. I will be Raquel from now on. When the five-weekers arrive, Callum reminds me I must introduce myself as Raquel. When I do so, he finds it hilarious. While the reasoning behind this nickname is that it would be confusing having two people with the same name, nicknames function as more than just a differentiator. In one of the five-weeker training sessions, the volunteer staff have to pick a famous person they feel an affinity with. The new Rachel, thinking that she should try to pick someone Endeavour-like, chooses a famous scout. The five-weekers have already completed their jungle camp training, where Rachel’s “outdoorsy” skills emerged as less than perfect. Her choice provokes laughter, and Callum bestows her nickname – Scout. The nicknames are used almost exclusively, Callum rebuking others if they call either of us Rachel.
When the venturers arrive Sam, the deputy expedition leader, discovers two of them are also called Sam. At the first changeover, she organises a “Sam-off”, a competition to determine who is allowed to be called Sam. The three of them stand at the front of the terrace, and the audience calls out challenges for them to perform. DEL Sam, revelling in performance, is the clear winner, winning the right to be known as “Sam”. For the rest of the expedition the other two are referred as Sam2 or Sam3, reflecting their place in the competition. In one sense, nicknames are used to emphasise the individuality of persons. The idea that someone might have the same name is not acceptable because everyone must be understood as unique and particular.

Nicknames are derived from a massive range of stimuli. Often they are a play on words, alterations of the person’s proper name, reference to TV programmes, films or songs. They might come from something the person said, as Scout’s did, or from a particular trait in that person. They often poke fun at the person, for instance one volunteer staff member was sometimes called Pedito, the Spanish word for fart (or shit in some parts of Latin America) with the –ito signifying little and cute, because as Scout who made it up teased him, he could be “a little fart” – annoying and a bit unpleasant. It is also a play upon the sound of his real name. Some nicknames “stuck” and no one could remember how the person got their name.

Louis and Callum often change names to their Spanish version when people arrive in Costa Rica. For example, John becomes Juan, Mark becomes Marco. Many of the nicknames use the Spanish affectionate form –ita (feminine) or –ito (masculine) which is added onto the end of a name. For example, “Raquelita” (Raquel) or “Juanito” (Juan). After I spent ten days with Elise (an interpreter who learnt her Spanish in Mexico where the practice is very common) on a project in Nicaragua where she frequently called me Raquelita, this stuck as my new nickname. This form was also added onto non-Spanish names such as Callumcito (Callum), Louisito (Louis), Elicita (Elise). An expedition nickname highlights the possibility for becoming someone new, an altered self.

Sometimes, however, people reject their nicknames, not wanting to be known as anything other than their name. On the expedition after I left Costa Rica, there were two Helens. One was the communications officer in charge of writing the blog, and the other was the logistics coordinator. Their nicknames became Blogger and Logger, reflecting their roles as well as a nice chiming and rhythmic play on words. However, in this case, only one “stuck” as Logger refused to be called anything but Helen. While Helen rejected her
nickname, they are usually understood as forms of affection and accepted with good humour. Acceptance of a nickname reinforces the friendly relationship between people. It also to a certain extent reinforces the power of the bestower.

My fieldwork friends are fascinated by my use of pseudonyms in my thesis. Every time we talk about my work, they ask, “What have you called so and so again? And what am I?” Despite my efforts to protest that this is not the point of pseudonyms, that they are an attempt to respect privacy, they still always ask me. John was indignant at the pseudonym I chose for him. When I explained that I had picked it so that I could discuss how he was always referred to by the Spanish form, Juan, he was not appeased. When I probed what was wrong with the pseudonym, he said that it was boring. “You know, Scout and Diego, they’re funny. John, well it’s just boring.” I asked what he would rather have as a pseudonym, offering to let him pick whatever he wanted. This did not mollify him either. Scout and Diego’s pseudonyms are affectionate and teasing. Scout’s refers to her amusing choice of the famous scout. Diego is Argentinean and a fervid football supporter. I named him after Diego Maradona, the Argentinean football player who scored against England during the 1986 World Cup via a handball, a foul that the referee missed. It is intended to be provocative, reflecting the banter-filled relationship that I have with him. Despite the fact that other pseudonyms of close friends do not have stories behind them, Elise, Callum and Louis for instance are all reasonably random choices, picked largely for their origin to reflect those people’s backgrounds. John is still upset that my choice for him does not reflect anything about him as a person, nor our friendship. In the use of a nickname as a form of affection, it displays the connection between two persons. How someone receives a nickname is not as important as its continued use, which reinforces the relationships between the nicknamed and nicknamers.

Nicknames can denote inclusion and exclusion because they occur between close friends. There were many people on expedition who did not receive nicknames. Callum is the main bestower of nicknames. Although he most frequently makes up and gives nicknames, he has also collected the most himself. Only particular people can give nicknames; they emphasise power, but are also used to minimise hierarchy. Callum gives nicknames to those he likes the most, gets on best with and effectively stresses a friendship and affection that crosses the power relationship. Callum’s commonly used nicknames were given to him by Louis. In the same way that Callum shows affection and inclusion by giving nicknames to his subordinates to diminish his position of power over
them, Louis, who is ostensibly Callum’s boss, asserts their equality and mutual respect through affectionate use of nicknames. Nicknames are more than a differentiator or a marker of individuality; they signify connection. Edwards’ analysis of naming in North England displays a similar process;

Names may individuate – a particular combination of a first name and a family name does mark a unique person – but, at the same time, they carry with them the significant relationships that constitute a person…their power lies in the connections they make explicit (Edwards 2000: 235–6).

Nicknames embody the relationships between people. Even in the act of emphasising the individual, it in turn emphasises the connection with someone else.

**JOKING RELATIONSHIPS OR “BANTER”**

One morning, Callum, Jody, Diego, Bruce and I sit on volcano view, sipping coffee after breakfast, waiting for the daily fieldbase morning meeting. Jody was on radio duty the night before and Callum asks her to give us a “run down” of the alpha groups. The radio SITREPs have a standard pattern of eight categories that demand specific details from the groups. Every morning, the alpha groups “call in” at their designated time and reports on their current situation.

At roughly six am, the first groups call in, beginning with a “cell-call”. They do this by entering a code into their HF90 radio that causes the fieldbase radio to beep urgently. The fieldbase radio display flashes “3001”, identifying the caller as Alpha One. Whoever is on radio duty picks up the handset and depresses the button, holding the handset beside their mouth so the microphone is at ninety degrees, preventing their own breathing from muffling their words. The quality of sound is often poor, crackling static on the line making it hard to detect words. Every action on the radio is geared towards maximising intelligibility and preventing indistinctness or misunderstandings. All volunteers are trained in “radio protocol” a standard repertoire of words that have a specific radio meaning and are easier to hear over the radio. For instance, each time you speak on the radio, you must identify yourself with your call sign in case anyone else is also trying to communicate on the same frequency. Fieldbase must do the same, referring to itself as Zero. A conversation with a trekking group might run as below,

Hello Alpha One, hello Alpha One this is Zero. Go ahead, over.
Hello Zero, hello Zero, this is Alpha One we have a SITREP, over.
Zero, go ahead with SITREP Alpha One, over.
Alpha One, serial alpha: Sixth August, zero six hundred, over. (Date and time of communication)
Zero, copy that continue, over.
Alpha One, serial bravo: [grid reference], base of Cerro Dragon, (location)
Zero, copy continue, over.
Alpha One, serial charlie: Warm, overcast. (Weather conditions)
Zero, copy continue, over.
Alpha One, serial delta: Walked eighteen kilometres and developed six blisters, over. (Progress to date)
Zero, well done on distance, look after those blisters! Continue, over.
Alpha One, serial echo: Ascending Cerro Dragon. (Future intentions)
Zero, copy continue, over.
Alpha One, serial foxtrot: Extra tape in resupply. (Requests or questions)
Zero, say again, over.
Alpha One, serial foxtrot: Extra tape in resupply.
Zero, copy that, continue, over.
Alpha, One serial golf: None. (Updates to risk assessment)
Zero, copy continue, over.
Alpha One, serial hotel: Sixth August one eight hundred over. (Date and time of next communication)
Zero, copy that. Any further messages? Over.
Alpha One, no further messages, over.
Zero, nothing further from us. Good luck with the Dragon. This is Zero listening out.
Alpha One out.

Callum and Louis are meticulous about the radio logbook, frequently telling the fieldbase staff to write clearly, not to leave any gaps, as it is a “legal document” that could be used to assess insurance claims or litigation. It would be easier to use mobile phones, though more expensive, but Callum and Louis prefer to keep using the radios because they think the “discipline” is good for the venturers. Despite this, Callum also encourages the fieldbase staff to be cheerful, funny and encouraging towards the alpha groups to ensure they do not feel too isolated. 61

Jody begins describing her morning’s communications with the groups, reading from the radio log in unnecessary detail. The rest of us listen in frozen inattentiveness, I try not to catch Diego’s eye, as I know his expression will make me laugh. I focus on my coffee, placing the cup beneath my nose to enjoy its chocolaty scent. Callum stares at Jody,

61 Fieldbase also write and deliver “Radio Endeavour” every Sunday, a radio show containing world news, football results, songs, alpha group gossip and whatever funny skits they can think of.
feigning interest, but his forced stillness tells me he is listening out of politeness rather than necessity. None of us needs to know the details of whether Alpha Three have sunshine or rain, or that Alpha Six are planning on eating avocados for lunch. Callum and deputy expedition leader Diego need to know if there is anything significant, such as severely adverse weather conditions that will need managing, any unanticipated risks the groups might face. Bruce and I, as logistics team, need to know about any resupply requests. Whoever is writing the blog for the day can get their updates directly from the radio log itself, so Jody’s desire to diligently report everything the groups say is not helpful, despite her intention to do a good and thorough job.

As Jody finishes her lengthy summary, I shift in my seat and open my mouth to tease her “That was great but can we have a little more detail next time please?” But before I speak, Callum catches my movement and anticipates that I am going to attempt “banter” with Jody. He glares at me pointedly, shaking his head slightly to convey his point. I falter, lamely thank Jody and shut my mouth again. As I glance at Diego, the mirth in his eyes means I have to cover my face to disguise my silent laughter and grin. Jody looks confused, and I feel mean that I was going to tease her. I cannot “banter” with Jody, she would not understand that I was joking with her; she would not understand that she should tease me back and would be offended. Had I teased Diego in the same way, I know that he would retaliate, perhaps along the lines “Oh sorry, I was under the impression that you needed facts to write your thesis, but if you’re just going to write whatever you like, if you don’t care about fine details and nuance, fine, whatever. I don’t care if your thesis is rubbish”. To which we would both laugh, or the teasing may continue. However, I do not have that kind of friendship with Jody. Jody does not have that kind of friendship with anyone on expedition. She would never insult anyone, and therefore it is not appropriate to insult or tease her. Banter is not all encompassing, there are those that are outside it.

This practice, known as “banter” on expedition, is a form of joking relation. A joking relation is between two parties who are expected to tease or insult each other, and in turn, are required to take no offense (Radcliffe-Brown 1940). Banter was a defining characteristic of expedition life for me, although this is not the case for everyone on expedition. It is hard to distinguish how banter emerges between persons, there seems to be little regular patterns such as relative statuses like grandparent and grandchild identified by Radcliffe-Brown (1940, 1949). Banter takes place between friends, between persons who know you well enough to know the boundaries of what they can tease you about. In
this sense, it is very close to Radcliffe-Brown’s notion of permitted disrespect; there is an unspoken agreement of mutual licence with one another. I knew that I had finally reached a good rapport with Callum when he began insulting me. As Graeber remarks “joking relations tend to be mutual, an equal exchange of abuse emphasising an equality of status” (2007: 17). Entering into banter with someone is acknowledgment of equivalence and of a shared sense of humour – though not everyone finds the kind of inverted and transgressive edge that characterises banter on expedition funny.

Banter is a quick fire exchange of joking insults, with no general model. There are often, but not exclusively, crude or scatological. Graber notes of joking relationships that “it is humour of a very particular kind, one which might justifiably be called “shameless”, and intentional invocation of the very things that would be most likely to cause embarrassment in other circumstances” (2007: 17) Louis often teases Callum for being Scottish, calling him “stingy” and claiming that all Scots are miserly. Another favourite response from Louis is to hold up his index finger vertically and to declaim, “Do you see a flicker? Do you see a flicker on my give-a-fuck-ometer?” A common insult is to call someone a “lightweight”, usually referring to someone’s inability to drink large quantities of alcohol, but on expedition, where alcohol is prohibited, to refer to any kind of weakness. These standard responses however, are “cop-outs” as they do not utilise the wit and knowledge of the speaker. They are feeble attempts at repartee.

