

**Walking through and being with nature:
An examination of meaning-making and human-
environment interaction in two walking and solo
experiences in UK wild places**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Being in the outdoors, with its wildness and beauty, journeying mountain ranges, moors, rivers, and waking up to nature is something I have been privileged to enjoy since I was a child. These places opened my mind and provided another sense of meaning to life. My mum gave me the ultimate gift when she took me walking in Scotland's wild places and raised me to be resilient, caring and adventurous. If it was not for her enthusiasm for the outdoors, independence and gusto, I perhaps would not be carrying out my doctoral journey now; she is my inspiration. For that, and for her love and support, I thank my mum.

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Abstract

According to Frumkin (2001), now more than ever before people need to reconnect with nature. Contact with nature is considered by many as crucial to mental health and wellbeing (Kellert & Wilson, 1993) and there are many ways in which these benefits can be accessed. Wilderness therapy is considered as a popular concept in the mental health field in the USA and Australia (Levine, 1994) and there are many different structured programmes that exist (Crisp, 1997), with similar potentials and outcomes. A review of the literature considers the purposes and meaning of terms like wilderness; mental health and wellbeing in the natural environment, particularly in a UK context; the features of structured outdoor programmes; and theories related to contact with nature.

The aim of this research is to examine the relationship between humans and their environments, and what might be therapeutic in these relationships. The thesis seeks to explore the best way to work with the features of the natural environment, in order to identify the qualities that contribute to people's experiences. A custom-designed walking and solo experience (WSE), suited to UK conditions, is presented. Two WSE's were run, to explore university students' perceptions of *walking through* and *being with* the environment. The first was a five day journey (n=4; 3 females and 1 male) and the second (n=5; 3 females and 2 males) consisted of the same elements and number of days, but took place over two weekends, with a two week interval in-between. Participants' perspectives were gathered from pre- and post-experience interviews, journal writing, group discussions and a nine month follow-up interview. A thematic analytic approach was taken to analyse the data. Both WSEs were considered together in analysis, but comparisons were made so as to evaluate implications for practice.

As one of few UK-based studies on experiences of outdoor structured experiences, this research makes a valuable and essential contribution. Considerations of the WSE structure of the two studies are discussed and suggestions are made for alternative approaches to this kind of research. It infers that if time and cost allow, a longer five consecutive day WSE is better, but using weekends may still be effective. A good balance should also be sought between group and solo elements as the latter aspect was reported to be more beneficial for these two groups.

Being still was challenging for participants, but fostered the greatest sense of achievement. Participants also found meaning related to artefacts in the landscape. The discussion explores aspects of transitional experiences, the

nuances of meaning-making and human-environment interaction, and what endured after the experiences. The findings suggest that interaction with environment and landscape is intricate and bound by cultural influences, with dynamic transitions and interactions happening within place, space and time. This provides an insight into the meanings associated with being in the outdoors as well as into the *processes* that are actually inherent in these experiences. Process-orientated research in this area has not yet been offered by the literature (Revell *et al.*, 2013). This is in contrast to much of the literature in this field that focuses on outcomes of these experiences.

This research identifies the need for further considerations of people's experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction in natural environments. Implications for research, practice and policy are also proposed, offering a number of ways forward in the outdoor literature and in public health.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 The broad topic

A 'wild place' is generally situated in a place that is relatively remote from human settlements and can be described as an area, or landscape, where natural features are predominant. Locating and being able to have so-called wilderness experience in the UK is different to what might be possible in the USA, Canada, Australia or Africa, due to the size of the country and the imprint of historic human activities over the centuries. What this thesis attempts to do is explore some aspects of these experiences of wild places, but in a UK context, specifically exploring features of a walking and solo experience (WSE) in the north of England.

In the past two decades, increasing attention has been paid to the potential restorative aspects of nature. The breadth and number of studies and literature on the relationship between humans and nature in relation to health and mental health is driven by the widespread assumption that the natural environment is essential to human fulfilment and meaning, at both the individual and the societal level (Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Natural landscapes have also, for a long time, been viewed as therapeutic landscapes, as 'healing places' (Baer & Gesler, 2004). For example, Akhurst (2010) explores similarities between walking in wild places and therapeutic experiences. Whilst the idea that such places may contribute to human health and well-being is not new, the therapeutic landscape concept is a recent social science construct, conceived as a way for academics to frame both real and imagined connections between place and human health (Gesler, 1992). This concept of therapeutic landscapes draws from humanism and the philosophy of holistic health, resisting and criticising what is seen as the positivist hegemony of the biomedical model itself. Potential difficulties inherent in experiences have not been consistently considered by some of the studies in the ecopsychology literature (Akhurst, 2010). An interrogation of the nuanced and complex nature of the ways that people make meaning from their experiences would therefore be beneficial.

The use of the term 'therapeutic landscapes' has been noted to have potential shortcomings, however. For example, Baer and Gesler (2004) state that: (i) use of the term may raise false expectations; (ii) research often fails to recognise that perceptions about therapeutic landscapes differ over space, time and across individuals; and (iii) no landscape is perfectly 'healthy', thus research findings need to be balanced by a critical view that also mentions unhealthy aspects of wild places. Also, when considering experiences in wild places that have some level of structure, it is useful to distinguish between 'therapy' and 'programme' in the same way as the terms 'therapy' and 'therapeutic' are distinguished (Davis-Berman

& Berman, 1993). Crisp (1997) provides a good definition of the two terms stating that the former is a "method of clinical practice" whereas the latter is a "treatment service" (p.4). 'Therapy' then involves practice, based on psychological theory and carried out by a trained individual, whereas 'programme', though it may involve therapeutic approaches, is driven by philosophy, service aims and human and physical resources (Gillis, 1992). A 'programme' is thus "not in itself a 'therapy'" (Crisp, 1997, pp.5).

In this thesis, the aim is to illustrate the ambivalences and nuanced nature of natural environments, or wild places, which potentially have many shades of meaning. Through rich data, this thesis will show that a landscape's therapeutic quality is changeable over time, person, space and experience. The creation and maintenance of "ambivalent and nuanced spaces" (Baer & Gesler, 2004, p. 411) and the factors, qualities, elements and processes that are involved in this process are identified and explained.

1.2 The UK context

It has been acknowledged for many years that natural environments are places that can benefit health and mental health, but a resurgence of interest in the importance of the benefits of natural environments has been fairly recent. This is evident with the creation of 'green' and 'blue gyms', and campaigning by Natural England (2012) to create a natural health system. Additionally, a number of recent reports have been produced by organisations such as Scottish Natural Heritage, John Muir Trust and Natural England about the benefits of natural environments and wild places. A recent report commissioned by the Scottish Natural Heritage (2008) addressed several factors of people's perceptions of wildness in Scotland, including: the importance of wild places in Scotland; perceptions of wild places; recognising the benefits of wild landscapes.

Many of these reports recognise the influence of the growing populations, enlarging cities and loss of accessible natural space. In tandem with these growing pressures, it has been noted that mental illness is increasing, leading to excessive and undue strain on the NHS and waiting lists. Mental illness is said to account for over a third of all illness in Britain and 40% of all disability (NHS, 2013). The total cost to society is £105bn each year in lost earnings, productivity and reduced quality of life, and according to Frumkin (2001), people need now more than ever before to reconnect with nature.

Wilderness therapy is a pioneering concept in the mental health field (Levine, 1994). As a form of psychotherapy, wilderness therapy has existed since the 1980's and the benefits of wilderness therapy have been relatively widely

reported (Gillis, 1992). Although the roots of wilderness therapy are deep and there are substantial numbers of outdoor experiential programmes and centres throughout Britain, wilderness as a therapeutic tool is not well integrated with traditional psychotherapeutic practice and conventional therapies. However, the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) supports the 'Counselling and Psychotherapy Outdoors' (CAPO) organisation, and this group promoted practice and research broadly in outdoor contexts (Ecotherapy, 2013).

Research in the area of wilderness therapy is predominantly focused on adolescent groups with behavioural problems also known as 'youth at risk' and many of the wilderness models that exist are limited (Conner, 2004). Little research exists that explore the therapeutic qualities of wilderness therapy associated with adult groups with mental health problems. Research that has been conducted on 'other' groups has primarily focused on adult survivors of domestic and sexual abuse (Levine, 1994) and they have highlighted benefits of wilderness therapy but also feminist limitations of wilderness therapy. Some research has detailed the benefits that outdoor experiences have on work colleagues in relation to stress, and team building (Friese, *et al.*, 1995; Gager, *et al.*, 1998). Although the outcomes of the research mentioned above have been positive, to date much of the research does not effectively evaluate the therapeutic factors evident in the wilderness experience/ processes (Russell & Farnum, 2004).

In order to address the gaps in research in the UK, the qualities of experiences in natural environments will be explored in a grounded and data-driven methodology using a thematic analytic approach.

1.3 Motivations for engaging in this research endeavour

In this section, I identify factors that contributed to my decision to engage in the research to be described in this thesis. The first contributory factor relates to a desire to gain an in-depth understanding of the potentials of natural environments for restorative purposes. This motivation is driven by my experiences of walking as a youngster, teenager and young adult in the Scottish mountains. My mother would take me to remote places and we would camp and stay in bothies and small youth hostels. It was during this time that I developed my confidence in and love of the outdoors. The mountains make me feel alive, provided me with a great sense of perspective and inner strength. It was in the mountains that I really developed as a person and solo ventures extended this growth. The combination of this and my desire to work with people and support them to improve their quality of life was what linked my passion for psychology and for the outdoors. My desire is to work with the features of being with nature, walking through (journeying) and sitting

with (being still with) nature, to benefit others, creating an experience that could be used for therapeutic purposes without having any particular therapy label or stigma *per se*. I do not have qualifications in therapy, but I wanted to see how I could use my experiences to investigate the potential of natural environments more.

The aim was to explore different ways of working with people diagnosed with mental health problems, understand the role that 'wild places' may have in creating a therapeutic experience and nurturing a therapeutic process, and understanding the role and benefit of walking in and sitting with 'wild places'. 'Being with' is used to describe a person spending time with themselves and the environment without distractions of people, books, and technology. Although there is a therapeutic emphasis here, I consciously steer away from using the term therapy as I question for the need for such labels. Although such terms may facilitate communication, as a label, they can also be restrictive. These assumptions derive from my experiences working as part of a user-led service called ReachOut in Stirlingshire, where I studied my first degree in Psychology. It was in this context that service users helped me realise the stigma that therapy has and that it can be counter-productive in efforts to support someone in need. I therefore sought out a way to work with people with minimal stigma and in a way which would be more inviting. Additionally, working with nature and the natural environment provides openness for opportunities to arise, and for the person in need to steer elements of the experience in an emotional as well as a physical journey. In doing so the aim is to harness the qualities of the environment and use it as a non-judgemental context to work with people and just to let them be in that space and see what comes to be important for them. This kind of approach sits alongside the approach of Berger and McLeod (2006) where they report the benefits of the therapist not being at the centre of the process, but rather that both the therapist and client experience the natural environment and therapy side by side.

With this in mind, there was a need to do broad and grounded research first rather than to build the research on preconceived ideas. The desire was to see if anything new would emerge, but also to start from a place of relatively simple constructs. The concern was that by bringing in too many factors, especially therapeutic ones, too early would compromise the exploratory nature of the research and the fundamental motivation of the endeavour, to capture the essences of experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction. Capturing this level of detail was important, so that when intimate moments between a person and the environment arise, those accompanying a group or

individual could better understand these moments and the potential for them to be explored with that person or group.

This thesis is essentially an in-depth enquiry into aspects of the human condition: our meaning-making in everyday experiences alongside exposure to wild place experiences. This is to be an enquiry, an examination that is concerned with the details by which people describe and understand their experiences. In this thesis 'the little things', the nuances are acknowledged and valued. To do this, rich bodies of narrative were sought.

In the future, the intention is to use the findings and learning from this thesis to further develop research in the area, which will in turn feed into outdoor practice. My wish is to harness the qualities of natural spaces and help people realise their potential, strength and resilience through experiences. By running a number of retreats or experiences, and involving a number of different people, the aim is to refine the ideas from this thesis, refine my skills and develop a way to work in an effective and harmonious way with nature and people.

1.4 Overview of the thesis structure

Chapter 2 consists of selected themes of the wilderness, nature and theoretical literature. Terms and definition used within the literature are foregrounded and implications of these terms are considered. Evidence on wellbeing, mental health and the natural environment is then discussed, particularly in relation to a UK context, providing an insight into relatively recent activity in this area. Various structured outdoor programmes are then considered in relation to one another. This provides the scope of practice where contact with nature is utilised. This is followed by theories about the benefits and underlying processes of this contact with nature. Finally, an overview of the approach to wilderness research and a rationale for the research is clarified.

Chapter 3 charts the theoretical and philosophical assumptions of the research and explains the rationale for the ontological approach, critical realism, and the epistemological approach, thematic analysis. The pluralistic and pragmatic nature of the approach is explained and a *bricolage* approach is elucidated. The combination of a thematic analytic approach is then clarified, drawing upon works from Baer and Gesler (2004) and Charmaz (2006) to do so. It then ends with considerations of the research decision regarding the development of the research questions.

In chapter 4, the 'natural history' of the research is provided, involving an explanation of the research journey and its evolution. The WSE structure and

phases are described first. Secondly, how the data was generated and the ethical issues that were considered are explained. The process of analysis is explored and the chapter ends with clarification around how the thesis was written, in particular, the analysis chapters.

Chapter 5 is the first of the analysis chapters that is presented, 'Being with Nature'. It charts the nuances of experience in natural landscapes and addresses all three of the research questions. Included in this chapter is an examination of some of the most intimate participant narratives, detailing the scope of the participants' journeying; their motivations, expectations, adjusting and contemplating.

The sixth chapter, 'Landscape and Cultural Artefacts', starts to uncover more detail about the influence of the WSE structure as well as to identify the resources provided in the landscape and how cultural repertoires are utilised in relation to these resources. It takes a further shift to highlighting the complexity, impact and meaningfulness of ways that participants related, made sense and meaning of the 'situation(s)' and the context (the constructed experience of the WSE), and to the landscape.

Chapter 7, 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom', is the analysis chapter that explores the emotional and negotiational aspects that underpinned experiences of the WSE. Responses to elements of the WSE, how transitions were made between phases, and entering and exiting the experience are clarified. Finer details and features of participants' experiences are provided that help shape and form a sense of the situatedness of the features.

Chapter 8, 'Benefits and Outcomes', provides a succinct overview of the main benefits that participants experienced during and after the WSE and the main overall outcomes of the research. This chapter brings together evidence that suggests participants gained a sense of perspective, confidence and competence as a result of the WSE and found new ways of coping with stressful or anxiety provoking aspects of everyday life.

The ninth chapter summarises the findings, bringing together key themes and considering them alongside the literature to answer the research questions. Considerations of the WSE structure are discussed and comparisons of studies one and two are explored. Following this, alternative approaches are explored alongside a discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research. The chapter concludes with implications and suggestions for future research.

Finally, chapter 10 provides a synopsis of the thesis, providing an overall sense of the thesis, its contributions and originality.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Various terms and definitions are used within the literature about different types of contact with nature, natural environments, and in particular outdoor structured experiences. Whilst reading the literature it became apparent that the meaning of some terms differ depending on author and are likely to have been influenced by change in culture and by the writer's political, cultural, socio-economic and work contexts. Other more recent terminology has not become established enough to refer to a singular concept. This makes defining terms very difficult for the purpose of this thesis. Despite this, an attempt is made to clarify some of the terms and discuss the implications of these for the research decisions taken in this study. Accordingly, brief definitions and distinctions between key terms are provided at the start of this literature review, which intends to allow for more consistent and clear communication throughout the thesis.

The literature review then moves on to discussing evidence on wellbeing, mental health and the natural environment, concentrating first on the relationship between people and nature in the UK. Since all participants were British, this second section partly aims to provide an appropriate context to the discussions about nature and wellbeing, as well as to later material in the analysis chapters (chapter 5, 6 and 7). In doing so, this section pays attention to the more historical background of camping and activity in nature, looking briefly at camping and scouting culture. It also aims to provide an insight into the more subtle and less theorised aspects of people's relationships with nature. It then moves on to explain some of the efforts in the UK to harness the benefits of contact with nature. The ways in which contact with nature is accessed, through various structured outdoor programmes, are explored, and then a shift is made into discussing theories about contact with nature and well-being. The chapter ends with a concise overview of approaches to wilderness research and a brief rationale for the research.

Relevant papers for this literature review were identified from three databases: PsychINFO, ERIC and google scholar. Published and unpublished literature and research studies since 1990 were considered during searches. Any examined literature that was published at an earlier date was accessed through searches in reference lists for appropriate literature and when identified as seminal in kind by other authors. Given the variety and extent of research efforts in this area, a delimitation method was employed. If over 60 studies were conducted on a specific topic associated with natural environments, mental health, wellbeing and contact with nature the literature was restricted to refereed literature. If relatively

fewer studies were generated, the literature search was expanded to include proceedings articles, unpublished dissertations and theses, and other sources of research information. Books and novels were also included where appropriate, especially for topics that were broad and far-reaching in its scope such as wilderness debates. When searching for literature on structured outdoor experiences and programmes a number of assumptions and caveats were used. First, though terms like wilderness and wildlands are technically different, they are used interchangeably in the literature as inherent in all three definitions are elements of undeveloped, relatively remote areas that are substantially free of significant human impacts (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000). Wild place is a relatively new term and thus little resulted when using it within searches. There is also considerable overlap in the literature among the concepts of adventure, wilderness and nature therapy, wilderness experience, adventure and outdoor education, and challenge programmes. For this reason they were grouped as 'structured experiences'. In this thesis the emphasis was on using natural environments as the setting for participation. A study was not, therefore, included in the review if the participants were not exposed to a natural environment. For example, indoor climbing walls or rope courses as part of programmes were not considered. The various terms, however, were used to acquire the relevant literature and attempt to provide as comprehensive scope of the area as possible. Despite efforts to acquire and review the highest quality literature available, the issue that some studies and material may be incorrectly evaluated or missed completely is freely accepted. Second, it is acknowledged that there are a variety of benefits that are possible outcomes from contact with nature. Within this thesis, benefits are defined as the prevention of a worse condition or an improved condition to an individual or group of individuals (Ewert & McAvoy, 2000).

2.1 Natural environments: definitions and assumptions

Definitions and assumptions underpin and drive thought, knowledge and meaning. To understand the influence of terms, it is important to grasp the meaning of different terminology and, in part, their historical and cultural significance. The appropriateness of doing so is made clear in the following quote from a recent White Paper on natural environments that defines them as:

...wildlife, rivers and streams, lakes and seas, urban green space and open countryside, forests and farmed land. It includes the fundamentals of human survival: our food, fuel, air and water, together with the natural systems that cycle our water, clean out

pollutants, produce healthy soil, protect us from floods and regulate our climate. And it embraces our landscapes and our natural heritage, the many types of contact we have with nature in both town and country. In England our natural environment is the result of thousands of years of interaction between people and nature. It continues to be shaped through the care and attention invested by the individuals and organisations who actively manage it (DEFRA, 2011, p.7).

What this quote demonstrates is the embeddedness of culture and history that shape conceptualisations of natural environments, the personal, social and economic value associated with them, and subsequently the use of them. The next part of the literature review will address the idea of wilderness from a historical, as well as a contemporary, perspective. The idea of wilderness has extensive roots in the past, which are informative, enlightening and relevant to this thesis. The other terms, wild place and wildland, in comparison, are far more contemporary.

2.1.1 Wilderness

Essentially, wilderness is a state of mind influenced by personal and cultural values (Nash, 1982). It is a popular term and idea (concept or mental impression) and has been defined and re-defined over many years, existing for centuries within social, religious and academic discourse, for example the romantic poets like Keats Wordsworth, Coleridge (Jochem, 1941) and Emerson (2004). A dominant definition within the literature is that it is a remote natural environment where there is little to no evidence of human presence or disruption:

In North America the term perhaps has the most cultural meaning. Literature from the USA has had a key influence in the conception of the idea of wilderness and historical shifts in thought. The American idea of wilderness created a culture of meaning and identity related to the settler history there, that has changed over many years, and across the world. It is due to the dominance of the USA literature about the idea of wilderness, rather than the conceptualisation of it per se, that there is a

particular focus on the USA perspective in this section
(Public Law 88-77, 1964).

There are numerous references to the wilderness in English translations of biblical texts (Callicott & Nelson, 1998). Fuelled by first generation Puritans, the wilderness was seen as a stronghold of Satan, an evil place that should be feared and loathed and thus should be tamed or eradicated. The early Puritan North Americans were emigrants, which could have shaped their experience of a 'new land' that was to be 'discovered' (Callicott & Nelson, 1998). A shift was seen, however, with second and subsequent generation Puritans, such as Jonathan Edwards (a Puritan preacher in the late 1700s), who re-orientated thoughts about wilderness being an innocent, divine and pure place, and suggesting that cities, systems and settlements were strongholds of Satan. Perspectives from indigenous people did not appear to be considered in those times, and still appear to be marginalised within the literature.

Muir, along with his fellow defenders, Leopold and Olsen, built on the influential work of Emerson (e.g. 1904), Roosevelt (e.g. 1998 [1897]) and Thoreau (e.g. 2006 [1862]) in the latter years of the 1800s and started to assemble evidence of the value and fragility of wilderness. The ideas slowly gained political and public support to protect wilderness and protect it from the imprint of humans to establish it as an identity of North American people. Within their argument was a strong sense that nature should be protected from humans, that wilderness should be primitive and uninhabited.

Assumptions perpetuated by Muir and other romantics were ignited with similar force in the 1990's, with the wilderness debate developing in academia. The debate began with heated exchange in the literature between Callicott (1991) and Rolston (1991). Callicott argued that the idea of wilderness maintained an unprecedented pre-Darwinian separation of humans from nature driven by biblical doctrine and that such an argument was inaccurate and unfounded. Rolston (1991), in contrast moved away from biblical justifications, contesting Callicott's claims and fundamentally argued for the perpetuation of the human-nature separation idea, based on the assumption that humans have the ability to adapt to environment, to adapt the environment around them to their needs, and are uniquely different from nature since they possess culture. According to Rolston (1991) humans "transcend" nature. Responses from Native Americans (who until the late 1900s had been ignored and silenced), proclaimed the importance and history of people living alongside wilderness and not separate from it (Callicott, 1991). Such a stance seemed to have no bearing on the 1964 USA Wilderness Act however, which officially defines wilderness to be:

...in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape is hereby recognised as an area where earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man is a visitor who does not remain (Public Law 88-77, 1964, section 2a)

Response to the Wilderness Act (Public Law 88-77, 1964) from scholars and writers, such as Nash (1982), Bayet (1994), and Guha (1989), critiqued the human-nature divide that was implicit in the definition of wilderness. This was because the idea of wilderness eradicated any sense of the history, culture and use of these lands by indigenous people and therefore was unhistorical (Bayet, 1994). Utilising a similar idea of wilderness, the British Empire claimed to have been premised upon colonising wildernesses across the world, even if small and marginalised populations were resident in them. Typically, the way residents of wildernesses lived was seen as 'wild' and thus were regarded in a similar way as the land – as something to be tamed. One example, of many, is that parts of Australia, which were at the time a land managed by aboriginal inhabitants and far from 'empty', were claimed by British soldiers and government during the years 1788-1850 (Bayet, 1994), and resulted in a large reduction in numbers of aboriginal people (through the introduction of new diseases, loss of land and loss of people through direct fighting with the colonisers; Moses, 2000).

Despite responses being made, indigenous history was, and is, rarely included in the concepts of wilderness, with consistent claims that wilderness is a land absent of humans. This kind of rhetoric is said to implicitly support colonial tendencies (Carpenter & Pryor, 2004). Such idealistic and dualistic ideas about wilderness do not exist in indigenous life – there are no words for wilderness in native languages (Nicholls, 2008). A holistic view is taken instead; the natural landscape is an ecosystem that they are part the way they live (Nicholls, 2009).

Parallel to these arguments, and fuelled by the injustice and incoherence inherent in the idea of wilderness, a critical and alternative rhetoric has emerged. Ideas about wilderness were regarded as androcentric, ethnocentric, genocidal, phallogocentric, unscientific, unphilosophical, politically problematic, and outmoded (Callicott & Nelson, 1998). Debates about the idea of wilderness also shaped and developed the preservation and conservation movement to be explored. Arguments thus led to the production of a number of 'alternatives' to the standard wilderness idea. The first notable alternative was from Callicott (1991) who suggested that the wilderness idea be replaced by a concept of 'sustainability' and 'wildness', by which humans and nature live harmoniously and respectfully alongside each other. Synder (1995) argued for a gradual 'reinhabitation' of

wilderness areas, and Naess (1995) proposed the idea of 'free nature', in an attempt to move towards coexistence of people and nature. These alternatives were all sympathetic to the human-nature relationship concept and to the notion that the quality of 'wildness', produced in places that had been labelled wilderness, promotes a particular type of relationship between humans and place – one that needs to be sustainable, equitable, and harmonious.

Simultaneously, during the late 20th and continuing into the 21st century there has been a shift from a traditional anthropocentric conception of wilderness (a resource for human use such as research, recreational use, spiritual journey, scenery) to an idea of preserving an area primarily (perhaps solely) for the use of non-human beings, which gave rise to biodiversity reserves. This is now an established aspect of conservation biology (Chazdon, *et al.*, 2009). Plumwood (1998) also challenged the perspectives of Rolston (1991), Callicott (1991) and Cronon (1995), arguing that the nature-culture dichotomy needs to be maintained not opposed. Each concept is complementary since the terms may be seen as opposites but not opposed: are like yin and yang or male and female (Callicott & Nelson, 1998). Thus, according to Callicott and Nelson (1998) the 20th century literature presents two main alternatives:

1. to "deanthropocentrise" the standard wilderness idea, and;
2. to replace it with the obviously related, but very different, concept of wildness and the concepts of free nature, sustainability, and reinhabitation that are allied with it (p. 13).

By 'deanthropocentrise' Callicott and Nelson meant that the wilderness idea be developed in a way that humans are not the focus of the meaning and purpose of wilderness – wilderness should not be considered as a product or commodity for humans. Despite all the turmoil in the wilderness debate, a study in 1998 by Cordell *et al.* identified that the public in the USA (people aged 15 years and above) were in general support of the idea of wilderness; finding that air quality, wildlife and endangered species habitat, plant and animal ecosystems, natural landscapes, scenic beauty were all important qualities of a wilderness. The protection of wilderness was seen as vital and having an option to visit a wilderness area, as well as just knowing it is there, was highly valued.

Examining the wilderness debate within a UK context specifically, using a UK wilderness conservation organisation as an example (Wilderness Foundation UK), this kind of shift is evident. The Wilderness Foundation is an established UK

organisation that situates itself between public and research driven objectives, and therefore is perhaps more likely to represent a more balanced agenda. As an organisation dedicated to the preserving the world's wild places and connecting people with wild places, it works in partnership to create an international network for the advocacy and protection of wilderness, and to research wilderness and its positive benefits (Wilderness Foundation, 2012). On their website, the foundation makes no attempt to define wilderness or wild place. This is in contrast to their website content which was displayed in 2010, which had a page describing what the foundation termed as 'wilderness area'. They defined wilderness in a way that advocated the importance of biodiversity and was sympathetic to the human-nature relationship perspective, recognising that the presence of human inhabitants does not disqualify an area of wildness. Their definition divided into two main dimensions: a place that is mostly biologically intact; and a place that is legally protected (Wilderness Foundation, 2010) and also referred to wilderness as having a set of qualities such as "wildness, intactness, and remoteness" all of which they state are "to some degree contextual and subject to interpretation." The definition presented by the Wilderness Foundation in 2010 was inclusive of many perspectives including that of "inhabitation" (Synder, 1995) and those who advocate biodiversity reserves (Walker, 2003).

The foundation's shift includes wild places and wild lands alongside wilderness (and at times with a greater emphasis on wild places), and their reluctance to provide any definition of either wild place or wilderness (despite using both terms) may suggest a move away from the idea that definitions are needed when relating to the benefits of wild places and wildernesses to people. Where wilderness (and wild land) is emphasised more, the content tends to be referring to biodiversity and the protection of it whereas wild places. This is perhaps demonstrating a sensitivity to the UK context as on the Wilderness Foundation website there is no mention of wild place, only wild land and wilderness (which are often used interchangeably) (Wilderness Foundation SA, 2013). The particular emphasis on wilderness and wild land within the Wilderness Foundation SA may be, again, representative of the context, since in for example Africa, there are more likely to be wildernesses (as the Wilderness Foundation SA define it) to protect.

Such a shift seems to represent the changes in the scholarly literature and the way writers in the field are resituating and reconceptualising how they describe and think about natural landscapes. Organisations and scholars are using continuums of wildness to differentiate between various natural environments that one may encounter in a particular place, area and country. Continuums are also

useful when differentiating between different degrees of one typology of natural environment, e.g. wilderness. Within such continuums then, landscape that is legally protected, and therefore requires some level of land management, can be better represented, and at its minimal level, can be classed as wilderness (or type of wilderness). A continuum of wildness, therefore, does not disqualify an environment as a wilderness but rather enables it to be merited with a degree of wildness within the typology of wilderness. It is then important that wildness be well defined and that a substantial level of agreement is achieved among researchers regarding any given definition of natural environments¹.

I agree with such a shift and progression in thinking, but argue that the concept of wilderness has been misused and, rather than spend time abandoning or reshaping past definitions of the wilderness (e.g. the Wilderness Act (1964) definition), I argue that a commitment might be made to what could be termed an 'extreme'² definition, which would then allow for a move to other notions that better represent today's/current natural environments. I therefore, to an extent, agree with, what may be considered as an uncompromising definition of wilderness as being an expanse of land that is an untamed place, untrammelled by humans. This is perhaps what a 'true' (absolute) and 'pure' (untainted) wilderness is. This definition of wilderness however cannot be said to exist anymore in our lands. Naveh decisively states, "Even the few remaining natural and nearly natural landscapes are affected directly and indirectly by human activity and, unfortunately, are shrinking and vanishing rapidly" (2000, p. 14), "Because of the overwhelming global human dominance, almost no truly undisturbed natural and very few close-to-natural or sub-natural landscapes are left on earth" (Naveh, 2004, p. 487). Furthermore, 95% of the total open ecosphere (biosphere) landscape area is or has been modified by humans and is used culturally as semi-natural and agricultural spaces (Pimentel *et al.*, 1992).

¹ For example, in the Wilderness Foundation's definition in 2010, they do not provide what they mean by 'wildness' and 'intactness'.

² What I mean by 'extreme' is an uncompromising and possibly absolute/strict / stark definition or notion – something that is extreme is at the extremity of something, e.g. a continuum. In this sense a commitment should also be made to the other extreme, the other extremity, which perhaps is the built environment. These two extremes then, although may not exist in today's world, would not be misrepresentative but would provide a yard stick or benchmark for naturalness in environments/different types of natural environments. They would be the book ends that (would) contain and hold a body of thinking and definitions.

Despite the above limitations, there are those who posit that a wilderness can be created by allowing the wildness of nature to 're-inhabit' an expanse of land. Such a land is not a wilderness though and should rather be understood, and referred to, as a distinction of a natural environment on the continuum (e.g. wildland or wildplaces) depending on the extent of wildness that is evident there. Attempts to re-wild a place should be done with caution, and cannot be regarded as a wilderness according to the definition above. In the past, such attempts to re-wild a place were done, to the detriment of the people who were born and lived in these places, and to their traditions, culture and way of life. Though perhaps not then, such practices are regarded now as highly controversial, particularly among the new discourse around Gaia (Lovelock, 2009) and theories like the biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984). Wildland is a more relative and transient term, and is perhaps more appropriate and representational of the world's, and especially the UK's, natural environments. It is for this reason I argue that the debate should not revolve around the definition of wilderness itself but how people use it.

2.1.2 Wildland

Wildland (rather than wild land as it is also known), is typically used within and alongside 'looser' definitions of wilderness to describe an area of significant wildness and remoteness (Taylor, 2012; Schreyer & Beaulieu, 1986; see also land management literature e.g. Miller, 2003; Keane, Gray, & Bacciu, 2012; Cordell *et al.*, 1998). The Wilderness Society (2013) use wildland and wild place interchangeably with wilderness. In the UK, the John Muir Trust describe wildlands as environments that often include generally large areas of woodland, mountains, bogs, rivers and coastlines, which are populated with wildlife and contain valuable scenery. Wildlands have little human activity within them and can be found mainly in Northern and Western Scotland, but also in upland England, Wales and Northern Ireland (John Muir Trust, 2012). The concept of wildland has become increasingly popular in the UK, with recent formations of research institutes specifically dedicated to them such as the Wildland Research Institute (WRI) founded in (2009). The WRI defined wildland in 2009 as those "regions and places that are often but not exclusively remote, largely devoid of human features and with natural or near-natural ecosystems", and are:

...transitional landscape where the condition of the natural habitat is either partially or substantially modified by human activities....Wildland in Britain refers to areas of existing or potential high value natural habitat...(WRI, 2009).

To measure the wildness of a place, a continuum is used where levels of naturalness and human modification mediate the extent to which something is 'pristine' wilderness or 'indoor urban'. Measurable attributes such as remoteness from population and mechanised access, and perceived/apparent and ecological naturalness are used to ascertain where on the continuum a location lies (WRi, 2009). The WRi's definition and idea of wildland is useful and to some degree encouraging as it avoids absolute statements and rather supports a 'continuum' idea of wildness, which is sympathetic to accommodating multiple perceptions (both public and scholarly). There is, however, an emphasis on measurable attributes and a lack of inclusion of public-derived attributes and perceptions. Additionally, experiential dimensions are rarely if at all, a focus of WRi research and terminology. Stating this, however, is not to dispute the usefulness and the contributions of the WRi.

2.1.3 Wild place

Wild places are areas that have tracts of nature and human presence and are characteristically more accessible. The John Muir Trust aptly states that "a connection with nature and a sense of wildness can be found in many places, often within or close to urban areas. These wild places are where most people have the opportunity to enjoy, value and care for nature" (2011). Robert MacFarlane's (2007) recent book, "Wild places", provides a contemporary, honest and refreshing perspective on the way areas of British landscape perhaps are thought about. He and others, such as Maitland (2008), break away from the dominant rhetoric of USA literature that largely use wilderness to describe British landscape and situates 'wilder' landscapes within a UK context. MacFarlane regarded 'wild places' as residing not only in large expanses of landscape but also in pockets of land and in, what could be described as, transitional landscapes, such as tracts of wildness in or between towns or cities, where 'wild' (nature) and the built environment meet. Additionally, the notion of wild places that MacFarlane alludes to seems to be an emerging idea. Despite its apparent infancy, both MacFarlane's idea and the John Muir Trust's definition of wild places, and use of the term, complement each other.

Wild place is used comparatively less than wildland and wilderness with relatively little mention in the literature. If mentioned at all the term is used fleetingly and sparingly, often only used synonymously with wild or wilderness areas rather than being an idea or concept in itself. To-date, a definition has not been located within the research literature. This suggests that it is a relatively new term. This broad and open definition intends to be inclusive, embracing and sympathetic of multiple perspectives. It does not attempt to define wild places in a

limited form, in exclusive, territorial, or authoritarian language. Additionally, the word 'place' implicitly implies a human relationship with landscape, which is complimentary to its meaning. No research was found in relation to the health benefits of specifically 'wild places'. This may reflect a lack of confidence in the term. I find it to be a relevant and appropriate term for many natural environments in the UK and thus adopt the term in this thesis.

2.2 Natural environment, Mental Health and wellbeing

2.2.1 People's relationship with nature in the UK

Nature and contact with it is highly valued in the UK and has been for a long time. The two examples chosen to demonstrate ways in which ordinary people have engaged and built a relationship with nature are camping and the scouting movement. These two traditions of outdoor leisure and activity are chosen since they involve many and various peoples and camping, which is a particularly intimate way of being with nature. Both camping and Scouts could be regarded as contributing to a culture in the UK, as well as other places. In these two activities, nature is seen to be, and has been regarded for a long time, as an integral part of a person's life, development and learning. This section will look at the culture of camping and Scouts and, though brief, its purpose is to provide a degree of context to people's experiences of nature in the UK.

Camping: Camping is a useful outdoor activity to explore as it is a popular mode of being in nature. Camping is readily recognised as an activity in nature that provides a means of gaining perspective and meaning from life. Indeed De Abaitua (2011) in his recently published book states:

Camping is a profitable traffic between town and country, actuality and hope, between where we are and where we want to be next. And when we return home, we bring with us some of the insight gained at camp. Camping also renews our appreciation of running water on tap, duvets and central heating – of all that sedentary civilisation has given us (p. 271).

People's relationships with camping in the UK have existed since the 19th century and this was one of the main ways to get away and out of the life and grime of the urban city. Mobility brought by the bicycle helped gain access to the countryside for those with less means. Camping also became part of a health initiative after the 1st world war and became part of a social revolution to improve

health, which was partly driven by fear after large losses of healthy people during the war.

Many people, then and now, describe camping as a way to reconnect with being human, to regain a natural rhythm and rediscover their place in the world. Camping was also a way to get some freedom from class and structure, rules and responsibilities of society (Burch, 1965). A drive to develop bonds with other people and wanting a sense of identity, whilst sharing time with people with similar principles gave rise to being part of clubs, large areas of camping and lots of people. This has led some researchers to be interested in the sociology of camping, with one study in particular finding that camping grounds are arenas where people and their dramas reflect equality and differentiation, change and consistency, and identifies the importance of play that camping affords (Burch, 1965).

Camping being economical still remains an appealing feature of the activity, and despite an increase in fee-based campsites, the relatively low costs make it an attractive choice of leisure for all kinds of people. Like most leisure activities there are always two sides to consider. De Abaitua (2011) aptly states:

...it is the coexistence of positive and negative that makes the camping experience vivid and telling...For me, camping is a smile that is also a grimace. Just as we develop a taste for the sour, so I have grown to appreciate experiences that exist in a superposition, that is, proceeding in some unknown state, perhaps towards happiness, perhaps not; experiences that come with as many reasons to do them as not (p. 41).

Camping has cultural meaning. When camping, people are agentic and active in creating their leisure experiences. Place is formed within and outside the practice of camping and knowledge of the place can be attained from previous experiences, relations with others, books, and films (Crouch & te Kloeze, 1998).

Scouts: Camping with a purpose was first proposed by Lord Baden Powell who subsequently started up Scouts. For him, camping was different to leisure as it had a purpose and focus and a goal. Within the Scouts movement, camping became a dominant activity from which other experiences, activities, and teaching took place. The first experimental camp was in 1907 for 20 boys. Since then it has grown to an estimated 28 million members worldwide and over 499,000 girls and boys involved in Scouting in the UK (Scouts, 2012). The main aim of the movement is to support young people in their mental, physical and spiritual development and for them to learn to contribute to society. Development was driven by a

programme of informal education which incorporated practical outdoor activities (e.g. walking, back packing, camping, woodcraft, water and land based sports. The Girl guides, created in 1910, have a similar purpose but included young females. Both guides and scouts have become enduring and popular parts of young people's lives in the UK and these continue to play an important role in some young people's education in and engagement with nature, and in supporting their wellbeing. More integration of the sexes into similar activities is found in modern scouting.

Both camping and camping with a purpose (scouting) could be regarded as symbolising a culture of connecting with and valuing nature and experiences in nature. These traditions continue today, which illustrates the importance of contact with nature for many people in the UK.

2.2.1.1 People's relationship with nature in England

Looking to England specifically, as this is the setting of the current research, there is further evidence of people's relationship with and value of nature. One large source of evidence is the Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) (Natural England, 2012) survey, which provides unprecedented insights into the way people visit and use the outdoors, with data being collected in weekly waves over four years. The survey shows that people in England enjoy the natural environment in many different ways including: visiting the countryside and green spaces in towns and cities, watching wildlife and volunteering to help protect the natural environment. The survey itself consists of data collected from face-to-face interviews, with at least 45,000 interviews being completed every year. Previous surveys support the findings of the MENE survey within the England Leisure Visits Survey (2005), reporting an estimated 3.6 billion home-based leisure trips in Great Britain in 2005, and 5.2 billion trips in 1998, with 16% of those going walking, hill walking, rambling (Natural England, 2012).

2.2.1.2 Natural Health Service

To increase the number of people who live near to (within five minutes' walk of) an area of greenspace and to encourage more people to exercise outside, near nature, an initiative called the Natural Health Service was created. The initiative, supported by Natural England, aims to "enable every GP or community nurse to be able to signpost patients to an approved health walk or outdoor activity programme" (Natural England, 2009, p3). Essentially the purpose of a Natural Health Service is to uphold two principles of the National Health Service (NHS) – that 1) healthcare

should be comprehensive and available to all, and that 2) it should be free at the point of delivery – but also extend these principles to encompass the benefits of the natural environment (NHS, 2013). To achieve such goals, work is carried out to ensure quality greenspace is more equally available to all and support provided to health professionals in using the natural environment to prevent diseases of 21st Century living (e.g. cancer, diabetes, and obesity).

Using the natural environment to prevent disease and improve health is mobilised through the issue of ‘green prescriptions’ to patients, in which a referral to activity in natural outdoor spaces is made. The use and issue of green prescriptions has received attention in New Zealand where research has supported the physical and psychological benefits of green exercise (e.g. Kerse *et al.*, 2005). Such initiatives are seen as a positive step towards improving health and reducing spending on healthcare, which has more than doubled in the UK in the last decade. Spending grew from £53 billion in 2000-01 to £120 billion in 2010-11 (National Audit Office, 2012). Furthermore, the gap between the least healthy members of society and the healthiest has increased over the last 30 years (Natural England, 2009). Both have a negative impact on health.

Despite having wide support, the Natural Health Service idea still remains controversial within health professions. This may be due to a lack of clarity around how health professionals are supposed to prescribe such interventions, however there is no research, a part from Natural England, that substantially identifies any resistance to the concept. With this proposed service, there seems also to be a fundamental shift from intervention to prevention within health services, or at least the potential to. What a Natural Health Service attempts to do is provide a way to bridge the gap in health inequality, reduce spending on health and improve health in general. A movement away from prevention towards intervention, however, is an agenda within health and mental health that has been around for many years (Durlack & Wells, 1998) but translating it into action has proved more difficult. Two initiatives developed to help achieve such a vision are Access to Natural Green Space Standard (ANGST) and Walking your way to Health Initiative (WHI) (also known as Walking for Health (WfH)).

Green prescriptions: are a clinician-based initiative that has been developed mainly in New Zealand and works alongside the ideas of Natural England’s Natural Health Service of referring patients to green exercise to benefit personal health e.g. improve mental health and reduce cardiovascular risk problems (Kerse *et al.*, 2005). In addition, to the UK and New Zealand, a push for green prescriptions has taken place in the Netherlands, where a study found that 26% of 100 GP consultations advised physical activity for patients but failed to mention the

benefits of physical activity in nature areas (Maas & Verheij, 2007). Green prescriptions in New Zealand prescribe localised outdoor activities (e.g. health walks), as in the UK, but also use motivational interviewing techniques to decide how to increase physical activity and discuss appropriate goals. Patients who experience little activity, and are with relatively good health, are identified and typically prescribed walking and home-based physical activity (leading to the provision of some resources). Exercise specialists from local sports foundations then receive these “prescriptions” and, over a three month period, telephone patients to advise patients about community exercise initiatives and their physical activity goals, whilst also motivating and encouraging them.

Findings from studies on green prescriptions have indicated their positive impact on improving physical function, increasing energy expenditure and activity levels, and reducing hospitalisation in adults, and is regarded as an effective intervention for improving quality of life (Elley *et al.*, 2003; Kerse *et al.*, 2005). Swinburn *et al.*, (1997) also found that GPs in Auckland were very positive about the concept of green prescriptions, stating that these were achievable within general practices and beneficial to patients. Furthermore, the study identified that GPs preferred prescribing and discussing exercise goals than to give verbal advice alone, and found that green prescriptions are a valuable tool to document and formalise agreed exercise goals. However, they highlighted time as a major barrier and the following as key elements for successful implementation: resource materials, appropriate training, and patient follow-up.

ANGST: was established by Natural England to help succeed in the first objective of the Natural Health Service. In collaboration with the NHS, planners, developers and local authorities, *ANGST* set a benchmark which stipulated everyone should ideally live “within 300 metres of an area of natural green space of at least two hectares – roughly the size of two football pitches.” (Natural England, 2009, p. 10). Remote access to natural areas was also benchmarked with the aim to ensure that all homes are within 10 km of a 500 hectares or more of green space.

2.3 Contact with nature: Structured outdoor programmes

Structured programmes refer to experiential and therapeutic programmes. This section examines the different ways in which contact with nature is engaged with through different programmes and is regarded as important to health and wellbeing. Many of the approaches that will be addressed in this section reside under an umbrella term ‘green care’, which encompass therapeutic applications of nature-based interventions that target specifically vulnerable groups and that include green exercise activities (Peacock *et al.*, 2007). Under this umbrella are six

main approaches to using contact with nature to improve health and wellbeing: social and therapeutic horticulture, animal assisted interventions, care farming, facilitated green exercise as treatment, ecotherapy, wilderness and NT (Hine, Peacock & Pretty, 2008). Examples of green care that will not be addressed in this section are care farming and animal-assisted interventions, as they are not relevant to the current research.

The initiatives, experiential programmes and therapeutic programmes that will be described and evaluated in this section all provide different ways for people to engage with nature. For example, by developing a number of initiatives institutions (e.g. by the NHS, Natural England), service providers, outdoor organisations (e.g. The Wilderness Foundation) and charities (e.g. John Muir Trust) contribute to efforts to instigate, create opportunities and support people to make and increase their contact with nature in the UK. Outdoor experiential programmes provide structured experiences in nature that can be therapeutic (termed enrichment) and therapy programmes provide people with experiences in nature that have explicit therapeutic intent (therapy).

Enrichment based approaches, like outdoor experiential programmes, provide an experience which has the potential (and is intended) to be beneficial to participants. The programmes do not seek psychological disorder during recruitment and do not impose therapeutic theory factors or reasons that underlie a person's personal, mental, behavioural or emotional issues are not thus not explicitly addressed. Therapy interventions, on the other hand, particularly, and sometimes specifically, address the process underpinning a person's 'disorder' or issue, and have direct and explicit intent to be therapeutic (Crisp, 1997).

The characteristics of programmes, such as length of time, context of the client, complexity of client's therapeutic issues, availability of adventure experiences and the facilitators' capacities to use adventure experiences in his/her treatment approach also vary (Gass, 1993). The extent of a programme's therapeutic intent depends partially on the following factors: the therapeutic expertise and background training of facilitators; presence or absence of follow-up (Gass, 1993); and presence or absence of therapeutic procedures, such as specificity of treatment goals, assessment and diagnosis, and the use of an individual treatment plan (Crisp, 1997). Despite these factors and though initiatives, experiential and therapy programmes are each distinguishable, they are also complimentary to one another and interlinked with a common philosophy about the importance of and beneficial qualities of nature.

The initiatives discussed below encourage outdoor activity and structured programmes that aim to provide the benefits of recreation and enrichment. Each

type of structured experience is defined and examples are provided to explain how they each bring people in contact with nature. With many and various examples existing, this review has selected key examples to illustrate particular features.

2.3.1 Structured outdoor recreation programmes

Many of the structured outdoor programmes mentioned in this section are relatively new as concepts and initiatives in the UK. The programmes that will be explored are Walking your way to Health Initiative (WHI), green gym, and blue gym. To begin, I will introduce green exercise which is emerging as an umbrella concept for physical activity in nature.

2.3.1.1 Green exercise

Green exercise is an outdoor physical activity that is generally informal such as walking in urban green areas, cycling, kite flying, gardening and countryside conservation projects. The notion of green exercise evolved largely due to extensive research, and the development of theory about the benefits of nature on mental and physical wellbeing and its restorative implications (Barton & Pretty, 2010). It has also been a response to an increasing number of people finding themselves living in urban environments and having fewer opportunities to have contact with nature (Barton & Pretty, 2010).

Green exercise, as an initiative, came into force in the 1990's and aimed to improve wellbeing, as well as connect people to nature and their local areas (Natural England, 2012). Research studies have found that green exercise improves mental health through: enhancing self-esteem and mood; increasing physical activity which leads to improved physical health, increased heart rate variability, lowered blood pressure and reduced obesity; increasing Natural Killer Cell activity that enhances immune function; restoring mental fatigue and reducing stress (Barton & Pretty, 2010; Pretty *et al.*, 2007; Pretty *et al.*, 2005a; Pretty *et al.*, 2005b). Additionally, green exercise has been found to influence moderate short-term reductions in anxiety. For example, for people who perceive they are exercising in more natural surroundings, greater reductions in anxiety have been found (Mackay & Neill, 2010), which also suggests that natural environments compliment the benefit of physical exercise and are beneficial in themselves.

Most of the green exercise literature is based on quantitative studies, and though some of these are useful in identifying the benefit of green exercise, the psychological and physiological measures utilised within the research can be

limiting. Using prescribed measures masks the importance and emergence of other factors and phenomena. More qualitative work would prove useful in expanding knowledge about the scope of green exercise and move towards understanding more fully why the combination of greenspace and exercise is beneficial and articulate its experiential qualities.

2.3.1.2 Walking your way to Health Initiative

WHI is a programme developed by Walking for Health. Health walks are often brisk, regular, and short in duration. Such exercise has been shown to benefit cardiovascular health and have indirectly benefited from reduced stress and social interaction and relationship building (Lee & Buchner, 2008; Morris & Hardman, 1997). Often the social contact is the most important aspect of health walks and contributes to high retention rates (Burton, Turrell & Oldenburg, 2005). For these reasons, and with an increasing amount of supporting evidence that demonstrate the benefit of health walks, the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) encourage GPs and Community Nurses to refer patients to outdoor activities to improve wellbeing (NICE, 2012) – sometimes referred to as green prescriptions.

Health walks particularly target people who do not take much exercise (Lamb *et al.*, 2002) and aim to encourage more people to become physically active in their local communities and have become increasingly popular. The walks are made as accessible as possible and provide a free service that is based in local areas. Such services is possible as the walks are led by trained volunteers, funded and supported through local partnerships, insured and promoted by the national centre, and are typically run by NHS, local councils or local and national voluntary organisations (Walking for Health, 2013).

Overall, health walks are becoming increasingly popular, with more than 600 local schemes, 75,000 participants being recorded in 2011 (Walking for Health, 2013). This is partially because research studies investigating health walks are typically quantitative and systematic (e.g. Lamb *et al.*, 2002) and a number support their effectiveness (NUFU, 2002; Morris & Hardman, 1997; Shin, 1999).

2.3.1.3 Green Gym

Green Gym is to some extent an extension of green exercise, in that it was created as an initiative to increase physical activity in green spaces. It is a free scheme run by the British Trust Conversation Volunteers (and supported by Natural England) that, through working in the outdoors, increases people's physical activity. The

activities are normally part of a conservation project, therefore, as well as increasing healthy physical activity, participants also learn about ways to improve their local surroundings and about environmental conservation more broadly (Birch, 2005). This could mean that green gym activity can become more meaningful than other forms of green exercise.

Participants of Green Gyms are either 'self-referral' volunteers or 'referred' following recommendations from social and health care professionals and organisations (Yerrell, 2008). Qualitative studies have shown that Green Gyms created activities in which people could enjoy social contact, be stimulated by nature and were able to attain a valued productive role (Birch, 2005), all found to enhance mental wellbeing. In a quantitative study by Yerrell (2008), benefits of Green Gyms were increased health and confidence, contribution to environment, and skills and training, which spurred a sense of positive self-worth and personal achievement. Such findings have been particularly appealing to occupational therapists in that Green Gyms, in addition to improving mental health, have the potential to provide re-skilling to people who have experienced social exclusion and who may be occupationally disadvantaged to access a valued and productive occupation within a community (Birch, 2005). In addition, green gyms also promote an appreciation of different aspects of conservation work in the local environment such as political, managerial and bio-diversity aspects (Yerrell, 2008). Green Gyms, therefore, seem to be a beneficial element of Natural Health Service agenda.

2.3.1.4 The Blue Gym

The Blue Gym is a UK government initiative that is also supported by Natural England. It has two functions; 1) as an evidenced based activity and 2) as a funded research enterprise. The former refers to activity that has a view of and/or takes place in natural water environments. The latter is a project based at the European Centre for Environment and Human Health in Cornwall and aims to build evidence about how human health and wellbeing is enhanced by natural aquatic environments such as coast, lakes, rivers, inland waterways. (Department of Health, 11 Feb 2009). Studies produced from the Blue Gym project have found that both natural and built scenes (on photographs) containing water were associated with greater positive affect, higher preferences and higher perceived restoration than those without water, with images of built environments containing water being generally rated just as positively as natural green space (White *et al.*, 2010). Additionally, good health has been found to be more evident for those who live closer to the coast (Wheeler *et. al.*, 2012; Depledge & Bird, 2009). It is important

when assessing this literature, however, that it may be biased due to particular agendas underpinning the purpose of the Blue Gym.

Overall, at one stage or another both Blue Gym, Green Gym and WHI were funded by the Department of Health and were part of the Policy document "Be active, and healthy: A plan for getting the nation moving" (Department of Health, 2009). This plan set out the Government's framework for the delivery of physical activity for adults and was developed with particular emphasis upon the physical activity legacy of 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games. Focus was on England rather than other nations within the UK, with little rationale. The inclusion of initiatives like Green Gym, Blue Gym, green exercise and WHI within government policy could suggest that the programmes and the concepts they encompass fit within a wider agenda, an agenda that may not reflect or meet local, group or individual needs.

2.3.2 Structured outdoor experiential programmes

Experiential programmes, in the context of health and wellbeing, refer to structured experiences in natural environments that are often organised and lead by a trained outdoor practitioner. Such programmes tend to be based, in part at least, on the idea of enrichment and based on the assumption that "experience in itself will move the client towards psychological health." (Crisp, 1997, p.12). A persons underlying 'disorder' or 'dysfunction' is not directly addressed and no attempt is made to understand its causal or maintaining processes. Any benefit would be indirect but may strengthen a person's coping mechanisms or resources to counter factors causing mental health issues. For example, enrichment interventions would not deal with the causes of substance abuse such as depression, isolation, or sexual abuse but instead would aim to increase self-esteem for those who abuse substances. This can mean, however, that some of the benefits, especially those linked with therapeutic changes, are short-lived because underlying processes of the issue still remained to be addressed (Crisp, 1997). Examples of experiential programmes in nature that will be discussed are solo experiences, Outward Bound and Wilderness Experiences.

2.3.2.1 Solo Experiences

A powerful element of nature and adventure-based programmes is that it takes place in a remote location, providing opportunities for solo experience (Nicholls, 2008). Solitude has been shown to be a fundamental element of wilderness experiences (Hall, 2001; Hammit & Brown, 1984; Patterson & Hammit, 1990;

Stankey *et al.*, 1984; White & Hendee, 2000) and is often a prevalent theme in visitor and client narrative, along with related feelings of remoteness and freedom (Gaspell *et al.*, 2003). Importantly, according to Nicholls (2009; 2008) opportunity to have time alone and adopting an unhurried and process orientated approach can increase the therapeutic potential of nature-based programmes.

Not all programmes include solo elements but they are a traditional part of wilderness experiences of all kinds and are often regarded as an essential part of a rites of passage philosophy (Davis, 2003; Foster, 1998; Neill, 2003; Riley & Hendee, 2000) that promotes a holistic understanding of the place humans hold within the context of their natural environment (Davis, 2003). Time alone is regarded as an essential personal journey by a number of indigenous cultures, such as those found in Belize (the Mayan Indians), New Mexico (the Zuni), West Africa (the Mende), Kalahari (the Bushmen), Australia (the Aborigines) (for a list of examples and references see Riley & Hendee, 2000, p.128). Regarded as an opportunity for personal transformation in outdoor programmes, solo experiences have risen in popularity (Lertzman, 2002), with a number of authors documenting that they are a beneficial component to programmes (Knapp & Smith, 2005; Angell, 1994; McKenzie, 2003). Importantly experiencing and 'surviving' extended time frame solos can mark life transitions for people, especially adolescents (Davis, 2003).

The solo period is referred to differently, depending on its duration and characteristics' for example, Vision Quest, survival solo, reflective solo and quiet time or time outs. Vision Quest derives from rites of passage rituals (Angell, 1994) and is based on intuitive knowing rather than 'objective' knowledge that typically underpins contemporary WT (Russell, 2001). Survival solo required a person to spend a prescribed period of time (24 hours to four days) alone in a designated safe location, to find food, shelter, water and make fire for themselves and involves discreet supervision (Angell, 1994). Once included as an integral component of the Outward Bound programme, survival solos are now less highly regarded as being a useful or beneficial component due to the hardship involved (Smith, 2005). A shift was made towards solo experiences that centred on the natural environment rather than survival, like the reflective solo (Talbot & Kaplan, 1986). Reflective solos, though they last for similar durations as survival solos, have the greatest support from research (Daniel, 2005; Hollenhorst & Ewert, 1985; McKenzie 2003; Russell & Phillips-Miller, 2002). Most extended time-frame solos can have mixed responses with some people rating them as the best component and others as the most difficult (Talbot & Kaplan, 1986). Finally, quiet time (Nicholls, 1998) or mini-solos (Potter, 1992) are shorter, brief experiences of solitude in wilderness which offer time for reflection and can be prescribed or self-initiated.

2.3.2.2 Outward Bound

Experiential programmes such as Outward Bound (OB) have become popular in the USA, UK and in Europe as a way to have contact with nature and for individuals to challenge themselves more than usual (Hattie *et al.*, 1997). Serving around 70,000 people of all ages and backgrounds annually in a number of countries (for a list see Outward Bound, 2013), Outward Bound is a non-profit educational organisation that aims to develop leadership skills required to serve others and achieve potential. Targeted outcomes of Outward Bound are self-discovery and character development and are achieved through the application of both classroom and active learning expedition-based methods. Additionally, key elements of the Outward Bound course design that were found to contribute to positive outcomes: holistic approach to course design, range of instructor facilitation methods, a safe and positive learning environment, variety of reflective activities, and diverse participant groups (Martin, 2001).

Research studies have found that Outward Bound programmes increase participants' self-esteem and self-awareness (Hattie *et al.*, 1997), increase multiple dimensions of self-concept (Marsh *et al.*, 1986a; 1986b), have a positive impact on group dynamics and development (Fielding & Hogg, 1997; Ewert & Heywood, 1991), improve self-efficacy that is transferrable to participants' everyday lives (McAvoy, 2000), and counteract harmful dependencies on drugs and alcohol while promoting helpful dependencies on the self and others (Pryor, 2003; Kennedy, 1993; Mc Peake *et al.*, 1991). In a multi-method study by Hartig *et al.*, (1991), wilderness backpackers reported higher overall happiness compared to non-wilderness vacationers and a control group. Additionally, the randomly assigned natural environment group reported higher overall happiness and positive affect, whilst also reporting lower anger or aggression scores. Reports of increased happiness could have been due to wilderness backpackers actively seeking the wilderness and having a desire fulfilled in comparison to the non-wilderness people not having such a strong desire satisfied. Nevertheless, these findings imply that experiences in natural settings may have psychologically restorative outcomes despite no formalised intervention being focused on the clients' problems.

Outward Bound predominantly work with adolescents who are deemed 'youth at risk' to themselves or others, are manifesting destructive behaviour and have or, are likely, to commit a crime in the future. Many studies have researched the effectiveness of Outward Bound for youth at risk (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1989; Fischer & Attah, 2001; Pommier & Witt, 1995; Kelly & Baer, 1968; Kennedy,

1993; Niell & Heubeck, 1995; Niell, 1994; Marsh *et al.*, 1986; Marx, 1988), but few research studies examine female experiences (Wang, Liu & Kahlid, 2006).

Values of Outward Bound that influence design principles are: learning through experience (including reflection and transference, and learning from success as well as failure), challenge and adventure (unfamiliar settings and managing risk instigate learning and impelling experiences) and supportive environment (physical and emotional safety and positive group culture). Though 'survival' is not a foregrounded aim, it is still implicit within all the Outward Bound values. Such a value system seems appealing and popular in westernised societies, with continual rising figures from the number of Outward Bound participants from a number of countries increasing from below 500,000 in 1941 to over 2,000,000 in 2010 (Outward Bound International, 2012). These figures suggest that Outward Bound is a popular structured programme for contact with nature, though such figures should be considered with some caution due to bias and other contributing factors. Research suggests that reports of its popularity and success may be due to Outward Bound programme values typically being consistent with key outcomes (Estes, 1994; Goldernberg *et al.*, 2005). Furthermore, despite Outward Bound's increasing popularity, understanding of how outcomes are achieved relies heavily on theoretical ideas, rather than on empirical research (McKenzie, 2000). Empirical research that has been produced has, however, influenced Outdoor challenge programmes to move away from the popular 'survival-dominant' Outward Bound system that emphasised risks and physical hardships and instead emphasises natural environments, typical backpacking³ excursions, providing food and shelter materials during solos and excluding risk-related and endurance tasks and exercises (Talbot & Kaplan, 1986).

Overall, the Outward Bound movement is influential to those who have been interested in developing similar programmes. For example, after the first programme in the USA in the 1950's, the movement gave rise to an entire outdoor education industry in the USA, with wilderness courses today being available in a number of countries.

2.3.2.3 Wilderness experience

Wilderness experiences are similar to Outward Bound in that they are structured programmes that aim to benefit people through contact with nature and can be

³ Backpacking excursions refers to walking trips in natural environment where the person or group carries all the equipment that is needed to survive and involves at least one overnight stay out in that environment.

used for both preventions and intervention purposes. Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001) state that solitude is a key element of wilderness experiences but also argue the importance of four other aspects of wilderness experience: oneness, primitiveness, humility, timelessness and care. Oneness refers to a sense harmony and belongingness with nature, primitiveness related to a simpler lifestyle based more on need than want, humility is a sense of appreciation and gratitude for the things one has, timelessness relates to the feeling of time not mattering, and care relates to a greater sense of care for others and for oneself.

Though wilderness experiences may have implicit learning objectives, they do not have explicit and educational or therapy elements built into their programmes like Outward Bound. Friese *et al.* (1998) define 'wilderness experience programmes' (WEP) as those that use wilderness or wildlands for personal growth, rehabilitation, education, and leadership development. Mental and physical challenges are key elements of wilderness experiences that support participants to grow, learn, develop skills, to lead and heal. Few studies on wilderness experience, however, define what wilderness and wildland areas are. Clarity on the characteristics and qualities of the environment in which structured outdoor programmes take place would be helpful, both in terms of being able to discern a more in-depth understanding of the context of the programmes, and help identify more clearly how these programmes differ from others.

Wilderness experiences tend to be multi-phasic consisting of five major stages: anticipation, travel to, on-site (i.e. being in the wilderness), return travel, and recollection (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Clawson & Knetsch, 1966; McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998). Patterson *et al.* (1998) found that at the landing phase (the place where participants arrive and start activity) an important shift in experience occurred. Time whilst waiting for the arrival of transport was used for reflection and "sorting through the experience" (p. 447). Furthermore, Patterson *et al.* (1998) propose that conditions at the landing area have a significant impact on the quality and nature of experience and should be prioritised more in programme planning. In addition, Borrie and Roggenbuck (2001) demonstrated significant experiential change from the entry, through immersion, to exit phases of the wilderness experience when they carried out Experience Sampling Method data (which involves asking participants to stop at certain times and make notes of their experience), from a sample of wilderness visitors. When compared to the entry phase, participants showed greater focus on the environment at the exit phase and on reflecting about oneself and life, with less focus on others and social acceptance being found during the immersion phase (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001). Furthermore, during the entry phase, care for the wilderness was more evident

than during the exit phase; and scores on humility, primitiveness, and oneness were higher at both the immersion and exit phases than during entry. These findings further suggest the importance of having the opportunity of reflecting, reliving, defining the meaning of the experience and sharing the experience.

2.3.3 Outdoor therapy programmes

Outdoor therapy programmes have arisen out of a strong tradition of experiential programmes. As a consequence, it has been said that there exists a blurring between experiential programmes and therapeutic ones (Crisp, 1997). To make claim to a programme being therapeutic, a need for clear distinctions between the two types was necessary and a movement towards professionalisation began. This movement has also involved increased attention to the ethics (Mitten, 1994) and consequences of therapeutic outdoor programmes, and appropriate staff qualifications (Davis-Berman & Berman, 1993).

Staff qualifications have been found to be particularly important. For example, meta-analytic studies of innovative education programmes in school settings report effects sizes similar to .34 for immediate programme effectiveness (Hattie, 1992; Hattie *et al.*, 1997), whilst psychological training meta-analyses report slightly higher effects (Lipsey & Wilson, 1993), and meta-analyses of psychotherapy effectiveness find stronger effects (Casey & Berman, 1985; Smith *et al.*, 1980). This suggests that the more trained and qualified the staff, the more effective the programme.

Despite changes and developments within the profession, the number and type of psychological mechanisms that have been described whilst studying the process and impact of outdoor therapies have remained relatively constant. These are: self-actualisation (Young & Crandall, 1984), self-determinism (Ewert, 1987), self-acceptance (Vander Wilt & Klocke, 1971), increased locus of control (Hans, 2000), aggression reduction, recidivism, increased well-being and neurosis reduction (Hattie *et al.*, 1997), and increased coping skills (Neill & Heubeck, 1998). Additionally, a major meta-analysis of outdoor programmes by Hattie *et al.* (1997) cites an effect size of .34 for immediate programme effectiveness. However, though the impact of outdoor therapy programmes can be diverse, the outcomes of interventions can lack longevity (e.g. Herbert 1998, identified that effects dissipated after a year) and reasons why natural environments 'work' remains unclear.

The distinctions between different outdoor programmes are also vague: There are numerous kinds of outdoor therapy programmes, each with a different

label and approach (Beringer & Martin, 2003; Crisp, 1996). According to Ewart and McAvoy (2000), for example, determining the number and focus of outdoor therapy programmes and approaches depends on the definitions used to classify programmes and approaches. In order to clarify distinctions and provide an overview of the various approaches within outdoor therapeutic work, this part of the chapter is divided into a number of sections that address each classification of outdoor therapy. Such distinctions are contrived at times as there is overlap between each style of programme. Accordingly, the following adventure-based therapies will be discussed: 'AT', 'WT', 'wilderness-AT', and 'therapeutic wilderness camping'. In addition to these the other approaches within green care – NT and eco-therapy – will be discussed as these are nature-based approaches that demonstrate a greater emphasis on contact with and creating a greater connection with nature.

2.3.3.1 Adventure Therapy

AT has been defined as a set of adventure activities used to enhance therapeutic assessment and treatment and has been used as an umbrella term for a number of wilderness and adventure based interventions, as well as non-wilderness based, non-residential, short term approaches such as initiative activities and ropes courses (Crisp, 1996; Gillis, 1992). According to Gillis (1992) AT engages with aspects of experiential, challenge and risk-taking based 'contrived' activities to treat an individual or group with behavioural or mental health issues. Examples of contrived activities include ropes and challenge elements (high and low), indoor climbing gyms and initiative, problem solving and group trust activities (see Rohnke, 1991; Rohnke & Butler, 1995). These activities take place indoors or within an urban environment; clients are not isolated from other man-made objects do not need to cook their own meals or sleep overnight in the outdoors. As such, Crisp (1996) identifies AT as being different to many other therapies due to the artificiality of the environment in which that it is sometimes based, the contrived nature of tasks and the parameters of the activity, such as rules, criteria for success or failure and goals.

