

# Chapter

# 8

## Conclusions and Beginnings



## 8.1 Preamble

*We have sailed,*

*We have sailed,*

*Home again cross the sea.*

*We have sailed,*

*Stormy waters,*

*To be near you,*

*To be free,*

*(Sutherland 2012).*

What were once only words I sang along with in my youth now have particular meaning for me, meaning that is created through undertaking this research. With these words in mind, I climb back up my conceptual crow's nest to reflect upon trainee participants' perceptions of their relationship between their identity development and their participation on the Leeuwin II tall ship in light of the Australian context in these emerging decades of the twenty-first century. While I make my ascent, I think that in this individualised contemporary milieu, one where it is often considered difficult to understand the experiences of young people as they transition to adulthood, they have contributed much that requires careful contemplation. As they sail into shore, like the song suggests I am aware it is true, in many ways they really have been set free!

Indeed, I consider how trainee participant perspectives, the literature, Leeuwin board members and workers, even my own experiences on board, and

the theoretical understanding, or more precisely, how the nature of habitus and its relationship to social fields all contribute to this discourse. While continuing my climb, I also consider the image of the elephant and the blind men [sic]. But this time, what I realise is that the blind men [sic] are starting to look around, this study, through understanding the relationship between trainees and the Leeuwin II tall ship, is shedding light on the relevance of outdoor adventure as it relates to young people's personal development in an individualised contemporary life. It is an important insight as this, to my knowledge, is a perspective that has not yet been considered in quite the same way.

While understanding their relationship with the field of the Leeuwin II tall ship in light of their everyday lives is clearly complex, what trainees discuss about their development they experience, how and why they think it happens, what this means in their everyday lives, and what they think it means to be an adult raises several common themes. In many ways, what they say is nothing new and adds to the already vast amount of adventure literature. However, as the discourse unfolds, what they say emphasises certain aspects of it also. For example, they overwhelmingly cite feeling more confident about themselves after their voyage, something they indicate continues to influence their lives over many years. How they cite the value of contrast, or the experience being something new in relation to initiation contributes further to an explanation put forward by others as to how and why the Leeuwin II adventure works. But the theme of responsibility adds to this, too. While this is often relating to their reference to adulthood, they also cite it to include their sense of confidence. As such, the idea of responsibility is regarded as an important part of their identity development and subsequently a shift in outdoor adventure discourse particularly as to how and why it works. This is certainly an important insight. So too is the nature of habitus and its relationship to social fields; something that demonstrates the value of the tenets of communitas as an integral part of

understanding this relationship. Thus, *communitas* emerges as having particular relevance in their identity development in the twenty-first century. Clearly, what trainees and others contribute certainly provides insight into the relationship between their identity development, their sense of self and adulthood, and their participation in the Leeuwin II tall ship adventure program as it relates to the Australian contemporary milieu.

## **8.2 A Sense of Confidence**

In an individualised society like Australia that is understood as a cloud of possibilities where young people need to contemplate and negotiate, a society that can also promote insecurity at nearly every level of it (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002), having a sense of confidence in oneself is a significant personal attribute. Indeed, it is a necessary power of thought (Bauman 2001) when understanding young people need to be deliberative and simulative as they pursue opportunities available to them (Côté 2000). As such, acquiring a sense of confidence through their experience on board the Leeuwin II tall ship translates into trainees and their *habitus* acquiring agentic capabilities, or a sense of confidence underpinning their sense of free agency enabling them to intentionally make things happen by their actions (Bandura 2001).

Thus, from the understanding that not all young Australian people possess agency in their contemporary lives, acquiring a sense of confidence is important for many reasons. First, having confidence is understood to have better prepared them for their lives. In other words, it means they have developed a sense of control over their actions (White & Wyn 1998) and as powerful actors they are more able to take control of a situation rather than a situation taking control of them (Thoman 1999). According to an understanding of *habitus*, having a sense of confidence is important in a life that requires it to interact with different

habitus (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008). In addition, having confidence is also important for them when understanding how Bourdieu (1993) describes social fields. Primarily this is because social fields, in contemporary life, are informed and motivated by internal competition and self-interest. This implies they will not only need confidence to work within these struggles, they will also as new comers, need confidence to break through the entry barriers, where in some of these fields, dominant agents are defending their monopoly against the threat of actual and perceived competition. Although not elaborated on in this book, with confidence to act as free agents also extends to them contributing to society's capital as Bourdieu (1985) describes. As such, being confident and having control over their actions is absolutely tied up with contemporary life; a life where they need autonomy, personal development (Wyn 2004, p. 6) and also resilience (Neill & Dias 2001; Ungar, Dumond & McDonald 2005).