Instead, the best form of banter, because it demonstrates the closeness and knowledge of the joking partner, is premised on the individual characteristics of the persons involved. Scout’s creation of the nickname Pedito is a good form of banter, as it draws on the individual characteristics and is affectionately insulting. As Graeber notes, while the inversion of joking relationships is avoidance (forms of respect that entail persons to avoid contact with one another in a generalised manner), joking “tends to focus on the particular: references to idiosyncrasies, personal quirks.” (Graeber 2007: 17). It is not the words that are significant (although there is some status in the skill and quickness of wit) but the relationships that the exchanges signify. Banter is something of the moment; the words disappear underneath the laughter and the continual creation of a friendship.

Smith (2012) explains in her ethnography of Halleigh in North England how she learnt to participate in what her participants called “having a barter”. Similarly to banter, having a barter relies on quick-witted insults. As Smith was told by one of her participants “If someone calls you chicken wings, you call them chicken legs and tell them to never wear
shorts!” (Smith 2012: 111). The important thing was not to take offence. Smith describes how one member of a friendship group often took these joking insults seriously or personally, becoming upset and offended. This in turn offends the insulter because their comments are not taken “in the spirit intended”, that is as a form of friendship (Smith 2012: 121).

Smith argues that although there are “structural aspects” to jokes, they do not explain the “ephemeral substance” of them (2012: 112). She pursues a hermeneutical approach in order to explore both individual motivations and structures to “take into account the social context and individual intentionalities” (2012: 114). Smith’s approach shows that in this social context, between friends, the individuals’ intentions of joking insults and teasing are not intended to be hurtful or embarrassing but to reinforce social relationships. This is the same on expedition, although it does depend on who you try to joke with, and what about. Smith remarks there are some things people do not joke about. Joking is situational. Being a friend is knowing which topics are taboo. I enjoyed banter and found that on expedition it was a useful skill in building fieldwork relations. Most of the friendships that I have maintained post-fieldwork continue to have an element of banter to them. I found the harder adjustment coming back to academia, and forgetting that joking relations were not the norm and attempting to insult colleagues did not work as it did on expedition for making friends.

Radcliffe-Brown identifies another level in the maintenance of friendliness. He argues that joking relations often occur between parties who have different interests. They occur in instances of possible “social disjunction” (1940: 197). The “sham conflicts” of joking attacks and insults prevents real ones (1949: 134). Radcliffe-Brown’s pieces have little direct ethnography so it is difficult to discern exactly how, in his circumstance, fake fights prevent real fights. From my ethnography, it seems to me that joking insults do several things. It constantly creates friendships as each bout of joking pushes at the boundaries of what is acceptable to joke about. Each time both parties indicate they know what can and cannot be joked about, this reinforces the mutual trust and therefore licence to continue teasing. Equally, teasing remarks may also have an element of truth in them. Therefore, my desire to tease Jody about her excessive detail constituted a non-confrontational methods of dealing with disgruntlement. People’s irritating qualities often become the brunt of jokes, and, if the jokes do not have the intended effect or changing behaviour, can
be (eventually, after expedition, when they no longer have to deal with the problem) transformed into what people remember affectionately about them.

In the context of expedition, where a collection of different people must co-exist and work together, despite having their own individual motivations and aims for being there, the possibilities for social disjunction and conflict are high. Radcliffe-Brown notes that joking relations are not the same kinds of relations as between kin. Between brothers, for example, obligations of “solidarity” and “mutual help” (1949: 134) exist. Between joking partners, the only obligation is not to take offence and to avoid open disputes (1940: 208). Despite the efforts of Louis and Callum to bind the individual members of the alpha groups, everyone involved knows they will be only together for a short period - just three weeks. This means there is not expectation of lasting obligations to one another. Yet, three weeks could feel an extremely long time if there are constant arguments. Joking facilitates a short-term obligation to “get on”. This is the converse of what Smith (2012), Graeber (2007) and Radcliffe-Brown (1940, 1949) argue. They depict joking relations as those that the parties involved seek to maintain. In Smith’s case, it is the longevity of the friendship that is reified through joking. At Endeavour, while some friendships may continue after expedition, there is no obligation for them to do so.

**BEING GOOD HUMOURED/HOW TO TAKE A JOKE**

It is the first phase of my first expedition. I was supposed to be on a roadtrip up to Nicaragua with volunteer staff John and Derek in Bravo Three, Endeavour’s Toyota Hilux pickup truck. Instead, I found myself accompanying two venturers on the bus from Northern Costa Rica back to fieldbase. Alfredo had fought with Darren, running at him wielding a machete. According to the PMs, they had both been teasing each other for several days, in a manner that had begun to get nasty instead of playful. Something had finally sparked them into an open conflict. Although they were both to blame for the incident, because Alfredo had picked up a weapon Sam and Louis decided to remove him from the project. One of Alfredo’s friends, Geraldo, also demanded to leave the project, worried about a backlash from Darren once Alfredo had left. Bravo Three needed to continue on to Nicaragua to resupply the trekking group with food. Neither John nor Derek could speak Spanish, and both were drivers. As I could speak Spanish, and could not drive, Sam decides that I should come back to fieldbase with the two Nicaraguans, Alfredo and Geraldo. Once back at fieldbase, Callum has a long discussion with Alfredo and sets him a series of jobs in order to prove himself worthy to go back onto a project.
Although he and Geraldo undertake these tasks for a day or so, happily helping Don Manuel construct a bridge across part of the kitchen garden, they both decide not to remain on expedition.

During the summer, Louis and Callum run two overlapping expeditions, a ten-weeker and a five-weeker. While the ten-weekers are out on their first phase, the five-week volunteer staff are undergoing induction. As I had only just participated in an induction with the ten-weekers, and would see another in the next expedition, Callum asks me to be part of a skeleton fieldbase team. He, Sam and the five-weekers are spending their time in back to back induction-training sessions. Jill is the only other fieldbase volunteer staff member on site, and as part of the logistics team, she spends a lot of the day in the bodega (warehouse) preparing the tools and food for the five-weekers’ first phase.

The biggest role for fieldbase while the alpha groups are “on project” is maintaining radio contact with them and the communications logs. The alpha groups “call in” on the radio twice a day, to give a SITREP – a situation report – or could call at any time if there is an emergency. There needs to be someone at fieldbase at all times in case. The radio is located at the front end of the office, and most of the training sessions are held in the staff room or classroom, which are at the back. As the only free person, Callum asks me to be responsible for the radio so that he and Sam can concentrate on the five-weekers’ training. The radio room has its own bed so I sleep there to monitor the radio during the night. Unfortunately, the radio room mattress is infected with bed bugs to which I have an extreme reaction, becoming covered in a maddeningly itchy rash. I then succumb to a cold. I am miserable. I am frustrated to be back at fieldbase instead of in Nicaragua, the solitary days and nights make me both lonely and anxious that I am not doing “proper fieldwork”.

One day, still itchy and feeling sore, emotionally and physically, I have lunch with the five-weeker volunteer staff as they break from their training. Although lonely, I am in a foul mood, and therefore do not feel like talking. When someone asks how I am, I reply monosyllabically. Callum starts to tease me to try to get me out of my mood, telling me that he will have to lock me in the bodega until I have found my sense of humour. No one else laughs at his joke. Usually, I would reciprocate in the banter; perhaps asking him why he thought he was any judge of a sense of humour as his was so awful. However, today, I am too upset to be teased, and leave the table without saying a word, knowing that I am going to cry. After walking around the fields that surround fieldbase, two of the five-
weeker volunteer staff come to find me and check that I am all right. I am quite touched at their concern as I do not know them well, and have not spoken to them much. We talk a little, they are sympathetic and kind and I return calmer. Callum comes to speak to me, I imagine to apologise for being insensitive. Instead, Callum criticises me for not being able “to take a joke”, and for having a bad attitude. The five-weekers have been struggling to bond; he tells me he does not need me “bringing everyone else down”.

Through humour, Callum tries to notify me that my behaviour is not appropriate. In attempting to ridicule my moodiness, Callum is trying to deploy what Billig calls “social power” (2005: 3). Richard Lee describes a similar technique amongst the Kalahari bushmen whose “obligatory insults over a kill” (1969: 30) are a “tactic of enforcing humility” (1969: 34). By insulting a hunter’s catch, the Bushmen prevent him from developing arrogance that could upset social harmony and ensure that he behaves properly. However, in my case, because no one else laughs, the humour does not have its intended effect. That two of the volunteer staff came to check on me vindicated me in my eyes and convinced me that Callum was in the wrong. Perhaps if the volunteer staff had laughed at me with him, it would have forced me to “take” the joke, to laugh along with it and thereby respond to its intended “disciplinary function” (Billig 2005: 7).

Having a good sense of humour and being thus able to take a joke were valued traits on expedition. Billig argues that having a sense of humour is seen as a “vital human quality” (2005: 11). Although he does not discuss what a sense of humour consists of, he explores who is an appropriate person to write about humour. He describes how authors of texts about humour seek to show that they are fun or funny in their prefaces, and thank their families for inspiring them with their humour. On expedition, as far as Callum and Louis are concerned, having a sense of humour means being able to laugh at yourself and to “take” a joke. This is not the case for all, as shown by the two five-weeker volunteer staff’s sympathy for me. When I do not react in an acceptable way for Callum, he tries a serious route, chastising me both for not responding to the discipline of humour and for the “attitude” he was originally joking about. However, his irritation with me is not solely about the failed discipline. My refusal to respond to the joking made Callum look bad in front of the five-weeker volunteer staff. Taking offence at a joking insult meant to not offend, offends the other party (Smith 2012). By not “taking” the joke, I made Callum look like a bully. Even though he was trying to make me behave differently, he did not want to be made to feel that he was being cruel.
Humour as a disciplinary force does not always occur in a top down manner. During my first ten-weeker induction, Sam starts every day with an icebreaker or two. Endeavour use icebreakers a lot, it is one of the characteristics that volunteers mention as defining an experience as “that is very Endeavour”. Icebreakers are techniques used to “break the ice”, to dispel the still frostiness of a first encounter with a stranger, create a sense of communality and help people to feel comfortable with one another. They are often silly, and usually try to enforce either physical or emotional closeness. A very common icebreaker is The Human Knot.

Facilitator: Ok, everyone stand in a circle, facing in and join hands. Great. Now I want you to tangle yourselves up, without breaking hands. Step over each other, twist and turn, don’t be shy, get up close to everyone. Once you’re nice and tangled, you’ve got to unravel yourselves. No cheating! Keep hold of each other’s hands all the time.

Stepping over each other’s arms, ducking beneath armpits and grasping sweaty hands firmly, the group must try to end up in its original position of standing in a circle, all facing in and still connected together.

Figure 20 The Human Knot

Often facilitators will ask their group to repeat the activity, changing the rules, for instance preventing the group from talking whilst they untangle themselves, forcing them to
communicate with wiggling eyebrows and jerking heads.

Figure 21 The Human Knot Close-up

Other icebreakers are verbal and induce closeness through sharing personal stories or secrets.

One morning during the volunteer staff induction, the staff are all sitting out on the terrace after finishing breakfast. The tables are arranged in a large square so that we can sit around and see each other. Sam hands out slips of paper and asks us to write down two things about ourselves; something about our name, and the thing we are most proud of to date. We read ours out in turn. Sam starts;

Sam: I hate my full name – Samantha – urgh! I never use it. Even professionally, I’m always Sam. Lots of people assume that I’m a man. I’ll be in business meetings when people don’t know who I am, and they’ll be asking, where’s Sam, he’s not arrived yet has he? Sometimes I’m tempted not to own up just to see what they might say about me! The thing I’m most proud of is when Fuzzy and I, that’s my horse, won this competition. We’d been training for it for ages, and I didn’t think it was going to happen, so it was a massive surprise and extra wonderful when we did.

Randy: I don’t think my name has any special meaning, my parents named me it. Sometimes people also call me douche-bag, which is probably fair enough, but I
prefer Randy really. The thing I’m most proud of is, after a year of trying, of finally being able to touch my toes.