Bandoroff and Newes (2004) argue that AT offers a unique way of combining and implementing a number of therapeutic/psychological theories, for example humanistic theory, cognitive and cognitive behavioural theory (e.g. Gillen, 2003), and interpersonal aspects of object relations theory. AT in essence combines traditional modes of therapy with adventure activities. Some authors also argue that personal change in AT is brought about by a socio-ecological approach to health and wellbeing (Carpenter & Pryor, 2004). Regardless of the specific approach, however, positive outcomes have been found for a number of different

groups including, adolescents (Autry, 2001; McNutt, 1994; Rayment, 1998; Stevens *et al.*, 2004; Tucker, 2009; Williams, 2000) and less so with adults (Herbert, 1998) and women (Warren, 1996). A recent survey of outdoor education programmes found that only 7% of programmes used standardized outcome measures (Neill, 2003). Of these 7%, a smaller percentage had their results published. Such findings have led to increasing pressure for more quantitative approaches to adventure-based therapy research, that provide statistics and a breakdown of results e.g. in terms of programming factors such as, sequencing of activities, facilitation style, client problem(s) and intervention length (Neill, 2003).

AT originates from experiential education – learning by doing with reflection (Gass, 1993) – which can be traced to the educational writings of Dewey (Kraft & Sakofs, 1985). The premise of experiential education is that people learn best when multiple senses are activated during learning (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004). As such, AT is an approach that was first used in Outward Bound programmes (Rohnke, 1989), during a time when Outward Bound were expanding the application of their adventure education model to therapeutic populations. To achieve the desired outcomes fundamental experiential education principles were applied to therapy (Gass, 1993, p. 5):

1. The client becomes a participant rather than a spectator in therapy.
2. Therapeutic activities require client motivation in the form of energy, involvement, and responsibility.
3. Therapeutic activities are real and meaningful in terms of consequences for the client.
4. Reflection is a critical element of the therapeutic process.
5. Functional change must have present as well as future relevance for clients and their society

In comparison to the earlier programmes, the field has experienced a paradigm shift, moving away from traditional assumptions around disequilibrium towards more positive psychology paradigms (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005). Part of the reason for this is that change theory is relatively unsubstantiated by empirical evidence (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005; McKenzie, 2003), with research finding that peak learning and change occurred during a range of relatively stress free activities (Leberman & Martin, 2002). Feminist authors, such as Estrellas (1996), have challenged the creation, use and manipulation of stress and warn of the harmful effects of unnecessary stress. Instead, Eustress is regarded as more beneficial, promoting self-awareness and self-determined approach to risk. Such a change in paradigm seems to be more sympathetic to variances in tolerance for

risk and anxiety and is more likely to avoid the occurrence of instability or insecurity in people, especially those who are more vulnerable.

Additionally, in the last twenty years there have been considerable movements in AT, with a shift away from contrived situations towards using natural spaces and situations more. Efforts have been made to build genuine communities through action-centred therapy, in an unfamiliar environment, where there is the climate of change and where personal and professional assessment can take place. Thus, the role of the therapist changes from a more passive as in traditional therapies to an active role (Gass, 1993).

Despite shifts and the range in programme structure, AT typically addresses issues such as substance abuse, assertiveness, impulsiveness, anger and self-worth. To accomplish these outcomes, strategic, metaphoric and solution-orientated paradigms are applied and the systemic concept of 'disequilibrium'⁴ as the basis for theory of change (Nadler & Luckner, 1992). The scope of AT has led to its growth because it is easily adaptable to enhance established treatment approaches (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004). Another reason is because it reportedly provides a rich therapeutic environment for personal change (Gass, 1993).

Good sources of information about AT come from comprehensive overviews (Newes & Badoroff, 2004), and up-to-date critical reviews (Gillis, 1992; Miles & Priest, 1999; Gillis & Thomsen, 1996). Additionally, writings from Gass (1993) and Davis-Berman and Berman (1994) provide some of the most significant collations and commentary on AT research and the field of AT, at least for North America. From an international perspective, the published proceedings of the first two International AT Conferences (Itin, 1998; Richards & Smith, 2003; Mitten & Itin, 2008) are recommended.

Overall, as a field it continues to be regarded as evolving and maturing (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004). The variability within AT and lack of well-organised, definitive knowledge about the effectiveness of its different types, however, leads to confusion (Niell, 2003) and tends to mask important distinctions in application and assumptions about the therapy.

⁴ Disequilibrium refers to a dynamic process between anxiety and a desire for its resolution, which is used to promote change. Within adventure and WT approaches including an element of risk is one way of creating disequilibrium (Luckner & Nadler, 1997).

2.3.3.2 Wilderness Therapy

WT occurs in remote wilderness or wildland areas and consists of small-group, multiple day experiences where the group remains relatively intact for the duration (Crisp, 1996). Since WT is part of AT, target groups are very similar with adolescents or 'problem youth' being the main clients (Russell, 2003). Though Inclusion and participation in WT for adolescents is voluntary, typically the treatment programmes are prescribed, whether it be by a therapist, school or parent. Other examples of client groups are people with disabilities (Roland & Havens, 1981), and female survivors of abuse (Cole *et al.*, 1994).

Practically, the way wilderness typically works is that as members of the group live and interact together as a living community in an isolated natural environment, it creates a situation in which participants have experienced the natural consequences of their behaviours (Gillis, 1992). This process can take place within in two intervention structures, expeditioning and wilderness base camping (which is when therapy takes place from a basecamp in the wilderness and thus there is less journeying). Expeditioning involves utilising a number of different modes to move from place to place such as back-packing, cross-country skiing, rafting, and canoeing in a self-sufficient manner.

The therapist's role during WT is to facilitate healing through the process by which a person engages the wilderness, either alone or with others, and engage with the benefits and challenges from that interaction (Powch, 1994). Most of the 'therapy' thus happens in the context of the experiences. A combination of generic group therapy and group systems models, along with interpersonal behaviour therapy methods are usually applied with follow-up and transition therapy. Follow-up and transition therapy can often be brief, however, and not as comprehensive as is needed to optimise the progress made during programmes. Outcomes from this approach are seen to emerge over time from a social process and are frequently related to holistic change, personal and inter-personal insight, and subsequently personal growth. In essence the combination of the wilderness environment and the therapeutic modality constitute the WT milieu.

Wilderness-adventure therapy: Wilderness-adventure therapy is related to the wilderness and adventure therapy but is, distinct by, for example, wilderness-adventure therapy utilising qualities of natural environment, wilderness type activities (e.g. backpacking, long distance canoeing, or cross-country skiing) and adventure type activities (e.g. climbing, caving and kayaking) that take place usually somewhere that is not isolated but is outdoors, and is structured in a short session format (Newes & Bandoroff, 2004). There is no overnight stay and over several hours, or within a day, activities like caving that are conducted in a real cave or

rock-climbing on natural rock may be take place. Without an overnight element, emphasis on community living is minimised compared to wilderness and AT programmes, which is why there is a distinction between the different types (Crisp, 1996). Similarly, however, the main client group is adolescents (Bandoroff, 1989; Crisp, 1997; Jones *et al.*, 2004; Wichmann, 1991) with few clients that are adults or women (Cole *et al.*, 1994); and like other approaches, behaviour change seems to be related to instructor experience and expectations (Wichmann, 1991) and social psychological benefits (Paxton & McAvoy, 2000).

2.3.3.3 Therapeutic Wilderness Camping

In contrast, therapeutic wilderness camping involves 'primitive' long-term residential camping, which often uses a developed site with facilities, ancillary buildings and permanent fixtures in an isolated area (Gass, 1993, p10). Community living is the main method within the change model and the isolated setting is fundamental to fostering community living, within which pro-social relationships are fostered through behaviour based privileges. To promote community living, comfort is emphasised through individual effort in shaping the environment e.g. furniture making, tool making and hut building. The therapeutic programme also usually involves a minimum 12-15 months residential experience where clients are based in a formal camp base (Brown, 2005). Again, studies on adolescent populations dominate the literature (Dunkley, 2009; Clagett, 1990; Freeman *et al.*, 1982; Gillis & Thomsen, 1996; Griffin, 1981; Rawson & McIntosh, 1991; Warady, 1994), with few specifically targeting females (Levitt, 1994) or adults (Bennett *et al.*, 1998). For a more up-to-date study that compares data about the therapeutic outcomes of camping programmes for children from 15 European countries see Kiernan *et al.*, (2004).

2.3.3.4 Nature Therapy

Unlike adventure and WT, NT is relatively new and under-researched. NT is similar to adventure-based therapies in that nature is seen as partner in the process (Berger & McLeod, 2006), with less of an emphasis on the client and therapist being at the centre of therapy (McLeod, 1997).

NT as a profession has only recently been developed further. Dominating the research into the profession is the work of Berger (2003, 2009; Berger & McLeod, 2006). Berger's work began when he founded 'The NT Center' in Israel, 2002, through which educational and therapeutic programmes and training are offered. It was after this time that he started publishing in the area.

Within NT, traditional concepts of 'setting' as stable and unchanging are broadened to the idea of setting as dynamic; the therapist does not control and/or 'own' the environment in which therapy takes place, instead the environment in NT actively shapes the setting and process (Berger, 2004). Experiencing nature in an open environment, NT takes advantage of its healing qualities (Berger & McLeod, 2006). The therapy works within a holistic framework, integrating elements from Gestalt, ecopsychology, transpersonal psychology, art and drama therapy, the narrative approach, mind-body practices and Shamanism (Berger, 2009). Overall, as a holistic approach, NT has worked well alongside Native American spirituality (Hunter & Sawyer, 2006), with children (Berger, 2006, Berger & Lahad, 2009) and older people (Berger, 2009), a population rarely included in adventure-based programmes.

2.3.3.3 Eco-therapy

The primary focus of eco-therapy is to reconnect people with nature. Like NT, wholeness and oneness in nature are key notions with in eco-therapy. Everything is interconnected, related, or inter-related and that every organism, whether organic or inorganic, exist in relation to each other (Glasser & Hertz, 1999). Based on ideas in ecopsychology that involve the integration of psychology and ecology, eco-therapy utilises a broad range of nature-based methods of psychological healing grounded in the idea that people are inseparable from the rest of nature and are nurtured by healthy interaction with the earth (McCallum, 2005). Eco-therapy consequently aims to restore the natural balance between the inner and outer person through physical connections with nature and restoring mental and emotional balance (Capra, 1982). Wilderness and adventure based-therapy, outward bound, survival training, gardening, meditation in nature, rites of passage and rituals, shamanic counselling, and walking outdoors can all be employed as part of an eco-therapy programme (Kelly, 1996; McCallum, 2005). There is the assumption that disconnection with nature is damaging to mental health (Kelly, 1996).

Intervention through eco-therapy is based on the premise that working with people physically in nature brings about an awareness of the body and the trauma that may be locked in the body. Aspects of exposure to nature are believed to hold great potential to transform trauma. For example, a Jungian approach involving archetypal landscapes to evoke the archetypal history of human nature (Chiro, 1993), is typically utilised with the programme and is where the physical terrain provides the challenges and obstacles required to face danger and confront fear. Set within an empathic environment, challenges are seen as natural obstacles

within a journey, rather than contrived ones, and encourage a group to persevere and rely on each other (similar to that of WT). Finally, the most important distinction between eco-therapy and other outdoor therapies previously discussed is that within eco-therapy, symptoms are assessed as signals of distress in a larger social context; symptoms in an individual reflect what is going on in the world as a whole (Conn, 2006). This is counter to traditional western psychological approaches that tend to identify pain as a pathology, disorder or illness in an individual or family. The vision of eco-therapy is to heal people within their environment and at the same time heal communities, and build trust (Kelly, 1996).

2.3.4 Characteristics of Wilderness, Adventure and Nature Therapies

What characterises wilderness, adventure and nature therapies (which I will refer to as outdoor therapies) is their programmatic nature. Due to the need for physical, technical, support and safety resources, outdoor therapy interventions are typically less individualised compared to traditional clinical applications of behaviour change or modification. This is partly due to the origins of outdoor therapy residing within outdoor education, which has a practical necessity of securing safety and providing sufficient support. Although activities such as problem solving, initiative, trust and group activities require less physical resources, the majority of outdoor therapies include varied activities in isolated environments that require extensive resources. Outdoor therapy programmes that are more conventional and individual client focused tend to use an eclectic and flexible approach to match need, and have increased in popularity despite the apparent effectiveness of group approaches to outdoor therapies (Crisp, 1997).

The extent to which outdoor therapies can be individualised depends on the resource availability, and the scope of man-made and natural opportunities. The structure of outdoor therapies is limited by these and influence location, time frame, activity types and overall therapeutic approach. This essentially leads to the need for a programmatic format in which interventions are implemented and is partly the reason for it being an enduring characteristic of outdoor therapy. Structure is created by the development of universal behaviour modification systems based around levels of privilege and daily or weekly timetable, and their implementation and conceptualisation clearly constitute a programme.

Two different programme approaches are uni-modal and multi modal (Crisp, 1996). Uni-modal therapy is where outdoor therapy is the sole therapeutic intervention. Supporting clinical activities such as case management, assessment

process and follow-up may also be included, but the core intervention is outdoor therapy. Highly qualified clinicians with a broad range of therapeutic skills and knowledge invariably carry out these interventions. Group size typically is six to eight individuals, which is similar to other group therapies but group size can vary. An example includes Lifespan Wilderness Therapy Programme. This should be contrasted and compared with Gillis *et al.*'s (1991) description of 'primary therapy'. Uni-modal outdoor experiences, due to the lack of a therapeutic programme structure, can be termed as enrichment instead of therapy.

Multi-modal therapy is where other therapies are combined, either concurrently or in series, with outdoor therapy. For example, wilderness therapy can involve individual or family therapy prior to the intervention, or adventure therapy is frequently combined with group or individual therapy. Outdoor therapies can be utilised within conventional therapies as an additional and complimentary therapy⁵ to other therapies; wilderness, adventure or nature therapy could be as involved as uni-modal therapies (e.g. therapeutic wilderness camping programmes). The ways in which the therapies are combined are typically guided by a clinical rationale and it is argued that this paradigm of multiple therapies within one programme provides a complimentary and additive therapeutic outcome/intervention. Outdoor experiences, on the other hand, might be used as an adjunctive enrichment to other therapies; they do not involve therapeutic practices. Though Gillis *et al.* (1991) have a notion of a continuum of therapeutic depth, in practice it has been argued to be more unhelpful than helpful and from some practitioner and research perspectives, either something is therapy or it is not (Crisp, 1996). Crisp (1996) argued for clear delineation between therapy (therapeutic procedures are instituted) and enrichment (when therapeutic procedures do not occur). Whether or not an experience or programme is therapy or therapeutic is an on-going debate within the outdoor therapy and experience literature. Clarity on the issue has been sought so as to develop the professionalism of outdoor therapy (Itin, 2001).

⁵ According to Crisp (1996) this was known as adjunctive therapy states that due to some combinations of therapies using outdoor therapy within their programme being more equal and thus becomes just as integral as the primary therapy. He therefore argues that differentiating between 'multi-modal therapy' and 'adjunctive enrichment' is more useful.

2.4 Theories linking contact with nature and well-being

The theories that link contact with nature to well-being move beyond the poetic and philosophical articulation of nature's capacity to morally inform and inspire, and make scientific and theoretical claims of a human need for nature; identifying specific human processes and structures (e.g. cognition) within the human-nature interrelationship.

2.4.1 The biophilia hypothesis

The concept of the biophilia hypothesis attempts to provide an understanding of the human relationship with natural processes and life. The term biophilia means "love of life or living systems" and was first coined by Fromm (1964). According to Fromm, people are attracted to everything that lives and grows and there is a tendency to preserve life and prevent death. Expressions of these tendencies are: preference for the new over the old, functional rather than mechanical approaches to life, and curiosity. Within the biophilia idea people search for self-awareness and aspire to grow aspects that are akin to Buddhist and mindfulness traditions. Furthermore, human dependence on nature is considered to be extensive and includes spiritual meaning, satisfaction, and intellectual, cognitive and aesthetic needs (Fromm, 1964).

Wilson (1984), extended these ideas about biophilia and brought widespread attention to the concept, proposing that the relationship with and tendency towards nature is integral to human physical and mental growth: thus a developmental process, and could be an expression of a biological need. Wilson defined biophilia as the "innate tendency to focus on life and life like processes" (1984, p. 1). Claims of the hypothesis thus move beyond issues of primitive physical and material nourishment and assert that people thrive best in environments that have other forms of life around, and flourish in spaces that are more like natural habitats.

Strong assertions are made within the biophilia hypothesis and it suggests that the human tendency to relate with life and natural process is:

- Inherent (that is, biologically based);
- Part of our species' evolutionary heritage;
- Associated with human competitive advantage and genetic fitness;
- Likely to increase the possibility for achieving individual meaning and personal fulfilment (Adapted from Kellert & Wilson, 1993)

Kellert and Wilson (1993) state that the scientific approach of the biophilia hypothesis attempts to be cautious and aims to avoid a romantic idealisation of nature. However the theory has limitations of achieving any decisive 'proof': "We are forced to behave...much like the blind men of the allegory: convinced of the beast's existence but ready to confess to having little detailed understanding of its precise shape, form, content, structure, and function" (1993, p. 21). Such a statement is pertinent for many investigations into human-nature relations and interactions, due to the complexity of the systems.

Despite limitations, a central assertion of the biophilia hypothesis is that what is critical to human meaning and fulfilment, at both the individual and the societal level, is the natural environment (Kellert & Wilson, 1993). Some authors argue that the biophilia hypothesis stimulated a shift in human consciousness, creating a 'biophilia revolution' based upon a love of life and supported by knowledge and conviction that a deep relationship with nature will meet human needs (Orr, 1993).

Table 2.1 Universal values and aspects of the natural environment

This table is adapted from Kellert (1996) and provides details of the universal values, their definition and function.

Value	Definition	Function
Utilitarian	Practical and material exploitation of nature	Physical sustenance/security
Naturalistic	Direct experience and exploration of nature	Curiosity, discovery, recreation
Ecologicistic-Scientific	Systematic study of structure, function	Knowledge, understanding, observational skills
Aesthetic	Physical appeal and beauty of nature	Inspiration, harmony, security
Symbolic	Use of nature for language and thought	Communication, mental development
Humanistic	Strong emotional attachment and "love"	Bonding, sharing, cooperation, companionship
Moralistic	Spiritual reverence and ethical concern for nature	Order, meaning, kinship, altruism
Dominionistic	Mastery, physical control, dominance of nature	Mechanical skills, physical prowess, ability to subdue
Negativistic	Fear, aversion, alienation from nature	Security, protection, safety, awe

According to the biophilia hypothesis humans appear to be especially skilled at deriving meaning and value from nature and that this skill may be a derived emotion-mediated process (Khan & Kellert, 2002). Kellert (1996, 1997) identified that humans have a kinship with nature, and set out a collection of universal values related to the natural environment (table 2.1) that reflect this mastery and were considered biological in origin.

Arguments have been made that posit that these values can be developed during childhood and adolescence (Kahn, 1997) and have been found to be richly and diversely constructed by children (Khan & Kellert, 2002). These values are influenced by experience and learning. Furthermore, Lovelock (2009) decisively states that people's recognition of living things is instant and automatic, which is a recognition that has evolved as a survival factor. Finally, according to Khan and Kellert (2002), "We must recognize our need for a more pristine and, at times, wild nature so that adults and children alike can experience it, construct concepts of ecological health, and be nourished by it in body and mind" (p. 114). A 'wild nature' is at the heart of this theory, as in ART.

2.4.2 Gibson's ecological theory of development

In comparison to Bronfenbrenner's bio-ecological model, which refers to social contexts to conceptualise interaction between person and environment, Gibson's ecological theory of development, like ART, sought to understand this dynamic interaction in relation to perception (Tudge *et al.*, 1997). Gibson identified four aspects of human behaviour that develop through perception: agency (self-control and intentionality in behaviour), prospectively (intentional, anticipatory, future—orientated behaviours), search for order (tendency to seek order, regularity, and pattern to make sense of the world), and flexibility (perception that can adjust to new situations and bodily conditions) (Gibson & Pick, 2000).

According to Gibson, perceptual learning is information that becomes known over time and is characterised by a process of differentiation rather than construction, arguing that meaning does not need to be constructed (Gibson & Pick, 2000). Three concepts that support differentiation are: affordances, reciprocity of the organism and environment, and information. Affordances are the possibilities that are available to a person in an environment to act upon something (Tudge *et al.*, 1997). Exploratory behaviours allow the organism to "probe the environment...reveal information that specifies relevant environmental properties" (Adolph *et al.*, 1993, p.59). Perceiving the environment, therefore, necessitates a perception of self and perceivers tune their actions. To perform a particular activity

or action a person differentiates between information that is relevant in the environment. Obtaining an initial description of the environment is therefore necessary before any perceiving can take place, as what there is to be perceived needs to be specified first. This is what Gibson called 'ecological optics'. In essence Gibson's theoretical framework explains that "action is guided by perception and action over time informs perception" (Tudge *et al.*, 1997, p. 80), therefore the perceiver and the environment are inseparable.

One of the major criticism of Gibson's framework is that it seems to exclude the influence of the social world, and as Tudge *et al.* (1997) explains "Even perception of physical objects may be mediated by the co-construction of beliefs and meanings attributed to such objects within a particular culture" (p. 97). Gibson's theory appears to complement Bronfenbrenner's theory and together they positively contribute to understanding the person-environment interrelationship.

2.4.3 Attention restoration theory

The benefit of contact with nature is diverse, with a wealth of literature arguing for its role in human health and well-being, as well as spiritual health, all of which advocate its healing or restorative properties (Pretty *et al.*, 2007). Restoration perspectives have been dominated by Ulrich's (1981) psychophysiological stress reduction framework and Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) attention restoration theory ART, (Hartig, 2008; Korpela *et al.*, 2001).

Attention is focusing on one object or train of thought which allows one to perceive, think, distinguish, remember better than otherwise could and shortens reaction time (Williams, 1984). Kaplan (1989) used ideas of attention processes and sought to reveal its role in human-natural environment interaction to understand the restorative qualities of natural environments. According to ART "prolonged or intense cognitive effort depletes the ability to direct attention, and restorative environments assist in the recovery of directed attention" (Ouellette *et al.*, 2005, p. 175). People experiencing mental fatigue become irritable, unable to pay attention to the activity at hand, and are easily distractible (Kaplan, 1995). Based on ART, Kaplan, and others researching in this field, believed that directed attention and cognitive functioning could be restored if time is spent in 'restorative environments' (e.g. Felsten, 2009; Kaplan, 1995). Kaplan (1995) has argued that properties of an attention restoring experience are: 'being away', moving away or taking a mental break from activities that are attentionally demanding and that are causing fatigue; 'fascination', an effortless and compelling way of attending with

involuntary attention and intrinsic interest of the situation; 'extent', sufficient scope to sustain interaction for a period of time without boredom; 'compatibility', a perceived fit between the person's informational needs and intended goal and what the environment provides. Such properties were found to be dependent on the kind and quality of the environment, involvement with the environment, and frequency and duration (Kaplan, 1995). Additionally, Berman *et al.* (2008) noted that natural environments provoke involuntary attention because these environments are "rich with inherently fascinating stimuli," (p. 1207) without demanding directed attention.

Regular exposure to a natural environment was found by a number of studies to counteract attentional fatigue in healthy adults. For example, early evidence showed psychological benefits were produced from wilderness experiences (Kaplan & Talbot, 1983) and from less intense exposures to natural environments, such as a view from a window (Ulrich, 1984). More focused studies of effects of natural environments on cognitive function also consistently showed improved attention and mental restoration (e.g. Hartig & Evans, 1993; Kaplan, 1995; Ottosson & Grahn, 2005). These studies provide good support for the benefits of contact with nature.

2.4.4 The bio-ecological model

Continuing the holistic approach to understanding human-environment relationship is the bio-ecological model, first developed by Bronfenbrenner (1989). Gestaltian and ecological perspectives underpin the model. Within an ecological perspective it is theorised that a person's development is intimately related to a changing environment, which includes social, physical, and psychological (Tudge *et al.*, 1997). Ecology itself is the study of "organism-environment interrelatedness" (Tudge *et al.*, 1997, p.73), believed to be inseparable parts of a whole (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993), and thus is coherent with Gestalt approaches (Seargent & Winkel, 1990).

The bio-ecological model focuses on systemic properties of the environment and includes physical, social as well as historical and cultural aspects to understand the person-environment interrelationship, in relation to local/specific (micro) dimensions and to broad/general (macro) dimensions (Tudge, *et al.*, 1997). Processes at macro levels (historical and cultural) through to micro levels (proximal processes) are shown to affect development. Proximal processes function as the engines of development and:

...a proximal process involves a transfer of energy between the developing human being and the persons, objects, and symbols in the immediate environment. The transfer may be in either direction or both; that is from the developing person to features of the environment, from features of the environment to the developing person, or in both directions, separately or simultaneously (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000, p. 118).

Proximal processes therefore produce two major kinds of developmental outcomes, which Bronfenbrenner (1989) characterised as competence and dysfunction.

The primary purpose of the bio-ecological model was to develop a theory that improved understanding of the conditions and processes that shape human development. The bio-ecological model is an attempt at developing an ecology of human development and has been highly influential in developmental science. The most recent version proposes an important argument, that;

Throughout the life course, human development takes place through processes of progressively more complex reciprocal interaction between an active, evolving bio-psychological human organism and the persons, objects, and symbols in its immediate external environment (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998, p. 966).

With this a new construct of the model arose – ‘exposure’. Exposure refers to the degree to which contact is maintained between the person and the proximal processes in which that person engages (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000), and varies along five dimensions: duration, frequency, interruption, timing, intensity.

- *Duration.* On Average how long is the period of exposure? What is the length of the session?
- *Frequency.* How often do sessions occur over time – hourly, daily, etc?
- *Interruption.* Does exposure occur on a predictable basis, or is it often interrupted?
- *Timing* of interaction is critical. For example, does the interaction take place shortly after an event or happening and long after – both will produce differing degrees of effective and ill-efficient reinforcement to development.
- *Intensity* refers to the strength of the exposure; when exposure to proximal processes is brief, happens infrequently and does not take place

on a predictable basis, developmentally-disruptive outcomes are more likely to occur. (Adapted from Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000)

These five dimensions enable and help guide a more detailed interpretation of person-environment interaction and though the bio-ecological model is predominantly utilised to further understanding of child development, it has proven to be an adaptable model for holistic understanding of issues around human-environment interaction. More recently, has been a useful theory for developing ideas about human-nature interaction (Burls, 2008).

2.4.5 Environmental self-regulation hypothesis

The environmental self-regulation hypothesis proclaims that one's environment provides invaluable information according to which people can assess their emotions and development; people use environmental strategies to help regulate themselves and "as a process through which people maintain a balance between pleasant and unpleasant emotions and a coherent experience of self" (Korpela *et al.*, 2001, p. 387). Fundamental to the ideas of the environmental self-regulation hypothesis are deep ecological ideas within the Gaia hypothesis, which proclaims that the Earth is a single living and self-regulating organism and is an evolving system (Lovelock, 2009). In this, the thinking 'self' includes the natural and physical environment and is regarded as a useful way of looking at human-nature relationships. It is a holistic approach, incorporating thinking, feeling, spirituality and action, that argues the Earth's systems are something that humans are part of, have a role to play in and leads to a deeper connection with life and nature. Humans are regarded as part of the natural world and, combined, are part of a larger self; humans are nature.

One of the earlier holistic approaches to understanding the human-nature relationship is Egler's ideas from 1964 of a 'Total Human Ecosystem' (THE) (Naveh, 2004). The THE was an integration of man-and-its-total-environment (Naveh, 2004). The THE included the complementary role of humans as an integral part of the global ecological hierarchy and was a level above natural ecosystems. Based on a holistic landscape ecology, deep ecological thinking essentially relies "on a transdisciplinary systems view of the world as an autopoietic, self-organizing, and self-regulating, irreducible Gestalt system." (Neveh, 2000, p. 23).

Within Gestalt and ecological thinking then, consciousness is a process of nature becoming aware of itself. Human beings, as one type of conscious organism, are mere extensions of our environment (Seed *et al.*, 2007). It is a holistic perspective that can be traced back to the work of Leopold and his term 'thinking

like a mountain': where one stands in the entire ecosystem requires a complete appreciation for the interconnectedness of the elements in an ecosystem, rather than regarding oneself as an isolated individual (Leopold, 1949). For example, Leopold (1949) writes "The cowman who cleans his range of wolves does not realize that he is taking over the wolf's job of trimming the herd to fit the range. He has not learned how to think like a mountain." (p.140). The 'thinking like a mountain' term was used to campaign and raise awareness of a deeper and more complete understanding of the meaning and connectedness between humans and nature (the whole system of earth). The purpose of Leopold's writings also articulate consequences of disconnectedness with nature.

Disconnectedness with nature, has been understood as a 'dysregulation' of person and their environment. Dysregulation has the potential for great harm as it reflects difficulties in awareness and understanding of the interrelatedness and interconnectedness between people and the natural world (Gratz & Roemer, 2004). Under the self-regulation hypothesis then, those people who recognise their relationship with their environment, seek certain places for restorative reasons in order to attain cognitive and emotional balance. For example, children may form an attachment to parents or friends as a social strategy of self-regulation, but they may also engage in environmental strategies by attaching themselves to a certain place – a favourite place. Studies suggest that favourite places are places in which cognitions and emotions change in a way that is characteristic of restoration and that favourite places are typically high in restorative qualities (Korpela *et al.*, 2008).

Some researchers provide evidence for the environmental self-regulation hypothesis in their studies of children's and adults' attachment to favourite places (e.g. Korpela *et al.*, 2001). Favourite places were also shown to be stable over a 10 month period and not momentary choices (Korpela *et al.*, 2001) and in studies from the UK, Ireland, Finland, Senegal and the USA the largest category (50% - 63%) of adult favourite places were everyday natural settings, such as parks, beaches, or forests. This suggests that indeed people have some innate connections with their environment and the environment is not just a setting in which things exist and where happenings occur, but rather environment and person are interrelated.

2.5 Understanding experiences and meaning in nature

Traditional approaches to investigating wilderness experiences have been user satisfaction (Brown, 1989; Graefe *et al.*, 1984; Williams, 1989), and benefits-based approaches (Driver *et al.*, 1987; Manfredi *et al.*, 1983). Experience-based approaches are numerous (Borrie & Roggenbuck, 2001; Jones *et al.*, 2004; McIntyre, 1998; Roggenbuck, 1993; Schmidt & Little, 2007) and have increased in

popularity but tend to continue to use preordained categories for measurement of experience rather than more open and qualitative ways of documenting and understanding experience. Meaning-based approaches (Arnould & Price, 1993; Loeffler, 2004; Patterson *et al.*, 1994) are more recent in comparison to many satisfaction and benefits-based approaches with studies focusing on self-affirmation (Schreyer *et al.*, 1986) and sense of place (Kyle *et al.*, 2004; Sharpe & Ewert, 2000; Williams *et al.*, 1992). These are all different ways in which researchers have studied the experiential values and qualities of wilderness.

Prevalent approaches to understanding wilderness experience within therapeutic and recreationist literature have been motivational research programmes that examine the nature of the experience indirectly by measuring specific psychological outcomes realised from an experience, viewing wilderness experience as intrinsically rewarding rather than an activity (Driver *et al.*, 1987). Within programmes, desired outcomes, goals, motivations, expectations, and cognitive judgments about outcomes actually achieved are assessed and thus the actual nature of the experience has been relatively ignored in relation to other wilderness experience investigations (Patterson *et al.*, 1998). As a result the process through which people attend to and perceive nature, the content of what is enjoyed, or the emotional responses are not explored extensively and generally do not take into consideration that for those people who have had little or no previous experience of wild places have, often, non-existent or vague expectations (Arnould & Price, 1993). Importantly, experiences often emerge and may differ from expectations. Some argue that the most enjoyable or memorable feature of the experience may be the unexpected rather than expected (Arnould & Price, 1993; Scherl, 1988).

2.5.1 Experience- and meaning-based approaches to examining outdoor (nature) experiences and therapy programmes.

Experience-based approaches can involve a number of different research methods. The most common methods are in-depth interviews but questionnaires, journal writing, group discussions and focus groups have also been used to good effect. This section of the literature review examines studies that specifically explore people's experiences of personal development and therapeutic activities conducted in outdoor environments. This section will begin by discussing historical approaches to capturing people's experiences of outdoor recreation in natural environments, followed by research on experiences of structured outdoor experiences ending with experiences of outdoor therapy programmes.

Much of the research in this section is from North American sources and the natural environments that are referred to are often described as wilderness. Little UK based research is included due to the scarcity of empirical research in this area that has been carried out in UK wild places and that is concerned with experience (Hinds, 2011). Finding literature on experiences of outdoor therapy was particularly difficult with few results arising from extensive searches.

2.5.1.1 Experiences of outdoor recreation

Understanding outdoor recreation experiences has been a focus of investigation for more than three decades and remains “a complex and elusive problem” (Brookes et al., 2006, p. 331). Williams *et al.*, (1992) provided evidence that people developed an attachment to, or dependence on, wilderness and wilderness-like places. Four wilderness areas (in Arkansas, Georgia, Montana, and Texas) were included in the study. Place attachment was directly related to use history (how people used the place over time) of the wilderness place. Unique meanings attached to wilderness were created among long-term wilderness recreation participants as they had more place-based experiences and attachments as well as attachments to the general concept and values of wilderness.

Patterson *et al.* (1998) took a heuristic approach to understanding wilderness experiences. Treating experience as emergent, interviews were collected from thirty visitors to a large wilderness area in the Ocala National Forest in Florida, over eight days between July and August. 30 randomly selected participants were interviewed (10-20min), asking them to tell their story of their experiences. Aspects of experience most meaningful to participants related to challenge, closeness to nature and decisions not faced in everyday environments. Unexpected positive aspects of a wilderness experience were reported to enhance the quality of the experience, whereas unexpected challenge was generally judged negatively. Story making and ‘surviving’ the unexpected is argued to lead to a deeper meaning being related to an experience. Authors however state that the role of challenge is unclear and suggest that it may be related to ‘situated freedom’; the idea that there is a structure in the environment that sets boundaries on or constrains the nature of possible experiences, a greater focus on the environment/setting is encouraged, but people are free to experience the environment in a highly individual, unique and variable way. The degree to which a persons’ experience can be captured in 10-20 minutes is questionable, however, but this is one of the first studies to provide a richer and broader understanding of outdoor experiences.

More recent work by Brooks *et al.*, (2006) exploring place attachment in the outdoors found that time and experience accrued in place, social and physical interactions in and with the setting, and active reflective process of regulating sense of identity to affirm commitment to place, were important aspects of participant experiences. Again visitors were targeted. Randomly selected from the Rocky Mountains National Park, 12 Caucasian visitors (7 males and 5 females, aged between 23-60 years) were asked about their experiences of this natural environment. Importantly, relationship to place was identified as the active construction and accumulation of these providing an insight into how place meanings impact on experience of outdoor recreation. A missed opportunity in this study was to ascertain how place relationships benefit peoples' lives. Despite this, the Brooks *et al.*, (2006) and Williams *et al.*, (1992) studies show that the role of place attachment in forming meanings associated with place is important to consider, especially when areas of structured outdoor experiences unknown to participants are utilised.

With the aim of identifying distinctive elements of wilderness settings that contribute to triggering peak experiences, McDonald *et al.*, (2009) collected data from 39 wilderness visitors using open-ended questionnaires. 11 woman and 28 men (aged 17-70 years) were asked to recall a 'peak experience' in wilderness, which were analysed using content analysis. Aspects of peak experiences were: aesthetic quality, escape, , multiple peak experiences, oneness-connectedness, overcoming limitations, and heightened awareness (deeper understanding of the world). The theory of restorative environments (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) was used to enhance analysis and provided support to claims that aesthetic pleasure and renewal lead to peak experiences.

Coble *et al.*'s., (2003) examination of solo (2 hours – 1 day) and backpacking (overnight trip 2 or more days) experiences in natural environments also provides support for restorative theory. Freedom of choice, autonomy, personal control (e.g. setting own pace) and solitude facilitated time to reflect, connecting with nature and centring of attention (flow state), which were found to be renewing and relaxing. With a particular focus on fears and strategies, the study also emphasised which experiences were diminished, maintained, or optimised depending on the capacity to negotiate these. Interviews with 20 Caucasian participants (10 men and 10 women, aged 20-50 found that solo hikers/backpackers had five fears (fear of getting hurt by another individual, fear of accidental injury/life-threatening emergency, fear of getting lost, fear of wild animals or dogs, and fear of theft of belongings left in one's vehicle) and five strategies (avoiding perceived threats, modifying their participation, using aids or protective devices, expanding their

knowledge or skills, and employing a psychological approach). Fears are rarely discussed in the literature and, though these particular fears may relate more to sole recreationists, this research highlights that experiences in natural environments may evoke such fears. In these instances people's strategies have meant that their fears do not hinder or stop them carrying on with solo or activity in natural environments. This cannot be assumed universally however.

Unlike previous studies where the primary focus was on wilderness experiences, Hennigan (2010) examines experiences in nature more generally and their therapeutic potential. 12 working and middle class European-American women (aged 25 -54 years) were interviewed about their experiences of being in or near nature. These were women who spent regular periods in nature (ranging from backpacking to hiking and living in the outdoors due to homelessness), with the exclusion of women currently experiencing eating disorders. A feminist analysis found that participants gained perspective, greater awareness and empowerment, providing feelings of confidence and competence from experiences in nature. Overall, spending time in natural settings improved body image; distance away from cultural contexts increased embodied experiences (physical strength and sense of smell and touch) and supported connection with nature. How the researcher came to these conclusions was not clearly outlined or described. Despite this the findings are encouraging since they show that important and long-term benefits can derive from a variety of natural environments.

2.5.1.2 Experiences of structured outdoor experiences

The importance of the social aspect of structured outdoor experiences has been observed. Arnould and Price's (1993) study, examining peoples' experiences of commercial multi-day rafting trips in the Colorado River Basin over two years, provides an insight into pre-trip experiences. Through participant observation and interviews participant experiences were characterised by personal growth and self-renewal (sense of purpose and place), *comunitas* (communion with friends, family and strangers), communion with nature (e.g. connection with nature and escape and sense of freedom). Expectations of the experience, of guides, of others, comfort and safety (reassurance), expectations about environment, and expectations about feelings (ideas about nature – solitude, escape) were also evident. There was however only a weak link reported between expectations and satisfaction. Satisfaction had little to do with whether expectations were met and instead stories seemed to be more important, a finding that is supported by Patterson *et al.*, (1993; 1998). Although many value statements are made in the

study, it is one of the first studies to investigate structured outdoor experiences in a qualitative and emergent manner.

Nanschild (1997) explored experiences of an organised recreation event 'WomenTrek' (1500km walk/ride). Women who participated in the longest and remotest sections of the WomenTrek were interviewed. Interpretive analysis found, that relationships with others was an important element. A women-only group was particularly empowering for participants, strengthening a sense of community. Changes in physical, emotional, psychological, relational and spiritual aspects of self were mentioned as beneficial qualities of their experience. Women reported transferring the benefits and empowerment to their everyday lives. Though little is mentioned regarding the natural environment, this study provides an important insight into the impact of same-gender groups, which has been supported by later work.

Fredrickson and Anderson's (1999) study also found that being in an all-women group, as well as being in a wilderness, contributed to meaningful aspects of experiences in the outdoors, including spiritual inspiration from the expansiveness and power of the landscape. Two organised experiences were evaluated: one to a wilderness area in Minnesota, and one to the Grand Canyon, Arizona. Content analysis of participant observation, journals and semi-structured interviews concluded that benefits of an all-women group were related to group trust, emotional safety, and sharing common life changes. However, spiritual inspiration was optimal when positive relationships with others were combined with complete immersion in the landscape ('wilderness'); time alone enabled people to enter deep reflection (something that was not considered accessible when near nature at home) and to connect with landscape and see it as a source of spiritual inspiration. One of the most interesting aspects of this research is the finding that the first group of participants referred to environment as more of a 'gestalt' and less frequently focused on any one particular environmental feature. It is postulated that this is perhaps because this environment had few topographic relief or landmarks and little or no opportunity for a panoramic, open view. In comparison, the Grand Canyon was more frequently talked about in relation to individual features of the biophysical environment, perhaps because it was characterised by sweeping panoramic vistas and more geologic features. In understanding person-environment interaction better, this distinction between group experiences would have been a useful avenue to follow-up and investigate further.

Two studies by Heintzman (2006; 2008) found similar spiritual opportunities in peoples' experiences in structured wilderness experiences. Both studies involved

men-only groups on canoe trips. Heintzman (2006) included additional activities of camping, unstructured time to be alone or with others, discussion times, an optional overnight solo, and spiritual activities. To determine long-term impact, interviews took place five months after the trip and involved 6 males (20-70 years of age). Short-term impact of participation in the wilderness trip was a sense of peacefulness. Long-term impact was characterised by recollection (positive memories and reflections rather than behavioural changes). Social settings (being alone, being with one other person, and in group) as well as the wilderness setting were viewed important to spiritual well-being. Qualities of the wilderness setting were getting away from everyday routine and remoteness. Also noteworthy is that pace of life slowed down after the trip for one participant. As in Fredrickson and Anderson (1999), time for participation as well as for self was important. Time alone was especially beneficial for some: the three males that did the solo found it particularly helpful for spiritual wellbeing. Few men reported that the men-only group was important to spiritual wellbeing. Group discussions were viewed positively by four males but other participants said that group discussion could have been more intimate. The practical implications are that designing wilderness experiences to include opportunities for contact with nature and a range of social interactions may be more important than including structured spiritual activities and discussions during the wilderness trip.

Based on the findings from Heintzman (2006), the Heintzman (2008) study was less structured. Spiritual activities, in particular, were excluded. Interviews with six males (aged 40-60 years) were conducted shortly after the trip. Spiritual friendships, friendships (getting to know others – possible friendships), friendships facilitated by conversations, (gaining other peoples perspectives) openness facilitated by the men-only group (less responsibility felt without wife and children, around females they would take on gender roles), spirituality facilitated by wilderness as God's creation, space for spirituality facilitated by wilderness (getting away from distraction) were important aspects of their experience. Though friendship was more important this may have been due to it being a homogenous group (same city and same church) and most of the men knowing each other through the church they were recruited from. The differences in findings suggest that there are a numerous factors that influence experience and spirituality. These factors are not, however, obtainable from either of these two studies. The spiritual aspects of these studies are also biased as the intention was to explore spiritual experiences.

One of the most recent, and UK based, studies of experiences of structured outdoor experiences is by Hinds (2011). Feelings of connection, aliveness,

contemplativeness, self-discovery, confidence, and well-being were experienced by 5 middle class British women (aged 17-25) during a 10 day walk on the Isle of Hoy, Orkney (described as a 'Scottish Wilderness'). The women were fee paying and self-selecting and part of a group of 11 women and 1 man. The positive experiences derived from intimacy with the natural environment and from bonds formed within the group. Interviews during the latter states of the trip, and analysed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), resulted in three major themes: solitude and simplicity (feeling alive, clarity of thought, wellbeing, authentic self, being away), challenge and accomplishment (sociability, acceptance and reward), changing perspectives and priorities (values, environmental connection, contemplation). The environment was considered non-threatening, allowing the women to discard worries about self-presentation – participants were less self-conscious – and some social and personal demands were alleviated by the physical environment. Changing experiences and impressions of the body have been noted by others in the outdoors experience literature (e.g. Hennigan, 2010), as well as restorative benefits of solitude and simplicity (Coble *et al.*, 2003; McDonald *et al.*, 2009). This possibly suggests that structure and support may not enhance these qualities but rather enables access to these kinds of areas. Participants also tended to compare their wilderness experience with home life.

2.5.3 Experiences of outdoor therapy

Literature that focuses on participants' experiences of outdoor therapy is scarce (Kyriakopoulos, 2010). Whilst there are a number of evaluative papers on outcomes (Russell, 2002; Witman, 1992) or characteristics (Witman, 1993) of outdoor therapy, only three papers were found in this literature search that related to experiences.

Autry (2001) expanded on research about outcomes and characteristics, exploring the feelings, attitudes and perceptions of at-risk young females participating in Adventure Therapy. 'At risk' young females aged 13-18 years, resident in a same-gender outdoor-based psychiatric rehabilitation facility, took part in a four day backpacking trek and high and low ropes course. Using a constant comparison method, themes of trust, empowerment, teamwork and recognition of personal value were identified. Empowerment was particularly valued by participants and has been found in research on outdoor experiences in general (e.g. Hennigan, 2010; Nanschild, 1997) suggesting that it can be a benefit of outdoor experiences without any therapeutic input *per se*. A disconnect between Adventure Therapy experiences and the process of transferring valued aspects of these experiences into everyday life was identified, however. This is contrary to the

findings of Nanschild (1997) and Kyriakopoulos (2010; 2011) but this may be due to the difference of age and context. Women in the Nanschild (1997) study were however older and came from more stable backgrounds and thus transferring benefits may have been easier to achieve. This study highlights that transferability of benefits is a critical element that warrants further investigation.

In a similar study, Sklar (2005) provides an insight into experiences of youth in a therapeutic wilderness challenge intervention. Interviews with 15 'at risk' youth and 18 parents, focus groups with seven staff and follow-up interviews with two staff members resulted in three major themes: challenge (personal growth and social growth characterised by active physical, social and psychological experiences), community (trust, group support, friendship), and key player relationships (staff-teen relationships, staff-parent relationship, parent-teen relationships). Like Autry (2001), trust and relations with others (teamwork) were found to be important aspects to young peoples' experiences as well as to adults' (Arnould & Price, 1993; Brookes *et al.*, 2006; Heintzman, 2008; Hinds, 2011). Though these findings are useful, one of the main limitations is that no mention is given to the transferability of the benefits of the therapeutic intervention.

Also relating to these is Nicholls (2008) study on experiences of *Quiet Time* (self-initiated time alone) during wilderness therapy involving 'at risk' youth (16 males and 2 females). Grounded theory analysis on data collected from interviews, photographs, journals and field notes showed various dimensions of experience related to quiet time. These were: a sense of being alone; a positive mind-frame; a personal time perspective and focussed attention. It illustrated that, contrary to understandings of solitude as an objective and external condition, it is indeed subjective and nuanced. Also identified was that *Quiet Time*, despite being a commonly occurring phenomenon, initiated by participants and positively impacting on attitudes and behaviours, is largely over-looked by wilderness therapy literature. This may suggest that more subtle or discreet features, and moreover, participant-driven rather than leader-driven aspects, are underestimated and under-reported.

Kyriakopoulos (2010; 2011) is a UK based study reporting on an Adventure Therapy approach with participants with self-reported anxiety and depression and provides some useful insights into the process of taking counselling outdoors. Four males and six females aged between 20 to mid-forties) were recruited from a university counselling service. Prior to the Adventure Therapy, participants received 10-15 individual counselling sessions and on-going sessions followed it. Adventure Therapy involved outdoor activity over two separate days (trekking and abseiling; trekking and rock-climbing) in natural areas. Themes identified in the

study were: enhancing wellbeing (sense of escape from problems and stresses, tranquility of environment, natural scenery, lack of external distractions); gaining psychological benefits through managing risky situations (personal and group effort); enhancing feelings of care-taking through cooperation (apprehensions and feelings of anxiety about group dynamics); changing through doing (experiential learning space). Long term counselling sessions (exploring anxieties and to achieve inner healing) and outdoor interaction (experiential venue for achieving personal change) were found to be mutually beneficial, suggesting that provision of prior counselling builds a therapeutic alliance that facilitates change and transferability of benefits and learning. The natural environment enhanced sense of well-being and development of positive self-assessment and emotions they were able to transfer to their 'daily lives'.

The most recent work on experiences of outdoor therapy is from Revell *et al.* (2013). They conducted an international online survey on people's perceptions about what was helpful about their experiences of outdoor therapy which was analysed using grounded theory methodology to conduct thematic analysis as well as descriptive and inferential statistics. From a total of 43 responses, the most helpful aspect was being in the outdoors and well as being part of a group, and were found across both quantitative and qualitative analyses. Primarily, this research leads to interesting questions about the therapeutic relationship and group related benefits. Most importantly, however, it highlights that further investigation into the meaning of being outdoors is required.

The research discussed here suggests the emergent nature of meaning in some experiences. This suggests that a traditional linear approach, where measurements of motivation or satisfaction are based upon pre and post questioning and an analysis driven by met or unmet expectations, has limitations. Traditional research approaches dominate the wilderness experience literature and therefore the desire of many researchers to understand 'how' the human-nature relationship works need further clarification. The complexity and sometimes elusive nature of experience and meaning-making illustrates the limits of a linear approach, a more cyclical and broad approach may be necessary to capture the nuances within this area of study (e.g. Patterson *et al.*, 1998).

A remaining challenge facing attempts to understand outdoor experiences is to explicitly demonstrate the influence of wilderness conditions on the experiences. Experience and meaning may extend beyond the spatial and temporal boundaries of wilderness experience. Meanings and influence of wilderness experiences therefore may not be accessed fully if only on-site qualities are considered. Lastly, by being overly reductionist in understanding wilderness

experiences, researchers may be missing or misinterpreting the mystery, meaning and profound significance of these experiences (Borrie & Birzell, 2001).

Overall, further research needs to be carried out that is more comprehensive in scope, grounded in data, and guided by participants experiences if any attempt is going to be made to understand more fully the interrelationship between humans and natural environments.

2.6 The current research

In an attempt to provide more detailed and context-specific descriptions, understanding, and conceptualisations of wild place experiences and avoid broad, surface level abstraction (Patterson *et al.*, 1998), this research project investigated the complexity and holistic nature of experience, meaning-making and human-nature interaction. The nature of experience is, therefore, seen as emergent, not as predictable; it seeks to move away from an assumed linear sequence of events that begins with expectations and ends with outcomes that are then cognitively compared to establish experience quality. No such attempt will be made in this thesis.

The research questions that intend to address this gap and further elucidate experience, meaning-making in nature, and the human-environment interaction are as follows:

1. What is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?
2. What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?
3. What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?

The aim is to develop a deeper understanding of the nature and diversity of experiences in two wild place areas and to elucidate person-environment relationship/interaction more clearly. This approach goes beyond traditional approaches of surveys such as motivational research programmes, and psychometric measurements as they, instead of seeking and valuing uniqueness and variation are engineered to seek commonalities in the measurement of responses. A predetermined model of the nature of experience is inappropriate. Of priority was to obtain participant descriptions that are as extensive and open as possible (through interviews, group discussions and journals).

The goal of exploring the nature of experiences is therefore to identify the boundaries of the environment and the types of experiences that participants have within those boundaries. This and be done at various levels of abstraction

(specificity). For example, at a very broad level one may determine that individuals visiting a wilderness place may experience 'challenge and excitement' or enjoy the experience, both of which, on the surface, seem consistent with ideas and evidence around benefits of contact with nature. However, it is easy to imagine how both a person canoeing down a river and one taking a water chute log ride at Alton Towers may find challenge and excitement; but the definition of what challenge and excitement mean and the manner in which these opportunities are related to the setting, is likely to differ vastly for the two types of experiences. Similarly, one person can enjoy nature by watching deer along a road through a national park while another observes deer grazing with their herd whilst climbing remote Scottish mountains. While both individuals may report that 'enjoying nature' was an important aspect of the experience, the actual nature, meaning, and consequences of the experience are more appropriately described in vastly different language. As a result, a more specific description of experiences is needed to provide a basis for understanding experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction.

2.7 Chapter summary

In the first part of this chapter, the history and meanings associated with terminology around natural environments, in particular ideas of 'wilderness', were considered in order to highlight the complexity of the topic and clarify important arguments and concepts within the field. The differences and similarities between terms, definitions and assumptions were important to consider first since authors use these umbrella terms differently and fundamentally set limits to their claims.

The second section of the chapter scopes the benefits of having contact with nature. It situates discussions within a UK context, which aim to illuminate, in brief, the value associated with contact with nature ranging from activity, to institutional services or systems that attempt to enable greater contact with nature and protect it. It thus provides the main motivations for the research as contact with nature is increasingly becoming something that is regarded highly across various levels.

The next section addresses how the human-nature relationship have been attempted to be harnessed, highlighting various approaches and structured outdoor programmes that have been implemented. A number of ethical, practical and theoretical aspects of structured outdoor experiences were discussed. In doing so, it provides an insight into the scope of wilderness experience practice and a number of considerations regarding these informed the way that the studies were designed (which will be described in the next chapter).

The fourth section charts some of the theories that have motivated and driven developments in practice, research and ideas around the human-nature relationship. These were particularly useful in understanding the breadth of thinking and ideas on this often idealised, romanticised and complex topic.

The penultimate section illustrates the numerous ways that research has attempted to understand experience and meaning in nature. This section begins by outlining early studies and traditional approaches, and then shifts to discuss empirical research conducted on experiences of structured outdoor recreation, experiences, and therapy. The chapter ends by clarifying the motivations of the current research, the research questions and intentions that aim to address the gaps in research.

Overall, each section demonstrates the scope of debates and thought about the nature and human relationship and, to some degree, their development. Conceptualisations, values, practices, theory and research have been mapped and although not exhaustive, it provides an insight into the topic area and provides an insight into my explorations of the literature.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Philosophical Considerations

Ontologies...shape how researchers answer questions regarding the validity of knowledge (qualitative vs. quantitative, etc.), the legitimacy of methods to produce knowledge (experimentation, induction, hypothesis testing, etc.), and the assumptions inherent in particular conceptualizations of the object of study and certain methodologies (Miller *et al.*, 2008, p.2).

One's philosophical position drives presumptions about nature and consequently one's ontological and epistemological stance. Elucidating philosophical principles underpinning this research was difficult because it derived from personal disposition rather than from within a particular academic discipline. Despite the difficulty of this process, it is a necessary one (Madill *et al.*, 2000). In doing so, this accentuates and acknowledges subjectivity explicitly and thus recognises its limits. Stipulating the limits of the research is important to the integrity of the inquiry, since in "refusing to recognise its own limits" the research and its philosophical position ends up perverting the 'truth' (if such a 'truth' exists) of its findings and conclusions (Curry, 2003, p.6). This transparency aims to provide a detailed insight into my worldview in relation to the current qualitative inquiry and to elucidate the consequences of such a position to the inquiry process (Vasilachis de Gialdino, 2009).

Clarifying the theoretical framework of the research is important within thematic analysis. As Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, "Any theoretical framework carries with it a number of assumptions about the nature of the data, what they represent in terms of the 'the world', 'reality', and so forth. A good thematic analysis will make this transparent" (p. 9). In setting out the theoretical position of the thesis I aim to achieve the following: to remain aware of and avoid polaristic tendencies that often arise during such a process; to be transparent and clear in detailing my position; and to highlight strengths and limitations of my philosophical and theoretical position in relation to the research objectives. The aim is not to extend 'factual' knowledge but to clarify and appreciate the foundations of thought that have driven the method, analysis and conclusions of the research. In doing so, the contextual fabric of this thesis is revealed in a way that makes clear how I endeavour to contribute to theoretical and philosophical approaches to the study of outdoor nature experiences. Accordingly, what will follow is a set of theoretical

commitments and philosophical assumptions about the world and how I have come to know it.

The chapter begins by explaining the critical realist approach to the research and its pluralistic and pragmatic nature. In the intermediate sections, the *bricolage* approach to the research will be explained, including the use of, and rationale for, thematic methods of analysis, and influential psychologies. This chapter will conclude with considerations relating to the study of experience, meaning and meaning-making, as well as an explanation of the research decisions. The aim is not to provide a complete or concrete account of the various theoretical and philosophical issues relating to the research, but rather an overview of its contextual layers.

3.1 A critical realist approach

Fundamentally, I take a critical-realist approach on truth/reality and knowledge. 'Reality' (what is experienced and is existent) is considered as complex, unstable, and thus pluralistic; intuitive forms of knowing and our way of knowing as partial, provisional, restricted, local and contingent. 'Reality' itself can be (and perhaps is) global but, our understanding of reality is always bound by epistemic factors like those mentioned above. Accordingly, I can only have a 'view in' the world (e.g. subjective view), not 'of the' world (e.g. objective view). This does not rule out trying to seek or have a view of the world, but all such views will remain in it (Ingold, 1996).

Critical realism situates itself, seeking to bridge the divide, between naive realism and radical relativism; determining the nature of the social world is always fallible and a 'reality' (a world) does exist independent of particular human endeavours to describe it (Scott, 2005). Fundamental within critical realism is the argument that "there exists both an external world independently of human consciousness and at the same time a dimension which includes our socially determined knowledge about reality" (Danermark, 2002, p. 6). Danermark (2002) characterises critical realism as a 'both-and' approach, emphasising that it bridges dualisms but also that it is not just a philosophy derived from the combining of two polar ontologies. Indeed, critical realism is a philosophy in its own right bringing its own set of principles and ideologies. This position therefore argues that any knowledge of 'reality' or the way it works in a complete sense is impossible, and any claims are always open to error.

The current research aligns itself with the critical realist ideas of Scott (2005), who lists five important principles of critical realism:

- that philosophical concerns need to be addressed prior to making decisions about strategies and methods;
- that it is not possible to describe the world in an infinite number of ways because reality acts as a constraint on how it can be described;
- that there are objects in the world that exist whether they are known by anyone or not;
- that there is a need to focus on social practices that are not predetermined by social structures, since human beings are knowledgeable agents with powers to make a difference and thus have the capacity to monitor their actions and change the practical setting of action
- that a notion of error is accepted in relation to the possibility of providing a correct view of reality (p. 638).

These principles have guided the research, analysis, reflective and writing up process. The first principle is addressed in this chapter and principles b), c) and e) are adopted in the analysis phase of the research and particularly provide the limits for conclusions made in the thesis, forming a framework for critique. Principle d) informed the praxis and ethics of the research, aligning well with community psychology principles of emancipation and empowerment (Orford, 2008) that are discussed later in this chapter. This principle allows the participants in this research to be valued, their voices respected, and their role in the creation of the data to be acknowledged.

Critical realism thus avoids naively realist or solipsistic positions. The belief that all 'truth' is accessible or that the existence of one's self is all that can be true (e.g. all other 'truth' is impossible) is thus rejected. Instead, a critical realist approach argues that "observers and researchers are not entitled to say that there are stable and enduring relationships in society that constitute reality, which is independent of them" (Scott, 2005, p. 637). Critical realism asserts that in the world there exist 'open systems', meaning that combinations of social events and outcomes are irregular and inconsistent. In doing so, critical realism "seeks to reconcile the context-bound and emergent descriptions that are made about the world with the ontological dimension that exists outside of, and is independent of, attempts to describe it" (Scott, 2005, p. 636). Accordingly, within this thesis no attempts are made to access 'true' or 'complete' reality or claim it. Instead, I aim to access aspects of participants' experiences and meaning-making, and thus to value nuance and ambivalence. To access qualitatively new information, a *bricolage* approach was taken to the conduct of the research and its analysis.

3.2 An 'implicit' bricoleur

The way I view the world reflects, partially, who I am and thus reveals, to an extent, what kind of researcher I am. How I think – the lens through which I see and understand the world – directly impacts on the choice of tools I decide to use to study experience and meaning-making in that world. In order for the ontological and epistemological assumptions of the research to be of any use they need to be considered in relation to each other, as a *bricolage* – a theoretical and methodological mixture of approaches to address a specific inquiry (Kincheloe, 2001). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) do not separate the *bricolage* from other modes of qualitative inquiry and argue that, in fact, qualitative research is *bricolage* and qualitative researchers are bricoleurs (Kincheloe, 2005).

To conduct the research I had to negotiate my own personal path through the methodological terrain (McLeod, 2001) and identify the best approach that would address the research questions, the principles of the research and complexity of experience and meaning-making. Such journeying is sometimes needed, as McLeod (2001) notes: "What may at first sight seem to be a certainty about method and its application does not always work in practice. The method needs to be adapted to circumstances, the method differs according to who uses it, the researcher needs to be flexible" (p. 119). Indeed, flexibility has been key within the entire research endeavour, in approach, methodology and analysis.

Such a flexible design approach is advocated by *bricolage* philosophy, but can also be referred to by some researchers (e.g. Robson, 2002; Wright, 2009) as an 'Emergent Methodology'. Emergent Methodology, like *bricolage*, is when "detailed framework...emerges during the study" (Robson, 2002, p. 81); it is an iterative, changeable and on-going process where choices are made purposefully and careful consideration is made prior to, during and after implementation (Wright, 2009). Emergent Methodology and *bricolage*, co-exist "out of respect for the complexity of the lived world" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p.137). Emergent Methodology could be considered as loose and ill-defined but Wright (2009) explains,

The label 'emergent methodology' does not signify a failure to plan ahead; rather a more sophisticated recognition that data analysis is a core element in the research design. It implies a researcher who is aware of multiple possibilities in the early stages, who selects appropriate strategies as s/he assimilates the material and begins to understand its

significance and makes iterative adjustments throughout the process. (p. 64).

Whether methodology is considered as 'emergent' or *bricolage*, the purpose of both and consequence for the current research is the same; they allow me to convey to the reader the iterative process that occurred. The approach enabled me to let the data shape the design when the project was moving in different directions to those initially anticipated (Wright, 2009). This iterative approach involved a developing understanding of the strengths and limitations of specific methods during two research studies, initial immersion in relevant literature before the studies took place followed by an extensive period of familiarisation with a broad range of literature after the commencement of the first phase of analysis, and a constant movement back and forth between reflective journal keeping, diagramming and coding of the data. Acknowledging my active involvement with processes, I made a continual effort to evaluate and the monitor progress, method and analysis, enabling me to problem solve and improve the research. Pre-specification and pre-ordained categories and concepts were avoided and, in relation to analysis, the following quote from Sacks' (1984) was particularly pertinent: "when we start out with a piece of data, the question of what we are going to end up with, what kind of findings it will give, should not be a consideration" (p. 27). In doing so, I sought to "say something sensible about a complex, relatively poorly controlled and generally 'messy' situation" (Robson, 2002, p.4). Allowing this freedom and flexibility in the research was empowering and strengthened my own belief in my methodology; the process emerged through the data.

Wright (2009) provides an apt example of emergent methodology and, particularly, a movement away from using grounded theory in its entirety. She explains in detail her development in method, adapting continually to the needs of the participants and research (e.g. addressing the research questions). This mirrored many aspects of my research journey, challenges and subsequent research decisions. I have also succeeded in employing many of the strategies to enhance and monitor subjectivity proposed by Gough and Madill (2012; see table 1, p. 381) throughout the present explorations. All these movements and reflexive adjustments to the research process fundamentally informed the thesis 'product'. My intention then, is not to provide a gentle, smooth research story it is to provide a detailed account of the research process. This was despite my fears in doing so, as there was a risk that I would have to face the danger that this would be interpreted by the reader as 'messy', or as Wright (2009) states, 'a failure to plan', it is simply is not the case.

Applying the label *bricolage* (considered as an emergent methodology) retrospectively to the methodological decisions helped me to continue to be flexible and move forward with the research. It allowed me to find a new confidence in what I was doing and provided support for the evolving and organic nature of the research (which was driven by a complex myriad of ethical, philosophical and theoretical influences, which are discussed more later). I no longer felt like I failed, indeed I planned extensively to use grounded theory principles, which I considered, at the time, to be a supple enough method that could be moulded to a complex research agenda and design. Although grounded theory is considered as an Emergent Methodology, procedurally it is quite prescriptive, even in its more relaxed modern usage (Charmaz, 2006) and flexibility is encouraged only on a micro level (e.g. sampling and coding choices) (Wright, 2009). Despite this grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 2008) was not abandoned in its entirety; rather it became a source of inspiration that guided research decisions and a thematic analysis of the data. This and employing a critical realist frame to the research emerged through the needs of the research, the participants and my perspectives. Additionally, as Yeung (1997) highlights "critical realism is still largely a philosophy in search of a method" (p. 70). The critical realist needs such an appropriate combination of methods to conduct concrete research.

A number of principles of *bricolage* had an influence on the research. Within this form of investigation, the phenomenon under study is viewed as inseparable from its context, the language used to describe it, the culturally and socially constructed interpretations of its meaning(s), and the historical situatedness in a larger enduring process (Kincheloe, 2005). Flexibility is promoted, thus methodology is negotiated rather than designed. In appreciating the complexity of the research process, the research method is not passive and is far more than procedure (Kincheloe, 2001).

Fundamentally, *bricolage* recognises, seeks, and values complexity and Kincheloe (2005) summarises the key principles of *bricolage* claiming that complexity is rooted in notions of:

The questioning of universalism – with the recognition of complexity, the contextual detail may interfere with the ability to generalise findings to a level that can be universally applied.

Polysemy – interpretation is always a complex process and different words and phrases, depending on the context in which they are used, can mean different things to different individuals; several meanings often exist.

The living process in which cultural entities are situated – Knowledge is set within a process – oriented context has a past and a future, researchers have traditionally viewed a phenomenon in a particular stage of its development.

The ontology of relationships and connections – The self is less stable and essentialised than was previously thought. In this context, the relationship between self and culture becomes a central focus in particular forms of social, cognitive, and psychological research. Culture is not merely the context in which the self operates but also “in the self” – an inseparable portion of what we call the self. Who we are as human beings is dependent on the nature of such relationships and connections.

Contexts – knowledge can never stand alone or be complete in and of itself. When researchers abstract, they take something away from the contextual grounding.

The interpretive aspect of all knowledge – interpretation is always at work in the act of knowledge production - the “facts” never speak for themselves. To research, we must interpret; indeed, to live, we must interpret.

The fictive dimension of research findings – in the zone of complexity, no fact is self-evident and no representation is “pure”. Bricoleurs assert that there are fictive elements to all representations and narratives which are influenced by a variety of forces (e.g. linguistic factors, narrative employment strategies, and cultural prejudices). (adapted from, pp.328-330)

The above principles informed the way the research was conducted and complexity and knowledge production was acknowledged. As a bricoleur, knowledge is not produced by method (McLeod, 2001). The world according to a bricoleur is too complex to be revealed as an objective reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and therefore no attempt should be made to do so. Essentially, bricoleurs seek multiple perspectives. Providing the ‘truth’ about reality is not an agenda of *bricolage*, rather the aim is for thick descriptions of the complex nature of human experience and meaning-making, acknowledging always the changing and evolving nature of knowledge. Thus, it fits well with the critical realist position of the thesis. Many aspects highlight the necessity for a different approach to traditional ones. These are: limitations of a single method and traditional practices of validation; dominance of certified modes of knowledge production; and in particular, the argument of the inseparability of knower and known and the complexity and heterogeneity of all human experience. By respecting complexity in the current research, a number of tools were sought to elucidate it, thus taking a *bricolage* approach.

