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From ‘character-training’ to ‘personal growth’: the early history of Outward Bound 1941–1965

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This article examines the approach to ‘character training’ in the early years of the Outward Bound movement in Britain between c.1940 and c.1965. It examines the key components of the concept of ‘character-training’ promoted in the Outward Bound schools by Kurt Hahn and his early followers, and some of the criticisms to which the four-week courses were subjected. It goes on to examine the reassessment of the rhetoric and practices of Outward Bound that took place in the 1960s, and argues that the changes that took place were the outcome of a more sceptical approach to ‘character-training’ on the part of a younger generation of Outward Bound leaders. Although these changes were contested and incomplete, they reflected developments in other areas of British life in this period, such as the probation service. They resulted in the replacement of the language of ‘character-training’ with an agenda of ‘personal growth’ and ‘self-discovery’.

Keywords: character education; leadership; Outward Bound; outdoor education; Kurt Hahn

The past two decades have seen a re-emergence of the practice and rhetoric of ‘character education’. The last Labour government’s Green and White Papers on education in 2001 endorsed an idea of ‘education with character’ that was closely associated with the latest developments in ‘education for citizenship’.¹ In the USA, there are three journals devoted to character education, as well as a large body of literature published in other outlets; its appeal crosses the political spectrum.² The widespread interest in character education invites a consideration of its historical context, and most recent accounts of its re-emergence as a policy objective have discussed its long-term evolution, often focusing on the growth of muscular Christianity in English public schools, as well as the emergence of uniformed youth movements in the late

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¹James Arthur, *Education with Character: The Moral Economy of Schooling* (London: Routledge, 2003), 25; Andrew Peterson, ‘Education for Active Citizenship and the 14–19 Curriculum: Essential Issues and the Implications for the Initial Teacher Education of Citizenship Teachers’, *International Journal of Citizenship and Teacher Education, Conference July 2005 – Proceedings*: http://www.citized.info/pdf/ejournal/conf_2005/008.pdf (accessed May 22, 2009).

²*Journal of Research in Character Education; Journal of Character Education; Journal of College and Character*. See Peter Smagorinsky and Joel Taxel, *The Discourse of Character Education: Culture Wars in the Classroom* (Mahwah, NJ and London: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2005), 21–2.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³ This emphasis reflects the existence of a large historiography that considers the Scouts, Boys' Brigade and other youth organisations, usually concentrating on the period before 1920.⁴ In an important article published in 1985, Stefan Collini asserted that, during the Victorian era, 'the idea of character ... enjoyed a prominence ... that it had certainly not known before and that it has, arguably, not experienced since'.⁵ Similarly, Nathan Roberts has argued that the idea of character in the period 1880–1914 was more adaptable than historians have often assumed, and influenced a number of educational developments and a broad spectrum of political opinion.⁶ Most historians, however, have downplayed the continuing importance of the idea of character in mid-twentieth-century Britain.⁷ This partly reflects the American experience: although character lay at the centre of important educational research in America in the 1920s, Heather A. Warren has shown that, among the 'mainline' US Protestant churches, the idea of character – 'understood to be the stable arrangement of moral qualities accompanied by the determination to put such qualities into action' – gave way after the 1930s to the more private, inward idea of 'personality'.⁸ In Britain, too, it has been argued that the language of character was less prominent in the second half of the twentieth century: Arthur shows that there was little sign of the word in government education policy in the second half of the twentieth century, and that, more generally, the growing dominance of cognitive psychology and ethical relativism in education tended to marginalise character education.⁹ Even in outdoor education, Lynn Cook argues that the goal of 'character-training' was 'less obviously promoted' after the Second World War, although 'character building' was an influence on the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which was established in 1956.¹⁰

This article explores the early history of the Outward Bound movement in Britain, and in particular its approach to 'character-training' and the ways in which this evolved during its first quarter-century. Arthur asserts that Outward Bound 'avoided

³Smagorinsky and Taxel, *Discourse of Character Education*, 25–6; Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity: Manhood and Sports in Protestant America 1880–1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).

⁴For a review of this literature, see John J. MacAloon, 'Introduction: Muscular Christianity after 150 Years', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23 (2006): 687–700. On youth organisations, see for example Martin J. Dedman, 'Baden-Powell, Militarism and the "Invisible Contributors" to the Boy Scout Scheme 1904–1920', *Twentieth Century British History* 4 (1993): 201–23; Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell's Boy Scouts and the Imperatives of Empire* (New York: Pantheon, 1986); David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy: The Boy Scouts, YMCA and Their Forerunners 1870–1920* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

⁵Stefan Collini, 'The Idea of "Character" in Victorian Political Thought', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 5th series 35 (1985): 31.

⁶Nathan Roberts, 'Character in the Mind: Citizenship, Education and Psychology in Britain 1880–1914', *History of Education* 33 (2004): 177–97, esp. 191–2.

⁷For a recent exception, see Fiona Skillen, '"A Sound System of Physical Training": The Development of Girls' Physical Education in Interwar Scotland', *History of Education* 38 (2009): 410–11.

⁸Heather A. Warren, 'The Shift from Character to Personality in Mainline Protestant Thought, 1935–1945', *Church History* 67 (1998): 538–9. For an example of American character research in the 1920s see H. Hartshorne and M.A. May, *Studies in the Nature of Character*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan, 1928).

⁹Arthur, *Education with Character*, 20–1.

¹⁰Lynn Cook, 'The 1944 Education Act and Outdoor Education: From Policy to Practice', *History of Education* 28 (1999): 172.

using the term “character training”;¹¹ however, this overlooks the extent to which the organisation remained explicitly committed to this very goal, along with the related aim of ‘education for leadership’, for most of the period before the mid-1960s. This article examines the conception of character-training that was embodied in Outward Bound in the 1940s and 1950s, largely owing to the influence – both direct and indirect – of Kurt Hahn, one of its most prominent founders. It shows how the movement combined some older aspects of muscular Christianity with more historically specific concerns, rooted in the experience and aftermath of war. The faith of the movement’s early leaders in the promotion of character and leadership ensured the maintenance of training programmes based on exposure to challenging and potentially dangerous situations, and the explicit promotion of ‘Character Training Through Adventure’.¹² However, by the mid-1960s, the language of character and leadership, and other aspects of the Hahnian educational vision, had come under sustained challenge from both outside and within the organisation, and the rhetoric of character-training was gradually abandoned, replaced with an emphasis on the ‘softer’ aims of ‘self-discovery’ and ‘personal growth’. This, it will be argued, confirms Arthur’s identification of the 1960s as a real ‘turning-point’ in the history of character education, reflecting the wider social and cultural changes that characterised the decade.¹³ Although it will not be considered here, the 1960s also saw a downgrading of the religious components of Outward Bound courses, which were challenged in similar ways, provoking considerable debate within the movement.¹⁴

The article will show how the changes in vocabulary and ideology within Outward Bound paralleled those that have been identified in the probation service in an important article by Abigail Wills, which shows how the project of reforming ‘delinquents’ evolved from the 1950s to the 1960s, reflecting changing attitudes to adolescence, personality and nationhood. Wills argues that, although the approach ‘did not alter in its fundamentals’, certain significant aspects of the treatment of delinquents were adjusted to reflect shifting educational priorities. Therefore, while the ‘central contours’ of the ‘normative masculinity’ that was inculcated among inmates of probation homes remained ‘disciplined work ethic, strength of personality and self-control’, the 1960s saw a downgrading of the physical and militaristic aspects of the probation regime, and ‘reform came to be understood primarily in terms of its benefit to the individual’. This reflected the growth of affluence, the abolition of National Service and the emergence of new theories in the treatment of delinquency. However, Wills also notes that the transition – which echoes the earlier shift from character to personality identified by Warren – was not a simple one, and that aspects of the older version of masculinity persisted into the 1960s.¹⁵ Similarly, in the publicity of Outward Bound, the language of ‘personality’ and ‘self-discovery’ was increasingly foregrounded, while changes to the content of courses undermined the early links between physical achievement and character-building. As with the probation service examined by Wills,

¹¹ Arthur, *Education with Character*, 21.

¹² ‘The Outward Bound Schools: Character Training through Adventure’ [1959]: Cambridge University Library (CUL), Add. 8270/26/45.

¹³ Arthur, *Education with Character*, 25.

¹⁴ For one aspect of the religious history of Outward Bound, see the recent short discussion in Mark Freeman, ‘Muscular Quakerism? The Society of Friends and Youth Organisations in Britain c.1900–1950’, *English Historical Review* 125 (2010): 663–6.

¹⁵ Abigail Wills, ‘Delinquency, Masculinity and Citizenship in England 1950–1970’, *Past and Present* 187 (2005): 159–60, 177–8.

the changes within Outward Bound do not fit neatly into a model that associates the 1950s with 'tradition and stability' and the 1960s with 'social upheaval': not all aspects of the earlier conception of character-training were jettisoned, and the changes were gradual, involving disagreements between the founders of the movement and new, usually younger, leaders who had joined Outward Bound in the 1950s. As a result the transition from 'character-training' to 'self-discovery' and 'personal growth' was both complex and incomplete.¹⁶ Yet the practices, and, in particular, the language of Outward Bound changed significantly between 1950 and 1965, and this can be clearly seen to reflect an evolving conception of the role of outdoor education, which both mirrored and influenced wider educational developments.