Randy’s comments are meant as jokes, and the rest of the volunteer staff laugh in response. He uses humour so that he does not have to share anything too personal, and in doing so shows resistance to this demand to reveal parts of himself that he does not want exposed. Some volunteers really like the icebreakers, finding them fun and funny. Others participate with a resigned air, sometimes using humour to avoid direct confrontation and to avoid offending others who enter into them with earnest. Using humour subtly undermines the activity by not taking it “seriously”.

Making a joke of yourself however, is not as “disrespectful” as directly refusing to take part, or to question the purpose of the activity. This works because humour is a part of being “Endeavour”. While grumpiness, surliness or withdrawal from the group would provoke a remark of “That’s not very Endeavour”, humour is an acceptable response, though not a desired one. In this sense, the means of resistance ends up being a form of behaviour sanctioned by Callum and Louis. This is similar to what Max Gluckman calls “instituted protest” (1954: 2). Gluckman describes “rituals of rebellion” that entail disrespect and opposition towards the king. This has a “cathartic effect” (Gibson 1955: 1074) that actually reasserts the king’s authority. The method of dissent works within the structure of power, and thereby does not challenge the system.

If a participant feels unable to take the serious activities seriously, being silly about it at least shows an engagement with the rest of the group, although Sam often got frustrated by it and consequently did not get on well with Randy. Graeber draws on Bakhtin’s work to illustrate this coeval outcome. Bakhtin’s work shows how medieval carnivals celebrate the debased, embracing the negative stereotypes of the lower classes, revelling in them and inverting the social order. Graeber notes that there are differing opinions over whether this is genuinely subversive, whether carnival serves as a vent to enable the lower classes to better cope with their daily drudgery, or whether the carnival is “a perfect example of the practices of the lower strata apparently reinforcing the images and stereotypes entertained by the upper, though with diametrically opposed intent” (2007: 30).

62 A douche-bag, or a douche, is an American insult referring to a female sanitary product.
Another example shows how resisting silly behaviour and utilising it can both form aspects of resistance to perceived hierarchy. While I never saw any of the volunteer staff directly refuse to participate in an icebreaker or energiser, it sometimes became an issue for the venturers. Scout, Callum and I visit one of the water projects in Achuapa during a road trip in Nicaragua. The PMs, Susan, Soraya and William, have been trying to start every day’s work with an icebreaker and to end the day with games but the venturers have started moaning about it and do not want to take part. Susan, Callum, Scout and I discuss the problem in a snatched conversation over hot cups of sweet hibiscus tea made by the local cooperative.

Callum: Do you need to do icebreakers and games every day?

Susan: Well we wanted the group to bond, and to have a bit of fun together.

Callum: Well, you know, sometimes you can’t force it. If they aren’t keen on doing it, don’t do it. You don’t need to do them every day. You might find that if you just let them do their thing, they will probably end up playing games anyway. Sometimes they just don’t want to feel like it’s “organised fun”.

Susan begins to describe another aspect of the group dynamics that is bothering her. The group have been playing a game of Murder, which is similar to the board game Cluedo. The names of all the members of the group are written onto small squares of paper. An equal numbers of objects and locations are written down too. They are folded up so no one can read them and put into three piles. Each player picks one from each category. The aim is to “murder” the person whose name you pick out by handing them the object (murder weapon) in the location you are assigned. The game is played continuously, a murderer can strike at any time, and the game can therefore last weeks as the players plot against one another and try to catch out their victim when they are not thinking about the game. It tends to cultivate an air of joking mistrust and suspicion, as Callum tells the volunteer staff with enthusiasm when describing the game during their induction training.

On the day Susan narrated to us, the group had conspired to help venturer Eve murder PM Susan. Susan is the group’s medic, and is therefore responsible for the health of all the volunteers during her project. As Susan walks down the village to the worksite, different venturers approach her to tell her that Eve is feeling unwell and is resting at the school. The venturers work spread out down the road along which they are laying piping. Each time Susan passes a venturer, they urge Susan to go and see Eve. Susan told us that she
was getting increasingly worried as she neared the school, rehearsing all of the possible causes for Eve’s symptoms in her head. When she reaches the school, Eve takes off her flipflop, rubbing her foot as if it hurt and hands the sandal to Susan. Unthinkingly, and concerned with Eve’s health, Susan takes it. Eve laughs and tells Susan she has been murdered. Susan is angry and upset with the whole group for the subterfuge and worrying her unnecessarily. She shouts at Eve and the others present and leaves the group to be alone so that her anger could dissipate.

Callum, Scout and I listened to her story. Callum began questioning her about the details, and asked her if she felt like she had acted appropriately. Susan affirmed she thought she had, but said she still felt uneasy about it. Before the discussion could move further, the venturers arrive to pick up their letters and messages from the Land Rover. There was not another opportunity to talk to Susan alone. The next day, as we travel onto another project site, we discuss the event in the Land Rover. Callum expresses frustration; he did not feel he had managed to discuss the problem fully. He had wanted Susan to reflect on her reactions and how the venturers, who he saw as only playing the game and not meaning to upset her, might have interpreted them. Within the context of the other problems with the group, Callum felt that the PMs were being too controlling, and that this incidence was both an example of the PMs “taking things too seriously” and the venturers trying to challenge them.

Susan felt her reaction was justified because she felt that the venturers were undermining her. Callum felt that her reaction was not justified because although the venturers may have been undermining her, they were doing so in an appropriate way, through humorous silliness, and Susan can only expect to be subject to that if she continues to act in a domineering manner. I was surprised by the events, as during induction Susan seemed to have a bright and ready sense of humour, and a laugh that frequently echoed around fieldbase. I imagined that she would be the sort of person able to laugh at herself, and to “take a joke”. Scout, who was a co-PM with her, confided however, that Susan found the projects stressful, and her sense of humour was therefore less evident when dealing with the venturers. Similarly, I would have assessed myself as being able to “take a joke”, but this was not the case when Callum attempted to discipline my behaviour through his joke. Therefore, jokes are to a certain extent situational. Silliness and humour can be used as a form of resistance, “kicking against the dictates of social life” (Billig 2005: 2), but in doing so this practice reinforces the way of being that Endeavour seeks to inculcate.
Humour and silliness become the standard responses to a variety of incidents on expedition, functioning as a way of coping with the demands of living in close quarters with people who have different interests, concerns and ways of living.

**Allocations and Group Bonding**

**Wednesday 9th July 2009**

Terrace, Fieldbase

Costa Rica

The trestle tables are set out on the terrace. They run down the middle in three rows with benches either side. The venturers sit on the benches, chatting and joking with one another whilst there is a pause in proceedings. The terrace is awash with Endeavour’s colours – green and blue – because most of the venturers are wearing their new Endeavour T-shirts. Induction is nearly over but the T-shirts are still bright since they do not yet have the characteristic post-phase dull grubbiness from ineffective hand washes in cold water. Along the far side of the terrace, which looks out onto fields, other T-shirts and long-sleeved tops drying along string washing lines almost look like celebratory bunting. The atmosphere is lively and expectant.

The PMs are preparing themselves for their allocation skits “backstage” in the office. They peak through the doorway into the classroom so that through the windows they can see onto the terrace and check if the speeches have finished and whether anyone has begun their skit. The PMs have been planning their skits for a day or so, rushing into Alba to buy the props, which are now strewn about the office. A friendly yet competitive rivalry between the PMs means most of them have been secretive about their plans, not willing to give away ideas to the others. Only one PM team has shared their idea with me beforehand, and that is only because there were unsure what to do and wanted help. I perch on a small ledge above a drain leaning my upper body precariously against the windows of the classroom, hoping they will not crack as I scribble notes. Louis has already given his speech explaining the projects in a way that aims to get the venturers excited about the destinations they might be heading off to tomorrow.

He finishes talking and looks around to see which PM team is going first. Spotting a wave from someone who disappears before I can see whom it is, Louis taps on the laptop at one side of the terrace end. Music begins to issue through the connected amp and speakers. The venturers laugh as they identify the tune – it is the recognisable theme from the film.
series “Mission Impossible” that stars Tom Cruise. PMs Glyn, Milo and Daisy emerge from the various entrances onto the terrace. They are all wearing black Endeavour T-shirts, black bandanas tied around their heads and have smeared black camouflage paint across their faces. Clasping their hands together in front of them, pointing their top two fingers and curling the others into their palms they simulate holding guns as they run up and down the terrace. They crouch and duck against imaginary gunfire, rising again above the heads of the seated venturers to return fire and assess their predicament. The venturers respond with laughter, whoops and clapping, although some of them look on in stunned silence. The PMs converge at the top of the terrace and Louis turns the music down so that Glyn’s Welsh accent carries to all the venturers. Milo and Daisy crouch and stand beside him, maintaining their characters as they pose with their “guns” (Figure 22).

Glyn: We are Alpha Two: Mission Possible. [Laughs] This is the Maribios Trek, you have been carefully chosen and selected to join a team of highly specialised agents.

[Milo pokes his head up so the rest of the crowd can see him better, with a silly expression on his face. The comparison with Tom Cruise’s cool and sophisticated persona causes laughter at the idea of someone so silly being a “specialised agent”.

Should you choose to accept the mission you will be transported to a secret grid reference in a new land...You’ll be part of a death-defying mission of mayhem, mischief and madness. [Laughs] You will be required to dig deep, to challenge yourselves - to the core! Are you ready to accept this challenge?! [Cheers, whoops and clapping]
As Glyn calls out the venturers’ names, they stand up from the benches and make their way to the front. Milo daubs paint on their faces and Daisy helps them to tie a bandana on their heads. The other venturers cheer and clap, so loudly that it is difficult for Glyn to project his voice over their noise as he calls out the remaining names for his group. The Alpha Two venturers continue to stand at the front as more venturers make their way to the front, greeting their new team mates with hugs and pats on the back. The Maribios Trek refers to a walk across \textit{Los Cordillera de Maribios}, a chain of volcanic mountains in Nicaragua. It is considered the harder trek of the two running this expedition because this region is very dry. There are few rivers and the group must ensure they walk fast enough to reach another source of water every day. Tom Cruise achieves his assignments in the \textit{Mission Impossible} films against seemingly unassailable difficulties. The PMs reference it because they require the same traits from their venturers – to take on challenges, to be able to “dig deep” and achieve the near impossible. However, not wanting to scare the venturers, or make them think the trek is beyond their means, they joke that it is “Mission Possible”.

All the PMs pick an allocation theme that relates to their project. Alpha Four for instance, are recruiting for the “Wellington Brigade” (Figure 23 Alpha Four “Ceremonial” Wellies).
They will be building a community centre in Nicaragua, living on a hillside in the wettest region of Nicaragua. The PMs ride in on pretend horses, wearing waterproof ponchos and present each venturer with a pair of wellington boots to keep their feet dry, but more importantly to symbolise their incorporation into the Brigade.

Figure 23 Alpha Four "Ceremonial" Wellies

On the second expedition, the new PM team for the Maribios trek play more specifically on the region’s dryness. Instead of dressing up and performing themselves, PMs Nirish and Mark call up two venturers at a time. Commenting on the necessity to be able to “down” water when it is available, they carry two litre jugs of water. They set the venturer pairs the challenge to “down” the litre of water as fast as possible. “Downing” something has specific rules; you cannot pause to take a breath or even close your mouth while swallowing, nor can you spill anything. The whole measure of liquid must go down your throat all at once. When finished, you must put your glass upside down on your head to prove that it is empty (anything you have not drunk you will then pour over yourself). When one venturer finishes their water, the other venturer must tip the water they have not drunk over their own head as punishment. This allocation skit references university sport team initiations (and also has similarities to military initiations (Winslow 1999), although
prospective team members would be “downing” pints of beer or other liquor rather than water. Nirish and Mark indicate this link by providing a “vom bucket” – a bucket in which the venturers can vomit into if they need to (Figure 24). Most of the venturers cheat, “accidentally” pouring water down their fronts so that there is less to drink. Others cannot continue drinking, often because they are laughing too hard. The whole terrace is in fits of laughter, roaring with noise, encouraging the challengers on and laughing at their failures.

Figure 24 Competitive Water "Downing"

Surprisingly, no one seemed to mind getting soaked, nor did they sulk about losing or about being laughed at. As an Endeavour employee might comment, they “got into the spirit of expedition”. I never witnessed volunteers refusing to participate in these public performances, although they “enter into the spirit” of it in varying degrees. Billig (2005) argues that being laughed at is a marker of shame and embarrassment that entails disciplinary control. Here although being laughed at is not shameful, it does necessitate a particular kind of behaviour – that of embracing silliness. In doing so, the venturers are incorporated into their new group and establish an initial shared experience to “relate to” one another as the basis of building relationships.