I have neither the skills nor the experience to claim to have mastered the breadth of qualitative approaches and thus I am an 'implicit bricoleur' (McLeod, 2001). The most common challenge to this kind of approach to research is that a bricoleur, in attempting to know so much, knows nothing well and struggles within a misguided process (Silverman, 2010). In an effort to avoid such pit-falls this research uses *bricolage* principles as a guide. The approach taken in this research thus contains elements of *bricolage*, but is not *bricolage* itself, and uses grounded theory as a source of inspiration guiding a thematic analysis and critical realist framework.

3.3 Guiding principles within the thesis

A level of improvisation and creation had to take place when carrying out the research and analysis. These aspects are regarded by some as an integral requirement of qualitative inquiry (Kincheloe, 2005; McLeod, 2001) and thus within a critical realist paradigm, a number of principles from other areas of thinking influenced the way I carried out the research, drew my conclusions and wrote up my findings. Here, influential principles from grounded theory, environmental, ecological, psychological, philosophical and methodological literature are highlighted.

This section will uncover, explicate and summarise principles that informed the research overall. Each one of these principles has particular qualities that contributed to the complexity and richness of the philosophical approach of the thesis, and their contribution will be highlighted.

Grounded theory had many appealing principles that informed the research process. They were: the need to get out into the field to discover what is going on; highlighting the complexity and variability of phenomena and of human action; persons acting on the basis of meaning; the understanding that meaning is defined and redefined through interaction (Corbin & Strauss, 2008); a subjectivist epistemology that looks at how individuals view their situations; acknowledging that any resulting theory is an interpretation (Charmaz, 2006). Regarding that last principle, Charmaz aptly highlights that:

In the end, inquiry takes us outward yet reflecting about it draws us inward. Subsequently, grounded theory leads us back to the world for a further look and deeper reflection – again and again. Our imaginative renderings of what we see and learn are interpretations, emanating from dialectics of

thought and experience...we are part of our constructed theory and this theory reflects the vantage points inherent in our varied experiences, whether or not we are aware of them (2006, p. 149).

Grounded theory principles inspired particular analytical decisions, such as that literature and theory, were not introduced until the analysis was complete (Willig, 2008); data was coded and thematically organised; and analysis took an iterative approach (Charmaz, 2006). I accepted authorship of a reconstruction of experience and meaning (Mills *et al.*, 2006) and the relationship between myself and the participants was not only valued, but it was also recognised within the research process that knowledge is co-constructed (Charmaz, 1995).

Gestalt/ holistic psychology: Most of the overarching principles of the thesis reside in Gestaltian thinking. It is holistic and global, and its basic premise is that an understanding of the human condition cannot be reduced to smaller and smaller basic units; the whole is different from a simple sum of its parts. It takes a transactional approach that posits:

The experienced environment is an event in time whose components are so intermeshed that no part is understandable without the simultaneous inclusion of the complex texture of all the aspects of the instant, and it is the interaction among the components that is of interest (Bell *et al.*, 2001).

In this thesis, I applied five useful dimensions specified by Seargent and Winkel (1990, p. 443):

- 'the person-in-environment' provided the unit of analysis;
- both person and environment dynamically define and transform each other over time as 'aspects' of a unitary whole;
- stability and change co-exist continuously;
- the direction of change is emergent, not pre-established;
- the changes that occur at one level affect the other levels, creating new person-environment configurations.

Holistic assumptions like these provide a useful frame for the research which is suitably flexible to encompass other ideas and ideologies. In particular, Gestalt ideas have been influential within environmental psychology and ecopsychological research in investigating how people perceive, interact and inter-

relate with their environment, and also in theorising about the human-nature relationship (Bell *et al.*, 2001; Blair, 2011).

Environmental psychology: Environmental psychology refers to the study of human-environment interaction: people's inter-relationships with their environment (Bell *et al.*, 2001; Seamon, 2000). Inter-relationships with the natural world and social world create experiences, and vice-versa; experiences help create and shape social worlds, natural worlds and people's conceptualisation of them.

There are two main objectives of environmental psychology inquiry. The first is the study of environments as the context of behaviour. This is based on the premise that people's behaviours and moods are meaningful only if they can be understood in terms of their context. Environment thus determines what behaviours are possible, how successful or difficult they may be and so on; environment is seen to influence behaviours and provide meaning just as do social settings or developmental stages, or age. The second is concerned with the consequences of behaviour for environmental issues such as recycling, pollution, and global warming (Bell *et al.*, 2001). The second agenda of environmental psychology does not concern the current research.

Inherent in most environmental psychology investigation is the assumption that behaviour is predictable (Cassidy, 1997). Within the context of this thesis, such an assumption does not harmonise with the ontological and epistemological foundations as previously described. Nor does it align well with other Gestalt and humanistic psychology principles. Predicting behaviour, experience and meaning construction is not the aim of this research, rather, the aim is to unveil the complexity of human experience and meaning construction, capturing its depth, thickness and variation – its richness. Such a task is itself complex and challenging, but it is the endeavour of the current research and is set within a critical realist paradigm.

One of the reasons for doing this is that environmental psychology literature has a tendency to separate objectivity and subjectivity (Curry, 2003). Abram (1996) agrees strongly, stating that environmental literature:

...perpetuates the distinction between human "subjects" and natural "objects", and hence neither threaten the common conception of sensible nature as a purely passive dimension suitable for human manipulation and use. While both of these views are unstable, each bolsters the other; by bouncing from one to the other – from scientific determinism to

spiritual idealism and back again – contemporary discourse easily avoids the possibility that both the perceiving being and the perceived being are of the same stuff, that the perceiver and the perceived are interdependent and in some sense even reversible aspects of a common animate element (p. 67).

With Abram's words in mind, and considering them in the context of the thesis, a view of reality where subjects and objects are separated serves little purpose. If experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction are going to be accessed – or rather interpreted – in an insightful, intuitive and, most importantly, authentic manner then such a divide seems unsuitable. That is, to understand the inter-relationships between (human) experience, meaning-making and environment there is a need to study them as a unit – holistically – rather than separately as distinct and independent components (Bell *et al.*, 2001). Thus, although environmental psychology informs the research in terms of the subject matter, ecopsychology, a strand of environmental psychology, is more aligned with Gestaltian and humanistic values.

Ecopsychology: Ecopsychology is generally seen as a sub-field of environmental psychology and seeks to consider various aspects of the human-nature relationship. It is characterised by a shift away from anthropocentric tendencies in theory and research to more ecological, holistic and ecocentric ones, with epistemological foundations in pluralism and pragmatism, and a particular emphasis placed on the value of self-reflection (Doherty, 2009).

The mission of ecopsychology is to appeal to positive ecological emotional bonds that ecopsychologists believe exist between humans and nature, professing these as normal and healthy in order to enhance the effectiveness of the environmental movement (Roszak *et al.*, 1995). Among other forms of environmental psychology it has a unique focus on the therapeutic qualities and potentials of the human-nature bond (Doherty, 2009). Wilderness settings and experiences are sometimes used as psychological tools by psychologists, psychotherapists and teachers. A particular agenda within these experiences is to create therapeutic and behaviour change. In the context of the present research, neither was a focus. The potential of natural outdoor spaces as therapeutic media was of interest, but the emphasis was on examining nuances in experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction, rather than solely on nature's therapeutic quality or an outdoor programme's therapeutic outcome. In this sense the research aims to be less individualistic.

Community Psychology: Community Psychology, like ecopsychology, provides an ecological perspective on the person-environment fit. Importantly, instead of attempting to change the behaviour or personality of an individual, as mainstream psychologies tend to advocate, a person's environment is the focus of action and study (Rappaport, 1977).

Community psychology, like Gestalt psychology, provides valuable overarching principles that informed the research process and the thesis as a whole. It also resides in pragmatist and pluralistic paradigms. Orford (2008) summarises community psychology's epistemic and methodological commitments stating that community psychology:

- prefers a plurality of methods, especially qualitative methods, but is not fixed to any particular methodology;
- does not seek to transcend the complexities of contexts by formulating any particular theory or rules – emphasis is on empowerment;
- evaluates and critiques its practice and approach to human inquiry;
- believes that action is inseparable from knowledge (praxis) in that knowledge is acquired through action and action builds on knowledge.

Furthermore, community psychology prioritises the importance of considering social contexts, power, empowerment and disempowerment and collaborative work in human inquiry.

With these community psychology principles in mind, participants are valued and central to the inquiry. I agree with a 'participative' or 'human' inquiry-based principle that "Knowledge which does not respect the whole person is destructive of the world" (McLeod, 2001, p.122), emphasising the importance of relational, emotional, spiritual and embodied dimensions of experience. Such an approach values the "humanistic trust in the creativity, integrity and truth-seeking capacity of the person, and in the 'sense-making' capacity of individuals and groups" (McLeod, 2001, p.122). Any knowledge claimed in this research therefore is produced through a knitting of stories; stories provided by the participants and stories created by the interpretations of them. This is considered possible, viable and achievable within the scope of the research; a scope that is limited by time and resources, its philosophical stance and by the complexity of the 'thing' being studied.

3.5 Experience, meaning-making, and language

I believe that a person telling their story intends to communicate and represent their own individual experience, despite possible fluctuations in accuracy. A person comes to know and construct their reality through direct (passive and active), and indirect ways of experiencing; using symbols is indirect, visually perceiving is active, and sense of touch, taste, and smell is passive (Tuan, 1977). The way people come to know things is mediated and limited by the direct and indirect nature of their experiencing. Direct experience allows one to know something intimately, like your home, whereas indirect experience is conceptual allowing one only to know about something, like a country. Tuan (1977) aptly highlights, however, that "one person may know a place intimately as well as conceptually. He [sic] can articulate ideas but he has difficulty expressing what he knows through his senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and even vision" (p. 6). These nuanced aspects of experience can be difficult to express and thus some people can suppress that which they cannot communicate. Some experience is regarded as personal and eccentric and thus little value is associated to it. For this reason some people deem these more subtle experiences and meaning to be private. This makes accessing this kind of experience and meaning challenging at times (Tuan, 1977). Limited literature on environmental quality attempts to understand how people feel about space and place and engage with different modes of experience (e.g. sensorimotor, tactile, visual, and conceptual). Ambivalence is also often ignored. However, some work in humanistic psychology, philosophy, anthropology and geography has recorded the intricacies of human experiences.

Tuan (1977) explains the intricacy of experience and the importance of utilising an appropriate investigative approach to access its meaning and complexity. He argues that the objective and subjective divide needs to be overcome since humans experience moves beyond the personal and subjective. For example, human interaction with artefacts, activity or social situations tends to be something of interest to us. It is thus important to explore how humans act on and create things through their interactions with the world. Tuan goes on to explain that experience also requires externalisation, communication and clarification. In doing so, he highlights that words are necessary to discuss or theorise experience. Experience is thus mediated by language. Language provides categories and meaning used to interact with others and to coordinate understanding and actions (Hart, 2008), and the sharing of meaning further shapes it, creating new meaning and new ways of experiencing. I am mindful of this in my use of language within the thesis and when engaging in making any argument or assertions. There is an element of uncertainty that has to be accepted, however, as experience and

meaning-making is not entirely subjective (Tuan, 1977). Like Tuan then, the research takes a human-centred approach, which he explains well:

Human-centeredness acknowledges the role of humans in actively constructing artefacts – conceptually, linguistically, and materially – being concerned with them, handling them, and putting them to work. It acknowledges the diversity of human conceptions that motivate how things are acquired, exchanged, rendered meaningful, and used. Consequently, when we talk of meanings, we must be clear about whose meanings we are talking of and allow for the possibility that we may see things differently (1977, p.2).

Krippendorf and Butter (2007) state that experiences and meaning-making can only be accessed through ‘second-order understanding’. Human-centred research understands that people may experience the same thing, a structured programme, or environment quite differently. People experience and understand things in a context, conceptions and understandings thus cannot be universalised. Accordingly, “understanding others’ understanding requires listening to what they say they experience and acknowledging their understanding as legitimate, not inferior or mistaken, even when it deviates significantly from one’s own” (Krippendorf & Butter, 2007, p.2).

Meanings are acquired through activity; the sharing and interchange of personal opinions, knowledge claims, and experiential understanding/reflection. This thesis focuses on individual and social meaning-making activity but it is acknowledged that social and individual meaning is rarely separable and thus no attempt will be made to do so. According to Kincheloe (2005) “diverse meanings continuously circulate through language, common sense, worldviews, ideologies, and discourses, always operating to tacitly shape the act of meaning-making” (p. 332). Meaning construction consists of both preserving and enlarging meaning. In the process of meaning construction, searching for new possibilities is important (Seon-Hee, 2000). Furthermore, “what distinguishes human action from the movement of physical objects is that human action is meaningful, and thus can be grasped only in terms of the system of meanings to which it belongs” (Tizro, 2012, p. 67).

Accessing meaning is complex. By engaging in the data collection procedures as well as data analysis I could explore nuances of meaning. It usually takes considerable work to discover the subtlety and complexity of respondents’

intentions and actions and thus deep immersion in the data is required (Charmaz, 2006). I may have entered the implicit world of meaning, but not of explicit words. Furthermore, often the meaning of incidents showed in the emotions they expressed when retelling the event, more than in the words they chose. Accordingly, I needed to be alert to conditions under which such differences and distinctions arise and are maintained. Having the material to anchor the experiences takes rich data and entails having sufficient knowledge to see differences and distinctions.

Varela (1984) sums up well the special nature of experience, meaning and understanding:

That the world should have this plastic texture, neither subjective nor objective, not one and separable, neither two are inseparable, fascinating. It points both to the nature of the process, which we can chart in all of its formality and materiality, as well as to the fundamental limits about what we can understand about ourselves and the world. It shows that reality is not just constructed at our whim, for that would be to assume that there is a starting point we can choose from inside first. It also shows that reality cannot be understood as given and that we are to perceive it and pick it up, as a recipient, for that would also be to assume a starting point: outside first. It shows, indeed, the fundamental groundlessness of our experience, where we are given regularities and interpretations born out of our common history as biological beings and social entities. Within those consensual domains of common history we live in an apparently endless metamorphosis of interpretations following interpretations (pp.10-11).

3.6 Ethics and reflexivity

Iterative reflection was imperative to maintain ethical and methodological rigour. Within the current research I acknowledge that my beliefs, experiences and interests influenced my decision making and actions and thus shaped the research. For example, my interests in the outdoors and natural, wild environments led me to conduct research on the topic of nature, experience and meaning-making. I have also had many experiences of journeying in 'wild' landscapes, on my own and with

groups, which have influenced my ideas about these landscapes. These experiences have provided me with the knowledge, skill and confidence to create and lead my own WSE which inevitably changes the dynamics of the research process and relationship that can be formed with participants and the research itself: sometimes it made it easier to build rapport and at other times it did not.

A number of researchers see reflexivity as a key component in the research process (Etherington, 2004; Willig, 2008). For example, in a recent article titled "How can we improve psychological science?" it was stated that "it's time to bring introspection - the act of reflecting on one's own mental process - out of the closet, after an official ban lasting over 100 years...introspection could provide valuable raw material for building theories" (Locke, 2009, p. 390). Reflexivity was therefore considered not only as a method in its own right but also as a complementary method that was implemented alongside the remaining research methods.

Reflexivity is thus the articulation of my personal insights and interpretations on the phenomenon, and the impact of these on the research process. It was the process of reflexivity that facilitated the ethical monitoring of the research. The combination of ethical and reflexive practices is considered to improve the rigour and trustworthiness of qualitative inquiry (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003; Willig, 2008). Methods can broaden and deepen our view and understanding of life and our actions within it (Willig, 2008), but as Charmaz (2004, p. 287) aptly highlights, "Methods are merely tools" – reflexivity is key to rich, robust qualitative research. Accordingly, I acknowledge that research findings are my own experiential account of the research, which is contingent, provisional, partial, restricted, and local (Miller *et al.*, 2008); I include wholeheartedly my own subjectivity in the research.

Ethical approaches specific to how the data was collected and research carried out is clarified and discussed in section 4.4.4.

3.7 Research decisions

To ensure rigour in the research, it is important that my thinking and how that thinking evolved is illustrated (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003). In this section then, my thinking is outlined regarding some of the key research decisions that occurred during the research process. The choice of methods was driven by ideas about how the world works, how people interact with environment (in particular outdoor 'wild' environments), how people experience and make meaning out of those experiences, how environment influences people's experience, and so on. To access these ideas, 'how' rather than 'how many' questions were deemed most

appropriate and such an inquiry lends itself to a qualitative approach. To understand the process, this section will clarify key research decisions that influenced the design, process and ethos of the research endeavour, and is important since, fundamentally, choice of methodology is influenced by the research questions (Silverman, 2010) and ontology.

It took time for the research questions to evolve since they were continually influenced by reflective and analytical examinations of the research data and research process; the data steered many of the decisions regarding the focus of the research (Charmaz, 2006; Etherington, 2004). I also acknowledge personal influences, such as experience, knowledge and beliefs, during decision-making processes.

Unlike the final research aim – to examine people's experiences and meaning-making during a WSE and human-environment interaction – the original aim was to examine the effectiveness of Wilderness Therapy with people with mental health problems:

1. Is Wilderness Therapy beneficial for individuals with mental health problems?
2. Does Wilderness Therapy have a positive effect on the therapeutic community as a collective?
3. Do the effects of wilderness experiences change for people according to the severity of the mental illness and why?
4. If Wilderness Therapy is effective how can the principles of success be replicated in everyday life?

These research questions were in an initial research proposal. They were somewhat unrealistic and my understanding of my own ontological stance was only just developing. Question one was the primary focus of the research, as subsequent questions were considered to depend on its outcome. I wanted to find out whether Wilderness Therapy was a useful experiential tool within the mental health arena and I sought to examine this and how it could be harnessed and implemented more readily in the UK. However, I soon realised through reflection and further reading that such an aim was too broad. The sample required for addressing question two was reconsidered, since locating a group of people who termed themselves a 'therapeutic community', near to York, proved difficult. Consequently, it was decided that this sample requirement should be removed and that recruitment from York St John University students was the most efficient method. Regarding questions two and three, it became clear that in order to investigate 'severity' of mental illness, participants would have been required to be

labelled with some sort of diagnosis. It was thought that this requirement may become problematic as having such criteria suggested that some sort of clinical background/experience would be needed. I did not have this expertise and accessing such expertise may have proved challenging. In the case of study one it was necessary to recruit participants quickly (due to timing and weather limiting the months of the year when a study was possible), so the criteria were simplified. Thus question three was completely removed. Question four was also removed as it was too broad and thus unachievable. Accordingly, the research questions were revised and narrowed.

The three revisions that followed became more specific for example, there was an aim to identify and investigate effects, qualities, and underlying processes of Wilderness Therapy. As my knowledge of the literature grew there was a decision to measure the longevity of programme outcomes. This was driven by literature that criticised the lack of follow-ups (Ewert, 1987; Morris, 2003; Newton, 2007). Furthermore, as I became more aware of the North American influence within the wilderness and wilderness experience literature, I made an effort to situate the research and its implications within a/the UK context. The sample group was also simplified to a generic 'adults'. This was because previous terms that were coined during the forming process of the research questions (i.e. "with mental health problems") went against the principles of community psychology that, through my reading and exposure to the mental health practice, became increasingly irrelevant and inappropriate for my research. Community psychologists aim to move away from disempowering and individualising terms and labels within mental health (Orford, 2008). The language used, and the assumptions that accompanied terms like 'mental illness' and 'severity', are complex, and thus critical questions such as "Who has the authority to label and diagnose an individual?" and "What and whose purpose does this serve?" arose. Attempting to answer these questions was not the focus of the research and thus using such terms was deemed intrusive to the research endeavour. Simplifying the sample provided flexibility, whilst also reducing the problematic that existed in previous revisions.

Version four saw improvement but the research questions, still troublesome, required further refinement. For example, terms like 'effects', 'qualities', and 'processes' remained. For version five these words were removed as they were considered multifaceted and thus had no clear application. The term Wilderness Therapy, that was used to describe the outdoor programme of the study, was also changed in version four to Wilderness Experience Programme (WEP). This was due to a better understanding of the research field, its popular

(well known) terms, and its distinctions between outdoor programmes and their specific components (Crisp, 1997). The term WEP represented the study programme more accurately and avoided disputes over what 'therapy' is, and also its negative public connotations.

Deeper into the refinement stages I moved even further away from the positivistic undertones of the first version of the research questions and sought to examine people's meaning-making from the experience I was providing in an outdoor 'wild' environment, rather than seeking to discover and justify specific outcomes. I thus replaced "programme" with "experience". This decision was partly steered by the widening literature search and by my deeper understanding of my epistemological positioning within the research. For example, though my initial searches for wilderness experience and therapy literature seemed to produce limited resources, once I began to broaden my search and use more novel search terms, such as camping therapy, adventure therapy and Outward Bound, I started to discover large amounts of research (though they were still largely of North American and Australian origins).

Some of the literature investigated the wilderness and experiences within it more qualitatively and sensitively, but the majority revealed research that produced lists of outcomes and positivistic interpretations. I wanted to resituate my research into a different arena of investigation, by moving away from positivistic assumptions towards interpretivist thought and method. Thus in version five the nature of the questions were more person-centred (with influences from authors such as Carl Rogers) and a move was made away from projecting an 'objectivist' examination on people's experiences of the WEP towards a position that acknowledged subjectivity more committedly and valued participants' voices. Furthermore, as I gained confidence with deconstructing and critiquing the literature I replaced "wilderness" with "wild place" as I felt this better represented what was available in the UK landscape, changing to the term "'wild place' experience" (WPE).

Although the questions in version five were considerably changed from the original version they were still concerned with examining what meaning people create/gain from experiences in outdoor 'wild' environments, and identifying how such environments could facilitate a therapeutic journey. Although the term 'qualities' was still utilised, 'qualities' were to be identified and defined by the participants rather than by me or the literature, thus the intention was to minimise complications not exacerbate them. However, though I also recognised that complications may not be minimised, I included the term as it most accurately represented what I wished to investigate and identify; the elements,

characteristics, and components that made the WPE beneficial or not. Multifaceted terms were, therefore, generally avoided in version five and the aims of the research were less complicated. As a result, the research endeavour was more focused and manageable.

The first five revisions took place in the first year of the research before the first study was conducted. The revisions had filtered out much of the material that was problematic. Through reading I also became more and more interested in experience and felt that the holistic use of the term 'experience' allowed for scope in the research and negated the need to examine 'effects' and 'outcomes'. It was this sixth version that then led to the final version of the research questions stated in the introduction to this chapter.

The aim to investigate how useful outdoor 'wild' environments are as experiential tools/environments within the mental health arena still remained in the final version. The name of the outdoor structured experience changed to something more removed from the literature and more akin to the essence of the research endeavour and the experience. The experience was renamed to 'walking and solo experience' (WSE) thus encapsulating the fundamental elements of the experience itself. The final set of research questions were considered to best represent the need in the wilderness literature and my own ontological and epistemological stance. The final set of research questions were:

1. What is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?
2. What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?
3. What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?

The above explanation of the research decisions demonstrates the development of my ideas and my resistance to the temptation to present my method in a positivistic way. Van Maanen (cited in Hyde, 1994) notes that there are many tensions in fieldwork, which often go unreported; including those between accident and planning, impulses and rational choice, accurate judgements and mistaken ones. In essence, "Research is in itself a process and a learning experience" (McLeod, 2001 p. 120); in particular PhD research. Indeed, as a new researcher, the journey of a PhD has been profound.

Chapter 4: Methodology: The natural history of my Research

Research is an adventure into the unknown. The intention here is thus not to provide a method for replication, but to provide a 'natural history' of the research, involving an explication of the research journey and its evolution. A detailed description of what I did during the enquiry into experience and meaning-making is offered, and how the research framework guided action is explained. Ethical and reflexive commentary will weave in and out of the chapter, appearing where appropriate and useful. Ethical and personal influences were interconnected with the research process and decision making, thus, the inclusion of them aims to enrich and enhance the flow of the chapter.

This chapter will detail the data methods of two studies. Formal approval of the research design, programme phases, and data collection methods were granted by the York St John University (YSJU) Ethics Review Committee (see appendix G and H). Each study involved participants 'walking through' and 'being with' a natural landscape which included overnight 'wild' camping. The duration and locations of the studies differed but the general objectives of the studies remained the same, thus it is useful to restate these. The purpose of the research was to examine what meanings people create and gain from experiences in natural landscapes, and identify how such landscapes could facilitate a therapeutic journey. The questions were therefore:

4. What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?
5. What is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?
6. What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?

The chapter is structured in four major sections. The first, explains the reflexive approach to the research methodology; the second, details the structure and phases of the WSE; the third, describes how the research was conducted and data was generated; and the fourth, clarifies how the thesis was written, with particular attention paid to analysis. Each section explains how the research was developed and conducted, including a discussion of the various theoretical, ethical and reflexive issues.

The chapter begins with an outline of what the WSEs were and how they were structured and delivered. Epistemological and ontological issues relating to the nature of the topic and reflective statements relating to challenges and limitations are revealed intermittently throughout the chapter, particularly when

explicating the method of analysis. Intermediary sections describe the methods used to access, collect, transcribe and analyse the research data, concluding with a description of how the thesis and analysis was written.

Essentially, the study of people's experiences of natural landscapes is exploratory and thus a flexible and open (emergent) methodology and methods are required. The aim therefore, is not to provide an exhaustive and complete account of the various methodological issues relating to the topic, but rather to identify some of the central issues involved in adopting a thematic analytical approach.

4.1 Reflexivity

To investigate human-nature interaction and people's experiences and meaning-making I applied a reflexive methodology. Involving two main facets, "careful interpretation" and "reflection" (Tizro, 2012), my use of reflexive methodology aims to connect ideas about what peoples' experiences and meaning-making of a WSE are, and human-nature interaction, and why these aspects may emerge. Every attempt was made to avoid losing a connection with people's 'lived experience' of the WSE and nature, whilst also providing some interpretive insight into that experience. In doing so, the type of reflective methodology undertaken presumes that all research is subject to interpretation; there is no method to access reality and experience in a 'factual' manner (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009). Indeed experience is already an interpretation, an interpretation that needs to be understood (Scott, 1992), and a central aspect of reflexive methodology is acknowledging, and being aware of, the presence of interpretation throughout all stages of research (Tizro, 2012).

Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009) suggest a four level approach to reflexive methodology: 1) handling of the empirical material; 2) discursive interpretation of that material; 3) critical interpretation; 4) reflection upon the research process and outcomes in relation to the researcher's role and authority. These four levels are quadri-hermeneutic and offer a guide for reflection allowing me to recognise my bias towards nature as a therapeutically potential environment and use this awareness to perform critical interpretation that considers different manifestations and exertions of power during the research process. It is important that this framework is regarded as a guide for the researcher and used to learn how to study the same data (material) from different perspectives and demonstrate interconnections between 'what' and 'how' questions. The value of reflexive methodology is therefore "an awareness of the various interpretive dimensions at several different levels, and the ability to handle these reflexively" (Tizro, 2012, p. 67).

To facilitate and record this reflexive process I kept a research journal. Research journals are regarded as an important strategy to monitor researcher subjectivity, as well as a good way for researchers to become familiar with reflexivity (Gough & Madill, 2012). Robson (2011) advises 'real world' researchers to keep research as part of good practice suggesting that starting the journal from the very beginning of the research is the best way to inform the analysis and writing-up stages of research. In doing so, he states that the research journal forms part of an 'audit trail' (a full record of research activities). He particularly refers to the inclusion of appointments, notes from papers read, and decisions and progress made in relation to each phase of the research project. This kind of journaling of the research process was carried out from the commencement of the research using a combination of a diary and Microsoft Word documents to store this information.

To extend this ethical and reflexive procedure, Etherington (2004) suggests that journal writing be used to develop one's own 'internal supervisor'. To create this kind of internal critical dialogue reflections should also include considerations of: noting one's presence as a researcher (the impact of the research upon one's personal and professional life, participant lives, and one's relationship with participants); noting communication and bias (writing freely about thoughts and feelings so biases can be identified and used to enable communication and interpretation). In using a journal, a researcher is able to explore the complexities of one's own presence in the research setting, which can enhance understanding as well as ethical and methodological rigour (Etherington, 2004). This more reflective information was often more spontaneous and thus was recorded on the computer, in notebooks and on pieces of scrap paper.

In this sense, I kept a reflexive journal as well as a more formal/ procedural research journal. The reflexive journaling was generally more loose and open; notes were kept in various different locations, written spontaneously and unsystematically, as well as more formally during and at key phases of the research. Reflections that were written on the computer and note books were perhaps more systematic and legible. For example, I always took a notebook with me during the studies and wrote reflections on the computer about my thoughts, apprehensions and excitement beforehand and ideas and evaluative comments after the studies. By contrast, ideas and thoughts about arising themes and possible affiliated concepts were recorded more sporadically on the computer but often on scrap paper and kept in a box file.

On a practical level maintaining a research/reflexive journal helped me keep a track of the research process, be disciplined, and create lists of things to do.

Creatively, journal writing facilitated the formation of ideas and links, where I could think more freely and without judgment. Personally, it assisted an internal process; to deal with apprehensions and challenges related to the research, consider critically my own position in the research and relationship with participants, as well as participant welfare. Finally, writing reflective notes was like a release, whether that be of tension or of ideas, and was crucial to carrying out successful and ethical research.

Overall, journal writing informed the writing up of the thesis and reflective commentary is embedded in my writing. Excerpts from my journal writing have been included in thesis chapters where appropriate.

4.2 The walking and solo experience (WSE)

A walking and solo experience (WSE) in nature is a structured outdoor experience in a natural landscape. Types, styles and variations of structured outdoor experiences have been discussed in the literature review. This literature is used to demonstrate certain aspects of the WSE that was designed for the current research.

The decision to design and lead a WSE was first pragmatic. At the start of the research endeavour an attempt was made to observe and collect data from participants involved in a pre-existing outdoor structured programme, like wilderness therapy (WT) or wilderness experience programme (WEP). However, the terms WT and WEP are not widely used in the UK, and thus identifying a programme proved difficult and time consuming. Furthermore, the literature suggests that the majority of WT and WEP programmes exist in North America and Australia whilst few exist in the UK (Newton, 2007). Programmes that were identified in the UK at the time, such as the Wilderness Foundation, predominantly ran WT, but for adolescents and not adults. What became apparent near the time of the first study was that there were universities who provide outdoor education related 'wild' experiences, which could have been accessed. Duration and objectives varied however, and locally run wilderness experience or WT programmes who worked with adults specifically were thus not successfully identified.

I therefore elected to design and lead a WSE: I had the experience, training and confidence to do so. However, this meant that I could not necessarily "enter the life of the participant" (Willig, 2008, p.57) as comprehensively as perhaps possible if I had been a participant within a pre-existing programme. I considered that my prolonged engagement and immersion in the setting and process would

benefit the data gathering and analytic process and further the strength of rapport built with the participants. This in turn aimed to facilitate a holistic understanding as I was more able to engage with the participants and my own "flexibility, insight, and ability to build on tacit knowledge" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p.113). Furthermore, there was an effort to avoid the research having to 'fit' within an ethos, structure and process of a pre-existing programme and its leaders. Instead, the aim was to create, and examine, a WSE that prioritised the quality of spending time in a natural landscape, that maintained focus on this process within the landscape (rather than activities taking place within the landscape as in Adventure Therapy (AT)), and promoted an empowering and open ethos. It was thought that these features, though they characterise outdoor structured programmes, are qualities that can get lost at times with the incorporation of other features and activities. For this reason, designing and leading the WSE was practical and beneficial to the aim of this research.

Both of the studies involved a WSE which consisted of two distinct aspects: 'walking through' and 'being with' a natural landscape (two features that appeared to be identified as being fundamental to such programmes). I led the WSE and was accompanied by a facilitator who had some experience of walking (as back-up, for reasons related to health and safety). Decisions around the structure of the WSE were driven by the aims of the research and my own experiences in nature and leading in the outdoors, as well as the literature. Literature formed the basis of a theoretical framework for the WSE and detailing the sources that informed elements within (see Table 4.1). Additionally, decisions were influenced by the amount of resources available – such as equipment, time, money – and location and accessibility. A certain level of simplicity was, therefore, desirable since the aim of the WSE was to provide a structure that would be conducive for the participants to 'be with' and, to some extent, 'connect with' the landscape (if it were at all possible). No attempt was made to expose participants to high adrenaline activities like climbing or gorge walking which are often aspects of adventure experiences and adventure therapy (Crisp, 1997), as this was not an objective within the research, nor was it coherent with the principles of the research. High adrenaline activities were seen to detract attention from the examination of people's experience of natural landscapes. The aspects of the WSE, journeying through and being still in the landscape, and the sequence of them within the WSE, were similar for each study. Modifications in relation to structure, such as duration and location were implemented for the later study. In line with grounded theory principles, these modifications were influenced by participant feedback and data. There were also a number of objectives of the WSE that were considered to be fundamental to

the research endeavour. These objectives were ethical, effective, contextual and pragmatic considerations.

The primary ethical concerns of the WSE were to create a safe space to experience a natural landscape, and provide an inclusive and enjoyable experience. The latter objective was very much contingent on the success of the former objectives. It was hoped that participants would experience some level of personal growth during the WSE and that they would find the reflective activities valuable. Providing an 'inclusive' and 'enjoyable' experience, however, could be seen as problematic as this may lead to forcing the data by the participants and myself, as the researcher. Despite this concern, it was imperative that the WSE was designed carefully with participant welfare in mind. For example, to facilitate enjoyment it was important that the level of terrain in the WSE location was appropriate to participant abilities. Every effort was made in the design and the running of the WSE to make it enjoyable and manageable. This did not negate the possibility of participants having a negative experience, however. Participants were informed that disclosure and reflection about every aspect of their experience before, during and after the WSE was desired, including negative experiences. Participants were informed of this during the pre-experience presentation, and it was reiterated during their pre-and post-interviews.

To create a safe space, two levels, personal and practical, were considered. The personal level refers to creating a space for participants during the WSE to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions, and practical relates to how issues were addressed and procedures implemented: the two are interdependent and were considered together. To promote an open, inclusive and safe landscape in which to share experiences, thoughts and feelings, participants had opportunities to meet each other before the WSE (e.g. recruitment presentation and training session – see sections 4.2.1 & 4.2.3) and a soft 'contract' (Sills, 2006) (informal agreement) was established. This agreement was unwritten and covered issues like respect for others' opinions, confidentiality and turn taking when speaking. Participants were informed that the WSE would be terminated if any psychological distress or harm arose (or was of high potential to arise), and if weather conditions were a high risk to participant safety. Procedures for withdrawal from the WSE once at the location were problematic however, due to limited access to the area. The consent form (see appendix D) and recruitment presentation explicitly stated that to withdraw during the WSE would involve them walking back to a road with the facilitator where there was phone reception, unless injured. This meant that the withdrawal process was longer than 'typical' research studies and imposed a potential dilemma for participants. The implications of this were clearly discussed

with each participant so as to avoid any misunderstandings. Participants were also made aware during the recruitment presentation and training session, of the uncontrollable features of the landscape they were entering and the impact that this would have on the WSE (e.g. timings, camps, structure could change depending on the weather conditions) and their experience (e.g. changing plans, uncertainty, waiting around). Changes would also be determined by group ability and needs. Accordingly, it was made explicit to participants that plans were not fixed and were dependent on many factors, making them aware that they would need to be comfortable with, and prepared for, change.

To reduce the risk of injury and the chance of participants feeling overwhelmed by the WSE, a compulsory training session was included in the study preparation. During this session equipment was selected, checked and distributed, and information and demonstrations on the appropriate use of the equipment followed. This sort of briefing and preparation time has been said to reduce stress and anxiety (Pearson & Smith, 1986) and help create a pre-mindset, which has been shown to be important before a WSE (especially before the solo experience) (Bobilya *et al.*, 2009). Furthermore, to minimise the chance of injury during the WSE, stretching exercises were encouraged, as many of the participants had little or no experience of walking on hilly terrain with large heavy bags. The exercises involved the group standing in a circle, and following my lead, muscles from the neck down to the legs were stretched. As well as to physically prepare and recover participants' bodies, stretching also aimed to psychologically prepare participants for each day, providing a pause and calm space before beginning and ending each day.

Additionally, a participant-observer accompanied the group in both WSEs; my supervisor attended the first WSE and Kevin and a colleague, Brendan, attended the second WSE. Kevin was a participant during the first WSE and volunteered to help with the second WSE (attending the second weekend only). Accepting Kevin's offer to help seemed to compliment the ethos of the research in the sense that it was as inclusive and beneficial in doing so. The presence of the participant-observers helped enhance participant welfare and interpretation verification in three ways. Firstly, if someone injured themselves whilst on the WSE my supervisor was there to provide assistance. Secondly, in order to gauge my own performance and manner as a researcher and mountain leader my supervisor was able to monitor and intervene if and when appropriate. Thirdly, a more 'objective' perspective provided an opportunity for my observations and reflections to be validated and compared.

It was important to ensure that the location of the WSE itself was safe. Thus considerations about the terrain were not only important to promote an enjoyable, manageable experience, but to ensure that the level was within everyone's capability and no participant was put under any undue stress or danger. For this reason, the location was visited and the route of travel risk assessed before each study took place (see appendix M and O). To minimise risk and enhance safety further, I attained a Mountain Leader and first aid qualification before the first study commenced. These qualifications trained me to: be competent in basic first aid; navigate; lead; complete preliminary risk assessments; conduct continual risk assessments throughout the WSE. Each WSE also had an additional experienced person to ensure that, in the event of an accident, an experienced person always remained with the group. Having a backup also meant that my leadership and conduct could be observed, which helped create and ensure a safe landscape for participants.

The affective objectives of the WSE in both studies were to provide a memorable and powerful event that would make an impression on participants, and to support personal growth. The overall focus of the WSE was then, enrichment (Crisp, 1996). The purpose of the WSE was to create an experience that would result in participants leaving with something positive hopefully that contributed to personal growth. To achieve these objectives a number of elements were implemented.

Firstly, the WSE intended to provide participants with an adventure. The route taken in the WSE location aimed to make the experience manageable and enjoyable whilst maintaining an element of challenge and variation in terrain and height. For an experience to qualify as an adventure, it should meet three criteria: the experience must be freely chosen; be intrinsically motivating and rewarding; and have an uncertain outcome (Priest, 1990). It was, therefore, important that participants had a certain level of independence and choice during the WSE; people cooked or catered for themselves throughout – an element that also emphasised independence / self-sufficiency. Participants were therefore provided with maps, and were encouraged to contribute and suggest alternatives to plans. As many of the participants did not know how to map read however, the provision of these may have seemed superfluous but it was felt important that they all had one. Though I accepted and assumed all responsibility, I made sure each participant had a map so that I was not the sole map bearer, as it may have communicated a desire to exert and maintain control within the group. This was not an aim in the WSE, nor was it conducive to community psychology principles that underpinned it and the research process. Despite not being able to map read, participants were able to

contribute to route decisions and every effort was made to show participants where they were on the map, where they were in relation to their surroundings, and to explain where we were going next.

Secondly, to evoke interest, reward, and encourage a sense of an uncertain outcome, emphasis was put on the activity and challenge of 'walking through' and 'being with' the landscape. In doing so, the WSE avoided activities that often dominate and define AT programmes (such as climbing, gorge walking, canoeing etc.). Such high intensity activities were felt unnecessary, and fundamentally had the potential to detract from the purpose of the WSE and research objectives. The WSE instead distanced itself enough from AT programmes, but maintained adventurous aspects needed to promote a positive and hopefully motivational experience. Consequently, the likelihood that a sense of achievement would arise amongst participants increased and every effort was made to support them to complete the experience; an element considered important for participant confidence and self-worth.

Thirdly, the WSE aimed to employ an "unhurried and process orientated approach" (Nicholls, 2008). Participants were therefore entrusted with their own process, while facilitators provided support (Asher *et al.*, 1994). Growth was also encouraged by providing participants with an opportunity to experience an adventure (as discussed above): through the landscape, their thoughts and emotions. In an attempt to accomplish these aspirations, efforts were made to achieve the experiential qualities that Ewert and Hollenhorst (1997) claim characterise outdoor structured programmes:

...merging of action and awareness; spontaneity of action; personal control and awareness of power; intense enjoyment; and perhaps transcendence of self as congruency is found between the challenges inherent in the activity and ones' abilities to respond competently to those challenges (p.21).

To achieve these qualities, contextual criteria of the WSEs for the two studies were considered, with the aim to expose participants to an unfamiliar, predominantly natural and relatively remote landscape. In order to achieve a context like this for the WSE, these aspects were addressed together. To achieve the first objective, unfamiliarity, the chosen location for each study was one that none of the participants had seen or walked in before. Unfamiliar landscapes are useful in WSEs (Gass, 1993) and if any (high) risk was perceived whilst in the unfamiliar landscape, potential change mechanisms and inter- and intra-personal processes are said to have the potential to occur (Herbert, 1998). For the location

to be predominantly natural, it was desirable that the area have a higher presence of natural features (such as plants, trees, hill, rock, and vegetation) than human or manmade features (such as houses, pylons fences, walls, agricultural land). Remoteness was an important element of the WSE as, "Remote and natural settings imply less availability of outside aid and corresponding increases in the need for self-sufficiency, leading to a heightened sense of consequence and awareness" (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1997, p. 22). For the purpose of the research, a remote place was a location that was a reasonable distance away from civilisation and with minimal manufactured features.

Though practically the 'feeling of' remoteness is feasible, to a degree, by driving a certain distance *away* from cities and towns, the 'reality' of remoteness was not as easily achieved due to England's high population. Driving or journeying a distance (i.e. a journey of one hour) was not always enough to evoke such a feeling thus, whilst choosing a suitable location, an effort was made to avoid people, houses, and generally any representation or suggestion of civilisation. It was hoped that this would conjure, to some degree, a sense of 'wildness' and remoteness, and thus facilitate participants' immersion in the landscape (without too many distractions from every-day life). Both locations were within designated National Parks.

It is thought by some that separation or "being away" (as coined by Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989) from one's 'typical' everyday landscape plays an important role in outdoor structured programmes in encouraging growth (Hammit, 1980; Bettmann & Jaspersen, 2008). Additionally, 'being away' provides an opportunity to think and has restorative features (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1989). For this reason, it was important that the location of the WSE should have a degree of remoteness and unfamiliarity, despite the challenges of this provision in England.

Fundamentally, the emphasis of the WSE was on providing participants with an enriching experience, allowing time for participants, from an ecological perspective, to 're-connect' with themselves and the landscape – nature. In this sense, the WSE was coherent with the following: "rather than viewing nature as a force to conquer, nature [was] seen as a gentle teacher" (Asher *et al.*, 1994). Nature was regarded as a partner in the effort to provide a meaningful experience for participants; nature was not viewed as an object to be used.

Table 4.1 Theoretical Framework for the WSE (study one and two)

This table shows how research and literature have informed elements of the WSE structure and design

Element/ aspect	Theory	Source	Origin
Facilitation style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Letting the experience speak for itself' • Humanistic approach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gass & Gillis (1995) • Rogers (1951) 	U.S. U.S.
Briefing: pre-experience presentation and training session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduces stress and anxiety • Front loading – brings purpose & larger effects • Pre-mind set is important 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearson & Smith (1986), Mackenzie (2002), Alvani (1995) • Bobilya <i>et al.</i>, (2009) • Russell <i>et al.</i>, (1998), Campbell (2010) 	U.S. U.K.
Moving into the landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being away – restoration theory • Being away from/to • Separation – attachment theory in WT 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaplan & Kaplan (1989) • Hammit (2000) • Bettmann & Jasperson (2008) 	U.S. U.S. U.S.
Exploration phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleansing phase and being away from the familiar • Physical self and social self (relies heavily on Social Learning Theory (SLT)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russell & Farnum (2004) • Russell <i>et al.</i>, (1998) 	U.S. U.S.
Journey phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical self & social self • Personal & social responsibility phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Russell & Farnum (2004) • Russell, <i>et al.</i>, (1998) 	U.S. U.S.
Solo phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for participant to take responsibility over solo structure and time • Physical rest and reflection • Duration: 24-72hours • Significant life event • Perceived risk (voluntary and involuntary) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Campbell (2010) • Bobilya <i>et al.</i>, (2009) • Herbert (1996) & Starr (1969) • Bobilya <i>et al.</i>, (2009) 	U.K. U.S. U.S. U.S.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peak experience (links to 'self – actualisation' – humanist theory e.g. the basic goodness of human beings and the need to achieve one's full potential. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daniel <i>et al.</i>, (2006), McKenzie (2003), Nicholls (2008; 2009), Starr (1969) • Herbert (1996) 	<p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p>
Post-experience debriefing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimises learning and closure • Processing of event and reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Self-assessment ○ Peer reflection ○ Programme reflection ○ Life reflection • Value / evaluation • Ownership, personalisation and following through on changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pearson & Smith (1986) • Mackenzie (2002) and Russell <i>et al.</i>, (1999) • Gass (1993) • Gass (1993) 	<p>Aus.</p> <p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p>
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distance to think and 'Soft fascination theory' (most likely to be achieved in the exploration and journey phase) • Unfamiliar landscape • Unfamiliar landscape + perceived risk (high level) = activation of inter- and intra-personal processes and potential change mechanism • Natural consequences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kaplan & Kaplan (1989) • Gass (1993) • Herbert (1996) • Russell (2001) 	<p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p> <p>U.S.</p>
Activity in natural landscape (e.g. the phases)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi-sensorial learning modality • Multi-functional nature (may = change) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisp (1997) 	<p>Aus.</p>
Experience type	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Enrichment' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crisp (1997) 	<p>Aus.</p>

4.2.1 The WSE phases

As established above, the WSE did not replicate the structure of another programme, but rather integrated ideas and principles from a number of different outdoor programmes and therapies (see table 4.1). Phases were used to describe the structure of, and identify transitions in, the WSE. The functions of the phases were primarily to ease the transition from landscape to landscape (urban to natural) and activity to activity ('walking through' and 'being with'). Phases were thus intended to complement each other and facilitate the experiences and emotional and physical journeys of the participants during the WSE as follows: an exploration phase, journey phase and a solo phase. The 'walking through' aspect of the WSE related to the exploration and journey phase, whilst 'being with' a natural landscape involved a solo phase.

The purpose of the exploration phase was to ease participants physically and mentally into the unfamiliar natural landscape gradually and safely. Thus walking tended to be relatively short in distance and duration. The journey phase intended to provide an opportunity for participants to travel through the landscape, allowing movement from one location to another (different) location. This meant that participants had to carry all the food, shelter and belongings they needed. It was during this phase that the aspect of adventure and challenge was most likely to occur (but this depended on the individual's prior experience).

Challenging experiences were also possible during the solo phase, but equally important (if not more) was for this phase to provide an extended amount of time where participants could be alone with the landscape and feel no pressure to do any specific activity. The inclusion of a solo phase has been claimed to have many benefits such as physical rest and reflection (Campbell, 2010), and has been stated as a significant and powerful life event (Bobilya *et al.*, 2009), and described as a 'peak experience' that can lead to 'self-actualisation' (McKenzie, 2003; Nicholls, 2008). Incorporating some form of solo time within a WSE has been found to be powerful for people as it enables a focus on the immediate experience and processing of the 'journey' and time in the landscape (Nicholls, 2008). The solo experience has thus been a consistently popular component of most WSE and WT programmes (Knapp & Smith, 2005). Additionally, the solo has been found by recent studies to be a key element for participant growth and learning (Daniel, 2003).

Whereas some literature has used terms like solitude or quiet time, the term 'solo' has been chosen as it describes this phase of the WSE more accurately. For example quiet time often refers to experiences that are of short length and happen

whenever participants want them to happen (Nicholls, 2008). Furthermore, although every effort was made to make participants feel alone and not see anyone during their solo phase, participants knew that they were not totally alone; they were aware of the proximity of others primarily due to safety and ethical considerations. Therefore, the term 'solitude' - "the state of being alone" - was replaced with 'solo' as this phase was specifically "for and done by one person" (Pearsall, Concise Oxford English Dictionary, 2001).

The solo phase lasted between 34-36 hours for each study, which is a typical duration in solo experiences, lasting between 24-72 hours (Bobilya *et al.*, 2009). The duration of the solo phase in the WSE was also influenced by the camping arrangements in the first study, with participants sleeping during a number of their solo hours. To avoid producing unnecessary divergences between the studies when making comparisons, a similar duration was employed during the solo phase in the second study.

The solo phase occurred within the journey phase, near the end of the WSE. This was to ensure that the solo phase was a 'part of' the journey and encompassed in the entirety of experience, and not experienced in isolation to the other phases. The aim was that participants would consider the solo as part of the journey - a still journey. Other structured outdoor experiences have similar phases to those described, with the journey phase particularly aimed to encourage awareness of the physical and social self - their differences and similarities (Russell & Farnum, 2004; Russell *et al.*, 1998).

All of the phases aimed to facilitate participants to engage and 'be with' the landscape. In order to understand how each phase was accomplished in each study, however, they are discussed in relation to each individual study and more detailed information about the location of the two WSEs below.

4.2.1.1 WSE phases in study one

Study one took place in September, the early autumn in the College Valley in Northumbria, near the Cheviot Hills. The WSE was led over a five day period (from a Sunday to a Friday) and participants travelled by train and by car to the initial location, a bunkhouse. The bunkhouse was located at the top end of the College Valley and provided basic and comfortable accommodation (e.g. beds, fire, kitchen and bathroom). The participants, participant-observers and myself stayed at the bunkhouse for the first two nights, firstly to enable everyone to rest after a long journey and to gently expose participants to the landscape, and allow participants (and leader) to prepare for the journey phase and camping. The structure and

sequence of the WSE of the phases are illustrated in Table 4.2 (see also appendix P).

Table 4.2 Study one WSE structure and phase sequence

This table shows the sequence of activity that took place on each day of the WSE.

Day	Description of Activity
Day 1	– Arrive at the bunkhouse in College Valley (evening)
Day 2	– Exploration phase begins and ends (3-4 hour walk)
Day 3	– Journey phase begins (5 hour walk) – Camp 1
Day 4	– Journey phase (6-7 hour walk) – Camp 2
Day 5	– Solo phase (34 hours) – Camp 3
Day 6	– Solo phase ends – Walk back to the bunkhouse (3 hours; Journey phase ends) – Travel home

Exploration phase: The exploration phase primarily involved the group walking a circular journey down a valley, up a hill, and back down again. The terrain was low in grade as much of the walk was on established paths, with a mixture of steep and flat gradients. This meant that participants could adjust their bodies and feet to the terrain gradually, without too much challenge or discomfort. The walk lasted approximately four hours, allowing time for tent construction practice to take place in the afternoon and for participants to have the opportunity to explore the area.

The exploration phase route was circular to allow participants to be exposed to as much new terrain and views as possible and purposely began and finished from the same location (the bunkhouse) due to it being a relatively familiar place to the group (having already spent a night there). The aim of returning to somewhere similar was to encourage feelings of safety and comfort, an important consideration for participant welfare. In the evening the group were provided with guidance on packing their rucksacks for the journey phase the following day; a group discussion was recorded, maps were distributed and the route discussed.

Journey phase: The journey involved participants walking from one location to another over three days. The average length of time spent walking was between four and five hours: At no time did walking duration exceed eight hours. The route was circular as at the end of the journey phase we returned to the bunkhouse. The terrain was of medium grade and was similar to that on the exploration phase and thus within participant abilities. The main difference from the exploration phase

was the duration of the walking each day and the addition of carrying weight: participants walked for longer and carried all their equipment (including a tent) and food required 'to survive' for the three days. Each camp was in a different location and each day gradually built on the last, in regards to walking duration, grade of terrain, and height gain and loss. The last day of the WSE involved a short walk so as to return to the bunkhouse and complete the journey phase.

Solo phase: The solo phase involved participants spending 34 hours on their own in the natural landscape. During this phase each participant had all the equipment they had carried with them during the journey phase. Before the solo phase began participants were briefed on its purpose, which was to sit with the landscape without the distractions of everyday life. Participants were therefore asked to hand in, or turn off, all technological equipment (e.g. mobile phones and radios) for the duration of the solo phase. The use of watches was optional as it was thought that for some participants being without a watch may cause disorientation and discomfort; some participants chose to keep their watches and others discarded them at the start of the WSE. Participant camps were close to a water source and no tent was in view of another. The tent being out of sight was desirable so as to inspire the feeling of being with the landscape without distraction. To further aid this process of 'being with' the landscape, group members were also asked not to wander more than 30-40 metres from their tent.

All of these restrictions were optional, and participants were reminded of this before the solo phase commenced. To ensure that participants felt safe and that they could withdraw at any time, at an arranged time in the evening of the solo a torch was flashed at participants' tents. The participants then would flash back if they were ok, or if they were unhappy they would come out and express any concerns. This strategy was agreed before the solo began. After the solo, participants were debriefed and they were asked if they wanted a photo record of their achievement.

Camping: Throughout the duration of the journey phase and solo phase each participant had a tent. Two participants owned their own tent and two participants borrowed tents. All campsites were wild camps in that they were not designated areas for camping and had no facilities. Wild camping was chosen for two reasons; there were no designated areas for camping along the walking route, and it was more likely that seeing or camping with or near other people would be avoided. All campsites were positioned near water sources (i.e. less than 50m). During the training presentation (see appendix E) participants were informed of the camping ethos; that is when camping (and walking) there must be no trace that people had resided in the area. Participants were, therefore, provided with trowels for when

'nature calls' and were told to burn any toilet roll used. The ethos was also reiterated during the WSE.

Participants camped for three nights and utilised two campsites. The first campsite was chosen by the participants who, rather than sleeping in the valley and in view of a house in the area, chose to investigate and camp in a corrie named Bizzle Crag. On the third day, group members chose to extend their walk and go straight to the proposed camping area for the solo phase. Due to the time available and participant eagerness, the final campsite was set up in advance of the scheduled solo phase time. The location was a shorter distance away from the bunkhouse. This meant an early start on the final day ensured an earlier return to the bunkhouse, in time for transport arrangements and relaxed departure. Therefore, instead of the planned 24 hour and one night's camping, the solo phase lasted 34 hours and involved two nights camping alone. Participants were happy with this arrangement and during the last group discussion of the WSE the majority stated they would have liked to have extended the solo phase, suggesting no discomfort arose during the two nights' solo camping.

For safety and environmental reasons, participants were also informed not to have camp fires. The camp spots for the solo were also in a location where they were away from any path, which made it less likely that participants would be disturbed by other walkers.

Location and terrain: The map used during the WSE was a 1:25 000 scale Ordnance Survey (OS) explorer map number 16 and titled "The Cheviot Hills". A study of the map and investigation into the location identified the appropriate safety features such as; access roads, accommodation, and escape routes (in case of an emergency). Additionally, a reconnaissance and risk assessment of the location, conducted before the WSE, verified; suitable campsites, escape routes, access, type and difficulty of walking routes and terrain, accessible and clean water sources, and locations where there was a phone signal. These procedures were all necessary to ensure a safe and enjoyable WSE.

The landscape varied in terrain and height which met the physical and adventurous aspects of the WSE. The location also accomplished Ewert and McAvoy's (2000) definition of wilderness in that it was a 'wildland' place that was unfamiliar to the participants. As mentioned before, these characteristics were felt appropriate to provide if an interesting and enjoyable experience was to be achieved. The area also met other criteria. Firstly, in the area was a comfortable, affordable bunkhouse that provided a base for sleeping, emergencies and equipment. Secondly, the location was within a four hour journey from York (it was

important that time was used as effectively as possible so as to maximise the time spent in nature). Thirdly, the location was accessible by train, bus and taxi. Finally, it was the most remote location that met the criteria discussed above.

Equipment: Participants had access to an equipment list which was provided in a questionnaire (see appendix A). The questionnaire was distributed during the training session (see appendix E) a month before the WSE, during which all the necessary equipment for participants was provided. Participants were responsible for acquiring the basic equipment (e.g. toilet paper, food and base layers) and were encouraged to use their own equipment whenever possible. An inspection ensured that the equipment participants used was safe and appropriate for use during the WSE however, and if participants could not be provided with equipment they were asked to buy or borrow the equipment.

4.2.1.2 WSE phases in study two

The location for study two was the North Nidderdale area in the Yorkshire Dales during end of August beginning of September. As it was nearer to York it was less distance to travel, but the area was smaller and was less accessible (i.e. less choice of paths) than the Cheviot Hills area in Northumbria. The leadership structure was similar to that in study one: the group included the researcher, a backup and participants. The WSE in study two was spread over two weekends (see table 4.3 and appendix Q and R), enabling the WSE to maintain its length of five days, but providing perhaps a more affordable and accessible experience.

The original intention was to have the WSE take place over consecutive weekends, however the study had a two week interval instead since not enough participants could manage two weekends in a row. The decision around the change in structure from a five day consecutive WSE to a five day two-part experience was three fold: it was influenced by the data, from a desire to examine whether a change in structure would yield similar findings, and was a structure that was thought to be more accessible if it was to be provided within a mental health framework. The data from all the participants in study one suggested that the transition from their everyday landscape into an unfamiliar natural landscape was an important event. By having a two-part structure to the WSE, the transitional experiences of participants between landscapes could be further examined.

Another modification was that participants did not sleep in a bunkhouse for the first night in the landscape, instead we camped. Again, the decision to do this was driven by the data from study one. All the participants noted that they would have preferred to have camped throughout the WSE. Due to the reduction in time,

smaller walking area, and poorer accessibility in terms of paths it was, however, difficult to achieve a similar structure to the first study.

Table 4.3 Study two WSE structure and phase sequence

This table shows the WSE structure and sequence of activity, describing what took place and when.

Weekend	Day	Description of Activity
Weekend one	Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel to the location by minibus - Walk to camp one (2 ½ hours; Exploration phase) - Camp1
	Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Journey phase begins (5-6 hour walk) - Camp2
	Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walk back to the minibus pick-up point (5 hours; Journey phase ends)
Weekend two	Day 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travel to the location by minibus - Walk to a location where participants could choose their own camping spot (2-3 hours; Journey phase) - Camp 1
	Day 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solo phase begins (36 hours) - Stayed at same camp (1)
	Day 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Solo phase ends - Walk back to the minibus pick-up point (2-3 hours; Journey phase ends)

Exploration phase: The exploration phase was shorter in distance and duration than in study one (2 ½ hours). The group walked from the drop-off location in the valley up a gradual hill to the first campsite which was near a stream. The terrain was a low grade as we walked on an established track though the gradient was steep at times (varying from 15 degrees to 30 degrees); the pace remained steady. Unlike study one however, the gradient was less mixed involving mainly uphill for the first part of the walk, and then gradual undulating ground. The exploration route was also not circular, the group walked from one location to another different location and participants were carrying all their belongings and equipment, rather than leaving them behind (as in study one). This made it similar to the journey phase, making the exploration phase and journey phase far less distinguishable from one another than in study one.

Logistical and pragmatic restraints steered these modifications. For example, the equipment and participants' belongings could not be stored safely as we did not stay in a bunkhouse, walking without them was therefore implausible. The terrain also dictated modifications; a short circular route was not possible due to there being few paths. Going off path on the first day of walking would have been too demanding and would have compromised the purpose of the exploration

phase. Additionally, a slightly shorter time schedule meant that a circular route could not be completed before it became dark.

Journey phase: The journey phase in study two guided participants on a walk that involved them covering new ground for two days, on weekend one. During those two days participants continued to carry all their equipment and belongings and camped in a different location each night. A section of the route had no established path, making the terrain quite demanding at times. This meant that heather and boggy areas had to be crossed and thus took more time to walk through. Some of the participants found the off-path section difficult and others enjoyed the 'wildness' of it. Like study one, the journey phase was circular in type and ended at the location where the exploration phase began.

The journey phase during weekend two was rather different. It involved a short walk to the camp area designated for the solo phase (day one) and a short journey back to the pick-up area (day three). The route of the walk was exactly the same as the walk during the exploration phase, as it was logistically and pragmatically convenient and meant that the participant did not have to complete their solo in a completely unfamiliar location; this would have also been disruptive, compromising attempts to create a calm atmosphere in the lead up to the solo. Additionally, walking a different route that was unfamiliar to participants was not desirable as this would have defeated the object of the exploration phase and the gradual acclimatisation to being back in the WSE.

Solo phase: The solo phase, like in study one, involved two solo overnight camps and lasted 36 hours. Participants arrived at the solo area late in the afternoon. Solo camp locations were dictated by the participants and advice was provided if sought or necessary. The only request was for participants to choose a place to camp that was out of sight of other tents and accessible to water. Similar to study one, participants were debriefed about the purpose of the solo phase and were asked to stay within 30-40 metres of their tent, and not to read or use any technology. Safety procedures were also similar in that the backup and I were camped near each campsite, however, instead of a late night check during the second night, each participant was provided with a whistle, which they were to blow if they felt unsafe or wanted to terminate the solo phase. A whistle was chosen instead of flashing a torch at the tent (as in study one), as participants from study one said that it was an unwanted disturbance to their solo experience. Once the 36 hours had passed, in the morning of day 3, each participant was informed that the solo phase was complete and participants were asked if they wanted their photos taken as a visual record of the event. A de-briefing then followed and we all walked back to the minibus pick up point, completing the journey phase.

Camping: The camping criteria (i.e. camps should be situated no more than 50 metres from water) and ethos was the same as that employed in study one. Additionally, participants attended a training session (see section 4.2.3) that informed them of these. Every participant had a tent, no one had to share: all but one of the participants had to borrow a tent. During weekend one, once the camping place had been reached, participants were asked where they would like to set up their tents in reasonably close proximity. During weekend two, participants chose where they camped as previously stipulated.

Location and terrain: The north Nidderdale area in the Yorkshire Dales as a location for the second study was recommended by a local outdoor education centre as an accessible, but 'remote' place to walk and camp. The area was open and had varied terrain, providing the opportunity for the participants to walk through open countryside and also through a forest. The grade of terrain varied from established track, to small grassy paths, to no path at all. For the majority of the walk no villages, towns or cities could be seen, however, there were established farms in the area and participants had to walk through two (one at the beginning and one at the end of the journey phase). Distant farmlands were in sight for most of the WSE. Consequently, animal traps and grouse shooting butts were scattered about the landscape. These were at times a strong reminder of the presence, action and influence of humans on wildlife and scenery. Despite these features, the area had surprisingly plenty of wildlife and the topography of the land provided ideal secluded spots to sit with the landscape.

Equipment: As in study one, participants were provided with an equipment list in the questionnaire (see appendix A) and during the training session (see appendix E). Participants were expected to obtain the basic equipment but every effort was made to support the participant if they could not afford something. Equipment was sourced from a local outdoor education centre that provided; rucksacks, cookers, fuel, tents, boots, waterproof trousers and jacket, torches. It was hoped that this would reduce any stress or difficulty related to obtaining appropriate equipment. Additionally, the centre was visited and equipment checked before the WSE took place. Any other equipment that was required, such as hats, gloves, scarves and walking poles, was sourced by me.

4.2.2 Reflective commentary

Designing and leading the WSE was an aspect of the research I was the most comfortable and confident with. I had a clear idea of how I was going to carry out the WSE and how I was going to lead it; the literature only confirmed my approach.

Deciding to be a leader as well as a researcher was one I discussed with my supervisors frequently as I knew that such an involvement would be questioned ethically and methodologically. In particular, ethical implications of having a dual role within the research were evaluated. The product of discussions was that having a dual role could provide an intimate insight into the participants' lived experience of the WSE. I also believed that I would gain a far greater awareness of the context and ability to assess the impact of the constructed environment. However, I was also concerned that I may have 'blindness' towards some of the aspects of the constructed environment created by the WSE design, since I created it and also was immersed in it, making it more difficult to provide a more objective evaluation of the context. The other contributing factor and bias was my agenda to gain practical experience and knowledge of designing and running my own walking and solo experience, as well as theoretical knowledge. At the end of the PhD I wanted to have gained as much from the experience and opportunity as possible. This agenda never compromised ethical or methodological considerations of the research however. Reflective work with myself and my supervisors helped minimise the chance of that happening.

The main reason I felt so comfortable with this aspect of the research is that I had five years of experience of leading in the outdoors and working with various people, with various needs. In comparison, my experience of qualitative research consisted of practical and theory work completed on one of my undergraduate psychology modules – this was all I had to base my decision making on. I also had no previous experience of hermeneutic based work, which made me question my ability as a researcher.

4.3 Generating the data

This section provides details of how the research was carried out, principles were adhered to and analysis was completed. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise the importance of the finished product including an account "of what was done, and why" (p.15). Accordingly, to address this need the following section will cover: recruitment and selection; methods of enquiry; methods of analysis; and writing up conventions and principles.

4.3.1 Recruitment and selection

Objectives and process were made as transparent as possible to ensure that participant welfare and research rigour were maintained so that informed

decisions could be made by everyone involved in the research. This included decisions around participation, communication, recruitment, as well as modifications that were implemented as a result of feedback. It was crucial to the ethos of the research that the recruitment was as inclusive as possible. Accordingly, this section will discuss; sampling methods, eligibility criteria, recruitment procedures and consent (see figure 4.1 for a flow chart of the recruitment procedure).

