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Using Hike-Along Ethnographies to Explore Women's Leisure Experiences of Munro Bagging

Abstract

This methodological study analyses the merits of adopting an ambulatory 'hike-along' approach to explore the mobile experiences of women during serious leisure pursuits such as Munro-bagging – climbing Scotland's 3,000 feet high mountains. By walking with participants as they ascended their chosen routes, rather than relying on sedentary, post-hoc interviews, we were able to observe the transient, shifting natures of their pastime, the embodied relationships between self and landscape, previously overlooked moments of 'in-between-ness', liminalities between mobility and immobility, and the ways in which women live their experiences into being, intertwining their self-concepts with emerging understandings of their environment. The 'nowness' of our methodology captured the inseparability of actor, (inter)action, self, movement, and temporospatial and sociocultural contexts. Moreover, the inherent mobility of our approach brought a congruence with the subject matter, participants, settings and phenomena of study, which helped to separate women's adventure identities from the androcentricity permeating the canonical literature on walking. We therefore recommend broader adoption of 'hike-alongs' within similar ethnographic studies of serious leisure.

Introduction

This study examines the potential of a hike-along methodology in studies of serious leisure, where capturing experience ‘in the heat of the moment’ may provide authentic accounts of intersections between enthusiasts, their activities, the places and spaces in which their experiences are lived into being, and the Heideggerian Dasein of ‘being there’. By co-participating in participants’ activities, hike-alongs may facilitate authentic examinations of experience which are temporospatially congruent with the realities of participants. The secondary, empirical purpose of the study is to uncover how women experience hillwalking as an embodied serious leisure activity in which they interact with landscapes to generate personal spaces as they inhabit the liminality presented by mobility.

The three key methodological objectives are as follows:

We intend to ascertain the effectiveness of hike-alongs in exploring space and place as per Jones et al (2008), and in revealing relationships between space, place and performative walking activities. We extend Heddon and Turner’s (2012) study of women’s walking, establishing how an ambulatory method can reveal aspects of participants and their hobby, in the context of walking’s androcentric genealogy as a pastime, and of its physicality (Heywood & Dworkin, 2003) as landscape and body are mediated by the activity (Spinney, 2006).

We aim to explore the efficacy of hike-alongs in capturing the embodied nature of serious leisure and liminalities between self and landscape, responding to Palmer and Andrews’ (2020) call to extend the field exploring ‘*embodiment in terms of difference and the mobile subject*’ (Hall, 2020, p.304) through ‘*experimental methodologies and ethnographies*’ (p. 305). We therefore seek to preserve recollections of ‘*transfer points*’ and places of ‘*in-between-ness*’ (Sheller & Urry, 2006,

p. 219) where actors simultaneously experience mobility and immobility – summit breaks, mid-ascent breathers and punctuations meaningful to the actor and activity but underrepresented in static interviews.

Likewise, we aim to review the capacity of hike-alongs as a real-time instrument to leverage the power of visual signifiers (Emmel & Clark, 2009; Evans & Jones, 2011) such as clouds lifting or summits appearing. We explore how hike-alongs elicit place-specific responses (Evans & Jones, 2011). Using a data generation/collection process inseparable from the studied activities, participants and contexts, we aim to frame ethnographic encounters, narrating human mobility synchronously through a novel '*ethnographic participant observation*' (Theriault, 2015). The three major research questions are therefore as follows: (1) Do hike-alongs help explore interrelationships between space, place, performative walking and participants? (2) Can hike-alongs capture the embodied nature of serious leisure and liminalities between self and landscape? (3) Can hike-alongs leverage visual signifiers to elicit place-specific responses, capturing the 'nowness' of experience?

Our participants are female Munro baggers. Munros are the 282 Scottish mountains over 3,000 feet (914 metres) high and Munroists are the 6,500 people who claim to have climbed every Munro, this number swelling by 200-250 annually (Scottish Mountaineering Club, 2016). Munro baggers – a much larger population of uncertain size – work purposely towards (in Munro vernacular) 'completion' of a 'round'. The average campaign lasts over twenty years (ibid.), some a lifetime, others three or four years, and a few are solo, continuous or winter rounds. Although no official data is available, observations on hills and enthusiasts' social media sites suggest that females now represent 30% to 40% of participants. Munro ascents may be strenuous, remote, disorienting, prolonged and dangerous, demanding skill and tenacity – serious leisure. Whilst Lorimer and

Lund's (2003) excellent work on performativity in Munro bagging explored the underpinning socio-cultural beliefs and practices at play, it was primarily concerned with '*a cultural biography of mountain quantification*' (p. 142) and tensions between walking as a processual, aesthetic tradition and as a self-conscious, list-oriented process. Our ethnographic research incorporates those considerations but seeks to uncover more personal, embodied touristic experiences (Hall, 2020; Palmer & Andrews, 2020) through novel means.