The first section of this article sets out the early history of Outward Bound, outlining its growth and development in the 1940s and 1950s, and introducing some of the key individuals in the movement. The second examines in detail the conception of 'character-training' that inspired the Outward Bound pioneers, setting it in the context of the early postwar period, and differentiating the Outward Bound approach to character from that of other youth organisations. The third section examines three important criticisms of the Outward Bound ethos; and the final section shows how the movement's orthodoxies were attacked in the 1950s and, especially, the 1960s, and how key components of Hahnian 'character-training' were reformulated to meet new educational priorities in the mid-1960s.

The origins and early development of Outward Bound

Compared with other youth organisations, Outward Bound has received relatively little attention from historians. However, a number of short accounts of its history were written by its early leaders,¹⁷ and from the early 1970s onwards several sociological studies offered their assessments of it; most of the latter provided a basic historical overview. Important among them were a study by Basil Fletcher, published in 1971, which offered an optimistic assessment of the impact of Outward Bound, and a much more critical study by Kenneth Roberts, Graham E. White and Howard J. Parker, which took issue with Fletcher's methodology and findings, and doubted the 'social significance of the character-training industry'.¹⁸ There are also discussions of Outward Bound in the large biographical – and often somewhat hagiographic – literature on Kurt Hahn, whose distinctive educational ethos also found expression at Salem school in Germany and, most famously, at Gordonstoun in Scotland.¹⁹ Matthew Millikan has recently examined the American Outward Bound movement, which began in 1962, and which he sees as having embodied a secularised version of a much

¹⁶Ibid., 159; Arthur, *Education with Character*, 25.

¹⁷Adam Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character: The Impact of Gordonstoun* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962): chapters 6–7; J.M. Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences: The Story of the Outward Bound Schools* (Wakefield: Educational Productions, 1968); David James, ed., *Outward Bound* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957).

¹⁸Basil Fletcher, *The Challenge of Outward Bound* (London: Heinemann, 1971); Kenneth Roberts, Graham E. White and Howard J. Parker, *The Character-Training Industry: Adventure Training Schemes in Britain* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles): 8; David Hopkins and Roger Putnam, *Personal Growth through Adventure* (London: David Fulton, 1993).

¹⁹See Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character*, chapters 1–2; H. Röhrs and H. Tunstall-Behrens, eds, *Kurt Hahn* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970 [1st German ed. 1966]); Martin Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools and Legacy: To Discover You Can Be More and Do More than You Believed* (Wilmington, DE: Middle Atlantic Press, 1996).

older muscular Christianity.²⁰ However, the British origins of Outward Bound are relatively unfamiliar in the historical literature, and will therefore be summarised here.

The first Outward Bound school was established at Aberdovey (Aberdyfi) on the west coast of mid-Wales in 1941, by Kurt Hahn and Lawrence Holt. Holt contributed to the Norwood report on secondary education, published in 1943, and was a partner in Alfred Holt and Company, owners of the Blue Funnel line, which had a longstanding four-year scheme for midshipmen, which aimed at 'character-training' as well as practical education among boys destined to become officers.²¹ The model that developed at Aberdovey, under its first warden (and close ally of Hahn) J.M. Hogan, was a four-week course, in which trainees were given intensive athletics training, learnt seamanship, and prepared for a land-based expedition at the end of the course. Boys at Aberdovey were organised into groups known as 'watches', which were introduced to promote a spirit of teamwork and friendly competition.²² The development of character was the declared aim of the school: although the necessities of war meant that the early courses at Aberdovey were focused disproportionately on seamanship, it was later insisted that the Sea School offered not 'training for the sea' but 'training *through* the sea'.²³

In 1946 the Outward Bound Trust was established to manage the Sea School and to establish new schools. The Trust was formed at a meeting held in G.M. Trevelyan's rooms in Cambridge, organised by Spencer Summers, who was a director of his family's iron and steel business, John Summers and Sons Ltd, and had been a Conservative MP, holding a minor government post during the war. The Trust's first president was the social investigator and reformer Seebohm Rowntree, and the committee also included Rowntree's son Peter, a director of the family confectionery company, the mountaineer Geoffrey Winthrop Young and Lord Malcolm Douglas-Hamilton, chairman and vice-president of the Family Welfare Association. The Chief Scout, Lord Rowallan, was a member; and by the early 1950s the committee also included Victor Feather, assistant secretary of the Trades Union Congress, and the second Baron Rea, son of a Liberal chief whip. An appeal letter in November 1951 was signed by, among others, Clement Attlee and Sir William Lawther, chairman of the Trades Union Congress.²⁴ The Trust, therefore, involved a number of military and ex-military men, industrialists and labour representatives, and all three main strands of British politics. The breadth of representation was in part a deliberate strategy to ensure a wide appeal for the Trust's activities, but can also be seen as a reflection of the broad potential support for the vision of character-training that it promoted. Later, Outward Bound obtained the prominent support of mainstream educationists, such as Alec Clegg, chief education officer for the West Riding of Yorkshire from 1945 to 1970, and Jack Longland, a former Everest mountaineer who had a long career as an education officer in local and central government from the 1940s to the 1970s.

²⁰Matthew Millikan, 'The Muscular Christian Ethos in Post-Second World War American Liberalism: Women in Outward Bound 1962–1975', *International Journal of the History of Sport* 23 (2006): 838–55.

²¹Brian Heathcote, 'Development of Character in Seafaring Apprentices and in Business', in *Young Men in Industry and Commerce: Modern Tendencies in Character Training* (Hull: Association for Education in Industry and Commerce, 1930), 19–28; Cook, '1944 Education Act', 163.

²²Kurt Hahn, 'Origins of the Outward Bound Trust', in James, *Outward Bound*, 14–15.

²³'The Outward Bound Sea School, Aberdovey, Merionethshire: An Enterprise of the Outward Bound Trust': CUL, Add. 8270/26/39. Emphasis in the original.

²⁴Appeal letter, November 1951: CUL, Add. 8270/26/22.

In 1950 the Trust opened its first Mountain School, at Eskdale in the Lake District, under the wardenship of Adam Arnold-Brown, who had been one of Hahn's first pupils at Gordonstoun, and during the Second World War had been a training officer at the Highland Fieldcraft Training Centre, which was led by Lord Rowallan. The principles behind the Mountain School were the same as those at Aberdovey: exposure to challenging situations in the mountains, as at sea, would strengthen the characters of the young men (and, from 1951 on a limited number of courses, young women) who attended, and would develop their powers of leadership. The four-week courses culminated in a group mountain expedition, and included a programme of athletics, as well as mountain training and participation in mountain rescue services. Arnold-Brown stayed at Eskdale until 1953, when he was replaced by Eric Shipton, a well-known mountaineer, whose tenure of the post lasted only until 1954.²⁵ Shipton in turn was replaced by one of the Eskdale instructors, John Lagoe, who stayed until 1960 before leaving to take up a job in industry. Tom Price, a schoolmaster and keen mountaineer and seaman, replaced Lagoe. A succession of short-term instructors, often recruited from schools and the military, worked at Eskdale, while at the Sea School many instructors were seconded from the merchant navy, particularly from the Blue Funnel line. As with the sea at Aberdovey, the mountains at Eskdale were a means to an end: Arnold-Brown remarked that 'we did not set up to be a climbing school, but a character-training school based on mountaineering'.²⁶ A third school, the Moray Sea School at Burghhead, which Hahn had founded when Gordonstoun returned to Scotland at the end of the war, came under the control of the Outward Bound Trust in 1952. A second mountain school was established at Ullswater in 1954, and another opened in Devon in 1959. There was a sixth school, at Rhowniar in Wales, set up to run courses for girls in 1963. By 1960 more than 30,000 trainees had passed through the schools, and by 1964 the total stood at 55,413 (of whom 51,746 were male), making them a small but not insignificant presence in the educational landscape.²⁷ There was also a concerted move to establish Outward Bound centres overseas: the first course in Malaya ran in 1955, and other early overseas ventures took place in Kenya and Germany.²⁸ Outward Bound started in the United States in 1962, led by Joshua Miner, who had taught at Gordonstoun in 1951.²⁹

Most Outward Bound trainees in Britain in this period were male, and most were industrial apprentices aged between 15 and 19. In this respect, Outward Bound in Britain differed significantly from its successor in the United States, where most trainees were sent by schools.³⁰ In Britain, only a small percentage of trainees were sent by their own educational establishments, mostly public and grammar schools, while a handful were sent by their families.³¹ One of the declared objectives of Outward Bound was to mix boys from different backgrounds, which was felt to be a worthwhile

²⁵Shipton left because of the unsatisfactory conduct of his personal life. See Eric Shipton, *That Untraveller World: An Autobiography* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1969), 215–16.

²⁶Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character*, 151.

²⁷*The Times*, April 28, 1960: 8; Outward Bound Trust, annual report (OBTAR), 1964. The annual reports are in CUL, Add. 8270/22. They do not have page numbers.