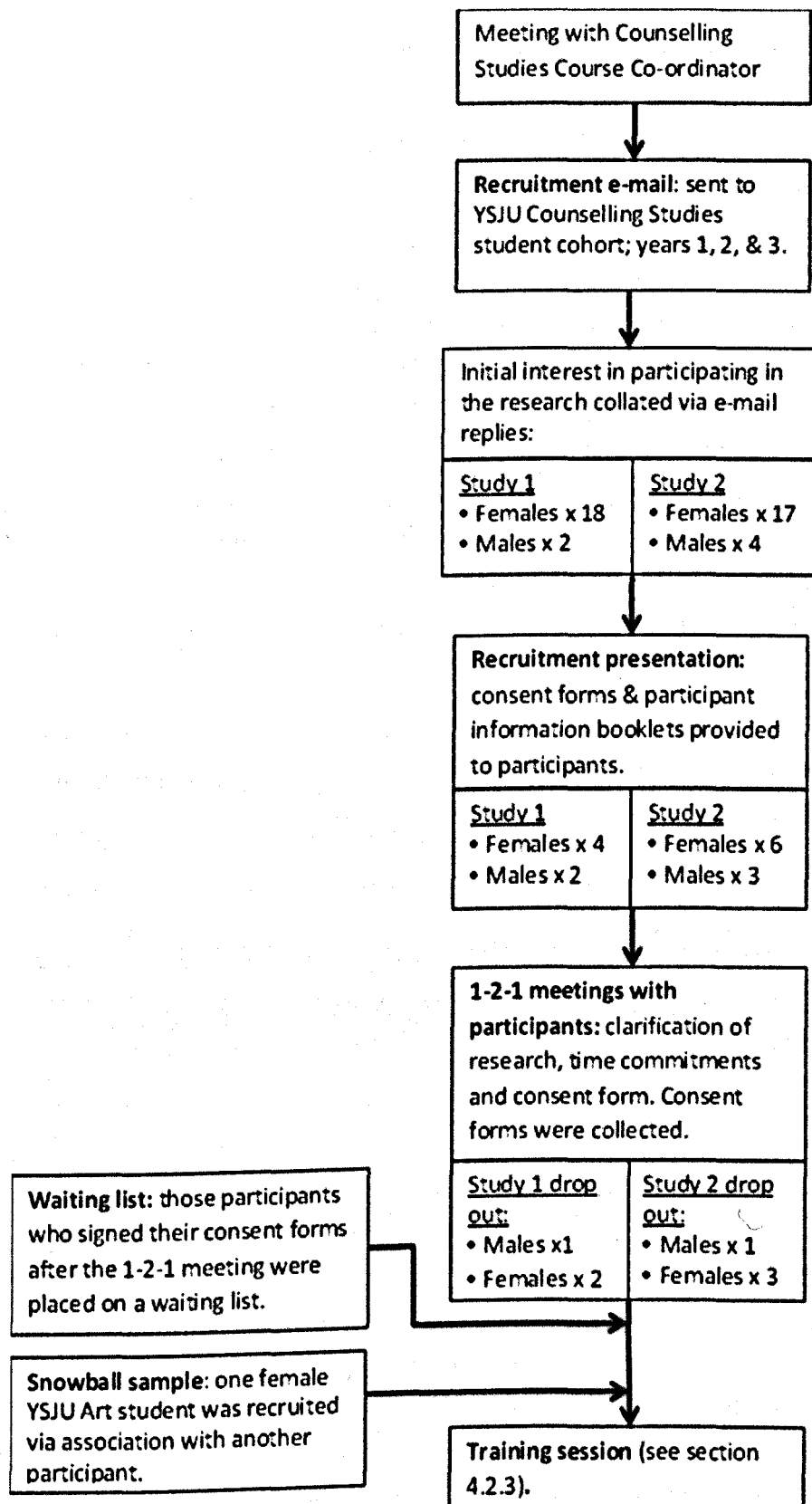
The target number of participants was between 4 – 8 members. This group size was chosen since smaller group sizes are best if emotionally charged topics could arise (Morgan, 1996). Additionally, a small group is safer and more manageable than larger sized groups to lead in remote natural environments.

Participants were recruited by a combination of purposive and convenience sampling. This was implemented as “there were no data from participants to direct what further information should be sought and explored” (Chiovitti & Piran, 2003, p.433). Participants were recruited within York St John University (YSJU), and thus were purposive in nature (Charmaz, 2006) as counselling students were specifically recruited to gain rich data. Counselling students were considered to enrich the data with their therapeutic knowledge and background, and their reflective and critical skills, developed during their counselling degree. Counselling studies students were regarded as more able to provide detailed accounts and to communicate an understanding of their experiences during their WSE. Consistent with constructivist grounded theory principles, participants were primarily selected on the basis of their ability to contribute to evolving theory rather than their representativeness of an adult population (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith, 2008). Implementing purposive convenience sampling enabled quick and cost effective recruitment. Finally, during study one an instance of snowball sampling (Marshall, 1996) occurred. One of the four participants was an art student as she had heard about the pilot study from another of the participants and was subsequently recommended as a potential candidate. Since she met the eligibility criteria she was accepted as a participant within the research.

The eligibility criteria were as follows: participants had to demonstrate that they were committed to the research; that they had the time to carry out that commitment; that they had reasonable physical fitness (i.e. if they had particular joint or muscle or breathing problems, they were not eligible for the research due to concerns for their welfare); they had little or no previous experience of hill walking or outdoor orientated exercise. Selection issues were discussed with participants and an agreement with the criteria was confirmed.

Figure 4.1: Stages of recruitment

This flow chart details the stages of recruitment during the research and includes numbers of interested people and those who had to drop out.



To recruit participants the head of the Counselling Studies degree programme (hereafter referred to as course co-ordinator) was approached and the purpose and endeavour of the research, particularly the recruitment process, was explained during a face-to-face meeting. This meeting provided an opportunity for assumptions regarding counselling studies student skill sets (e.g. journal writing, group work and therapeutic knowledge) to be clarified and a copy of the consent form and participant information sheet to be exchanged. Conversations regarding the research with the course co-ordinator helped maintain transparency and ethical rigour, ensuring that all concerned were continually informed. With this information, the course co-ordinator could deal with inquiries and concerns raised by the students on the course if they arose. Furthermore, although the majority of the pilot study took place before the commencement of the first term of university, the research required a considerable amount of time and commitment from the participants. Concluding parts of the data collection were subsequently completed within the month that participants returned to the university. It was therefore important that the course co-ordinator was aware of this extra commitment and that their contribution was acknowledged by the course staff. Participant welfare was thus of primary concern.

The Initial recruitment for both studies was negotiated through an e-mail detailing the topic area and intentions of the research. Location, duration, number of participants required, approximate project commencement dates and the research area were described. E-mails were distributed to first, second and third year counselling studies students of YSJU by the course co-ordinator and replies were directed back via the same route. Those who replied to the recruitment e-mail (Study one: females x18, males x2; Study two: females x17, males x4) were provided with a date, time and location of the recruitment presentation.

Study one and two recruitment presentations took place in YSJU and detailed: my background, research area, research plan, the experience, experience location, transport, insurance, participant selection, participant privacy, confidentiality and anonymity, equipment, participation benefits, participation considerations (see appendix B). Both presentations lasted between half an hour and forty five minutes and time was left for questions and discussion. The recruitment presentation was also an opportunity to gain clarification and confirmation from participants about their skill set and previous experience. At the end of the presentation consent forms and participant information booklets that explained the research in more detail (see appendix C) were provided so that these

could be distributed to staff if appropriate. Attendees were also asked to consider what was presented to them and express interest either by phone or e-mail.

The participant information booklet provided participants with a complete equipment list ('kit provided' and 'kit not provided') required for the WSE. Participants were provided with as much information about the research as possible, in a clear and uncomplicated manner, so that a fully informed decision could be made regarding participation.

The consent form contained the following information: the researcher's background, justification for the research, a description of the programme plan and process, research risks and benefits, and participant rights (i.e. withdrawal, confidentiality and anonymity). The form included a participant signature confirming an understanding of the research project, agreement of participation and authorisation for the use of personal information for publication. For those who wanted to be involved (Study one: females x4, males x2; Study two: females x6, males x3), one-to-one meetings were organised to discuss any further queries and the consent form (see appendix D). Signed consent forms were collected from each participant at least one week before any data collection commenced. Participants also retained a copy and were reminded that they could withdraw at any time.

Every effort was made to make the recruitment process inclusive and thus the selection process was flexible. Due to time constraints and the relatively small numbers of people who expressed firm interest in the research those who gave consent first were accepted as participants. Those who expressed interest and signed the consent form later, after the recruitment presentation, were placed on a waiting list in case there were any unexpected problems that would prohibit a participant attending the WSE. Those placed on a waiting list were made fully aware that attendance on the WSE could not be guaranteed but, that taking part in the data collection (questionnaire, psychological inventories (study one only) and pre-experience interview) before the WSE was required, in case they needed to replace a participant who had to withdraw. This procedure was felt to be a fair and effective way to conduct recruitment under the circumstances and time restraints.

Lastly, in terms of drop-out rates, one male and two females in study one and one male and three females had to withdraw from the research due to personal reasons or work commitments.

4.3.2 Participants

All participants were students in higher education, Caucasian and of British Origin.

Study one: Four students participated in the research and were given a pseudonym. There was one male (Joe), aged 39, and three females aged 22 (Kit), 37 (Sam), and 42 (Alex). Although 6 participants were initially selected, due to personal circumstances, two people had to drop out at the last minute and the person on the waiting list was also unable to attend at short notice (this person attended study two instead). There were no noteworthy differences between the participants in terms of their current education and race – all participants were British and Caucasian. The only difference was that one of the participants was an art student instead of a counselling studies student.

Information about participants, such as health issues, previous experiences, expectations, pre-conceptions and motivations for participating, was gathered before the WSE by questionnaire and pre-experience interviews. Sections 4.3.1 and 4.3.3 provide detail about the procedures of these.

At the time of the study, two participants (Sam and Joe) were going into their final year, one participant (Alex) was going into the second year of Counselling Studies, and the art student (Kit) was in her final year. Thus, all participants had differing levels of experience and knowledge regarding counselling, group work, journal writing. Kit and Joe were friends and the other participants knew each other from the Counselling Studies degree programme.

Sam and Alex had previous health issues that they voluntarily disclosed. Sam had experienced cancer and Alex was a drug addict but had been in recovery and therapy (attending a 12-step programme and Narcotics Anonymous (NA)) for the past three and a half years (at the time of the WSE). Although these disclosures had no practical impact on the data collection process or WSE protocol, there was an awareness of the participants' possible heightened vulnerability whilst on the WSE, especially the solo phase.

Kit and Joe exercised regularly, varying from medium to high intensity activity (e.g. running or horse-riding – surfing and skiing). Alex and Sam exercised from time to time, involving generally low intensity activity (e.g. short low-level walks). Experience of hillwalking was varied. Joe and Sam often went hillwalking, with Joe being experienced on large British mountains (e.g. Munroes) and long distance walking (e.g. Machu Picchu trail), with Kit having experience of hillwalking in the past and Alex having none. Kit and Joe regularly went camping, Sam went sometimes and Alex very few times. Only Kit and Joe had experience of camping alone.

Participants' expectations and pre-conceptions were fairly similar overall. Participants' attitude to the environment/nature and outdoor activity was positive and contact with nature was seen as beneficial; all participants seemed to have a predisposition towards nature. All of the participants considered outdoor activity in nature as part of a healthy and happy lifestyle. Joe and Kit regarded connection to nature as also important. The benefits participants thought that they would gain were: learning something new like skills and knowledge (all participants); being able to pass on that knowledge (Alex); reflection and focus (Joe and Alex). Reasons for participating in the research were for those aspects mentioned above as well as: personal growth/development (Alex and Sam); gaining a sense of other people's perspectives of the outdoors (Alex); and finding out more about the therapeutic potential of nature and solitude (Joe, Alex and Sam). The main thoughts or feelings described by participants about the research project were: excitement (Kit and Alex); apprehension about group-dynamics (all participants) and the solo (Alex and Sam); expectations about the location would be remote and away from people. Finally, participants' ideas about what constitutes a 'wilderness' or a 'wildland' was that these places are undisturbed, uninhabited and uncultivated by humans and modern life. All the participants stated this however Kit also regarded 'wildland' as a natural open space or woodland. Since the term 'wilderness' was used in study one, it may explain why one aspect of participants' expectations before the study was that the location would be remote.

Study two: Five students, two males aged 23 (Dannie) and 36 (Leslie), and three females aged 20 (Nina), 23 (Sarah), and 43 (Alex) participated. Out of these five students three of them shared similar counselling modules and thus knew each other better. Alex had participated in study one and the reason for her inclusion in both studies was to make a more intimate comparison between the experiences of the two studies and, with no previous hill-walking experience, she was an ideal candidate.

Eight people signed consent forms and had agreed to participate but due to work commitments three students could not attend the WSE during the dates selected, leaving five remaining participants. All five participants were counselling studies students: there were no strong variations between the participants in terms of their education and they were British and Caucasian.

Information about the participants was collected in the same way as study one, by using a questionnaire and a pre-experience interview. At the time of the study, two participants were entering their second year of study (Leslie & Sarah), another two participants were going into their final year of study (Alex and Nina), and one participant had just completed his university degree at YSJU (Dannie). Thus

all participants had differing experience and knowledge regarding therapeutic work, group activities and journal writing.

Leslie and Sarah disclosed in their questionnaire that they were experiencing depression, with Sarah stating that she also suffered from anxiety. Both Leslie and Sarah were taking medication for this. Leslie was also visually impaired with one blind eye and one with partial sight. Alex was still attending NA meetings and the 12-step programme. Nina and Dannie disclosed no health issues.

Nina and Alex exercised regularly, Dannie exercised sometimes and Sarah and Leslie exercised little or not at all. All participants when exercising took part in low to medium intensity exercise. Dannie had the most experience of hillwalking, having participated in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards. Alex and Nina had moderate levels of hillwalking experience and Sarah and Leslie had little. Dannie had a considerable amount of camping experience, Sarah, Alex and Leslie had few experiences of camping, and only Alex had experience of camping alone (which she had gained during study one).

Participants' expectations and pre-conceptions were similar to those involved in study one. There appeared a lower disposition to nature among participants, however. Nina, Alex and Sarah expressed a clear disposition towards nature whereas Dannie and Leslie did not, and none of the participants talked about a 'connection' to nature like participants did in study one, which suggested a fairly strong disposition to nature as important to one's life. Attitudes to environment/nature and outdoor activity was generally positive with participants stating that activity in nature is healthy (all participants) and cathartic (Nina, Sarah, Alex). The benefits participants considered to gain from the research were a greater appreciation of the simple things in life (Nina and Dannie) and learning something from the experience (Leslie, Alex, Sarah). These also formed part of the reasons why participants volunteered for the research. Nina and Sarah also stated that finding out if 'wilderness' can be therapeutic was an additional motivation to volunteer. Expectations regarding the location were that it would be a place away from people but that it would not necessarily be remote (all participants) and two participants were apprehensive about the solo experience (Nina and Dannie). Lastly, participants' pre-conceived ideas about 'wilderness' and 'wildland' were similar to those expressed in study one; the two terms were regarded as natural and places where there was no presence of modern life. All of the participants expressed this. Sara also commented that she associated 'wild' with drama and turmoil and wild things like lions.

4.3.3 Preparing participants: training session

The training session for studies one and two took place one week before the WSE commenced and lasted four hours. The session required compulsory attendance and aimed to prepare participants for walking and living in an outdoor 'wild landscape'. Prior to the session, a suitable location and time was arranged with the participants. YSJU was chosen as the location for the session for its neutrality, convenience for participants, and due to its storage capabilities for the equipment required for the training session. The training session had two parts; a presentation and a practical session.

The following categories were covered in a power-point presentation: equipment; packing the rucksack; clothing; food; outdoor ethos; camping skills; hygiene; hotspots; feet; water; communication; emergency procedures; finalising details of the WSE (see appendix E.). The practical session allowed the inspection of equipment to take place, to be fitted and distributed, and for the equipment lists to be checked and problems to be identified. Throughout the session questions were encouraged and each participant was provided with a handout of the presentation to take home so that they had access to the information.

4.3.4 Entering the field

...if we abandon the traditional goal of research as the accumulation of products – static or frozen findings – and replace it with the generation of communicative process, then a chief aim of research becomes that of establishing productive forms of relationship. (Gergen and Gergen, 2000, p.1039).

To encourage participants to share their lived experience and disclose personal information, discomfort, or opinions about the research, every effort was made to build a good and mutually respectful relationship with the participants: forming good rapport was key to the welfare of the participants and to the endeavour of the research (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Silverman, 2010). To achieve rapport, I aimed to create a safe environment in which participants could experience and share their thoughts and feelings freely, without judgement or pressure. It was important to establish a balance between participant needs and research objectives (Etherington, 2004), which required a sensitive, flexible and adaptable approach to the needs of the participants throughout the research process. A way to achieve this was to engage in a reflexive approach:

When we enter into relationships with our research participants it is inevitable that issues of power come into focus and require us constantly to scrutinize and interrogate our own positions, views, and behaviours, turning back onto ourselves the same scrupulous lens through which we examine the lives of our participants, always looking for tensions, contradictions and complicities (Olesen, 2000, p.236).

Thus, throughout the research process I aimed to monitor and maintain a balance using iterative reflection to scrutinise and inform my actions, decisions and relationship with the participants, including how I exerted power during leadership and data collection.

To decrease differences in power between myself and the participants, and any resultant discomfort, a commitment was made to 'levelling the relationship' as much as possible. For example, when appropriate I contributed my own thoughts and feelings in group discussions so that the process of disclosure was not purely one way between the participants and myself. Participants were also respected as experts on their own 'experience' and as learners. Participant voices were an important and integral part of the research; participants were reassured that their voice and input was valuable, and were encouraged to disclose any misgivings and reject or offer suggested changes to any structured elements of the research process or WSE (Akhurst, 2000).

Additionally, I was aware of the amount of time and commitment the research would entail from participants. Hence, it was important that participants gain as much out of the experience as possible; emotionally, developmentally, and academically. Participants were not only experiencing a natural landscape, they were experiencing a research project therefore, depending on their level of involvement, they could also potentially learn about research ethics, method, and conduct.

4.3.5 Striving for richness

Studies of structured outdoor programmes/experiences have identified that little is known or understood about what meaning-making occurs during a WSE, what meaning stays with people, and how people experience the transitional aspects of moving into a natural landscape and returning to everyday life. The current research aimed to examine these and thus, due to the exploratory nature of the research endeavour, it was vital that rich data were collected; "Rich data reveal

participants' views, feelings, intentions, and actions as well as the contexts and structures of their lives" (Charmaz, 2006, p.14)

Gathering rich data allows access to the different ways people experience, share those experiences, and make sense of them: Complexity and variance are acknowledged and valued (Charmaz, 2006). A conscious effort is made to move away from compartmentalising things into manageable chunks and move towards a more holistic and comprehensive approach. For example, people have strengths and preferences regarding methods of communication; some people prefer writing down their thoughts or speaking one-to one whereas others find that group settings aid their disclosure (when talking with participants during the pre-programme interview such preferences became evident). For this reason a number of data collection methods were employed.

Multiple methods provide validation and "a larger more complete picture of the phenomenon under study" (Fielding & Schreier, 2001, p.3), which allows an opportunity for both researcher and participant to reach beneath the surface of the phenomenon. Indeed, facilitating participants to elaborate on their responses by using a number of methods, and collecting contributions before, during and after a study, has been encouraged recently by qualitative method authors so as to deepen the level of subjectivity in research (see table 1, p381; Gough & Madill, 2012). The use of one method generally only allows the exploration of the research to travel along one route, whereas multiple methods can allow the research to journey along many paths and thus generate different and varied data along the way. Therefore, selecting a number of qualitative methods was thought to promote, rather than inhibit, participants' sharing of their experience. The methods enabled them to communicate and express their thoughts and feelings in an unforced manner (journal writing); in a one-to-one conversation (individual interviews); and in interactive and social conversation (group discussions and focus groups). Tizro (2012) points out the importance of having "access to the full range of strategies and narrative versions available to the participant" (p. 69).

Invasive data collection methods were avoided as much as possible during the WSE. For example, participant observation was initially considered as a method of data-collection, however the primary objective of the WSE was for participants to feel comfortable and free (physically and mentally) within the landscape. After some consideration, participant observation was avoided as it was thought it may engender a sense of surveillance or monitoring and would interfere with the experiences of the participants, and their development of rapport, trust and confidence within the group, and with me. Participant observation was therefore not included as a method and the "rights of the stakeholder" were honoured and

maintained (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Furthermore, concerns over remaining detached enough to accurately reflect on the participants' experiences and meaning-making were avoided (Willig, 2008). Two methods that were utilised during the WSE, and deemed less invasive than participant observation, were journal writing and group discussions. These were included on the premise that immediacy was important in order that participant experiences could be captured.

The use of interviews, group discussions and journal writing provided opportunities to support the different ways people narrate personal experiences (Ison & Russell, 2000). In doing so, stories are captured and contextualised by each other. In journal writing, stories are retained in a stable written form: In interviews stories are retained in fluid oral form (Webber, as cited in Ison & Russell, 2000). Interviews and group discussions were semi-structured and helped build rapport between the participants and me. The purpose of the interviews and group discussions (and journals) was to trigger stories about the interviewees' experiences and their understanding of them. Objective 'facts' about events or objects were not sought; of crucial importance was the individual's interpretation of their experiences and not relating descriptions of things or facts which were independent of an individual's understanding or interpretation (Ison & Russell, 2000).

These were the methods employed in study one and two and the key methods in collecting rich data. Study one also included the collection of data from psychological inventories (see section 4.3.2) for a list of the psychological inventories employed). The inclusion of psychological inventories was thought to enhance and compliment the other data collection methods. In study one, however, it became apparent that they did not fulfil these objectives and were a hindrance to the research endeavour and their construction and use did not align well with the ethos of the research. Furthermore, participants also conveyed their discomfort with them, reporting that they found them unnecessary and not helpful.

4.3.6 Reflective commentary

Generating the data posed a number of interesting challenges. One crucial element of this process was to be inclusive in the way I carried out the recruitment process. It was often a difficult balance between inclusivity and considerations of physical ability. Matching participants in relation to physical ability was something that I wanted to avoid as I did not want to separate people in that way. Nevertheless, it was something that did require some thought. Experience, from

study one and past guiding work, had taught me that having too much variation in ability had the danger of splitting the group and effectively creates an ability divide, which subsequently makes emotional safety and group safety difficult. This inner conflict was difficult to overcome and address as the literature presented arguments for both inclusive and ability-orientated approaches, although there was a general tendency towards a more homogenous group approach in the research literature. My intentions were to align, as well as I could, with community psychology principles and thus it were these that guided the decision to be as inclusive as possible and minimise categorisation/separation of any kind.

Although participant observation was not employed I was concerned that my presence during the WSE would influence what and how much participants disclosed to me. Before and during the WSE I emphasised to participants to be as 'free' as possible in their talk. During the WSE I also tried to provide as much space as possible for participants to experience the landscape without my presence. To do this, there were opportunities for participants to wander away from the group and explore areas nearby on their own. Additionally, I often led from behind, only moving to the front of the group during times where more clear direction and guidance was needed. This worked successfully in study one, but in study two this kind of 'atmosphere' was not as easy to create. This was because the physical ability of participants were too different, creating a situation where some participants had to wait for other participants. Additionally, time was more pressured generating a more hurried approach and the difference in ability only perpetuated the issue. I was very uncomfortable as a leader during study one and I found it to be one of the most difficult things I have had to do during my experience as a mountain leader. The difficulties that occurred made me question the changes I had made to the WSE design, location and route choice.

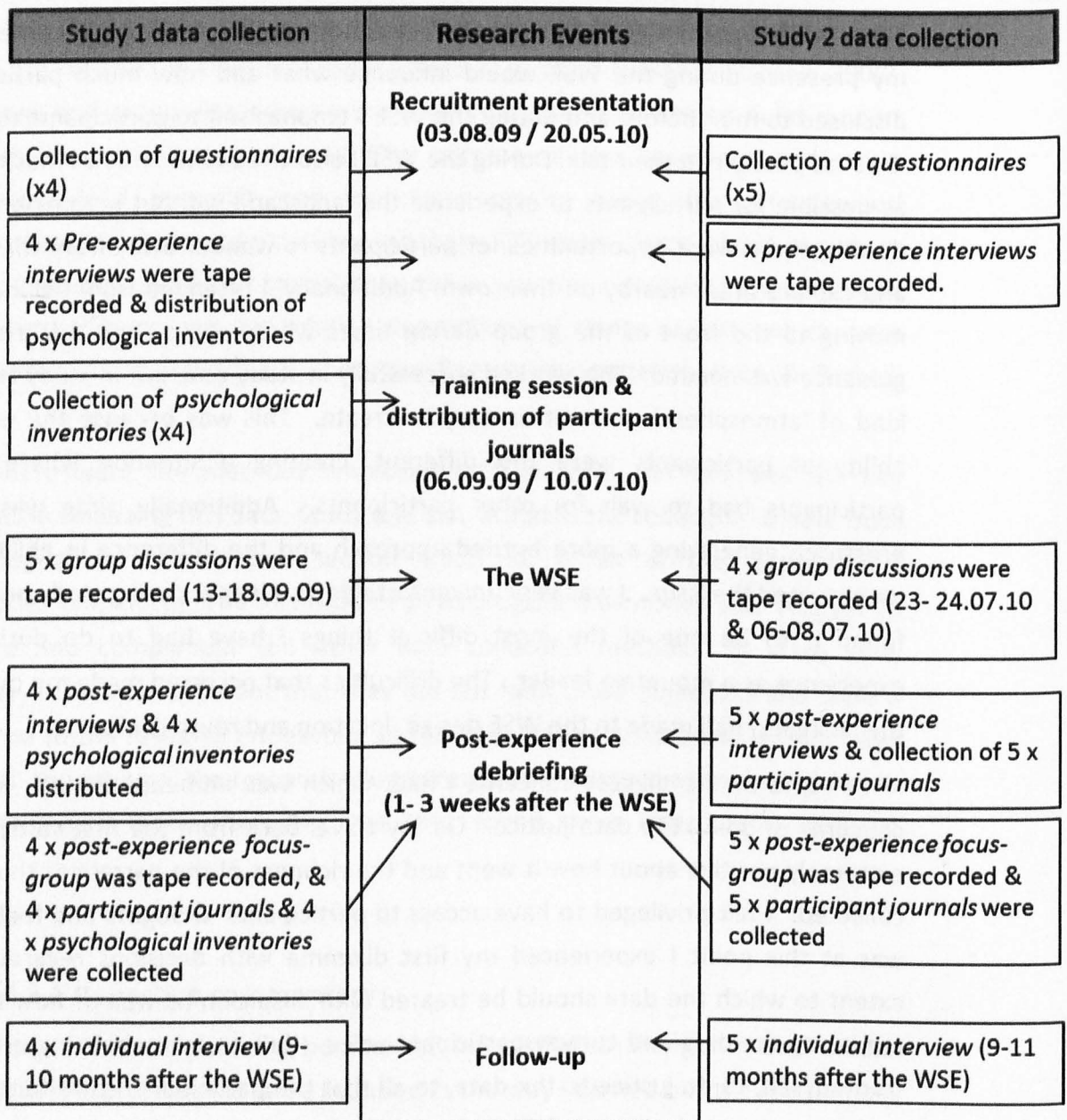
One of the biggest concerns I had, which was immediately felt, was my concerns of doing the data justice. On my travel back from the first study, I was extremely positive about how it went and the richness of the narratives that were collected. I felt privileged to have access to participants' thoughts and feelings. It was at this point I experienced my first dilemma with decisions regarding the extent to which the data should be treated with suspicion as well as how best to represent the data and convey participant voice. I felt an overwhelming pressure, from myself, to do justice to the data, to all that the participants contributed, and to draw authentic and insightful understanding from their words and interactions.

4.3.7 The research outline

As mentioned above, each study involved a number of data collection methods, including pre-experience presentations and training sessions, and the WSE itself. For clarity, the stages of the research process are summarised in figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2 Study one and two research process outline

This diagram describes how and when data collection methods were employed.



Multiple methods led to the collection of different types data, for example study one included: psychological inventories, tape recordings of pre and post-

programme individual interviews; participants' written reflections; tape recordings of five group discussions; tape recording of the focus group discussion. In study two the same methods were used to collect data, excluding psychological inventories, and the research process followed a similar structure to that of study one in regards to event sequence. That is, other than the exclusion of the psychological inventories, the data collection methods in study two remained the same, were of the same frequency and occurred in the same sequence as study one. However, although the intention was to complete five group discussions during the WSE, as in study one, only four were completed in study two due to lack of time. Nevertheless, these efforts helped maintain consistency between study one and two whilst also allowing for a change in the structure of the WSE – from an experience over five consecutive days to a five day experience that was divided over two weekends with a two week interval in-between – to be evaluated.

4.4 Methods of enquiry

This section describes the methods used to collect data, which were numerous and varied so as to provide a holistic access to participants' experience and meaning-making of the WSE. Accordingly, the following methods will be described and rationales provided: Questionnaires; psychological inventories; individual interview; group discussions; journals; focus groups; follow-up interviews.

4.4.1 Questionnaires

A questionnaire was the first data collection method to be completed and aimed to attain background information (see appendix A). It was specifically written for the purpose of the research and collected information regarding participants' experience and knowledge of the outdoors, and attitude towards nature and the landscape. Questions sought to access information about: background (i.e. name, age, gender, university and programme of study, year of study, and previous courses or work experience); health; outdoor experience; opinions about the research; opinions about the landscape; emergency contact details; equipment requirements (i.e. sizes and kit list). Health details were especially important to record in case of any physical or mental health issues occurring during the WSE. These questions were asked so that I could be aware of participant contexts and thus participant welfare would be considered. In addition, the information was sought in case it became useful in the analysis stage of the research. The questionnaire also provided preliminary data for the pre-experience interview, where participants were asked to provide more detail of their previous experiences outdoors. Furthermore, questions like "What are your reasons for participating in

the research?" helped me understand each participants' motivation for and expectation of the research/WSE. The questionnaire therefore provided important preliminary details about each participant and highlighted any areas that needed further examination.

4.4.2 Psychological inventories

At the start of the research endeavour the research was initially driven by a more conventional path and thus part of the research was comparable with the generally positivistic nature of previous research in the area. In other words, it has been recommended by Newton (2007) that more research on wellbeing and outcomes of wilderness experiences should use quantitative methods. For this reason, four psychological inventories were utilised in study one: Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995); Coping scale (Carver, *et al.*, 1989); Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) (Burckhardt, *et al.*, 1989); and Scale of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989).

These particular inventories were selected as they measure outcomes that repeatedly emerge in the literature. Numerous studies have noted the development of self-efficacy and coping skills whilst in 'wilderness' landscapes (Morris, 2003; Newton, 2007; Paxton & McAvoy, 2000). Accordingly both the GSES and Cope scale were used to measure these outcomes. The QOLS was chosen due to: its inclusion in studies of healthy adults (which is compatible with the population of this study) and adults with mental health disorders; being a short five minute questionnaire; being responsive to change as a result of specific contexts; being viewed as a valid and reliable instrument for measuring quality of life (Burckhardt & Anderson, 2003). Finally, due to the popularity of Ryff's Scale of psychological wellbeing as a measure of wellbeing within positive psychology (Keyes *et al.*, 2002; van Dierendonk, 2005), it was thought that it was the most suitable to use within the present research, regarding the examination of wellbeing during the WSE.

Participants were asked to complete the four inventories at home and return them at the pre-programme interview. The measures were self-administered and took between 30 minutes to 45 minutes and participants were asked not to linger on questions. The inventories were distributed before and after the WSE in order to provide a baseline and comparison data. The information collected by the questionnaires after the recruitment stage of the research identified that none of the participants had any diagnosed mental health problems. It became clear whilst gathering the data from the inventories, however, that

neither the participants nor I found the inventories particularly useful. For example, some of the participants felt that the questions could be interpreted in different ways and what answer they provided depended on the context and thus they found it difficult to decide at times. Most importantly they found that the inventory was not able to capture what they had gained out of the experience and, based on the data provided by them, I agreed.

Psychological inventories were initially introduced as an attempt to carry out a mixed method approach in an endeavour to enhance the research. As the research developed, however, and I gained a greater sense of the nature of the wilderness experience literature, such an approach was not conducive to the research endeavour, which became more influenced by critical realist principles.

This move was influenced by the evolution of the research questions (see chapter 3) and overall aim, which began with positivism (e.g. impacts and effects) and then moved towards an effort to capture participants' lived experiences and the construction of them. The inclusion of psychological inventories therefore felt contradictory to the evolving philosophy of the research. For these reasons, and as a response to participant feedback, the use of psychological inventories was abandoned for the subsequent study; data from the inventories were thus not included and analysis not analysed, and will not be discussed further in the thesis.

4.4.3 Individual interviews

Interviews were conducted pre and post the WSE and were semi-structured (see appendix I and J for a copy of pre- and post- experience interview schedules). In line with the first revisions of the research questions, the main purpose of the interviews in study one were to evaluate the 'effectiveness' of the WSE, thus interviews took place before and after the WSE. This meant that any changes in behaviour or well-being could be noted.

The focus of the research changed in study two; there was a move away from positivistic influences towards a more interpretive approach. Pre-experience interviews sought to capture participant expectations whilst the post-experience interviews aimed to gather participant narratives around, and related to, their experience during the WSE. Pre- and post-experience interviews also sought to explore participants' experiences of going from an everyday life context to a natural landscape context.

Transitional experiences and participant expectations were targeted data from study one and suggested that this may be an interesting avenue to investigate

further. Additionally, participants' preconceptions were accessed; participants were encouraged to relate back to their previous experiences and were explicitly asked in the pre-experience interview and questionnaire to disclose such information.

Interviews in studies one and two were completed within a two week period, before (pre) and after (post) the WSE. The duration of each interview ranged from 27 minutes to 1 hour 35 minutes. Table 4.4 provides durations for each interview during study one and study two. The post-experience interview followed similar procedures to those of the pre-experience interview in studies one and two. The only difference between the two studies was that in study one, during the second half of the interview, a colleague (a neutral figure from the research) conducted the last part of the interview. This latter part of the interview lasted about 10-20 minutes and involved questions that predominantly focused on the quality of the WSE and research process, leadership, and group dynamics. These topics were considered to be possibly more 'sensitive' for participants to answer than others since the questions directly asked participants for their opinions on aspects of the research (the WSE) that I had designed and led. Ethical and methodological considerations were important to consider here as by not having someone impartial ask these questions it could 1) put participants under undue distress, discomfort or pressure, and 2) as a result influence what participants say or not say (e.g. the quality, trustworthiness and richness of the data). During the study one focus group, however, participants disclosed that having a different person asking questions during interview implied to them that I did not trust them. Additionally, it became clear, whilst transcribing the data, that the participants generally repeated to the colleague what they had disclosed to me, which put its usefulness relevancy into question but also implies that I had a good rapport with the participants. Consequently, the use of a colleague to ask more 'sensitive' questions near the end of the interview was discarded.

Table 4.4. Study one and two interview durations

This table illustrates the duration of each individual interview that was held during study one and two.

Individual interview durations					
Study one			Study two		
Participant names	Pre-experience	Post-experience	Participant names	Pre-experience	Post-experience
Sam	1hr 12min	1hr 8min	Nina	25min	1hr 26min
Kit	38min	27min	Alex	31min	1hr 11min
Alex	45min	47min	Sarah	37min	1hr 1min
Joe	53min	35min	Leslie	52min	40min
			Dannie	1hr 35min	45min

In study one, seven pre-experience interviews were tape recorded but only four were transcribed as the remaining three did not attend the WSE. One interview failed to record fully but due to the participant's willingness and enthusiasm, another full interview was conducted, which asked the same questions similar responses were given. All the interviews for study two were successfully tape recorded and transcribed. An interview guide was also prepared for study two and was less structured than study one, as I was more comfortable with interviewing and in utilising participant contributions to guide questions. Accordingly, the first question asked during each of the interviews aimed to be as open as possible in the aim that the participants' response would lead onto further questions and thus data collection would be open to "new and unexpected phenomena" (Kvale, 1996, p.33).

Semi-structured interviews provided a framework and some focus, prompting open-ended explorations of meaning, rather than circumscribing the responses (Ison & Russell, 2000). I invited participants to develop a 'rich picture' of experiences and attributed meaning around themes of interest to me and the participant and though questions were prepared beforehand, their purpose was for guidance only: where appropriate questions prompted by participant responses were also asked. A carefully constructed interview guide meant that I did not lose sight of the original research question (Willig, 2008) however, when appropriate and relevant, I was able to make judgements to pursue a participant's answer (Kvale, 1996; Fontana & Frey, 2000). The aim was therefore to avoid gathering limited responses and rather allow participants to tell their story and, to some extent, steer the interview.

This flexibility allowed themes to be explored in any order and new themes to arise (Kvale, 1996; Charmaz, 2006). In each interview the participant brought their own experiences and world view to the situation, thus each interview had a

different dynamic. However, such a dynamic during a “semi-structured interview requires sensitive and ethical negotiation of rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee,” (Willig, 2008, p.25). Accordingly, since the pre-programme interview was the first chance to establish a rapport with each participant, I made every effort to create an atmosphere that was warm and friendly. Furthermore, to provide a context to the interviews participants were briefed and debriefed during each one (Kvale, 1996) and the pace, flow, and intensity of the interview was determined predominantly by participants and their contributions and mood. Questions posed, therefore, tended not to be too specific, and aimed to minimise any influence phrasing may have had on participant ideas and opinions (Charmaz, 2008). If this was achieved it was thought that rapport was more likely to be promoted.

Finally, at the end of every interview participants were informed that if they wished to comment further on any statements they had made, or wished to remove any comments made, they could. Additionally, to acknowledge my role as a co-producer, at the end of every interview I added “a description of the situation, the interaction, the person’s affect and [my] perception of how the interview went” (Charmaz, 2000, p. 33) to each transcription.

4.4.4 Group discussions

In order to retain the immediacy of the experience during data collection it was decided to hold group discussions every evening of the WSE. This was also employed during study two. The attempt to harness immediacy, combined with exploring and sharing experiences within a natural landscape, was to encourage participants to express their thoughts, feelings and emotions ‘in the moment’ and from the physical and emotional journey they had experienced. The researcher assumed the role of a facilitator during each group discussion. In study one the supervisor had a dual role as participant and observer and as a result, she contributed and asked questions when she felt it were appropriate, assuming a facilitator role when appropriate. The atmosphere was relaxed and participants were encouraged to ask questions whenever they wished.

Five group discussions during study one, and four during study two were recorded and transcribed. Most discussion took place within the natural landscape (excluding the first group discussion in study one that took place in the bunkhouse) and lasted from 23 minutes to 1 hour and 42 minutes (see table 4.5 for exact durations of each group discussion). The duration of the discussion was guided by participant response, mood and energy.

Table 4.5 Study one and two group discussion durations

This table illustrates the duration of each group discussion that was held during study one and two.

Group discussion durations		
	Study one	Study two
Group discussion 1	31min	1hr 13min
Group discussion 2	28 min	1hr 09min
Group discussion 3	23min	1hr 5min
Group discussion 4	46min	1hr 42min

Following study one, participants noted that they were not sure of my role during group discussions and that setting a formal working agreement would have been useful and reassuring. They also mentioned that my input to discussion would be welcome and would facilitate the discussions to become more natural and open. Consequently, in study two, these agreements were made before any group discussion took place.

Despite this approach being more suitable, I was still considered, to some degree, an outsider to the group. This was partly due to the need to maintain my role as a facilitator and monitor the ethics and focus of the group discussions. I also had to remain cautious of what I said and how this may influence participant responses. Accordingly, I contributed less than others in the group, in order to avoid dominating discussions.

4.4.5 Journals

Journal writing is viewed as a minimally invasive qualitative method (Nicholls, 2008). In general wilderness experience literature has promoted the use of journal writing as a powerful means of: fostering awareness and clarification of emotions and feelings (Lucker & Nadler, 1997); promoting positive adaptation to stressful situations (Smith, 2005); and facilitating reflection on action (Kottcamp, 1990). In studies one and two, journals were kept by participants throughout the duration of the WSE and had two main objectives, which were to allow participants to record their experiences, thoughts and feelings as they arose, and to provide an avenue for private reflection and disclosure. Moon (1999) summarises the usefulness of journals well: "To enhance the personal valuing of the self towards self-empowerment"; "To provide an alternative 'voice' for those not good at expressing themselves"; "To foster reflective and creative interaction in a group"; and from more of a constructivist point of view, "To enable learners to understand their own learning process" (p.190). All these aims were coherent with a multiple method approach to gathering data to harness people's strengths and adapt to limitations

or challenges. Furthermore, journal writing can serve "...as a form of self-expression, a record of events, or a form of therapy" (Boud, 2001, pp.9 -10). For this reason the journal writing also was chosen as a method for its cathartic potential during the WSE.

In study one there were no formal guidelines provided with the journals; only a rough guide of what could be written was verbalised to the participants during the training session. At this stage in the research, it was assumed that participants, with the experience of journal writing within their degree, would be confident to reflect and write what they wished in the journal. Providing no formal guidelines also aimed to encourage participants to feel empowered during the journal writing process, writing as naturally as possible. When, where, and how participants partook in journal writing was also left to the discretion of the participants. By doing this it was thought that participants would feel ownership over the journal and their writing, and thus entries would be more honest and beneficial to the participants (and subsequently the research). Participants were advised not to force writing if they did not wish to write and were informed that they could express themselves through different media such as art and poetry. Three participants in study one used drawings (sketches) and poetry, as well as writing, to record and express their experiences. Kit, Alex and Joe provided sketches and Joe used poetry. In study two, Leslie used poetry and Alex provided some sketches.

This open and unstructured approach aimed to facilitate participants to elaborate on their responses but the decision to do so was also personal. I reflected on how I journal write and the way I approach this kind of writing is sporadic, muddled and spontaneous, often producing scribble, sketches and messy writing showing ideas in all directions on one page. Though I find my journaling difficult at times, the freedom and creativity that comes with it – allowing myself to be 'messy' – was beneficial and productive. With this in mind, I wanted the participants to have the same opportunity or 'space' to do so. These were my intentions behind providing no guidelines for journaling in study one.

Written guidelines (see appendix P) were provided in the second study, however. This decision was made based on feedback from participants stating that there was some confusion about what was expected or required of them whilst journal writing. These guidelines provided suggestions of what to write, such as the experiences, thoughts, feelings and emotions felt during the WSE. It was made clear that the suggestions provided were guideline thoughts; participants could use the journal in whatever way they felt comfortable, appropriate and useful to them.

On completion of the WSE participants had the option to continue their journals, which meant that they could record their transitional experiences of returning to everyday life. Three out of the four participants in study one wrote entries subsequent to the WSE, one participant wrote journal entries prior to the WSE, and all the journals were returned at the post-experience interview. In study two one participant wrote journal entries prior to the WSE and following the WSE, and four out of the five participants completed their journal, returning it during their post-experience interview. The participant who did not partake in journal writing stated in the pre-experience interview that it was not an activity that she/he found enjoyable or useful and that contributing in group discussions was more desirable; I made it clear that it was their choice whether to partake in that activity or not.

Journal writing has shortcomings, whether it is completed or not. For example, some authors have highlighted that participants, knowing that the journal will be read, may limit entries to description rather than reflection and thus restrict self-expression (Conner-Greene, 2000), or participants may write to please the researcher (Anderson, 1993). These important factors were considered and every attempt was made to reduce their occurrence. Finally, to transcribe the journals they were photocopied and original copies returned to participants at the focus group.

4.4.6 Focus groups

Focus groups facilitate the expression of experiences and encourage open conversation that might be left underdeveloped in an interview. Furthermore, "when researchers want to explore people's understandings...it makes sense to employ methods which actively encourage the examination of these social processes in action" (Kitzinger, 1994, p.117). For these reasons a focus group followed the post-experience interview and the term focus group is used instead of group discussion so as to differentiate the two data collection methods. Although focus groups were conducted similarly to the group discussions, the differentiation provided clarity for participants in relation to its purpose: to discuss particular issues that arose over the duration of the WSE.

In study one the focus group was held five weeks after the completion of the WSE. Though the intention was for the focus group to be held within a month post-programme, this was not possible due to the lack of participant availability to meet at the same time. Three out of the four participants were able to attend the focus group including the supervisor who contributed to and facilitated the process.

During study two participants met for a focus group four weeks after the completion of the WSE and three participants out of the five attended. Each focus group lasted up to two hours in duration.

Focus groups allow participants to express their views and comment on one another's contributions (Willig, 2008; Wilkinson, 2008). In order to facilitate a relaxed and open atmosphere, the recorded session began with an icebreaker exercise involving everyone sharing a word that they associated with the WSE. Photographs, taken during the WSE, were also shown to the group, aiming to stimulate reminiscence on events, thoughts and feelings experienced during the WSE (Prosser & Schwartz, 1998). Looking through the photographs took place before the session started to be recorded and lasted approximately 30 minutes. Any discussion after the photo session was tape recorded and lasted for approximately 90 minutes. A discussion guide (see appendix K) provided prompts around issues such as what the participants thought fostered the feelings and emotions they had experienced during the WSE, which facilitated dialogue.

Not tape recording this session with the photos was, perhaps, a missed opportunity as the photos often triggered conversation. However it was thought that not recording the session would foster a better rapport and yield richer data later, whilst the tape recorder was on, as a consequence. Lastly, at the end of the focus group session attendees were provided with a CD copy of the photos and a copy was sent to the participant who was unable to attend. Journals were also returned at this point.

4.4.7 Follow-up interviews

Participants attended a follow-up interview within a period of twelve months after the completion of the WSE, in both studies (see table 4.6 for details follow-up interview dates and durations). Follow-ups are regarded as a valuable component within research design and incorporating them into the research provided a degree of methodological and ethical rigour (Ewert, 1989). Lack of follow-ups within wilderness experience and Wilderness Therapy literature has also been criticised (Ewert, 1989; McKenzie, 2000) and thus I wished to rectify this limitation within my own research. Follow-up interviews in studies one and two mainly evaluated the third research question "what stays with people after experiencing a WSE?" I wanted to see whether, after a certain amount of time, participants still felt and thought in a way that was similar to how they felt shortly after the WSE. Follow-up interviews were also able to identify whether participants made any changes in their life as a result of experiences during the WSE.

Table 4.6. Study one and two follow-up interview dates and durations

This table illustrates the duration and date of each follow-up interview that was held after study one and two.

Follow-up interview dates and durations					
Study one			Study two		
Participant names	Date	Duration	Participant names	Date	Duration
Sam	23.06.10	57min	Nina	25.05.11	29min
Kit	25.08.10	46min	Alex	28.08.11	45min
Alex	07.07.10	1hr 09min	Sarah	07.06.11	46min
Joe	22.06.10	1hr 50min	Leslie	25.05.11	39min
			Dannie	07.06.11	32min

Follow-up interviews were not included in the first draft of the research design, thus these were not stipulated in the ethics and consent forms. Consequently, an addendum was applied for through, and granted by, York St John's University Research Ethics Sub Committee (URESC) (see appendix L) and participants' consent was sought. The duration between the completion of the WSE and the follow-up was extended as much as possible so that an evaluation of the longevity of the experiences and meaning-making from the WSE could be accessed. When the follow-ups took place varied from one study to another as availability was generally dependant on the participants' academic timetables and personal commitments. Accordingly, study one follow-up took place between 9-11 months and study two 9-10 months after the completion of the WSE.

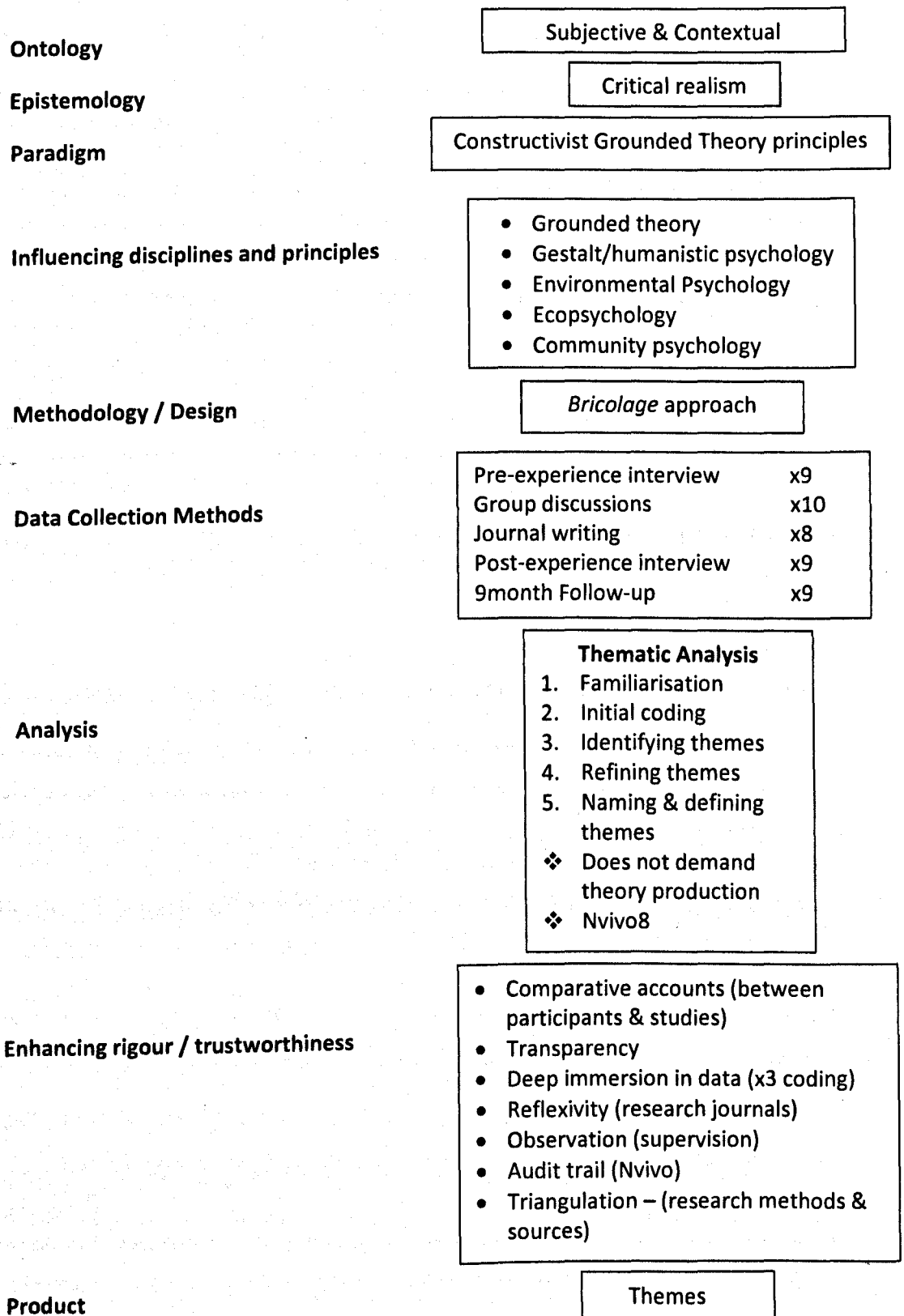
Each follow-up session involved participants completing a face-to-face or telephone interview lasting 29min – 1 hour and 50 min and explored the participants' memories from the WSE and any subsequent experiences they may have had since that were related to the WSE. Participants were briefed and debriefed and once the follow-up interviews were transcribed, hard copies were sent to participants along with transcriptions from the other data collection methods. This formed part of the research ethical procedure and made sure that participants recognised their own experiences in the transcriptions, offering an opportunity for comment and/or to make a further contribution (Holloway & Todres, 2003).

4.5 Method of analysis

This section presents a detailed account of the way in which analysis was carried out in the research, the rationale for the analytical approach, and deliberations of ethics and rigour (for a diagrammatic summary see figure 4.3.). A section providing an overview of how the thesis and analysis is written up will follow.

Figure 4.3 Overview of the research approach

This figure presents components of the research approach and descriptions of what relates to those stages. Each stage influenced the next to produce the resulting themes of the analysis.



4.5.1 Analytic approach

The thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was framed within critical realist ontology (Scott, 2005) and was influenced by a number of guiding principles (see section 3.3). Analysis thus took a *bricolage* approach, which is advocated by Mcleod (2001) and Kincheloe (2005) in qualitative enquiry.

According to Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis is “a foundational method for qualitative analysis” (p.4) and is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (p. 6). Critical realism allows the researcher to argue that language plays a central role in the construction of meaning and that it is the task of the researcher to study the ways in which such constructions are produced, how they change across cultures and history, and how they shape people’s experiences, whilst also maintaining a respect for individual-meaning-making (Willig, 2008). It offers the kind of nuanced understanding needed for the current research and is specifically used as a meta-theory from which to view the data and conduct the analysis; seeking to “reconcile the context-bound and emergent descriptions that are made about the world with the ontological dimension that exists outside of, and is independent of, attempts to describe it” (Scott, 2005, p. 636).

Thematic analysis offered a flexible and adaptable form of inquiry (Clarke 2013). Since it is typically used as a tool across different methods (Boyatzis, 1998), it is well suited to the research objectives and to being combined with a critical realist ontology. This theoretical freedom was advantageous and provided the basis to conduct a rich, complex and detailed analysis. Polkinghorne (1995) also supports the use of thematic analysis particularly when dealing with personal texts. In analytical approaches the narratives are the starting point rather than the end point of the analysis (Etherington, 2004). Participant data provide a representation of an individual’s reality, based on the idea that narratives hold the raw material of inquiry. In addition to this, narratives provide a window into a person’s reality but also provide the resources from which to explicate a greater understanding of meanings that are associated with a person’s reality that are created in social interaction and socio-cultural processes. Thematic analysis was, therefore, an appropriate and effective method for this research.

Thematic analysis “minimally organises and describes your data set in (rich) detail” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6). Analysis therefore aimed to connect with participant stories seeking “to locate common themes or conceptual manifestations among the stories collected as data” (Polkinghorne, 1995, p.13). Themes were formed through coding, as it is through coding that discoveries are made and a greater depth of understanding is achieved (Braun & Clarke, 2006;

Charmaz, 2006). Each coding and refining stage gradually increased in its level of data analysis and provided a comprehensive insight into participants' experiences and meaning-making of the WSE.

Though potential patterns of meaning arose during the data collection, before coding started, the first phase of analysis was an immersion phase and a "selection procedure based on a criteria of relevance" (Marton, 1988, p. 155) and prevalence. Participants' narratives are read and re-read before they are sorted and coded (Braun & Clarke, 2006) and often several times so as "to make judgements about common sets of statements and variations according to the themes" (Cousin, 2009, p. 194). In doing so a shift is made from individuals and their utterances, to meaning embedded in the narratives (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Marton, 1988). To conduct the coding and to generate themes, full transcriptions were analysed providing "ideas and understandings that you otherwise miss" (Charmaz, 2006, p.70) and Braun & Clarke's (2006) six phases of analysis were employed. These stages are shown in table 4.7.

Coding was carried out on a qualitative software management tool, Nvivo8. This facilitated the management of such a large amount of data and aimed to facilitate the classification of "previously unspecified ways in which people think about certain aspects of reality" (Marton, 1988, p.147). All the transcribed data were entered into Nvivo8; data was exported and was categorised under each of the methods of enquiry (e.g. pre- and post-experience interviews, journals writing, group discussions and focus groups). Questionnaires and psychological inventories were excluded from this process. Through this process, the data was coded and themed holistically; study one and study two data were considered together. Analysing both studies together meant that no undue separation or inapplicable comparison was made.

Table 4.7 Phases of thematic analysis

This table is adapted from Braun & Clarke (2006) and illustrates the phases of thematic analysis that were followed to produce the themes and the findings.

Phase	Description of process
1. Familiarising yourself with your data	Transcribing data (if necessary), reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas.
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.
3. Searching for themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.
4. Reviewing themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts (Level 1) and the entire data set (Level 2), generating a thematic „map“ of the analysis.
5. Defining and naming themes	On-going analysis to refine the specifics of each theme, and the overall story the analysis tells; generating clear definitions and names for each theme.
6. Producing the report	The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back the analysis to the research question(s) and literature, producing a scholarly report of the analysis

Using this methodology enabled an understanding of the participants' experiences and meaning-making to be developed and refined (Cousin, 2009). It was recognised within this research that “no method can excavate the pure voice of the interviewee” (Cousin, 2009, p. 195). Data is interpreted through the lens of the researcher and thus is a limitation that is reflective of the paradigm upon which this research rests; concepts are constructed “through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 19). Using a data software management tool was, therefore, to fulfil a methodological objective – to provide a more consistent and systematic means of manual coding. Nvivo8 was a means of collating and storing the data, allowing for the creation of preliminary categories through methodical and manual coding.

During analysis, studying how, and sometimes why, participant meanings and actions arose in specific situations was of interest. Pools of meaning were identified

and formed on the basis of their similarities and relationships. This continued process of immersion and 'familiarisation' with data allowed for detailed coding to take place (Dahlgren *et al.*, 2009). Groupings made according to similarities were arranged and re-arranged and the attributes of these clusters of coding were made explicit. This allowed for the meanings of each cluster to be consolidated and eventually to constitute a definite category or theme (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Codes are thus developed into groupings of data that represent a theme (Gibson & Brown, 2009).

According to Braun and Clarke (2006), "A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (p. 10). Themes are identified in relation to their prevalence across the entire data corpus and in terms of space within each data item. My interpretation of the data, and distilling of themes, is thus necessary and requires a flexible approach. There is no correct or incorrect method of determining prevalence: what is imperative to the production of a theme is consistency and that it identifies an essence of the data that relates to, and helps answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The themes identified during analysis were both semantic and latent (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Although Braun and Clarke explain that focus is principally on one level, it is said with an essentialist and constructionist divide in mind; semantic being related to essentialist and latent to constructionist ontologies (though they also state that latent thematic analysis is not always constructionist). Since the current research takes a critical realist approach, combining the use of semantic and latent levels of themes justifiable.

'Descriptions' of the data are developed into organised patterns of meaning, are summarised and the identification of the broader significance of the patterns and their meanings and implications provide the 'interpretation' (Patton 1990) rather than striving to 'go beyond' participants' words to something more implicit (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Literature was accessed after the analysis process and therefore enhanced the inductive nature of the analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The subsequent use of the literature, however, led to a level of theorising, which contributed to the production of latent themes.

Latent themes move beyond description and meaning and "start to identify or examine the *underlying* ideas, assumptions, and conceptualisations – and ideologies – that are theorised as shaping or informing the semantic content of the data" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 13). Accordingly what contributes to the form and meaning of participants' experiences and meaning-making of the WSE are sought

and articulated within analysis. Latent themes are thus interpretive products rather than descriptive products of analysis that lead onto interpretations.

The form of experience and meaning are thus directly identified and theorised, but analysis also attempts to move away from individual psychologies and provide an insight into the socio-cultural contexts and, at times, the structural conditions that enable and produce the participant accounts. Both latent and semantic levels are thus deemed necessary and form the basis of analysis and thesis, providing a comprehensive platform to move into the discussion phase and further distillation of ideas. Furthermore, relying more on semantic thematic analysis allowed the researcher to maintain the ethical and underlying philosophical principles of the research (e.g. respecting participants' voices, and diversity among people and settings; and critical realism).

Comparisons were then made between the narratives that participants expressed to the researcher (during an individual interview), with peers (during a group discussion or focus group), and in private (during journal writing). Content (themes) and the context (landscape) within the data were considered and compared (Kitzinger, 1994). Comparisons were also made between participant groups, WSE structure (i.e. duration and location), and study findings. To carry out these comparisons, movement back and forth between data and categories were made. This movement within the analysis process provided a way to gain further insight into the complexity of the data and form refined ideas (Charmaz, 2006) and allowed for the formation of 'nodes' or themes to be created through Nvivo8. These nodes or themes broadened, subsequently creating sub-themes, and highlighted the different ways in which participants experienced the WSE.

The procedure of thematic analysis informed by grounded theory principles thus allowed for a recursive enquiry to take place (Clarke, 2013). This process was not linear in nature; analysis was an iterative process allowing for an understanding of participants' experience and meaning-making to form. This enabled shifts, reductions and adjustments to take place (Cousin, 2009). Additionally, when appropriate, diagramming was also used to illustrate the logic behind the ordering of ideas which subsequently provided an analytic frame (Charmaz, 2006).

The creation of themes and diagrams provided a 'map' (Tesch, 1990) to form and detail "the qualitatively different ways in which people experience, conceptuali[s]e, perceive and understand aspects of the world around them that the study concentrated on" (Marton 1988, p. 144). Descriptive categories are displayed and accentuated based on their similarities and differences and themes

are articulated (Dahlgren *et al.*, 2009). The themes created by this process were used to answer the research questions.

In the spirit of grounded theory then, the type of thematic analysis employed was data-driven and 'bottom-up'. Themes were strongly linked to the data (Patton, 1990) as data was specifically collected for the purpose of the research and was not theoretically driven. A pre-existing framework for coding did not exist and the researcher's analytic preconceptions were not purposefully imposed on the data during the analysis process; data was not forced to 'fit' into anything intentionally. It is acknowledged, however, that an 'epistemological vacuum' is unachievable (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Overall thematic analysis is a method of analysis that is "concerned with making sense of participants' world" (Langdrige, 2007, p. 110). Time, and resources spent to familiarise and immerse oneself with the data is thus crucial and necessary. The use of Nvivo8 endeavoured to increase efficiency and rigour during the analysis process, and to a degree it did. However, a limitation of Nvivo8 is that it decontextualises data. Whilst using the system, distance from the essence of the data was felt to increase. This 'distancing' from the data was partly due to the lack of context: The way the software management system organised and arranged data obstructed the achievement of a holistic approach to the analysis and maintain the essence of the data and themes discerned. Nvivo8 also encouraged a detailed line by line dissection of the data and a fragmented view of the data and its essences.

Distancing from the data is something that Marton (1988) warns against as meaning of the text is likely to change if utterances are taken out of context. It also highlights the importance of the honesty and integrity of the researcher during the analysis process (Cousin, 2009). I nevertheless acknowledge the limits of the qualitative paradigm and the biases and subjectivities that follow (Charmaz, 2006). A way to minimise these are to provide explicit criterion attributes, allowing for transparency in how the data was analysed and classified, which is deemed important to many qualitative researchers (McLeod, 2001). Furthermore, prescribed themes or a priori codes were not used to code or sort the data. Instead, themes emerged from the data allowing for themes to be generated from participants' experiences of the WSE.

It should also be stressed that the use of a computerised qualitative software tool may have aided in the organising and accessing of the data, but it was not used for any computerised analysis; categories were formed by my reading and re-reading the data several times. Furthermore, to aid the distillation stages of

analysis, I used Microsoft Word to re-organise data related to themes, re-establish context, and further refine themes. This worked well during the final stages, leading to a comprehensive writing up of the analysis.

Essentially, the analysis was pragmatic and the aim is to make clear something that is confused and unclear (Schwandt, 1994). The aim of the interpretation of the data was about “actively debating and exchanging points of view with our informants. It means placing our ideas on a par with theirs, testing them not against predetermined standards of rationality but against the immediate exigencies of life” (Jackson, 1989, p. 14). Nevertheless, common areas of criticism of interpretivist work could not be avoided. Criticisms lay within three criteria; critical purchase, authority and epistemological claim making (Shwandt, 1994). It was important that I was aware of issues related to creating codes and themes and to critique my findings for their solipsism; interpretations are only my accounts and are dependent on her own consciousness and sense-making of other people’s sense-making. Critique also comes from relativism, highlighting the importance of demonstrating that all accounts are equally worthy or unworthy, good or bad; they are just one account of many other possible ‘accounts’ that could exist, which may either complement or contradict another given account (Smith, 2008).

In reality, there is no final analysis; the inquiry is circular (Hein & Austin, 2001). The research was a culmination of actions, influences and processes. It was important then, that the methodology was subjectively critical (e.g. that limits of interpretation be acknowledged) and be flexible and creative enough in its data collection process and analysis in order to do so, and thus be more likely to comprehend these and elicit the impact of them on the research outcomes (Mills *et al.*, 2006). The aim of the analysis was therefore to present a reconstructed ‘world version’ and not to produce theory: The analysis is a product of the research, the researcher and the researched; it is therefore complex and dynamic.

4.5.2 Context and analysis

Context is an important notion for understanding meaning-making. To understand meaning-making is in part to understand ‘language-in-use’, a term used by discourse analysts like Gee (1999). According to Gee (1999) context includes shared knowledge, and the physical setting in which a communication takes place, including eye contact, gestures, body language and movement. Additionally, anything that has been previously stated and been done by those involved in the communication, including any shared or cultural knowledge, is exposed.

Due to the scope of the research, additional contextual elements of the physical setting that Gee describes could not be gathered. Physical settings during analysis were considered more broadly, such as solo phase, journal writing, and group discussion, in which participant narratives were being created.

Figure 4.4 Contexts and influencing factors

This figure provides a diagrammatic overview of the different contexts and influencing factors that were part of the research process.

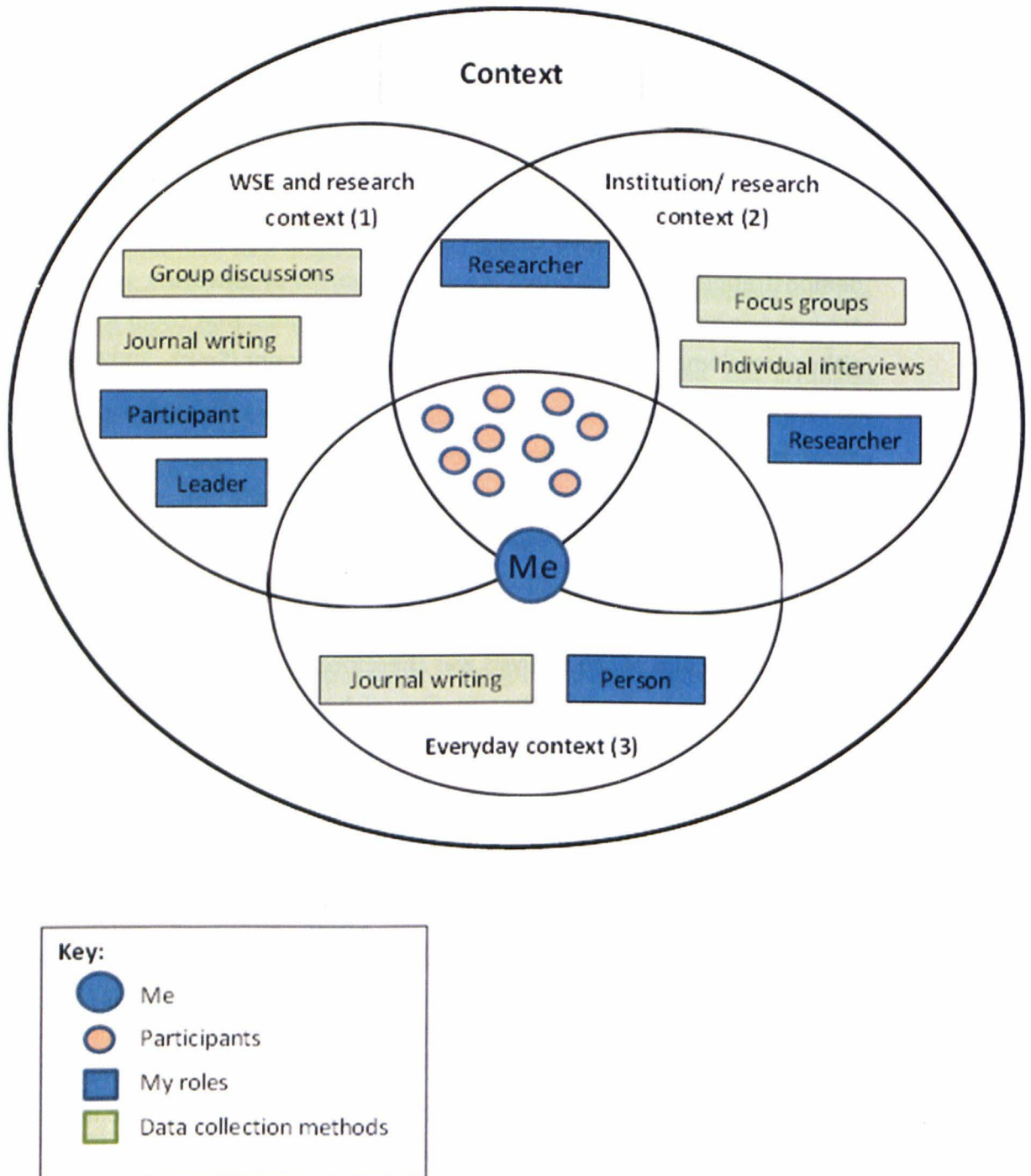


Figure 4.4 displays a diagram and represents different contexts that the participants and the researcher interact with, as well as the influencing factors relating to the research. Broader and less controllable factors, such as weather and personality, were not included as they are too complex to consider. The model was used to assist the reflexive process within the analysis and to maintain awareness of influencing forces, such as power, overlapping roles and contexts, and consider these when developing conceptual categories and theoretical concepts.