Review of the Literature

The need for Hike-alongs in Serious Leisure and Adventure Tourism research

Whilst several studies have explored 'walking in nature' (e.g. – Heddon & Turner, 2012), we propose the hike-along method as a context-based application drawing on embodied knowledge. Many previous ethnographies of walkers have employed static, post-event interviews, excepting Heddon and Turner (2012), whose walking interviews explored female walkers' experiences within the sociocultural context of a canonical walking 'tradition' rather than a temporospatial or Serious Leisure context. By joining female Munro baggers in the Scottish Highlands, we consider how hike-alongs help us to witness how embodiment enables experience to unfold, bringing hikers' landscapes into being (Gailing & Leibenath, 2015). As even familiar landscapes, '*mediated by relationships and individual personalities*', become dynamic under different conditions (Groves & Varley, in press), this research aligns methodology, phenomenon, context and participants at an individual level. Moreover, as the lead researcher is a Munro bagger, hike-alongs frame ethnographic encounters from the inside rather than as an observer and discussant 'looking in'. Instead of embracing a proprioceptive, knowledge-based conceptualisation of mountains as

disembodied observers, *we* experience them alongside participants in real time and space. This brings landscape into being in an intimate, revelatory way. ‘Sit-down’ interviews may elicit selective, incomplete accounts, isolating leisure from women’s lives rather than exploring its constant influence on their adventurer identities (Doran et al, 2018), but our approach captures socio-spatial mobile participation in adventure landscapes. Moreover, as Heddon and Turner (2012) understood walking within a genealogy privileging an implicitly masculine ideology and obscuring women’s walking, we want to *feel* this space on the terms enacted and expressed by women hikers. Although walking may create for actors time-space and platial experience, the styles and contexts of walking practices remain inscribed by convention (Edensor, 2010). Therefore, we strive to capture participant voices whilst observing their cultural contexts and considering the styles, rhythms, terrains, distances, fitness levels and ‘*embodied dispositions of the walker*’ which open the ‘relational spaces of “*people-landscape*” ’ (Macpherson, 2016, p. 425).

Serious leisure is embodied through physical, emotional and sensual interactions between participant and environment (e.g. - Small, 2007), generating ‘*autobiographical sedimentations in the body*’ (Hall, 2020, p. 304). Blisters and aching muscles anchor memories of adventure (Elsrud, 2005). To consider how landscape is narrated through the body, we intend to capture the experience of landscape and liminality between self and landscape from mainly a female body orientation, responding to calls for adventure research focusing specifically on physicality (e.g. - Heywood & Dworkin, 2003), and addressing Doran et al’s (in press) observation that ‘*little research has considered women’s experiences of participation in hard mountaineering activities*’.

Adventure tourism is undertaken in unfamiliar, natural locations, entailing real or perceived risk (Buckley, 2007). Activities like cycling and backpacking - accessible to beginners and infrequent participants and carrying lower risks and physical demands - have been termed ‘soft’ pursuits,

whilst climbing, wilderness backpacking, mountaineering or potentially dangerous activities are ‘hard’ pursuits. This distinction between ‘serious’ and ‘casual’ leisure (Stebbins, 2012), is criticised as masculinised by feminist writers (e.g. – Green, 1998). Androcentric portrayals of expeditions (Elsrud, 2005) and gender roles (Vodden-McKay & Schnell, 2010) can render adventure daunting (Myers & Hannam, 2008), hindering adventure identity development (Little, 2002; Wilson & Little, 2005). Hanson (2010) opines that, whilst mobility and gender are inseparable, one must consider both the post-structural view of gender as socially constructed and evolving, alongside its structural interpretation as fixed, predetermined and determining, as both paradigms co-exist within society and individuals. Moreover, we should treat mobility and confinement not as ‘good’ and ‘bad’ bipolar opposites, but as context-dependent. For example, the school run or commute may represent unwelcome movement, and mobility may entail altruistic caregiving (Clement & Waitt, 2017) – it is not just mobility, but *control over* mobility, which reinforces and reflects power (Massey, 2001) – hence, choice, control and individual agency are respected, observed and reflected here. By considering these factors, hike-along interviews can facilitate context-based, ethnographic research capturing the ‘nowness’ of embodied leisure and interactions between self, space and place.

Theoretical Developments underpinning Hike-alongs

Walking is an aesthetic, critical practice and a form of exploration with particular political correspondence and critical significance (Pinder, 2005). Myers (2011) and Pink et al (2010) used walking to promote innovative production and representation of knowledge, whilst Taylor (2020)

employed ‘walk-and-talk tours’ to explore the loss and cultural displacement felt by inhabitants of a deindustrialised village, and Thompson (2015) analysed sites of cultural regeneration by walking through and around them. The ‘shared walk’ (Lee & Ingold, 2006) and ‘go-along’ (Kusenbach, 2003) developed due to methodological questions around human movements inherent within the Mobilities paradigm (Sheller & Urry, 2006) – migration, individual mobility and their social implications. Solnit (2001) suggests that walking intimately engages landscape, requiring techniques in which researchers walk with participants (e.g. – Anderson, 2004; Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003; Reed, 2002). To explore how routes construct place, walking with interviewees encourages connection with one’s environment (Ingold & Lee, 2008). If places extend and complement identity (Anderson, 2004), then exploring links between place, community, personal roles and identity benefits ethnography (Kinney, 2017). By exploring the spatial, or platial, an understanding of the human-place dialectic is unpacked (Anderson, 2004). As with Ingold (1993), landscape is neither passive nor static, but a site where human movement is embodied and accommodated, unfolding and moving dynamically through human-environment interaction (Doughty, 2013).