While I argue that there is a disciplinary function to the kinds of humour levelled at volunteers during expedition, there is a further element that Billig does not acknowledge.
Being laughed at can be unpleasant, and the embarrassment can therefore alter behaviour, but there are other responses to being laughed at beyond embarrassment or shame that serve a different function. Megan McCullough (2008) explains that being laughed at can reinforce relationships by letting someone “in on the joke” (2008: 282), even when they are the cause. Similarly, Smith’s (2012) argues being ridiculed and ridiculing in return as a form of jocular abuse is an expression of friendship.

Louis and Callum use other techniques to create shared experiences. The night before “deployment” when the alpha groups leave fieldbase for their projects, the venturers gather in the classroom before a party begins. Callum gives them an inspirational speech about how to cope on expedition. As I described in chapter two, this usually entails telling them how to “man up” when things “get tough” and leading them in a rousing rendition of “Singin’ in the Rain”. He also takes the opportunity to thank all the fieldbase volunteer staff who complete the preparations necessary for their imminent departure. He points out each fieldbase volunteer staff, describes what they have been doing and how – usually remarking on their ability to stay smiling when things get difficult – and prompts the venturers in clapping and cheering. However, he leads them in communal clapping rather than random applause. He demonstrates clapping a physical “round” of applause, moving his hands in a circle and clapping at the imaginary four edges, above his head, to one side, below his knees, to the other side. Gradually the venturers copy him until all the claps occur at the same time with the same movement. Callum switches the movement and claps, calling out “a triangle of applause”, clapping above his head, to the side of his knees, to the other side of his knees and above his head again. Everyone joins in synchronically. Wiltermouth and Heath argue that “acting in synchrony with others can foster cooperation within groups by strengthening group cohesion” (2009: 1), noting the use of these practices in organisations like armies or churches that function on the basis of collaboration, peer pressure, discipline and conformity. I argue on expeditions that laughing together has a similar effect to these synchronous activities, even if laughing together requires you to laugh at yourself.

Being laughed at can have an incorporating aspect beyond Billig’s characterisation of it as a shameful event. McCullough’s (2008) example of a family laughing at Robert’s, one of their relatives, public dance performance demonstrates how laughing at someone can have multiple simultaneous meanings beyond shame. Robert’s family watch his performance of an authentic Murri (aboriginal) dance that he performs to a White tourist audience.
McCullough cannot attend the dance routine, and so asks the family, when Robert is not present about how it went. The initial description is inconsequential, but as the evening progresses, the family begin to crack jokes about Robert’s clumsy efforts. Donnie, a young relative, jokingly imitates him, causing the rest of the family to laugh. Throughout the evening, though they discuss other topics, the family keep reminding each other of Robert’s performance, provoking further imitations from Donnie and more laughter. Robert returns the next day and Donnie performs a “brief, muted caricature for Robert, who smiled weakly in response.” (McCullough 2008: 280). McCullough argues that Robert’s performance was embarrassing, and conjured up issues over authenticity, particularly because it was performed in front of a White audience. It therefore had the potential to shame the family, and result in Robert’s exclusion. However, Donnie’s gentler reproduction of his imitation allows Robert’s reincorporation by “letting him in on the joke” (2008: 282) to preserve the social relationships and mitigate against the “salient social value of relatedness being threatened.” (2008: 282). The family’s laughter at Robert may have embarrassed him, and perhaps would encourage him to improve his dancing abilities, but McCullough’s example shows that there is also an element of familial warmth and incorporation to their laughter.

Equally, on expedition, volunteers are laughed at by others because they look silly, because they fail at the assigned task, but the laughter is not wholly negative as Billig implies. Callum encourages the PMs to make the allocations an “event”, he tells the PMs that this is their first chance to “set the tone”, to establish expectations of their venturers.

Callum: If it’s [the performance] half-arsed, it won’t work. It’ll fall flat. You have to go for it! Do something you feel comfortable with though, if you’re at all embarrassed, they [the venturers] will be too. If you throw yourselves in, they will as well, and that will set you up for the attitude that you’ll get throughout your phase.

An important part of this tone is being able to be silly, to “not take yourself too seriously”.

LICENCE TO BE FREE

Billig (2005) argues that humour is often represented, problematically, as wholly positive. He critiques self-help books and academic articles that argue humour can be a positive force that people can utilise in order to be happier and more successful. Billig connects this “ideological positivism” to the conditions of late capitalism and its emphasis on individualism and the need for persons to constantly “create and recreate themselves”
by seeking inner change. There are many correlations with this argument evident on expedition. On expedition, this positive mind-set not only requires being resilient in the face of difficulties but also to be able to laugh at, be silly about and not take oneself too seriously. Humour is used both as a disciplinary force, as a means of resistance that reinforces the prescribed way of being, and to build cohesive groups and friendly relationships.

Radcliffe-Brown uses the idea of “licence” to explain joking relations. He argues that joking relations are “permitted disrespect”, you can insult someone with their permission, they will not take offence, and will insult you back. I want to extend the notion of licence to incorporate the connotation of having a chance to do something. Humour and silliness offer another form of licence; that to be free of the self. At every changeover, the fieldbase volunteer staff organise a themed party. Depending on the time of year, this may coincide with Christmas (Figure 25), or Halloween (Figure 26). One expedition had a card-playing craze, so fieldbase organised a mass card game (using people as cards) and a complementary casino night (Figure 27). Foam (Figure 28) and UV (ultraviolet light) (Figure 29) parties are common. All these parties encourage dressing up, for people to play a different self for a night.

For the UV party, venturers paint each other with florescent paint that shines brightly under the ultraviolet light. Callum, as usual, “sets the tone” and co-opted me as assistant costume-designer. Roughly basing his fancy dress on a warrior from the recently released film 300, which graphically depicts the final stand of Spartan fighters against the Persian army, he dug out an old metal helmet made from mess tins beaten into shape and a tarpaulin skirt. I fashioned a cloak by pulling down and re-sewing a dusty curtain. Callum stripped to the waist and proceeded to direct me in painting designs on his back, while he painted the colours of his football team across his face, reminiscent of Mel Gibson as William Wallace in Braveheart. As the venturers gather in the classroom for the speeches and thanks you before the party takes place, Callum directs that the lights be turned off so he can make a dramatic entrance. He stands on the stage, positioning his back to the venturers. As the lights are turned on he whips off his cloak to reveal the words “This Is Endeavour!” In the film 300, this is the rallying call for the warriors, a demonstration of their strength, bravery and determination to fight to the death. Callum’s costume and performance emphasise the traits he feels as necessary for expedition; strength and perseverance. However, in his speech he stresses another trait;
Partying is very important. It’s all about dressing up and making a bit of an arse of yourself – as you can see (he gestures to his costume). There will be prizes for most imaginative use of paint. This makes Endeavour for you; you have to make a bit of a fool of yourself ‘til midnight.

Many venturers and volunteer staff embrace this rallying call wholeheartedly, as shown below.

![Figure 25 Christmas Themed Party](image1)

*Figure 25 Christmas Themed Party*

![Figure 26 Halloween Costumes](image2)

*Figure 26 Halloween Costumes*
The parties were only one of the opportunities to “make a bit of an arse of yourself” during expedition. At the end of a phase on the evening when the venturers and PMs
return to fieldbase, each alpha group performs a “skit”. A skit is a short play, song or performance. These skits perform a different function to the allocation skits described earlier, which take place at the start of the phase to promote group bonding. These skits signal the end of the phase, and are more playful, humorous and transgressive.

Callum uses the radio to inform the groups of the judging criteria; 1) group involvement. The skits are a means for group bonding and everyone should have a part to play. 2) Inclusion of different languages such as Spanish, Dutch, Cantonese. This is partly to ensure everyone’s involvement but also requires the venturers to be inventive about how they communicate information to their audience. Many skits use props, mimes and actions to convey meaning while different languages run as a commentary over the top. 3) “Comedy value”, the skits should be funny. 4) Tell the story of the phase. The skits often become an arena for “bragging” about the groups’ achievements or the luxurious (or not) conditions of their project sites, heightening competition and providing more fuel for banter. 5) Song or performance. The skit should contain either of these elements.

Fieldbase usually makes one as well, filming it during the phase and playing it rather than performing on the night. Callum loved writing and filming the fieldbase skit, roughing out storyboards and inventing new ideas each expedition. He argues the enthusiasm of the fieldbase skit “sets the tone” for the rest of the evening; if the venturers see the effort fieldbase has gone to, they will be enthused in their own performances.

The skits are usually performed on the classroom stage but when the whole expedition cannot fit, or when the weather is too hot and humid to be indoors, performances are on the terrace instead. On my second expedition, the competition is so fierce that the logistics team construct a makeshift stage on the terrace and string up a red curtain to respond to the “buzz” surrounding the performances. The skits invert normal life. They play with existing hierarchies; the PMs are often the subject of jokes. The venturers exaggerate and make fun of their defining characteristics – perhaps an oft-used word or phrase. One PM, a medic, fell into a large hole during a trek while he was not looking where he was walking, and tried to deny it ever happened. This earned him the nickname of “Dr. Denial” and the pride of being the main plot device in his group’s skit. Venturers will play different people who featured in the phase, such as the foreman or park rangers, or “play up” and embellish their own selves. They may play entirely different or made-up characters. The skits often draw on popular songs, films or books and reframe these storylines or genres through the events of the phase. For instance, one fieldbase skit was a music video of the popular song
by Jay-Z “Empire State of Mind”. The chorus centres on the lyric “New York” sung by Alicia Keyes. This has been parodied already with all the lyrics changed to relate to “Newport”, a town in Wales. Fieldbase did their own version of this; “Fieldbase State of Mind”. The lyrics feature all the fieldbase volunteer staff, and the video itself shows them all dressed up as “rappers” or “gangstas”. These characters are exaggerated to the point of the ridiculous.

Tommy explained the purpose of the skits to me in terms of Jungian psychology. He argued that ideally the skits are the opportunity to “play” sides of yourself that do not usually come to the fore. Tommy described to me the Jungian model of archetypes, using a model developed by Robert Moore and Douglas Gillette (1991). This model has four archetypes which represent different parts of the self; warrior, magician, king and lover. Most people are deficient in some of these aspects, and tend to orientate themselves to one more than the others. A “healthy psyche” has a balance between all the aspects of a self. Tommy said that through drama and acting, the aspects of the self that aren’t usually enacted can be “played”; exaggerated and experimented with. Tommy explained that Jung felt that this would help people to deploy these aspects more in their daily lives as a result of having “played” with them in a skit. In the safe space of expedition, parties and skits allow people to have licence, to step outside of their normal or usual self. This can help you to learn about who you are by helping you to “realise your potential” that rests inside of you, but which you haven’t “tapped into” before.

Despite Tommy’s advocacy of their learning potential, skits and fancy dress are a source of contention within Endeavour. They become very important to the venturers and volunteer staff on expedition, and epitomise for them, what expedition “is all about”. However, at Head Office, the images of venturers, volunteer staff and the country director or country programme manager dressed up in costumes (cross-dressing was a particular issue) or involved in silly activities is felt to have the potential to reflect badly on the professional image of the organisation. Head Office did not want to stop the practices entirely, but there was a move to contain them, and ensure that “embarrassing” images did not reach the media. Gary Alan Fine, in his ethnography of role playing games, remarks “fantasy, play and nonsense have been depicted as opposed to the important doings of human life – working and knowing the real world,” (Fine 1983: 5). Alison’s aims as CEO to build the credibility of the organisation are not helped, in her view, by practices that could easily be misinterpreted as “nonsense”.

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Tommy cautioned that the skits have to be framed properly for their positive effect to have an impact. He feels that while people enjoy them, they may not have the effect he desires because silliness masks the “learning points”. Callum and Louis would disagree. They believe being silly and not taking oneself too seriously is part of the point of the skits. The venturers reproduce this narrative. At one post expedition weekend, one venturer tells me how expedition has taught him to differentiate between what you should take seriously and what you can laugh about. He used the example of how his friends’ frustration at having to wait in a queues or their anger at losing a belonging now seems odd to him. He said he used to be like that too and got worried about these small things. Due to his experiences on expedition, he realised that these are not important, and it is not worth spending energy getting upset about them. The other venturers in the conversation agreed with him that they had learnt this too. The inherent silliness of skits and fancy dress has a serious function, and they provide an experimental learning zone that teaches particular traits in the venturers and volunteer staff, whether or not these learning points are explained to them explicitly.