The broad 'context' (e.g. cultural, societal and personal) is represented by one large circle. Within that broad context there reside three main contextual influences, which are shown as three interlocking circles and labelled 1-3. The contextual influences are: WSE and research context (1); institution/research context (2); everyday context (3). The one large shaded circle with 'me' in it represents me (as a person, researcher, leader and participant). The participants, who are represented by smaller circles, and I reside in the interconnection of all three contextual circles as each of us were influenced by them at any given time.

My roles within the research were multiple as I was a leader, researcher, participant and also a person. These roles are represented by darkly shaded rectangles. I was involved in each context (represented by the large darkly shaded circle) but I had specific roles particular to each context; I was a researcher in both context 1 and 2, was a leader and participant in context 1 and had no particular role (a person) in the third, 'everyday' context.

There were various facets to my roles that may have influenced the participants' behaviour. Being a leader and researcher gave me authority and power. The leader role involved map reading, dictating where the group were going, the length of the walk, and making decisions in emergencies. The role as researcher involved gathering data, which dictated in what ways participants divulged personal information. I also set boundaries, shaping a working agreement, implementing criteria for the phases of the research and participant recruitment. The role as a participant was less defined. Because of the roles as researcher and leader, the participatory role was partial and fragmented as I shifted in and out of responsibilities during the WSE. Nonetheless, I experienced 'walking through' and 'being with' the environment alongside participants, and although these elements were experienced differently because of my other roles, I too journeyed and sat with the landscape – I was part of the experience. I physically and sensually experienced the same elements (wind, rain, sun, terrain) as the participants and therefore was a participant in my own right. Lastly, since the participants were York St John students, there were times that I would see some of them at YSJU and I would have short informal chats with them.

This last example relates to my role as a 'person' though it may be confusing to refer to it as a role as in an everyday sense it should not be. For the purpose of clarity and ease to explain the diagram, however, I have chosen to use the term role in relation to this aspect. This was partly due to the discomfort I felt whilst in this 'role'; when I met participants outside research or WSE contexts, at first, I was never sure how to be around participants. I wanted to just 'be me' but I was aware of my other roles and the need to act 'professionally' as well as in an authentic manner so as to build rapport and trust with participants. The positive response I received from participants in study one meant that I was more comfortable with this more undefined aspect of the research process and that 'being me' was not just acceptable but welcome by participants.

Included in this diagram are the data collection methods that took place during the research and are represented by lighter shaded rectangles. Group discussions took place in context 1, focus groups and individual interviews took place in context 2, and journal writing spread across context 1 and 2 as they were written by participant during (i.e. in the WSE and research context, 1) and before and after the WSE (i.e. in the everyday context, 3). These data collection methods had a structure of their own (e.g. personal, social, one-to-one) as well as a broader context structure (e.g. WSE, institution, and the everyday) that may have influenced how participants expressed themselves. For example, due to my dual role during the WSE, I could have been considered as either a researcher or a leader, or both, during group discussions with participants. Any one or two of these roles could have impacted on how comfortable participants felt in disclosing thoughts and feelings. In reality any one of my roles at any time could have influenced participants, but one of my roles may have been more prominent in specific contexts. There is however, no way of knowing for sure the dynamic nature of this possible process. One way of attempting to access such information was to ask specific questions regarding these possible interplays.

Overall, the diagram illustrates that nothing in this research, and more generally in qualitative research, is separable, isolated, unbiased, or uninfluenced – aspects of research and its context(s) are always interconnecting at one point or another.

4.5.3 Transcription

“A researcher who does not undertake this part of the work loses the opportunity that transcribing presents us with.... Not only does it help us to listen and hear more of what we might have missed in the moment but it also gives us a chance to check that we have been ethical” (Etherington, 2004, p.79).

Etherington (2004) sees great value in the usefulness of transcribing one's own data and many other authors suggest that the same person transcribes the data (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Creswell, 2003; Willig, 2008). Charmaz (2008) particularly states that transcriptions “provide details for nuanced views and reviews of data” and provides “new insights and more codes with which to work” (p.87). This is contrary to Glaser (1998), who argues that researchers who transcribe are likely to be wasting time and are in danger of becoming lost in data. Though there is a danger of getting lost in the data, and this was something that I experienced, transcribing was part of the immersion phase of analysis and was therefore crucial to the process (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Accordingly, I transcribed all the data (see table 4.9.). This allowed me to engage with the data, reflecting on comments made and context throughout the transcription process, which, in turn, added to the richness of the data. Transcribing also helped me to maintain closeness to participant meanings.

Table 4.9 Word count of transcripts

DATA collection	Study 1	Study 2
Pre-interview Alex	9,160	5,716
Pre-interview Joe/ Dannie	6,139	15,174
Pre-interview Kit/Nina	5,206	3,596
Pre-interview Sam/Sarah	9,997	5,796
Pre-interview Leslie	N/A	8,619
Group discussion 1	8,341	14,260
Group discussion 2	4,598	13,038
Group discussion 3	4,023	10,879
Group discussion 4	9,104	17,148
Post-interview Alex	8,424	12,688
Post-interview Joe/ Dannie	6,128	14,082
Post-interview Kit/ Nina	3,424	25,028
Post-interview Sam/ Sarah	13,143	9,746
Post-interview Leslie	N/A	14,567
Journal Alex	8,327	8,132
Journal Joe/Dannie	2,341	N/A
Journal Kit/ Nina	5,120	3,504
Journal Sam/ Sarah	690	1,164
Journal Leslie	N/A	1,751
Focus group	15,944	18,751
Follow-up Alex	13,077	9,311
Follow-up Joe/Dannie	9,010	4,303
Follow-up Kit/ Nina	4,888	5,390
Follow-up Sam/ Sarah	8,847	7,706
Follow-up Leslie	N/A	6,717
Sarah's pre- solo interview	N/A	7,447
Sarah's post-solo interview	N/A	9,108
TOTAL	155,931	253,621
Overall TOTAL	409,552	

Tape recordings from the interviews (pre- and post- experience), group discussions, focus group, and two follow-ups were transcribed verbatim thoroughly and simply (Wilkinson, 2008). Nuances such as pauses and emphases were documented (Smith, 2008) (see table 4.10). Recording nuances meant that a participant's voice was less likely to be lost during transcription and that the transcript was more representative of the flow and rhythm of conversational speech. This helped a reconnection with the data and with the moments and contexts in which they were created. For example, using the symbol (.) to represent a micro pause instead of a full stop meant that when reading the transcript the dialogue flowed better and was more 'true' to the original nature of the verbal

account. Additionally, it meant that I was less likely to impose punctuation and rhythm of speech on a participant's narrative, aiming to reduce my influence on the transcript and unnecessary misrepresentation that may have occurred as a consequence. Full stops, although important in formal prose, were deemed less appropriate for spoken language and were therefore excluded.

Table 4.10 Transcription conventions used for data extracts

Transcription Key
<i>Adapted from Smith (2008)</i>
Underlining – emphasis
(...) – speaker trails off
() – round brackets – used when transcriber is uncertain what was said, but is able to make a reasonable guess – for example, (about)
[] – square brackets – enclose comments made by transcriber. Such comments include inability to make out what was said [indistinct], and sounds that are difficult to transcribe – such as {tch}, [stutters], as well as interactional features of note – such as [laughs], [pause], [cuts in], [Turns to Edith].
<i>Adapted from Potter (1996, p. 223)</i>
CAPS – loud talk
Mmm – will be noted (Reissman, 2008)
(.) – Micro pause (less than 2 seconds).
(4.5) – Timed pause (i.e. 4.5 seconds)

Since I was transcribing the data, contextual information that described the situation and interactions that occurred were included (Charmaz, 2008). To protect participant identities pseudonyms were used. Participants were made aware, however, that anonymity could not be guaranteed, despite every effort made to do so; the intimate nature the research (e.g. participants were small in number and knew each other) limited the capacity to ensure this. Once transcriptions were complete, copies were sent to the participants to read and included an invitation to comment (Etherington, 2004).

4.5.4 Transparency and ethical considerations

Transparency is important within qualitative enquiry since behaviour goes beyond what is observed and it is the researcher's responsibility to access subjective perceptions and meanings (Schmid, 1981). Variability is also expected in qualitative research, which emphasises the uniqueness of human experiences and

situations (Field & Morse, 1995). Accordingly, the range of experience is examined rather than the average experience. To access variability the researcher needs to become intimate with it, therefore decreasing distance between the researcher and participants (Krefting, 1991). This was achieved by prolonged contact with participants during the WSE.

To improve transparency within the research, Charmaz (2006, p.68) provided a list of questions:

- Do these concepts help understand what the data indicate?
- If so, how do they help?
- Can you explicate what is happening in this line or segment of data with these concepts?
- Can you adequately interpret this segment of data without these concepts? What do they add?

To ensure transparency in coding, the following questions were asked:

- How does my coding reflect the incident or described experience?
- Have I created clear, evident connections between the data and my codes?
- Have I guarded against re-writing – and therefore recasting – the studied experience into a lifeless language that better fits *our* academic and bureaucratic worlds than those of our participants? (adapted from Charmaz, 2006, p.69)

These questions helped minimise the influence of my preconceptions, and thus also the monitoring and critiquing of the analysis process. Braun and Clarke (2006) also provide a useful 15-point checklist providing criteria to support the completion of a good thematic analysis (see table 4.11).

Table 4.11 Braun & Clarke's (2006) checklist of criteria for good thematic analysis

Process	No.	Criteria
Transcription	1	The data have been transcribed to an appropriate level of detail, and the transcripts have been checked against the tapes for "accuracy".
Coding	2	Each data item has been given equal attention in the coding process.
	3	Themes have not been generated from a few vivid examples (an anecdotal approach), but instead the coding process has been thorough, inclusive and comprehensive.
	4	All relevant extracts for each theme have been collated.
	5	Themes have been checked against each other and back to the original data set.
	6	Themes are internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive
Analysis	7	Data have been analysed – interpreted, made sense of - rather than just paraphrased or described.
	8	Analysis and data match each other – the extracts illustrate the analytic claims.
	9	Analysis tells a convincing and well-organised story about the data and topic
	10	A good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts is provided
Overall	11	Enough time has been allocated to complete all phases of the analysis adequately, without rushing a phase or giving it a once-over-lightly.
Written report	12	The assumptions about, and specific approach to, thematic analysis are clearly explicated.
	13	There is a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done – i.e., described method and reported analysis are consistent.
	14	The language and concepts used in the report are consistent with the epistemological position of the analysis.
	15	The researcher is positioned as active in the research process; themes do not just emerge.

Another way that transparency and ethical practice was provided was to ensure that the voice of participants came through in the analysis and write-up, describing participants' experiences and meaning-making as faithfully as possible (Munhall, 2001). Charmaz (2006) particularly encourages this approach and degree of visibility, encouraging the creation of in-vivo codes and including participant words in emerging theory. This often difficult balancing act between interpretations and automatically representing the voices of participants enables

the reader to make the connections between the data and the subsequent findings (Jones, 2004).

To further the ethical practice of the research, research design, procedure and analysis were participant-oriented. Findings were obtained from the examination of human experiences as they are lived and perceived by participants and were not defined a priori by me; I revealed and represented emerging multiple realities as effectively as possible (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Sandelowski (1993) one way of knowing that findings are trustworthy and ethical is that interpretations of participant experience and meaning-making are immediately recognisable descriptions. By sharing the findings with academic audiences such as seminar and conference presentations and with my supervisors, the findings of the research were deemed useful and trustworthy. Meetings with supervisors every month also meant that data analysis was audited (Lincoln & Guba, 1985); continual revisions were made to themes and diagramming as a result of conversations with my supervisors. This auditing process led to the refinement of themes, the defining and naming of these and producing the report.

Lastly, an additional factor that enhanced rigour and trustworthiness was the length of time that I was immersed in the data. The first study was completed within the first year of the research, with study two conducted in the second year. This meant that I had been analysing and formulating thoughts about the data and its meaning and implications for over three and a half years, moving back and forth to the data, and thus data collection and analysis was iterative. Furthermore, the data was coded twice due to a technical fault on Nvivo 8. Data that had been coded up to year three of the research had to be re-analysed, taking over six months to complete. This meant that immersion in the data was considerable before major themes were distilled; that I knew the data intimately, which facilitated a holistic, in-depth analysis.

4.5.5 Producing the thesis

In writing up the analysis, a rich thematic description of the entire data corpus is provided and important themes are explicated. The analysis chapter headings represent domains and are heuristic organising categories and therefore do not represent totally discrete, independent entities (Kyriakopolous, 2011). The themes that are discussed reflect a rich holistic description. As a consequence some complexity and depth can be lost (Braun & Clarke, 2006) however, every attempt was made to include depth and demonstrate the complexity of the data and analysis. Such an approach is useful especially when examining an under-

researched area and attempting to formulate new ideas within the field. By taking this approach in analysis, it allowed for the consideration of other important principles that helped uphold the ethos of the research, that is being informed by community and humanistic psychology values and promoting a participant-centred approach; respect and diversity of people and settings; the challenging of the dominance of individually-focused models of enquiry; questions power within the research process; and valuing pluralism in research (Orford, 2008).

Principles related to the writing up of the analysis were influenced by Charmaz (2006). For example, 'emerge' or 'emergent' is used when discussing the analysis and discussion. 'Emerge' is described by Braun and Clarke (2006) as convoluted, warning that there is a danger that using the word implies that the process of analysis is passive and naïvely realist. To be clear, the analytic process was active, immersive and included careful attention to the detail; the word 'emerge' is used to value the grounded nature of the methodology (McLeod, 2001) and the voice of participants. This does not mean, however, that the analysis sought to 'give voice' to my participants (Fine, 2002); rather, the analysis sought to value and preserve participants' voice.

In writing I strived for my voice not to "transcend experience but re-envisage it... bringing fragments of field work, time, context, and mood together in a colloquy of all the author's several selves – reflecting, witnessing wondering, accepting – all at once" (Charmaz & Mitchell, 1996, p. 229). Achieving this delicate balance was challenging, but bringing clarity to such connections demonstrates the value placed on participant contributions to the thesis.

Ethical obligations to represent participant experiences as faithfully as possible were also met (Kvale, 1996; Mills *et al.*, 2000). This, in turn, enabled me to render "participants' experiences into readable theoretical interpretations" (Mills *et al.*, 2006, p.32). Accordingly, in the analysis chapters I was an author of experience and meaning-making rather than as a "distant expert" (Charmaz, 2000, p. 513).

The iterative nature of the analysis required for writing to commence early on in the analysis phases (Clarke, 2013). Reflective journals (see section 4.1) were used to note ideas and links, questions for analysis and the refinement of research questions, which enabled thinking and the focus of the research to develop. A noted trend within my reflective journaling was my use of landscape, maps and mountains as metaphors for explaining the development of the research, my own journey doing the research, and the analysis process. Consequently, within the write-up these metaphors are used to guide the reader, especially through the

analysis. With such a substantial amount of data I found it helpful to conceptualise the data and conduct the organising process as if I was mapping an area. When faced with emotional (e.g. competence and confidence), procedural, or conceptual challenges, I seemed always to fall back on my mountaineering experience; using metaphors facilitated the challenging and daunting process of making sense of the data and of the contextual issues (e.g. section 4.5.2). In doing so, in some way, I found that I was also able to transfer some of the confidence and sense of capability I associate with my mountaineering skills into the research context – a context I felt far less familiar with. Metaphors were thus, a useful cognitive tool (Blackwell, 1998). Metaphors are intentionally applied in this thesis as a way to communicate new information and ideas and helps situate abstract ideas in a more familiar and tangible context (Blackwell, 1998). Diagramming, as mentioned in section 4.5.1, is used for similar reasons – as a cognitive tool – as it too has similar structural and communicational qualities as metaphors, and can also be considered as symbolic. Diagrams aid reasoning and understanding pictorially, and understanding this visual representation requires interpretation which is, in turn, a metaphorical process (Blackwell, 1998). Accordingly, metaphors and diagrams facilitate an analytical and communication process, grounding the abstract, to an extent, to visual and metaphorical representations.

Lastly, moving towards the practicalities of writing-up the analysis, a number of conventions have been used. In particular, the prevalence of a theme is noted by stating “the majority of participants”, “many participants or “a number of participants” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 11). Braun and Clarke (2006) do question the use of such phrases since they convey little ‘actual’ meaning or information. Despite this, they are phrases that were felt to be useful in the write-up of the analysis. Furthermore, sample numbers are indicated when participant data is used to support themes.

Conventions that Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 5-6) suggest for use are: ‘data corpus’ for all the data collected for the research, ‘data item’ for an individual piece of data (e.g. an interview, a journal, a group discussion), and ‘data extract’ referring to an individual part of the data that has been coded from within a data item. Data extracts were used to convey major themes that were formed on the basis of the following criteria: the prevalence of the theme across the data and participants, and the depth of meaning of the theme (e.g. the prevalence of the theme within data from one or two participants). Extracts that best represented a theme, or best demonstrated different aspects of a theme, were selected for use in the analysis chapters.

The following details should also be noted: quotes from the data are italicised in-text; data excerpts are referred to as examples and numbered; immediately below the example number, the source information is provided (e.g. participant name, data collection method, study number); data excerpts from journals are not corrected for spelling mistakes, punctuation or grammar; the symbol [...] represents the exclusion of data. When I refer to study one group discussions and focus groups the initials stand for E (Elizabeth – researcher/facilitator); JQ (participant / facilitator); A (Alex – participant); J (Joe – participant); S (Sam – participant); K (Kit – participant). When I refer to study two group discussions and focus groups the initials stand for: E (Elizabeth – researcher/facilitator); A (Alex – participant); L (Leslie – participant); F (facilitator); N (Nina – participant). Additionally, wherever possible, as much of the context (e.g. interviewer questions and prompts and surrounding contextual talk) is provided. However, due to the length of many of the data examples, it was not always possible to provide all the contextual information or the full data extract. Additionally, quotes from participant narratives were used to enhance the analysis and participant voices within the thesis.

Chapter 5: Being with Nature

This first analysis chapter begins to chart the nuances of experience in natural landscapes, providing detailed examination of some of the most intimate participant narratives. The domain, 'Being With Nature', presents themes that relate to each of the three research questions: What is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?; What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?; What stays with people after experiencing a WSE? Insights into many of the broadest themes within the entire analysis are captured, with aspects of experience and meaning-making being discussed; these also arise in subsequent analysis chapters. Here the scope of participants' journeying begins to be revealed; their motivations and expectations before they began, and their adjusting and contemplating during and after. The intricacy of the interplay between participants and their surroundings is elucidated, and a perspective into the way participants try to make sense of their experiences is explored. It is here that the landscape of the data begins to form, detail starts to emerge, landmarks begin to be located, and a map starts to take shape.

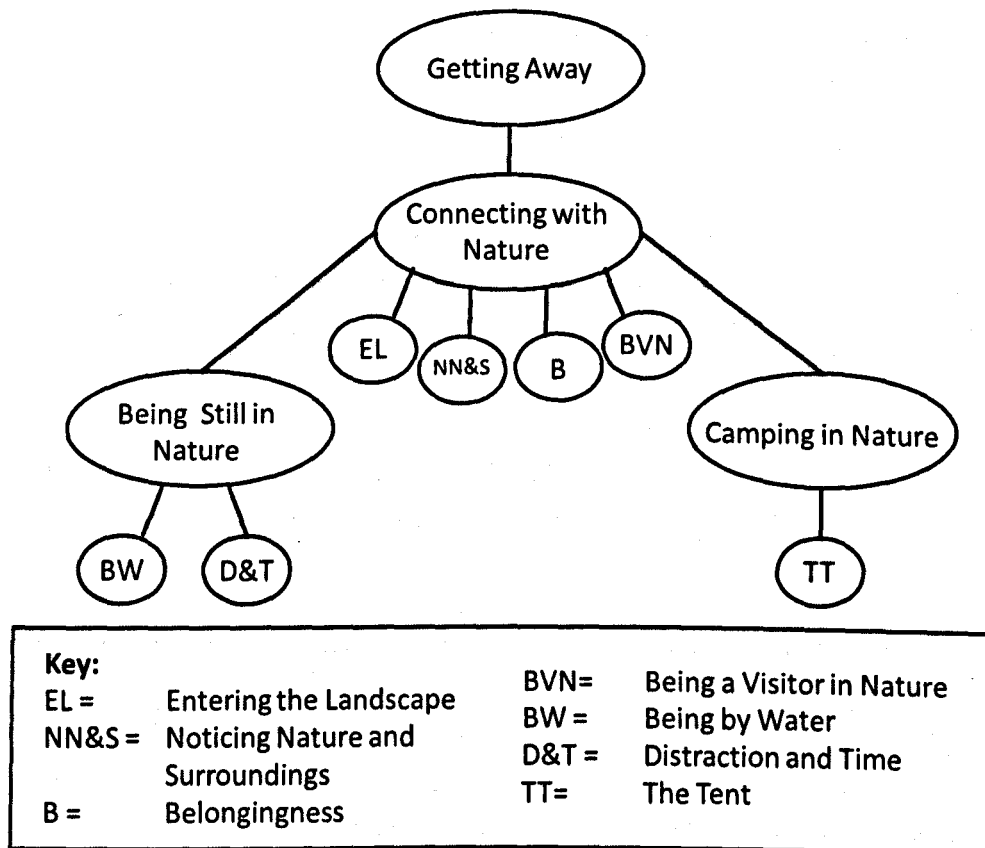
Many themes arose during analysis and I use the metaphor of landscape and mapping to facilitate the communication and 'situatedness' of the themes (e.g. how the themes relate to one another and collectively aid a broader more conceptual understanding of participant experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction) for the reader. It also helped me to ground and organise my abstract thinking to something that I understood and could visualise easily (e.g. maps and features of landscapes). In this sense, each analysis chapter sketches (describes) a map (formulated ideas and themes) of a relatively unknown area of investigation (of a landscape). Situating this process in something more tangible aims to facilitate understanding rather than hinder or obscure it. It helped me process the findings and analysis journey and since maps in general are used widely by many I hoped that using the metaphor of mapping would be as useful to the reader as it was to me.

The chapter has four main themes which are; 'Getting Away', 'Connecting with Nature', 'Being Still in Nature' and 'Camping within Nature'. These provide an insight into the various aspects of and ways participants experienced being with nature. Figure 5.1 provides an introductory overview of the themes and their inter-relationships. Themes 'Camping in Nature' and 'Being Still in Nature' are both linked to and help understand participants' experiences of 'Connecting with

Nature'. 'Getting Away' and 'Connecting with Nature' are both motivating aspects of 'Being with Nature'.

Figure 5.1 Introductory overview of key themes in chapter 5

This diagram shows the main themes and sub-themes within chapter 5 and demonstrates their inter-relationships. Themes 'Being Still in Nature' and 'Camping in Nature' contribute to understanding more deeply the theme 'Connecting with Nature', and it and 'Getting Away' are the essence of participants' experience of being with nature.



5.1. Getting Away

'Getting Away' refers to what the WSE meant to the participants and demonstrates their desire to escape everyday places and aspects of everyday life. The theme highlights, in part, the motivations of the participants for going on the WSE and also what the WSE meant to the participants. Space and time are most prominent in this theme. Getting away is initially about moving away from aspects of the everyday rather than finding a place to be; it is about getting space away from responsibilities, roles, rules and duty. Place becomes more important later on for some, but not for every participant. This will be demonstrated in later themes. Gaining space also comes with a sense of there being more time or time no longer mattering. Perception of time is nuanced and different for each participant, however, and depends on the activity level. Alongside the element of time is the

enjoyment of freedom and simplicity felt with not doing anything, which was particularly experienced during the solo phase.

Bounded within this category are themes that link with subsequent chapters of the thesis – ‘Landscape and Artefacts’, and ‘Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom’—and their themes relating to social norms and independence. These are prominent and recurring themes that influence and mediate experience and meaning-making and were highlighted throughout analysis.

All of the participants expressed a desire to get away and considered the WSE to be an opportunity to be free from social demands and aspects of everyday life, and to access a simpler way of life. Seeking freedom is a common theme. For some participants (n=6) freedom is expressed in the form of adventure and escape from everyday life and the city. Sarah stated that she *was really happy to be like (.) going on a little adventure [...] it was lovely to be out of the city (.) and (it was lovely) to go to (see) and be like really far away [...] can we go back?* (Sarah, post-experience interview, study one). Sarah’s comments reveal the pleasure of being very distant from the city, implying that there is a desire to get away from aspects of everyday life. Later in her post-experience interview Sarah stated that her desire to *go back* to the WSE landscape was far stronger after her solo experience, since her experiences of being with the landscape were more profound having created a stronger connection to place.

Some participants (n= 3; Nina, Alex, and Dannie) were more explicit about what they were getting away from, such as ‘reality’, which included responsibilities, problems, societal pressures, and other people, and seemed to cause some level of stress. In example 5.01, Nina describes how she is enjoying living a simpler and less complicated life for a while whilst camping, away from her *list of things to do* (line 2). ‘Relinquishing Responsibilities’ is a theme that will be discussed in detail in chapter 7, but here it helps us understand what participants were ‘getting away’ from:

Example 5.01:

Nina, journal, study two

- 1 In a way I’m looking forward to home comforts but definitely not my list
- 2 of things to do and responsibilities. If I didn’t have them I’d be glad to
- 3 go back but I could quite easily do another day, maybe two out in the
- 4 wilderness. Maybe it’s a sense of dread to go back and face the
- 5 problems I left. It feels like this camping because we are away from
- 6 ‘reality’ in a sense + home comforts then it’s a much simpler way and I
- 7 feel more calm because of this but when I’m home it just feels so much
- 8 more complicated and I’m constantly thinking.

What is particularly interesting about this example is that, although no specific reference to a cityscape (everyday place) is made, home comforts are something that help Nina distinguish between two places – the everyday and the escape place (*the wilderness* – line 4). Home comforts are an aspect of everyday life enjoyed by Nina, but lines 1-3 show her recognition of the relative value of both places. At this point the *sense of dread to go back and face problems* (line 4-5) overrides any desires for home comforts and she rather seeks to stay away from reality (line 6) as it makes her feel *more calm* (line 7) and free from *constantly thinking* (line 8).

Alex talked about similar desires to get away and resistances to going home, and expresses these in both study one and study two. Alex describes her experiences of the WSE aptly as *in reality and kind of out of reality* and states that *it was just about wanting to get away [...] away from responsibilities and stress* (follow-up interview, study one). In the days leading up to her second WSE, Alex expresses her desire and excitement to get away early in her journal and further highlights reasons why the ‘reality’ in nature was more desirable than the ‘reality’ at home: *to be able to get away – wow I can’t wait [...] to feel like I belong – on my own – no people – nothing to worry about – no one to talk to* (journal, study two). Feelings of belongingness and getting away from people, in particular, were important motivations for Alex to participate in the WSE for a second time. Feelings of belonging are a feature that will be discussed in chapter 6 but clearly Alex expects her wishes to get away from people to be fulfilled by participating on the WSE. Alex had additional motivations to get away in study two that were to get away from feeling oppressed by social rules and everyday responsibilities and pressures:

Example 5.02:

Alex, follow-up interview, study two

1 A: [...] it’s like we’re all trapped in our own little prisons but in a bigger
2 prison because of everything I mean the rules we have to abide by: and
3 even when you go into the wilderness there’s still those rules there: (.)
4 you know you’ve still got to abide by what people say which is really (.)
5 kind of (.) you know frustrating but then you’re in your tent and that is
6 like you- I don’t know in a tent you’d think it was more restricted but it
7 isn’t it’s kind of you get up and you can’t see anybody else around you
8 and that is erm for that moment you can feel free you know until you
9 bump into somebody and then it’s like oh god (.) put me on a planet
10 somewhere up there and it’ll be fine where there’s no people

The topic of ‘other’ people triggers an explanation of what they represent to Alex and fundamentally what she wishes to get away from. Alex uses her past

experiences of being homeless to understand her experience and feelings. People remind Alex of things she dislikes about society, being governed by rules that she feels she and others have to conform to (lines 1-5). Two co-existing and interlinking prisons are described, one that is more personal – an internal prison perhaps – and one that is broad, encompassing a wider feeling of social entrapment. A place which allows her to escape from this is her tent (line 5-8). This interesting relationship with the tent is expressed by other participants (n=4) and is discussed at the end of this chapter. Alex expresses strong feelings of dissatisfaction with aspects of everyday life and of wanting to get away and be independent from being part of society. She articulates her needs dramatically, as an escape to another planet (line 8-10). Alex and Nina both seemed to have been drawn in and out of 'reality' during the WSE. Disturbances, such as unwanted thoughts about responsibilities, reminded both of an undesirable 'reality', whereas nature brought them into a desirable 'reality'.

The benefits of getting away from people were also shared by other participants, such as Dannie who stated *there was nobody nagging me you know like no pressure on me or anything* (post-experience interview, study two). 'Other' people seem, therefore, to epitomise the essence of social pressure. Dannie's comments also bring together the experiences and feelings that many of the participants (n=8) voiced and demonstrate the 'push' of everyday life and that it is a wish to be free and just 'be' that drives the desire to get away:

Example 5.03

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

1 D: it's hard to (.) say it in a concise way but like but just escaping
 2 somewhere just (.) stepping stepping out of normal like
 3 [...] like (.) if you're on a conveyer on a conveyer belt it or something
 4 and it's just like stepping off that conveyer belt (.) so you're like not
 5 getting pushed along (.) just place where (.) a place where basically
 6 where time doesn't matter to me just a place where you're not being
 7 rushed but time's not an issue (.) that's (.) that's basically it doesn't
 8 matter how long you're there for you're just there for until you feel like
 9 coming back that's that the main thing about it (.) just there's no rush (.)
 10 cos it's like every day you (.) you usually rushed by something even if it's
 11 down to just (.) even if you've got a day off (2) or something like (.) for
 12 me anyway (.) em (.) there's still (.) there's still a bit of pressure (2)
 13 even if it's self-applied to do something with your day cos otherwise
 14 you feel like you've wasted your day [...] but just that (2) place where (.)
 15 time doesn't matter it doesn't matter what you do (.) you just sit and
 16 not do anything but just being able to just (.) not have any (.) pressure
 17 on you at all or anything just (.) just being able to relax and not feel
 18 (2.5) yeah (.) yeah (.) feel quite free I suppose you know just (.) feel free
 19 to just be a human being and sat in a place (.) rather than (.) be (2) this
 20 person who is a (.) who does (.) who has to do (.) you know and all these

21 other terms (.) that society places on us sort of [...] I suppose it's getting
 22 closer to actually being wild you know like (2.5) just being like animal
 23 just animal cos at the end of the day we are animals but just living like
 24 an animal but more just about (.) existing rather than (.) having to earn
 25 money (.) get a grade and (.) please somebody and do something (.) you
 26 know (.) just the mundane things that everybody has to do in society to
 27 get along in society (.) you know to get away from it and sort of eh (2)
 28 screw it I'm (.) just going to sit here for as long as I want to sit here

The whole extract implies a desire to seek, and enjoyment of having, a simpler, freer, more primal life. Dannie's talk about society and everyday pressures as being on a conveyer belt (lines 1-5) resonates with Alex's comments about feeling trapped in a prison and the aspiration for escape from the everyday is strong. Additionally, associating the experience with *being wild* (line 22) and being and living *like an animal* (line 22 and 23-24) accentuate meaning made from the WSE; that we (human beings) are meant to be free. He makes a distinction between being a 'person' and being a 'human being' (lines 15-21). Being a person is associated with being normal (line 2), conformity, routine and responsibilities (line 10-14 and 19-21, 24-27), whereas being a human being is associated with being wild (line 22-24) and free (lines 18, 27-28). Feeling wild and free interlink and are shown to exist alongside each other. Dannie also makes distinctions between everyday places and escape places. Everyday places are where one can get stuck on a conveyer belt, conforming and performing for others and society. Escape places are wilder and freer, where *time doesn't matter* (line 5-6, 14-15), with reference made to the WSE landscape. The distinctions and contrasts made between the two types of places enhance the meaning of his points and show a desire to have distance between himself and undesirable aspects of the everyday, which are also evident in the former examples.

What these examples and quotes suggest is that getting away is about physically getting away from a place that represents society. It is also about getting away from activities and thus gain distance from aspects of everyday life. The WSE and WSE landscape fostered feelings among participants of not doing anything and not 'having' to do anything, and with it experiences of freedom and belongingness. The WSE seemed to permit participants to get closer to feeling more free; free from a life that was perceived as partly controlled by society, norms and other people.

5.2. Connecting with Nature

'Connecting with Nature' extends the theme 'Getting Away' and demonstrates the many and diverse ways in which participants expressed their experience of nature

and connecting to their surroundings. The theme particularly highlights participant's transitional experiences during the WSE – transitions from space to space, space to place, and place to space. Transition relates to movement. The word transition is used rather than movement, as the phenomenon of transition is related to movements in a holistic sense, including emotion, spirituality and spatiality. Acknowledging and gaining a sense of movement allows an understanding to form about the transitions in participants' sense of space, place and time. 'Connecting with Nature' is about enjoying space and is about the journey and process of gaining a sense of place; a sense of nature and nature as a place, and a sense of one's own place in nature and relation to it. Experiences of space and place seemed much more stable than experience of time. Participants experienced time in different and varying ways, which often were contradictory and fluctuating. Time was noticed and unnoticed, time was important and lacked importance, time was bounded and free. Participants felt more bound by time when they described being less present in space and place; their sense of space and place seemed less evident. Conversely, participants were less bound by time when they had a greater sense of space and place. This theme has four sub-themes, 'Entering the Landscape', 'Noticing Nature and Surroundings', 'Belongingness', 'Being a visitor in Nature', that demonstrate the various manifestations of the main theme in more detail and elucidate related achievements and challenges.

'Entering the Landscape' relates to participant descriptions of connecting with nature during the first day in the study locations. 'Belongingness' illustrates how participant's experiences of connecting to the nature manifested through feelings of belongingness. 'Noticing Nature and Surroundings' shows more the way in which participants connected to nature and how they demonstrated this deepening connection through experience – through a greater awareness of and appreciation of what was around them. 'Being a Visitor in Nature' demonstrates another, perhaps more challenging, facet to participants' experiences of connecting to nature, particularly in relation to pre-conceived ideas about a nature and human divide. Participant narratives demonstrate achievements and challenges related to their experience of connecting with nature and are shown in all of the sub-themes, with 'Being a Visitor in Nature' presenting more challenges (barriers) to connecting with nature than being an enabling aspect of such a process.

Data that reveal general experiences of connecting with nature are presented first before exploring the sub-themes. In the examples below, the many different facets of connecting with nature are shown. One of the most basic elements

needed to connect to place and nature is to be there (n=8), which Sarah articulates clearly:

Example 5.04:

Sarah, post-experience interview, study two

1 S:[...] I got dead excited about all the animals (.) so (.) but it was like the
2 actual experience (.) looking at them in books or on the telly does not
3 do it for me I've got to say (.) I'm not like oh wow::w (.) it's that actual
4 experience it's like all the countryside like (.) I don't know::w (2.5) just
5 thinking about it is not the same as being there (.) so you can't capture
6 that like in a picture as well it doesn't say anything about what you felt
7 like

Sarah highlights the value of the *actual experience* (line 2) and the feelings it conjures. The excitement about experiencing nature so closely is important to Sarah. She describes the impact of the experience as being different, both visually and in relation to feelings (line 6-7). Being in and with nature is thus an altogether different experience than that of looking at pictures, one that cannot be captured, which suggests a desire for contact with nature rather than representations of nature. In example 5.05, Sarah talks about nature as a source of motivation for her (line2-5), further suggesting the connection she felt with nature. She compares her experiences of waking up in nature and at home (lines 1-2):

Example 5.05:

Sarah, post-solo interview, study two

1 S: I opened up my window and I thought oh I'll sit out there (.) I think it
2 was because I didn't have anything that needed doing [...] the thing that
3 got me up this morning because I tend to snooze in the morning (.)
4 wake up go to sleep wake up go to sleep (.) was just suddenly (.) the sun
5 just shined it was like just ooh (.) and I was like ooh oohooh err

Sarah attributes part of her motivation to not having *anything that needed doing* (line 2). Here we see, demonstrated in changes in sleeping habits, further transitions made in a participant's connection with nature and place. Changes in Sarah's experiences of waking up highlight that she experienced one place differently from the other, with the WSE landscape being the more enjoyable to wake up to.

The above examples demonstrate benefits of actually being present in nature. The following example shows the importance and benefit of being in the present (n=9), 'in the here and now', in nature. Being in the present in their surroundings, escaping unwanted thoughts and turning attention to the details of

nature or its peacefulness rather than the details of everyday life demonstrated participants' transition to connecting to place and nature:

Example 5.06:

Nina, journal, study two

- 1 I just been for a walk to see the stream and sat on a rock and it was
 2 brilliant I just felt instantly in the beautiful scenery and open space. [...] I
 3 wasn't thinking about all the stuff that I left back home. And all the
 4 worry. There was no one else and it was bliss.

This excerpt demonstrates Nina's enjoyment of being with nature and the benefit gained from being focused on the present in nature. Going for a walk seems to help Nina 'be' in nature and her enjoyment is, in part, because of the pleasant scenery, but also because of the feelings as a consequence of there being *no one else* (lines 3 and 5) and not thinking about the worry back home. The absence of such distractions seems to help her experience being in nature more fully. Doing some sort of low-energy activity in nature, like walking or sitting, seemed to facilitate the contact (n=9), which is also demonstrated in the extract below:

Example 5.07:

Joe, journal, study one

- 1 15th Day 3
 2 [...] And as I sit here in the open I have a sense of exhilaration. Here life
 3 is starting to feel distant.
 4 I really enjoyed the time climbing myself up by the waterfall. I enjoyed
 5 the challenge I was able to focus on the environment IN THE HERE AND
 6 NOW without the need to make conversation. However the space
 7 brought my thoughts to relationship concerns but I think this was cos I
 8 had no distractions. Camping together was good, brought a sense of
 9 unity. [...] But being out camping seems to have focused concerns on
 10 immediate experiences.

This shows Joe becoming more immersed in nature during the start of the journey phase. As he did, he felt more *distant* (line 3) from life. When Joe ventured on his own to a waterfall the experience allowed him to be more present and focused on *immediate experiences* (line 10) which he writes in capitals, for emphasis (line 5-6). This was also achieved whilst camping, which also afforded him, and others, time to themselves and to re-focus concerns. Other spaces, with no 'typical' everyday distractions, however, led to unwanted thoughts about *relationship concerns* (line 7) showing ways that thoughts may be prompted by a WSE. For Joe, the space was an escape as well as a space in which he thought about concerns and stresses. Being in the present in nature was thus not always easy to

achieve, suggesting that being in nature alone is not always enough to connect to place and nature, 'being in the here and now' is also important, showing that the space can be both enabling and challenging and that connecting to nature is a nuanced and shifting process

As Joe shows, being with nature is not always a positive experience all the time and connecting with nature is not necessarily an easy process. In example 5.08, Alex expresses in her journal her irritation with the midges disturbing her experience and questions being in nature for longer:

Example 5.08:

Alex, journal, study two

1 I wonder if a person could go mad being on their own for a long period
 2 of time – I say this because my thoughts are of getting revenge on the
 3 midges from that are stopping me from sitting outside looking around
 4 me.

The midges stop Alex from going outside and, in a sense, seem to create a natural barrier to interaction with nature. This experience stimulates Alex to ponder the possible negative effects on someone's mental health (lines 1-2) when in nature for a longer time. Such a question was not previously articulated either during or after her experiences in study one. This suggests it may be the first time she has thought about being in nature this way and shows how different experiences provide different perspectives. Alex's experiences with the midges seemed to trigger her to think about a different aspect and represent a paradox of experiences out of doors. Later in this chapter though, Alex talks about how being with nature made her feel free from 'madness' and thus contrasts with this excerpt and demonstrates dissonance, which is something that all participants (n=9) display in the data.

5.2.1 Entering the Landscape

The following section expands on the variety of experiences of entry into the natural landscape. Temporally, 'entering the landscape' refers to the initial experiences of participants travelling to the WSE location and during the exploration phase, and relates to the transition from leaving the everyday landscape to a more natural landscape. At first, the landscape is regarded as an expansive and daunting space by some (n=3). The space became less intimidating over time, as it developed to be more of a 'place', and became more inviting, providing motivation for exploration. Some participants (n=3) make reference to

the landscape as a place, but in more abstract terms, such as 'like a picture/painting', suggesting some degree of detachment from the landscape.

Feelings expressed when entering the landscape were positive and full of expectation, enthusiasm and excitement for most (n=6). For Alex, the destination was remembered as follows:

Example 5.09:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

1 A: I remember going erm down the (.) down this road and seeing the
2 house and it was so straight away it was freeing [...] it was definitely like
3 walking into a picture you know whenever I see it in my head it's like a
4 picture

Alex also describes her experiences of entering the landscape *like walking in a picture* (lines 2-3), suggesting that the feeling of entering the landscape was immediate and memorable. By stating the landscape was like a picture, she suggests that her surroundings seemed to meet her expectations and previous conceptions about what the place would be like, as well as the place being fondly remembered by her. The use of the picture, as a figure of speech, also suggests that to some extent Alex may have regarded the place as separate and different to what she may have previously experienced or observed. Consequently, her experience of entering the landscape, like walking into a picture, represents a paradox; she experienced both a connection as well as a disconnection (a sense of distance) from the place.

First impressions of the landscape were not always immediately positive in the entry phase. Joe writes that *When I first started to approach the bunk house I felt a bit * low (depressed would be too severe) once I got out the car I felt differently there was less foreboding* (journal, study one). In example 5.10, Joe writes a poem that reflects this, explaining the increasing invitation of the landscape and his consequent feelings of connection with the landscape:

Example 5.10:

Joe, journal, study one

1 As I peered out, barren
2 mountain hills loomed
3 ever in, with fore-
4 boding they stand
5 silent unmovable.
6 Disparaging to all who
7 are drawn to them.
8 Now I stand before
9 them! Like a mortal
10 before his god. Yet,

11 foreboding dissipates, an
 12 invitation beckons. The
 13 calling to wander over their
 14 scarred belly and experience
 15 the gentleness and fragility
 16 of the barren mountain
 17 hills.
 18 Reflection on Poem: The first part of the poem is a description of
 19 arriving into the valley by car and stepping out into the open. Whilst the
 20 2nd part describes in-part the increased connection I felt and change of
 21 emotions I experienced when in contact with the environment on the
 22 1st & 2nd days.

Joe describes through poetry his experiences of entering the landscape. Initial impressions of his surroundings were of nature as an intimidating and powerful force. He felt summoned (lines 9-10) but this summoning seems to change into a welcome (line 12) as Joe starts to experience the more subtle and nuanced character of nature (line 15). This transition in how Joe interacted and perceived the landscape elicited a change in mood (lines 20-21). Excitement and motivation developed as he made more contact with the place, which he revealed earlier in his journal: *Somehow getting out that car and making contact with the environment made me feel invigorated and excited about walking up the hills (the higher the better I felt)* (study one). Making contact with nature was therefore an important process. Gaining height and distance seemed to provide greater contact with nature and enhance the process of connecting with nature. The importance and benefit of gaining height and distance is a theme that is discussed in chapter 7. Such a transition took place over two days during the exploration phase and the beginning of the journey phase (lines 21-22), which suggests that connection to place took some time for him and was not necessarily instant. This contrasts with Alex's account of entering the landscape as *straight away it was freeing* (example 5.09, line 2).

5.2.2 Noticing Nature and Surroundings

Part of the process of connecting to nature and place seemed to be noticing aspects of nature. Participants became more aware of their surroundings and took greater interest in nature as time went on during the WSE. Participants (n=9) started to notice detail and character rather than being defined by large landmarks or distinct features; nuances in the landscape come to matter. A sense of place is seen to grow and by noticing nature some participants become more aware of

their own position in the natural landscape and start to realise that they are visitors in nature, a quality discussed in sub-theme 'Being a Visitor in Nature'.

The different aspects of nature were varied and included animals (animal tracks, grouse, sheep, birds, frogs, insects), features (sounds, the breeze, smell of freshness, water, colours in nature) changes in nature (changes in weather, cloud formations, colour, and temperature). Variety and detail is aptly captured by Nina's statement; *I think you really see the little things out here* (journal, study two). Participants (n=7) noticed nature throughout the WSE but predominantly during the solo experience where participants were more likely to notice changes due to being still. The variations in observations are captured well in Alex's journal entry:

Example 5.11:

Alex, journal, study two

- 1 The clouds look so black as they move across the sky, something I never
- 2 notice when I'm at home. I can see the top of a tree moving in the
- 3 breeze, but here where I'm camped I feel no breeze. My eyes are more
- 4 open to the sights, my nose to the smell of freshness and my ears to the
- 5 water + the birds. [...] The bracken it's tall, bright green in colour, it's a
- 6 gorgeous contrast to the purple heather that lies silently behind it.

For Leslie, who had a visual impairment, noticing nature was enjoyable.

Example 5.12:

Leslie, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 L: I think that were probably the best time (.) when I woke up in
- 2 t'morning (.) and I just lay there and (.) sort of listening (.) listening to
- 3 what's around

Example 5.13 illustrates how a change in the surroundings and noticing nature stimulated a change in mood for Dannie.

Example 5.13:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 D: I started seeing little insects and: weird things like I saw a big massive
- 2 dragonfly (.) and just- (.) went under this big (.) fallen tree that it looked
- 3 like it were sort of man-made I remember that (.) it was like a it was like
- 4 an archway [...] it's funny like (.) the (4) definitely the surroundings of
- 5 the different parts (.) where we were (.) affected my mood I think (.) so
- 6 that that made me feel better

This change in mood happened near the end of the journey phase, in weekend one. The forest seemed to offer more variation in natural features than the moorland terrain that dominated the walk, suggesting that variation in terrain

is important to Dannie. In the forest, natural features and wildlife were more varied. What is important here is that Dannie enjoyed noticing nature particularly during the time he was walking in pain with two sticks because of a bad back. The forest and the nature and change in scenery it had to offer were perhaps a welcome distraction. Interestingly, Dannie's memory of his observations was very full two weeks after the WSE. Dannie seems to remember the features of this place in detail, much more than other areas during the WSE, suggesting that the positive mood created by the change in space motivated him and made him more observant of his surroundings during that time. It also suggests that the features of these kinds of surroundings were more meaningful to him in some way.

As well as welcome distraction and novelty gained when noticing nature, noticing nature also had potentially more profound effects. Example 5.14 shows how noticing nature for Sarah changed the way she thinks about life:

Example 5.14:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 S: [...] it takes like it literally takes my seeing ducklings to be like (.) oh:
 2 yeah (.) like you don't have to do anything to be happy (.) you just have
 3 to notice what's already there

Here Sarah describes what she took away from her experiences. Noticing nature, wherever one is, provides a sense of perspective. The perspective gained whilst with nature and noticing nature provides Sarah with meaning, value and happiness. The essential learning from her experiences is that valuing what you have can bring happiness. Strong statements like this suggest a meaningful realisation. Interestingly the meaningfulness of these insights occurred after the WSE, suggesting that sometimes realisations take time to crystallise. Overall, it seems that noticing nature and surroundings is an important element within the process of connecting to and gaining meaning from nature.

5.2.3 Belongingness

Belongingness refers to when and how participants felt a connection with nature and to the landscape they were walking through and sitting with. Some participants (n=4) questioned their place in nature, e.g. as part of nature or separate from it, and how participants made a transition to feeling more connected to nature is explored during and after the WSE. Space and sense of space becomes less important here and sense of place takes precedence as participants find themselves 'connecting' or not 'connecting' to the landscape, gaining a sense of belonging or not. Often connection to place was noted when participants (n=7) began to notice nature more than usual. Place also becomes more prominent in

examples where participants (n=6) talk about their experiences of achieving varying degrees of 'connection' and about their 'place' in nature. The passage of time is not prominent in this theme perhaps because the data examples capture present, 'here and now' reflections.

Joe, Sarah, Nina, Kit and Alex all experienced some level of belongingness to nature during or as a consequence of the WSE. Nina felt this during her solo experience. Her solo provided an opportunity to walk through the environment without a backpack, giving her the freedom, or ability, to take more notice of her surroundings: *She noticed the little things that you wouldn't see if you were just stomping your way through, which made her feel more in nature and part of it as well* (Nina, journal, study two). Alex described her solo experience in study one as spiritual:

Example 5.15:

Alex, post-experience interview, study one

- 1 A: when I was there I didn't actually feel like I was in a body if you (.) it
- 2 wasn't an out-of-body experience or anything (.) it was just more like
- 3 this it is this is nature you know and we are one [...] I'm feeling this is
- 4 how I am (.) this is where I am (2) I'm here (.) you know (.) and that was
- 5 fantastic to kind of keep time still

Alex conveys the connection she felt she had with the landscape as a consequence of being still. Alex describes being present in her surroundings – *this is where I am (.) I'm here* (line 4) and her experiences of connecting to self – *this is how I am* (lines 3-4). From what Alex describes it seems as if the freedom and peace of mind may have come from feeling some level of harmony and connection with her surroundings and with nature. Experiencing harmony and connection seems also to pause time (line 5).

Joe demonstrates a strong sense of belonging in his journal as he records his feelings the day he leaves the landscape, the first full day back in everyday life and then nine days after the end of his WSE. He describes how his connection to the landscape remained and how his connection to the outdoors impacted on his transition back to everyday routine and habits. He relates his connection to nature with childhood experiences and reveals that in a way he seeks to re-experience the feelings he felt as a child in nature:

Example 5.16:**Joe, journal, study one**18th/19th

1 [...] Coming back I noticed smells more strongly such as perfume from
 2 passers-by and sense of wellbeing, it also struck me I had not even
 3 thought about what was happening in the news and when I did begin to
 4 watch it I just turn it off (not like me) I felt a bit more sensitive to the
 5 negative reports on it. I had some wine with my dinner but felt I did not
 6 really want it! (another not like me) Later I switched the TV off as I
 7 found the noise distracting and just sat in the silence and by candlelight.
 8 I still have a feeling of being connected to the outdoors for the
 9 moment...

20th

11 Really feeling like getting back out there by myself, usual distractions
 12 alcohol, shops and TV seem little hollow at the moment! Feeling really
 13 chilled still and a little removed to my usual concerns [...] Did not have
 14 any alcohol last night, usually I would but felt my mind was still out
 15 doors, thinking of lying out on the heather star gazing, went to bed
 16 earlier as well, about the same time I had been over the past week
 17 whilst outdoors.

28th

19 Still have a strong urge to head out-doors, it feels more comforting than
 20 ever before! I know that when I do go trekking again I will find it a
 21 cathartic experience. This was something I had forgotten from when I
 22 was younger and have now re-experienced as an adult.

Joe's journal entry builds up to his realisation about a *forgotten* (line 21), *cathartic* (line 21) emotion that he had only experienced when he was *younger* (line 22). This may explain why the thought of going outdoors was *comforting* (line 23). Joe's connection to nature persists over a number of days after he leaves the study location. His connection to the outdoors is demonstrated by his heightened sense of smells (lines 1-2) and by his *sense of wellbeing* (lines 2). Noticing everyday smells more after the WSE was noted by Alex who spoke of the potency of deodorant, food and water when she returned (Alex, journal, study one) suggesting that it was not an isolated occurrence. Joe also illustrates connection with the outdoors and a sense of belongingness by reporting reactions to his usual routine; a desire to relinquish everyday routine and habits. He seems to feel detached somewhat from his usual habits and drifts back into thinking about the outdoors (lines 14-15 and 19). A usual routine of watching the news for Joe also seemed to be over-stimulating and distracting (lines 2-7). The news drew his attention away from the 'here and now', which he stated he experienced during his WSE. Again, a comparison is made between aspects of everyday life and nature, suggesting that they are considered as two distinct and separate places, and are used to bring a sense of understanding to a particular context. Additionally, in his follow-up interview, one of the things that Joe remembered most from the WSE was *just*

having a sense of being more connected to the outdoors but that as time went on that sense of connection dissipated (study one). These comments further affirm Joe's sense of belonging, but highlight how time and distance from a place can reduce connection with it.

Example 5.14 shows an attempt to try and understand the experience of being with nature, in which Sarah states that experiencing nature is a part of *the essence of being alive* (lines 3-4), suggesting a purpose and belonging in nature, but also being separate from it:

Example 5.17:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

1 S: cos I don't think of myself as being like (.) I don't identify myself as
2 being someone who (.) says things like (.) that I'm (.) connected to the
3 (2) earth: or that kind of thing [...] but I think that's part of it (.) like the
4 essence of being alive

Sarah attempts to understand her emotions towards and experiences in nature, explaining how she enjoys nature and its beauty but also how she feels she is not necessarily part of it. Here Sarah seems to present a realisation that part of being alive is to enjoy and see the value in nature; and that looking and experiencing nature is enough to produce that feeling of aliveness and vitality.

What Sarah explains as *the essence of being alive*, Alex explains differently below. For her it is a *basic drive in everybody* (lines 7-8). This links with Sarah's reflection in her journal, *water just stirs something in me that must be on some primal level because I'm just drawn to it* (journal, study two). Alex also implies separateness between nature and the everyday landscape by stating that she does not feel like she belongs in the everyday (line 1) and rather feels a greater belonging in and with nature:

Example 5.18:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

1 A: [...] i I don't feel like I belong here (.) and then when I was there I look
2 back now and I (.) you know it's like a belonging in a sense you know
3 cos I've been looking into evolutionary psychology and I just think if you
4 go back to basics (.) and you think what a human being was like you
5 know (.) about like living with nature and everything I wonder if there's
6 that basic drive in everybody to be actually living with nature and just
7 the basic things (.) and that's why I felt so comfortable in that situation

Alex describes her connection to nature clearly (lines 1-2). The belongingness she felt is further reflected in her reflections on how *comfortable*

(line 7) she felt with *living with nature* (line 6) away from the influence of others. This satisfaction with living with nature, promotes thoughts about people's belongingness in the landscape more generally and where such feelings may stem from: that evolutionary psychology might explain belonging in nature is not an isolated or unusual feeling. Her curiosity in theory implies that she may believe that there is something more meaningful in her feelings of connectedness, something greater and more holistic. Alex, along with Joe and Sarah, therefore regard the natural landscape as a significant place, with Alex and Sarah describing it as a place that has elements considered fundamental to human beings.

5.2.4 Being a Visitor in Nature

Being a Visitor in Nature presents instances where participants demonstrated an awareness that they were in a landscape where nature and natural features were dominant, rather than human beings and manufactured objects. As in the previous theme, participants (n=4) here are shown to have talked about their 'place' in nature but in doing so also talk about nature's place, representing ways in which participants felt a connection to place. Although there were fewer examples to support this theme, the examples are rich and strong and thus were deemed an important aspect of connecting with nature and, more broadly, the experience of being with nature. In these examples, nature is shown to have its own space. That space has fixed qualities, e.g. a rock has its place, streams flow and birds fly freely, and that only nature should change the detail of these qualities, not people. Participants (n=5) show a growing sense of nature's landscape as a place, with boundaries and being a home to animals. Such awareness led some participants to express things in such a way that implied that they felt like they were a visitor in nature. Alex provides particularly strong examples of this:

Example 5.19:

Alex, journal, study two

1 Just been out of my tent to make coffee and it's a full scale attack from
 2 the midge brigade, hundreds of them. Kinda bothered me but it's me
 3 who's invading their space. Just been to see the ants nest, but could
 4 only see a few of them – here in this particular spot I feel I'm getting in
 5 the way – just like I'm invading their space, an outsider disrupting
 6 nature. But at home it's the other way round – if an insect comes into
 7 my house I get rid of it, so who can blame the midges for attacking. [...] I
 8 kinda feel I'm intruding on their land.

This shows Alex assessing her actions, illustrating a contrast in the way she would respond to something in her home than in nature. In this instance she

wanted to co-exist with nature and did not want to change or dominate nature. Alex was very aware that she was in nature's space and place and saying things like *getting in the way* (lines 4-5) and *disrupting nature* (lines 5-6), suggest that Alex regarded nature as having a routine and order. Separateness from nature, that nature has its territory and people have their territory, is also implied here when Alex uses terms such as *invading* (lines 3 and 5), *outsider* (line 5), *intruding* (line 8), *their land* (line 8). Alex's home is her territory whilst the WSE landscape is nature's territory. By using words like *attack* (line 1) and *attacking* (line 7) and associating the midges as a *brigade* (line 2), Alex accentuates the sense of being an invader. Alex attaches a human construction to explain what she sees when she attributes 'brigade' with the midges and their behaviour. Such words are aggressive suggesting that space and territory is important, and that the way territory is protected and claimed is something that resonates with human behaviour; indeed it militarises territory.

As well as noticing the behaviour of nature, considering nature as having its own place also made Alex more aware of the impact of her behaviour on her surroundings:

Example 5.20:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 I remember feeling (.) GUILTY that I was doing that to my body (.)
- 2 polluting it cos you know it was so fresh and I were polluting the air [...]
- 3 Here [everyday context] I don't think twice (.) I don't think twice about
- 4 it

Alex reflects on how being in the natural landscape emphasised and accentuated how her behaviour impacts on her body (lines 1-2). Pollution and the consequences of it are mentioned twice here, which enhances the meaning and her memories of feeling guilt (line 1) accentuate the meaning. Overall, the realisations and feelings that Alex experienced emerged from, what seems to be, a deep sense of place, a place that was different than what she is used to. Sarah also demonstrates this:

Example 5.21:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

S: I don't feel like I'm anything to do with birds or butterflies but I feel like they're beautiful (2) why do they have to be anything to do with me?

Sarah comments on her awareness of some sense of intruding – she is in their space, not that they are in her space. Separateness is conveyed here but at the same time also a sense of connection and appreciation of nature, of its beauty. Many of the excerpts were reported in participant journals (n=3), something which implies that they were unsettled about their position in nature (e.g. whether they were part of it or a visitor), and reveals their attempt to try and understand it more privately. This, in turn, suggests that different places can have different impacts on people and provide a change in perspective.

5.3 Being Still in Nature

Many of the noteworthy examples relate to the theme 'Being Still in Nature': describing the challenges and benefits of being still. This theme is about being in space, being alone in space, realising vast space, and finding and moving (mini-transitions) between different spaces, where one feels differently or sees something differently. It is about noticing spaces. Physical and mental spaces are revealed particularly in the 'Distraction and Time' theme, which illustrates how responsibilities and distractions can intrude on space. 'Being Still in Nature', allows the pause needed to be still in place, and gain a sense of nature's place. Here we see transitions between spaces – from tent spaces to open spaces, from feeling that it is therapeutic to relinquishing that purpose, and larger transitions in 'Distraction and Time' where participants struggle to leave behind everyday life and responsibilities. All participants (n=9) described their experiences of being still with nature as memorable to them.

Being still had its challenges and benefits. This was the case for Joe in study one, and Alex, Nina, and Leslie in study two. Alex found being still difficult due to constant shifts in thought and emotion, *one minute I was loving it and the next thinking I should be home* (journal, study two). With an overwhelming sense of duty, that she 'should' be somewhere doing something, responsibilities back home – the everyday – seemed to disturb Alex more during study two. Nature, however, helped her be present in the landscape: *something would catch my eye - a bird, a fly, an ant etc and it would bring me back to the here and now* (journal, study two). A similar process was experienced by Nina, Leslie and Joe, but for Leslie, overcoming feelings of boredom, rather than responsibilities or duty, were of primary concern.

Example 5.22 demonstrates how Joe wanted to hold onto that experience of stillness in mind and in time. He reveals the challenges with thinking or doing nothing, with a competing sense of daily routine:

Example 5.22:**Joe, post-experience interview, study one**

1 J: like the kinda sunset erm (2.5) there was a particular moment for me
 2 when I woke up in the morning on the 24hour period and I just sat for
 3 10 min in the tent just at the door of the tent eh just it was just sitting I
 4 did this before everything that I (had) to engage in so just as I knew that
 5 this was going to last for maybe five or ten minutes and then once I had
 6 to move then everything else would have to start (.) the day would just
 7 unfold in its way [...] so it's that experience of that kind of stillness both
 8 in myself and in nature that kinda comes to mind

Joe seems to want to avoid or suspend routine and in doing so maintain the experience. Joe marvels at the opportunity to *just sit*. The experience of *just sitting* (line 3) was precious, which is alluded to by his reference to it being a *particular moment* (line 1). Movement could disrupt or change the fragile 'moment' (lines 4-6) and it could only last a short while (lines 5). Joe's certainty that being still can only be short in duration also implies a norm of routine and habit. There seems to be a deep sense that this stillness was a profound experience for Joe.

For Sarah it was not just the experience of being still that was profound for her but the realisation that she could experience stillness. In example 5.20, Sarah explains how she came to realise that she has *the potential to stand still* (line2), something that she normally finds very difficult to do (lines 3-4). Sarah transforms this realisation into an empowering coping mechanism for periods of *mental ill health* (line 11):

Example 5.23:**Sarah, post-experience interview, study two**

1 S: I think what I'll really keep which is really lovely (.) is that that
 2 realisation that like (.) I have the potential to stand still (.) because I
 3 honestly don't do that ever [...] it's really a nice realisation (.) that like
 4 oh it is possible for me (.) because I just assumed it wasn't (.) [...] so it's
 5 nice that there's an outlet that I do feel dead calm (.) really good (.)
 6 because I think it's something to try and incorporate into my life (.) that
 7 will be really healthy (.) and that's really positive (.) I don't have that
 8 much erm (3) like it more like about taking over (.) I don't have that
 9 much (.) apart from friends and stuff in my life that I (.) enjoy (.) like
 10 pleasure activities and that's the hardest part like (.) if you are having a
 11 period of like mental ill health (.) is that that's the significant thing that
 12 everyone always asks like what can you do to make yourself feel better
 13 (.) and that's what I'm lacking (.) the thing that that therapeutic thing
 14 that just makes you feel better (.) I don't really have one (.) so (2) yeah
 15 that's like (.) a massive thing for me (.) wee hee [laughs]

The profoundness of her realisations is accentuated by the level of detail in the information she provides about how she struggles with being still. Being still in nature seemed to be a way in which Sarah could relax and be calm in mind as well as body. She notes that she has found something that she can use to make herself feel better when she feels down. Nature becomes her outlet and was a *therapeutic thing* (line 13) that she felt she was *lacking* in her life (lines 11-14) and this is especially significant to her (line 15). The use of words like *potential* (line 2) and *it is possible for me* (line 4) and *I just assumed it wasn't* (line 4) shows changes in her perspective. Saying such things enhance her account of her realisation.

5.3.1 Being by Water

'Being by water' was often described by participants as a way to connect with the landscape and nature. Near water, participants (n=5) had a sense of space and freedom; participants found a place to be, and to create space (freedom), and being by water seemed to increase (e.g. Alex) and decrease (e.g. Joe and Sarah) a sense of time passing. Being by water was enjoyable and reviving, but there were individual variations in experience.

For most participants (Nina, Sarah, Dannie and Joe) being near water was a sensual experience, providing calm as well as fascination for some. Joe found that water provided an escape from troubling thoughts. Example 5.21 is a poem Joe writes to describe his feelings at a waterfall:

Example 5.24:

Joe, journal, study one

1 My day now draws to evening after spending the afternoon at the
 2 waterfall I feel refreshed and less troubled with thoughts.
 3 [...]
 4 Poem/Waterfall
 5 I trudged through
 6 the heath entangled in
 7 thoughts I stumbled upon
 8 a rescuer!
 9 A gurgling waterfall
 10 cascading to a pool below;
 11 embanked by summer grass and clusters of
 12 reeds.
 13 There, I sat for a while,
 14 with bare feet tapping
 15 the ice cold water,
 16 taking refuge by the
 17 waterfall on that late summer's day.
 18 With the passing of the
 19 sun and its warmth and the

20 creeping in of the shadows
 21 it was time to leave that
 22 refuge at mine, with
 23 fondness and un-tangled
 24 mind.

In the poem, Joe describes his sensory experiences and the attractions of the stream. His experiences entering the space of the waterfall with unwanted thoughts allowed him to leave in a different state of mind (line 23-24). The waterfall provides a welcome sanctuary and peaceful and soothing distraction from tangled thoughts. Using the word *rescuer* (line 8) and *refuge* (line 16 and 22) implies that Joe felt a sense of relief. The poem also displays how Joe noticed the detail of nature, describing the nuances he observed in the landscape. The way Joe talks about his experiences with the waterfall suggests that the space he *stumbled upon* (line 7) over time became more of a 'place' to him, a special place that he became 'fond' of (line 23). For Sarah being near water brought *real happiness* (line 4):

Example 5.25:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

1 S: I think when you get used to functioning every day without being
 2 particularly happy like the (.) the most I expect out of life is just to not
 3 to be chronically unhappy and when those times (.) when you actually
 4 have real happiness and not just okay-ness that you really notice it (.)
 5 and I think that's when I almost got a bit like euphoric when I was in
 6 that stream and the same thing happened again when we found
 7 another stream (.) something about streams

The feeling of happiness and euphoria she describes when she found streams during the WSE seemed to trigger a realisation in her that she could be a happy person rather than just a *functioning* (line 1) person that only felt, and could feel, *okay-ness* (line 4). It appears to be freeing for Sarah to feel that she does not have to be content with not feeling *chronically unhappy* (line 3) and for this reason her realisation is particularly important to her and is one of the main things she remembers from the WSE. Being with or near water was not always the positive experience that Joe and Sarah convey, however. In example 5.23, Alex expresses a different aspect of being with water:

Example 5.26:

Alex, journal, study two

1 Water is supposed to be calming and soothing but I can't seem to get
 2 into the noise and the flowing. Last night I could, it sounds this morning
 3 like I'm running a bath, that it's pouring with rain, but I know it's only
 4 the stream [...] I had to move because with the rush of the water I

5 couldn't hear myself think.[...] My thoughts run clearer in the place
6 where there's no noise and my negative – going home thoughts have
7 gone. My head seems less busy not having to listen to the running
8 water.

Though Alex has an expectation of water being *calming and soothing* (line 1), she describes an instance of the running water disturbing her connections with the place, ability to listen to nature and listen to her own thoughts (lines 4-5); the noise of the stream is an unwelcome distraction from being present in her surroundings. The use of the word *noise* (lines 2 and 6) illustrates Alex's feelings of frustration and that she regarded the sound of the water as a disturbance. Alex was prompted to move from the water and when she did her head seemed *less busy* (line 7) – the reduction of sensory input was helpful. Alex accentuates the meaningfulness of her experiences of discomfort caused by the stream by associating them with qualities of the stream. For example, Alex states that in a quieter place away from the stream her *thoughts run clearer* (line 5) as if her thoughts were like water. When in the tent, out of sight of the stream, Alex associates the sound of the stream with everyday sounds like a tap running into a bath and falling rain (line 3). By likening her experiences of emptying her mind of negative thoughts with the clarity of water Alex also makes reference to something in nature to convey her experiences. Additionally, when detail is noticed time seems to have less meaning and being still provides an opportunity to focus more on space.