Drawing upon Merleau-Ponty (1968), Wylie (2002) considered ascension and elevation in hill-walking as *‘enlacements of self and landscape, as intertwining of vision and the visible’* (p. 442). In ascending the modest but alluring Glastonbury Tor in southwest England, he found being-in-the-world constantly, corporeally enacted. People and places are conjoined through performativity. Moles (2008) conceptualises space not merely as a synthesis of social context and culturally embedded meanings, but as a site to be created, experienced and consumed. A problematic term, not least in feminism and human geography, ‘space’ and the ‘spatial’ may be *‘the sphere of the existence of multiplicity’* (Massey, 2001, p. 259), yoked with time to provide a spatio-temporal

locality articulating interrelations. With increasing emphasis on embodiment, materiality and the influence of place and movement (Hein et al, 2008) within mobilities research, emerging mobile methods enable creative re-combinations of theoretical traditions, methods and epistemologies, helping to theorize the human, ‘embodied and material practices’ of movement (Sheller, 2014, p. 789). Thus, we understand movement as socio-spatial, and social knowledge as spatialized through harnessed placed-practices (Anderson, 2004) – subjective walking experiences as dialectical processes within human relationships, influenced by participant knowledge about, and attitudes toward, their environments (Evans & Jones, 2011; Kinney, 2017) and corporeal mobilities (Murray, 2009).

Women and Walking in theory

To assess the potential of hike-along interviews in leisure research, we study women hillwalkers, reviewing the related literature and considering the congruence between our proposed methodological innovation and the needs of the participants, phenomenon and theoretical debate. In analysing the canonical tradition of walking, Heddon and Turner (2012) observed that women lack prominence and their walking is often portrayed as dependent upon relationships, domestic, vulnerable and companionable, rather than epic, historical, discovering and colonising. Given Deleuze and Guattari’s (1980) notion of the postmodern, nomadic wanderer, and Thoreau’s (1862) concept of peripatetic humanity and itinerant, knight-like walkers unencumbered by membership of place-bound origins, these gendered spaces incorporate exclusionary processes (Hodgson, 2012). As hooks (1990) notes, place may be a space of marginality, resistance, choosing, intervention, creativity, power and self-recovery – or a space in which to challenge hegemony. Hence, despite walking’s reinvention from mundane act into meaningful pastime, it has presented

female adventurers with socio-cultural barriers to participation. Indeed, male adventure, wilderness and ‘seriousness’ are valorised comparative to the ‘parochialism’ of the local and the domesticity of the miniature (Heddon & Turner, 2012).

Walking carries cultural connotations (Kay & Moxham, 1996) but, as Ingold and Vergunst (2008) note, the social dynamics prevalent within embodied movement are insufficiently theorised. In response, Heddon and Turner (2012) proposed a new narrative of women’s walking, emphasising performativity, the traversing of wilderness and of a time-space expanse which is monumental, delocalised, transgressive and unbounded. Therefore, we endeavour to represent women’s leisure through a methodology which guards against the power imbalances which sometimes permeate research relationships (Carpiano, 2009). By focussing on how women become Munro baggers in real time-space, this rendition is theirs – particularly, it belongs to the participants – and post-interview Member Checking sessions ensure that interpretations represent their experiences.

Methods: hike-along ethnography

In this section, we review the rationale and efficacy of current mobile methods, explaining how hike-alongs complement them through their inherent contextualisation with embodied activities.

Walking interviews have been used infrequently to explore human-spatial interactions, reflecting the culture and historicity (Moles, 2008) of phenomena and their environments. Place-based field research strategies have included walking interview variants such as touring (Reed, 2002), go-alongs (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003), ‘bimbling’ (Anderson, 2004), ‘walking alongside’ (Clark & Emmel, 2010), ‘walk-along/walk through’ (Moles, 2008) and the Docent method (Chang,

2016). Carpiano's (2009) go-alongs combine interviews with observation of participants interacting with people and environments (Carpiano, 2009; Kusenbach, 2003). Walkarounds constitute observations of participants' chosen routes through and across spaces or places, prompting questions as sites become visible (Emmel & Clark, 2009). By rendering researchers visible within communities, they may build credibility and empathy but risk suspicion by relinquishing anonymity. Similarly, in participant walking and 'walking alongside', the native or expert participant selects a particularly relevant location (Clark & Emmel, 2010; Kinney, 2017). Moles' (2008) 'walk-along' or walk through enabled serendipitous encounters with obscured artefacts and diverse stakeholders, each inhabiting space differently and offering unique perspectives of located cultural and historical significances. 'Drive-alongs' by car traverse larger landscapes but lack spontaneous encounters (Kusenbach, 2003). Anderson's (2004) 'bimbling' uses aimless wandering without a predetermined route or location. Whilst Hein et al (2008) and Anderson (2004) praised bimbling for removing participants from politicised interview rooms, they neglected that outdoor landscapes may be similarly politicised (Mason & Milbourne, 2014) and should be explored rather than filtered out.

Chang's (2016) Docent method casts participants as expert guides, constituting iterative, concurrent data collection and analysis, and focusing on situated actions. The researcher assumes a novice, learner or follower role. Whilst some ask participants to follow the same route, providing cross-sectional responses to previously unfamiliar places (e.g. – Jones et al, 2008), this inductive approach cannot capture fully the freedom of hillwalking. Our methodology complements those above by facilitating close explorations of interrelationships between participants, their performative walking, and the spaces and places experienced. It strives to capture the liminalities

between self and landscape by eliciting space-specific responses within the ‘nowness’ of embodied leisure.