Therefore, gaining a sense of confidence from their experience on board is a significant development, one that is strengthened, as it is not necessarily differentiated by their age or gender. Furthermore, my own experience and that of A 13 who has Asperger's Syndrome, suggest gaining a sense of confidence is not necessarily differentiated by disability either. In fact, participants in this study, adolescents, post adolescents, and past trainees, are united as they describe experiencing feeling more confident after their voyage, even those who already felt confident before they sailed and back in their everyday lives. Time does not seem to erode this feeling; it is something they convey from one week to sixteen years after they return home.

There are those who indicate building on their sense of confidence and subsequent agency and others describing it as more an initiation to it, in particular those who do not have a strong sense of self-confidence before they sail. All of this certainly supports identity contingently being 'activated' in the

Leeuwin II context (Brubaker and Cooper 2000). In fact, having confidence as adults is an important part of their contemporary lives and all participant trainees demonstrate, in differing ways, the field of the Leeuwin II tall ship influences their sense of adulthood also.

### **8.3 A Sense of Adulthood**

For some adolescent participants this is described more in terms of initiation, for some post adolescent participants it is an awareness or awakening of it. What is interesting for past trainee participants is that some of the younger ones describe feeling more like adults prior to them sailing while older ones, at least in part, attribute their development as adults to their voyage. Subsequently, what they say substantiates the view raised by all trainee participants that adulthood is understood according to experience rather than simply a person's age. This view is thought provoking, for one reason because it promotes the idea that when habitus is given certain experience, a change in identity is likely to occur (Shotter & Gergen 1989; Gergen 1991). In a similar vein, when it is not experienced, it is possible to implicate young people's extended transitions to adulthood; transitions that are more often recognised in this respect in virtually every post-industrialised society (Arnett 1998, 2000, 2004; Shanahan 2000).

In the first instance, what adolescent participants overwhelmingly portray contributes to this discourse as they convey a situation where their experience of responsibility develops in them a sense of what they perceive as adulthood. What they describe also implies a situation that where responsibility is lacking, it is likely this development will not occur or will be inhibited. Thus, it can be argued that being given responsibility on board the Leeuwin II tall ship will most likely contribute to them feeling more like adults. Many adolescent, post adolescent, past trainee participants, Leeuwin II workers, and the literature

agree with this as they describe responsibility going hand-in-hand with young people's development. In fact, all categories of trainee participants identify it as how they define what they perceive it means to be an adult. When adolescent participants raise the idea of it as the experience they cite as part of their development, in this instance in regards to their identity as an adult, it is reasonable to assume that the same opportunities for assuming responsibility may be lacking in their everyday lives. LW 6, who believes that today, more often than not, young people are not given any responsibility at all, highlights this understanding.

However, what many post adolescent participants contribute to this discourse is also important. These participants indicate that their experience of responsibility on board raises their awareness of their identities as adults rather than perceiving it as an initiation to it, implying that they have already experienced responsibility in their everyday lives. But because without an awareness of it transitioning them to adulthood or at least until their sense of adulthood is well established over time as past trainees indicate, it might indeed be associated to extended transitions, or post adolescents or emerging adulthood more commonly recognised in contemporary life. This is significant because it indicates that it is not just simply experiencing responsibility in their everyday lives, as suggested by adolescent participants, that automatically translates to their awareness of their identity development as adults. Indeed a lack of awareness of this adds another dimension to the idea that being given certain experiences, like responsibility, will invoke a change in identity as an adult.