²⁸Hilary Tunstall-Behrens, 'Outward Bound Overseas', in James, *Outward Bound*, 108–36; OBTAR, 1953.

²⁹Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools*, 28–9.

³⁰Renate Wilson, *Inside Outward Bound* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1981), 83.

³¹For an example of the latter, see 'The Effects of Outward Bound Training', July 12, 1961, 5: Cumbria Record Office, Whitehaven (CROW), YDSO 41/8/16.

objective in terms of their personal development; this was emphasised in the Trust's advertising, some of which was specifically directed to public schools.³² Local education authorities, and the probation service, also sent some boys on Outward Bound courses. The majority, however, some 90% in the 1950s, were sent by industry; in 1953 around 350 companies, and by 1956 more than 600, were sending boys and girls on Outward Bound courses.³³ It was therefore essential that the schools won and retained the respect of personnel officers, who needed to see the value of Outward Bound courses, which cost their companies a lot of money. Not only did companies lose four weeks of labour input for each trainee that was sent, but they also had to meet the high and growing costs of Outward Bound courses: for example, the fees at the Moray Sea School were 26 guineas in 1952 and 30 guineas in 1956, and at the Devon school the cost of each course in 1960 was £35.³⁴ In 1964 the fees at all schools were increased from £40 to £45.³⁵

Character and leadership

The declared aim of Outward Bound was to provide 'short-term character-training courses', designed to foster the core qualities associated with the concept of character. Spencer Summers recalled that the attractiveness of the Outward Bound idea in the late 1940s was due to 'the fact that so many differing views converged in the idea of a residential character training course for boys on the threshold of life'.³⁶ This convergence was the result of, on the one hand, a widespread and longstanding belief among educationists in the importance of character, and, on the other, some specific features of the war and postwar years. The Education Act of 1944 (building on the Camps Act five years earlier) required local authorities to establish facilities for outdoor education, and the first outdoor centre provided under this legislation, White Hall in Derbyshire, opened in 1950.³⁷ There were many direct echoes of the Edwardian period, when the 'boy labour problem' raised widespread concerns about the character of young men, and at the same time the emergence of 'hooliganism' and fears of moral decline resulted in the formation of character-building movements such as the Scouts.³⁸ It is perhaps unsurprising that, in 1953, Philip, second baron Rea, in whose former home the Eskdale Mountain School was established, and who sat on its board of governors, could describe Outward Bound as 'a tardy (but wholly worthy) continuation of the then "modernistic" ideas of

³²Draft letter to public school headmasters [February 1950]: CUL, Add. 8270/4/16(iii).

³³"'And Not to Yield': A Story of Character Training through Adventure', broadcast recorded March 4, 1953, 1–2: CROW, YDSO 41/9/8; Wilson, *Inside Outward Bound*, 83; Outward Bound Trust, *Bulletin*, April 1956, 7. The copies of the *Bulletin* cited in this article are in CUL, Add. 8270/23.

³⁴Spencer Summers, 'The History of the Trust', in James, *Outward Bound*, 31–2; 'Adventure for Character Development', leaflet advertising Devon Outward Bound School: CUL, Add. 8270/26/29.

³⁵Liverpool Outward Bound Schools Association (LOBSA) minutes, March 19, 1964: Merseyside Record Office (MRO), M361/OBS.

³⁶Summers, 'History', 28.

³⁷Cook, '1944 Education Act', 161–2, 169.

³⁸See Rosenthal, *Character Factory*; Harry Hendrick, *Images of Youth: Age, Class and the Male Youth Problem 1880–1920* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990).

education of my own youth of forty to fifty years ago'.³⁹ The association between manliness and character that was made by Edwardian youth movements can also be discerned in Outward Bound. For example, according to one account, the movement's aims were 'to develop the character of every boy ... and promote a sense of manliness in him'.⁴⁰

Although many aspects of Outward Bound drew on older discourses of education and character, some were particularly resonant in the wartime and early postwar periods. In a contemporary context, Winton 'links a renewed interest in character education to insecurities about students' academic achievement, economic competitiveness, civic engagement, personal safety, moral decline, and the loss of a common culture';⁴¹ these comments could apply equally to the 1940s and 1950s. Cook has shown how the language of character-training permeated the Norwood report, which referred specifically to the experience of Aberdovey, while in legislation after 1945, 'emphasis swung between reasons of "fitness for war" and attempts to reduce the incidence of juvenile delinquency'.⁴² Many historians have examined the fears about delinquency and the 'problem family' in this period, as well as wider perceptions of economic decline.⁴³ As Wills has shown, Outward Bound courses were considered suitable treatment for some delinquents; a number of borstal boys were being sent each year by the late 1950s.⁴⁴ The presence on the Trust's committee of the chairman of the Family Welfare Association emphasised the possible uses of outdoor education for the products of the 'problem family', another important social concern at this time. For Kurt Hahn and other Outward Bound pioneers, welfare dependency was one aspect of Western 'materialism' that threatened to undermine character. Writing in 1953, one member of the Outward Bound Trust argued that the welfare state carried a danger, in the form of an assumption that 'all the necessary and good things of life grow on bushes like wild blackberries', as a result of which young people 'may come to forget that the receipt of benefits involves obligations to the community which confers the benefits'. Outward Bound, which helped 'to inculcate a sense of responsibility' in its trainees, worked against this tendency.⁴⁵ Spencer Summers later recalled that Outward Bound gave young people an opportunity to develop a 'sense of responsibility' and therefore provided 'an antidote to the possible consequences of the Welfare State'.⁴⁶

More generally, materialism and consumerism were seen as diseases of affluence. Kurt Hahn repeatedly identified 'six declines which surround and influence us all': the decline of physical fitness, of craftsmanship, of initiative, of self-discipline, of

³⁹Rea to Arnold-Brown, May 7, 1953, CUL, Add. 8270/12/90(i).

⁴⁰*Meccano Magazine*, February 1952: 52, cutting in CUL, Add. 8270/25/12(i).

⁴¹Sue Winton, 'The Appeal(s) of Character Education in Threatening Times: Caring and Critical Democratic Approaches', *Comparative Education* 44 (2008): 305.

⁴²Cook, '1944 Education Act', 163, 158 and *passim*.

⁴³See John Welshman, *Underclass: A History of the Excluded 1880–2000* (London: Hambledon Continuum, 2006), chapter 4; Wills, 'Delinquency'; David Smith, 'Official Responses to Juvenile Delinquency in Scotland during the Second World War', *Twentieth Century British History* 18 (2007): 78–105.

⁴⁴Wills, 'Delinquency', 172; *The Times*, April 24, 1958, 4.

⁴⁵Russell Lavers, 'Outward Bound', *British Weekly*, January 1, 1953, press cutting in CUL, Add. 8270/25/20.

⁴⁶Summers, 'History', 29.

memory and, most important, of compassion.⁴⁷ An important aspect of the decline of initiative was the social disease of ‘spectatoritis’, which was widely commented upon in *Outward Bound* in this period. One leader commented in 1957 that playing fields in Britain were poorly developed and those that did exist were ‘designed for a handful of players and a multitude of spectators’; similarly, Summers complained that too many young people spent too much of their time engaged in ‘receptive forms of entertainment’, such as watching football and the cinema.⁴⁸ After leaving *Outward Bound*, Adam Arnold-Brown also claimed that its courses attacked ‘spectatoritis’.⁴⁹ These concerns were not entirely new; however, in the context of widespread political and sociological interest in the ‘problem of leisure’, which emerged in the interwar period and reached its apex in the 1940s and 1950s, the ‘spectatoritis’ disease was seen as particularly dangerous.⁵⁰ It was closely connected with the decay of ‘moral fibre’, which Summers believed was addressed by the experience of an *Outward Bound* course.⁵¹ There was a close association between the character of the individual and that of the nation: materialism and welfare dependency were seen as national, not just personal, diseases. This was reflected in the investigations by the Trust president Seebohm Rowntree into the ‘national character’, and his endorsement of the aims of *Outward Bound*.⁵² In the context of the juvenile justice system in the 1940s and 1950s, Wills has emphasised the connection between the individual and society, and the importance of a collective view of the character of a ‘national community’.⁵³ Similarly, Gary McCulloch points to the association among educationists such as Sir Richard Livingstone of ‘character’ with ‘national ideals and ... national virtues’.⁵⁴ *Outward Bound* represented itself as an attack on social, as well as individual, problems. An appeal letter in 1948 expressed the fear that ‘mass-production, the commercial exploitation of leisure, and other features of contemporary life are capable of causing grave damage to the national character unless positive steps are taken to prevent such damage’.⁵⁵ Similarly, the Sea School announced in 1949 that ‘many people are deploring the present lack of moral stamina; the desire to evade anything like hard work, and the general lack of initiative; and they are asking what is the remedy’.⁵⁶

⁴⁷Kurt Hahn, *The Young and the Outcome of the War: The Essex Hall Lecture 1965* (London: Lindsey Press, 1965), 20; Flavin, *Kurt Hahn's Schools*, 34–5; Hahn, ‘Origins’, 10; Kurt Hahn, address to Harrogate conference, bound with *Harrogate Conference Report* (see note 114 below). There were either five or six declines, depending on how Hahn categorised them.