Methodological considerations within mobile interviews

Using walk-alongs, Kusenbach (2003) identified five issues explorable more effectively than through other methods – environmental perception, spatial practices, biographies, social architecture, and social realms – and we explore these later. To unlock them, walking interviews provide visual prompts as observed sights (Hein et al, 2008), stimulating recollections of history, spatial practices and traces of how space is imagined, lived, appropriated and changed by actors (Emmel & Clark, 2009). Researcher immersion within cultural domains demands participation rather than distant observation (Anderson, 2004), providing relational perspective (Carpiano, 2009). If place is the ‘*space which people have made meaningful*’ (Cresswell, 2004, p. 7), researchers must seek the concrete aspects of encounters - the appearance and constituent parts of the scene - and abstract aspects like emotions, thoughts, feelings, perceptions, memories, imaginations (Trell & van Hoven, 2010) and practices (Anderson, 2004). Walking interviews facilitate reflections upon feelings and attitudes in situ rather than post-event (Evans & Jones, 2011). Through the ‘distinctive sociability’ (Lee & Ingold, 2006) created through accompanied walking, they render subject, object and method inseparable.

Whilst Spinney’s (2006, p. 709) ‘*kinaesthetic and sensuous experiences of the hybrid subject–object*’ were aligned to an appropriate method, the context was road cycling, not walking. Some researchers using walking interviews seek a third space between theory and praxis or method (Moles, 2008), neither fully academic nor activist, but in a negotiated pathway (Hein et al, 2008).

This enables observations of interactions, patterns of movement, co-constituted sites of memory (Hall, 2020), atmosphere and affect, and the liminal transfer points punctuating mobility (Hein et al, 2008; Sheller & Urry, 2006). If landscape is a story pervading its inhabitants (Ingold, 1993), walking interviews help exploration of self and others. By capturing the unforeseeable and serendipitous (Clark & Emmel, 2010) in an explicitly spatial approach (Jones et al, 2008), they portray the fullness and context of being (Carpiano, 2009) – an elicitation rather than verbal exchange (Trell & van Hoven, 2010) – and theory is produced immediately within direct, lived experiences (Moles, 2008) which are walked through (Carpiano, 2009), engaged with (Kinney, 2017), narrated and shown rather than described (Clark & Emmel, 2010), allowing reflection in action (Trell & van Hoven, 2010). Method-subject congruence reveals the rhythms and cycles, *‘temporality and specificity of walking practices’* (Butler & Derrett, 2014, p. 2), demonstrating when actors’ bodies or environments become ‘present’ in the frame - not *‘sedentary methods in motion’* (Evans & Jones, 2011, p. 850), but reflecting multiple, moving, spontaneous everyday experiences within places of flux and ingrained, obscured meanings.

Having presented the intended benefits of hike-along interviews, we advocate moderation in their use. Merriman (2014), whilst welcoming performative, participant and ethnographic novelty, warned against fetishizing the new and seemingly novel, skewing priorities, over-relying on technology and producing *‘over-animated mobile subjects and objects’* (p. 167). By pursuing effectiveness, closeness and accuracy in portrayals of movements and events (Fincham et al, 2010), and by contextualising the intangible, ephemeral aspects of mobility (Spinney, 2009) and the actions of moving, dynamic subjects, one risks overstating movement. Therefore, rather than discarding static interviews, we use complementary post-walk reflexive sessions. These enable participants to compare informally their post-hoc recollections with earlier comments and

observations, considering the extent to which their ‘on-hill’ comments are mediated by immediacy, embodiment and ‘being-there’. This encourages participant reflexivity, shares ownership of interpretation with participants (democratising the process) and facilitates closer examination of the empirical study focus and ‘hike-along’ methodology. Furthermore, the emerging data uncovers variations in speed and mobility between participants and the significance of liminality during walks.

Themes explored by the Hike-alongs

The empirical themes discussed are less central here than the methodological effectiveness of their exploration. Moreover, open-ended, participant-directed hike-alongs lend themselves more to uncovering unanticipated insights than *a priori* themes. Nonetheless, certain themes are inseparable from their theoretical traditions and considered here during participant accounts. The four main themes within the research, and the rationale for their inclusion, are as follows:

(i) Jones et al (2008) explored space-place relationships rather than the efficacy of walking interviews. Therefore, we use our novel methodology to explore interrelationships between walking, walkers, space and place; (ii) Spinney (2006) explored how the exertion of cycling up a mountain and landscape are intertwined. However, hiked ascents are slower, incorporating more immobility. Heddon and Turner (2012) critiqued women’s participation contextualised against androcentrically skewed traditions, whilst Heywood and Dworkin (2003) suggested that participation be contextualised within its physicality, but neither focused specifically on methodologies. For this reason, we try to uncover ways in which landscape and bodies are mediated by walking; (iii) To Sheller and Urry (2006, p. 219), ‘transfer points’ and places of ‘in-between-

ness', where actors simultaneously experience mobility and immobility, were integral to the Mobilities paradigm, but novel methodologies were secondary to spatial/platial movement and actions. Therefore, we use hike-alongs to explore these liminalities; (iv) Emmel and Clark (2009) and Evans and Jones (2011) discussed 'visual signifiers', sight lines, and elicitations of place-specific, real time responses, but their discussions of this were explored solely within urban contexts unrelated to serious leisure, the Mobilities paradigm or the interrelationships of self, activity and landscape. To address this, we seek to inspect the impacts of these methodological factors within the context of women's hillwalking.

Our data analysis structure is also 'thematic', adopting a hybrid of Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) and Kusenbach's (2003) categorised approaches, discussed below.