Silliness is a serious matter on expedition. The ability to be silly is a sign of personal maturity and security. Those most comfortable with their own selves are able to “play” other selves. These people find the most extravagant fancy dress costumes for the changeover parties, and revel in acting. Humour plays a very important part of the judging criteria for the skits – it is usually those that get the most laughs that win the prize for best skit. Equally, the funniest skits are those in which the performers have embraced the idea of performing to the greatest extent.

I argue that this sense of licence runs throughout expeditions silly practices. Being able to not take yourself too seriously, to the extent that you are happy to be something else for a night, to step outside your own self and become something new resonates with the neoliberal idea of individual freedom. In this case, it is not the freedom to pursue self-interest, but the ultimate freedom to be anything that you want; to dress up as a ghoul or as the opposite sex, to revel in the lewd, the scatological, that which is normally socially unacceptable to celebrate. These moments of permitted disrespect and licence provide relief from the otherwise carefully disciplined behaviour during the phases where venturers must be aware of others and consciously patrol themselves to ensure sociality prospers. The expedition changeovers embody a temporary carnivalesque atmosphere that volunteers have to tone down once they return home. This licence also applies to
relationships, volunteers can have close friendships during expeditions, but be free to release themselves from them afterwards if they wish. The importance of being able to be silly on expedition is a crucial part of cultivating a particular kind of person.
CHAPTER SIX - PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

This chapter unpicks the notion of personal development. By describing Endeavour’s personal development techniques, I consider the model of personhood that these practices construct. The notion that all persons are unique and particular individuals is an important one at Endeavour. Harvey argues that neoliberalism has become so all-pervasive because it shrouds itself in a conceptual apparatus with individual freedom at its core (2005: 5). Individualism has also been described as a defining characteristic of modernity (Bauman 2000; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Beck 2000). The individual is the crux of much liberal theory that preceded neoliberalism (e.g. Mill 1982). In each case, the definition of what constitutes an individual and what characteristics it entails differs. Similarly, at Endeavour individual has a particular and specific meaning.

This chapter will show ethnographically that Endeavour is in the business of making individuals. However, in order to be a good individual, Endeavour’s volunteers must be good at social relations (albeit temporary ones). This reframes previous debates in the anthropology of personhood that have argued that there are two opposed models of personhood, one in the West that is based on the notion of the individual, and one for the rest of the world that emphasises social relations. Ethnographies of Britain have indicated the importance of personal relationships, such as kinship, for the constitution and understanding of persons (Carsten 2004; Edwards 2000; Evans 2010) This chapter argues through an analysis of Endeavour’s personal development techniques that the “essentially alien elements” of individuals and relations exist on a “continuum” (Bloch 2011). Individuals and relations are thereby reimagined here as continuities that reinforce one another.

In this chapter, I explore three aspects of personal development. The first of these analyses the personal development techniques used during the volunteer staff training. Sessions on personality types aim to help volunteer staff “get to know” themselves. If they know themselves, they are able to understand themselves in relation to others. Therefore to be good at social relations individuals must become self-aware, but this self-awareness should be orientated outwards. Secondly, I show how persons are understood as continually in the process of becoming. Persons are not given but must be brought into being. Personal development is often represented as a “journey” by Endeavour employees

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63 As an online article, Bloch’s piece does not contain any pages numbers.
and volunteers. There is a parallel with the first chapter of the thesis which explores the importance of “development” at Head Office for making sense of change and disjuncture and with neoliberalism’s call for constant growth and change. Just as Endeavour has developed organisation-wide strategic objectives, on expedition periodical target-setting meetings seek to instil venturers with a sense of “personal trajectory” that engages them with their development and growth. Lastly, I explore Endeavour’s “reviewing” practices. Reviewing is part of Endeavour’s experiential learning model. This is based on the idea that while you learn things by doing them, learning is enhanced if you can consciously acknowledge and evaluate what you are learning as you do it. This entails recording “progress made”, culminating in volunteers practicing self-audit.

THE PERSONHOOD LITERATURE

Deriving from analyses by Dumont and Mauss, the anthropological literature on personhood has revolved around a distinction between “the West” and “the Rest”, which characterises western persons as individuals and the rest of the world as relational, joined-up or dividual to indicate that they are embedded in social relations. As Mauss and Dumont note, the notion of the individual in the west has a particular historical and political trajectory, often associated with the Enlightenment era. Some authors corroborate this distinction, (Conklin & Morgan 1996; Kondo 1990; Spiro 1993; Strathern 1988) while others seek to show the importance of relations in the west (Carsten 2004; Edwards 2000; Evans 2007, 2010; Marre & Bestard 2009), or of the individual elsewhere (Course 2010; McHugh 1989).

This body of literature has remained fixed within this dichotomy in a manner that has ceased to be productive. As Bloch notes, a further problem with this literature is the huge variety of related but seemingly distinct languages employed to discuss it; “terms such as self, the I, agent, subject, person, individual, dividuals, identity, etc” (Bloch 2011). There is a division of terms along disciplinary lines. The mash of terminology makes it difficult to find a path through the literature and find ways to speak to it and with it. I have always thought of my work as investigating personhood – following Mauss’ (1985) and Fortes’ (1987) definition of personhood as the social expectations and ideas about what a full member of society should be like. I have thought about this as different from discussions about subjectivity and selfhood, which I felt constituted a more psychological approach. This became a difficult idea to hang onto in the field as my participants talked and thought about the “self”. Bloch also identifies the struggle to make links within the literature and
proposes a new way forward. He concatenates these terms into “the blob”, because, he argues, despite using different terms, the literature often argues similar points.

Bloch maintains that there are real cultural differences between “blobs”, but that this can be exaggerated. He asks “Is there really nothing to be said about the species *Homo Sapiens*?” Bloch approaches humans as a “natural organisms” to consider commonalities and differences. In doing so, he hopes to integrate the contributions of anthropology and cognitive science. Drawing on cognitive science, he explores the different “levels” of the blob; “with the deepest levels shared by all living things and the highest levels creating the possibility of a narrative reflexive autobiography”.

![Figure 30 Bloch's (2011) Blob](image)

According to Bloch all creatures share the initial “core self”. He uses the example of a lobster that consumes claws but has enough sense of self not to eat its own claws. The “minimal self” refers to the ability to perceive time and continuity, “to use information about the past for present behaviour which involves being in the past in imagination, and the ability to plan future behaviour which requires being in the future in imagination (Bloch 2011).” This however, is not at the stage of organising memories into a story. That is the next level: the “narrative self”. Importantly, this requires “reflexive interaction with
others”. Bloch argues that these levels are a “continuum”, not separable but rather interacting.

The last level has caused considerable debate in cognitive science. As Bloch asks “Is talking about one’s autobiographical past the same as having and using such an autobiographical memory, a capacity which, it is most likely, we share with non-linguistic anthropoids?” He draws on Strawson (2005 cited in Bloch 2011) who argues that there are some people who are “into” telling stories about themselves, and others who are not. Bloch borrows Strawson’s terminology, which describes the latter as “episodics” and the former as “diachronics”. Both have a narrative self, but diachronics have a “rhetorical style” which constitutes an “extra” narrative. Bloch argues that this can be useful for contrasting different cultural settings. It allows us to acknowledge, like Mauss, “that there has never existed a human being who has not been aware, not only of his body, but also, at the same time of his individuality, both spiritual and physical” (1983:3), but that there are those who “have got into the habit of talking about their inner states and those who don’t” (Bloch 2011).

Bloch argues that the blob is created within two continua. The first I have already described: that of the core, minimal and narrative self, which he argues, because they are contiguous, are all cultural, whether or not they may appear as “private” or “public”.

… like icebergs, the blob is 90% submerged but the exposed part has no real independent existence from the submerged part and vice versa (Bloch 2011).

The second continuum exists between blobs, between “different people linked by social ties”. Bloch argues, therefore, that the dichotomy between individual and relational persons is non-existent: “There is thus no basis for a contrast between two types of blob”. Evans makes a similar argument

… rather than thinking about human relations in terms of a dichotomy between those societies characterized by situated persons engaged in personalized relations of exchange and those typified by autonomous individuals participating in the impersonalized relations of the market (Carrier 1999), we might more usefully think of a continuum of situated-ness (Evans 2010: 183).

Endeavour’s model of personal development has interesting parallels, but different significance, with Bloch’s blob. Endeavour also start with the notion of the “core” of a person, which they describe as the locus for intention and action, derived from their
unique history and circumstances. While everyone has this core self Endeavour uses a variety of practices and learning tools to help their participants “get to know” themselves. Becoming who you are entails learning about your core through introspection, reflection and constructive feedback from others. While Endeavour frame this learning in terms of personal development, I argue, using Lave and Wenger’s (1991) notion of situated learning, that they are producing particular kinds of persons. Lave and Wenger argue that instead of being about the internalisation of knowledge or information learning is about becoming a full participating member of social life. Following Fortes (1987), this enables an analysis of models of personhood and how these shape society and are shaped by society.

**BECOMING YOURSELF, KNOWING YOURSELF**

A significant portion of Endeavour’s volunteer staff induction training teaches the volunteer staff to “get to know” themselves. In Endeavour’s model, it is possible not to fully know your own self, in the sense that you may go through life reacting and responding to the world, without “reflecting” upon why you behave in particular ways. Correspondingly, much of yourself is hidden from others. They may interpret things about you through your behaviour or via their knowledge of your social history, but they never really know you unless you choose to reveal yourself.

Endeavour uses a variety of models and metaphors to explain this idea of the self. Similarly to Bloch, Tommy uses the metaphor of an iceberg during the volunteer staff development weekend. Like an iceberg, two thirds of a person are “below water” and cannot be seen. Tommy asks the volunteer staff to think about what aspects of a person might be visible to another person, and what is invisible. He writes them up on a piece of paper on the flipchart stand (Figure 31). He writes the visible characteristics above the waterline, and the invisible below. Some features may hover between the two, for instance, mood and emotion could be hinted at by body language. Some characteristics are considered specific to the individual, such as their past experiences, body and age, and are therefore placed within the iceberg. Others attributes are considered more influenced by society, such as gender and culture, and so are placed outside the iceberg.
What this model seeks to teach volunteer staff is that they have a self that interacts with, yet is distinct from, their outer body and their projected image of their self to others (Goffman 1971). In this model, all action is the product of the core inner self.

The iceberg model reveals an understanding of persons as unique because of their experiences and circumstances – their social history. An individual contains their history. They embody it (Toren 1999). They come into being through their embedded and situated positions and relations with others (Evans 2010). For Tommy, persons are not the mere products of their situation; each person is responsible for themselves and their actions. Toren argues that persons “embody the history of our own making” (1999: 2). She argues that even though persons are produced in, through, and by their relations with others, the response each person has to their world is unique.

The first stage of learning how to become who you are is to have a greater understanding of your own submerged self. On my first expedition, Sam uses two psychometric profiling tools in the volunteer staff induction training to help us understand ourselves better. In her usual job, Sam is a high profile human resources manager for a large communications company in Britain. She tells us that these psychometric models are often something she uses when putting together work teams or problem solving among her employees. The first technique she uses at Endeavour is a DISC profile. This requires all the volunteer
staff to take an online test answering questions about their preferred responses to different situations. For example:

- **Active.** I like having people around so that we can bounce ideas off of each other and talk while we work.

- **Productive.** I don't mind having people around, as long as they are getting things done and not interrupting me.

- **Alone.** I like to focus on my task without interruptions.

- **Calm.** I don't mind having people around, I just prefer that the environment stay pretty quiet and peaceful.

Sam tells us to pick the response that is “most like” what you would prefer, or what is the “most common” for you. After answering the questions, the website generates a numerical analysis of the responses and how they fall into four categories. Sam reproduces these for us all on a graph (Figure 32).