Habitus provides an important contribution to this understanding. First, it demonstrates how their sense of self has developed as a subconscious phenomenon and they are simply not aware of their identities as adults in their everyday lives. According to Bourdieu (1977) what happens is that, an unconscious

competence develops of which they are neither the producer nor do they have conscious mastery over it. However, understanding that habitus responds differently to responsibility experienced at home to the responsibility experienced on board the *Leeuwin II* tall ship is invaluable learning. This is because it demonstrates the value of young people's identity developing in a context removed from their everyday lives. This is, as trainees demonstrate, not only in a spontaneous reaction to their growth in their sense of adulthood but also in their sense of self like confidence, too. This can certainly be understood as part of post adolescents testing their partially developed sense of identity in a new and more adult-like setting of the *Leeuwin II* tall ship as they continue to develop it (Kenniston 1971). But rather than them consciously exploring their identity development, understanding the nature of habitus supports the idea that what is not automatically activated in their contemporary lives is certainly possible when it is removed from it.

In other words, what happens is that the disruption to the continuity of habitus means that rather than it perpetuating established social differences as the basis for trainee's identities (Adams 2006), it promotes certain change in it. Therefore, understanding habitus experiencing a contrast or something new particularly away from their everyday lives is a process considered important in conjunction with their personal growth, too. This is well supported by all trainee participants. However, what happens within the field is important also, and subsequently implicates *communitas* in how and why the *Leeuwin II* adventure works.

## **8.4 Communitas**

Indeed, all groups of trainee participants identify their experience on board being something new when they are asked how and why they think they experienced personal growth from their voyage. However, when PT6 coinciden-

tally reveals he is discussing his second voyage rather than his first, it substantiates the experience being something new contributing to their sense of adulthood. Put simply, it explains why he did not experience the same understanding of growth from his second voyage as he had already experienced some of it from his first voyage. Rather than feeling an increase in his sense of maturity as other trainees did when they returned home, PT6 felt more like an adult when preparing for his voyage and boarding the ship for the second time. What he reveals about his adult identity supports his new experience on board as an initiation to it. In other words, it means the field of the Leeuwin II tall ship, as a process of something new, is understood as supplying habitus the means of initiation (Giddens 1990).

This points to the relevance of communitas, or the principles of it bound to the idea of liminality contributing to trainee participants' personal development. This is often related to a sense of adulthood but as PT6 and others indicate, it has relevance in regards to developing their confidence also. Subsequently in the first instance, communitas is important because it promotes something new contributing to personal development. As PT6's first sail was only a day sail, and he indicates growth from it established in relation to his second voyage, The Leeuwin II tall ship in the first instance is indeed regarded as something new for him, too. Even when trainees indicate they are experienced sailors, for example, as A14 and PT2 do, a tall ship like the Leeuwin II vessel is not necessarily something they have experienced sailing in quite the same way. Thus, the experience goes beyond this because sailing out to sea on this vessel takes them to a place they have not experienced in quite the same way before. As such, the Leeuwin II tall ship as Turner (1969) describes, is a place where they are 'betwixt and between' their everyday lives. This is what he calls communitas, and as the trainee participants indicate, it is important for identity development to occur for many reasons.

### 8.4.1 **Communitas: Removed From Everyday Life**

Firstly, removed from what they know means their habitus is stripped of its everyday status or as Turner (1974) puts it, it is stripped of its structural attributes. Leeuwin II workers often describe this, but frame it as trainees being taken out of their comfort zone. But no matter how it is described, in reality what it means is that trainees are away from what they know, which means the Leeuwin II tall ship environment is a levelling one that sees them all equal with each other. Furthermore, part of being removed from what they know includes being separated from whom they know. This is potentially another crucial element in trainees' development when understanding PT4, who was not separated from her boyfriend, indicated she did not experience the same understanding of personal growth.

Thus sailing with a 'clean slate', as Leeuwin II workers put it, is one reason they indicate as to how and why the Leeuwin experience works. Trainee participants largely agree, recognising the value in this also. LW6 perceives this is one reason how and why the Leeuwin II adventure works because trainees are treated the same, there are no judgments made, and they are "given an opportunity to reinvent themselves." LW1 concurs and believes this happens because they come on board with a clean slate, allowing them to step back from the conformities of their everyday lives, a life according to her that is often influenced by peer pressure where young people mindlessly follow others even if they don't like it. Turner (1967) simply argues it is because when young people are not acting institutional roles, they can be themselves.