Methodology

To trial hike-alongs, ten female hillwalkers were recruited. All were seasoned adventure tourists and serious leisure enthusiasts (although none assumed either label) who had undertaken numerous solo walks in remote parts of Britain. Four initial participants, from Wales, Northern England and Scotland, were selected for their experiences, being known to the lead researcher through their mutual hobby. Two initial hike-alongs involved participant and researcher, whilst the other two women brought one hiking companion each. Two further participants were suggested by a participant (who accompanied them), and the final two recruited during conversation in a Highland bunkhouse. Data saturation occurred after six walks with ten participants, reflecting their long, immersive nature (Guest et al, 2006), as only around 5% of subsequent data suggested previously uncovered insights. After walk seven, the proportion reduced further. Though generalisation was

not sought, participants represented a range of ages, ethnicities, marital and domestic statuses, sexual orientations, outdoor experience levels, education levels and occupations, enabling multivocality and capturing diverse perspectives.

Interviews were analysed using a hybrid of Mauthner and Doucet's (1998) Voice-Centred Relational Method (VCRM) and Kusenbach's (2003) five themes for walk-along interview exploration. This uncovered deep experiences and links to hidden structures, physical activity and landscapes. VCRM involves reading transcripts four times for (i) a 'plot' or story offered by the participant, (ii) the voice of 'I' or 'we' and the participant's opinions and positionality within the plot, (iii) relationships between people and entities like organisations, and (iv) the contexts in which these play out. These were used as tentative guidelines rather than rigid boxes into which data was forced. As previously discussed, the five foci of Kusenbach's (2003) go-alongs were (i) participants' environmental perceptions, (ii) their spatial practices, (iii) their biographies, (iv) the social architecture inhabited, and (v) the 'public', 'parochial' and 'private' social realms where actions occur. These were superimposed onto VCRM to form a hybridised analytical framework, which, although useful as a 'handrail' during data analysis, constituted a secondary, 'background' technique rather than a research focus. Therefore, the following findings and discussion will explore the contribution of the hike-alongs rather than of the 'VCRM/five themes' hybrid.

Five walks included a Munro, and one was an 18-mile valley walk. Participants and researcher wore digital voice recorders and lapel microphones with windshields. These were effective in good conditions, but wind noise and breathlessness sometimes muffled the recordings. Walks and walkers' details are summarised below:

Participants	Walks
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Daphne, 42, civil servant, female, white, heterosexual, Scottish, regular hillwalker, usually in pair / small group but sometimes solo, keen climber, married, one child, graduate	Munro climb, hot weather, wonderful views, many biting insects, rocky terrain, one participant. (For second walk, see Rachel.)
Helen, 38, legal clerk, female, white, heterosexual, Welsh, occasional hillwalker with family or friends, married with children, educated to High School level	Munro climb, clear weather, good views, some cliffs, one participant, slipped on descent
Jennifer, 50, sales manager, female, white, heterosexual, English, mixed ethnicity, regular medium-distance walking with dog in small groups, long-term partner, educated to sixth form level	18-mile Scottish glen (valley) walk, breezy, showers, two participants (Jennifer and Alison) and dogs
Alison, 46, teacher, female, white, heterosexual, English, regular medium-distance walker with dog in small groups, married, graduate	Ditto – nervous of cattle
Claire, 62, retired, female, white, heterosexual, English, regular hillwalker and medium/long-distance walker in small groups, married, adult offspring, graduate	Several mountains including one Munro. Two participants (Claire and Beatrice), Claire had muscle fatigue and foot blister, clear weather
Beatrice, 28, scientist, female, mixed ethnicity, gay, daughter of Claire, English, regular hillwalker/kayaker/cyclist, often walks solo / in small groups, same sex partner, graduate	Ditto – hungover, smokes, climbed effortlessly
Carla, 30, academic, female, white, heterosexual, Dutch, multi-day solo walker, cycles, wild camps/swims, kayaks, graduate	Munro climb, hot weather, wonderful views, steep paths, rough terrain, two participants
Josie, 25, marketer, female, black, gay, Scandinavian, regular hillwalker, kayaker, skier, climber, cyclist and runner, single, graduate	Ditto – twisted ankle on descent
Rachel, 45, civil servant, female, white, heterosexual, Scottish, regular hillwalker in small groups (often all-female), infrequent long-distance walker, cyclist, graduate, married	Munro, cool day, good views, busy paths, easy gradients, three participants – Daphne, Rachel and Steph
Steph, 48, civil servant, female, white, heterosexual, Scottish, regular hillwalker (all-female groups) and runner, married, teenage children	Ditto
David 45, male, white, heterosexual, academic, English, regular solo hillwalker, 1-2 long-distance walks annually, married, two children, wild camper, occasional climber	All walks

Table 1: Walkers and walks

Several participants noted that David shared specific memories, experiences, values and skills with them, such as being a Munro bagger and appreciating landscape. They expected the research to be conducted by someone more ‘insider’ than ‘outsider’ – notwithstanding criticisms of those labels within feminist debate on positionality (England, 1994).