![Figure 32 DISC Profile](image)
DISC stands for dominance (D), influence (I), steadiness (S) and compliance (C). In the training session, Sam writes on the white board in the classroom all the characteristics of the categories. They range from low to high and each has positive and negative attributes. Dominance is related to the control and power one has. Influence is related to how someone performs in social situations and how they communicate. Steadiness is the degree of patience, persistence and thoughtfulness. Compliance refers to the response to organisation, structure, rules and regulations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dominance</th>
<th>Influence</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driven</td>
<td>Tends to co-operate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determined</td>
<td>Undemanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneering</td>
<td>Mild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Agreeable</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Cautious</td>
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<tr>
<td>Demanding</td>
<td>Calculating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egocentric</td>
<td>A “push-over”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forceful</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong-willed</td>
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<td>Aggressive</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Steadiness</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steady</td>
<td>Restless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure</td>
<td>Flaky</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Calm</td>
<td>Eager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxed</td>
<td>Impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>Impatient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Averse to rapid change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possessive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemotional</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predictable</td>
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</table>

Sam tells us that the DISC profile can help us learn about our selves by giving an objective viewpoint, a window revealing our submerged self. She says the aim is not to “psychoanalyse us”, which some people have expressed nervousness or even anger about.
but that we can “take which bits you want”. People are suspicious of what they felt was “prying” into their private thoughts and feelings. Sam manoeuvres around this issue, stating that people should only share with the group what they feel comfortable with. The purpose of the training session, she says, is that to be good PMs – to help others develop – the volunteer staff need to be able to understand themselves.

I came out as equal measures D and I, half-way between low and high in both. My highest category was S, so the high steadiness evaluation is my dominant characteristic. Sam explains that any of the categories which are significantly higher or lower than the others can be regarded as defining characteristics, such as my low score on compliance. As the volunteer staff read through the features on the whiteboard, they mutter to themselves and those next to them about how much affinity they feel to them. Some comment on how they would like to think of themselves as having the good traits, even if they may not be the first things they would use to describe themselves. They seem to find it harder to welcome the negatives. Rather than an objective view, the volunteer staff are subjective, weighing up each attribute and to what extent they feel it matches themselves.

There are no revelations of people suddenly discovering things they did not already know about themselves. However, some people are unhappy with their results. Callum was discontented with his classification as a D. Throughout the session, instead of his usual energetic and engaged persona, his face is a frown, and he is silent and sullen. He holds Sam and her knowledge of human resources and “soft skills” in high regard, and uncharacteristically marks his feedback form on the session as the lowest grade possible. Callum did not want to think of himself as leading by dominance, and preferred to imagine himself as leading through influence. Callum argues that he had not answered questions in relation to his work approach and wants to do the test again. Sam agrees, and Callum’s second results profile him as a high I. 64 Sam admits that the online DISC profiling tool we use for this session is crude and unsophisticated. She explains that she uses a more complicated version in her work to get to know people “super-fast”.

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64 This also shows that it is possible to skew the results of these tests if you have in mind a particular profile you would like to be.
Louis runs a similar session on my next expedition but uses a different model known as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. In this model, there are sixteen possible personality types that involve the interchange of four opposed categories. These dichotomies are Extraversion (E) vs Introversion (I), Sensing (S) vs Intuition (N), Thinking (T) vs Feeling (F), and Judgment (J) vs Perception (P). These are known as “preferences” and are abbreviated with the bracketed initials. For example, one personality type would be INFP. These preferences are usually assessed in a person by a long questionnaire and the responses are then collated by a trained Myers-Briggs practitioner. However, instead of asking everyone to take a test, Louis writes the categories’ descriptions on the white board in the classroom and asks the volunteer staff to pick the one they feel most resembles them. He then splits the group on whether they defined themselves as extraverted or introverted.

To decide which category they are, Louis advises the volunteer staff to consider “where you get your energy from. It is from other people, do you need others around you to feel energised? Or do you get energy from within, and need time away from others to recharge?” However, this was not always the best indicator, as Scout discovered. Scout categorises herself as extraverted and accompanies the other Es into the staff room, leaving the introverted in the classroom. However, she returns sheepishly after a short while. As she re-enters the classroom, which is quiet, she laughs. She explains that the other room is full of noise with everyone talking over each other. One of the other Es spotted her in there and declared, “What are you doing in here with us knuckleheads?” Louis, who has remained with the Is, laughs too.

“Yeah, I thought you might end up back in here.”

“Well, I definitely do get energy from having others around me. But, I’m not one of them.” Scout replies as she gestures towards the staff room. For Scout, her misjudgement is funny, and she often retells this story as a humorous anecdote. But the point of these sessions however, is not how well the model fits yourself, but how it can help you think of yourself objectively and embedded in social relations. Although Sam explicitly says that the profiles were to help us learn about ourselves, she does not mean that there is an inner self within us that we ourselves do not know about, more that we may not have thought about it in these terms before. This is similar to what Bloch argues about how some people

65 Louis said that he used this model because he was more familiar with it, but otherwise the session had the same purpose as Sam’s, which I describe below.
are “into” talking about their inner states. Sam characterises us as the “experts of ourselves”. The iceberg model where the majority of a person lies beneath the surface encompasses the fact that people may not reflect or think about where their emotional responses, their reactions and decisions are coming from. The journey of self-discovery is not about discovering something you did not already know, it is about becoming aware of that which is already there, hovering just beneath the surface, waiting to be noticed. The way these profiles are mobilised and used, highlights this point, as I show below.

In the training session, once we have our results and an understanding of what it means, Sam put us into smaller groups dependent on our highest score so that all the Ss, Ds, Is, and Cs are together. She tells us to discuss what the strengths and weaknesses of this category are and what it would be like to work with someone from a different category. Although we had answered the profiling questions in terms of our personal preferences, the session revolves around how each of us (categorised as a D, I, S or C) interacts with others; what our strengths and weaknesses are when we work in a team. The session sought to get the volunteer staff to think about themselves situated in social relations with others. Reflecting on how we interact with others and why was what Sam meant when she said it would help us to learn about ourselves.

Therefore, successful personal development entails being able to reflect upon yourself and think about how you are in relation to others. However, success does not entail being a particular profile of a person. Sam asks us to consider in our DISC groups what is the ideal DISC profile for being a PM, a venturer, country programme manager, country director or DEL. The groups struggle to find an answer, arguing that in different contexts different traits might be needed. For instance, in a crisis a strong dominant leader who can take control, delegate and manage a situation is an asset. However, Callum was uneasy about being categorised as dominant because equally, influencing people into thinking particular actions are beneficial rather than needing to command them to do something (such as doing the washing up is a good idea because then a project site will not attract animals) can be more effective and less abrasive. Sam picks up on these debates and argues that there is no perfect profile; a combination of different elements is going to be the most useful and effective “on the ground”. We then discuss what different benefits each profile could bring to a PM team. This principle of combining different strengths and weaknesses was also something that Callum and Louis use to create the PM groups,
matching up those who have different approaches to make the PM teams more adaptable and therefore, in their eyes, stronger.

These practices of categorising different types of persons are used to help individuals understand their own selves in order that they can have successful relationships and functioning teams. Evans interrogates the processes by which boys at school become friends. In thinking about how these relations are formed and negotiated she explores “…the part that friendship plays in the process of becoming a particular kind of person” (2010: 175). It is through the creation of friendships (or antagonistic relations) that the children Evans worked with become themselves. Evans argues that this is a “situated” process. A child brings his self “into being, on a continuous basis, in relation to the questions of who he can become relative to his friends...constituting his idea of himself in social relations” (2010: 182). 66 Sam is attempting to create a similar process in the volunteer staff through this training session. Once designated as a having a particular profile, such as steady, the volunteer staff need to be able to reorient this idea about themselves in relation to others, to understand themselves as situated in social relations. Similarly, Toren uses the concept of autopoeisis to describe the process by which persons self-create or self-produce, but states that relations are crucial to this process. Evans argues of Gary, her exemplary case study that;

He is working out his social position vis-a-vis others and he is “situated” in those relations. It makes little sense, therefore, to describe him as an individual, as in any simple way, the author of his own existence. Gary cannot know who he is without this process of making sense of other people’s ideas of who he can be. (Evans 2010: 182)

However, in the context of Endeavour, the idea of the individual is important because this is how people talk and feel about themselves. However, this emphasis on the individual does not annul the importance of relations for creating that individuality. Magnus Course’s (2010) work on Mapuche personhood argues that in choosing their friends (in a way that they cannot choose their kin), Mapuche persons demonstrate their autonomous individual volition. Thus, Course continues, being able to choose to make social relations defines the person as an individual. This cyclic-referential process show how inextricable individuals and relations are.

66 In her chapter, Evans focuses almost exclusively on boys.
The models I have described are not usually part of the daily exchanges on expedition. They are tools used in training to help the volunteer staff understand themselves better. I did not hear many of the volunteer staff discuss their profiles outside the training sessions. However, some Endeavour employees utilise them in their work and personal lives, particularly at times of conflict. They deploy these personality categories to help conflicting parties look objectively at a situation in order to understand it, and themselves, better.

1st March 2010
Conference Centre Bar
Manchester

Brad and I are sitting in the corner of a pub, beers close to hand, catching up on the gossip at Endeavour as it has been a while since we have seen each other. We discuss various pieces of gossip about mutual acquaintances. Talk turns to me. I was feeling low, which was one of the reasons why we were in the pub. Brad had heard rumours about a disagreement I had with a mutual acquaintance and wanted to make sure that I was ok. Not knowing that he already knew about this disagreement in some detail, I described it to him in depth.

I had had a misunderstanding with Daniel via an email exchange. I described this to Brad and then explained how this made me feel, explaining that it was difficult from an email to pick up signals as to what Daniel meant by particular phrases. I wondered about Daniel’s intentions and how what he was feeling at the time may have influenced what he wrote, just as my feelings might affect how I interpreted what I read. Brad listens intently to me while I speak, and then as my speech peters out he jumps in energetically “You’re such an F!” Taken aback by his interjection, I just look at him. He continues,

You’re such a strong F. A feeler. You’re totally seeing this through your emotions, which Daniel isn’t. The reason this has escalated is because Daniel’s not, he’s a thinker. This is a classic case. Daniel’s judgement of the situation is detached. He doesn’t think when he sends an email how it will affect you emotionally. He just sends what he wants to say. He won’t consider the consequences of saying that.

Brad was using the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator model. Although I had not completed this but Brad felt able to assign me as F due to his experience with the model.
Initially I did not find his revelation helpful. When we had first met Brad had also tried to
guess my “type”, which had then also made me feel uneasy and irritated. I had informed
him then that I did not like it. He asked me if it was because it felt like I was being “put in
a box” – by which he meant being categorised – claiming that he was not doing this. I
clarified that it was not only the process of being categorised that grated on me, it was
more the assumption that someone could presume to know me straight away, it felt like an
invasion of privacy and I was not sure how a label would be helpful anyway. Back in the
pub, Brad seemingly perceived something from my expression and sought to placate me.

> I know you don’t like it, but it can help to understand why this has happened.
> Daniel wasn’t intending to upset you. It would never even cross his mind how you
> would feel when you read that.

While the categorisation made me feel uncomfortable, Brad’s insight did eventually help
me understand the root of this dispute. For Brad, the Myers-Briggs type indicator is a tool
to help us understand how people are in the world, how they interact with each other and
why. It shows that people are different and can help them to manage those differences by
being made aware of them. According to Brad, in learning that I was reacting in an
emotional way and Daniel was reacting dispassionately, I could begin to understand where
misunderstandings had occurred. By locating it in a dichotomy of personality types Brad
was trying to help me see this argument beyond my subjective experience. By classifying
both Daniel and I as types, Brad was nullifying our individual and personal responses and
using this to help me step back and reflect, as per the experiential learning model. Brad
was coaching me to become self-aware so that I could understand my social relationship
with Daniel, and where it was going wrong.

**JOURNEY OF SELF DISCOVERY**

Another important aspect of personal development that Endeavour often emphasises is
that it is a process that never ends. This is often a quality noted by anthropologists in
discussions of personhood. In Britain, people are legal persons at birth. Socially too, birth
in Britain confers at least a degree of personhood (Carsten 2004; Conklin & Morgan
1996). Fortes’ work on the Tallensi shows that among them, “full personhood is only
attained by degrees over the whole course of life. Birth marks only a starting point, the
minimum quantum of personhood,” (Fortes 1987: 296). Edwards notes similarly that in
Bacup, in North England, “one needs to be born *and* bred,” (2000: 246). Evans argues that
friendship and thereby personhood is “a learning phenomenon and it is never
accomplished; it is an ongoing process” (2010: 182) and Course describes Mapuche personhood as “open-ended” (2010: 169).