⁴⁸H. Stewart Mackintosh, ‘Character Training and the Contribution Made by *Outward Bound*’, in James, *Outward Bound*, 157–8; Spencer Summers, ‘Memorandum on the Influences Affecting Young People’, March 19, 1954: 2: CROW, YDSO 41/8/7.

⁴⁹Arnold-Brown, ‘Talk on *Outward Bound* to Staff of Department of Education’, December 1959: CUL, Add. 8270/21/25.

⁵⁰See Andrzej Olechnowicz, ‘Unemployed Workers, “Enforced Leisure” and Education for “the Right Use of Leisure” in Britain in the 1930s’, *Labour History Review* 70 (2005): 27–52.

⁵¹“‘And Not to Yield’”, 1–2: CROW, YDSO 41/9/8.

⁵²B. Seebohm Rowntree and G.R. Lavers, *English Life and Leisure: A Social Study* (London: Longmans, Green, 1951), 336. See Mark Freeman, “‘Britain’s Spiritual Life: How Can It Be Deepened?’: Seebohm Rowntree, Russell Lavers and the “Crisis of Belief” c.1946–54’, *Journal of Religious History* 29 (2005): 25–42.

⁵³Wills, ‘Delinquency’, 175–6.

⁵⁴Gary McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings: Education for Leadership in Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 22.

⁵⁵*The Times*, November 13, 1948: 5.

⁵⁶*Outward Bound Sea School prospectus*, 1949: CUL, Add. 8270/26/6.

According to the movement's propaganda and to many who had passed through the schools as instructors or trainees, Outward Bound courses helped to provide this remedy through a 'subtle' but effective process that fostered the qualities associated with the idea of character.⁵⁷ These qualities were summarised by one leader as 'independent thought and action, self-reliance, self-restraint, patience, endurance, determination, thought for others, [and] responsibility'.⁵⁸ These words and phrases appear repeatedly in the Outward Bound literature of the 1950s, along with 'initiative', 'self-discipline' and 'self-confidence'.⁵⁹ In one rather exaggerated account, written in 1959, the hoped-for impact was described as follows:

[At the end of an Outward Bound course, trainees'] whole being has been shaken up. They have carried responsibility, surmounted difficulties and overcome fear. They have worked in a team, enjoyed effort and learnt how others live. They have accomplished more than they thought possible.... They have been subjected to the obligations inherent in community living. They have conformed to that code of honour and behaviour on which good citizenship is founded.... The proud are humbled, the timid are encouraged. The shirker and the leader are equally revealed. Self-control has led to self-respect. Self-confidence has grown and life has been given a purpose and a sense of service encouraged. Such experiences must influence a boy's attitude towards life and strengthen his character.⁶⁰

There was a tough regime featuring a cold shower or bath each morning, a series of individual and team challenges that gradually increased in difficulty as the course progressed, and an emphasis on confronting the dangers that were posed by the sea and the mountains. The element of danger was acknowledged and emphasised by the leaders of Outward Bound: for example, the Trust's *News Bulletin* for July 1953 declared that '[i]t is fundamental to the Outward Bound experience that the boys should meet and resist the forces of Nature'.⁶¹ The power of this challenge was such that, according to Arnold-Brown, some companies preferred to send 'weak candidates' on Outward Bound courses, finding positive effects in most cases, while in other examples the training was claimed to have cured boys of hypochondria, nervousness and speech defects.⁶²

A strict programme of athletics training, focusing on field events, was also an integral part of all Outward Bound courses. The physical side of the Outward Bound challenges was considered particularly important by Kurt Hahn and other early pioneers, and appears to have had an impact beyond the movement itself. Lynn Cook asserts that, in the 1950s, the provisions of the 1944 Education Act were 'increasingly used to promote the type of outdoor education that valued qualities associated with character training for leadership recommended in the Norwood Report and promoted by

⁵⁷Letter from unknown correspondent, January 1951: CUL, Add. 8270/1/35(i).

⁵⁸Tom Price, 'Points to Cover', n.d. but enclosed with Price to Williamson, May 31, 1963: CROW, YDSO 41/8/11.

⁵⁹Letter from unknown correspondent, January 1951; *Bulletin*, November 1952, 6; P. Carpenter, 'The Outward Bound Schools: A Scheme for the Development and Assessment of Character: Abstract', 2-3: CROW YDSO 41/9/8.

⁶⁰'The Outward Bound Schools: Character-Training Through Adventure': CUL Add. 8270/26/45.

⁶¹*Bulletin*, July 1953, 3.

⁶²Arnold-Brown to Hogg, May 20, 1960: CUL, Add. 8270/21/30; 'The Effects of Outward Bound Training', July 12, 1961, 1-3, 10: CROW, YDSO 41/8/16; Summers, 'History of the Trust', 46.

Hahn'; one example is the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, which began in 1956. Certainly the influence of Outward Bound pioneers such as Longland and Hogan in the local authorities that took a lead in developing outdoor education demonstrates the resonance of Hahnian character-training within the educational establishment.⁶³ Wills emphasises the close association between physicality and character-training in the probation service in the 1950s, where a 'martial' masculinity was fostered among juvenile delinquents, drawing on a Hahnian understanding of *mens sana in corpore sano*: physical effort was 'seen as a *sine qua non* in the development of manly strength and personality'.⁶⁴ In the 1940s and early 1950s, the badges awarded to those who had attended Outward Bound schools were graded into three categories: Honours or Silver; 'Merit', 'Standard' or Bronze; and Membership. Each boy was judged on athletics, mountaineering or seamanship, and 'leadership', and awarded a badge accordingly.⁶⁵ As was later the case in the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, athletics was an integral component of the assessed element of the course.

As demonstrated by its inclusion in the badge criteria, 'leadership' was also an important aspect of Outward Bound training. This can also be seen as a rather outdated concept, even in the early postwar period.⁶⁶ Writing in 1974, Roberts, White and Parker saw leadership as a 'relic of pre-war days', and noted that many in Outward Bound had 'ambivalent feelings' about it.⁶⁷ By the 1960s, some were rather more than just ambivalent: for Tom Price, leadership, like character, had 'a large number of connotations, some of them rather unpleasant'.⁶⁸ However, for personnel officers whose companies formed the great majority of Outward Bound's sponsors, the qualities of leadership that were fostered at Aberdovey and Eskdale were important elements of the training. According to the Trust's own *Bulletin*, companies who sent boys were prompted by 'the quest for potential leaders'.⁶⁹ Public schoolboys, too, could learn useful lessons about how to lead: one such boy, who became a patrol captain at Eskdale, found that working-class trainees were unwilling to obey his direct orders, and realised 'that a more subtle form of leadership was required'.⁷⁰ Industry was not the only area of modern life where leadership skills were important: for example, the Leeds Outward Bound Association provided bursaries to recruit boys and girls from the Youth Service, who were 'selected with potential leadership in mind'.⁷¹ At Ullswater, the programme included an element of public speaking, which was seen as 'a vital part of the requirements of leadership training'.⁷² The models of leadership within the schools were the subject of debate, but, whatever the preferred method of fostering it, leadership was clearly important. At the Mountain School in the early 1950s, an end-of-course report on one trainee rather damningly commented that the 'lad' was '[j]ust a follower', and not a leader.⁷³

⁶³Cook, '1944 Education Act', 169, 171.

⁶⁴Wills, 'Delinquency', 168, 178–9. See also Skillen, "'Sound System'", 410–11.

⁶⁵P.D. Maud, memorandum explaining badge system, February 1953: CUL, Add. 8270/11/25(i); Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences*, 99–101; Summers, 'History', 37.

⁶⁶McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 36.

⁶⁷Roberts et al., *Character-Training Industry*, 15, 69.

⁶⁸Tom Price, 'Some Aspects of Character-Building', in Röhrs and Tunstall-Behrens, *Kurt Hahn*, 88.

⁶⁹*Bulletin*, April 1956, 7.

⁷⁰Letter from unknown correspondent, January 1951: CUL, Add. 8270/1/35(i).

⁷¹OBTAR, 1957.

⁷²*Bulletin*, July 1959, 8.

⁷³Additional report on X.Y.: CUL, Add. 8270/12/87(ii).