Participants chose and led walks. Several selected routes which they had walked before, like the ascent of Buachaille Etive Mor, allowing them to relive space-specific memories of previous experiences. This mountain is famous, so care was given to examine the interplay between the participant’s present and past experiences with ‘folk memory’ and collective psyche: in their tours of English towns and villages famous as television programme settings, Mordue (2001) and Hibberd & Tew-Thompson (2018) explored how collective, cultural memory can intertwine real and fictionalised landscapes, and this appears transferable to a Highland landscape often reinterpreted through film, television and literature. Certain comments reflected perceptions and experiences which were more personal and less determined by broader social units, and social constructions of location did not drown out participants’ adventure identities (Holton & Riley, 2014). Participants compared their previous and current experiences, gauging their development as walkers, appreciators of landscape and members of socio-cultural entities. Others chose walks not previously undertaken and discussed the gaps between their expectations and realities of the walk, interacting with a new landscape.

Fickle, potentially dangerous mountain weather presents challenges not faced within urban walking interviews. Therefore, walks were scheduled during safe weather, and walkers carried emergency kit in case of deteriorating weather, illness or injury. Route details and estimated return times were

left at base. Navigation was by map and compass, although some participants used GPS and Google Locate to check directions, altitude and distance walked, and everyone carried a smartphone, despite patchy network coverage. GPS was not used for mapping comments against locations but voice recorders were synchronised and participants encouraged to name locations, linking reflections to specific places. Although participants occasionally photographed and videoed key moments like arriving at summits, these were outside the data collection strategy as we considered the possibility of these approaches compromising the synchronicity and ‘nowness’ sought through hike-alongs, despite their undoubted value in empowering participants and enriching data (Pink, 2007). Transcripts were punctuated by long periods when speech was either unnecessary or (due to breathlessness or adverse weather) impractical - word density was roughly a twentieth of that during conventional interviews.

Findings and Discussion

In this section, we analyse the data, relating them to the key themes identified earlier, and scrutinising the emerging theme of ‘emergent voices’ whose significance, although discussed in the extant literature (Moles, 2008), was unapparent until the first hike-alongs.

Interrelationships between walking, walkers, space and place

There was frequent discussion of context-specific practices (Anderson, 2004) which may have been forgotten in static interviews. Jennifer confessed that she usually mismanages ‘*reading a compass and setting a bearing. Especially where there is magnetic rock*’ – some of the navigational,

landmarking skills recognised by Hodgson (2012) which are often forgotten post-event. Less expected was the recurrence of politicised comments about self and landscape, despite the ‘radical rural’ of Halfacree (2007) or the progressive rural discontent in Scotland and the UK (Hunt, 2018). Two participants placed themselves (as Scots wanting independence from the UK) within the broader politico-historical context of the Highland Clearances, other abuses of landed interest against crofters, and the denudation of the landscape by sheep and deer. Rachel almost eulogised that ‘*Scotland is so beautiful. I’m very proud of it. The people of the Highlands have seen many struggles down the years. So has the land. It has been stripped of trees, overgrazed, depopulated and overstocked with sheep.*’ This seemed to represent almost an allegory of self. Such a declaration of pride in Scottish landscapes is perhaps unavailable to non-Scots, however strong their passion for Scottish mountains, and she appeared to use her nationality to yoke her self-identity to a timeless landscape, implying (albeit gently) to her English companion her comparative ‘insiderness’, sense of belonging or cultural ‘ownership’. Furthermore, by connecting the historical persecutions of the Highland Clearances with the more recent denudation of vegetation and land misuse, she emphasised the continuity and interconnectedness between past and present, people and land, seemingly placing herself within this tradition, and bonding herself to a landscape constructed through observations and experiences of it and the dialectic, iterative interaction between self and space.

Claire noted how she felt legitimised or othered by her perceptions of how other hillwalkers were judging her. ‘*That old guy who sprinted past me, hands in pockets, probably thinks I should stick to shopping*’, she laughed, unconsciously using masculinised portrayals of adventure in her critique. Josie, meanwhile, criticised an expensively equipped male walker, commenting that ‘*his boots didn’t look like they had seen active service. He’d got the pale complexion of an office*

worker. *Here – look at my midge bites and sunburn.*’ Here she spontaneously uses a military analogy to subvert a gruffly elitist, masculinised putdown and invert it for her own ends against a man.

The mediation of landscape and the body by walking

As expected, talk of embodiment proliferated. Josie complained of *‘blisters and aching muscles. I feel older each year now. But the landscape barely changes.’* This talk of sameness and evolution (Emmel & Clark, 2009) placed participants within the dynamics of the larger environment (Chang, 2016). Synchronous exploration of walking experiences was highly effective. The minute competencies linked to socialisation, knowledge, navigation, memory and emotion (Hodgson, 2012) - potentially overlooked or deprioritised post-event - were foregrounded by real-time acts of inscription (Heddon & Turner, 2012). Steph, mid-climb, observed that *‘some of these things I’ve just mentioned – how I learned how to place my feet on scree slopes and how I used to feel nervous about loose stony slopes before I learned that – I’d never have thought about stuff like that in an interview. As soon as I’m past the scree slope, I’ve stopped thinking about it. In fact, I never stop to think that it was ever an issue. It certainly wouldn’t ever enter my thoughts in the pub or the car afterwards. But every single time I walk on scree in the mountains, I have same thought process. I remember sliding and falling on scree when I started hill-walking...how I felt – the dread and frustration – in the Great Stone Shoot [in the Skye Cuillin range]...gradually figuring out how to place my feet. I relive it each time I’m out on the mountain and encounter that sort of terrain.’*

Clearly, hike-alongs capture raw emotions, unlocking elusive, vital memories of experience, development and the co-presences of self, action and landscape. Here, being confronted by scree

mid-conversation triggers interconnected reminiscences, helping explain Steph's organic growth as an adventurer, and illustrating the iterative, evolving dialectic between Steph's skill and confidence and the shifting medium of rock.