As well as habitus being removed from everyday life, the experience needs to be one where they are, as Liminars, able to form anew. However, it is more than this when understanding what happens in the field, too.

## **8.4.2 Communitas: More Than Just the Mountains Speaking**

Sailing a tall ship requires teamwork; as the saying goes, ‘it’s all hands on deck and steady as she goes.’ This raises the importance of the relationships formed and the activities associated with sailing the Leeuwin II tall ship contributing to how and why the experience works. Integral to this are the workers who are not only leaders and role models (McKenzie 2000) they are also managers of perceived risk and safety (Sennett 1998; Dickson 2000; Boyes & O’Hare 2003). Through them trainees create trust, reciprocity and they experience responsibility, too, particularly when they understand the experience is real. In other words, when out on the ocean, ‘a vast and untameable beast’ as LW 10 describes it, in a sailing vessel like the Leeuwin II tall ship, the mountains are not just speaking for themselves (Dickson et al 2008)!

The relevance of these relationships and activities contributing to their development is well supported when considering all trainee participants raise it in their responses. This is so even when females tend to identify new relationships and males new activities. The reason for this different gender response is not being taken up in this book, even though the literature describes outdoor adventure as an androgynous experience, something that makes sense when understanding communitas as a levelling environment. Rather, it is the idea that experiences of trust, reciprocity and responsibility that accompany these relationships and activities that are indeed understood as the essential components of participants’ development. Thus, the Leeuwin II tall ship environment provides both activity and relationship and supports what happens on board for all who sail in her. In other words, there is opportunity for both young females and males to experience positive personal development in a way that is appropriate for them. This is important, for it cannot be assumed that

their development will automatically be enhanced in any situation, there is also the potential to retard that development (Pearson 1991).

Indeed, PT4, a trainee whose voyage did not work well for her supports this when she explains how she considers the relationships and activities vital to how and why a Leeuwin II experience works. This includes the role of the worker, teamwork, challenge and appropriateness of the activity. She goes on to describe how, for her, these were missing in her voyage and clearly associates it with how and why her Leeuwin II experience did not work for her. Yet according to *communitas*, there is more contributing to how and why she did not experience personal identity in the way the other trainees did.

### **8.4.3 Communitas: Feeling Connected**

According to *communitas*, when trainees come on board they start out as a group of separate people, from different places, having different identities. But over time, they become a group with a group identity (Andrews 1999). As I recall our last group gathering, this is a sentiment conveyed by the program coordinator when she said that we were now a part of the Leeuwin II family. However, rather than lose their individual identity, what happens is that realising their commonness or connecting with each other, trainees experience liberation (Turner 1974). PT4 clearly illustrates the relevance of this separation about her personal development. Not being separated from her boyfriend meant she did not connect to the others or the experience on board and as she describes, they actually felt “quite isolated.” This means she did not experience liminality and her habitus is not set free from conformities as other trainees’ experience. In the field of the Leeuwin II tall ship, being separated from what and whom trainees know illustrates how their subsequent sense of connectedness promotes and strengthens their sense of self, including their feeling of confidence and adulthood.

Therefore, feeling connected, or belonging, enhances the possibility of personal growth. There is a spontaneous connection of those on board in the intense Leeuwin experience; something Turner (1969, pp. 97 - 116) describes as, “the generic human bond” – “a strong sentiment of human kindness.” Indeed, it is argued that when PT6 discusses his two voyages, he demonstrates the relevance of this connection in relation to personal development, both as an initiation and continuation of it. This is certainly something other trainees appear to consistently support in relation to their confidence and adulthood. In this way, the support between each other that trainees and workers repeatedly refer to can certainly be considered an important part of how and why the Leeuwin II adventure works in relation to trainees’ developing in different respects. However, as trainees and others, including myself indicate, this feeling of connectedness extends to being able to connect to the wilderness that adds significantly to the difference.