Correspondingly, at Endeavour, volunteers and employees often talk about expeditions and personal development as a “journey”. Although I have sought to show throughout this thesis the general traits and attitudes that Endeavour’s personal development techniques engender, employees emphasise that these journeys are “individual” and particular to each person. Partnerships Manager Jamie uses the metaphor of personal development as a journey to highlight that people have different “starting and ending points”. He does not think that there is a specific, measurable “end” to the personal development journey on expedition. Instead, the journey itself is important. Brad compared it the fable The Wizard of Oz. Throughout their journey, the characters in this story are aiming for a particular target – to meet the Wizard of Oz – to fulfil their dreams. However, when they reach their destination, they realise that through the trials and problems they overcome, they have already achieved their desires.

Jamie argues that the real value in the journey is the “distance travelled”, meaning how far someone has gone on “their journey”. This means for instance that two persons may reach the same point by the end of the expedition, but because they had different starting points, one will have “travelled” metaphorically further than the other. The greater distance, the greater the achievement. However, it is important to note that there is no sense of journeys being right or wrong, better or worse. Each individual will have a different journey specific to him or her. Because Endeavour think that people learn experientially, their individual history and physical experience through their own separate bodies is unique to each person.

While I was at Head Office, Brad was working on developing an award scheme for completion of an expedition; something he hoped would be similar to the Duke of Edinburgh’s award and eventually gain the same status. 67 I was present for several of the briefings and discussions of this award scheme. Some employees had concerns about the criteria for the award and how it would be assessed because the Endeavour employees felt that each person gained different things from the expedition. This is in part to do with their

67 The Duke of Edinburgh Award is a programme that requires participants to fulfil certain activities in a given time limit. This programme has a good reputation and is recognised by most university and employers. See http://www.dofe.org/default.aspx for more information.
understanding of expeditions as a “buffet”, as presented in chapter one, from which people can pick and choose the bits that they want. They were also worried about how personal development would be “measured” and how the award would take into account different individual “starting points”. Others commented that having an award makes it seem that Endeavour is aiming for a particular “finished product” which is incompatible with their commitment to “lifelong learning”, to personal development as an individual and a continuous process. Despite this, as I showed in chapter three, the pressure to “monitor and evaluate” is becoming ever-stronger at Endeavour as “audit cultures” become a greater part of funding processes (Shore & Wright 1999; Strathern 2000). Although employees resist the notion of “measuring” personal development, this idea is already embedded in their personal development techniques, although they are not always numerical measurements.

One of the personal development techniques used at Endeavour to help people on their “journey” are 1-2-1s. A 1-2-1 is a semi-structured “conversation” between two people that usually involves some form of target-setting or problem solving. The volunteer staff have these at the start and end of the expedition with Louis or Callum, and maybe in the middle at some point if there is time or a “pressing issue” that needs to be resolved (for instance if someone is causing problems on expedition by behaving inappropriately, or struggling to adapt to expedition life). The venturers also have three 1-2-1s every phase, a total of nine meetings throughout the expedition, almost one a week. The PM training manual lists guiding questions for the PMs to use, but suggests, if possible, that the venturer should lead the conversations, with the PM prompting if necessary. Louis tells the volunteer staff that the aim of a 1-2-1 is to help the venturers set goals for their personal development, if they wish to do so, to discuss their progress on these goals and as Brad did for above, help them to think objectively about themselves and the social relationships they form. 1-2-1s are similar to academic supervision. An academic supervisor is a guide. They point students in the direction of potentially applicable theories and sources, help them to set realistic goals and reflect back to the students on their progress. Supervision is aimed at helping the supervisee (and, perhaps more importantly, their project) to improve and develop. Supervisors recommend, advise and feedback, but it is the student who is ultimately responsible for their (and their project’s) progression.

PMs are not supposed to give direct guidance or advice, but instead to act as a “sounding board” for venturers to confide and test out ideas about the personal growth. By reflecting
back to the venturers what they have already said, the theory is that venturers will become conscious of themselves and how they are in the world and eventually learn how to do this reflecting on their own. Some venturers or volunteers staff had specific goals they wanted to achieve on expedition. Coral, for instance, an expressive actor from Cornwall, tells me that she wants to learn how to be quiet in a group. How to check herself, she continues, from needing to be the centre of attention. Louis and Callum encourage the volunteer staff to promote this kind goal setting. Tommy notes that people have varying levels of introspection, and that these “tools” seek to “begin the journey”.

**REVIEWING: REFLECTING ON PROGRESS MADE**

The most common personal development technique used on expedition is reviewing. This happens every day on expedition. According to Brad, reviews are an essential part of the experiential learning process. Once individuals experience something, they need a specific moment to reflect on what they have experienced in order to “draw out the development and learning”. The volunteers have a “final review” session during wash up. The venturers return to their original groups from phase one with their first PMs. Each venturer is given a sheet of A1 paper and asked to divide it into three sections; “before Endeavour” “during Endeavour” and “after Endeavour”. In each section, the PM asks them to write or draw key moments or aspects of their lives at each stage. They suggest that in the “before” section, they might want to include why they decided to come on expedition, and what they were hoping to gain from it. In the “during” they suggest discussing high and low points, and what the venturers have learned. In the “after”, they can write about their hopes for the future and how what they have learned may change their lives back at home.

Endeavour also uses this technique during the volunteer staff selection weekends to begin discussion of why the prospective volunteers want to do an expedition and what are their expectations of expedition. Figure 34 shows three images “Now”, “Expedition” and “Future” drawn by prospective volunteer staff member Lucy. During the session, each person is asked to talk through their sheet. Lucy explains that “Now” shows her at a crossroads, unsure which direction she wants her life to take. “Expedition” represents what she wants to get out of going on expedition. She has drawn herself working in a team, being in the mountains and living outside in a tent as well as working on the building site, represented by a spade. For “future” she explains that she hopes that expedition will
enable her to find direction. Lucy’s diagram is emblematic of the narrative volunteer staff give for their motivations for going on expedition. 68

Figure 34 Lucy’s Now/Expedition/Future

Lucy’s drawing and explanation is generalised and non-specific, whereas Doug’s (Figure 35) is more personal and detailed. His image is split into the same three sections. He explains that he is a pilot in the Royal Air Force and served in Iraq. He has decided to leave the RAF and wants to go on expedition for “new challenges”, “to work with young people”, “de-institutionalisation from the RAF”, “expand horizons”, “give back”, “learn about myself”, “manage people and situations”, and “a mountain adventure”. His future shows a grounded plane, he does not want to continue flying and instead hopes for a “reality check” with a new “breadth of experience” and therefore an “altered outlook”.

68 As explained in chapter four.
Bloch’s second layer to the blob is the minimal self, the ability to perceive time, to imagine the past and the future. While Bloch is speaking in terms of cognitive processes, the construction of a temporal narrative is also an aspect of Endeavour’s personal development process. Sessions that focus on dividing life into stages are supposed to help venturers and volunteer staff engage with a sense of personal trajectory. To recognize that they have been undergoing personal development and that their goals, aspirations and behaviours have been changing. In chapter one, I showed how the notion of development is used by employees at Head Office to make sense of continual disparate change and re-represent it as augmentation. Equally, individuals have been experiencing continual change during expedition; the group reallocations, travelling to different places, altering their work on each of the project types, taking on different roles each day during the projects and playing different selves during the changeover parties and skits. To give this change purpose, it is represented as having an ultimate overarching aim of personal development. In this sense, along with becoming self-aware and aware of their social relations with others, persons also have to cultivate a history and future in order to bring themselves into being.

Reviewing happens all the time at Endeavour in a process of continual self and group auditing that seeks to “check” on progress being made as it happens. Just as Fozhan and Charlie have to write M+E reports, volunteers on expedition are also constantly
monitoring and evaluating their performance, as individuals and as teams. At the end of most days on project, the PMs or the day leader leads a review. The group is encouraged to talk about how they functioned throughout the day, how each individual member was involved and what everyone contributed. The Endeavour “Book of Spells” dedicates over ten pages to different review techniques (Figure 36).

The Good, the Bad and the Funny

Participants reflect upon the good, bad and funny aspects of the activity. Good for asking each individual and going around the whole group. The Leader should take up relevant points that require further discussion, and draw out constructive criticisms, strengths and weaknesses and the learning gained by individuals and the team.

These types of reviews can be used in different ways and at varying periods of a team’s development. The focus could be on improving on the teams overall ability whilst developing individuals.

Figure 36 Excerpt from Book of Spells

As the above example expresses, the team’s development is adjoined with the development of individuals. The team should reflect jointly on how they have performed, and individuals should contemplate their role in that performance.

Reviews are also the space where PMs encourage the venturers to deal with any problems. For instance, if some of the group feel others are not contributing as much as they could, rather than taking them on individually, they might raise the issue in a more general way to avoid open conflict. Instead of saying directly to someone “I don’t think you’re working hard enough on the project,” an Endeavour approach would be to ask the group during a review to rate their individual efforts on the project, and think about how they could contribute more. This addresses the issue via all team members taking responsibility for the team. Louis and Callum stress the importance of making sure that people do not feel “picked on”, even if the rest of the group are feeling angry with them. Reviews should not be “slagging matches”, where people insult and/or criticise each other. Louis and Callum’s message is that reviews should be purposeful. They need to be “directed” at improving the way the group functions by altering individuals’ behaviours. For instance, the review technique “suggestion book” seeks to address a specific issue without confrontation (Figure 37).
**Suggestion Book**

If someone is excessively negative and voices their complaints, you could have a suggestions book, which people can write in and is referred to daily. This means that all grievances are aired (and can be dealt with), by you in a much more neutral way.

*Figure 37 Review Technique: Suggestion Book*

Any conflicts or disagreements should be aired and dealt with swiftly, but this should be done in a way that prevents further conflict. Tommy often spoke of the necessity of “letting it go”, and of not getting “hung up” on things that irritate you, either by “dealing with them” by talking about them, or accepting that is how things are and not allowing it to bother you. Reviews seek to make individual emotions transparent and are a chance for reviewees to talk and discuss how they feel. It develops what Bloch (2011) calls the diachronic aspect of the narrative self. This requires self-awareness. A lack of self-awareness entails not understanding how you affect others. The review process emphasises the situated character of all persons.

Many of the review techniques seek to gauge individuals’ emotional states, such as whether they are happy or struggling. Callum refers to this as “taking the temperature”. Some reviews involve the participants holding up a number of fingers to illustrate how they are feeling – no fingers indicating the worst, and all five signifying the happiest they could be. Coral, the artist on my second expedition became fascinated by this and asked the trekking groups to keep a daily record of their review ratings. She collected these at the end of their phase and proceeded to make a piece of art based on the data. She collected different coloured leaves to indicate the different numerical values, the yellow leaves indicate five, green four, red and green three, brown two and grey stones represent zero. The venturers helped her to lay these out and photograph them (Figure 38). The number-of-fingers review is numerically based, others practices of self-audit are more discursive.
“Feedback” is another form of auditing used during expedition. At each changeover, on the morning after all the alpha groups returned, the volunteer staff all leave fieldbase to have breakfast together. After eating portions of gallo pinto, eggs, cheese, tortillas and coffee the groups settle into a feedback session. Sam hands out a sheet of paper to everyone with their name and picture on it (Figure 39). She explains “In a moment we’re all going to pass these to our left. The rules are; you write just one positive word that you think personifies that person. This is positive feedback here, nothing negative, what you think is great about that person, what you appreciate about them. Oh, and don’t sign it, these are anonymous comments”.

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69 Gallo pinto is a Costa Rican dish made from rice and beans.
This session is supposed to be quick, but sometimes picking a word is difficult, particularly for people who you know less well, or for those you know best – how do you encapsulate them in a single word? Those who are slow get a “backlog” of sheets, while others further round the table are waiting for the slips to circulate to them. Though the process is supposed to be quiet and contemplative, the volunteer staff laugh and joke, teasing people who create “traffic jams” and giggling to break the tension of the intimate activity. These wholly positive feedback sessions are sometimes called “rosy glow”, they are supposed to make you happy, and perhaps a little embarrassed at the nice things said about you. The feedback sessions that I did with venturers during projects required us to write a few sentences, folding over the paper we had written on so no one else could see. Diego’s rosy glow on my second comprised of having a sheet of paper taped to our backs that people had to write on (Figure 40). He preferred the increased degree of physical contact with this technique, and the difficulty of writing on an uneven surface at a strange angle made this particular glow filled with laughter, noise and movement.
These reflections from others reinforce the positive attributes desirable for PMs and venturers. This emphasises that despite being “individuals”, persons are not living in a vacuum. These personal development techniques are a form of self-audit. The feedback sessions are a method of auditing others, to assess and report on yourself and each other to reinforce positive traits and discourage negative.