5.3.2 Distraction and Time

The theme of 'Distraction and Time' centres around the solo experience, suggesting that there is something particular about being still that makes these factors arise and become more noticeable. Participants (n=8) try to fill time with distractions, either to avoid unwelcome thoughts or to pass time. Some participants' (n=7) time with nature is occupied by thoughts of responsibilities back in everyday life, which interrupt experiences of reverie and detract from the sense of space and freedom. For some participants (n=6) it is a struggle to find or create space. Being still, without activity and distraction, seems therefore to open vulnerabilities and expose issues associated with other spaces and places. Distraction seems to convey a resistance to being in and acknowledging space. Time is a distraction itself and not knowing the time is unsettling for some participants (n=3). For others (n=5), time did not matter, creating a sense of freedom and space in mind.

To pass time some participants (n=6) created distractions in nature. Example 5.24 shows how wildlife provided Sarah with welcome distraction during her solo:

Example 5.27:

Sarah, journal, study two

- 1 My naughty sheep is back looking at me, being quite vocal. Maybe I'm
- 2 in his spot. Ooh now there are 3 of them looking at me. See I'm not at
- 3 all lonely. I've got plenty of company with me, right here is my little
- 4 companion moth who I think slept on my rucksack and there are plenty
- 5 of little bugs lying about.

Nature provides Sarah with some entertainment as she notices the activity and behaviour of the wildlife around her. Wildlife provided her with the feeling of company. By stating *See I'm not at all lonely* (lines 2-3) infers that she had expectations of feeling lonely during her solo. The way Sarah writes, in present tense with an active tone, like she is narrating what she is seeing, implies that she is writing in-the-moment observations. In doing so, one gains a sense of the kind and frequency of sensory stimulation that Sarah is experiencing in only a few moments. Sarah's comments about her being in a sheep's *spot* (lines 1-2) suggest that she is aware that she is in nature's territory and considers herself as a visitor (a theme that was discussed in section 5.2.4). Sarah also thinks of sheep in a human way (line 1), which seems also to function to create a sense of companionship and distraction from being alone. This way of personalising nature is also apparent in Nina's data – *I spent my time naming them from Barebara to commander Harris* (journal, study two) – and in naming the sheep and giving them characters Nina created entertainment in a place where she found some difficulties keeping her attention on the present.

For some participants (n=6), the solo phase was not an easy situation to adapt to and get used to. Leslie felt bored during his solo experience and desired everyday distractions, seeking diversions from being present in his surroundings in example 5.25:

Example 5.28:

Leslie, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 L: erm (.) there I think (.) I think it was boredom (.) cos nobody else
- 2 was around (.) you know (.) erm (4) oh but at home at home it's
- 3 strange because I can sit at home (.) mind you you've got comforts
- 4 and your TV and computer and that and what not and (.) erm (.) yeah:
- 5 (.) so it- (.) it was probably because there was no (.) form of
- 6 interaction of any kind I mean at home got like TV (.) you know and
- 7 it's like oh I- (.) I can sit just with the TV on (.) just (.) you know so

8 there's (.) so there's sound (.) I think yeah (.) er (.) but I'm not
9 necessarily listening to it

Items/objects like the TV and the computer provide Leslie with welcome distraction at home (lines 2-4). Such distractions are a comfort, possibly making Leslie feel less alone or isolated (lines 6-8). Leslie found it difficult to engage or interact with nature, and although in his journal he conveys to a degree that he found a certain level of distraction from the sounds of nature, it was not as effective as a TV or computer. There were times where Leslie sought distraction from boredom in nature by noticing nature; *I ventured out and sat on the rock near my tent and took some photos, this helped to empty my mind of boredom and just enjoy the peace of the outdoors* (journal, study two). Distraction from nature however did not satisfy him overall and Leslie expressed his wish to go home on more than one occasion during the WSE. This suggests that entertainment could be found from his surroundings but that it was inadequate for him to be able to relax and enjoy his solo. Consequently Leslie found himself entertaining himself in different ways, such as by *trying to guess if it's a chocolate, peanut or raisin I am going to eat* (journal, study two).

Everyday distractions were also desired by other participants (n=5) and for Alex, like Leslie, everyday distractions were a comfort. Example 5.26 demonstrates Alex's fear before the experience, of not being able to access everyday distractions during her solo:

Example 5.29:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

1 E: you were talking about the fear around these solo (2) fear especially
2 (2.5) have you ever felt that fear or tension before you know in any
3 situation?
4 A: mm not that I remember no (2) usually I've I'm quite an isolating
5 person but then I've got all the tele and radio and stuff like that (.) and
6 the phone if I need to speak to anybody (.) there's always something
7 going off in the background you know (.) I don't know why I felt like that
8 (.) I think it was because I knew that it was gonna be complete silence
9 (.) and I know how my head can tell me stuff and it can go on and on
10 and on (.) and I was just frightened that I was gonna go off on that (2.5)
11 that a negative thought was going to be put in there you know I was
12 going to start feeling really sorry for myself (.) and I was gonna start
13 using

In this extract Alex explains how her fear of silence and of having no distractions might have triggered negative voices in her head and a desire to want to use drugs (lines 9-13). The type of distractions Alex mentions (line 5) provide ways to communicate with people. All of her examples generally link her to people

and activity, suggesting that she finds them comforting. It also implies that Alex may also have had a fear of being out of contact with people, in particular people she can *speak to* (line 6). Despite her fears, however, Alex explains that her apprehensions and preconceptions did not come to fruition; with no typical distractions and a sense of belongingness, Alex felt free from everyday worries and responsibilities.

Distractions were not always created or beneficial for some. Joe for example did not create distractions purposefully like Sarah and Nina, nor did he find the thought or reality of being away from everyday distraction uncomfortable. Joe did, however, experience unwanted and distracting thoughts and found welcome distraction in nature. During his solo, Joe first focuses on what he sees the purpose of his solo to be, bringing into his experience preconceptions and expectations he had formed before the WSE and then looking to nature for consolation. He soon realises that focusing on the 'here and now' would be more beneficial for him and that nature provides him with all he needs:

Example 5.30:

Joe, journal, study one

18th/19th September

- 1
- 2 I found the morning of the 24hr difficult in the sense I had unwanted
- 3 thoughts come up, and negative feelings from past and current stuff.
- 4 This seemed to be tied in with my expectation of it being therapy it felt I
- 5 put myself on road to experience these feelings and thought but what
- 6 to do with them was the difficult thing, being out in the wilderness
- 7 seemed to intensify the feelings as there seemed no distractions.
- 8 However, when I explored around my tent I came across a small
- 9 waterfall, there I spent the rest of the day and as I did I let go of the
- 10 idea of it all being therapy and tried to be just present in my
- 11 surroundings, in the 'here and now'. When I did this the intensity of
- 12 feelings lessened and I became more peaceful within myself.

Joe reveals how *difficult* (line 1) he found the solo experience initially, particularly in the morning. With the *expectation of it being therapy* (line 4) Joe felt that it was part of the reason why he was initially experiencing unwanted thoughts and feelings, which became a distraction away from him being present in his surroundings – '*in the here and now*' (line 11). Joe first sees the wilderness as a prompt for him to think about unwelcome things. Joe's preconceptions may have been due to the use of the term 'Wilderness Therapy' in pre-experience documents and the recruitment presentation. These could have foregrounded ideas of there being a therapeutic purpose in the wilderness. Joe reflects on how, through the day, he becomes less focussed on the idea of therapy and instead moves his

attention to nature and being in the present, which seems to lead to a more relaxed frame of mind and be a more welcome distraction.

The above examples mainly refer to the use of distractions to pass time. The next examples highlight the importance of time to some participants (n=3), how time was managed (n=4), and in what ways the issue of time (being aware of it or not) impacted on the experience of being with nature (n=8).

For Dannie time was not an issue during the WSE. He stated *I really did feel erm (.) like time didn't really matter* (post-experience interview, study two). Kit also enjoyed the absence of routine, despite finding that gauging time and duration was particularly hard:

Example 5.31:

Kit, journal, study one

- 1 I've just laid in the sun for what feels like a couple of hours but my
- 2 perception of time seems all over the place. Looking at the sun I'm
- 3 guessing it's about 2pm, but I could be completely wrong it could be
- 4 10am. I can't really tell how long I've slept, but that's brilliant. I usually
- 5 have something arranged for a particular time back home, but now
- 6 times not an issue.

Kit finds the perception of time hard to judge (line 2) and, despite her attempt at trying to gain insight from nature, she has little success with gauging time by using the sun (lines 2-3). Kit's easiness with not knowing the time may be because it represents a lack of responsibility and pressure on her, which is signified by her apparent enjoyment of relinquishing routine (lines 4-5). Kit conveys her experience of not knowing the time in a relaxed tone (lines 3-5) and though she notices time itself, she does not consider not knowing the time an issue (lines 5-6).

For other participants (n=3) time was important. For Nina time was an issue and though she found it hard to gauge time, and made many attempts to do so, she experienced time as slower than usual during her solo:

Example 5.32:

Nina, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 N: [...] I know sometimes I do listen to like what my stomach's saying
- 2 but you do sort of think like it's 9 o'clock (.) eat breakfast 12 o'clock
- 3 lunch five o'clock dinner sort of thing (.) and it wasn't (.) I wasn't
- 4 bothered about it the first weekend (.) and I wasn't bothered about it
- 5 until the solo bit and like even when we were walking back I wasn't like
- 6 bothered about what time it was or anything it was just that (.) because
- 7 I had erm (.) like nothing really to do (.) and I didn't know like times to
- 8 eat cos I was just by myself like no one was telling me like right it's time
- 9 to eat (.) I just think then it sort of (.) it dragged on and it got me really

10 erm (3) I guess frustrated in a way that I didn't like have the time I
 11 didn't know the time cos I sort of tried to judge it by the sun as well but
 12 like sometimes the sun would go in the clouds and I'd think oh well it
 13 must be like four o'clock or something cos it's starting to get a bit erm
 14 darker and then like the sun would creep and it would be like sort of
 15 midday point and I'd be like oh my god it's [laughs] I think I had lunch
 16 about two hours ago sort of thing (.) so erm then yeah it was a real
 17 problem but I was trying to think like at home I don't really watch it
 18 unless like (.) for meal times like (.) I guess or (.) if I'm waiting for
 19 someone to come or something you know I'm checking the time

Nina shows here a relationship between time and routine and how being still with nature seemed to accentuate time for her. Nina states the times of her normal routine (lines 1-3) with meal times seemingly important parts of the day (line 16-17). These examples of time-keeping are socially bound (lines 10-15 and 17-18). Interestingly, Nina seeks out information from nature after her usual, social, cues are not present (line 8), and because she had *nothing really to do* (lines 6-7) and no routine to rely on. When Nina could not judge the time of day she felt time *dragged on* (line 9), which *frustrated* (line 10) her. Nina had previously mentioned the difficulty she found with connecting with her surroundings. Trying to tell the time may then have also been used as a form of distraction (lines 6-7) but as a consequence Nina generally experienced time more slowly.

For others like Sarah, Alex, Sam and Kit, noticing nature was their main form of distraction and reportedly time, on a whole, went more quickly during their solo. For example, Alex reflects on her experiences during her solo when she returns home, stating; *I remember having a beautiful view and watching the sunrise + sunset which I have never noticed before which took my breath away. And also how quickly time went* (journal, study two). The pace of time was also experienced differently by participants and Sam wished that the slower pace she experienced during her solo continued after the WSE:

Example 5.33:

Sam, post-experience interview, study one

1 S: [...] I just felt that (2) I was just so chilled out to a point I've never
 2 been before really (.) erm yeah I really felt quite invigorated from the
 3 experience (.) erm but as I was saying to Lizzie the minute I got home it
 4 was like everything was back to a hundred mile an hour (.) you know
 5 rushing to get ready to go out you know rushing to do this (.) and I did
 6 feel I did feel that weekend actually that I was still on quite a bit of a go
 7 slow

This feeling of slowed pace contrasted to Sam's typical pace in everyday life (lines 4-8). Being still with nature thus seemed to allow Sam to relax, and that things could be carried out when and how she desired. The change in pace of time

took her a while to adjust to (lines 6-7). The difference in pace of time is noticeable to Sam which makes her leave the WSE feeling *invigorated* (line 4). The pace of time signifies to Sam a switch from being away from her role, responsibility and routine as a mother and wife (and as a student, as is revealed in her follow-up) and going back to it.

A sense of the duration of the WSE was also reported to shrink over time. Joe particularly highlights the challenge of gauging the duration of the WSE after completion:

Example 5.34:

Joe, follow-up interview

- 1 E: did it feel like five days that you were away for?
 2 J: no (.) not now (.) actually its strange you mention that [...]it's just
 3 become more of a memory of being out there (.) just kinda fragments of
 4 it rather than days (.) it feels more like three days than five days now (.)
 5 so the length of time out there seems smaller now for some reason

Joe's difficulty in gauging duration leads to his memory of the experience being shortened (lines 5-6), and he finds it hard to explain why. His memory of the experience and sense of time appears fragmented by the passing of time. This may be because time can be felt and experienced in abstract ways, especially when there are no social cues or norms.

Every example above suggests that experiences of being still in the landscape are nuanced and complex. At different times of the day and in different contexts, participants enjoyed situations and moods and desired a different pace of time. Regulating their emotions is not something that participants found easy however. A quote demonstrates the confusion that can arise: *this experience is not yet wot I expected [...] the slowness of everything (but I don't want it quick) confusing – my mind should start to slow tomorrow* (Alex, journal, study two). This demonstrates the ambivalent nature of experience, illustrating that rarely can we fully know what we feel from one moment to the next; one can only capture an essence of experience.

5.4 Camping in Nature

This theme illustrates transitions in human-landscape interaction in relation to the tent space and its influence on participants' experiences (n=6). The different ways participants experienced camping are presented in relation to how they experienced the natural landscape. Experiences in the tent were particularly interesting. Overall, many participants (n=5) enjoyed camping because, like Dannie,

it's the opposite of my everyday life in a way (post-experience interview, study two). One participant found camping disagreeable; *camping (like this) is not for me* (Leslie, journal, study two). Dannie enjoyed camping because of the contrast with the everyday, whereas Leslie missed everyday comforts.

There were a number of different aspects of the experience of camping, for example, how the camping space was affected by the presence of people. For Nina and Leslie (example 5.32 and 5.33) camping in a circle meant they felt the presence of others, which seemed to be a comfort and provide security:

Example 5.35:

Nina, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 N: [...] it's quite good that we were all in a circle on that first time
2 because I could hear like people snoring or coughing or turning over
3 and stuff

Example 5.36:

Leslie, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 L: first weekend were kind of like sort of like in a circle weren't we? (.)
2 er (.) the second weekend we weren't next to each other so being in a
3 circle like space between us weren't as big (.) so that that (.) felt a bit
4 more (.) I don't know secure I suppose

Camping as a group also came with certain rules, as Dannie highlights:

Example 5.37:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 D: if we were coupled up in the tents so it was a bit different (.) er cos
2 we like we'd chat for a bit (.) you know in the dark and stuff before we
3 went to sleep [...] certain people wouldn't appreciate erm (3) dicking
4 about [...] if I really want to go to sleep and somebody stops me from
5 sleeping I think that's just disrespectful and I hate that

When camping with others, Dannie explains that individuals need to respect one another. Any activity or action that would disturb sleep is unacceptable to him, based on his own values (line 5-6). Camping was also shown to have a particular routine, which is demonstrated through Leslie's song about his experiences camping:

Example 5.38:

Leslie, journal, study two

- 1 **A SONG**
2 Sore feet, soggy socks
3 Back & shoulders tied in knots

- 4 Wind, hail, snow, sun and rain
 5 Can't you tell its camp season again?
 6
 7 Bend, stretch, pitch that tent
 8 Put the Trangia out to vent
 9 Boil that peaty water
 10 Make yourself a brew
 11 Camping season, what a joy for you
 12
 13 Mucky boots, oh my soul I've lost half my leg in a man made hole. Use
 14 your poles with all your might, to escape the bog for it turns night.

Leslie's song captures his memories of camping and more broadly during the WSE, which he shared with the group after the end of the first weekend of study two. From the first verse and last it seems that hardships were particularly memorable. The song also highlights common camping activities, the ways in which everyday habits are brought into other contexts. Routines like making and drinking a cup of tea may have two functions; as a social or personal comfort, since it reflects routine, and as warmth and hydration, since it satisfies basic needs. Overall, what is conveyed by the above examples is that camping was generally enjoyed as a group, that there is camping etiquette and routine, and that camping as a group provided a sense of security. These qualities of camping help introduce the more nuanced participant experiences of the tent.

5.4.1 The Tent

The tent, as a manufactured object, influenced how participants interacted with and perceived the landscape. The tent was perceived as an object *in* the landscape and as an object that created different spaces of experience. The spaces inside and outside the tent were experienced differently. The different ways in which the spaces were experienced depended on the way in which participants related the tent to the landscape. Outside the tent, the tent was perceived as a cultural artefact, a man-made structure that did not fit well with the more natural surroundings (n=4). Inside the tent, participants (n=7) reported sounds outside as amplified and distorted which influenced and altered their perceptions of the landscape. Sense of actual space also changed whilst inside the tent, often causing a feeling of claustrophobia (n=4). Participants (n=4) felt frustration with the tent, which influenced their mood. Despite this, participants (n=8) also needed a space that was their own, which was often achieved by the tent.

At times, the tent served as a welcome shelter and comforting place. Sarah, Alex and Leslie describe their tents to be secure, personal spaces: *my own little pod*

(Sarah, journal, study two); *a protected bubble here in my little tent* (Alex, journal, study two); *my little home* (Leslie, post-experience interview, study two). Sarah, Alex and Leslie owned the tent they were using which may explain their attachment to it. The tent was often experienced as a space of safety and shelter, but this was not always so. Alex described that her tent – *her protected bubble* – in some ways allowed her to feel *safe* (line 1) but that the tent space also made her feel *quite vulnerable* (line 4):

Example 5.39:

Alex, journal study two

- 1 Safe, but still I know there are people outside. I can hear the wind
- 2 blowing at my tent, just thin material between me and the world
- 3 (nature). My imagination could run riot, believing there are things
- 4 outside- feeling quite vulnerable but not scared.

Part of the reason why Alex felt vulnerable in the tent was due to her imagination. Alex also shows her awareness of the permeable nature of the tent (lines 2-3). The thin material of the tent on the one hand allowed Alex to create a sense of her being away from people in her own place and space (her own world) and also allows her to hear the sounds of nature (lines 1-2). The thin and permeable barrier between her and what is outside also makes Alex feel exposed, however, Alex states she is *not scared* (line 4), conveying a clear distinction between the two. The space of the tent also allows Alex to imagine other things that threaten her sense of safety. What Alex reveals here seems to suggest that the tent is not solely an inanimate object, serving functionally as a shelter; the tent serves as an interface between the participant and landscape.

The way participants' (n=4) imaginations interacted with their experiences of the tent is also shown in Leslie's journal. Example 5.40 demonstrates the effects of the rain hitting the tent and how he found ways to amuse himself when inside the tent. The tent amplified the sound of the rain and, in a sense, Leslie's imagination. The sound of the rain was both unwelcome and provoked Leslie to be somewhat worried – *It sounds like its ripping through my tent, I hope it will be ok:s* (lines 1-2), and welcome, *like an audience clapping* (line 4):

Example 5.40:

Leslie, journal, study two

- 1 I was right it's [the rain] coming down heavy. It sounds like its ripping
- 2 through my tent, I hope it will be ok :s [written symbol worried face].

3 5:20pm, sang "the summer walkers" by Runrig to keep myself
 4 entertained the rain sounded like an audience clapping me :D [written
 5 symbol of happy face].

Here the sound of the rain against the tent became part of his thoughts and imagination. Rather than continuing to hear an aggressive or intimidating sound (line 1-2), Leslie came to hear the sound of a clapping audience (line 4), providing him with a sense of company. His imagination thus provided a welcome distraction from *feeling a bit trapped in this tent* (Leslie, journal, study two). Leslie seeks interaction and this example demonstrates how he tries to create a form of interaction during his solo experience; and interaction between his tent, himself and nature.

For Nina and Alex the amplified sound produced by the tent caused discomfort. The amplified 'noise' of the stream and the rain whilst in the tent kept Alex awake and stimulated her imagination when sleeping: she *fantasised about my tent being a boat – I shut my eyes and imaged I was floating down the stream* (journal, study two). Nina (example 5.41), was in awe of the rain, of nature, and the tent initially offered shelter. However, rather than being talked about as shelter from the rain, the tent becomes a discomfort causing feelings of confinement (lines 4-6), leading to a level of panic. The tent thus influenced Nina's experience:

Example 5.41:

Nina, post-experience interview, study two

1 [...] when it started coming down it was amazing really heavy it was like
 2 pellets sort of coming down and I don't know I don't know whether it's
 3 like the claustrophobia as well but I was like (.) for like a few seconds
 4 like my heartbeat like went faster and stuff and I was like oh shit sort of
 5 thing (.) I didn't think of like (.) cos it seemed to go on for ages I was like
 6 right I'm just going to have to like run out and like find someone (.) and
 7 but I managed to like stay through it

The tent seemed to change the way the environment was perceived. For example, what was initially viewed as *amazing* (line 1) outside the tent became something anxiety provoking and uncomfortable inside the tent. The experience of claustrophobia and panic meant that Nina wanted to seek help or company (lines 6-7), a desire that Nina managed to overcome (line 7).

The examples above describe how the tent can act as a barrier that amplifies sound and influences the perception of space and place, often in a way that was unsettling. The tent also acted as a barrier between the participant and their connection to the landscape, with a number of participants (n=6) saying they

wanted to relinquish the tent. Nina, Sarah and Alex describe their wishes to be able to view and feel connected to nature whilst in the tent. Nina also speaks of wanting to relinquish the shelter of the tent so as to seek a closer connection to nature:

Example 5.42:

Nina, journal, study two

1 I kinda wanted to wake up and see the wilderness and literally be lying
 2 in the wilderness. I know I'd be freezing and it's probably not a safe
 3 option because you need your tent and everything. But when I woke up
 4 and I heard the wind rustling the tent and people snoring then I open
 5 my eyes and I'm in a tent it's kind of like a disappointment I'm on the
 6 wilderness not in it. I'm in a tent surrounded by tents. When I got up to
 7 go to the loo if all those tents weren't there all those manmade objects
 8 that that would be true wilderness and I think it would be amazing

Nina wanted to be able to sleep outside without the tent as the tent seemed to separate her from the wilderness in a way that she did not desire (lines 3-6). As well as the tent being an undesirable shelter in nature, when she considers and judges the tent in relation to the type of landscape, it is also an undesirable object (lines 6-8). Since Nina considers the landscape as a wilderness, a place she generally considered wild and with little or no evidence of human presence, Nina contrasts between the tent and the landscape. In doing so, she regards the tent as an incongruent object in the landscape, an unwelcome intrusion that leads to her disappointment.

The tent space also impacted the kind of things participants (n=5) thought about. Nina reports in her Journal, for example, that *back in the tent, I was mulling over everything I have to do when I get home tomorrow, but out here all that seems irrelevant and a lifetime away* (journal, study two). She makes comparisons between her experiences of being inside and outside the tent. Inside the tent everyday responsibilities seemed to matter, whilst outside the tent everyday responsibilities seemed to lose importance. Nina's reflections help to illustrate the dynamic qualities of the tent, demonstrating how the tent space encouraged more home-related thinking. Her comments therefore suggest that being outside the tent gave Nina literal and mental space to attend to the nature around her and be more in the present. Different spaces also impacted on mood, behaviour and sense of locale for many (n=6):

Example 5.43:**Sarah, post-solo experience interview, study two**

1 S: [...] it was nice I woke up in a bit of a better mood (.) because I was
 2 dead happy all morning and then I think I just probably stayed in the
 3 tent a bit too long because I was doing stuff like I was writing and I was
 4 like cleaning my pots and stuff and I think (.) that's why I prefer to sit
 5 out here because being out in this environment is lovely being in the
 6 tent being in a tent isn't lovely and so it did make a difference to my
 7 mood like whether I was in the tent or out the tent even just sat outside
 8 it (.) like last night I just sat outside it until way after it was dark because
 9 (.) I don't know once you're inside you could be inside anywhere

Whether Sarah was inside or outside the tent impacted on her mood (lines 4-7). Sarah's mood then seemed to prompt how she interacted with the landscape (lines 8-9). Inside the tent, everyday activities like washing dishes and cleaning, or general activities like writing (things she felt she should do) were fostered. Sitting away from the tent Sarah felt she could just do nothing, be with and enjoy the landscape. The tent also created an environment where sense of place seemed diminished (lines 8-9). Sarah's comments therefore suggest that inside the tent is an environment that can be experienced quite differently and separately from the actual landscape outside.

This difference in experience causes Sarah displeasure with her tent and she reveals her acceptance of other man-made dwellings as long as they are made out of natural materials:

Example 5.44:**Sarah, post-experience interview, study two**

1 S: I want relaxation instead of like (.) right it's raining so I've got to lock
 2 myself in this (.) horrible PVC tent [laugh] (.) because I think ideally like
 3 if I could in my fantasy world if I was going to go walking I probably
 4 would not stay in a tent I'd probably stay in some kind of like (.) a yurt
 5 or something (.) like a (.) modern (.) kind of camping tepee (.) like an
 6 eco-house (.) or like a log (.) cabin or something (.) I don't know so
 7 something where you were still outside but I didn't have to look at a
 8 horrible plastic tent (.) or something (.) and it was I just (.) I feel insecure
 9 because there was not much of a barrier between you and whatever's
 10 outside [...] I just don't know there's something inauthentic about a big
 11 piece of plastic in the middle of the wild it just doesn't work in my head
 12 (.) but practically obviously you have to sleep under something

Part of Sarah's discontent with the tent is due to its material, labelled as *inauthentic in the wild* (line 13-16). Sarah considers the tent as being a fake object when placed in the natural landscape and is experienced as a *barrier* (line 9) between her and the landscape. Despite recognising the tent as a practical shelter (line 12), Sarah provides a list of more acceptable dwellings (lines 4-6), stating that

she would prefer a shelter that was more robust and made out of natural materials. This implies that Sarah accepts objects that are built by humans in the landscape that are made from natural material, but not objects built from man-made material. Walking equipment and items of clothing are not included in her deliberation, inferring that dwellings have greater meaning. It may also imply that tents are more noticeable because they are novel, since clothes and equipment are normalised and taken for granted. The importance of authenticity to Sarah might suggest that she finds the landscape precious and deserving respect and that in such a place the 'unnatural' should not mix with the 'natural'.

Participants' experiences of and their level of connection with the tent contributed to shaping experience in nature. The tent created either a space of shelter and safety or a space of shelter and vulnerability, and was experienced in various ways; as a safe space, as a barrier to space, as a space of the everyday, as a space of discomfort. As a physical artefact, the tent was crucial to participants out of an array of artefacts in the landscape, symbolising a number of different meanings and influenced experience.

5.5 Evaluative conclusion

The domain 'Being with Nature' encompasses motivations for wanting to be close to nature and experiences of nature and the landscape. Getting away from everyday life was about creating distance from the city, routine and responsibilities. This distancing involved a process of disconnecting from everyday life and connecting to nature and the landscape and to themselves and what is meaningful to them. Disconnecting and reconnecting is noted by changes in pace of time, need for and reliance on routines and norms, and the occurrence of welcome and unwelcome thoughts. Disconnection from everyday life was most realised when participants could empty the mind and be comfortable with that. Connecting to nature was linked with embodied experiences and noticing the details in nature. Disconnecting and connecting involved adapting to a change of landscape (from the everyday to more natural). This process created liminal experiences – experiences of ambiguity or disorientation – and were challenging for participants. Being still in nature both facilitated these transitions as well as hindered them. Participants had to negotiate with and around their perceptions and emotions during this liminality and the transitions. Within this liminal space, time is experienced differently and distractions can intrude as well as enable. Nature seemed to provide opportunities for reflection, rest, recuperation and tranquillity.

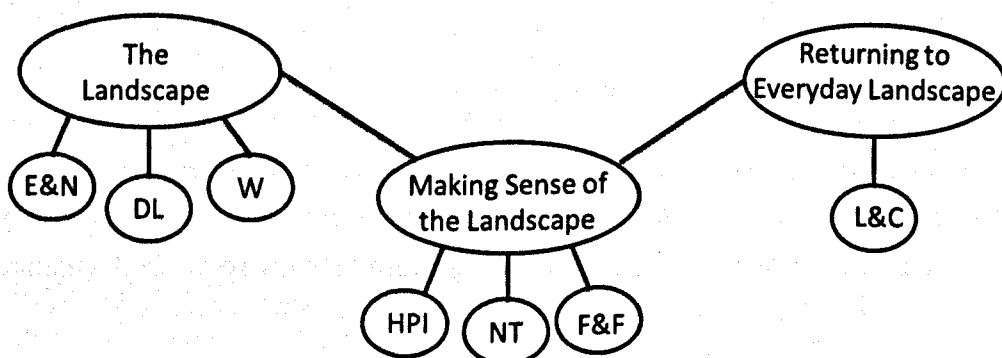
Cultural ideals and norms are also an undercurrent throughout participants' experiences of being with nature. Participants resisted some of them and also used them to take control or make sense during their experiences of liminality, whether that be trying to gauge time of day, understand motivations for decisions or behaviour (e.g. eating and sleeping), understand one's emotions (e.g. disappointment, frustration or happiness), or gaining a sense of familiarity or security. Cultural ideals and norms also intruded on participant's experiences, taking their thoughts and feelings away from nature. There was therefore a to-ing and fro-ing back and forth between using cultural ideals and norms as a resource as well as relinquishing them, which further demonstrates the experiences of liminality.

Chapter 6: Landscape and Artefacts

In this chapter, I argue that artefacts are used by participants to make sense of their surroundings and their relationship to it, and to include others in that sense/meaning-making process. Participants' experiences and meaning-making are discussed across their entire involvement in the research; before, during and after the WSE. Within the domain 'Landscape and Artefacts' the research questions that are addressed include "what is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?" and "what aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?". In the previous chapter the analysis provided an insight into the way people relate to their surroundings and began to reveal the mediation of that interaction. In the current chapter the unpacking of this complex process continues and mediating factors within human-landscape interaction are further elucidated. Furthermore, the analysis highlights how particular artefacts in the landscape were culturally loaded for most participants and, in turn, influenced their evaluations of the place and the WSE. These artefacts were found to reside in physical, societal, and symbolic/metaphorical realms. How pre-trip information framed the WSE and may have influenced participants' experience and meaning-making is also discussed. Three sections are included in this chapter. Figure 6.1 provides a diagrammatic overview of these themes their sub-themes and their inter-relationships.

Figure 6.1 Introductory overview of themes and sub-themes in chapter 6

This diagram shows the main themes and sub-themes within chapter 6 and demonstrates their inter-relationships. 'The Landscape' and 'Returning to Everyday Landscape' and their sub-themes link and contribute to understanding the theme 'Making Sense of the Landscape'.



Key:

HPI = Human Presence and Impact
 NT = Night Time
 F&F = Fantasy and Fairy-tale

E&N = Environment and Nature
 DL = Describing Landscape
 W = Is it Wilderness?
 L&C = Luxuries and Comforts

6.1 The Landscape

Participant experiences of the WSE and their previous encounters with nature, and ideas about nature and landscape from, for example, novels, TV programmes and films, informed their perception of place. Preconceptions about the WSE landscape, 'nature' and 'environment' are drawn upon by participants (n=7) to discern how they evaluated the place and also provide useful information for analysing and contextualising meaning. Questions about what 'nature' and 'environment' meant to participants were asked in study one. Sense of space and spaces also help participants (n=6) to characterise their experience of place. Additionally, participants' experiences (n=6) of different spaces within the WSE, at times, contributed to conflicting impressions. Transitions in thought and feeling are, therefore, apparent in the data. In this section there are three sub-themes 'Environment and Nature', 'Describing Landscape' and 'Is it Wilderness?'.

6.1.1 Environment and Nature

This theme presents participants' responses to the following pre-and post-experience interview questions in study one: When I say 'nature' what first comes to mind? When I say 'environment' what first comes to mind? These two questions were included in study one only, since in study two interviews became more open-ended and driven by the participants' reflections rather than the researcher's agenda. Responses to these questions provide an insight into some of the preconceptions and ideas surrounding these terms.

Responses (n=6) to the 'environment' question revealed the influence of popular discourse about environmental issues and human impact on environment, such as "global warming" and "recycling". Such responses have negative connotations, with participants (n=5) suggesting that the meaning of the term 'environment' was "conditioned". Conversely, 'nature' was linked to more positive connotations and was related to "sunsets", "wild animals" and "being-in-touch with the world" and was not considered to be associated to any "conditioned" meaning by participants. For example Sam captures some of these elements by responding, *it's just the outdoors (thing) yeh I'm just kind thinking about it (3) yeah the outdoors (2) well plants and wild animals* (Sam, post-experience interview, study one). Many participants (n=6) claimed that nature was everything as Alex illustrates:

Example 6.01:**Alex, pre-experience interview, study one**

- 1 A: I think everything's nature apart from these bloody buildings [...] so
2 everything that's not man-made anyway

Alex contrasts nature with manufactured objects. After the WSE she describes nature as 'freedom': *nature (3) erm freedom [laughter] it's the first thing I think about when I think about where we were you know just everything it was (2) erm (2.5) yeah the whole (.) the whole everything I can't (2) it was beautiful* (Alex, post-experience interview, study one). This suggests Alex takes a holistic ecological view of nature. The sense of freedom clearly also provides her with great pleasure and she came to associate nature with that feeling. Alex thus shows how perceptions about place can fluctuate and shift according to experiences.

For other participants the word nature conjured specific childhood memories:

Example 6.02:**Joe, pre-experience interview, study one**

- 1 J: when I was younger and erm like when I was a teenager I used to go
2 walking up by the a forest in Dumfries [...] I've always enjoyed kinda
3 birds of prey watching buzzards and stuff like that and just kinda
4 observing nature really and enjoying the solitude of it (.) so specific
5 memories I suppose

Nature conjures memories for Joe of exploring forests and hills near his home town. Nature provides Joe with *solitude* (line 4), a place to explore, to gain knowledge and sight of places far away and meet animals. Interestingly, like Alex, an additional element, not previously mentioned by Joe, arose in his description of nature after the WSE: *it's that experience of that kind of stillness both in myself and in nature that kinda comes to mind* (post-experience interview, study one). Thus in addition to nature providing 'solitude', nature also seemed to provide 'stillness' within. Participant descriptions of nature all seemed to be enhanced by additional qualities after the WSE.

Environment descriptions were much more restricted or generalised in meaning. Sam highlights this in her brief response, simply stating, *location* (Sam, post-experience interview, study one). Typically explanations included references to propaganda, campaigns and media messages with particular buzz words used like those Alex stated; *well that's all this recycling stuff tuh me is the environment you know just people just polluting the air and erm (3) yeah (.) like this ozone thing that's going on* (Alex, pre-experience interview, study one). The complexity of

notions surrounding the term 'environment' is demonstrated clearly in Kit's descriptions below:

Example 6.03:

Kit, pre-experience interview, study one

1 K: I think like more of sort of the elements like air, sea, and like sot of (.)
 2 forestry and stuff (.) but there's (.) it's all (.) at the minute (.) I think the
 3 view of the environment it is a bit sort of corrupted [laughs] (.) the
 4 whole everyone trying to be eco which is good but it seems to become
 5 more of a fashion than more people actually trying to do something
 6 right (.) erm (.) I think it's (.) you don't necessarily think about what you
 7 should about the environment because it's the first thing that comes
 8 into my head is what media is saying (.) rather than (.) what it actually is
 9 [...] I think about nature as (.) how you (.) all the (nice things) (.) all you
 10 can connect to (it) but I think more about the environment as the
 11 negative (.) sort of cos you just think about the damage that is done to
 12 it (.) and the environment that we're living in rather than just (.) the
 13 actual detail of it

This example demonstrates the negative connotations of 'environment'. Kit explains that the idea of environment has been *corrupted* (line 3) by *fashion* (line 5) and *media* (line 8). In turn, this makes her think about the built environment (line 12) and damage caused to the natural environment (lines 10-11) rather than what she would prefer the environment to mean and be about, the *air, sea* (line 1) and *forestry* (line 2). Making a comparison to nature helps accentuate her argument that the term has been tainted rather than the meaning being akin to nature. This separateness is further illustrated by contrasts made by Alex between nature and her home town after the WSE: *environment I think it's pretty disgusting in towns [...] you come back to places like this and it's like total (.) the whole world is going mad and you know (.) you kinda see it and the people just don't care* (Alex, post-experience interview, study two).

There seem to be tensions between notions of nature and environment that lean toward anthropocentricity and those that are holistic, ecological in kind. Participants (n=7) suggest that these perspectives are encouraged by society. Such a tension is highlighted well by Kit's comments after the WSE: *I still think the environment is the whole trying to be green and (.) but more so I think well the city is our environment as well and it's not just (2) wilderness places* (Kit, post-experience interview, study one). Joe particularly illustrates these points, describing notions around environment as *conditioned* (line 1) and provides descriptions that show the way particular connotations of environment influence behaviour and thought:

Example 6.04:**Joe, pre-experience interview, study one**

- 1 J: I would have to kinda think, and this probably more conditioned really
 2 like (.) you know I think of the environment as kinda things I can do::oo
 3 for the environment in that sense (.) but that's always been part of my
 4 kinda character [...]
- 5 E: and and I'm just curious about the conditioning part can you?
- 6 J: I just think you know that it's something that's used more on a global
 7 scale now (.) like environment in a sense of global warming and things
 8 like that (.) and certainly when I was younger I was never aware of
 9 environmental issues it was just my own kinda what personally saw (.)
 10 for example I used to go to a (?) and there was a lovely loch beside it
 11 and there was a rubber factory not far, they actually owned it, and I
 12 used to kinda go there to watch the swans that used to come every year
 13 to the loch (.) erm and eh one day I found one dead all covered in oil (.)
 14 an d you know I was really distressed about this and erm eh so I kinda
 15 wrote a letter to eh the rubber factory oh actually I took the swan to
 16 the local police station in a plastic bag (...) and kinda said this is illegal
 17 protected species you know [...] but like now I wouldn't necessarily call
 18 myself an environmentalist I'm not kinda attached to any specific
 19 organisations or stuff like that

For Joe, questions around nature and environment elicit childhood memories, which in turn helped him understand his positioning and form his response. Ideas about the meaning of environment are shown, with Joe seeing it as something to protect. He conveys awareness that he is likely to have been influenced by external factors fostered by society, such as ideas about *global warming* (line 7) and environmentalism (lines 16-19). This, in turn, emphasises that the word 'environment' represents broad meanings. Joe raises the issue of law to make his case about animal protection, suggesting that even as a child he had awareness of, and was influenced by, an awareness of environment that was comprehensive and had rules, regulations and order. Interestingly, after the WSE his ideas of environment seem grounded in the elements of environment, stating that environment was *eh mud (4) heather [Laughter] eh water (.) eh (5) yeah just eh (4.5) kind of rawness really* (Joe, post experience interview, study one) suggesting that participant descriptions (n=5) of environment seemed to be enhanced by the WSE.

What these examples demonstrate is that participant opinions of 'environment' and 'nature' remained essentially similar pre and post WSE. Small shifts were noticeable, however, after the WSE, perhaps becoming less abstract and less influenced by culturally driven ideas. Overall, these pre-conceptions of the terms 'nature' and 'environment' help reflect on and understand more detailed participant descriptions of the WSE landscape in both studies one and two, to follow.

6.1.2 Describing Landscape

The data below reveal participants' overall impression of the WSE landscape. What participants consider the place to be is discussed in relation to other types of landscapes and previous experiences. Although overall judgements are made by participants, these data also demonstrate the changing nature of participants' perceptions and experiences of place; different spaces in the WSE landscape fostered different feelings and prompted different pre-conceptions about that type of place.

Participants (n=9) described the WSE landscape in many different ways, illustrated below by a selection of descriptions that demonstrate the variation:

Example 6.05:

Sarah, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 S: [...] it was wild because it was in the middle of nowhere (.)so it was
2 wild but it was barren [...] it was quite like (.) empty (.) but I liked all the
3 different plants and things like that

Example 6.06 :

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 A: yeah it's definitely like walking in a picture [laugh] it's like walking in
2 a picture you know whenever I see it my head it's like a picture

Example 6.07:

Kit, journal, study one

- 1 Its great! No light pollution, complete silence. It's perfect I hope to live
2 somewhere like this eventually

Example 6.08:

Kit, post-experience interview, study one

- 1 K: I thought it were remote enough like in the solo time where I could
2 just strip off and sit outside (2) and erm and it were far enough away
3 from people (2) it were a shame that we did see other people (.) erm (3)
4 but I think it were ideal for sort of what we could access as well and
5 definitely thought it was remote enough [...] when you could see over
6 all the hills it felt far away you know

Example 6.09:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 D: [...] here was just long grass and it was just like (.) it just seemed to
2 go on forever (.) and there was just nothing of interest (.) like that bit
3 just (.) it just looked bland and boring [...] it was nowhere near as (.)
4 beautiful to look at as like the Lake District or something

Participants provide an insight into perceptions of the landscape, what features they noticed and their thoughts about those features. The majority of participants (n=7) described the landscape as wild. Example 6.06 shows how such 'wildness' can bring about a sense of familiarity and at the same time a feeling that the place is separate and different to what one may have previously experienced; the use of *a picture* (lines 1 and 2), as a figure of speech, suggests this and that the surroundings can also, at the same time and to some degree, meet a persons' expectations and preconceptions about a place. This paradox is supported by later reflections from Alex: *everything it was totally alien to me (.) but felt comfortable with it* (follow-up interview, study one). Aspects of the landscape were also held in high regard by some participants (n=5), for example Kit describing it as somewhere to live in the future (example 6.07). However it was not regarded by all as an appealing place, a view shared by Dannie (example 6.09) and Leslie. Dannie compares the WSE landscape with *the Lake District* (line 4), to make his point, showing that he preferred other types of landscape.

- Despite variation, the landscape was largely appreciated by participants (n=8), highlighted by the first four examples above and by the example below, where Sarah describes the landscape and the impact that place and space had on her:

Example 6.10:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

1 S: [...] I think the memory is more linked to like a really nice feeling: of
 2 erm (.) everything being really peaceful and open: (.) I think it's the
 3 space that really like made it very relaxing and really different from just
 4 being in a green (.) part of York (.) cos (.) there is something (2) really
 5 whatever the opposite of pressurising is (.) pressure relieving (.) about
 6 erm it's about being in this massive open space and kind of all my (.)
 7 daily life agenda crap bags goes out the window and that was nice: cos I
 8 (.) I don't get much perspective in the city and I get really obsessed
 9 about (.) daily living and concerns

Here the WSE landscape is described as a *space* (lines 3 and 6) that provides Sarah with a place to relax. She compares the everyday green spaces with the WSE landscape and illustrates the differences: the WSE as not just an open space but a *massive open space* (line 6). The qualities of the experiences within the WSE landscape Sarah describes as offering her relief from the stresses of everyday life, providing the space to gain perspective and be herself. Perceiving landscape is thus complex, illustrating the nuances of evaluating landscapes and the numerous qualities that participants look for.

Example 6.11:**Dannie, post-experience interview, study two**

1 D: [...] when I'm going up hills there's- there seems to be points like
 2 natural points where I think I'm going to stop here (.) and er natural
 3 points where (.) your view is obscured (.) and it's (.) it's like a bit of a (.)
 4 surprise (I suppose) so it just makes it er more rewarding because like
 5 you think well I'll get to there and then I'll see what- what's round the
 6 corner and then (.) I don't know you see little things I mean (.) like we
 7 had come to the top of one bit and we saw that like cabin (.) it's like
 8 why is there a cabin just stuck here in the middle of nowhere [...] if you
 9 can see everything you know (.) it's not a (.) random mystery shack or
 10 whatever (.) you can see right down to the bridge (.) so not even the
 11 bridge would have been a surprise

Example 6.11 shows that a landscape that provides *natural points* (line 2) and a sense of *mystery* (line 9) and *surprise* (line 4 and 11) is desirable. Dannie found these qualities to be in the WSE landscape, recalling experiences he had with the group when finding an unexpected cabin during their journey (line 7-8) but other parts of the journey did not satisfy him as much (line 9-11).

6.1.3 Is it wilderness?

The analysis above provides an insight into the general and meaningful qualities of the landscape that participants remembered. This section provides an insight into a specific debate of some of the participants (n=8) about the landscape's 'wilderness' quality. Whether or not the WSE landscape was a wilderness ("not contaminated" and "remote") or 'like' a wilderness ("natural") was something particularly considered by participants in their reflections about the place they were about to visit, were in, or had left. The term 'Wilderness', as a popular artefact, may have influenced participants' impressions of the landscape and the use of the term in study one pre-programme presentations and documents may have contributed. Shifts in the extent to which participants considered a place as a 'proper' wilderness or 'like' a wilderness are revealed, with some participants referring to artefacts in their everyday life, such as video games and pictures and to examples of wildernesses in other countries (e.g. Australia).

Various wilderness qualities were stipulated by participants. For example, prior to the WSE, Dannie describes *a wild place or wilderness (.) as sort of being (.) I said its sort of like you know (2) untouched by (.) or not contaminated by erm (.) buildings or whatever cars and things like that* (pre-experience interview, study two). He had particular preconceptions about the WSE landscape, referring to a place as being like a wilderness in a video game:

Example 6.12:**Dannie, pre-experience interview, study two**

- 1 D: [...] the environment where I expected it to be would be really (.)
 2 picturesque or something (.) and I also thought I'd might had been quite
 3 high up (.) so I could see around (.) more or less on a peak of a (.)
 4 mountain or something [laughs] (.) like really (3.) erm and I don't expect
 5 it being like that now having seen that (.) but my first vision when I like I
 6 tried to visualise [...] there's this (.) game on the X-box called (.) eh
 7 Oblivion right
 8 E: yeah I've heard of that game
 9 D: it's sort of a role playing game and you can just walk past it's a just
 10 world on its own vast eh (2) spans of (.) yeah wilderness and and also
 11 towns and cities like that and and often in that game you'd go up a
 12 mountain (.) and actually go up the mountain and there would be
 13 something at the top of the mountain that's exciting cos that's (.) that's
 14 the way that it works that it rewards you for actually going out of your
 15 way to go up a mountain to (.) and there would be a camp or something
 16 up there (.) and its eh really beautiful sort of game like really visually (2)
 17 stunning game (.) so you would get to the top of that so it would be
 18 rewarding not only in what you find or whatever also you'd look out
 19 and you'd see the whole (.) maybe like certain points the highest
 20 (could've) highest points and eh (.) you can see the whole map sort of
 21 thing you can see the whole (.) erm (.) landscape everything and I (3)
 22 sort of tied it into that sort of thing where I'd just get to the top sort of
 23 thing where I would just get to the top of somewhere and same and
 24 when I did the Duke of Edinburgh you just get to some high point and
 25 (2) well you just feel like you're almost on top of the world sort of thing

Dannie explains in detail his expectations of what the WSE landscape would be like. Qualities of wilderness that he mentions are *picturesque* (line 2), being *high up* (line 7) and having a view and perspective (line 3). He supports these comments further, by referring to his experiences during his Duke of Edinburgh challenge where he would climb up high making him feel *on top of the world* (line 29). Gaining perspective and a vantage point is important to Dannie and is an important quality within his idea of wilderness. He goes on to use a video game to illustrate certain points about his preconceptions. He realises that they are idealistic but in using such an example suggests his passion about the 'idea' of wilderness and though Dannie's expectations may not have been fully met he nevertheless stated after the WSE that he regarded the landscape like a wilderness; *I enjoyed that that whole day (.) because we were totally away from anybody else other than us (.) it was literally (.) it felt like we'd gone out into the proper wilderness* (post-experience interview, study two).

Despite the more sympathetic example above, most participants (n=6) did not regard the WSE landscape as a wilderness and there were a number of aspects that led to participants' conclusions, as the following example illustrates:

Example 6.13:

Alex, post-experience interview,

1 I wouldn't have put it as wilderness [...] I would see it as (.) erm (2) a lot
2 more wilderness [giggle] (2) if there were a lot more animals (.) more
3 trees (.) it were really open and I know there was all that forest (.) but it
4 was all man made [...] wilderness to me would be in the outback of
5 Australia or something like that (.) where its real nitty gritty (.) you
6 know where you have to feed off the land [...] where there is more
7 animals (.) wildlife you know (2) erm (3) more (2) plants (.) and things
8 like that then maybe I would class it as wilderness

The qualities of wilderness mentioned by Alex include 'more' *animals, trees, plants* and *wildlife* and a level of hardship and skill (lines 7- 8) such as one might find in a much larger area. Though she found the WSE landscape *open* (line 3) the presence of a *man-made* forest (lines 3-4) was not compatible with her ideas of wilderness, suggesting that some aspects (e.g. those related to nature) are more acceptable than others (e.g. those related to humans) in her idea of wilderness. In the next excerpt the connotations of 'wilderness' are illustrated, along with the dilemmas of labelling the type of landscape.

Example 6.14:

Nina, post-experience interview

1 E: you used wilderness like the word wilderness quite a lot
2 N: yeah
3 E: is it a word that you used quite a lot before doing this research?
4 N: no not really I just (.) I was using it because (.) that's what it's called
5 like that what you've used wilderness weekend like some parts of it I
6 didn't think it looked like the wilderness or was like the wilderness it
7 was a bit more than like countryside (.) and like because it was more
8 remote and stuff but (.) when I think of wilderness I think like wild I
9 think I've like tried to explain before you know like sort of like forestry
10 and (.) erm (.) you know like on that marsh bit like you don't know
11 where like your foot's going to go next and like all like the different
12 creatures and stuff so yeah (?) so I think I've just been using it because
13 you have (.) but it made me laugh because I was walking along erm (.)
14 uni to go back home and erm I don't know whether you've seen it but I
15 think it's like opposite the chapel and it's like a little wilderness area
16 and basically all they've got is like a bench and I was like bloody hell like
17 that's not wilderness [...] I usually describe stuff (.) I don't really use
18 wilderness like I either use wild or I use like oh the countryside and stuff
19 like that

Nina did not consider the landscape as a wilderness and states clearly here that she previously did not use the word wilderness pinpointing that it was me who provided the cue or source (lines 5). Features that make it like a wilderness are *remote* (line 8), *forestry* (line 9) and expanses of marsh (line 10). Her comment about her foot disappearing into the terrain and not knowing where her next step would go (lines 15-16), suggest an additional quality of wilderness, that the terrain should also have the unexpected and be challenging. The landscape was lacking these features though and needed more of them to count as a wilderness. Nina makes her point clearer by providing an example of a designated wilderness area at the university to question the use and legitimacy of the term wilderness (line 13-17); she also illustrates that she finds little value in the word, preferring to use 'wild' instead or 'countryside' (line 18).

6.2. Making Sense of the Landscape

As well as describing different aspects of the landscape, participants (n=9) showed how participants related to and used features in the landscape, to make sense and meaning of its vastness and of the smaller spaces within. Participants explain their experiences of these spaces, their movements (transitions) between them and their sense of place. The nuances of experience and human-landscape interaction are thus revealed as participants' sense of place changes from space to space as the meanings they associate with artefacts in the landscape shift. As participants started to perceive the landscape as a place and build a greater awareness of the space and spaces they were in and moved between their characteristics, insights are gained into the process that participants went through, when making sense of and defining the landscape. Overall, three main areas in which data seemed to cluster were apparent during the analysis: 'Night Time'; 'Fantasy and Fairy-tale'; and 'Human Presence and Impact'. 'Night Time' and 'Fantasy and Fairy-tale' and 'Human Presence and Impact' show how participants used artefacts related to these categories and the impact of these artefacts on perception and experience of landscape..

As well as physical artefacts like buildings and objects noticed in the surroundings (which will be discussed later in this section) other artefacts that were not present physically in the surroundings shaped experience and at times enhanced participants' (n=6) experience and sense of place. For example, Kit associates the landscape with a film she enjoyed in her childhood, reporting, *This place reminds me of the film 'Dances with wolves' one I loved as a child* (journal, study one) and Alex associates what she observes and experiences with what she has seen on TV and in paintings describing that, *A bird cheeps and even the sound*

of the water sounds crisp and morningish, like from a TV advert. [...]The sky looks totally different this morning all shades of grey/purple/ blue and white something out of an oil painting (journal, study two).

Abstract artefacts, like a painting or picture, and distant artefacts, like a plane, had an influence on how a landscape was perceived and experienced and how artefacts can be used to convey perceptions and experiences. The entry below was written by Alex on the first full day of the WSE, after the exploration phase and provides an insight into her use of picture and painting and the meaning she attaches to a plane:

Example 6.15:

Alex, journal, study one

- 1 I feel like I'm in a picture – a painting, the scenery is beautiful. A plane
2 flies over head which reminds me I'm still on planet earth.

Alex first uses a picture and painting to describe how she feels and the where she is (the scenery she is viewing). Her description of being *in a picture* (line 1) suggests that the scenery was perhaps so removed from her everyday life that it had an unreal and intangible quality to it. In a follow-up interview, for example, she describes the place as *somewhere I had never dreamt of going and had only ever seen anything like that on the telly* (follow-up interview, study one). This phrasing and use of an artefact (a picture) to describe the environment may suggest that for a moment, or moments, she felt she had escaped into an idyllic space. The movement from “picture” to “painting” supports this as Alex uses not merely a picture (a category which includes photographs), but a “painting”, which is something, by definition, that is ‘unreal’. *A plane* (line 1) however, interrupts this escapism and reminds her that she is *on planet earth* (line 2). This phrase further suggests that in that landscape she felt removed from the everyday world. The two phrases, *on planet earth* (line 2) and *I feel like I'm in a picture* (line 1) therefore create a distance between her and her surroundings, further enhancing its fantasy quality. Alex perhaps felt that she was in a different world, experiencing a different reality, a different place. Nina shared similar views to Alex and used the same artefact, a picture, to convey them: *it's so picturesque. There were no houses anyway. Alex said it was like stepping into a picture and she was right* (journal, study two), also being influenced by other people's experiences.

This section provides a general overview of participant's preconceptions and perceptions of landscape. The next section goes onto to discuss more specific examples.

6.2.1 Human Presence and Impact

The particular artefacts participants (n=6) associated with human presence and impact were: fences, paths, tracks, buildings, planes, sheep, and 'other' people. These features were physically present in the WSE landscape, represented human influence and were referred to by participants during their evaluations of the landscape. Artefacts external to the WSE landscape, such as TV, films and art were also referred to but were used as cultural references more broadly for participants (n=6), to make sense of their experiences and to share meaning with others. The meanings associated with these artefacts helped participants (n=5) identify what kind of place it was to them. Accordingly, by comparing their experiences to things they knew from previous experiences participants (n=7) shaped their experience of the space and their sense of place.

Seeing buildings during the WSE was often an unwelcome sight for participants (n=5). For example, when Alex saw buildings in the landscape it represented a place that was populated, which for her, took *the magic away a little* (journal, study two). The same thing was regarded by Sam as 'cheating'; she described seeing or being near buildings as *a shock* (example 6.10, line 5), which also suggests that preconceptions about the WSE landscape may have influenced her impression of the place:

Example 6.16:

Sam, post-experience interview, study one

- 1 E: can you talk to me about your thoughts regarding the environment
 2 that you were in during the programme em (.) is it you know just like
 3 was it what you expected or?
 4 S: [...] I didn't have really any preconceptions but the flat piece of grass
 5 next to the house was better than the campsites I've been on I would
 6 have felt like I'd cheated it if I'd shown a picture of my tent there [...]
 7 because I couldn't even see the other tents I mean I felt we were in
 8 quite a remote place in the first camp but because I kind of knew that
 9 house was just down that hill (.) then it wasn't quite so but when we
 10 were actually climbing and when we camped at the other one I did feel
 11 like (.) really yeah (3) that it was quite remote
 12 E: just going back to your comment about (.) you were saying that some
 13 of the terrain you thought was more like a wilderness but what do you
 14 term as wilderness for you (.) what made it more like it than this?
 15 S: because it was off kind of public footpaths and off the beaten track
 16 and there weren't any tracks to follow so it was literally going where we
 17 wanted

It is clear from this extract that Sam's preconceptions about the WSE landscape influenced her impression of the place, despite saying that she had none (line 4), finding a house and flat grass (lines 4-5) as undesirable features in relation

to her idea of wilderness. On the first campsite to which she refers, the house cannot be seen, but because she passed it along the route, she knows it is there (lines 8-9) and it continues to make an impression on her evaluation of the place. This is until more distance is created; by climbing higher and walking further away from the house, the second campsite felt more remote (lines 10-11). The house was therefore considered an intrusion and reminded her that the place was accessible to people, therefore camping near to it was considered as *cheating* (line 6). This suggests that she regarded proximity to occupied buildings, despite isolation, as problematic, implying that Sam had in mind ideas about the WSE and its locale. It also suggests that she expected some level of hardship or 'roughing it' during her WSE. This implies that her perceptions of place changed as she moved through the landscape and that seeing the house the day before did not have a lasting impact. When prompted to explain what she considered a wilderness to be (lines 12-14), buildings were not the only artefact that disturbed her. *Public footpaths* (line 15) also conflicted with her preconceptions. She explains that it felt more like a wilderness when *off the beaten track* (line 15) and the group was free to walk where they wanted. Going off path therefore, in comparison, was more congruent with her preconceptions of the landscape as a wilderness. This suggests that within Sam's conception of wilderness there are elements of freedom and distancing from things that represented the everyday.

The example below illustrates how the sense of remoteness was compromised at times (n=5) by the presence of 'other' people being close by:

Example 6.17:

Alex, post-experience interview, Study one

1 A: [...] I wouldn't have classed it as remote (.) I would have classed it as
 2 more (2.5) and I think it spoilt it because of the walk where the people
 3 were there (2) the fellas where they were having their cheese
 4 sandwiches (2) that kinda spoilt it (2.5) at first I could see that at the
 5 first couple of days and then we did that walk and I saw those guys
 6 eating cheese sandwiches with their shorts on (2) it kind of blew the
 7 whole thing up and I thought you know that's really spoilt my erm (3)
 8 my (2.5) kinda like fantasy image of where we were (.) you know (2)
 9 and then I realised that we were just here (.) you know (2) just a few
 10 miles from home kind of thing (.) so that's what spoilt that (2) other
 11 people you see (2) people

The thought of being able to get help easily detracts from Alex's ideas of remoteness. Being remote is for Alex principally about being far away from things of comfort and stability like her *home* (line 10), and particularly from *other people* (lines 10-11). Alex's dismay at seeing 'other' people, outside of the group is clear

here by the way she conveys her frustration in her talk and through several emphases (lines 5, 6 and 11). The people she describes appear to be on a day walk, indicating to her that she is not far away from civilisation. Alex speaks strongly about these interruptions of her experience and what she called her *fantasy image* (line 8), which she emphasises whilst talking, implying that she too had specific preconceptions about the WSE landscape and that she prefers her fantasy to 'reality'.

As well as buildings and people, tents were also regarded by some as incongruent with the landscape. Nina states [...] *if all those tents weren't there all those manmade objects that that would be true wilderness* (journal, study two). Tents were clearly regarded as manufactured objects by Nina and considered incompatible with her idea of wilderness.

Joe's recollections of his experiences, in comparison to Sam and Alex, show that buildings had little to no influence on his evaluation and experience of the landscape:

Example 6.18:

Joe, post-experience interview, study one

1 I was quite amazed at how remote it was and it wasn't because I saw
 2 houses that didn't particularly bother me a lot (.) or even the
 3 bunkhouse in fact in some way that kinda helped put it into context to
 4 where I was [...] the first campsite as well felt remote even though you
 5 know I think there was a house at the bottom of the valley but it didn't
 6 (.) there wasn't that connection there kinda mentally

Despite the presence of buildings, Joe still regarded the landscape as remote (line 1 and 4). Indeed particular buildings, like the bunkhouse, helped him appreciate and gain perspective about where he was. The next example from Joe's post-experience interview and highlights an array of artefacts that were used by participants (n=6) to make sense of their surroundings and that artefacts can have different associations to different people, in different contexts and at different points of time:

Example 6.19:

Joe, post-experience interview, study one

1 J: [...] I realised that being in England there was going to be limitations
 2 to what I expected (3) so on the one hand I was quite amazed at how
 3 remote it was and it wasn't because I see houses (.) that doesn't
 4 particularly bother me a lot (.) or even the bunkhouse in fact in some
 5 way that helped put it into context to where I was (.) the first campsite
 6 as well felt remote even though you know I think there was a house at
 7 the bottom of the valley but there wasn't that connection there kinda

8 mentally it felt we were in a remote place and that felt good (.) I think
 9 there was just that middle bit where we were kinda along that kinda
 10 wooden pathways and stuff like that that kinda felt (2) didn't feel (.) it
 11 still felt like a wilderness don't get me wrong but there was other folk
 12 around and stuff like that and em so it felt like we dipped in and out of
 13 it (.) that's what it felt like and so it didn't feel (.) totally immersed into
 14 it [...] none of that for me subtracted from it in a way what added to it
 15 that made the feeling of it of wilderness just (fact) just basic stuff about
 16 getting your water from the stream (.) eh erm you know cooking your
 17 own food on your little stove and you know that kind of stuff in a way
 18 kinda added to more to it than anything else

Houses (lines 3 and 6), *the bunkhouse* (line 4), *a wooden pathway* (line 2), and *stove* (line 28) are all artefacts that stand out for Joe and he talks about how they affect him and his evaluation of the landscape. "Houses" were neutrally framed and were not regarded as an interruption to the feeling of remoteness, no *connection* (line 7) was made with what houses typically represent – human presence (n=7). The bunkhouse helped Joe contextualise where he was perhaps because bunkhouses are typically located in natural landscapes that walkers use for shelter and comfort from the elements and thus represented to him something more basic and simple. Like Alex, other people (*other folk*, line 11), are an undesirable presence in the landscape, which may have contributed to the fluctuations in Joe's sense of remoteness (lines 15 & 24). Again the group members, despite being a constant human presence (though perhaps to a lesser degree during the solo phase), are not included in this category, they are not considered an interruption or distraction from the landscape. Basic actions such as *cooking your own food* (lines 16-17) and collecting water from the stream (line 16) added to the feeling of remoteness. The stove was part of attending to his basic needs – food and water – and thus perhaps qualified as less intrusive. Thus some artefacts are perhaps seen as essential and do not detract from the experience. Joe nevertheless tries to assure the interviewer that he essentially regarded the place as a 'wilderness' of sorts (lines 10-11).

The changing nature of participants' impressions of the place are captured when considering these experiences and observations (n=7). Changing impressions are also displayed in dissonance within participant recollections of their experiences. One of the most obvious examples of this was from Alex who had previously stated that other people and buildings were unacceptable in the landscape but then later stated, *Wow the view is fantastic and even though I can see someone and I saw a truck going up the path I'm not disappointed at all* (journal, study two). What seems to override any feelings of disappointment is the

scenery, which superseded any intrusion of an artefact representing human presence.

Participants (n=4) were not so critical of the presence of fences. This may be due to them typically being used to set boundaries and to keep things in or out. For example, Nina reports, *I was really enjoying my walk until I saw an old wire fence curled round the rocks. At first I didn't notice it as it had moss and grass growing on it, it definitely spoils it and must be damaging to the environment and the sheep and rabbits around* (journal, study two). In her journal Nina explains her reaction to the fence, which was presented as a marker of human presence and unwanted human tampering with the environment. For Nina, the fence was an artefact possibly symbolising human territory. The use of "curled" perhaps suggests that she saw the fence as an unnatural object wrapping itself round nature, that is "damaging to the environment" and to wildlife. There is also a sign of nature, the moss and grass, reclaiming its territory attempting to engulf the metal wire. Nina clearly states "it spoils it". Fences, as well as being associated with their purpose were associated with their owners: *a fence to the left of me which reminds me that there are farms and farmers close by* (Alex, journal, study two).

In the examples discussed, 'physical' artefacts, such as houses, fences and paths, have been shown have a disrupting influence on participants' initial appraisals of the landscape. For some participants these artefacts changed their perception of the landscape and impacted on the extent to which they felt remote or away from the everyday. As well as physical artefacts, however, symbolic/metaphorical forms of artefacts also influenced their perception of the landscape and were found to be used particularly in relation to night time.

6.2.2 Night time

At night, how participants experienced the landscape seemed to change. Sense of space and place shifted and references to everyday artefacts were predominantly related to 'the dark', remoteness, and violence e.g. "horror movies", "axe men", "murderers" and "muggers". These artefacts were used to express a sense of vulnerability and fear about being alone in the dark and in an unfamiliar and vast place. The following examples show the different forms of symbolic artefacts, as well as physical artefacts and in what conditions or instances they occurred.

Night time seemed to foster a darker aspect of imagination (n=5). For example, Alex explains *I felt like a child last night with the fear of being alone here in my tent.* (journal, study two), and Sarah discloses *Am a bit anxious because I just don't really feel safe in the dark. I know that's silly, but my damned imagination*

terrifies me sometimes (journal, study two). Imagination seemed therefore to play a role in participants making sense of their experience. The following example is from a group discussion and illustrates how ideas were shared in a group interaction. The discussion was about participants' expectations for the weekend and took place before the study two solo phase:

Example 6.20:

Group discussion, 06.08.10, study two

- 1 E: so I'm a bit I'm intrigued to (.) do you have any particular (2)
 2 expectations for this weekend since you've had
 3 A: [...] I've got a kind of a fear thing going on as well though like
 4 something really bad's gonna happen (.) when I was up there
 5 on my own [...] it's just like those horror thoughts you know
 6 that you have like there's a mad axe man around or
 7 something like that it's really weird cos I didn't feel like that
 8 before (.) like maybe cos you're so far away you know (.) erm
 9 (2) yeah so that's that's strange so
 10 E: yea::h (2) does anybody else feel like that at all?
 11 A: not till I said something [laughs]
 12 N: I have the fear of this axe man coming for me
 13 All: [laughter]
 14 N: that's the only reason that I was scared for the night time cos
 15 like (2) like befo::re it was like oh I could hear like people
 16 coughing or like moving around and I knew that we were like
 17 in a circle (.) but now it's sort of like (.) it's like these killer
 18 bunnies or like whatever you know you hear like all these
 19 stories (.) (I know but I like) found a skull like right next to my
 20 tent I was like oh brilliant (.) that's going to be me tomorrow
 21 All: [laughter]
 22 N: and then it was like (.) and then someone told me about how
 23 this fox had got into someone's tent and like mauled them [...]
 24 I don't know it's just all these and then you watch all these
 25 horror movies and it's like oh when you're all alone and in the
 26 dark
 27 All: [laughter]
 28 N: if someone hears me and it's just (.) and I'm just petrified [...]
 29 and so this is (.) so in the day- time it'll be fine (.) but yeah
 30 that's the only thing in the night like all the murderers and
 31 muggers are all they're all in the city where the people are
 32 A: yeah [...]
 33 E: so is that something you were expecting (2) to feel?
 34 N: oh yeah yeah I knew I'd be scared of that yeah (.) that's why I
 35 was like sort of looking forward to it (.) for like the daytime
 36 like being by myself and stuff (.) then like obviously the night I
 37 was nervous about (.) yeah [...]
 38 A: I am used to sleeping out in the dark (?) night and (.) I used to
 39 work in the night so (.) it used to be the daytime that scared
 40 me when people were around you know [laughs] but erm (.)
 41 yeah just being (.) when I when I was up there earlier and

42 even when I came down here I saw two figures and I was
 43 trying to (.) and it (.) it were two sheep (.) I thought it was a
 44 man and his dog (.) I thought what's he doing up there (.)
 45 spying on us [laughs] earlier on you know just (...)