#### **8.4.4 Communitas: Relevance in the Twenty-First Century**

Clearly, communitas is an important part of understanding the trainee participants’ personal development on the Leeuwin II tall ship. As such, it also raises the relevance of it in young people’s lives in the twenty-first century. This is particularly so when understanding how young people’s personal development can occur unconsciously and internalised, something the post adolescent participants exemplify when discussing their adult identities in their everyday lives. According to Bourdieu (1977), this happens because they are not the producer and they have no conscious mastery. Simply, they have not extended their horizon, they have not expanded their being, they don’t revel in a mastery of themselves, and they certainly do not have an impression of themselves, mainly illusory, that they are masters of their world (Hopkins 1993). In other words, they have not been “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed” as

Turner (1992 p. 48) describes. In a life considered by many as lacking tradition in many respects (Neill & Dias 2001) even to the point of it being described as being in a state of ritual bankruptcy (Grimes 2000; Bell 2003), this arguably demonstrates a lack of meaningful ways of marking transitions in contemporary life (Davis 2003) and promotes young people's participation in adventure programs like the Leeuwin II tall ship as *communitas* in the twenty-first century.

## **8.5 Concluding Remarks**

As I sit in my conceptual crow's nest, I think about young Australian people's transition to adulthood. Through losing Matthew, I am sadly aware that their personal development in contemporary life is cloaked with uncertainty and unpredictability (Pollock 1997). I think about what adulthood means. According to the trainees in this research, it means being a responsible and independent person; an identity they are aware of that also carries responsibility with it in their social context. Importantly, if they are to be successful negotiators and take advantage of opportunities, they need confidence as well, something that underpins their sense of free agency in this individualised milieu. I think about *communitas* in their personal development. At the end of this research journey, what do I think? Simply, understanding what development these trainees experienced and how it related to their voyage on board the Leeuwin II tall ship, I fully support *communitas* and all its tenets including experiencing something new, being separated from what and whom they know, experiencing responsibility in a real situation, and building relations of trust and a connection with others and the environment as being important and relevant in young Australian people's identity development in the twenty-first century (Neill 2003).

Interestingly, while sitting here, too, when I think about their identity development, and the Leeuwin II tall ship and its relation to *communitas*, I

realise, it is really true, the answer my friend, is blowin' in the wind, the answer is really blowin' in the wind!

Now I begin climbing down the rigging for the final time, and as I do, I look down toward the Leeuwin II deck. As I make my descent, I am aware that while this research journey is at its end, there is still so much more to learn.

This study, primarily through the voices of the trainees, and others as well as drawing on the concepts of habitus and social fields has explored personal development of trainees in relation to their age, gender and effects over time. But I also consider other populations of young Australians who participate in this program for example, Indigenous trainees. Will they agree with the others that the Leeuwin II tall ship acts as communitas contributing to their identity development? Or will they suggest other reasons how and why their participation works? When considering their socio-cultural context where they often experience disadvantage, and have low confidence to set high expectations and aspirations for future goals (Alloway et al 2004), better understanding positive developmental outcomes have great potential to benefit them in their everyday lives. Moreover, their insight into how and why they think their experience on board works can also contribute to understanding if their participation has relevance for their identity development in the twenty-first century.

Similarly, in a multi-cultural context such as Australia, a cultural focus can extend to include the views of other young Australian people who are born outside but live in and call Australia home, as well as those young people born as first generation Australians or belong to a minority cultural group. In fact, given culture and adventure research has been given little attention (Wetmore 1972; Bacon 1988; Purdie, Neill & Richards 2002), a cultural focus will add to this knowledge.

Further, young people who are disabled are another group who can contribute to this investigation. There is much to be learned about their personal development in Australia; it is a topical area, in the current political environment where much attention is focused on social inclusion and participation (Commonwealth Laws & Programs 2012). In fact, research shows that people with a disability have similar motivations and educational needs to others who participate in outdoor recreation activities (Ross 2001) and after one to two weeks participation, they demonstrate an increase in independence, self-esteem, and social and recreational skills that are generalised to their life back home (Ardivino 2004). Certainly, these young people with disabilities who sail on the *Leeuwin II* tall ship also have much to contribute to understanding the relationship between their personal development and their participation on this vessel. This includes identifying *communitas* as contributing to it.