The account presented of Outward Bound thus far has obscured some of the subtleties in the concept of character that underpinned it. It can be argued that there were some differences from the ideas associated with movements such as the Boy Scouts. According to Millikan, in Scouting, 'character was something imposed by the organization on the individual', whereas Outward Bound was distinctive because of its 'insistence that character is something that must be unleashed from within the individual as opposed to imposed from the outside'. Thus, while the 'attributes of character' that were fostered by Outward Bound 'seem to conform to the Victorian ideal', they were represented as 'a by-product of the actualization of the individual's higher self', which resonated with contemporaneous liberal priorities.⁷⁴ In Britain, there are examples of the language of 'self-discovery' in the publicity of the Aberdovey Sea School in the 1940s, which also described its goal as being the development of the 'whole man', a phrase which was later widespread within Outward Bound.⁷⁵ Arguably, the use of the phrase 'character-training' rather than 'character-building' suggests a belief, shared with the American version of Outward Bound, that character was part of the inward self.⁷⁶ Revealingly, Arnold-Brown used the phrase 'unfolding character' in the title of his autobiography, and 'character-development' also suggested that the attributes fostered by Outward Bound were innate to the individual, and needed to be drawn out rather than put in.⁷⁷ There was little sense of character giving way to personality in the early years of the movement; rather, the terms were used synonymously: thus in 1953 one sponsor remarked on the 'really stimulating experience which develops ... personality and character'.⁷⁸ It is possible to identify in the 1940s and early 1950s some elements of the focus on 'personal growth' and individual development that would later replace character-training in the language of Outward Bound. According to David Hopkins and Roger Putnam, the combination of practical training with 'personal development ideals' created 'early difficulties' at Aberdovey, which 'foreshadowed the debates about education and training, about child-centred or subject-centred approaches, which continue to this day'.⁷⁹

Criticisms of the Outward Bound approach to character-training

While the aims and rhetoric of character-training found widespread support within Outward Bound, and among its large body of industrial supporters, a number of pertinent criticisms were voiced, both inside and outside the movement, which cast doubts of various kinds on the value and ethos of the training that was provided at the schools. This section considers three such criticisms: the allegation that Outward Bound was militaristic; the doubtful long-term value of a four-week course; and the difficulty of measuring the impact of courses on young people's characters. Each of these criticisms contributed to the wider reassessment of the aims and rhetoric of the movement that will be discussed in the final section of the article.

First, a number of unsympathetic portrayals of Outward Bound associated its activities with the promotion of militarism. Hahn and others often emphasised the

⁷⁴Millikan, 'Muscular Christian Ethos', 847–8.

⁷⁵'Self-Discovery through the Outward Bound Sea School', 1949: CUL, Add. 8270/26/2(i).

⁷⁶See Millikan, 'Muscular Christian Ethos', 847–8.

⁷⁷Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character*. Cf. Price, 'Some Aspects', 87: Price preferred the phrases 'character-building' and 'character-development' to 'character-training'.

⁷⁸*Bulletin*, January 1953, 7.

⁷⁹Hopkins and Putnam, *Personal Growth*, 30.

value of the ‘martial virtues’, which had been identified in 1906 by the American pacifist philosopher William James, who was a powerful influence on Hahn. James argued that war offered possibilities for the exercise of ‘martial virtues’, but that these opportunities could be re-created in peacetime by the development of a ‘moral equivalent’ to war.⁸⁰ Outward Bound leaders often drew, explicitly and implicitly, on these ideas: Summers, for example, recalled that, during the war, ‘young people suddenly confronted with the need for action, having to act on their own and to assume responsibility at short notice, became men almost overnight’, and remembered that Outward Bound hoped for similar peacetime ‘transformations’ from ‘comparable experiences’.⁸¹ Even the more pacifist-inclined Outward Bound instructors acknowledged that war created opportunities for adventure, which could be re-created with beneficial effects in peacetime, while Summers presented Outward Bound as an ideal form of training for boys who were about to enter National Service.⁸² However, in this context the language of character-training provided ammunition for critics who could make lazy but obvious comparisons with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. One commentator in *The Times* likened Outward Bound to ‘an ascetic cult devoted to producing golden-limbed, superior men’.⁸³ Some leaders of Outward Bound admitted to ‘dangers’ in the ‘aspect of its training’ that emphasised the importance of character-building through adversity.⁸⁴ So concerned was Adam Arnold-Brown about possible similarities with the Hitler Youth that he even mentioned them to Mountain School trainees in his end-of-course address.⁸⁵ In 1959, many years after leaving Eskdale, he raised his concerns again, in an address to staff of the Department of Education: ‘The term “Character Training” has a distasteful connotation – it smacks of Pavlov, of the Hitler Youth, of Brave New World and authoritarianism.... I do agree that there are strong possibilities in Outward Bound Methods for good or ill; and it would be wise if those who believe in the dignity of the individual kept an eye open.’⁸⁶ However, the involvement of military veterans in Outward Bound schools, the use of military terminology – for example, while at Aberdovey the groups of trainees were known as ‘watches’, at Eskdale the term ‘patrols’ was used – and the emphasis on physical development all helped to cement the reputation of Outward Bound. This was helpful in some respects, enhancing its support among personnel officers, many of whom were ex-military men; however, the reputation was problematic in the context of an evolving relationship with local education authorities, and an emerging section of the movement that did not share Hahn’s faith in the ‘martial virtues’. As the next section will show, by the mid-1960s the younger generation of Outward Bound leaders was resisting the use of terminology associated with war and militarism.

⁸⁰William James, *The Moral Equivalent of War and Other Essays* (New York, 1971), 3–16. See ‘A Memorandum by Kurt Hahn, New York, May 1948’, 7–8: British Library (BL), Wq5/3551 DSC. For a recent discussion, see Lodewijk van Oord, ‘Kurt Hahn’s Moral Equivalent of War’, *Oxford Review of Education* 36 (2010): 253–65.

⁸¹Summers, ‘History’, 25–6; draft prospectus, n.d.: CUL, Add. 8270/1/9; Fletcher, *Challenge of Outward Bound*, 14.

⁸²Ronald Goldman, ‘Adventure and Responsibility’, *Educational Review* 10 (1958): 199–202; *The Times*, July 21, 1953, 7.

⁸³*The Times*, May 8, 1965, 9. See also Flavin, *Kurt Hahn’s Schools*, 33.

⁸⁴Price, ‘Some Aspects’, 90; Goldman, ‘Adventure and Responsibility’, 205.

⁸⁵Notes on end-of-course talk, August 1951: CUL Add. 8270/11/14.

⁸⁶Notes for ‘Talk on Outward Bound to Staff of Dept of Education’, 1959: CUL Add. 8270/21/25.

A second criticism, which was voiced both inside and outside the movement, was that the courses were too short to achieve the desired outcomes in term of developing character and preparing for leadership. There was good reason for scepticism concerning the long-term impact of a course that lasted only four weeks. As one industrialist asked in 1948, 'it was all very well to be on top of a mountain one month – what about the month after that?'.⁸⁷ Even some of the movement's strongest supporters voiced concern that the impact would be short-lived: one member of the Outward Bound Trust, who visited Aberdovey in 1947, doubted 'whether the course is long enough to effect a permanent improvement in the character of boys who after it return to an unsatisfactory environment', and this concern was echoed in the Trust's own *Bulletin*.⁸⁸ As a result, considerable thought was devoted to ways of extending the Outward Bound influence beyond the four-week period of the course. There was a flirtation with the idea of 'follow-up' courses, but many in the movement, including Eric Ship-ton, did not see the point of them, as it appeared that they were 'intended primarily as a holiday' – ironically, a criticism levelled by some at the Outward Bound courses themselves.⁸⁹ An alternative was the establishment of Outward Bound old boys' associations, such as the Argonauts in Liverpool, which involved former trainees in expeditions and various forms of public service.⁹⁰ However, both in Liverpool and elsewhere there were concerns that such organisations would segregate former trainees from their peer groups, and this in turn would undermine one of the purposes of Outward Bound, which was to strengthen leadership in other youth organisations. In Liverpool, therefore, efforts were made to secure Scout representation on the local association's committee, while at Eskdale itself trainees were given a list of organisations that they could join when they returned home. This list included the Army cadets, the Boys' Brigade, the YMCA, and various denominational organisations, as well as the Scouts.⁹¹ These issues reflected the difficult balance between the intended impact of Outward Bound on the individual, and the hoped-for effects on the trainees' workplaces and communities. A four-week course could transform a trainee's character and enhance his or her capacity for leadership, but this in turn could encourage dissatisfaction with workplace conditions – an outcome that would displease a company which had invested a considerable sum in paying for an Outward Bound course – or unwillingness to continue in existing youth organisations. Before the aim of education for leadership was undermined from inside Outward Bound in the mid-1960s, this problem was discussed at great length within the movement, and provoked repeated reconsiderations of the purposes of character-training. It became less of an apparent problem only when 'personal growth' and 'self-discovery' had emerged as the most important aims of the Outward Bound training, and leadership had been downgraded, as the next section will show.

⁸⁷Spencer Summers, 'Training for Leadership at the Outward Bound Sea School, Aberdovey', press cutting, 1948: CUL, Add. 8270/25/1(i). See also Fletcher, *Challenge of Outward Bound*, v–vi.

⁸⁸G.R. Lavers, 'Note on Visit to Outward Bound Sea School,' January 20, 1947: Borthwick Institute, University of York, B.S. Rowntree papers, LTE/64; *Bulletin*, June 1952, 5.

⁸⁹Eskdale governors' minutes, July 10, 1953: CROW, YDSO 41/1/1; see below, 36.

⁹⁰*Bulletin*, January 1953, 4.

⁹¹Eastbourne conference, October 1949, 'Session 4: Follow-Up: Remarks by Peter Rowntree': CUL, Add. 8270/24/7(i); LOBSA minutes, November 24, 1959, February 19, 1951; Arnold-Brown, *Unfolding Character*, 136–7; notes for boys at end of course, n.d. [1952?]: CUL, Add. 8270/26/29(i).