Alison reflected at length on the relationship between her body and hobby. *'This bit's "quaddy", isn't it?'*, she asked, referencing the impact of the gradient upon leg muscles. *'I overcooked my brakes coming down that last hill'*, she explained, borrowing a reference from Formula 1 commentators to express how she had pushed herself to, and perhaps beyond, her physical limit. Then *'I sometimes think I've not put a proper shift in unless I go home with blisters or muscle fatigue'*, conveying an unconscious perception of her serious leisure as something which has to be 'earned' through adversity – perhaps reinforcing androcentric portrayals of adventure criticised by feminist writers (Heddon & Turner, 2012).

'Transfer points' and places of 'in-between-ness' (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p.219) simultaneously hosting mobility and immobility

Hike-alongs produced many comments on liminality - of participants, experience, landscapes, Scotland and Britain (particularly within the contexts of political referenda). Several walkers expressed surprise at the strong knowledge and place-attachment they felt in *'those places on the way to somewhere else'* (as Steph put it). If Sheller and Urry (2006, p.219) called for exploration of 'transfer points' and of being immobilised during mobility, and Holton and Riley (2014) valued the significance of students' non-student spaces, then these hike-alongs captured the unexpected enjoyment of serious leisure participants when they were being neither serious nor leisurely, but simply taking stock, waiting for ideas or stopping for a breathless researcher to catch up. Alison

commented that, *‘when I look back on hills I climbed years ago, I remember the summit, any scary bits, breaks where I sit down and look around, and meetings with other walkers’* – interestingly, not the ‘core’ activity of hillwalking. She reflects that *‘I also remember my physical condition – whether I had a cold or felt lethargic – more clearly than some of the views and climbs’*.

As we emphasised to participants that the hike-alongs were *‘not just walks’* but also data collection exercises, they often used pauses (e.g. - breathers, summit breaks) to contemplate connections between their hobby, selves, bodies, landscapes and mobility. In this respect, hike-alongs stimulated participant reflexivity. Daphne commented that *‘the last pit stop really stitched together the two bits of walking before and after it. Because I’d been thinking about the first bit of the walk when I stopped, I was ruminating on this during the second bit of the walk, and it affected how I understood it and experienced it’*. Steph agreed, and Rachel giggled that she was trying to forget the first part of the climb *‘because I was walking clumsily and tiredly, and reflecting upon that made me a bit less confident when anticipating the second part’*.

‘Visual signifiers’, sight lines and their elicitation of place-specific, real time responses

The role of visual signifiers in walking interviews is acknowledged by researchers (e.g. – Emmel & Clark, 2009; Evans & Jones, 2011) who map comments to participant lines of sight. In this research, sight lines varied immensely, even considering the porous nature of boundaries in hike-along research sites (Emmel & Clark, 2009). During steep climbs, fields of vision could extend no further than one’s feet, obscured by steamy, sweat-streaked spectacles. At other times, lines of sight extended over 50 miles across lochs and glens, ridges and sea. This produced a pulsing effect similar to that experienced by Spinney (2006) cycling up Mont Ventoux – during ascents, long

periods of introspective focus on physical struggle, the limitations of the body pitched against the landscape, self-deprecation, gallows humour and exasperation, but from summits and ridges and on descents, expressions of wonderment, gratitude, spirituality, proud patriotism, achievement, validation and humility. *‘I hadn’t seen the view crop up’*, admitted Daphne, cresting a ridge. *‘I’d been so busy watching my feet, trying not to slip, and geeing myself up the hill.’* Claire checked her Fitbit (wearable fitness monitor) during post-walk reflection and commented, *‘My heart rate at 11.14am was 181bpm. That was going up that steep gully onto the ridge. I was angry with every stone and blade of grass right then’*. Her comments bore this out, but only in attenuated bursts of speech between breathless gasping. Some wind-down interview stories linked experience to specific places, exploring spatial issues explicitly (Jones et al, 2008). Climbing Glastonbury Tor and reflecting upon Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) ‘field of vision’, Wylie (2002) remarked upon the *“ongoing milieu of folding and unfolding, intertwining and diverging, from which subjectivity and meaning emerges”* (p. 445) – so it was here, but mediated more by the products of physical exertion.

As we have seen, the potential of this method to elicit place-specific responses (Evans & Jones, 2011) was borne out. Narratives of place and spatial specificity were rich and textured, as were accounts of ‘being there’ and physical connectedness to landscape. An unanticipated benefit was the prevalence of place-specific comments from David prompted by presence in the field and facilitating participant observations. For example, at one point, he sank knee-deep into a peat bog, almost losing a boot. This triggered a long, humorous conversation about the incompetent reading of difficult terrain and subsequent physical hardship, breaking down the psychic distance between researcher and participant through laughter, empathy and gentle teasing, and stimulating numerous recollections from both parties. David recalled childhood walking experiences of peat bogs in

Derbyshire. He mentioned school friends purposely jumping into them and returning home with unwashable outfits to present to their parents. He remembered someone who needed assistance retrieving a boot from a clay bog in North Yorkshire, and the darkly humorous guidebook passages of Alfred Wainwright (1968, p. 155), who advised Pennine Way walkers on Black Hill to look around before leaving the summit *'to make sure there is nobody in the vicinity sinking out of sight and in need of help'*. Each new recollection from David elicited more from the participant, which iteratively brought forth more from David, who was able to introduce a constructive, rather than intrusive, autoethnographic contribution to the process. Reflecting on this conversation, Carla suggested that she and David were *'riffing off each other'* like duelling musicians.