Exploring the experiences of trainees who sail as part of a school group can also contribute to understanding this relationship. In relation to the relevance of liminality and *communitas* raised by trainees in this study, this group has particular value because it contrasts them from participants who are separated from whom they know. If they are not separated from their classmates, will they experience a voyage where they are levelled with each other? Will they connect to the wilderness around them? Will the journey have any symbolic connection? Will they connect to each other with a sense of community that liberates them? If they experience beneficial outcomes, will they endure over time? Moreover, because they are a homogenous group sailing together and not as individuals interacting with a range of people from diverse backgrounds and ‘social difference’, something trainees in this study recognise particularly in relation to the age of other trainees, will this inhibit their experience of feeling equality, understanding and respect (Sharpe 2005) and or more and subsequent identity development?

There is also possibility to build from this Leeuwin II study. While gender forms part of the analysis in it, likewise the same analysis can be applied to future studies across different populations of young people for example, as are included here. However, voyages where trainees are of the same-sex are another category that has possibility to extend understanding from distinct gender populations.

Clearly, these different populations of trainees can contribute to better understand the relationship between their identity development and their participation in their Leeuwin II ocean adventure. However, further investigation across programs not only out on the high seas but back on land, would strengthen it also. Young people have much to contribute to better understanding their relationship with their personal development and these programs. Indeed, they might contribute to explaining while sail training experiences are generally positive and beneficial, some appear to be more effective than others in developing social confidence' (McCulloch et al 2010). It is certainly possible their views and those of different stakeholders will continue to shed light on their relationship between their identity development and their participation in different ocean adventure programs (McCulloch 2007). But this is also true for those wilderness adventure programs back on land and thus expands the analysis to include other kinds of outdoor adventure (McCulloch 2004).

Furthermore, is it possible investigation will continue to strengthen communitas in young people's identity development in contemporary life? Indeed, given the value of communitas raised by trainees in this research, it is not unreasonable to extend it as a major focus of future analysis with an understanding that it has much to contribute to it. For example, the characteristics of communitas can certainly be used to explain why students who were not separated from their classmates on camp in a study conducted by Smith et al

(2010) identified their experience as a social one rather than a change in their sense of self. As well, *communitas* can explain why some participant outcomes do not extend over time when on the *Nave Italia* tall ship the young sailors were required to participate in an ‘Inland preparation’ months before their participation, making their familiarity with each other on their voyage inhibit liminality and thus the benefits of their participation over time (Capurso & Borsci 2013). Perhaps in future studies *communitas* will shed light on why there is a difference in results for the mid adolescents who participate in it (Neil 1999; Richards 1999; Ewert & McAvoy 2000; Neill 2007b; Sibthorp, Paisley & Gookin 2007) or even explore an optimum time an outdoor adventure program need be for young people to experience beneficial identity development?

Thus, the stage is set for further inquiry into young people’s personal development and their participation in outdoor adventure and it is definitely not limitless. However, one suggestion for improvement in future explorations into the relationship between their identity development and their participation in other *Leeuwin II* tall ship voyages or different adventure programs in light of their everyday life would be to interview them at the same time-interval rather than broadly within a six month timeframe. Interviewing the research participants at a specified time would strengthen the similarities and differences they identify. But because the focus of this inquiry is to hear the voices and primarily learn from the young participants (in combination with other stakeholders), it is recommended to follow the same interview guide (see appendix). Extending this semi-structured approach across other investigations will allow them to freely discuss their views. This includes them providing critical and or constructive views of how and why their participation in the adventure program works, or equally, doesn’t work.

So now back on shore, as I walk away from this study with Matthew forever in my heart, I look back over my shoulder and reflect for the final time. I agree with Bourdieu, understanding the concept of habitus and social fields has been instrumental to understanding young Australian people's identity development and relationship with the Leeuwin II tall ship in light of the contemporary Australian milieu. Understanding the set of durable dispositions that the trainees carry within them that shapes their attitudes, responses, and behaviours to their experiences on board (Webb et al 2007) has provided an invaluable insight into this complex topic; one that shines its light on and coincidentally supports the relevance of communitas in young people's development in the twenty-first century.