A third, and related, criticism of the Outward Bound conception of character-training related to the measurement of its impact. Few if any plausible methods existed for doing this and this presented serious difficulties for the movement in the postwar period, ultimately contributing to the reassessment of priorities in the 1960s that will be discussed in the next section. Interwar American character education was beset by the same difficulty: despite some optimism about character research in the 1920s and 1930s, and one monumental study of the impact of character education,⁹² assessments relied on 'self-reports and narrative generalities'. More recently, character education has been described as 'woefully deficient in producing systematic outcomes research': reliance on proxy indicators – such as disciplinary records, service referrals, the extent of voluntary service participation, or even teenage pregnancy rates – is unsatisfactory, as is the use of post-training personality tests.⁹³ There were no attempts to measure the impact of Outward Bound courses: as Hopkins and Putnam explained, '[i]n a rather typically pragmatic British way, benefits were assumed to flow ... and few attempts were made to assess and explain the effects systematically'.⁹⁴ Two studies of sponsors and trainees, based on questionnaires, were undertaken at the behest of Outward Bound by Basil Fletcher in the late 1960s,⁹⁵ but these, it has been argued, used inherently problematic methods and cannot be described as independent research, having been initiated by the Trust itself.⁹⁶ A subsequent study by Roberts, White and Parker used a more robust methodology, and came to more pessimistic conclusions about the impact of character-training courses: whereas Fletcher believed that Outward Bound had a significant impact on character, the long-term effects were 'marginal', according to Roberts et al. Nearly two-thirds of the trainees they interviewed 'felt somehow "different"' after a character-training course, but the nature of this difference was not very clear.⁹⁷ The uncertainty of the outcomes of Outward Bound paralleled contemporaneous debates around the impact of National Service on the 'characters and attitudes' of young men: although it was widely viewed as an important arena of 'character development', the effects of National Service on individuals and communities proved similarly resistant to assessment.⁹⁸

The difficulty or impossibility of measuring the impact of character-training could be an impediment to the development of Outward Bound, especially because it relied mainly on course fees paid by employers and local authorities. This was recognised right from the start. Peter Rowntree, a key figure in his family firm and chairman of the first Outward Bound Trust management committee, 'stressed the need to obtain reliable evidence from the boys' future careers to prove the value of the training' that they received.⁹⁹ However, such evidence was not readily available and, even if

⁹²Francis F. Powers, *Character Training* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1932), chapter 11; Hartshorne and May, *Studies in the Nature of Character*.

⁹³Smagorinsky and Taxel, *Discourse of Character Education*, 58–9, 214ff. The quotation is from P. Nickell and S.L. Field, 'Elementary Character Education: Local Perspectives, Echoed Voices', *International Journal of Social Education* 16, no. 1 (2001): 2.

⁹⁴Hopkins and Putnam, *Personal Growth*, 55.

⁹⁵Fletcher, *Challenge of Outward Bound*; Basil Fletcher, *Students of Outward Bound Schools in Great Britain: A Follow-Up Study* (Bristol: University of Bristol School of Education, 1970).

⁹⁶Roberts et al., *Character Training Industry*, 19–20.

⁹⁷Ibid., 130–2. Roberts et al. examined a number of courses, not just Outward Bound.

⁹⁸*The Times*, July 16, 1953, 7; July 21, 1953, 7. See also Freeman, "'Britain's Spiritual Life'", 40–1.

⁹⁹Summers, 'History', 21.

systematic studies had been carried out, they were open to many objections, not least the difficulty of establishing a control group of young people who had not attended an Outward Bound course.¹⁰⁰ More fundamentally, the nature of the impact of character-training was such that it eluded statistical measurement: this was acknowledged in an Outward Bound prospectus, which added that 'because boys differ the effect on each will differ'.¹⁰¹ Such vagueness was unlikely to convince the many who were sceptical about the value of outdoor education, some of whom occupied prominent positions in local educational hierarchies in the 1950s, and who demanded more evidence of the value of Outward Bound training. One alderman from West Hartlepool was quoted in the local and national press in 1960, reporting an investigation by the education committee into the progress of former Outward Bound trainees: he scathingly remarked that '[t]he country needs more leaders, but apparently many candidates for these courses return with the impression that all they have had is a jolly good holiday'.¹⁰² Having sent several teenagers on the courses, the West Hartlepool committee found that 'nothing has happened', and that the public money spent on sending a small selection of local youth was not justified.¹⁰³ In reply to the alderman, Arnold-Brown admitted that 'objective evidence and proof' could not really be obtained, and rather weakly asserted that 'one must have faith, and one must use judgement'.¹⁰⁴ Only the physical impact of courses could be statistically measured, and, as the next section will show, the value of this element of Outward Bound training was increasingly questioned within the movement during the 1950s. It can be argued that the elusiveness of meaningful impact assessments in this period restricted the appeal of Outward Bound to potential sponsors. More fundamentally, it could call into question the validity of character-training as an educational goal, an outcome which other developments also encouraged during the 1950s and, especially, the 1960s.

From 'character-training' to 'personal growth'

During the 1960s the ideologies that underpinned the Outward Bound version of character-training were increasingly challenged, and this precipitated some changes in the practices and self-presentation of the organisation. Some of these developments were prefigured in the 1950s and even the 1940s, when the language of 'self-discovery' featured in some Outward Bound propaganda. However, they accelerated in the 1950s and 1960s, when a reassessment within educational research of 'moral development' and values acquisition drew on psychological insights into processes of 'personal evaluation' and the development of 'moral autonomy'.¹⁰⁵ At the same time, as Wills has explained in relation to the treatment of young men on probation, 'a shift to peacetime models of masculinity' accompanied the abolition of National Service, the growth of affluence and the emergence of the 'therapeutic method' in dealing with juvenile delinquency. Although not all aspects of 'martial' masculinity were jettisoned in the 1960s – a 'disciplined work ethic, strength of personality and self-control' were

¹⁰⁰Fletcher, *Students of Outward Bound Schools*, 67; Arnold-Brown to Hogg, May 20, 1960: CUL, Add. 8270/21/30.

¹⁰¹'The Outward Bound Schools: Character Training through Adventure'.

¹⁰²Press cutting, n.d. [1960]: CUL, Add. 8270/21/31(ii); *The Times*, May 17, 1960, 15.

¹⁰³Hogg to Arnold-Brown, May 19, 1960: CUL, Add. 8270/21/29.

¹⁰⁴Arnold-Brown to Hogg, May 20, 1960: CUL, Add. 8270/21/30.

¹⁰⁵See for example James Hemming, 'Some Aspects of Moral Development in a Changing Society', *British Journal of Educational Psychology* 27 (1957): 77–88.

still seen as important components of individual character – and although not all within the juvenile justice system approved of the changes, Wills shows that what constituted ‘acceptable discourse and practice’ undoubtedly changed in this period.¹⁰⁶ These developments are also identified by other historians of probation, who note that ‘a more welfare oriented period’ began in the late 1950s, with the beginnings of an increased emphasis on ‘welfare rather than punishment’, which accelerated in the 1960s, and was confirmed by official reports and legislation.¹⁰⁷ Similar changes were also in evidence within Outward Bound, where the ideas of character-training and education for leadership were increasingly questioned, and the language of ‘personality’ and ‘self-discovery’ was foregrounded. However, these changes did not go uncontested within the movement, particularly among the industrialists who still formed the bulk of the paying customers of the Outward Bound schools.

Even in the early 1950s, the Hahnian educational culture, in which ‘physical rectitude’ was closely associated with ‘character and moral probity’, was coming under sustained challenge within Outward Bound, particularly at Eskdale, where some instructors were opposed to the inclusion of athletics in the curriculum, feeling that it had little relevance in terms of mountaineering training, and that it was unfair on the physically weaker trainees.¹⁰⁸ During Eric Shipton’s brief wardenship at Eskdale, a concerted attempt was made to reduce the athletics component, but this met with opposition from traditionalists including Spencer Summers and J.M. Hogan. The latter argued that the athletics tests ‘were objective in a way which other elements of the training could not be’, and that ‘the guiding principle should be whether or not the activity was character training in its function’, and that even ‘artificial or dramatic means of achieving this end’, such as field events, were fully justified.¹⁰⁹ However, these priorities were not shared by the mountaineering specialists who increasingly held the balance of power at Eskdale. Shipton’s successor John Lagoe replaced field events with circuit training in the mid-1950s, and at the same time mounted a concerted, and eventually successful, assault on the badge system, again in the face of opposition from the pro-Hahn faction led by Hogan. The perceived unfairness of the inclusion of physical tests in the assessment criteria for the badges, and a more fundamental objection to the concept of ‘Honours’, ‘Merit’ and ‘Membership’, combined to form the main arguments against the system. Various compromises were tried during the 1950s, including the relegation of the athletics component to a colour-coded rim on the badge, but eventually it was decided – against the fierce opposition of Hogan and some other key figures in the Trust – to award a single rimless badge to all those who completed the course.¹¹⁰ By 1957 even Hahn admitted, rather grudgingly, that the original badge criteria may have been unfairly geared towards physical prowess, although he never entirely lost his belief in the value of physical culture to character-training.¹¹¹

The downgrading of *mens sana in corpore sano* was accompanied by other changes to the Outward Bound programme, which can also be seen to reflect a some-

¹⁰⁶Wills, ‘Delinquency’, 169, 177–81, 184.