The emerging theme of emerging voices

Although this research was not intended to probe Moles' (2008) idea of 'subaltern voices' being excavated, the co-created, collaborative findings suggest the effectiveness of hike-alongs in this respect. Daphne, who led a route familiar to her, commented on memories of experiences from previous walks as being *'dug up – I've uncovered a bit of the past and dusted it down'*, like the sands of time had obscured them, whilst Carla also attempted to *'dig up some old recollections'*. These links between common idiomatic associations of digging up or uncovering (i.e. – etic, rather than emic), reinforce Anderson's (2004, p. 254) observations of walking interviews' adeptness in unearthing incidents 'buried' within an *'archaeology of knowledge'*. They suggest that by being in the location of study and enacting the embodied practice of being researched, participants could recollect and connect with previous experiences more readily than in 'traditional' interviews. Josie suggested that her *'identity has been a bit buried recently under the day-to-day routine of working*

and commuting and family'. Moles' (2008) advised researchers to seek voices which are 'emergent' or 'subaltern', seemingly rising from the depths through a gentle brushing away of surface layers. In other words, immersion in the hike-along enabled landscape to be an excavating force, not just a 'frame' for the research topic. As Evans and Jones (2011) suggest, landscape is a noisy, speaking, expressive entity (Hein et al, 2008) with its opinions and desire to participate, or to stimulate the others' participation. Steph commented that, '*Being here, now, with these views in this timeless landscape...just brings everything back to the surface – walks up here as a kid with my dad, school trips*'. Enlivened by this force of nature's multi-sensory immediacy, validation springs from experience (Carpiano, 2009) and unearthed realities are re-layered. This is reminiscent of Holton and Riley's (2014) student participants re-layering their past and present interactions in a non-linear fashion when walking a route, interrupting the spatial and temporal continuity of the experience.

Conclusions

This article has proposed the use of hike-along interviews as a method of generating and collecting data from serious leisure participants to capture their experiences in a manner which is more contextually rich than that achievable through post-hoc, off-site interviews. They were intended to explore the constantly evolving interplay of participant, pastime, physicality, landscape, spaces and places which are mediated by mobility and the passage of time. Women hillwalkers were chosen as the focal population, and their Munro bagging as the phenomenon, as these enabled our novel methodology to be assessed within the rich theoretical contexts of women's walking, serious leisure and Mobilities – three areas of research in which hike-alongs are anticipated to make a significant

contribution. To assess the potential of hike-alongs, our research objectives were to gauge their effectiveness (i) in exploring interrelationships between space, place, performative walking and the participant, (ii) in capturing the embodied nature of serious leisure and the liminality between self and landscape, and (iii) in eliciting the place-specific ‘nowness’ of experience through visual signifiers.

Hike-alongs and their potential to explore interrelationships between space, place, walking and participant

In recognising that multiple mobilities are entangled in the social and emotional processes, structures and circulations of the female Munro bagging experience, we argue that this methodological transgression has re-sensitised the ontological study of recreational mobilities. By using a hike-along mobile methodology, the socio-spatial nature of women’s hillwalking activities is brought into sharp focus, and performative elements of their pastime are represented. This was facilitated by gathering insights synchronously to new knowledge being generated as a living, performative account of adventure landscapes which are inseparable from, and constitutive of, their experiences of serious leisure and their emerging identities.

Hike-alongs’ potential to capture the embodied nature of serious leisure and liminality between self and landscape

The liminality and interrelatedness of self, landscape and movement became central to the discussions without any prompting, and the method promoted conversations about ‘transfer points’ which, although often neglected in asynchronous discussions, were revealed here as fundamental to the female hill-walker’s experiences. By unavoidably filtering accounts through the aches, breathlessness, sweat and elation of the moment, the body and its physicalities took centre-stage.

Hike-alongs and the elicitation of the place-specific ‘nowness’ of experience

The ‘nowness’ of the conversations and the freedom given to participants helped muffled, ‘subaltern’ voices to emerge, surprising and delighting both participants and researcher. Moreover, the hugely varying, pulsing lines of sight acted as visual signifiers stimulating place-specificity and contextualising self and leisure. This was amplified by the ebb and flow of physical and mental fatigue, exasperation, relief and joy captured synchronously within the landscape, framing the ethnographic encounter and nurturing the congruence between method, participant and subject.

Methodological limitations and future developmental opportunities:

There are small but surmountable practical limitations to hike-alongs: wind obscuring recorded speech; weather postponing interviews; gaps between speech; matching the fitness and health of participants and researcher; ensuring safety in an environment of risk; participant feelings of conspicuousness when talking with a researcher on the walk (Kinney, 2017). Most of these may be mitigated or present only small challenges. Although this methodology succeeds in eliciting the revelations of hillwalking experience, this strength may be diminished in poor visibility (e.g. – low cloud and rain), when visual cues are minimised. Paving the route for innovative scholarship, future researchers may consider the potential to combine bio mapping (Hein et al, 2008) within hike-alongs to understand how experiences of traversing space for serious leisure link to physiological conditions – perhaps using step counters and heartbeat monitors. They may also wish to adopt other forms of ‘be alongs’ where mobility underpins the phenomenon, experience or identity.

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