The excerpt starts with Alex talking about her fears (line 3). As Alex is trying to understand her fear she describes her thoughts as *horror thoughts* (line 5), and introduces artefacts, such as *mad axe man* (line 6), which she uses to aid her own and others' understanding (as it is assumed by Alex that such examples have shared meaning).

Nina also implies *horror movies* (line 25) created a heightened experience. The reason for this may be due to the common horror theme of a character alone in a dark remote place. The similarity of the situations (e.g. the solo phase involved darkness, night time, isolation and a remote place) may have triggered the use and inclusion of these ideas. The use and inclusion of symbolic artefacts therefore may be partially influenced by context. For example Nina felt less vulnerable when camping in a group and was able to attribute noises to group members camped around her (lines 15-17) rather than to a stranger or fictional character. Whilst camping by herself there were fewer 'known' things around her to identify the sounds with. It seems that when more is 'unknown', imagination is more likely to intervene and participants refer to other things that are 'known', whether that be stories, films, or characters. *All these Stories* (lines 18-19), including those in films, seemed to enhance, exaggerate and perpetuate any existing fears; stories are therefore shown to have a purpose. This is even more evident when Nina proceeded to tell the group about two stories, one of her own about a skull (lines 19-20) being near her tent, and a friend's story about a fox mauling someone (lines 22-23). Despite the graphic nature of participant discussion, however, a light-hearted tone is evident in the excerpt, with lots of laughter taking place and increasing as the discussion went on, but in the context of the group discussion, humour could represent underlying sensitivity around the issue of fear.

This excerpt demonstrates how participants use artefacts to talk about fear and shows how culture influences experience of a landscape and associations that are made. The use of artefacts communicated a shared understanding and may have been used by participants, to establish common ground, so as to get to know each other. The group discussion seemed reminiscent of discussions that would take place when sleeping in an unfamiliar and isolated place e.g. round a camp fire or in a strange old abandoned house, whilst out on a camping trip with others. It is typically during these times that ghostly or mystical stories are shared and evolve. This is a common ritual in a number of cultures, including Britain and other western

cultures. Thus, as well as the conversation comprising artefacts, the conversation itself is a type of artefact.

Artefacts associated with night time are clearly influential among participants (n=5), and is further supported by the example below showing the topic of horror and 'axe men' arising again in the group discussion after the study two solo experience, on the Sunday:

Example 6.21:

Group discussion, 08.08.10, study two

- 1 L: I thought I could hear sort of like (2) people screaming and
 2 stuff
 3 E: what last night?
 4 L: yeah yeah
 5 A: it was the axe man [laughs]
 6 L: well as far as I know it was sort of like early evening (.) I tell
 7 you what it sounded like it sounded like somebody was
 8 watching a film and they had the volume really really loud
 9 but it was like distant (.) and I couldn't quite make out what it
 10 were (.) and I thought (h.) I'm going mad here

Here, noises in the night were described as *people screaming and stuff* (lines 1-2), attributed to the sound of someone watching a film (lines 7-8) which Alex, in jest, suggested may be *the axe man* (line 5). When a participant is unable to identify or attribute a meaning to a sound, there is concern about *going mad* (line 21). By using artefacts like horror films, which are symbolic, Leslie and other participants (n=3) attribute the sound to something external to them. But essentially, participants (n=3) show that they draw on a shared frame of reference (horror films). It seems also, that when they realise that hearing noises they relate to some form of extreme violence (e.g. horror movies) that they must be mistaken (e.g. 'I'm going mad here'). Nevertheless, the night time context, and common cultural associations with night time, influenced participants' perceptions of noise and their surroundings.

The last example, shows how artefacts related to night time and their associations, such as fear and vulnerability, can escalate and impact perception and how landscape is experienced.

Example 6.22:

Alex, journal, study one

- 1 17th Sept 09. (solo)
 2 [...] I know last night I felt quite vulnerable and small insignificant to this
 3 huge place. I was quite fearful, but that was my thoughts thinking of
 4 horror films I have seen. I have to bring myself back to reality

5 sometimes as the fear seems to get so intense. And in this place when
 6 its cold and dark I hear noise I don't know and the tent slightly blowing I
 7 can imagine that theres someone outside or an animal – not sure what
 8 animal, but obviously at that time of night I think its gonna harm me.

Night time is again associated with *horror films* (line 4). This association between night time, the landscape and horror films led Alex to have more suspicious and fearful thoughts about her surroundings believing that she is *vulnerable* (line 1) and that something will harm her (line 8). Sounds are heard differently, seem more unfamiliar and are perceived to be more threatening. These feelings are also, in part, driven by a realisation of her isolation in such a vast landscape (line 2-3), which all contribute to her *intense* (line 5) feelings of fear. Alex seems aware of the associations she is making and the involvement of her imagination in the fear she is experiences, as she makes efforts to bring herself *back to reality* (line 4).

It appears from these examples that the symbolic artefacts that arose during the group discussion before the solo phase may have enhanced pre-existing fears, then and during the solo, re-entering discussion after the solo. Symbolic artefacts are used to express feelings, create imagery and aid understanding, and seemed especially useful when someone is talking about something highly emotive and difficult to explain, such as fear. These artefacts may have influenced the way participants thought about and approached the situation of being alone in the dark. A person's use of symbolic artefacts therefore seems to impact on perceptions and experiences, associating meanings with these. Additionally, symbolic and physical artefacts seem to occur in participants' discourse when there is some level of unfamiliarity or 'the unknown'.

6.2.3 Fantasy and Fairy-tale

For some participants, the daytime landscape nurtured and fostered imagination that was less fearful and more comforting than compared to night time. Symbolic artefacts such as pixies, fairies, mushrooms, which are typical iconic features in fairy-tales and enchanted forest scenes, were referred to. Although a small number of participants presented such material, they became a sub-theme because participant's experiences of day time, and artefacts associated with day time, were so in contrast to night time artefacts and experiences. This sub-theme also further elucidates the influence of culture and artefacts.

A number of participants (n=4), mainly female, referred to fairy-tale and fantasy artefacts. Sarah referred to herself as a fairy-tale character stating, *I feel a*

bit like a pixie [...] a little elf [laughs] out in the fields (pre-solo interview, study two). Sarah also described her actions whilst walking over rough terrain and jumping over ridges as *like commando man* (post-experience interview, study two) expressing a fantasy image of herself. Both of these examples suggest that in the WSE landscape Sarah found herself feeling released and entering another character, allowing a level of freedom and creativity in her imagination. Such an imagination seems to be driven by common characters that are typically associated with wilder terrain, and being away from paths. When entering forested areas, associations were also made. Alex, for example, reports in her journal, *I keep looking at the bracken that's across the stream and thinking it looks like a mini jungle* (journal, study two) and Kit stating, *like my favourite memory of it is (.) when I got lost in the woods really [laughs] it were like a mystical tour* (journal, study one). Both demonstrate the ways in which different spaces conjure different experiences and associations. Kit's exploration in a nearby forest also illustrates symbolic and physical artefacts as more positive qualities of the landscape:

Example 6.23:

Kit, journal, study one

1 I found the most amazing mushrooms, the red ones with white spots
 2 on, it was like something from a fairytale. It really does remind me of
 3 stories or films I'd watched as a child, when I'm out here, and how it
 4 links to some of my previous artwork when I explored nature, and the
 5 magical aura it has. My sketches were of fairies and mystical creatures
 6 that were apart of the environment, such as mother nature herself in
 7 different forms, the green man and goblin type things, faces in trees
 8 and caves. I'd create characters of my friends, "Peteree the forest
 9 keeper," who used to live in Sherwood forest, a friend from college
 10 (Pete) etc. the forest today opened my imagination and has made me
 11 want to pick that back up. I used be influenced by the works of 'Brian
 12 Froud' who did the sketches for 'Labryinth' [...] Anyway I walked a little
 13 too deep into the woods at one point, and lost my way for a while but
 14 didn't feel too worried as I kept stumbling across really cute little areas,
 15 so many different types of Fungi and burrows. It was like the film 'Fern
 16 Gully' that's another childhood cartoon.

The artefacts in Kit's journal are symbolic in the sense that they are representative rather than physically present. What Kit observed and experienced in the forest takes her back to childhood and *stories* (line 2) and *fantasy films* (line 3) associated with that time in her life. Her interpretation of the landscape as a *fairytale* (line 2) is further enhanced by her artwork (lines 5-12).

Participants (n=3) also showed a switch into fantasy and imagination by giving human-like qualities to some of the animals around them. Nina shows this by naming the sheep (see section 5.3.2), Sarah refers to a sheep as 'naughty' (see

example 5.24 in section 5.3.2) and below Alex describes a bee and mosquito talking to her:

Example 6.24

Group discussion, 08.08.10, study two

- 1 A: a bee came and then a mosquito came and then something
 2 else came [...] imagination is a fantastic thing ain't it out here
 3 (.) it was like they were coming and saying hello (.) good
 4 morning [laughs] that's how it felt anyway

Lastly, Alex demonstrates well the sometimes quick shifts participants can make between reality and fantasy and the sometimes strong differences between the two:

Example 6.25

Alex, journal, study one

- 1 My head tends to wander from fantasy to reality. Fantasy i.e. skipping
 2 through the fields – living in a farm over the hill – herding sheep –
 3 Something like 'Little house on the Prairie' that was my childhood wish
 4 to live like they did, all happy and loving one another – it makes me sad
 5 to think of my family (and how we lived) angry to think that we could
 6 have lived like this in this land.

Here, Alex demonstrates how quickly one can move from fantasy – recalling film related (i.e. '*Little house on the Prairie*'; line 3) imagery (i.e. *skipping through fields, living in a farm, and herding sheep*; lines 1 -2) – to reality – recalling childhood wishes of living in an idyllic place with her family. The shift from, and difference between, experiencing fantasy to experiencing reality is accentuated by her feelings of sadness and anger that she relates to reality.

6.3 Returning to Everyday Landscape

For participants the transition from being part of the WSE and its landscape and returning to everyday landscape and everyday physical artefacts (such as luxuries) was an interesting and illuminating experience (n=9). Analysis reveals that returning to everyday life was a nuanced experience. Some participants (n=3) found the transition easier and sometimes unnoticeable, stating very little about that time. Participants who found the transition noticeable (n=6) reflected on the WSE, their time in landscape and with nature as having had an impact. This theme has a sub-theme, 'Luxuries and Comforts', providing examples of transition specifically related to everyday artefacts.

Leaving the WSE landscape was where transitions were first felt. Time away from everyday artefacts seemed to make seeing and having them again exaggerate

differences between the two landscapes and thus enhanced participants' experiences of transition (n=9):

Example 6.26:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

1 D: [...] funny how you can you can you can go away for like two days (.)
 2 basically (.) er two and a half days whatever (.) and er (.) things just
 3 amaze you (.) like just mundane things you just start seeing things that
 4 you don't normally start looking at things like (solid) road and just (?)
 5 how (?) it was and how (.) I don't know how weird the concrete looked
 6 and sort of thing (?) it just looked out of place as well like this road just
 7 (seemed to be) stuck in the middle of (.) nowhere like (.) the middle of
 8 nature (.) so it was strange (.) then we walked past (.) started like
 9 gradually walking past (.) loads of (.) more civilised things like I don't
 10 know walked past this like little weird garden with sculptures in it and
 11 like a lamp post in it and stuff like that [...] then there was a café (.) and
 12 then it was like that was we (.) we knew we were back in civilisation
 13 then (.) there was like a shop and a cafe thing there were people milling
 14 about and that (.) I started seeing people walking past it was like (3) it it
 15 seemed like (they) just come out of nowhere (.) and we'd been at I
 16 mean we've been out in the middle of nowhere and then (.) all of a
 17 sudden there's people there

Dannie provides an insight into his transition in the landscape, moving further away from *the middle of nowhere* (line 16), towards *civilisation* (line 12). After being away for two days he finds he shifts in thought and association, triggered by artefacts that he sees that he usually considers mundane but instead amaze him or seem out of place. What the artefacts he sees symbolise to him provide Dannie with a context, a cultural milieu that he uses to make sense of his surroundings and experience of journeying through them. For example, in the more natural setting of the WSE landscape roads became something noticeable and strange (lines 3-7). *Civilised things* (line 9) like people, sculptures, shops and cafes look out of place and seemingly appear unexpectedly. The feeling of moving towards civilisation rather than leaving nature was something shared by Joe stating that he has *more of a sense of getting back to rather than leaving (.) like a kinda getting back to kinda civilisation* (follow-up interview, study one).

Experiences of transition were often felt more when entering towns and returning home and had an impact on pace of time and sense of space in familiar places, habit and routine. For some participants (n=7) the contrast and dramatic change from their experiences in the WSE landscape to their everyday lives meant that the transition was quick. For example, for Kit, the business of life when she returned intruded rapidly making her experiences and memories of the WSE feel unreal: *It feels like it was all a dream now. On the return home, I've been extremely*

busy right from the first night we returned to York (journal, study one). For others, like Joe, Sarah, Alex and Sam the transition was experienced for longer, which Sam describes below:

Example 6.27:

Sam, follow-up, study one

- 1 E: so what was it like when you had to go back away from that (.) space,
 2 back to (.) home (.) where you live (.) and kind of everyday life (.) what
 3 was that transition like?
 4 S: yeah it was obviously manageable because obviously I've had that
 5 kind of lifestyle longer than I've had the (.) the solo project and done
 6 that five days em but I even I found it quite (.) quite hard coming back
 7 (3) em (2.5) in the car from Mounthooly (.) even coming through the
 8 village which for me the village would be quite quiet but to me
 9 everything seemed built up and busy and quite (3) not (2.5) not
 10 claustrophobic but it just seemed quite intense for me and when I got
 11 back home that evening and like even driving back from York to home it
 12 did seem like just being in a car and being (2) I suppose it (.) it was quite
 13 hard its quite strange (2) feeling really (.) and when I got back home (.)
 14 we were going out for a meal (.) but it was taking me absolutely ages to
 15 get ready whereas normally I would rush to get ready and get dressed
 16 and I was just really (.) I want to go slow (.) just want to go slow
 17 E: and did that (.) did that last for a while or?
 18 S: the next day I had to go into town and do the supermarket shop with
 19 the two boys and it felt really strange walking down the street in the
 20 town (.) just seeing lots, it probably wasn't any busier than normal but it
 21 just felt seeing all these people in cars (.) and shops it was quite a
 22 strange feeling

Transition was felt by Sam from when she was travelling back in the car for days after the WSE. Sam clearly found the transition back to everyday landscapes and life to be different from previous experiences since she remembers the experience in detail, seems quite surprised by her experiences, and describes them as *strange* several times (lines 13, 19, and 22). Sam also describes the transition as *quite hard* (line 6). Familiar types of places, like villages (lines 7-9), supermarkets (line 18), and town streets (line 19), came to be experienced differently and uncomfortably (e.g. as *claustrophobic*; line 10). The transition also made her aware of the change of pace, finding it difficult to rush and desired to just *go slow* (line 16). She thus seemed, in some ways, to have adjusted to the pace experienced during the WSE which, in turn, impacted on her experiences of adjusting back home and accentuated the difference between the WSE landscape and her everyday landscape.

Joe exemplifies the kind of transitions that participants experienced in his recollections of travelling and being back home:

Example 6.28:**Joe, follow-up interview, study one**

- 1 J: [...] I've forgotten the little village and we got some food there you
 2 know (.) that was really the first time that we'd really got back to shops
 3 and stuff (.) so still feeling that kinda (.) so still feeling that kinda still
 4 feeling that kinda (.) you know kinda mentally kinda still out in the
 5 wilderness but here we are (2) we are in a town so there was that kinda
 6 transition (.) so I was still kinda feeling the kinda erm (.) openness and
 7 kinda freedom of being out there but still in a town (.) a little bit like
 8 being on holiday and you come back and its at first day and it feel
 9 almost like you've been on holiday but you know that you're back in
 10 your home town you know whereas before I suppose all the kinda day
 11 to day stuff impacts on you (.) so kinda physically there but I suppose
 12 emotionally and mentally kinda still a little bit in the hills really (.) so
 13 that there was that kinda transition over that whole period (.) and as
 14 the kinda (.) as the journey kinda went from the hills back to York all the
 15 kinda really normal day to day stuff seemed to increase
 16 E: ok and (.) and did those kind of feelings last?
 17 J: [...] being back in my home environment and feeling slightly different
 18 about whether to watch TV or or (2) still feeling the sense of kinda (.)
 19 wanting to be outside really [...] being quite happy to sit in front of a fire
 20 than to particularly to have the news on [...] just having a sense of being
 21 more connected to the outdoors and as time went on that sense of
 22 connection dissipated

Here Joe explains the change in pace like *being on holiday* (line 8) feeling that a part of him is still *in the hills* (lines 11-12), *out in the wilderness* (lines 4-5) and *wanting to be outside* (line 19). *Out there* (line 7) suggests openness and distance which supports his comments about feeling a connection with the outdoors, and its *openness* (line 6) and *freedom* (line 7). Shifting back into an everyday context, leads him to realise this connection with the natural landscape and to him noticing it decrease over time (lines 21-22). The connection was brought to his awareness by a change in pace (lines 3-12), habit and routine (lines 18-22). Interestingly, both Sam and Joe make these points during their follow-up interviews, which also signify that their feelings of connection and experiences of shifting pace was memorable. Joe also shows a change in how he perceived himself and his body as he moved away from one landscape (nature) to another (everyday landscape) and demonstrates a distancing from cultural ideals: *smelliness (.) not during but when we got back [sniffs loudly] back to the railway station (.) like I don't smell like everyone else* (focus group, study one).

The transition back to the everyday, where they lived and worked, frustrated some participants. For example, being away in the WSE landscape and coming back home made Sarah realise her frustrations with the city she lived in and

how the landscape influenced her behaviour and motivations: *I'm here yet I want to go back [...] it's flat and you can't feel the breeze (.) and like I don't know (.) it's all stuffy now (2.5) I don't like it (.) I can't see all nice surroundings [...] I was thinking no wonder I never go for a walk in York* (post-experience interview, study two). For Alex being away from her everyday landscape influenced the way she felt in that landscape:

Example 6.29:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

1 A: [...] it can feel dirty and every single day I have a bath because I feel
2 dirty I go on the train I feel filthy I go in the car I feel my hands are
3 sweaty and I'm sweaty and I feel like I've got a film of muck on me I was
4 there five days and weren't even bothered about washing I didn't feel
5 that muck I didn't (.) even though I were living on the ground and
6 walking in mud (.) and you know and it was mucky you (.) it didn't feel
7 like that

Coming back to the everyday landscape Alex felt dirty (line 1, 2, and 3), making her want to clean herself. The agitation that feeling dirty causes her is clear in the way she expresses herself strongly, and by the repetitious nature of her writing. In the next example, Alex uses money to compare and communicate how she feels about the two landscapes (WSE and everyday), seeing it as a powerful influence. Alex provides an insight into the extent to which the change and contrast in landscapes and their artefacts impacted on participants' perceptions of place, their roles and actions in them, as well as interactions with particular artefacts:

Example 6.30:

Alex, journal, study two

1 Just walked into town and it felt really full – the atmosphere people
2 everywhere – really annoying – and money – I don't need money in the
3 wild place, but here everything stems from money.
4 I think the whole wild experience – such as bills, money, food, even the
5 toilet reminds me of why I used drugs in the first place. Trying to
6 understand what's normal to people – I'd rather run away from it all –
7 the business of towns.
8 I also wanted to use the toilet in the supermarket and was pretty pissed
9 off when it was closed – I had to wait till I got home, but the weekend I
10 could go to the toilet when ever I wanted. I am noticing so much more
11 this time than I did before – I am analysing a lot of different things –
12 the smoggy, dirty feel to the town with the traffic – the feel of the sun –
13 hot and stuffy – the different smells, like cafes, bakeries, (nice) but so
14 different – I just don't like the fullness, the hustle + bustle of this life – I
15 felt a kind of freeness on drugs + no responsibilities, here today I feel
16 responsibilities weighing me down and to experience the wild place was
17 like feeling from the past – in a strange way.

The necessity of an artefact, money, is used by Alex to clearly differentiate between two places she considers to be very different – a *wild* place (line 3) and a *town* (line 1). Everyday artefacts, used in a list (line 4), again demonstrate the difference between the two landscapes and her frustrations with the contrast between the two. Everyday activities (e.g. using the toilet), sensual experiences (e.g. unwelcome heat, smells, dirt, busyness and crowdedness), artefacts (e.g. bills, money, food and toilets) and pressures (e.g. responsibilities) in the everyday landscape irritate Alex because of the underlying restriction and rules of society that contrast with the freedom and choice of the WSE landscape.

It seems that, as participants transitioned from one place to another – from a less familiar place (natural landscape) to a more familiar place (everyday landscape) – how they experienced those more familiar places, like towns and their home, changed for a period of time after the WSE. Experience of familiar places changed in relation to pace of time/life (e.g. slower or faster), sense of smell (e.g. noticing smells more – one's own and others), sense of sound (e.g. noisier or quieter) and sense of 'space' (e.g. busy or crowded). On returning to their more familiar places participants slipped back into familiar routines, habits and distractions such as listening to music, watching TV, keeping occupied and re-assuming responsibilities.

6.3.1 Luxuries and Comforts

During the WSE, items like duvets, kettles and beds were considered as 'luxury' items and having and not having these made transitions out of and into everyday landscapes noticeable for participants (n=7). These items were generally associated with particular routines, such as at bed time (e.g. reading a book in bed, playing video games or watching TV), or morning (e.g. making a cup of tea, having a shower and going to work). Participants who noticed a desire to have or relinquish luxuries, comfort items or routine were also aware that they were experiencing a transition from one place to another (n=4). For example, during the WSE some participants displayed a desire for comfort, familiarity and solace by making reference to luxury items in their journals and during group discussions and interviews. Other participants (n=3) avoided luxury items and did so to experience something different from the everyday and to fully engage with the WSE and with nature (with the place). Interestingly, items such as a rucksack, walking poles, stove or tent were not regarded as luxury items (n=9).

Some participants were anxious about leaving behind some luxuries (n=5). Alex states, for example, *My head is spinning with different thoughts about luxuries I have at home + what I'm going to miss – like music, the news and bath + bed (journal, study two)*. Some luxury items are an integral part of her life and everyday activities. Some participants preferred life with comforts and valued them a great deal: *Towards the middle of the following week, I was thinking of excuses I could use to get out of going. I think I just prefer my home comforts too much (Leslie, journal, study two)*. Dannie illustrates the dynamic transition and relationship with everyday artefacts:

Example 6.31:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

1 D: [...] being able to just come for a shower and that erm (.) it makes
 2 you appreciate (.) those small things and that's another great thing
 3 about it it makes you really appreciate the little things that you've got
 4 (.) that are (.) not necessities but (.) they're luxuries and you don't (.)
 5 you're not seeing them as luxuries you don't see running water as a
 6 luxury and you don't see running clean water as a as a luxury you don't
 7 see having a fridge full of food as a luxury (.) you don't see even you
 8 know having a key to your room having a (.) comfortable bed (.) with a
 9 quilt on it and (.) and everything basically that's in the house is a luxury
 10 (.) but you don't you if you don't have to carry everything about back
 11 that's in the house (.) even when it's coming down to you've got a
 12 wardrobe (.) clothes that houses your clothes you know (.) you can get
 13 clean (.) and put on some new clothes go out you know you don't have
 14 to carry all your clothes about and all your- you know you're clean and
 15 everything so- and your food and that erm (.) so (.) yeah it's makes you
 16 appreciate everything a lot more and I think erm (.) anytime that you're
 17 without anything it does make you appreciate it [...] I did anticipate that
 18 happening cos it kinda makes sense that if you do wi'out something
 19 then you become more fond of (as much) when you get them back (.)
 20 you only realise then (their value) (.) I mean now that novelty's worn off
 21 and like they've just become normality again

Dannie explains the often subconscious reliance people have on everyday artefacts and the perspective and appreciation gained from the WSE and being away from luxuries, realising how fortunate he is to have these luxuries is something that was taken for granted. The appreciation he gets when returning to these luxuries is a motivation for him to be away from them for a while. This demonstrates how simple everyday things can soon become a luxury when not accessed and how artefacts accentuate transitions that people are experiencing. The amount and variety of food was also regarded by participants as a luxury (n=7) and changes in eating routine marked transitions between different landscapes:

Example 6.32:**Sam, follow-up interview, study one**

- 1 E: or sight is there anything that particularly that you can remember in
 2 terms of (.) something that you felt (.) or something you particularly
 3 remember visually like and image (.) were there any images that
 4 particularly (.) stand out from your experiences?
 5 S: well I've got sort of an image of food on plates (.) it just seemed like
 6 (.) what my meals were at home when we went out for a meal the meal
 7 just looked absolutely massive (.) it just looked like I could probably eat
 8 half of it could have been like enough I (.) erm (.) I felt I got used to
 9 eating less and I felt I realised I probably do eat more than what I need
 10 to eat (.) I could get by on eating a lot less [...] it was the amount and I
 11 think it was the big variety on the plate

For Sam and others, portions and the variety of food was regarded an indulgence (line 10-11) when she had returned to her everyday context. The abundance of food was a surprising thing that she noticed. It was also a memorable instance, as she recalls it over nine months after the WSE itself.

The level of appreciation and value participants had for comfort and material artefacts also led them to other realisations (n=5). Sarah, for example, realised her reliance on and gratitude for some material things:

Example 6.33:**Sarah, post-experience interview, study two**

- 1 S: [...] I have a new found appreciation of capitalism [laugh] (.) because I
 2 think I'm quite like right on and like (.) I don't need stuff duh duh duh
 3 but I like having a duvet and (.) it's nice (2.) so it was yeah it was just
 4 hard like not having (.) normal stuff not having normal food

Sarah describes what she had learnt from her WSE explaining that it made her realise how important *stuff* (line 4 and 6) is to her. The realisation arises from the difficulty she experienced from being without. The attachment of *normal* (line 4) to artefacts further accentuates her need for them.

6.4 Evaluative conclusion

The domain 'Landscape and Artefacts' provides a rich insight into the complex and nuanced relationship between people, the things around them and cultural ideas. Another layer of understanding regarding human-landscape interaction is gained, providing further details of how participants went through a process of disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating during and after the WSE.

The association participants make with artefacts shaped experience and meaning-making, and influenced mood, behaviour, perceptions and judgement of

place and landscape. Artefacts, physical, symbolic and societal, co-exist and are not independent from one another and participants' changing and fluxing relationship with artefacts and perceptions of landscape demonstrates further evidence of liminality (as discussed in chapter 5). Physical artefacts had a disrupting influence on some participants' appraisals and interpretation of the landscape but also shifted in meaning and form. Symbolic artefacts exhibited lighter and darker shades of meaning. The darker shades of symbolic artefacts related to fear and vulnerability of what was 'out there' in the landscape, with reference being made to horror stories and characters. The lighter shades of symbolic artefacts related to fairy-tales and mystical characters. Societal artefacts, linking to norms and values, manifested as commonly held views and dominant ideas about nature, environment and landscape. Participants both desired societal artefacts (whether ideas, views or routine) and wanted to relinquish them; the former was a way to seek comfort and the latter was to gain a greater connection with the landscape and facilitated the feeling of 'getting away'. Although the other two categories of artefact also have societal links, this category focuses more on patterns influencing judgements and related to 'worldviews'.

Transitions in emotion, mood, thought, sensual awareness (smell, touch, sound and sight) and awareness of time and pace change and flux during liminal periods, last for varying durations, and provide an insight into the degree participants felt connected with the WSE landscape and the WSE lifestyle (e.g. walking through and sitting with the landscape – a simpler lifestyle). It also seems that in unfamiliar situations people rely on what they know to make sense of landscape, situation and intrapersonal processes, whether that be artefacts or past memories and experiences.

Chapter 7: Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom

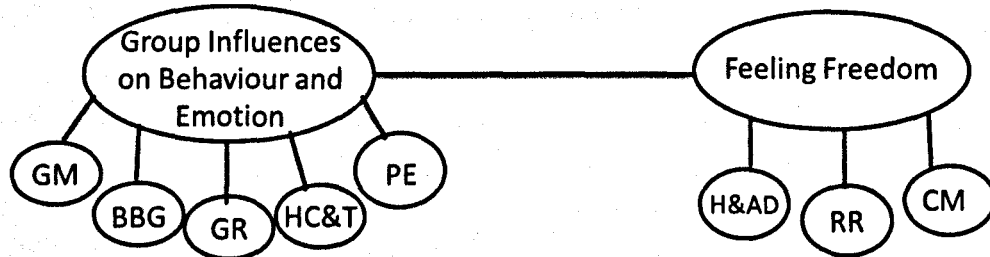
This chapter demonstrates some of the underlying emotional and negotional aspects of experiencing the WSE and dealing with its fundamental elements, walking through and sitting with the landscape, as well as structural elements like being led and being part of a group. Whereas the previous two chapters focused more on how participants related to and interacted with the landscape, rather than the WSE structure (the environment) *per se*, this chapter discusses the way in which participants responded to elements of the WSE and how this impacted on the way they transitioned between phases of the WSE and what meaning they took away from the experience. What emerged from these negotiations were issues of 'control, trust, choice and freedom', representing the themes in this chapter. Within this domain all three research questions are addressed; "what is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?", "what aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?" and "what stays with people after experiencing a WSE?".

The most memorable aspect of participants' experiences of the WSE was a sense of freedom. How feeling freedom presented itself and the ways in which feeling freedom emerged are discussed. Additionally, how participants negotiated various aspects of the WSE (e.g. group dynamics, 'other people', artefacts) to protect their experiences of freedom is explained. Overall, the chapter elucidates the finer details and features of participants' experiences, providing further form and shape to the developing picture, where a sense of the situatedness of the features starts to crystallise (i.e. how the features relate with one another).

This chapter has two major themes. In the first theme, 'Group Influences on Behaviour and Emotion', human-environment interaction (e.g. group component of the WSE structure) is key to understanding participants' experience of group dynamics. In the second theme, 'Feeling Freedom', human-environment (WSE structure) and human-landscape (WSE landscape) interaction are considered together; data revealed that the structure of the WSE and the landscape itself was influencing how participants were experiencing space and place. Figure 7.1 shows each theme and their sub-themes and provides a diagrammatic overview of these and their inter-relationships.

Figure 7.1 Introductory overview of themes and sub-themes in chapter 7

This diagram shows the main themes and sub-themes within chapter 6 and demonstrates their inter-relationships. The theme 'Group Influences on Behaviour and Emotion' impacted on aspects of participants' experiences of 'Feeling Freedom'.



Key:

GM =	Group Membership	H&AD =	Having and Achieving Distance
BBG =	Being Behind in the Group	RR =	Relinquishing Responsibilities
GR =	Group Roles	CM =	Childhood Memories
HC&T =	Having Control and Trust		
PE =	Protecting the Experience		

7.1. Group Influences on Behaviour and Emotion

A group environment was created and maintained by the WSE structure and design, and it was an environment that every participant experienced as part of their participation. Participants' transitions in experience, including feelings and thoughts, whilst moving in and out of group situations and spaces are explored. Participants' approaches to being part of a group were partly influenced by preconceptions and apprehension and demonstrated some of the ideals that are implicit in group work and thus the WSE (n=5). The participants' and my own ideals about group work were that everyone would get along and benefit from sharing their experiences (n=9). Despite desires for group work to be a positive element within any experience, group dynamics bring a nuanced and complex dimension to experience. How these ideals were upheld and challenged is clarified, revealing social pressure, social etiquette and unwritten rules, and how they influenced participants' experience (e.g. actions, emotions and reflections) of the WSE and the landscape. Instances of participants (n=6) trying to diminish such influencing factors in their experiences and how they felt about themselves are also illustrated. Lastly, power issues that are implicit in groups, especially in small groups, are also shown as participants convey implicit nuances of the WSE elements (e.g. walking in a group and solo experience).

Space and place are experienced interchangeably and how participants relate to space and place changes in relation to experiences as a member of a

group (n=6). For example, for participants being part of a group, at times, was both a welcome and unwelcome distraction from experiencing and immersing themselves in the landscape and the WSE elements (e.g. walking through and sitting with nature). Regarding the former for example, Dannie speaks positively about being part of a group: *I'm glad that I was in a group I think it's it's: definitely an important thing if you're going to do stuff like that* (follow-up interview, study two). How participants dealt with the group situation also impacted on how they connected to place and space and their ability to be in the present, in the here and now (n=7). To elucidate these features of being part of a group a number of sub-themes are discussed: 'Group Membership'; 'Group Roles'; 'Being Behind in the Group'. Firstly, some general examples are presented to show the breadth of group influences on behaviour and emotion.

Participants often felt apprehensive about being part of a group and how important getting on with others was; *I think if I didn't get on with them or didn't talk to them much then I'd be a bit like oh no this is like going to be three days of hell* (Nina, post-experience interview, study two). Being part of a group also prompted lots of different feelings. For example, Sarah stated that she is *just a bit more cardboard when there's lots of people around and men* (pre-solo interview, study one). For Alex, being part of her particular group during her second WSE made her more aware of her age; *In the van coming I felt really out of the group, I'm the eldest and just want peace and quiet* (journal, study two). Participants also felt like they had to do certain things whilst in a group and conform to the norm of the group such as walking and talking with others: *Today has been a real hard day – I felt like I haven't been able to relax, either talking and walking with people [...] Even though I enjoyed meeting new people being in my tent right now is great – just been able to relax and not think about conversation is lovely* (Alex, journal, study two). For other participants (n=4) being part of a group meant that there was a schedule that everyone should follow. Some participants, like Sarah, disliked this pressure to adapt their timings or routine to the needs of the group:

Example 7.01:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

1 S: that would be the hardest part I think (.) like (.) sticking to a schedule
 2 (.) cos I don't do that (.) I just kind of do what I fancy [...] no it was more
 3 like social (.) pressure in that (.) I like to do: my own thing but at the
 4 same time I'm really really reluctant to break any rules (.) not that there
 5 were any rules do you know what I mean? like I don't like disappointing
 6 people or doing things wrong (.) and so that was where my (anxiety)
 7 came in (.) of like (.) oh: I don't know: I'm late I'm always late and I- (.) I
 8 don't like it (.) it makes me feel bad:

For Sarah, having to follow a schedule is something that she did not enjoy and does not want to have to do. She explains that this is to do with her being independent (line 2), and the *social pressure* (line 3) that comes with being part of a group, both of which makes her question whether she would consider doing the WSE again as she finds it *the hardest part* (line 1). The reason why the social pressure is disliked by Sarah is that it make her feel more self-conscious about *disappointing people* (lines 5-7) which makes her *feel bad* (line 8). In her post-experience interview she elaborates on this pressure and awkwardness describing the experience like *when you wake up in someone else's house* (post-experience interview, study two). In a way, entering another person's house is akin to entering a group as both have uncertainties and hidden/unwritten rules, which is perhaps why Sarah associates these two experiences with each other. Participant feelings of guilt about doing what they wanted to do in a group context (n=5) is also well illustrated by Joe, articulating his predicament with feelings of obligation in his journal: *I like going out my own pace when it gets more strenuous. However I was not sure at time if I should stay with the group. Felt a bit guilty at times for not but then I feel this is about my experience* (journal, study one). Rules and abiding with them therefore seemed to be important

Some participants were concerned with fairness in the group and that everyone should follow and abide by rules in similar ways (n=3). Sam discusses her attempts to follow rules, her desire that everyone in the group followed them and her frustration and disappointment when group members did not follow rules:

Example 7.02:

Sam, post-experience interview, study two

1 I think initially I felt the first reaction was I felt a little bit let down that
 2 I'd been in a group that all participants hadn't abided by the rules (.) but
 3 then I thought well that's my issue and I thought well no I've done it I've
 4 abided by the rules so I've given it the best of my ability and I thought
 5 you know for whatever reason you know they couldn't you know so I'm
 6 not like downing them anything (.) my first if I'm honest my first
 7 reaction was just one of disappointment but it's also disappointment to
 8 think that somebody felt that they had to had to do that [...] I admit
 9 that because I drink and it said no alcohol that (.) that you know I didn't
 10 bring any alcohol that I didn't you know I would have loved to have sat
 11 there and done some reading on the solo project and also when
 12 somebody else said they had gone off on a walk (.) I thought should I
 13 have done you know but then I thought well no because you know I was
 14 sticking (.) to the criteria yeah

Sam describes how participants considered rules and abiding by them as an integral part of the WSE, to its challenge and achievement. Underlying the importance of rules was fairness. Rules were there to make sure that everyone

experienced something similar in the WSE and faced the same challenges, and abiding by rules represented accomplishment. Sam was happy with her own performance and how she coped with the WSE. For those who broke the rules Sam felt disappointment, implying that everyone should be equal in a group. Going off for a walk, drinking alcohol and reading were not permitted. This was something stipulated on information sheets for the research. Some were to help ensure safety (e.g. drinking) and others were to facilitate certain phases of the WSE (e.g. solo phase). Many of these things Sam expressed she would have liked to have done but did not because she was asked not to. Knowing that other people had apparently done these things was frustrating for her, showing the impact of being in a group on emotion and behaviour, and also the impact of the WSE rules.

7.1.1 Group Membership

This sub-theme relates to the extent to which participants felt they were, and wanted to be, a member of the group. Some participants (n=5) wanted to feel and be part of the group and for others it was less of an issue (n=4). There was at times, however, a conflict with what participants said regarding their expectations about being in a group and their actual experiences (n=4). Some participants seemed to transition in and out of wanting to be with or in a group (n=5), for example many participants said that the experience was an individual and personal challenge and voyage, and was not about being part of a group (n=5). Although some participants (n=5) stated that 'fitting in' was not important, by mentioning group issues they implied that indeed membership in the group does matter.

Being close to group members was clearly expressed as important by some participants (n=4) as Leslie demonstrates:

Example 7.03:

Leslie, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 E: what was the best and the worst thing about the- the two trips?
 2 L: erm (4) I suppose the best thing were (.) erm (.) sort of like spending
 3 time (.) with people (.) and forming new relationships (.) erm (.) having
 4 a laugh (.) spending time (.) quality time with people(.) erm (2) the
 5 worst thing I suppose was (.) sort of like (.) giving it all up at the end (.)
 6 you know and sort of like going back home

One of the most prominent things Leslie remembers from the WSE was *spending time* (line 3- 4) and forming bonds with people in the group. To develop relationships with group members spending *quality time* (line 4) and *having a laugh* (line 4) is important. Leslie states he found it hard to leave the group emphasising

the importance of group relationships as well as suggesting that the relationships were something he felt could not be re-accessed.

There was dissonance among participants regarding the need or desire for being part of a group (n=4). Sam shows this dissonance, considering the experience as a personal journey (a motivation that is discussed more in section 7.2.3) rather than a shared one but at the same time also implying that 'fitting in' was quite important to her:

Example 7.04:

Sam, post-experience interview, study one

1 S: even on the first interview I think I was kind of taking part as more as
 2 an individual (.) I mean I did (.) I'm quite happy to be part of a group (.)
 3 but I think my sights were a personal choice for me (.) and things (.) so
 4 the group was kind of secondary in a way (.) it wasn't like I'm going on a
 5 group outing (.) I want to be part of a group (.) because I feel sort of
 6 quite well balanced and quite well established with the friends and
 7 family I've got (.) so it's kind of just by the by for me (.) erm (2) and I
 8 think (3) as much as I maybe you kinda want to fit in I don't think it
 9 would have bothered me as much (.) years ago it would have bothered
 10 me (.) if I hadn't have felt like I fitted in but it wouldn't have bothered
 11 me if I (.) hadn't fitted
 1

Sam highlights again that the WSE is an opportunity for an individual rather than group experience (lines 2-4), the group element was of *secondary* (line 4) importance. She attributes this desire with feeling *well balanced* and *well established* (line 7), feeling that she does not 'need' to be part of a group to enjoy the experience and benefit from it. Since there was a group, 'fitting in' was still something on Sam's mind and was still important, despite being to a lesser degree than years ago.

Participants' motivations for volunteering for the WSE were predominantly personal. Some participants were very explicit about this; *I'm not really looking forward to seeing the others because I feel like I just want to do this on my own* (Alex, journal, study two). Joe provides an insight into concerns over group membership rules in relation to his friendship with another participant and about 'fitting in':

Example 7.05:

Joe, post-experience interview, study one

1 E: thank you (2) and generally how do you how confident do you feel
 2 you were through the five days?
 3 J: yeah I think I was yeah I think I was confident (3) erm (3.5) I think in
 4 the initial stages you're (2.5) again there's that kinda expectation to
 5 what to expect (.) group dynamics (.) and stuff that's always that's
 6 always you know erm (3) [cough] (3.5) there was a little bit of a
 7 challenging aspect in that which was about you know like I felt that me

8 and someone else (.) eh were kind of challenged on our friendship and
 9 how that fitted into the group so I was of that in the initial stages (.) so I
 10 had to kind of wrestle a little bit with (.) well what am I going do about
 11 that what can I do (2) I felt like not doing anything about it

Here Joe replies that he thought he was confident but then proceeds to explain his uncertainty about group dynamics. Joe had expectations that challenging group dynamics would arise as there is *always* (line 5) something to deal with when in groups. Joe and another participant (Kit) were challenged by their friendship. This challenge led to him questioning how they *fitted into the group* (line 9), suggesting that there are, or were, some unspoken and unwritten rules about the membership of the group. This led to a conflict about what to do about the situation, which led to a level of discomfort, making him unsure of his competence to deal with the situation.

Despite dissonance and some challenging experiences related to group membership among participants, being in a group was beneficial for some (n=3):

Example 7.06:

Alex, follow-up interview, study one

1 A: I'm back here and [laughs] I feel exactly the same [...] I think that's
 2 because I've thrown myself back into NA [Narcotics Anonymous] and its
 3 bracket (2) as I'm an addict [...] I WANT THAT FEELING BACK THOUGH
 4 [laughs] [...] maybe it that is ingrained in me that you're an ex-addict
 5 Alex you know (.) maybe that I need to be (.) around people that aren't
 6 but I'm constantly around people that are (2) see (.) my whole family
 7 and friends (.) circle of friends and everything (.) they all are (.) they're
 8 all addicts (2) they are either using or drinking or in recovery (.) so I'm
 9 constantly around those people (2) I was using before the experience,
 10 after the experience and maybe being around people that aren't maybe
 11 addicts I started to feel that way

Alex explains how being a member of a group of people that were different from her usual circle made her feel less like an ex-drug addict. Away from her usual company meant she could relinquish the label of an ex-addict that had become ingrained in her during her recovery process. Feeling like she had relinquished this label was short-lived however. Returning to her previous social environment the feeling was lost and *she felt exactly the same* (line 1) and desired the feeling to return (line 3), showing the power of being part of groups.

7.1.2 Being Behind in the Group

Walking in a group also presented issues around social pressures and shows the ways participants (n=5) experienced and negotiated their own needs with those of the group. The thought of holding other group members back was a common

concern among participants (n=6); *I was apprehensive a bit wondering if I could do it and keep up with other people* (Sam, follow-up). Additionally, for those participants who were 'behind' whilst walking (n=3, it was challenging for a number of reasons that were related to being part of a group. Leslie's comments capture participant's experiences of being behind well:

Example 7.07:

Leslie, post-experience interview, study two

1 L: erm (4) a bit frustrating at times (.) erm (.) you know because like t-
 2 the group would stop you know and you sort of like you catch up and
 3 wait for them to sort of catch up erm (.) but by the time sort of like I'd
 4 caught up they'd already had a seat for a while (.) you know at times I
 5 felt I were holding them back a bit (.) so (.) you know cos by the time I
 6 got there I wanted a seat and sort of like they'd already been there like
 7 five minutes or something

Being behind in the group was frustrating for Leslie. This was because he did not have the same amount of rest as other group members, explaining that though group members would wait for him this did not allow him to rest before feeling pressured to start walking again, implying a diminishment of his sense of choice. Consequently Leslie felt he was *holding them back a bit* (line 5). This feeling of holding people back was experienced by the other participants who had walked behind in the group (n=3). Leslie describes associated feelings of isolation:

Example 7.08:

Leslie, post-experience interview, study two

1 L: erm (.) you know I suppose (.) I enjoyed it (.) yeah I enjoyed it really it
 2 was alright it was (2) there were things I don't like but aye sort of things
 3 like that outweigh it (.) really
 4 E: do you think
 5 L: yeah (.) yeah either that or just blocked it all out [laughs] (.) the bits
 6 what I don't want to remember [laughs]
 7 E: what are those bits do you think?
 8 L: walking [laughs] erm (4) well sometimes (.) I felt a bit isolated (.) erm
 9 (2) it was like when I was struggling through the rough ground and (.)
 10 well just when I was struggling I suppose in general (.) I kind of felt a bit
 11 isolated (.) erm (.) sort of like when you're lagging behind and that [...] I
 12 felt emotionally isolated because (.) I'd all these emotions (.) sort of like
 13 going through me (.) sort- you know frustration and stuff like that but at
 14 the same time I didn't want to show it (.) erm (.) you know (.) erm so
 15 that was a bit of a like a struggle (.) because (.) I usually just open my
 16 mouth and say it [...] I suppose physical isolation (.) kind of came (.) I
 17 don't know when I was sort of lagging behind I suppose (.) erm (3) you
 18 know (.) but in the second weekend (.) I quite enjoyed that you know
 19 when we were walking up and I sat on that rock (.) and I said like you's
 20 walk on I knew where I were (.) I kind of enjoyed that (.) and I enjoyed
 21 that bit of isolation because I felt whingey

The complexity of experiencing being behind in a group walking is elucidated well here. Leslie struggled with the rough ground and with being left behind, which made him feel *emotionally isolated* (line 12) as he felt unable to show his frustration in the group. The negativity of his experiences is accentuated by multiple uses (and versions) of *struggling* (lines 9, 10 and 15) and *isolation* (lines 11, 12, and 16). Isolation was not always negative however. Though he was physically isolated when *lagging behind* (lines 16-17), it was the emotional isolation that he experienced that was difficult: Being alone also meant that he could release the frustration whilst not affecting others. Indeed, physical isolation was something he actively sought during the second weekend (lines 18-21). Nevertheless the emotional isolation he felt had a strong impact as he states he possibly *just blocked it all out [laughs] (.) the bits what I don't want to remember* (line 5-6), suggesting that there are negative aspects to being part of a group that require consideration.

Positive aspects of walking as part of a group were also experienced by participants (n=4). The next example demonstrates how a change in perspective helped a participant gain perspective about his physical ability compared to others in the group and be more sympathetic to the position of other group members:

Example 7.09:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

1 D: [...] walking along (so) didn't have a pack on but it [having a sore
 2 back] (.) still slowed me down so: I ended up (.) going from being able to
 3 rush ahead with my pack on (.) and and wait for everybody else to:
 4 [laughs] sort of being in the middle to the the back sometimes you
 5 know and erm (.) it it was kinda I did feel a bit more part of the group
 6 than I did appreciate what it (.) more what it's like to I look from the
 7 back at other people in front of you and stuff and erm (.) to find it a bit
 8 difficult (.) so I kind of (.) appreciated a bit more what it would have
 9 been like to be Leslie (.) for example (.) and erm I mean that (.) before
 10 that had actually happened (.) er that day I had wondered about Leslie
 11 (.) cos he was struggling a lot of the time and erm (4) cos his eyesight as
 12 well (.) and and I said I said to him I said (don't) take it (in a
 13 disrespectful way (.) I said to him but I've just been walking along (.)
 14 past however many metres with like one eye shut and sort of squinting
 15 out the other eye sort of thing so trying to (.) sort of (.) see what it
 16 would be like to be walking past (it's like) just like I can see (.) quite
 17 easily in front of what's- what obstacles are ahead I'm always scanning
 18 ahead (.) what my route's already automatically getting plotted out
 19 metres ahead so I already know (where I'm) putting my foot
 20 automatically so (.) by doing that my- range of vision was just
 21 horrendous so all I could see was my my foot like (basically on my feet)
 22 (.) and then like a foot ahead and then I was like tripping over stuff and
 23 (.) thinking actually this (.) no wonder it (.) takes him longer to do it
 24 because (.) of of all those things you know (.) so (3) in general that foot-
 25 that whole last day (4) I think I got to see (3) erm a bit more about other
 26 people's experience (.) through my own eyes in a way

At the end of the first weekend of his WSE Dannie hurt his back, making him unable to carry his bags, needing the support of walking poles to walk. A change in situation made Dannie realise what another member of the group may have been feeling during the WSE. Dannie describes the shift he had to make during this last phase of his WSE from being at the front or middle of the group to being at the back on the third day. His agility meant that he had a greater choice; he could choose to *rush ahead* (line 3) be in *the middle* (line 4) or *the back* (line 4). Once he had hurt his back his choice had diminished. Although Dannie found this experience *difficult* (line 8), it made him appreciate what being at the back was like, empathising in particular with Leslie who was *struggling a lot the time* (line 11). This led to Dannie asking about Leslie's experiences of being behind and dealing with his partial sightedness. Dannie also tries to 'put himself in his shoes' by shutting one eye whilst walking (line 14). This makes him realise and empathise even more with how difficult it was for Leslie and helped Dannie understand why he took longer to walk. Overall, his experiences of walking behind the group made him feel more *part of the group* (line 5-6) as people had to work more together to carry his bag.

Participants experiences of walking as part of a group highlights that there is an underlying sense of responsibility for others, that by being in a group one needs to think of others, which can result in negative experiences as well as positive ones. Alex highlights the sense of responsibility participants felt (n=6): *I get really hungry and I get quite controlling food er::m but not to the extent that I did then (.) cos I nearly did collapse (.) my whole body went funny (.) so yeah that was quite frightening (.) cos (2) I weren't frightened for me I was bothered about other people (.) I thought oh god I'm gonna spoil everybody's day kind of thing* (follow-up interview, study one). A sense of 'sticking together' is also illustrated however; *Alex said to me she said (.) oh lets we'll touch it together (.) I'll wait for you [...]I didn't feel kind of feel part of it (.) but that was through my doing not through what anybody else did (.) but I'm pleased it kind of came together for everybody at that point really* (Sam, follow-up, study one). It seems then, that although there were differences in opinion, experience and purpose for doing the WSE, participants came together when it mattered, suggesting an implicit and explicit cohesion among group members (whether it was needed/necessary or not).

7.1.3 Group Roles

Since there was a mixture of opinion on the benefit and importance of being part of a group, roles within the group were also ambiguous. This sub-section reveals that participants considered themselves as having had no particular role and neither did they want one (n=9). The only person that was identified as having a particular role was the researcher. Any roles participants mentioned for themselves were passive ones (n=5), which may suggest that, to a degree, participants desired to be free and independent from the group and responsibility. This point gets explored further in a later section (7.2.3).

Despite participants generally relinquishing their everyday roles (n=9), when discussing the topic in relation to themselves and other members of the group some participants showed that they had implicit roles. Some participants (n=3) felt that they were 'put into' a role that they did not particularly want to have:

Example 7.10:

Joe, journal, study one

- 1 Felt less clumsy with not so many girls there. When I heard that Jeff
- 2 could not come I felt for the first time I needed their male company!
- 3 This was a change for me as I was not bothered whether he could make
- 4 it or not, but now he was not I was bothered!!! I think I was because I
- 5 feel less pressured by not being the only male as if being the only male
- 6 put me more into that role!

Joe reports his expectations and apprehensions about what his role would be in the group. Being the only male in the group, Joe became more aware of his gender and its associated expectations. This put more pressure on Joe to be more like a male (lines 5-6), suggesting that with more men he would feel *less clumsy* (line 1). Without male company he felt like he would stand out more, and thus perhaps be more open to scrutiny. Having male company was initially not important to Joe, but once it was not an option it became an issue for him, suggesting an element of choice is important. Joe later explains this lack of choice clearly when asked about roles within the group, stating also that being the only male did not give him any power: *I was the only male in the group [...] that was my role whether I liked it or not but it didn't seem to kinda eh erm (2) particularly empower me in any particular way* (post-experience interview, study one). The following excerpt provides an insight into the impressions made by participants of other people's roles within the group and how roles can develop during a WSE as a response to the roles held by others:

Example 7.11:**Joe, post-experience interview, study one**

1 J: Lizzie had a particular role within the group (2) the volunteers erm
 2 (2.5) I wasn't aware of anyone within the four of us (.) if it is the four of
 3 us we are talking about (.) of having a particular role (.) we didn't seem
 4 to fall in to a role that I was aware of (.) so um it seemed to fall into
 5 more of two camps really I think (.) because it seemed to be kind of
 6 because there was four and [...] I think there was one individual where
 7 this was a totally unique experience too (.) and I suppose in some
 8 respects they were (.) taking (.) they had that role of you know (2) wow
 9 (2) this is completely new to me and and (.) there was maybe this
 10 aspect of some of us kinda introducing this experience to her

Joe begins by stating, like all other participants (n=8), the facilitators and I were regarded to have clear and key roles. He also states that one group member seemed to have some sort of 'in awe person' role in that the WSE and the landscape was *totally unique* (line 7) to that person. After being prompted to elaborate on his thoughts he explains that group members had no clear role or roles to *fall into* (line 4). By stating 'fall into' he suggests that people tend to take preordained roles. Joe also highlights his own sense of the roles that developed for him and for others in the group because of a particular group member to whom the experience was *completely new* (line 9).

Roles seemed to develop during the WSE for other participants (n=4) and followed a similar pattern of thinking, that they had no role but then found that one emerged through their experiences, situation and interaction with others:

Example 7.12:**Alex, post-experience interview, study one**

1 A: [...] I felt like it was (2) we were all equally participating [...] I felt at
 2 ease which I don't usually feel so (that was good) [...] I just felt I just
 3 participated and I was just honest I was just me which (.) you know [...]
 4 usually I'm quite controlling and organising and I don't like to follow
 5 other people and I did kind of feel a little a bit like I was allowing myself
 6 to be like a follower (.) I'm used to being the other way (.) you know so
 7 erm
 8 B: and how did you feel being the follower?
 9 A: you know I'd actually let it go (.) which was really unusual because
 10 usually I battle with it inside (.) you know it's like yeah that I need to
 11 kind of have that kind of power thing you know (.) but no I put my trust
 12 in Lizzie which is really erm (2.5) yeah really different really (3) because
 13 I didn't know what I was doing (.) I didn't know what was happening

Like many other participants (n=7), Alex felt she was an equal in the group (including the leader and facilitators) and that she *was just honest I was just me* (line 3). A role did emerge for Alex though through her experiences of the WSE as a *follower* (line 6). This led to her gaining a deeper insight into characteristics of her

personality and ability, since being a *follower* (line 6) is not a role that she is accustomed to (line 9-11), she is used to having control. As a follower she had to trust the leader, which consequently placed me in position of power.

No other participant said they felt that they were a follower, despite being 'participants' in a study and structured outdoor experience, which suggests being a participant was not considered by them to be a role. Interestingly, Alex's description of her role as a 'follower' did not reoccur in her second WSE. She instead took the role of a *rescuer* (post-experience interview and journal, study two). This role was more familiar to her, since it was a role that she had adopted in other parts of her life and formed part of her desire to be a counsellor. What is important is that she felt confident enough to take on that role in that context and relinquish her previous role. This may have been because of her experience from her first WSE.

7.1.4 Having Control and Trust

Participants had to negotiate being in and out of control and often had trust themselves and others. This theme demonstrates how participants exerted control, showing their desire to be perceived by others as maintaining control and independence (n=8). Participants' struggle and negotiation with the structure of the environment (the WSE), their own ability and choice is illustrated through their talk of trust and control. For some participants, reducing the level of control they had was very challenging as it involved a lot of trust and, in turn, was also regarded as an achievement by some (n=4). Having less control or a perceived lack of control was unpleasant and unsettling for some participants and had a negative impact on their experience of the landscape and the WSE (n=2). The power I had as the leader of the group is very evident here, implicitly and explicitly, as routine, direction and route taken in the landscape were all controlled by me. This also affected participant experiences (n=4).

Participants exerted their control in different ways. A number of participants (n=7) mentioned that going at their own pace whilst walking was important and not something they wished to change; *I didn't mind sharing the experience as long as I was moving at my own pace* (Joe, follow-up interview, study one). Going at one's own pace was about keeping a degree of control, though they had to surrender control to another person, which was typically me as I was the leader. Alex explains what this was like for her:

Example 7.13:**Alex, post-experience interview, study one**

1 A: I know this sounds a bit weird (.) but I kind of allowed you to be in
 2 charge which I've never ever done in my whole life (.) you know (2) let
 3 someone else take responsibility of what was happening so that was a
 4 real big thing for me to do (.) cos usually I've always got to be in control
 5 with what I'm doing (2) I have to know where I'm going (2.5) so that
 6 was kind of an eye opener (.) to see that I can do that (.) so I'm right
 7 proud of myself

Giving up control and letting someone else be responsible for and steer what was happening was something Alex had never had to do before (line 2-3). This was a *big thing* (line 4) which she felt *proud* (lines 6-7) of managing. Importantly she seemed to learn and benefit from the realisation that she could allow another person to take control describing it as *an eye opener* (line 6). For other participants (n=3) having to give up a level of control was not perceived as beneficial. Leslie provides an insight into what it was like:

Example 7.14:**Leslie, journal, study two**

1 When we started going over rough terrain, I hated it. I kept losing my
 2 balance, tripping and falling over. I felt out of control and had to put
 3 100% trust in Lizzie to guide me through until we reached the camp
 4 area. I didn't have a problem putting my trust in Lizzie. The problem
 5 was that I didn't feel in control. At times I couldn't see my feet, which
 6 added to my frustration. Towards the end of the walk, I became a bit
 7 irritable because I had been out of control too long and felt physically
 8 drained.[...] I also found myself agitated at the thought of why such a
 9 route was chosen.

Leslie reports in detail his experiences of being out of control (lines 2, 5 and 7). Challenging terrain caused Leslie discomfort (line 13) and imbalance (1-2), which he found frustrating (line 6) and physically draining (lines 7-8) leaving him feel *irritable* (line 7). His inability to change how the terrain was impacting on him and his ability to cope with it was draining. Although commenting that he had no problem placing trust in me (line 4), Leslie questions the route choice made by me (lines 8-9), suggesting that his trust in me may have been compromised by this. Leslie was asked about his difficulties with the terrain during and after the WSE as it was a significant part of his experience. Overall, he found it to be a negative challenge due to the overwhelming feeling of being out of control. Despite the challenging and uncomfortable nature of his experiences walking on off-path terrain, he did not mind trusting others like Sarah and me. This suggests that his discomfort was not necessarily about lack of trust but rather about the lack of control and choice.

Having control was important to participants during the WSE and they found ways to exert control. Leslie and Sarah found ways to exert and gain control, which Sarah described as a 'fake rebellion'; *me and Leslie were just messing around and be like (.) I'm not coming [laugh] which made me feel a bit bad (.) a bit of like fake rebellion (.) and just leave us here* (post -experience interview, weekend one). Sarah explains this further in her follow-up interview:

Example 7.15:

Sarah, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 E: do you remember when you erm? (.) do you remember (the) time (.)
 2 do you know what I'm going to say?
 3 S: [laughs] when I sat down (with) like I'm not going anywhere?
 4 E: yeah
 5 S: yeah- [laughs]
 6 E: what did you get out of that?
 7 S: I would call it resistant [...] I just wanted to (.) like I just wanted to get
 8 (.) done like I was so tired (.) and then (.) then that was the worst part of
 9 it saying like no you need to walk slower because we need to not leave
 10 Leslie behind (.) well like that altruistic part of me was like totally down
 11 with that and then the part of me that really wanted to go to sleep was
 12 not down with that at all and I just thought if I walk slow I'm going to sit
 13 down (.) and then I'm going to lie down and then I'm going to go to
 14 sleep (.) I didn't feel that was not a like (.) oh I can't walk fast because of
 15 Lizzie's authority (.) it was I don't want to walk fast because I don't want
 16 to disrespect (.) like the group (.) but I really want to walk fast (.) and
 17 just go (.) so I think that was me like being like well you made me walk
 18 fast so now I'm going to sit here for a bit

To exert control Sarah and Leslie sat down near the end of the first weekend of the study WSE and said they were not moving. She makes it very clear that she was trying to regain control as she states *well you made me walk fast* (lines 17- 18). What this also demonstrates very clearly was my power as a leader that Sarah describes as *authority* (line 15). Though she says that her behaviour was not related to my 'authority', an element of it is evident, as well as considerations for other people in the group, which were deemed more important to consider. Sarah illustrates the unwritten rules or etiquette of being in a group by stating that she did not want to *disrespect* (line 16) these or anyone in the group. The impression the group had of her was more important than mine, suggesting the strong influence of groups and feelings of being responsible for others.

7.1.5 Protecting the Experience

'Protecting the Experience' refers to instances where participants demonstrated protective behaviour regarding the experience in general and their individual and

group experience. In study one participants vacillated between wanting to be with or in a group or not (n=5). Participants said that the experience was an individual and personal challenge and voyage, and was not about being part of a group (n=5) and participants' desires to have some level of independence changed and shifted throughout the WSE and from space to space. Participants were also protective of the group experience with 'other' people being seen as a threat to both individual experience and the experience as a whole, as well as other things that will be discussed. Possible reasons why participants in study one were particularly protective of their experience will be discussed in the evaluative conclusion (see section 7.3).

Participants' motivations for volunteering for the WSE were predominantly personal (n=5). Some participants were very explicit about this; *I'm not really looking forward to seeing the others because I feel like I just want to do this on my own* (Alex, journal, study two) and *I know for me it wasn't so much as being part of a group but as a personal challenge and what I wanted was for me* (Sam, post-experience interview, study one).

Sam's report demonstrates well how some participants desired isolation and to be able to concentrate on their own experience:

Example 7.16:

Sam, journal, study one

1 For some reason I put on my mobile phone, and received a few texts. I
 2 was really surprised to get a signal even though I did not feel like ringing
 3 home, I did because I said if I got a signal I would. It felt quite strange
 4 ringing home as I felt quite connected to where I was and that this was
 5 my time alone- I would however know that I would feel guilty if I was
 6 asked if I could not get a signal when I got home

Sam reports how 'outside life' interrupted her experience, which she describes as *my time alone* (line 5). This time seems precious to her but responsibilities back home intrude. The guilt she reports if she did not communicate with family further suggests the power of responsibilities elsewhere, as well as technology mediating this distraction.

Joe shows how personal desires and confidence to fulfil them developed, despite social pressures: *I have a sense of growing individuality that puts my feelings 1st, it's like a journey and this is my unique experience, not just here but through life, it makes me feel less beholden to others!!!* (journal, study one). Joe's report here suggests strongly that the WSE brought a sense of being able and confident to relinquish unwelcome feelings of obligation to other people and to put himself first. By doing so, Joe implies that he is attempting to guard his 'unique experience'. Whether the experience should be for him or for others was not

always clear to him, however, as he had to negotiate various pressures of being in the group:

Example 7.17:

Joe, post-experience interview, study one

1 J: the actual physical stuff it was ok so it was more the dynamics em (.)
 2 but I think once I had articulated (.) kinda got it straight in my own mind
 3 what this was was for me (.) and this wasn't for me about working in a
 4 group even though I was aware that it was important (.) it was it was
 5 more personal (.) and it stopped being a problem (.) and I think I
 6 vocalised that at some point which you know I think [..]I had to try (.)
 7 particularly to try and distance myself from the group (.) to get the
 8 experience of being in the (.) in the wild (2) what I felt what I should be
 9 experiencing

Joe explains how, in contrast to the physical aspects, group dynamics were *a problem* (line 5) that he had to overcome. He articulates his predicament with feelings of obligation in his journal: *I like going out my own pace when it gets more strenuous. However I was not sure at time if I should stay with the group. Felt a bit guilty at times for not but then I feel this is about my experience* (journal, study one). To overcome his predicament he had to find out what was more important to him, which was that the WSE be a personal experience rather than about getting along with group members. To achieve a personal experience he distanced himself from the group. He regarded this as a way to be more *in the wild* (line 8) which he felt he *should be experiencing* (line 8). His last comment regarding being in the wild and his use of *should be* (line 8) suggests that he had preconceptions that being in the wild needed to be more focussed on himself. The above example therefore demonstrates his desire to 'protect' the experience in the way he preconceived it. Additionally, for Joe *the intense emotions came around when I was away from the group* (Joe, focus group, study one), which is further reason for him to protect his individual experience.

Participants were also protective of the experience more generally and of the group experience. This is demonstrated well by participants' reflections about the bunkhouse in study one:

Example 7.18:

Focus group, study one

1 J: I suppose in my mind I hadn't expected anyone else to be
 2 there and so when we did get there and there was someone
 3 else there [laughs] that's what kina I felt there were some
 4 kinda social not social niceties that would be too strong but
 5 there was a consideration up and above our own group
 6 A, K, & S: [yeah]
 7 J: that had kina taken something away [...]

- 8 S: I felt comfortable in the environment I felt more isolated with
 9 other people being there in the bunkhouse than I did actually
 10 out in the wilderness (.) I don't know I think it might have
 11 been because there is a family there and I wasn't with my
 12 family and I'm thinking I'd done this for me and then there
 13 were another two little children laughing and I thought awful
 14 thinking that I had to leave mine and then I got another two in
 15 my face and I think it kind of wasn't what I wanted it wasn't
 16 what I was there for you know to be have another family in
 17 my face because that is something I would have done with my
 18 family (.) I would have been there with my family and I'd done
 19 this for me definitely not to be faced another family [...] I felt
 20 that because they were obviously there for their reason and
 21 we were there for another reason even though we were kind
 22 of there in the same environment they were there as like a
 23 family holiday and we were there for something else
 24 J: for me it just added another dynamic into (.) what was going
 25 on which seemed to kinda (.) take away the focus away from
 26 our own group dynamics so
 27 S: that's what it was for me
 28 J: mm yeah
 29 S: there's no (2) group get together initially because as soon as
 30 we were there there was other people and I felt (.) I had done
 31 it for me

A discussion between Joe and Sam shows a protective tendency towards the experience and the group. When participants arrived at the bunkhouse there was already a family there. The presence of *other people* (lines 8-9 and 28) was considered as an intrusion and posed a threat to the experience in general, in terms of its uniqueness and isolation, and to the group dynamics as having other people around was considered as disrupting the group bonding process. The people were at the bunkhouse for reasons that were different to the group. Having other people around presented an issue of compromise and an obligation to consider other people for Sam and Joe and took a focus away from the group which was unwanted. Additionally, for Sam, the fact that the 'other people' were a family was particularly discomfoting for her as it reminded her of her own family, which she had left behind. This created a conflict for Sam who felt on the one hand a sense of guilt about leaving her children (line 13) and on the other protective of her own personal experience – the WSE was time to focus on herself and the presence of the family compromised this.