¹⁰⁷Philip Whitehead and Roger Statham, *The History of Probation: Politics, Power and Cultural Change 1876–2005* (Crayford: Shaw & Sons, 2006), 40–7.

¹⁰⁸Ibid., 161–2; Longland to Arnold-Brown, June 13, 1953: CUL, Add. 8270/21/2.

¹⁰⁹Eskdale governors’ minute book, November 19, 1953: CROW, YDSO 41/1/1; Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences*, 98–9.

¹¹⁰Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences*, 99–104.

¹¹¹Hahn, ‘Origins’, 15.

what ‘softened’ approach to character-training.¹¹² An early indication of a shift from character to personality can be seen in the introduction at Eskdale, during Shipton’s wardenship, of the ‘solo’, which (as the name suggests) required trainees to spend a period of time alone in the mountains. This became a longstanding feature of Outward Bound mountain training, and was particularly important in the American movement in the 1960s.¹¹³ Changing conceptions of education for leadership resulted in the adoption of ‘relay’ leadership within the ‘watches’ at Aberdovey by 1965; this involved the rotation of watch leadership among all the trainees.¹¹⁴ However, the most significant development in this period was the increase – albeit a relatively modest one – in the number of Outward Bound courses provided for girls and young women. By 1964, 3,667 girls had attended courses, still a modest proportion of the total, but many more were attending annually than a decade earlier, largely because of the provision of a specialist Outward Bound girls’ school.¹¹⁵ These courses were a controversial development: for example, some members of the Liverpool Outward Bound Schools Association felt that Outward Bound courses were completely unsuitable for young women, and they were caricatured in the press as producing ‘Tough Girls’.¹¹⁶ However, if only in small ways, the growth of adventure education for girls – both within and beyond Outward Bound – provoked a reconsideration of some of the central precepts of the Hahnian educational legacy. Although girls’ courses offered similar challenges to those provided for boys, they had a somewhat larger ‘cultural’ component, and up to a third of the time was set aside for ‘indoor’ activities.¹¹⁷ Significantly, at a two-day conference held at Harrogate in May 1965 – at which many of the problems facing Outward Bound were addressed, and which coincided with, or provoked, a wave of unfavourable publicity – there was a discussion about whether ‘the idea of manliness’ was any longer appropriate in the conditions of the mid-1960s.¹¹⁸

The Harrogate conference exposed the faultlines within Outward Bound, and particularly the rejection by many of the younger leaders in the movement of key elements of Kurt Hahn’s social diagnosis. The younger leaders such as Tom Price were joined by key figures from the wider educational world, notably Jack Longland, Alec Clegg and Bernard Davies – a tutor at the National College for the Training of Youth Leaders – in questioning the ‘character-training’ rhetoric of Outward Bound; and even J. M. Hogan, Hahn’s main supporter at Harrogate, expressed disagreement with the ‘six declines’ thesis, which Hahn continued to propound in the 1960s.¹¹⁹ The language of ‘spectatoritis’ seemed particularly outdated in 1965, although Hahn continued to use it: Davies exposed its hypocrisy when he commented that ‘I have never been able to understand why it is bad to watch football but good to listen to the Halle!’¹²⁰ Similarly, concerns about ‘materialism’ were treated with scepticism by

¹¹²Wills, ‘Delinquency’, 159–60.

¹¹³Millikan, ‘Muscular Christian Ethos’, 850.

¹¹⁴*Outward Bound in the 60s & 70s: A Report on the Conference Held at Harrogate on May 8th and 9th 1965* (no place, publisher or date given; hereafter *Harrogate Conference Report*): 11; BL, qL71/282 DSC.

¹¹⁵OBTAR, 1964.

¹¹⁶LOBSA minutes, November 23, 1956; *Bulletin*, January 1953, 4.

¹¹⁷*Bulletin*, July 1959, 5.

¹¹⁸*Harrogate Conference Report*, 5. For the unfavourable publicity, see *The Times*, May 8, 1965, 9.

¹¹⁹*Harrogate Conference Report*, 5–6.

¹²⁰*Ibid.*, 6.

many at Harrogate, although Viscount Cobham, opening the conference, echoed the Hahnian orthodoxy by declaring that '[a]ffluence and idleness, combined with ambition, had, throughout history, provided the highroad to decadence, while comfort and security could wither the stoutest potential heart.'¹²¹ However, Price and Davies both disagreed with this, Davies asserting that:

it seems to me that individuals are thrown back on their own resources more than ever before. People are expected to work out their own philosophy; they are faced with a confusion of values; there are no longer conventions and customs and established codes of behaviour.¹²²

Davies viewed this situation as a challenge to educationists to focus their efforts on 'individual young people'. Thus Outward Bound was represented less as a contribution to strengthening the national character, and more as a means of strengthening the individual personality of the young person attending its schools. By now, according to Spencer Summers, 'character-training' (which he had previously been eager to promote) was a 'misleading phrase', and Outward Bound was all about 'trying to bring out the inner strength of the boy [*sic*]'.¹²³

In effect, Harrogate precipitated a reconsideration of the language of the movement, particularly the focus on 'character'. Jack Longland, for example, exclaimed: 'What a difficult word character is! We should look at that word again and decide what we mean by it', and wondered 'whether Outward Bound needs a brand new vocabulary'.¹²⁴ Spencer Summers agreed that Outward Bound should 'take another look at our vocabulary', while Davies was even more blunt: 'I could not use the words "character training"'.¹²⁵ Even Hahn was reluctantly forced to admit that some of the criticisms of the language of Outward Bound were valid, and although his own speech raised the issue of the 'martial virtues', he concentrated instead on the ideal of service: 'During the war there were few youngsters who felt comfortable if they refused to serve. Can such a response be created in peacetime on a purely voluntary basis?'.¹²⁶ Others went further. For example, although Squadron-Leader Lester Davies, warden of the Ullswater Mountain School, expressed some sympathy for the view that war brought out 'the best, as well as the worst, of people', he had to admit that '[m]any young people nowadays were fed up with hearing about the last war, and this was a natural feeling'.¹²⁷ Similarly, in 1970 an exasperated Tom Price explained:

I do not like the term 'character-training'. It makes me think immediately of the Stiff Upper Lip and the Right Type. Phrases from the war stir uneasily in the memory, O.L.Q. and L.M.F. (Officer-Like Qualities and Lack of Moral Fibre).¹²⁸

Thus, for Price and many others, 'the word "character" itself is objectionable: it is at once too imprecise and too narrow for our purposes'. Price preferred to present

¹²¹Ibid., 3.

¹²²Ibid., 6.

¹²³Ibid., 17.

¹²⁴Ibid., 5, 4.

¹²⁵Ibid., 17, 4.

¹²⁶Kurt Hahn, address to Harrogate conference.

¹²⁷Harrogate Conference Report, 12.

¹²⁸Price, 'Some Aspects', 86.

an 'Outward Bound course as a way to help a boy (his word) to 'establish his values'.¹²⁹

Along with character, by the 1960s leadership was less significant as an educational goal within Outward Bound, and it was widely recognised that the use of the term did not help to promote the courses effectively. Across the educational system, as McCulloch has explained, the postwar political agenda of equality and democracy undermined education for leadership: an idea that had formerly held a wide political appeal seemed 'increasingly anachronistic' by the 1950s.¹³⁰ Within Outward Bound, the goal had persisted through this decade – largely because of the prominence of industry in its customer base – but by the early 1960s it was widely recognised that the use of the word 'leadership' did not help to promote the movement effectively. At Harrogate, Summers emphasised that Outward Bound was *not* a leadership-training school, and noted that he 'rather deplored the type of sponsor who picked out the lads whom he thought would eventually be *his* leaders'.¹³¹ At around the same time, Tom Price insisted that the Trust's publicity should refer to the qualities of 'initiative, responsibility, citizenship (*anything but leadership*)'.¹³² Other speakers at Harrogate were even more scathing about the idea of education for leadership, associating it with public school bullying, aggressive imperialism and racial prejudice. Alec Clegg insisted that 'if you train some to lead you must train others to be led', and such an assumption was characteristic of a class-restrictive, socially stratified education system: education for leadership was a 'distasteful, if not positively dangerous' idea, which should have no place in a modern scheme of education.¹³³ The turn towards 'individual development' influenced practices not only at Outward Bound but also at other outdoor centres, for example Bewerley Park in North Yorkshire. Here, Clegg's assertion that 'outdoor pursuits should be used for individual development and not as a means of measuring success' exercised a strong influence on the direction taken by the centre in the 1960s and 1970s.¹³⁴ It is significant that, whereas Outward Bound provided for a more or less privileged elite, mostly from within industry, by the 1970s the appearance of many other providers had opened up opportunities for more young people, not just those singled out by their employers as potential leaders, to participate in outdoor activities as part of their education. By the mid-1970s it was estimated that up to a quarter of all those aged 14–20 had taken part in some form of outdoor education.¹³⁵

Not all the influential voices within Outward Bound approved of the downgrading of character and leadership, and at Harrogate one faction, mostly comprising representatives of industry, defended the character-training rhetoric of the movement. For example, whereas Price suggested that Outward Bound schools should foster 'an atmosphere which is not inimical to culture', one industrial delegate – whose son had attended a course, with apparently beneficial results – disagreed:

¹²⁹Ibid., 87, 89.