Endeavour’s personal development techniques aim to create persons who understand themselves and how they interact with others in social relations, who have a sense of personal trajectory and sees themselves as on a journey of continual improvement, and who are able to evaluate themselves, to audit their progress and behaviour, and that of others. Thus while persons are understood as unique individuals, produced through particular social histories, social relations are fundamental to their becoming.
CONCLUSION

AN ENDEAVOUR PERSON

The final days of expedition at fieldbase are hectic and chaotic, venturers’ clothes and kit are strewn about the terrace, they constantly have to be reminded to stay out of the office area, which is covered in the volunteer staff’s belongings and the bodega is frequently raided for props for the skits.

Wednesday 16th December 2009
Venturers’ Last Night, Second Expedition
Fieldbase Terrace
Costa Rica

In the evening after dinner, Callum clears a space along the longer side of the terrace. The venturers and volunteer staff sit on tables and benches in an L-shape around him.

Callum: It’s nearly the end people! So it’s time to do some thank yous, to your volunteer staff team. I think you’ll agree they have put so much into this expedition, so much hard work, energy and love. So first of all I’d like you to show your appreciation for someone who’s done an awesome job the whole time, he’s a top bloke, enthusiastic, insanely competitive. The feedback from you guys on phase with him was brilliant – James!

Callum waves James up on to the stage area while the venturers and volunteer staff clap, whoop and cheer. Callum shakes James’ hand, and James turns to the crowd, giving a little wave in acknowledgement. He goes back to his seat and Callum continues;

OK OK, shush shush, let me introduce the next person. As a doctor, this person is a credit to the profession; dedicated, caring, hardworking, on hand to patch you up and look after us. But she’s so much more than that, an absolute pleasure to spend time with, incredible fun, and you can hear her laugh a mile off! Susan!

None of the volunteer staff knew that this was part of the schedule; each one looks surprised as they are called up in front of the expedition to be applauded. While the atmosphere is genial and high energy, not all the volunteer staff get as much applause, in terms of length or volume, as everyone else. Some are more liked or better known by the venturers than others. But Callum has something positive and warm to say about everyone, although he also teases some of the volunteer staff;
What can I say about this one that she hasn’t already said about herself?

Our photographer, whose camera was permanently welded to him, although he never seemed to be using it!

Callum uses the expedition nicknames too, and picks out particular days he spent with volunteer staff that were “highlights” of the expedition for him. Though each of the short speeches are individual to each volunteer staff, the traits Callum considers necessary to be a good volunteer staff and those that exemplify the appropriate attitude to be a successful Endeavour person emerge through his repetition of them; humour, fun, hard work, energy or enthusiasm, passion or dedication, kindness and thoughtfulness to others. These speeches are for inside expedition, for the individuals to leave with the feeling that they contributed to something “bigger than themselves”. Louis and Callum also write references for each of the volunteer staff. These are intended for use outside expedition, back in the “real world”; for job applications or to help the volunteer staff explain how and why they have spent their time away from paid employment. The references include an explanation of Endeavour and what it does, the dates the person worked with Endeavour, examples of the projects and a description of the specific responsibilities and skills required of their role (either PM, fieldbase volunteer, or both). They conclude with a summary of the person’s best attributes. I also received a reference, which is reproduced below;

Rachel took every opportunity to get as much out of the expedition as possible … Rachel worked hard, show great dedication and was a highly valued member of the team. She works professionally and showed great support for other members of the group. Whether she was putting in long hours in the office or travelling long distances to very remote project sites, Rachel always gave 100%. She completed her duties to a very high standard, and is trustworthy, reliable and fun. Rachel was great out on project site managing the group, liaising with project partners, thinking about the needs of all the individuals on site and making the most of the project. Rachel combines thoughtfulness, dedication and fun. Combined with her work as Logistics Manager, Administrator, and Project Manager, Rachel is also undertaking her PhD research on Endeavour expeditions. It has been interesting and informative to talk to Rachel about her studies and how Endeavour impacts on the lives of those take part [sic] in the expeditions. I thoroughly enjoy spending time with Rachel and wish her all the best in the future.

Again, the same traits that Callum mentioned so often in his speeches appear here; hard work, dedication, fun, being thoughtful of others, giving yourself and putting your energy into the team. I know from other volunteer staff allowing me to read theirs, that Louis and
Callum mostly use the same phrasing in each one, changing them slightly to make them “individual”. Two further ones, which did not feature in the thank you speeches but are emphasised in Louis or Callum’s other talks are the ideas of taking opportunities, and making the most of a situation. An ideal person with a particular set of virtues becomes apparent.

The picture is of a person who is brought into being, who is continually learning skills as well as about their inner self. This person stays energised and positive in the face of challenges, is disciplined and focused on achieving targets and goals. They are able to situate themselves in relations and care about others, but also to extract themselves and move on when necessary. They are competitive, motivated and able to assess when to take things seriously, and when to be free, silly, fun. They approach life as a whole with “good humour” and expect to “get back” what they “put in”; they are responsible for themselves. This is the ideal produced by Endeavour’s person-making process. While this is what Endeavour seeks to produce, there is also an element of self-selection, in that expedition will appeal to this kind of person.

If Endeavour’s person-making process is compared to a production line in a factory, this thesis has concentrated on understanding the machinery along the chain and how the factory organises these mechanisms to shape their product in response to supply and demand. The thesis has shown how and why Endeavour creates this type of person. I have explored the “behind the scenes” of a gap year organisation, shown how this organisation functions and the internal practices and processes that occur to send young British people abroad. In order to make sense of these internal practices, I have connected them to the current political and economic context in Britain. This organisational ethnography of a gap year organisation has sought to make an original contribution to anthropology by elucidating the interplay between personhood and neoliberalism with a dual focus on ideas and practices.

PERSONHOOD

By looking at Endeavour’s practices this thesis has built a theory of personhood to understand this organisation’s concept of personal development and how it seeks to create persons. I explained above the ideal type of person that Endeavour is seeking to create,

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70 Callum denied this, arguing that he wrote them specially for each person, and while this may be true, he sometimes had to write over fifty references, so it seems likely that he repeated some phrases.
and the thesis has described the techniques used to induce these attributes and characteristics. For instance, chapter two argued that the structure of expedition, with its short-term projects and changing group configurations encourages traits of flexibility and adaptability. A positive attitude should be cultivated to cope with physical hardship and challenging new scenarios such as lack of running water and poor living conditions. In chapter five, I extended this investigation of positivity to present a contribution to the anthropology of humour. Games, jokes and fun are used both as a disciplinary method and as a means to create and maintain social relations. In chapter six I dealt with personal development more explicitly and showed that while the notion of the individual is an important one at Endeavour and one must learn to understand one’s own self through methods such as reviewing, 1-2-1s and self-auditing, this does not preclude or exclude social relations. Rather persons are understood to be developed and improved through their awareness of their situatedness to others in social relations.

Using this theoretical approach to personhood as created by society through social relations, my thesis has explored the methods by which Endeavour shapes persons, but has also reflected on what this theory of personhood can tell us about society. This process of person-making is not always complete, but rather than assess how well Endeavour’s techniques work or to what extent they achieve what they aimed to do, I wanted to understand what ideas lay behind these practices. Therefore, in chapter two, which contributes to the anthropology of work, I explored how the skills venturers learn on expedition are applicable to demands from the labour market and feed into Endeavour’s idea of employability. In later chapters I have shown that the mode of personhood propagated at Endeavour is not pure individualism. Personal development stresses social relations, compliance to the needs of the group and thereby self-control. Persons must be responsible for themselves as the state recedes, and be responsive to other forms of governance, such as that administered by non-governmental organisations and charities.

**Organisational Ethnography**

Gap years have become increasingly popular with young people in Britain. Despite Endeavour’s partnership programme to increase participation from lower socio-economic areas, and its host country venturer programme to include nationals from the destination countries, gap years remain largely the premise of the privileged UK middle and upper classes that are rich in time and funds (Veblen 1965). Although not everyone can take part in a gap year, they shed light on the expectations of what middle and upper class young
people are supposed to develop into. Rather than focusing on the experiences of those who do gap years, this thesis has focused on one organisation that makes gap years happen. Charities and other non-governmental organisations have been historically influential to UK society, particularly in the management of poverty and in establishing regimes of moral value. The organisational approach of this thesis has enabled me to reveal the role that one of these organisations takes on, what it is influenced by and how it influences.

For instance, chapter one showed that frequent transient change exemplifies life at Endeavour Head Office. Drawing on literature from and contributing to the anthropology of organisations, work and finance I described the particularities of working in a flexible organisation. I described the traits that employees have to cultivate in order to be successful in this climate of transformation. I argued that while Endeavour needs to be flexible in order to respond to the changing gap year market, this is dislocating for employees who seek to create stability. They do so by retaining personnel with expedition experience and constructing a narrative of development that seeks to make changes meaningful by integrating them into a broader plan of progression. By focusing on the daily workings, processes and practices of Endeavour and its employees, I was able to show what matters to staff and how the organisation functions in response to this.

This thesis is about an organisation in a specific time and location. Endeavour is subject to the rules and regulations that surround charitable funding. Therefore the thesis also makes a contribution to the study of the charity sector and how one particular charity navigates its way through both the charitable and private sectors. As shown in chapter four, dealing with these contrasting arenas is the root of many of the contradictions and tensions at Endeavour. Chapter three investigated the relationships between the charity sector and the state by exploring a specific programme recently set up by Endeavour. This chapter focused on the internal struggles that this programme prompted concerning Endeavour’s broader purpose and function. I argued in this chapter that the possibilities for what this programme could be like were constrained by its funding source – DfID. This chapter extends work on governmentality to show how this programme becomes a vehicle for state interests and delimits the practices of citizenship. The thesis also reveals a budding arena of non-professional development associations who work within development but often without the conceptual apparatus common to professional development bodies.

NEOLIBERALISM
This thesis has told Endeavour’s story, showing the constraints and opportunities it undergoes, and how it deals with the persons that it shapes. However, this thesis has told a broader story and contained different levels of analysis, interlacing the everyday with wider societal conditions. I have described specific events, such as allocations and training sessions, to illustrate more general themes. Following Michael Burawoy I have extracted “the general from the unique, to move from the “micro” to the “macro” (1998: 5) and agree with Burawoy’s argument that “by focusing on the “macro” determinations of everyday life, the extended case method is the most appropriate way of using participant observation to (re)construct theories of advanced capitalism” (1991: 271). Each chapter has interrogated a particular facet of the machine and drawn on various bodies of literature to understand different aspects of the factory. The result is that this thesis makes small contributions to several areas of anthropology, but its key contribution is its approach and analytical framework, which overarches and unites all these topics of interest.

This thesis has deployed neoliberalism as an analytical frame, understanding it as both an ideology and a set of practices. My approach to neoliberalism has been to understand it as a process that people produce through social relations and by their ideas about the world. This enabled me to make connections between the economic, labour and government landscapes and understandings of what and how persons, employees, citizens, states and social relations should be like. I have focused on the interplay between ideas and practices, and shown how they inform one another but are also contradictory and divergent. The concept of charity is a particularly acute example of this, where the idea of its moral valency is so strong that practices which would not normally count as charitable are overwritten or reframed.

The broad aim of this thesis has been to understand an organisation and place it within its contemporary political-economic context. The thesis has presented material to demystify neoliberalism by focusing on specific set of actors who are both shaped by institutions of power; such as charities, state funders, corporate donors, and human relations experts. They in turn contribute to the formation of a transformed labour force and subjects. Neoliberalism is not all encompassing. Many of the practices and accompanying idea systems that have become associated with the neoliberal label, such as auditing, self-help, self-responsibility and competitive individualism, are part of the development of capitalism more generally. Thus neoliberalism is a way of looking at the latest readjustments in the global reshaping of persons. Charities such as Endeavour represent a
restructuring of governance so that governing occurs through non-government institutions that take on the task of shaping and disciplining subjects to be part of the workforce and citizenry. Though Endeavour has its own intentions – to foster young people’s and adults’ personal development, to make them good citizens and employees, to do charitable work, “make a difference” and improve society – it is well placed to deliver a neoliberal agenda. This is because it is a flexible organisation that has learnt that in order to survive, it has to be responsive to government policies and concerns, as well as societal trends and shifts. Thus, this gap year organisation is shaped by society and plays a role in shaping neoliberal persons.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