¹³⁰McCulloch, *Philosophers and Kings*, 6.

¹³¹*Harrogate Conference Report*, 17. Emphasis in the original.

¹³²Tom Price, 'General Points', n.d. but enclosed with Price to Stanbury, November 29, 1965: CROW, YDSO 41/8/16. Emphasis added.

¹³³Alec Clegg, address to Harrogate conference, bound with *Harrogate Conference Report*.

¹³⁴Lynn Cook and others, *Bewerley Park: From Camp School to Outdoor Centre* (Harrogate: Friends of Bewerley Park Centre, 2002), 69.

¹³⁵Roberts et al., *Character-Training Industry*, 15.

'I think it is admirable, and I don't want any "culture" in it!'¹³⁶ J. Parsons, a personnel director, defiantly explained that his company – and others – sent their employees to the schools 'because we believe in character training and because we believe the Outward Bound method is effective'.¹³⁷ In the ensuing discussion, Parsons denied that Outward Bound needed to change its vocabulary, claiming that there was no need to 'quibble about these definitions'.¹³⁸ His diagnosis of a 'moral crisis', resulting from the abandonment of behavioural codes and old taboos, was echoed by another employers' representative, W. C. Taylor from the north-east region of the General Post Office, who blamed a range of practices from remarriage to homosexuality for the social evils of the 1960s which, he believed, Outward Bound helped to address.¹³⁹ In the context of 'mods and rockers ... and the growing groups of aimless and undirected youth', even some sceptics admitted that there was still a role for the kind of character-training that Outward Bound offered.¹⁴⁰ Even into the 1970s some researchers endorsed the aims of character-training. In his study published in 1971 – itself an outcome of the Harrogate conference – Basil Fletcher welcomed the 'rejection of hedonism' in Outward Bound schools, which was particularly welcome in a 'permissive' society, the effects of which were 'softening'; and saw no reason to avoid character-training or the use of the term, although he had to admit that it was 'rather outdated'.¹⁴¹ Only in 1981 could another investigator finally report that the term character-training 'has fallen into disrepute and is certainly never used today'.¹⁴²

On one level, the persistence of earlier assumptions and vocabularies is not particularly surprising. Outward Bound continued to rely overwhelmingly on industrial sponsors, and even in the 1960s many personnel officers were ex-military men who had an instinctive appreciation of the value of character-training.¹⁴³ Moreover, military figures continued in prominent roles on the council of the Outward Bound Trust and as school wardens: of the four schools represented at Harrogate, three were led by men with a military rank, and the fourth by a woman. Many felt that the content of the courses was essentially good, but acknowledged that their public image needed to be changed. Thus one local authority educationist claimed, very revealingly, that "character training through adventure" is a little like walking the hills in a top hat': 'One wants to re-think the phrase. *Everybody has been agreeing on what one does, but the phrase itself lags behind by twenty-five years.*'¹⁴⁴ It was the vocabulary, not the practice, of the Outward Bound movement that failed to resonate with contemporaneous educational priorities. Indeed, although a number of innovations were adopted, especially in the mountain schools, the length and content of most Outward Bound courses did not change very much between 1950 and 1970. Physical training, expeditions, encounters with the natural world and team-work all continued to form the main elements of the training, even if the impact of these activities was increasingly described in terms of 'personal growth', 'citizenship' and 'self-discovery' rather than

¹³⁶Harrogate Conference Report, 7, 9.

¹³⁷J. Parsons, address to Harrogate conference, bound with *Harrogate Conference Report*.

¹³⁸Harrogate Conference Report, 9.

¹³⁹Parsons, address to Harrogate conference; *Harrogate Conference Report*, 7.

¹⁴⁰*The Times*, May 8, 1965: 9.

¹⁴¹Fletcher, *Challenge of Outward Bound*, 135–8.

¹⁴²Wilson, *Inside Outward Bound*, 161.

¹⁴³*Ibid.*, 105.

¹⁴⁴*Harrogate Conference Report*: 9. Emphasis added.

‘character-training’.¹⁴⁵ In 1974, Roberts, White and Parker described ‘a perpetual search for appropriate but inoffensive phrases such as “self-discovery”’, but concluded that ‘character-development or training is essentially what the schemes are all about’.¹⁴⁶ Outward Bound and its many imitators, despite their best efforts, continued to be dogged by an increasingly anachronistic vocabulary, reflecting the historical circumstances of the establishment of the first courses in the 1940s and 1950s, and although the avant-garde of the movement strove to dismantle the Hahnian conception of character-training in the 1960s, outdoor education remained popularly associated with ‘cold showers and severe physical toughness’, and with the aim of ‘character-building’.¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

This article has shown how the Outward Bound vision of ‘character-training’ and education for leadership, as articulated by Kurt Hahn and its other early pioneers, was increasingly questioned and modified during the first 25 years of the movement. The strength of Outward Bound in the 1940s and 1950s lay in its ability to maintain a commitment to both the practice and the rhetoric of character-training, and in so doing to appeal to a wide political and industrial constituency. This both reflected the widespread uses of the idea of character in education in the late Victorian and Edwardian period, as traced by Nathan Roberts,¹⁴⁸ and anticipated the broad contemporary support for many of the goals of character education. However, the type of ‘character-training’ that was promoted at Aberdovey and Eskdale contained elements that were framed as specific responses to wartime and early postwar circumstances. In particular, the foregrounding of *mens sana in corpore sano*, and the deliberate exposure of trainees to the dangers of the sea and the mountains, were aspects of a curriculum that promoted the type of ‘martial’ masculinity that Wills associates with the probation service of the 1950s. The similarities between the probation service and Outward Bound are unsurprising, as Wills notes that many of those who worked with young offenders had experience in youth movements before and during the war, and this was also true of many early Outward Bound leaders.¹⁴⁹ Outward Bound itself influenced the ideology and practices of offender management, where outdoor education was increasingly used to support the rehabilitation of young ‘delinquents’.¹⁵⁰

However, just as a younger generation of probation officers advanced a new conception of the duties of the state in regard to the ‘juvenile delinquent’ in the 1960s, so the second generation of Outward Bound leaders, encouraged by wider educational developments, increasingly expressed scepticism regarding the Hahnian conception of character-training. As this article has shown, the idea of character-training embodied in the early Outward Bound schools was always more complex than some caricatures

¹⁴⁵The period saw the beginnings of some experimental courses, particularly the ‘City Challenge’, which took Outward Bound away from its nautical and mountain settings, but it was only from the 1970s that significant changes took place in the length of courses and the type of trainees that participated. See Wilson, *Inside Outward Bound*, 31–2; Hogan, *Impelled into Experiences*, 113–14.

¹⁴⁶Roberts et al., *Character-Training Industry*, 12.

¹⁴⁷*The Times*, May 8, 1965, 9.

¹⁴⁸Roberts, ‘Character in the Mind’.

¹⁴⁹Wills, ‘Delinquency’, 167.

¹⁵⁰*Ibid.*, 172. For an example, see *Times*, October 18, 1962, 8.

allowed. However, its promotion was hampered by a lack of measurable outcomes and an association with educational and political priorities that seemed very outdated by the 1960s, when Outward Bound found itself 'a smiling target for the sceptics' because of the popular association of outdoor education with militarism, an association which its own practices had sometimes done little to challenge.¹⁵¹ As a result, the vocabulary of 'character-training' and leadership came under sustained assault within Outward Bound, helped by the interventions of influential educational leaders such as Alec Clegg. As early as 1953, one such leader, Jack Longland, derided 'the Tables and the Law handed down by Kurt Hahn', in a letter to Adam Arnold-Brown.¹⁵² By the mid-1970s only critics of outdoor education were using the discredited term 'character-training', while the idea of 'personal growth through adventure' came increasingly to the fore.¹⁵³ This reflected the earlier shift from character to personality in the USA, as identified by Warren,¹⁵⁴ and entailed a reassessment of the benefits that were conferred on participants by Outward Bound courses: these were increasingly described in terms of their impact on the individual rather than on society and the nation as a whole. These changes encountered some opposition within the movement, and the shift from 'character-training' to 'personal growth' was both complex and contested. The recent re-emergence of character education suggests that the shift was also incomplete, and that more consideration should be given to the evolution of the idea of character in the twentieth century.

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¹⁵¹*The Times*, May 8, 1965, 9.

¹⁵²Longland to Arnold-Brown, June 13, 1953: CUL, Add. 8270/21/2.

¹⁵³Roberts et al., *Character Training Industry*; Hopkins and Putnam, *Personal Growth*.

¹⁵⁴Warren, 'Shift from Character to Personality'.