7.2 Feeling Freedom

One of the overriding feelings that participants experienced during the WSE was a sense of freedom (n=7). How that feeling began and developed illustrated

transitions made emotionally throughout the WSE. 'Feeling Freedom' captures how participants responded to being away from their everyday lives and responsibilities, and their experiences and negotiations of control and choice; feeling freedom was inextricably associated with relinquishing responsibilities and having a sense of control and choice (n=7). The natural space and place of the WSE landscape contributed to participants' sense of freedom. The WSE landscape also allowed participants to be present in the 'here and now' as well as evoking childhood memories. The many facets of feeling of freedom and how the feeling of freedom was attained are elucidated by three sub-themes: 'Having and Achieving Distance'; 'Relinquishing Responsibilities'; 'Having and Achieving Distance'; and 'Childhood Memories'. Firstly, a few examples are discussed to provide a general sense of participants' experiences of feeling freedom.

Nina captures the essence of feeling free when reporting: *Its weird I've left all the stress and worry at home and I'm enjoying myself and feeling a hell of a lot better already! I'm just having fun and being myself which is great I can finally breathe, I'm free!* (Nina, journal, study two). Alex goes onto explain in more detail about what freedom means to her, how it is the main motivation to partake in a WSE again, and how she tried to understand it more; she demonstrates how multi-faceted the experience of freedom was:

Example 7.19:

Alex, post-experience interview, study one

- 1 I: would you partake in the wilderness programme again?
 2 A: oh yeah now yeah come on [laughter]
 3 I: can you tell me why?
 4 A: because it was fantastic it was just that freeing that (.) that freedom I
 5 felt and that peace of mind (2) just everything [...]it's like when I was
 6 there and it's totally given me a different light (.) and I've been reading
 7 a few spiritual books (.) especially just recently (.) and (2) it's like when
 8 (.) when I was there I didn't actually feel like I was in a body if you (.) it
 9 wasn't an out-of-body experience or anything (.) it was just more like
 10 this it is this is nature you know and we are one basically
 11 I: now you've completed the experience how would you describe the
 12 wilderness programme to another person who knew nothing about the
 13 scheme?
 14 A: oh ok well that they should do it [laughter] (.) that it's a freeing
 15 experience (.) you know (2) telling them about their environment (.) and
 16 everything that goes on erm (3) just that it is a really (.) really freeing
 17 really freeing you know (.) and you get a real awareness if you [...] so (3)
 18 personal growth [...] and gaining confidence

When asked if she wanted to participate in the WSE (then called wilderness programme) again, Alex confidently said yes, explaining that the reason was because of the freedom she felt (line 4), which is accentuated by the multiple uses

of the word *freeing* (line 4, 14, 16 and 17) and emphasis of 'freedom'. Alex also explained that the WSE was also about *personal growth* (line 28) and gaining *a real awareness of you* (line 19), suggesting that the freedom felt provided an opportunity for these things to arise and is associated with gaining perspective and insight into oneself. Freedom is also associated with having *peace of mind* (line 5), a sense of tranquillity within. Alex also describes her experiences as spiritual stating that it had given her a *different light* (line 6). This however, is not something she necessarily thinks other people will gain from the experience, suggesting that it might be a more personal aspect to her experience.

This feeling of freedom is something that is common across participants' responses and is one of the first things that they recall about the experience (n=7). This is demonstrated well in the next example where Dannie describes his memories of the WSE, he also provides an insight into when feelings of freedom started for him:

Example 7.20:

Dannie, follow-up interview, study two

- 1 E: what kind of things do you remember from the trip that weekend?
 2 D: [...] I did enjoy being away from (.) sort of (.) everyday pressures and
 3 complications really (.) if I'm honest (.) erm (.) like like uni' and work
 4 and paying bills and sort of that kind of eventually just went out of my
 5 mind completely (3) well quite so when I () I felt (.) sort of more
 6 freedom from those kind of pressures but
 7 E: yeah do you know how long did it take you to feel that kind of er
 8 freedom?
 9 D: it's it's hard to remember but (.) I would say probably the first (.)
 10 morning of waking up actually (.) erm you know the first full day (.) I
 11 think (.) the the initial of getting our stuff and travelling to the place and
 12 then just going for a walk (.) that was nice but it was still part of the day
 13 where I'd been in the city and (3) it was the day after when I woke up in
 14 the morning like early and everybody's (.) coming out of their tents and
 15 things like that and (?) starting and then we set off (.) I started feeling
 16 sort of freedom then yeah (.) I would say
 1

Freedom (line 6) is explicitly associated with being away from *everyday pressures* (line 2 and 6), *complications* (line 3). Examples of pressures were related to university, work and paying bills (line 3-4) and the relinquishing of these responsibilities will be discussed more fully in section 7.2.4. Despite relying on memory, Dannie makes an attempt to pinpoint when he started to feel freedom, which was on the first *full day* (line 10) of the WSE, as soon as people came out of their tents. Interestingly he notes that preparing for the WSE and travelling to its location was also enjoyable, implying that even the thought of 'getting away' is beneficial.

Participants also alluded to some of the conditions that helped foster, support and maintain the feeling of freedom (n=5). For example Kit reports; *I think the balance was great although we were being led by you guys, there was still enough freedom and security. Lizzie you were an excellent leader, couldn't fault a thing, and it was lovely to have Jacqui with us too* (Kit, journal, study one). This suggests that the kind of leadership that took place may have enabled the freeing feeling. The structure and duration of the WSE was also considered important to fostering feeling freedom: *Tonight I am looking forward to being home – because a weekend isn't long enough to enjoy my freedom, but still enjoyable* (Alex, journal, study two). The following 5 sub-themes elucidate further the aspects and complexity of 'Feeling Freedom'.

7.2.1 Having and Achieving Distance

This sub-theme demonstrates how participants achieved a sense of space, choice and perspective by gaining distance, between themselves, group members, other people (n=4) and everyday ideals. This latter aspect relates a lot to the theme 'Getting Away' in chapter 5 but rather than focusing on participant's motivations for doing the WSE this theme discusses the impact of getting away and achieving distance. Participants sought and accomplished these ends by 'getting to the top' of a hill or 'Being high up'. 'Getting to the top' was partly related to participants' competitiveness, but overall it was about a sense of achievement. 'Being high up' was more nuanced and was about gaining perspective and distance from other people and from everyday life. In doing so participants gained perspective on the landscape but also on themselves (n=3). For some participants the landscape was a kind of place that was non-judgemental, where social 'masks' could be relinquished and social norms ignored (e.g. washing hair and smelling nice) (n=5). This brought a level of perceived freedom to those participants and awareness about how 'other people' influence their actions, behaviour and emotions. Such experiences and revelations were meaningful to participants.

Travelling to the WSE location in itself helped participants achieve the distance they wanted, and expected, from everyday life and society. Just being in a different location and a good distance (3 ½ hour drive away from York) from one's home was not enough. Distance needed to be achieved for participants from things related to or that reminded them of society and home (comforts) as Sam illustrates:

Example 7.21**Focus group, study one**

- 1 S: and it's kind of you're going on a experiential journey (.) and its called
 2 a wilderness therapy and your kind of in a bunkhouse and even though
 3 it's a bunkhouse and its obviously not home from home but it's kind of
 4 similar in some ways [laughs]
 5 E: mm mm yeah
 6 S: you know you've got the cooker you've got you know the same sort
 7 of some of the same priorities as you've got at the home so it's kind of
 8 (2.5) so it's not really started
 9 J: so there was there was a different kind of focus for me depending on
 10 where we were (2) so one was kind of interpersonal stuff and (.) like
 11 maybe because maybe that was because we were like in a bunkhouse
 12 and stuff like that kinda stuff goes on you know and then being out in
 13 the open seemed to kind of free me from that kind of focus and widen
 14 my perception if that makes sense
 15 E: mm yeah
 16 S: you said like two of the words that first two words that sprung to my
 17 mind which is just openness and freedom

The similarity of the bunkhouse to a home was unwelcome to Sam as it the comforts within it, like cookers, represented to her the same priorities and duties that she has back home and in society in general. Because of this association 'the experience' did not feel to her to have started which created a state of limbo for her.

Focusing on getting to the top and gaining perceived distance by going uphill also allowed participants to think of mainly what they were doing in that moment (n=4):

Example 7.22:**Joe, journal, study one**

- 1 The higher we climbed the more exciting I felt there is something about
 2 being high up that lifts my spirits tomorrow we go higher, can't wait!!!
 3 [...] It felt good to get the top and feeling of 'do-it!'. Get to the top. As
 4 we descended it felt like coming home, was a feeling of being satisfied I
 5 suppose!

Joe regards both the focus and sense of achievement that he gains from climbing higher as beneficial, motivational and satisfying (lines 1-2). Joe goes onto explain, nine months after his WSE, that having and achieving distance was one of his fondest memories as it reminded him of the freedom he felt as a child. For Joe, having and achieving distance was also important for him to experience the wild: *I had to try (.) particularly to try and distance myself from the group (.) to get the experience of being in the (.) in the wild (2) what I felt what I should be experiencing* (Joe, post-experience interview, study one). Example 7.21 also illustrates other

qualities of this distance that were shared by other participants, like gaining perspective and appreciation of the landscape:

Example 7.23:

Joe, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 J: [...] one of my kinda nicest (.) not nicest but fond memory I have is
 2 actually been able to really get distance from seeing each other [...]
 3 there was something about the distance of that cos that was actually
 4 quite a nice memory [...] when I think about it (.) strangely enough that
 5 stays in my mind more than actually waterfall experience (2) that kinda
 6 looking over the valley and then kinda seeing a little tent in the distance
 7 (.) and I particularly remember Kit's tent in the distance maybe because
 8 there was a friendship there and you kinda (.) so I kinda thought oh I
 9 wonder what kinda Kit's doing (.) you know (.) that's actually quite a
 10 nice memory (.) actually
 11 E: and there's something about distance?
 12 J: yeah distance kinda looking over so it was kinda (.) visual (.) so kinda
 13 in contact but not in contact
 14 E: erm since you mention that did you ever feel that distance thing
 15 before the solo time?
 16 J: [...] I'm aware that was something I'd experienced before when I went
 17 walking right from child (2) and all the way through my walking
 18 experiences erm for me there was sort of a cathartic effect about being
 19 high up and looking down (.) well looking (.) over valleys and stuff
 20 E: did it matter if people were in the valleys?
 21 J: no as long as there was (2) a distance (.) a good enough distance
 22 where maybe they couldn't see them and you couldn't see them (.) you
 23 know (.) yeah so people weren't really waving at you they were just (.)
 24 out there [...] it was more about the distance just enjoying that and I
 25 think when you're amongst a lot of people you don't get chance to
 26 stand back and take in the view (.) it wasn't an attempt to isolate myself
 27 from the group it was just a natural response [...] to have the freedom
 28 to go at your own pace

'Distance' (lines 2, 3, 6, 21, and 24) is the key element to the beneficial quality of being high up. Having and achieving distance, being able to go his *own pace* (line 28), gives him a sense of *freedom* (line 27), highlighting the importance to allow participants to walk at their own speed. Sense of distance is gained by things becoming smaller in size and great pleasure arises from seeing people or tents as small objects in the landscape (line 6 and 7). Once distance was achieved, Joe felt like he was *in contact but not in contact* (line 12-13). Joe does not seem to mind the presence of objects in the landscape but prefers to have the option to engage with those things – distance allows this choice and control. His phrase may also suggest that he feels there is an element of safety felt when seeing these signs of human presence. Interestingly, after nine months, the benefit he gained from being high up and having a view of the valley became more important and memorable to him than his experience near the waterfall, which he had previously

explained was one of his most profound experiences. Perhaps this is because having and achieving distance by being up high provided him with a greater sense of freedom. Joe also explains how this sense of freedom reminded him of his childhood and that being high up had a *cathartic effect* (line 18).

A number of participants felt more self-conscious whilst walking and being part of a group. For example section 7.1.2, 'Being Behind the Group', demonstrated participants concerns about their ability to 'keep up' with others in the group whilst walking; *I did enjoy the walking but also because there were more people I was more self-conscious because I'm not very fit* (Sarah, post-experience interview, study two). Having distance away from people (to 'other' people) during solo experiences there were times, where participants felt less self-conscious; *Don't feel the need to change or put a bra on coz there's no-one to look at me which is NICE* (Sarah, Journal, solo). In contrast to the group situation, the solo experience thus seemed to allow Sarah to feel a sense of freedom – 'there's no-one to look at me' – fostered by avoiding judgement and rather experiencing life.

The effect of this experience can lead to perspective, greater awareness and empowerment. After Study one it Alex's reflections During her second WSE, Alex explains this sense of freedom well describing the perspective and awareness and empowerment she gained through her experiences of the WSE:

Example 7.24:

Alex, journal, study two

1 In the wild place I don't have to wear a mask – in the solo phase I can
 2 just be me – and I am so looking forward to it. [...] Oh it will be so good
 3 to get away from what's going on in the world, (pretend) it's not
 4 happening. I am so looking forward to not having to spend time making
 5 sure my hair's ok and not worrying about what my clothes look like, or
 6 what I look like. [...] Here there were no distractions, I won't get hurt
 7 from another person, I am safe in this place. I don't have to put on an
 8 act – a mask I can just be me with no distractions.

Here Alex reports on her desires and expectations before, and experiences during, her second WSE solo experience. Alex conveys a desire to have distance from what is happening in the world and escape (lines 3-4). Alex also suggests a sense of empowerment and freedom felt in the WSE landscape when on her own (during the solo experience) through her comments about being able to be herself – *I don't have to wear a mask* (line 1) and *I can just be me* (lines 1-2 and 8). Gaining this sense of distance from everyday ideals also allows her, as it did Sarah, to escape from worrying about her appearance (lines 4-5). In doing so Alex describes the solo experience like a safe haven (line 7), explaining that it allows her to get away from *distractions* (line 6 and 8) and *hurt from other people* (line 6).

7.2.2 Relinquishing Responsibilities

'Relinquishing responsibilities' is a sub-theme that overlaps with many other themes that have been previously discussed (particularly in section 7.1 and chapter 5). The way everyday responsibilities were pervasive is illustrated here and the extent to which participants were aware of these was often an unwelcome distraction from experiencing the landscape and connecting to nature (n=8) but, being aware of responsibilities was not always unfavourable (n=3). Many participants described having responsibilities by stating they want to relinquish them or the thought of them (n=8), and did so in varying ways. For example, Sam speaks of her responsibility for her children; *After ringing home on Monday evening I did feel a lot happier to know that my children were settled. This helped me to focus on getting ready for the camping out and long walks ahead* (journal, study one). Sam explains more about how she felt without having the responsibility that came with being a student and a mum:

Example 7.25:

Sam, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 E: is there anything in particular during the time of being alone (.) that
 2 seemed to make it important for you?
 3 S: I think it was just time to chill for me and not (.) being sort of erm (.)
 4 being both a student and a mum and running a house I think it was
 5 really just total time out for me when sometimes you can do something
 6 for yourself at home but its probably an hour (.) you know if you go do
 7 something like tai-chi or go out on your bike it's a little snap shot and
 8 then you're back into that whereas that was a longer period so it was
 9 really time to totally chill out

For Sam the time she spent alone during the WSE *was just time to chill for me* (line 3), which she reiterates in line 9. She clarifies her point, contrasting the *total time out* (line 5) from the WSE with the short lived and contained relaxation and break she gets from doing tai-chi (line 7). The way she emphasises 'total' suggests that there was an important factor of distance from any disturbance.

Alex stated that the WSE was a spiritual experiences which *was like the cleansing thing I've said it before and you take your brains out and wash it out*, describing it also *like a new born baby where you've got nothingness* (follow-up interview, study one). This quote, in particular, highlights a number of benefits from relinquishing responsibilities. Alex explains that the experience cleansed her, and allowed her to go back to something innocent. Alex captures the essence of being able to relinquish responsibilities; *Its so free I don't have to bother with anything. [...] Life's a lot easier in the wilderness – fresher- and free* (journal, study two). Relinquishing responsibilities also meant a lack of communication with the outside world, the two supporting each other:

Example 7.26:**Alex, journal, study two**

1 If I could forget I have a home, I would see my boots, cooking things,
 2 food, bed under – in this time space – my belongings all I own in the
 3 world – it would be great if this were true, to be able to leave
 4 responsibility and live like this –wow- it would be great. I can't get a
 5 signal on my phone, but at the moment I like that – no communication
 6 with the outside world. [...] As soon as I got back to Beverly Park I rang
 7 and got loads of shit down the phone and at that point I just wanted to
 8 go back to camp. I think the freedom of responsibility and my
 9 selfishness came out then, the same as when I was homeless and using
 10 - I didn't bother with people

Being able to leave responsibilities behind and having *no communication with the outside world* (lines 5-6) makes clear distinctions between the WSE landscape and her everyday landscape. Being out of contact, away from people and without responsibilities reminded Alex of being homeless (line 9) and using (line 11), possibly because of the sense of escape she gained from these two things. However this is as far as the similarities go. The sense of *freedom* (line 8) Alex experienced was influential and made her realise the many people demanded something from her (line 6-7). Alex encapsulates the feelings of freedom that come with relinquishing responsibility and feeling like having control over one's complete life, stating, *it was definitely about home on your back and you could just go wherever you wanted to go* (follow-up interview, study two). Similarly, Dannie states: *I did enjoy being away from everyday pressures and complications really like uni and work and paying bills and sort of that kind of eventually just went out of my mind completely (3) I felt (.) sort of more freedom from those kind of pressures* (follow-up interview, study two).

This sense of freedom and escape was not always easily attained during the WSE. Nina found it harder to relinquish her thoughts of responsibilities; *I found a nice spot in the middle of the stream to sit down. I tried to clear my mind but I was still thinking about things that needed to be done or what time it is* (journal, study two). Most participants, however, felt they managed to relinquish responsibilities. For example, Joe describes how he was able to 'disconnect' from his responsibilities and routine explaining that: *getting away from the normal routine (.) getting out in the hills and the countryside and erm (2) and you know that kinda just moving from one place to another place so that kinda disconnection from your normal routine and responsibilities* (Joe, follow-up interview, study one). Overall, respite away from responsibilities was beneficial and brought with it an appreciation of having space, enjoying place, and the time it afforded.

7.2.3 Childhood Memories

This theme builds on discussions (section 6.2) about 'Making Sense of the Landscape' and also, in a way captures the essence of 'feeling freedom'. During the WSE, in the landscape, most participants altered between being in the present and reflecting on the past (n=8). Features of the landscape particularly conjured childhood memories that reminded them of the freedom and activity they experienced then (n=6), suggesting that some of those feelings were being re-experienced during the WSE. The reference to childhood artefacts seemed to contribute to building a connection with place and, in turn, provides an insight into human-landscape interaction. The re-living and remembering of childhood experiences was therefore meaningful to participants and highlights the subtle, nuanced and complex nature of landscapes.

Dannie illustrates experiences of childhood memories well when talking about his experiences of lying in the long grass during the WSE:

Example 7.27:

Dannie, follow-up interview, study two

1 D: [...] it's just lying in a field erm the length- it always kind of just takes
 2 me back to when I was a kid and I used to just kick a ball about on a big
 3 field till I was tired and fall down in the grass and just sort of look up
 4 into the sky if it's an 'alf nice day erm (.) that kind of just being in long
 5 grass has something about it I dunno thinking about (.) about being and
 6 it's the smell of the grass [...] the sun was beating down and it- felt
 7 really good (.) and that just sort of took me back (.)me mind took me
 8 back to being a child

Here Dannie talks about stories of when he was a child, nine months after the WSE, suggesting that they were memorable and important. The sensory experience of being near and smelling long grass (line4- 5) which he sought as a child was something he was able to re-experience during the WSE. Lying there in the grass made him feel *really good* (line7) allowing his mind to take him back to *being a child* (line 8). Joe shows more extensively how childhood memories emerged explaining that the solo experience conjured freeing feelings and enjoyment of things that he had forgotten about:

Example 7.28:

Joe, post-experience interview, study one

1 J: you know the twenty four hour period was erm (3) erm just kind of
 2 flowed and kind of melted that probably how I would describe it [...] it
 3 brought back lots of kinda memories of the past kind of childhood type
 4 kinda of feelings [...] it kinda reminded me maybe of stuff I had

5 forgotten and erm (2.5) what I enjoyed in being kinda outdoors and for
 6 a time afterwards I was kinda of looking at kinda avenues thinking oo::h
 7 that would be nice to just to do (.) go out there just to camp out there
 8 you know (2.5) (I've/ we've) got the Yorkshire dales right on the door
 9 step

For Joe the solo experiences reminded him of *forgotten* (line 5) *childhood kind of feelings* (line 3) that *flowed* (line 2) and *melted* (line 2). The resurgence of these feelings motivated him to look into ways of re-experiencing these feelings and opportunities for them again. Whilst he thinks about how to do this he realises how close these opportunities are to him, bringing him a change in perspective. He specifically wants to be outdoors and *camp out* (line 7) suggesting that he seeks something similar to the solo experience particularly. The desire and challenge of re-accessing similar experiences to parts of the WSE are more fully discussed in section 7.3.1.

The WSE thus took participants back to childhood memories leading to reminiscing, but some participants also acted on their childhood feelings as Sarah highlights:

Example 7.29:

Sarah, pre-solo interview, study two

1 E: [laughs] did the frogs remind you of anything?
 2 S: it reminded me of being little (.) just that yeah frogs in a pond and
 3 stuff and frogs in my pockets (.) it was nice it was a nice memory I was
 4 quite surprised about how like giddy I was about some frogs [laughs] I
 5 was like weeeee (.) like a little kid yeah so it was really good (.) just
 6 wanted to play with them wanted to find some more in the puddles

Seeing frogs during her journey to her solo spot reminded Sarah of *being little* (line 2 and 5) which was a *nice memory* (line 3) to have. These associations prompted her to be playful, which came through whilst she talked, shown by her prolonged *weeeee* (line 6) and by words like *giddy* (line 4) and *wicked* (line 7). Interestingly, Sarah was *surprised* (line 4) at the way she felt, suggesting that her feelings and response to the landscape were unexpected but, nevertheless, welcome.

7.3 Evaluative conclusion

Transitions arising in relation to the WSE structure, group dynamics and landscape provide further depth of understanding about the process of negotiating, adapting, disconnecting and connecting. What we see here is that issues of control and choice are integral to this process as participants navigate each of these particular elements of the WSE. During the WSE participants

negotiated choice, control and group dynamics, adapted to landscape and context, disconnected from the group and from responsibilities and pressures, and connected to themselves, nature/the landscape and to their childhood selves/experiences. Liminal experiences are evident in negotiations within the group, particularly with regards to group membership, control and trust, protecting experience and feeling freedom.

The feeling freedom theme seemed to have five facets; escaping (having and achieving distance), relinquishing (responsibilities, social obligation and unwelcome thoughts), remembering (childhood experiences and feelings), having control, and having choice. Several contingent aspects to feeling freedom were present, which were rules/norms/boundaries, power imbalance, group dynamics and tended to impede and compromise participants' sense of freedom. These created unwelcome challenges and pressures for participants during the WSE and consequently impinged on their experience of nature. The group element in particular seemed to compromise aspects and purpose of the WSE which was to provide a safe, enjoyable and peaceful experience in nature, creating an opportunity for participants to connect with themselves and with nature. The group element reportedly got in the way of a connecting (to nature) and disconnecting (from everyday life) process and was another aspect that participants had to negotiate. Benefits and drawbacks of the group are however unclear. Overall, it seems important that there is a good balance between solo and group elements as both are as valuable as each other. However, for those participants who felt that time alone was noteworthy descriptions were quite profound implying that solo experiences were more rewarding and beneficial for them.

The reasons for the protective tendency of participants in study one is unclear. It may have been due to the difference in duration e.g. the shorter duration of trips in study two may have meant there was less pressure to get on with group members and thus there was less need to vocalise any desires for a more personal experience. Conversely, it could have been that group dynamics were less of an issue for participants in study two because they knew each other better (three participant were from the same counselling class, see section 4.3.2) or that they thought that a personal experience was less achievable in the shorter duration. It could have also been due to the participants' ages. Participants were of a more mature age in study one with only one participant in her 20's, compared to study two with three participants in their 20's. A greater maturity among participants in study one may have meant that being part of a group was less important. Additionally, since study

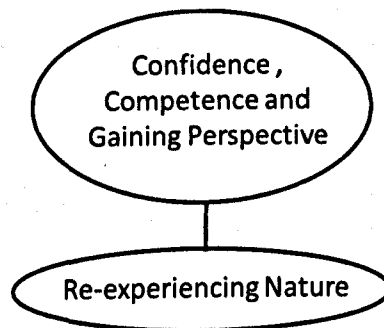
two had no reference to it being wilderness therapy this may have meant that the experience was constructed as less 'unique' and in turn was not an experience that needed 'protecting' from outsiders. Furthermore, there may have been less of a 'threat' in study two because less people outside of the group were encountered compared to study one as it was away from popular walking routes. In second study two participants, Dannie and Leslie struggled more physically and thus appreciated the group support. A further factor that could be influential, therefore, is the relative fitness and physicality of participants and should be something that is taken into account when constructing a WSE .

Chapter 8: Benefits and Outcomes

This chapter brings together the main 'Benefits and Outcomes' of the two studies. Under this domain evidence will be provided regarding some of the most meaningful and memorable elements of the WSE and thus primarily addresses the third research question, "what stays with people after experiencing a WSE?". There is one major theme, 'Competence, Confidence and Gaining Perspective', and it has a sub-theme named 'Re-experiencing Nature'.

Figure 8.1 Introductory overview of themes and sub-themes in chapter 8

This diagram shows the main theme of the chapter 'Confidence, Competence and Gaining Perspective' and its sub-theme 'Re-experiencing Nature'.



8.1 Competence, Confidence and Gaining Perspective

The transitions and negotiations participants made during the WSE around feelings of control and choices provide the most insight into the meaningful elements of the participants' experiences. The way participants dealt with the challenges and identified achievements meant that confidence could develop, which in turn empowered participants (n=6). The WSE also provided participants with experiences and skills in the outdoors, allowing them to evaluate their ability, judge their competence and to deal with challenges and previous apprehensions or doubt (n=5). The outcome of these judgements consequently impacted on their confidence, but feelings of competence and confidence arose for participants during and after the WSE and, for some, triggered action or change (n=4). Whether the feelings triggered action or change was not, however, the most meaningful feature for participants. It was the experience of these feelings that were reported to be important, not necessarily what they led to. Competence and confidence were experienced in open unknown space(s), family spaces, in natural remote places and at home with participants conveying that they make more time for things such as, being with family, being in a relationship, starting personal projects, and being with one's self.

The opportunity to 'get away' and focus on oneself was also important for participants (n=7), is illustrated by Sam:

Example 8.01:

Sam, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 S: I was just doing it for me (.) not to prove (.) anything to anybody else
 2 (.) I think it was my own doing (.) and I think that was what was good for
 3 me cos it's just when you're always doing things for other people at
 4 home and putting other people first then it was kind of (.) that, it was
 5 good for me

The WSE provided an opportunity for Sam to put herself first. This is a welcome change for Sam who has many responsibilities at home as a mother and a student. She regularly puts *other people first* (line 4). Stating it was *good for me* (lines 2-3 and 5) twice, and recalling it nine months after the WSE, implies that she found the opportunity for a personal experience and journey beneficial. The WSE as well as being challenging itself, also brought up past challenges which provided perspective. Sam reports how walking up a hill reminded her of the challenges she faced with cancer and how she overcame them, bringing her a sense of confidence and competence:

Example 8.02:

Sam, journal, study one

- 1 I did really feel like I was struggling though climbing to the top of the
 2 Cheviot Hill. I think part of this was that I wasn't focussing on reaching
 3 the top. I spent time looking back at being ill which I don't normally do
 4 but I think when I looked across and could see Seahouses and
 5 Bamburgh it brought back memories of when I was in the middle of my
 6 treatment and spent time here. I felt quite emotional when it was said
 7 compared to how ill I had been look what you have achieved. There
 8 were times on the walk especially on the climbs when I felt like it was a
 9 struggle and was slightly beginning to doubt my ability. When I had
 10 made it to the top though I did feel better

Sam felt great achievement walking up Cheviot Hill (the highest hill in the area) as it elicited a realisation about what she has had to go through to get where she is, on the hill making her way up to the top, and made her *emotional* (line 7). Being high up and the challenge of 'getting to the top' triggered lots of things for her including struggle (line 2), memories of the places and *doubt* (line 10) but making it to the top verified the strength she previously had to display during her cancer treatment. Kit also demonstrates the kind of competence and confidence participants gained from the WSE:

Example 8.03:**Kit, journal, study one**

1 When I got back I was so happy and eager to do as much as I could in a
 2 day. I've not had such a positive mentality for so long to this extreme.
 3 [...] Since the time away I've known exactly what I've wanted and
 4 needed to do with my current relationships, family and work, when
 5 before I was a little stuck. It's been absolutely amazing.

Kit reports her motivation and *positive mentality* (line 2) after the WSE. She is happy and is keen to deal with issues around *relationships, family and work* (line 4) after finding them difficult to deal with. Kit is surprised about the intensity and duration (line 1-2) of her feelings suggesting that it was perhaps an unexpected outcome to her.

Sarah illustrates the perspective on life that was gained during the WSE (n=5):

Example 8.04:**Sarah, follow-up interview, study two**

1 S: being in this massive open space and kind of all my (.) daily life
 2 agenda crap bags goes out the window and that was nice: cos I (.) I
 3 don't get much perspective in the city and I get really obsessed about (.)
 4 daily living (.) concerns and even though like we've done existential
 5 philosophy and counselling it's still hard to get hold of unless you've got
 6 like a (.) prompt. (.) I think that's what it kind of () so like: oh yeah see
 7 how you were worried about all this crap that's going on at uni and the
 8 (.) finer points of this essay well: it doesn't really matter because here
 9 are some birds (.) and isn't that the point really like (.) all this stuff is
 10 just constructs and that is real so it makes me feel better (.) so I guess
 11 that's what stuck just the feeling of being like (.) when I need peace
 12 then that's when I need to go somewhere (.) green: and open (.) yeah (.)
 13 I go in the forest when I need a hug [...] being reminded of like (.) well
 14 this is (.) it's the ultimate point of life and the ultimate point of all this
 15 crap that we do to ourselves like making ourselves do stupid degrees is
 16 it because we are supposed to enjoy it at some point (.) and we're
 17 supposed to feel happy at some point and just (.) be alive and
 18 experience being alive and so it takes like it literally takes my seeing
 19 ducklings to be like (.) oh: yeah (.) like you don't have to do anything to
 20 be happy (.) you just have to notice what's already there

The WSE provided her with a deeper insight, suggesting that the landscape and nature provides a *prompt* (line 6) to think beyond the less significant things, that she describes as *crap* (lines 2, 7 and 16). As well as acting as a prompt, nature provides her with a place to go when she needs *peace* (line 11), *a hug* (line 13), or to be *happy* (line 21) offering an escape from *constructs* (line 8). Nature is something *real* (line 8) and tangible that has meaning and purpose helping Sarah gain perspective and see *the ultimate point in life* (line 15). Knowing she has the option to go to nature to *feel better* (line 10) is meaningful to her and empowering,

providing her with a choice, control and confidence to deal with life. In her post-experience interview Sarah explains that the benefit she gained was not just about being with nature but about knowing that she can be still in nature: *I think what I'll really keep which is really lovely (.) is that that realisation that I have the potential to stand still [...] it's nice that there's an outlet that I do feel dead calm (.) really good (.) because I think it's something to try and incorporate into my life (.) that will be really healthy (.) and that's really positive [...] it's that therapeutic thing that just makes you feel better* (Sarah, post-experience interview, study two).

Alex also demonstrates the new perspective and the confidence and insights it provided:

Example 8.05:

Alex, post-experience interview, study one

1 it just really opened my mind you know (2) I can be on my own (2) can
 2 survive on my own[...]not one thought about using drugs which really
 3 really surprised me because in that situation at home you know I used
 4 to but since I've come back I haven't done anything I've been quite
 5 content being on my own at home [...]I just know that I want to reach
 6 the goals I want to reach (.) yeah (.) yeah more determined than ever
 7 [...]my confidence as well has gone up definitely erm mainly around
 8 doing things that I don't know (2) usually I like to change [...] I feel
 9 different I feel like I don't need others to help me strive for what I want
 10 usually I fix myself from other people [...] I'm aware of erm (2) what
 11 goes on around me influences me (.) you know (2.5) I was before but
 12 not to the extent that I am now (.) like the way people look at me (2) I
 13 think they can see me the way I used to be (.) and stuff like that [...] I'm
 14 more aware (.) cos I've never had that feeling before (.) never had that
 15 feeling that I'm not an addict (.) and I looked at that I thought oh my
 16 [laughter] you know (.) [laughter] why didn't I?

Like Sarah the WSE provided Alex with a realisation that she can *be*, (line 1) and *fix* herself (line 10) as well as *survive* (line 2) on her own, providing her with determination, motivation (line 6) and *confidence* (line 7) to reach her goals and do things she does not normally do. She reports control over her thoughts of wanting to use drugs and confidence to take charge of her life. These combined are very enabling for her. The way people look at Alex (line 4) makes her feel more aware about her perceptions of herself. Her experiences during the WSE helped her feel *not an addict* (line 7), which was novel to Alex. Being in a different landscape and environment around different people thus seemed to foster a positive self-image. Though she knew how other people influenced her it was the newness of this feeling that made Alex question why she has not felt it before, in other situations. This perspective she gained made her consider how much people influence the way she feels about herself and defines who she is. Alex also provides an insight into how the landscape provided an environment for profound experiences, disclosing

that although the place felt *alien* to her she felt comfortable in the place, which allowed her to feel like a different person there; *it was like I was a totally different person for those five days because everything it was totally alien to me (.) but felt comfortable with it* (follow-up interview, study one).

This kind of benefit from the WSE was however not the case for every participant (n=1). One participant did not report confidence in relation to outdoor activity like walking and camping. For Leslie the WSE made him realise that he did not like camping or off-path terrain:

Example 8.06:

Leslie, journal, study two

1 When we stopped half way, I felt that I wanted to be at home again. It
 2 was more than I was used to walking and I felt drained. When we
 3 started going over rough terrain, I hated it. I kept losing my balance,
 4 tripping and falling over. I felt out of control [...] I've been home for
 5 about a week now and I still prefer my home comforts. However, as I
 6 am really lazy, I do miss being pushed in to doing some walking.

In contrast with other participants, whose confidence in outdoor activity increased, Leslie expressed limited experience of these benefits (other than the final comment about 'being pushed' to do a little exercise) as he reflects on his experiences during the WSE in his journal. Instead, the WSE seemed to confirm that certain aspects of outdoor experiences were not to his liking. Though he found the walking a particular challenge it seemed linked to harder terrain and the lack of control that was experienced in that terrain. He values having the social support and encouragement of others to get him out walking (line 6). There does seem to be a lack of confidence though, as is captured in his post-experience interview: *I don't think I could have done it on me own but I wouldn't even try to do it on my own* (Leslie, post-experience interview, study two).

Dannie also did not find the experience as positive as others, mainly because of his back injury on the last day of walking (weekend one, study two):

Example 8.07:

Dannie, post-experience interview, study two

1 I did have a- like a constant reminder with the the injury (.) kind of
 2 soury a bit (.) I was kind of like (.) erm went from thinking ah there's
 3 really nice I met some nice people (.) erm (.) did something at the
 4 weekend that I wouldn't have been doing normally [...] then I just
 5 started going into more like (.) I knew I shouldn't have gone [laughs]
 6 something was going to go wrong [...] I think just getting to know
 7 anybody is is er (2) is a bit of a privilege

His injury created a negativity and pessimism around the WSE and thus he remembered the experience less fondly than others. He found the group aspect enjoyable and beneficial but he also mentions in his follow-up interview his concerns about going walking on his own: *I could have just died in the middle of there in the middle of nowhere (.) it would have been a massive deal because (.) I wouldn't have been able to g-(.) I would have had to eventually get up and (.) sort of try getting somewhere more civilised* (Dannie, follow-up interview, study two). This concern about his vulnerability in a remote place is strong, but leads him to the realisation of the importance of being in a group whilst walking, despite having a good amount of previous experience walking in groups: *I'm glad that I was in a group I think it's it's: definitely an important thing if you're going to do stuff like that* (Dannie, follow-up interview, study two).

8.1.1 Re-experiencing Nature

Competence and confidence is also reflected in participants' desires and abilities to re-access nature and qualities of the WSE (e.g. walking and being with nature) (n=7). Some participants' attempts to re-access their experiences were successful (n=4) and some were met by different challenges (n=3). Time and money, for example, were common barriers that participants experienced whilst making their attempts (n=5). Participants also re-accessed their experiences in different ways. For example, one participant sought out remote landscapes, such as the Cairngorms and Skye, whilst others walked in green spaces where they lived, noticing nature in the city (n=3). Similar feelings to those experienced during the WSE, such as gaining perspective and a sense of revival, were accessed during these times of re-experiencing (n=5).

Joe describes aspects of the confidence gained by participants and the desires felt by them to go and re-experience nature and elements of the WSE. He also notes additional qualities of the experience that he would want to have:

Example 8.08:

Joe, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 J: I feel more confident about going outdoors and it certainly planted a
- 2 seed in my mind to kinda re-engage with the experience with being
- 3 outdoors (.) so it's increased my kinda confidence of being able to be
- 4 outdoors and and for a period of time and what I would need and how
- 5 would need to do it you know from a practicality point of view (.) erm
- 6 (3) erm and it seems more significant for me to (.) be outdoors
- 7 somehow (.) that it's is something I would like to do more now now that
- 8 I've had that experience (.) erm because it feels (.) it feels beneficial
- 9 somehow [...] if I camp over like say at (?) for surfing then it's not the
- 10 same experience at all so (.) so there's something about the length of

11 time (.) and obviously location you know being away that seems to be
 12 best (.) if I was think about doing it again I would be thinking right I
 13 want to go somewhere I can walk and be slightly off the beaten track eh
 14 (.) I wouldn't particularly do the twenty four hour period again (.) in fact
 15 I would probably much prefer to be with someone and share the whole
 16 experience with someone yeah

Joe clearly explains how his experiences on the WSE motivated him to re-experience aspects of it. He says that this experience is different from his *surfing* (line 9) experiences due the length of time he spends doing it (lines 10-11). An experience that is longer in duration is more beneficial. This contingency of time is one among two others he describes. Location is also important, stipulating that it should be somewhere he can walk and go *slightly off the beaten track* (line 13), and sharing the experience with someone is also desirable (lines 15-16). He is also quite particular about the location, indicated by his use of 'slightly' when describing the location, suggesting that the remoteness he desires is a consideration and perhaps he does not want to be too remote. Company and not being too far away thus seems important elements to him re-accessing the experience, aligning well with the WSE design.

Another participant speculated about being further away in his desires of re-experiencing elements of the WSE:

Example 8.09:

Dannie, follow-up interview, study two

1 E: you have just spoken about wanting to go to an island (.) did you
 2 have it before you went on the trip?
 3 D: it's really watching it- you know that castaway (.) erm the film with
 4 Tom Hanks erm
 5 E: Castaway yeah
 6 D: yeah: and watching that and thinking yeah: in a way that sort- it it
 7 seems (.) it shows all the you know like the bad things that can happen
 8 to you and that (.) er (.) it seems like a nice experience in a way (.) as
 9 well (.) to me and it might seem a bit strange but I'm going to explain
 10 the reasons why erm (.) so yeah but just every experience that I've had
 11 going away from er the main hustle and bustle of the cities and that (.)
 12 has been nice (.) it's been nice coming back but (.) you know if you had
 13 a million I would go

Dannie explains his teenage desires of wanting to be on an island. He uses a film to engage me in his idea (line 3) and goes onto explain in detail the elements that kind of seclusion has and how it appeals to him. Essentially going to an island is about getting away, away from the business of the everyday. It is clear that by going away to an island Dannie wants to get a more 'extreme' version of feelings and experiences that he accessed during the WSE, appreciation being the most important to him; any

awareness of *bad things* (line 7) that could happen are overridden by gaining a sense of perspective and escape.

Other participants elaborate on challenges that faced (n=3) them whilst trying to re-access similar qualities to the WSE and explain how, despite initial enthusiasm, it was difficult:

Example 8.10:

Sam, post-experience interview, study one

- 1 S: ah mean I really really am glad that I did it and I really did enjoy the experience
- 2 I mean it does seem like it's sort of been put back now because so much has
- 3 happened since I've come back (.) and you get into everything don't you but I
- 4 know that once I look back at the photos that it would be great to meet up again
- 5 and reflect I really did I really did enjoy it yeah but I did bring a couple of books
- 6 back that I got from Mounthooly when we arrived back (.) and they were just
- 7 some on specific walks (.) so I've asked my friends [giggle] saying I might just try
- 8 and do a weekend and just go (.) I would love to yeah do some walking

Shortly after the WSE (about 3-4 weeks) Sam clearly expresses her enthusiasm and motivation to go back and walk in the WSE location (line 5), collecting books (line 6) from the place and asking friends to join her one weekend sometime (lines 8- 9) but having time is an issue (lines 3-4). Nine months later, Sam describes the challenges of achieving even a weekend away and the disappointment felt:

Example 8.11:

Sam, follow-up interview, study one

- 1 E: what has it been like to talk about these things today?
- 2 S: erm (2) yeah it's kind of been fine I suppose it just it does sort of (.) bring back
- 3 memories that (.) it is kind of good but then it makes me think that I've not really
- 4 done anything like that since and I suppose it's quite sad really and I think I
- 5 probably have liked to and probably liked to kept up the walking (.) which I
- 6 haven't done

Talking about her experiences during the WSE in her follow-up interview was fine (line 3) but brought with it memories of how good the experience was and sadness at the realisation that she has not managed to re-access those benefits since.

Some participants also found it hard to re-access the experience due to being self-conscious and lacking in confidence (n=2):

Example 8.12

Sarah, post-experience interview, study two

- 1 E: you were saying that: you: were: were thinking about rambling and that
- 2 you're a bit apprehensive about it (.) could you explain more?
- 3 S: OH YEAH (.) yeah cos I was worried about erm like just (.) in drawing
- 4 something like skill level and stuff and (.) I don't like holding people back or
- 5 whatever and also it is a bit scary to (.) join something like that on your own (.)

6 it's usually the only way I do do stuff but (.) erm (.) yeah I'm definitely still
 7 thinking that that like that'll be a nice thing to do (.) it's just getting the time
 8 isn't it out of you cos it's a few- if you allowed it then then all the crappy
 9 everyday stuff can take over your life

One way Sarah thought of re-accessing the experiences was to join a rambling club. Sarah had previously mentioned this to me during our walk. Although Sarah was motivated to join a rambling club because it would encourage her to get out more (line 6), she is nevertheless apprehensive to do so. This is because of a lack of time (line 8), confidence around her ability, and about joining something on her own (line 6). Again, concerns about not wanting to hold people back re-emerge and impacts on her sense of competence and confidence. Sarah, however, finds a different way to re-access the feelings she had during the WSE: if I'm really upset on the way home I'll go and sit by the river (.) and then I'm not upset any more [...] it literally takes my seeing ducklings to be like (.) oh: yeah (.) like you don't have to do anything to be happy (.) you just have to notice what's already there (Sarah, follow-up interview, study two). Simply noticing nature was enough to make her feel better suggesting that enjoying place is not just about where one is, but about what one sees, what one notices and what meaning one makes from that experience. Noticing nature thus seems an important element that stayed with participants from the WSE and one that participants wanted to re-experience.

Alex also captures the challenge of re-experiencing the freedom she felt and creating the kind of environment to do so in her home but also managed to re-experience elements of the WSE in other ways:

Example 8.13:

Alex, journal, study two

1 I've been trying to capture the feeling I get when out in the 'wild place',
 2 I've tried laying on the couch, with my windows open, in silence I've
 3 tried having a relaxing bath. But nothing is the same, nothing gives me
 4 that same feeling of freedom – which I believe comes from within, but
 5 out in the wild place I feel truly free

Example 8.14:

Alex, follow-up interview, study two

1 A: we went up Scafell Pike erm and camped (.) yeah for two nights just
 2 on a field with no one [...] so yeah that was the first time and the
 3 second one we've just been up to Scotland (.) erm we camped at
 4 Delaware forest and then at Ben Nevis and then went up to isle of Skye
 5 camped there for a night

Despite efforts to re-access this feeling by trying to reconstruct aspects of the WSE, like lying down, having air and breeze coming through, and silence (line 2, example 8.13), Alex is unable to reconstruct the conditions that she considers helped make her feel freedom. By doing so Alex also provides an insight into the aspects of the WSE that seemed to be beneficial to her. Regardless of these challenges of re-experiencing aspects of the WSE at home she does manage to go to the Lake District and to Scotland to camp and walk without a guide, suggesting she felt the confidence and skills to do so.

8.2 Evaluative conclusion

A sense of confidence, competence and gaining perspective appears to be a central outcome and benefit of the WSE. Each aspect co-existed and contributed to each other's existence. The WSE provided participants with the resources and motivation to re-experience aspects of the WSE, which although were met by challenges (e.g. time and confidence), led to new awareness and some success. There is also a sense that the WSE was, overall, a more meaningful experience for the women than the men. This may be because women are typically more reflective than men. However, it may have been due to the two males in study two, to whom I refer, having experienced particularly uncomfortable physical problems (e.g. back pain and imbalance) during the WSE rather than anything related to gender differences. Additionally, re-accessing the experience seems to be achievable in a literal/direct sense (e.g. doing the same activities like camping and walking) and in an indirect way of being near nature (e.g. sitting by a river in a city) suggesting that there is transferability and some longevity in what was gained during the WSE. The motivations to want to re-access the experience were related to health benefits (e.g. exercise, relaxation and tranquillity) and also to a sense of belongingness.

Chapter 9: Discussion

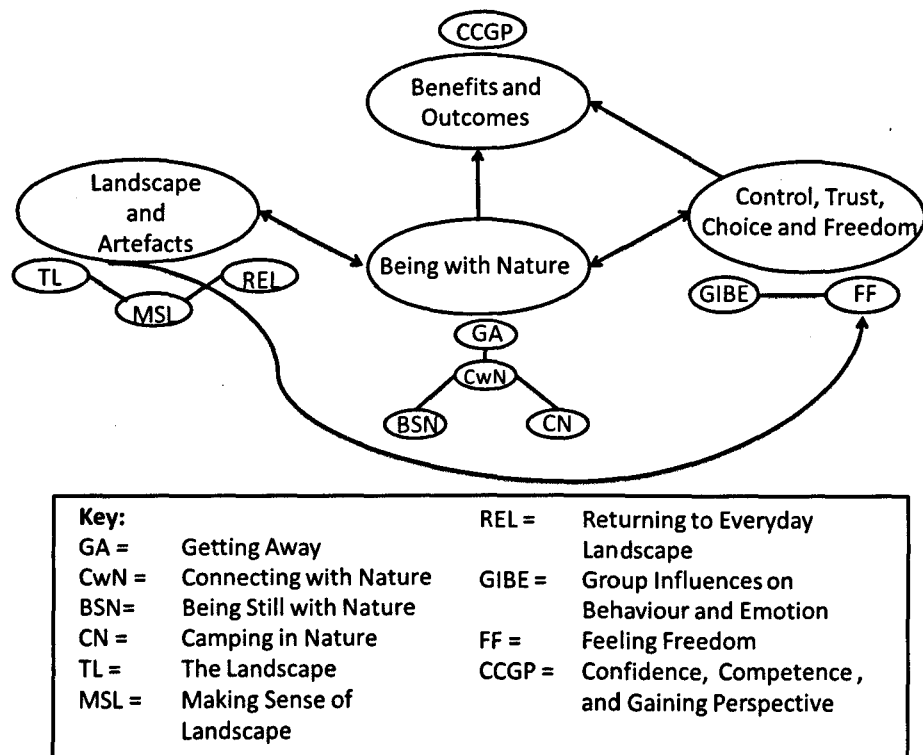
Presented in the findings chapters were major themes and sub-themes of four domains: 'Being with Nature', 'Landscape and Artefacts', 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom', and 'Benefits and Outcomes'. These and further analysis helped understand the following three research questions:

1. What is the nature of people's experiences during a WSE?
2. What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?
3. What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?

Figure 9.1 provides a diagrammatic overview of the domains and major themes, and illustrates the interrelationship between them. Unidirectional relationships are represented by a line with one arrow and a bi-directional relationship has a line with two arrows at each end. 'Being with Nature' is a core domain that co-occurs with the three other domains. There is a bi-directional relationship between 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom' and 'Being with Nature', and 'Landscape and Artefacts' and 'Being with Nature' as each link with and influence each other. There is no direct link or influence between 'Landscape and Artefacts' and 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom'. There is, however, a partial and unidirectional relationship between them: 'Landscape and Artefacts' influences the major theme 'Feeling Freedom' (FF). The relationship is partial because 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom' reflects complex interactions between the individual and the group, including the landscape. 'Being with Nature' and 'Control, Choice and Freedom' influence 'Benefits and Outcomes' and thus is a unidirectional relationship. In contrast to the other domains 'Landscape and Artefacts' is a more solitary domain, influencing other domains the least: no relationship exists between landscape and 'Group Influences of Behaviour and Emotions' (GIBE) and thus there is no complete and direct relationship between 'Landscape and Artefacts' and 'Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom'. This is perhaps due to 'Landscape and Artefacts' being more specific in scope, but it contributes highly to understanding human-environment interaction and meaning-making.

Figure 9.1 Diagrammatic overview of the findings

This diagram shows the three domains from chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 and their major themes and sub-themes. .



To understand how particular themes and sub-themes helped answer the research questions a table is provided that outlines this information (table 9.1). Specific themes and sub-themes of each domain are mapped according to their contribution to answering the research questions. Each domain and their contributory themes are shown separately so as to simplify the table and to be able to identify the themes quickly and efficiently. By mapping it like this the domain that contributed the most is more clearly identifiable. If a major theme or sub-theme is not mentioned then it did not directly help answer the research questions but instead may have done so indirectly. The reason for including this information is to further demonstrate the relevance and trustworthiness of the analysis and findings.

Table 9.1 Themes and sub-themes that contributed to answering the research questions

This table shows which themes and sub-themes from the findings contributed to answering the research questions. The themes and sub-themes are placed beneath their domain to facilitate clarity and efficient identification of the themes and sub-themes. Sub-themes are indented and when no sub-themes are mentioned below a major theme it illustrates that all of the sub-themes of that major theme correspond to that research question.

What is the nature of peoples' experience during a WSE?			
Being with Nature	Landscape and Artefacts	Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom	Benefits and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Still in Nature • Connecting with Nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Entering the landscape • Noticing Nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Returning to Everyday Landscape • Making Sense of the Landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling Freedom • Group Influencing Behaviour and Emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, Confidence and Gaining Perspective*
What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?			
Being with Nature	Landscape and Artefacts	Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom	Benefits and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with Nature • Being Still in Nature • Noticing Nature and Surroundings • Camping in Nature 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Sense of the Landscape • The Landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling Freedom • Group Influencing Behaviour and Emotion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, Confidence and Gaining Perspective
What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?			
Being with Nature	Landscape and Artefacts	Control, Trust, Choice and Freedom	Benefits and outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting with Nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Noticing Nature ○ Belongingness • Being Still in Nature <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Being with Water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making Sense of the Landscape <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Human Presence and Impact • Returning to Everyday Landscape 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feeling Freedom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competence, Confidence and Gaining Perspective

* excluding its sub-theme 'Re-experiencing Nature'.

Overall, this chapter brings together the findings, analysis and literature, to answer the research questions, showing their interconnectedness and overlaps. A critical iteration of the findings, followed by a detailed comparison between the findings and the literature, and a discussion of future research and implications is presented.

9.1 A critical iteration of the findings

The findings of this thesis provide a rich insight into peoples' experiences, meaning-making and human-environment/landscape interaction. Analysis shows that participant's experience of the WSE was transitional and that transitional experiences arise from fluctuating aspects of experience (disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating) in/with/from/to certain conditions (landscape/nature, group and everyday) and that these result in the creation and development of various dimensions of experience (physical, psychological, emotional, relational, behavioural and perceptual). These dimensions will be explained further in section 9.2.1 whilst answering research question one. Essentially, transitional experiences capture people's experiences, occurring before, during and after the WSE (see figure 9.2).

Figure 9.2 An illustrative interpretation of the main findings

This diagram shows the findings of the thesis overall, presenting transitional experiences as a central part of a participant's experience during a WSE. Transitional experiences have three element transitions, conditions and transition dimensions. The line between transitions and conditions represents an interaction and the arrows represent a unidirectional relationship (i.e. one aspect led to another aspect). Different mediating aspects influenced the interaction between transitions and conditions. Transitional experiences created various challenges and accomplishments for participants and how participants dealt with and perceived these may have ultimately led to the benefits they gained during and after the WSE.

Experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction

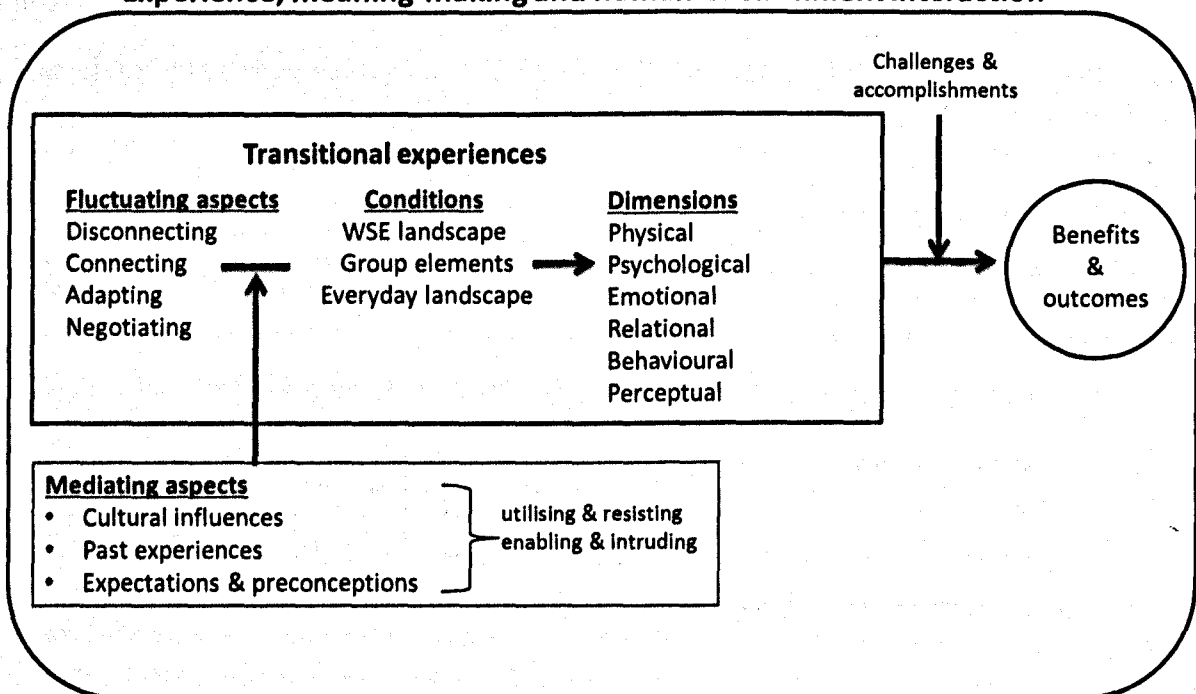


Figure 9.2 shows the elements of transitional experiences, the relationship between them and how they interact and influence each other, providing an illustrative explanation of the main findings of the analysis. Although the diagram shows a unidirectional relationship between fluctuating aspects and dimensions they are interdependent with one rarely, if at all, being experienced or happening on its own. The initiation and culmination of them is also blurred and fluxing, they are not linear in kind but rather iterative and ambivalent: fluctuating aspects and dimensions exist, co-occur and co-influence. The elements of the diagram and these particular aspects of the findings will be more fully explained in section 9.2, whilst answering the research questions.

The conditions are interpersonal (dealing with people, e.g. the group), and environmental (landscape/nature and everyday). Environmental conditions include aspects such as the terrain and artefacts (physical, symbolic and societal) and these influence, prompt and interact with transitions. They are contexts within which fluctuating aspects and dimensions arise and are experienced. This transitional experience, or process, also creates a sense of liminality which may also be contributing to people's overall experience and transitional experiences.

Interceding this process are three mediating aspects: cultural influences, past experiences, and expectations and preconceptions that participants used to make sense of their experience. Mediating aspects were found to influence the ebb and flow of transitional experiences, creating different challenges and accomplishments for participants. How participants perceived (e.g. more positively or more negatively) and dealt with them (e.g. overcoming or seeking challenges and acknowledging and remembering/internalising accomplishments) contributed to benefits participants' gained during and after the WSE (confidence, competence and gaining perspective), and to their experience and meaning-making more generally.

Cultural influences refer to cultural ideas, ideals and norms and relate to artefacts, group norms and social rules. Past experiences are aspects when participants drew upon previous encounters with similar contexts. Expectations and preconceptions are those ideas that participants had created before the WSE. Participants utilised and resisted these three aspects and they were an enabling as well as intruding part of their experiences. Expectations and preconceptions were also influenced by the WSE itself with many participants showing particular expectations associated with 'wilderness', a term used in study one. WSE structure was thus also a mediating aspect as it contained and guided activity and created

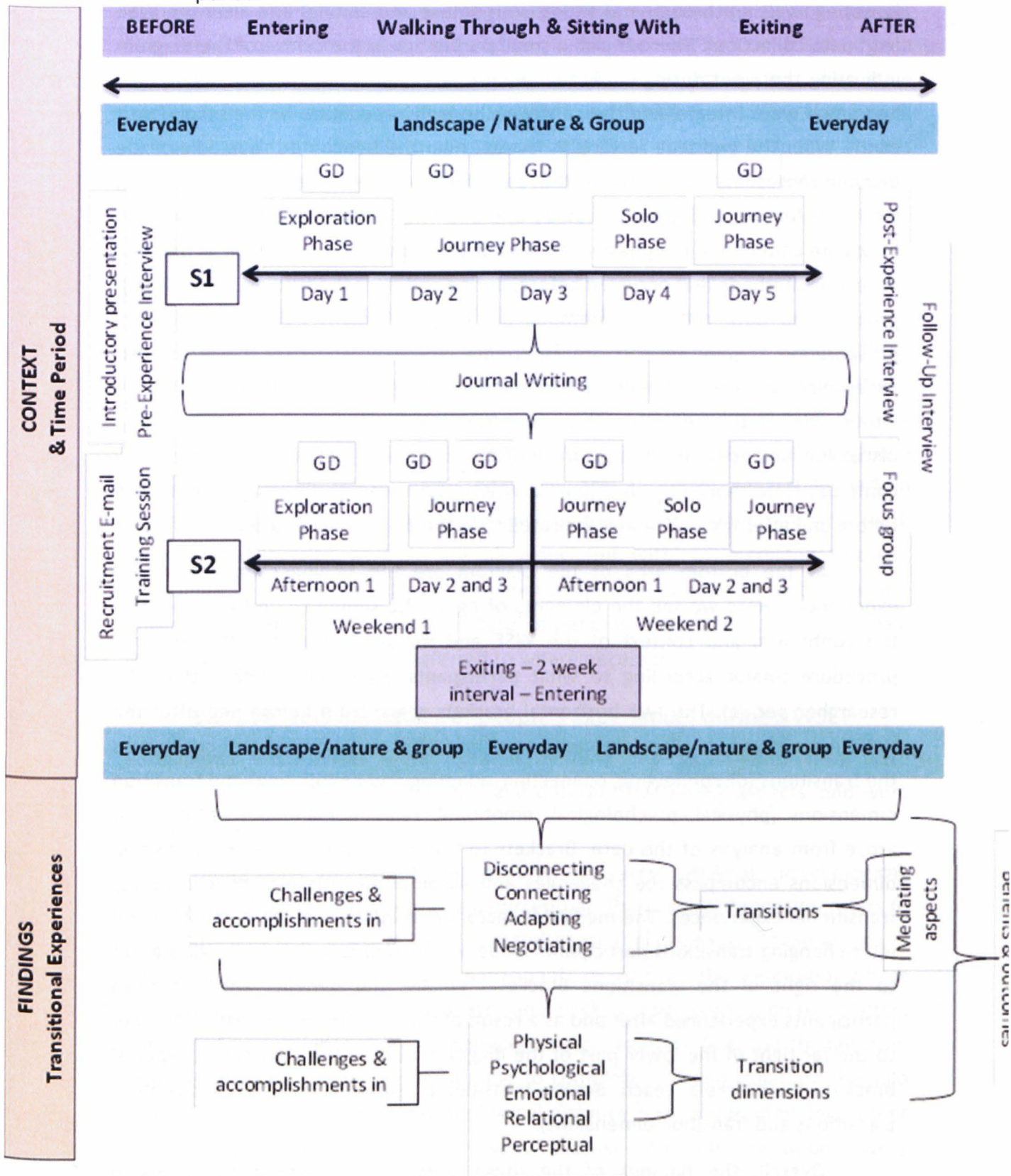
different contexts, situations and spaces (e.g. group and solo) as well as power relationships (e.g. being led and following) due to the phases, leadership and data collection methods. Because of this complexity, and the many ways that the WSE and research contexts could have influenced experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction, a diagram is provided that illustrates the WSE and research context alongside the transitional experience process (figure 9.3).

Overall, transitional experiences capture some of the shifting and developing features of people's experiences and meaning-making in a WSE context. Transitional experiences during the WSE were nuanced and some were in constant states of flux (such as mood and emotional aspects of experience as well as meaning and purpose), making them hard to capture. It is because of these nuances, ambivalences, fluctuations and fluidity that no attempt is made in this thesis to pin down or draw boundaries around any of these transitions (i.e. no attempt is made to determine or show their imitation and culmination) and rather continua are used in the diagram to convey them (figure 9.3). These continua present the occurrence and shifts of categories and features and illustrates well participants' different and changing experiences before, during and after the WSE. The way data were collected (more open-ended than directive) means that placing these transitional experiences within boundaries is not possible nor is it appropriate or accurate to do so. Instead the diagram demonstrates the prominent stages, phases, and social shifts and how they relate to each other.

Transitional experiences are tracked alongside and considered in relation to the WSE phases and research context (e.g. data collection methods before during and after the WSE and pre-WSE training and recruitment). At times, all of these were happening simultaneously, and it cannot be ascertained if any of them were ever experienced independently and thus they should be considered as interdependent dimensions. The structure of study one and two were different as were some of their features but they are considered together in the diagram so that comparisons can be clearly made.

Figure 9.3 Transitional experiences and the WSE and research context.

This diagram describes the transitional aspects of experience in relation to the WSE and research context, illustrating influential factors across a time period.



At the top of the diagram is the context and time period of the two studies. The purple rectangle at the head of the diagram indicates anything that happens before the WSE (e.g. recruitment, training and data collection), during the WSE (entering, walking through and sitting with nature and exiting) and after the WSE (e.g. data collection). There is also a small purple box in the centre of the diagram indicating the point during study two where participants left the WSE landscape, had a two week interval and then entered the landscape again for the second part of the WSE. The two blue rectangles located near the head and the middle of the diagram represents the conditions that participants moved in and out of (everyday, landscape/nature and group) in study one and two. In between these two blue boxes are continua of the phases and days of study one and two as well as the data collection methods that occurred before, during and after the studies. The research process and data collection methods before (recruitment e-mail, introductory presentation, training session, pre-experience interview) and after the WSE (post-experience interview, focus group and follow-up interview) are written vertically on either side of the continua. Data collection methods during the WSE (group discussion and journal writing) are written above and between the two study continua. Note, however, that journal writing for some participants commenced before and after the WSE and is indicated so in the diagram by brackets.

At the bottom area of the diagram are the findings and transitional experiences. Here we see the elements of figure 9.2 simplified and translated to the continuum and context of the WSE and major elements of the research procedure (major according to what participants experienced rather than the researcher *per se*). The two horizontal brackets reach from before and after the WSE (e.g. entering, walking through and sitting with, and existing) and encompass the transitions (disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating) and transition dimensions (physical, psychological, emotional, relational and perceptual) that arose from analysis of the data. Brackets to the left of transitions and transition dimensions encompass the challenges and accomplishments experienced during transitional experiences. The mediating factors that influenced the fluctuating and inter-changing transitions participants made are encompassed in the small bracket to the right of the transitions bracket. Finally, the benefits and outcomes participants experienced after and as a result of the WSE are set in a larger bracket to the far right of the lower part of the diagram, next to the 'mediating aspects' bracket. Its brackets reach across transitional experiences (e.g. across both transitions and transition dimensions).

Overall, the findings of the thesis answer help answer the research questions. The process of transitional experiences essentially explains and relates

to each research question. It does, however, particularly capture the first and broadest research question “what is the nature of peoples’ experiences during a WSE?” but also corresponds to the second research questions about human-environment interaction and meaning-making. This and how the findings answer the research questions is discussed and clarified in the next section, followed by a discussion of the WSE structure and comparison of studies one and two, alternative approaches, implications and future research and finally, concluding comments. Literature will be referred to throughout this final chapter, including studies referred to in table 4.1 that provided the theoretical framework of the WSE, as well as figure 9.2 and 9.3

9.2 Answering the Research Questions

In this section, the findings and the literature are used to address the three research questions of the thesis: 1) “what is the nature of peoples experiences”, 2) “what aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?” and 3) “what stays with people after experiencing a WSE?”. For clarity, the research questions are answered separately and in numerical order. The research questions (particularly question one and two), interlink and overlap as they are all associated with, or mediated through, experiences: That is aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making contributes to the overall ‘nature’ of peoples’ experiences. To help explain the answers, figure 9.2 will be referred to where necessary.

9.2.1 What is the nature of people’s experiences during a WSE?

Participants’ experiences were dynamic, shifting and ambivalent. They were transitional, had different dimensions and different fluctuating aspects, and were thus often liminal in kind.

Dimensions of transitional experiences were physical, psychological, emotional, relational, behavioural and perceptual. The physical dimension refers to bodily changes (e.g. physical excursion and sensual awareness). These are most notable during the WSE phases as participants move from the exploration phase and journey phase to the solo phase, and back to the journey phase, shifting gradually from easier to more challenging physical exertion (e.g. the change from exploration phase to journey phase) and to complete rest and isolation (the solo phase). It also refers to changes in physical distance from group members, other people and places (typically everyday places). Physical transitions were demonstrated by participant comments about feeling exhausted or relaxed and about finding certain aspects more challenging than others.

The emotional transitions were changes in participants' mood (e.g. enjoyment and disappointment) and feelings (e.g. feelings of freedom, security and familiarity, confidence and competence). Psychological transitions relates to changes in what and how participants were thinking (e.g. thinking of responsibilities, home, the past or thinking in the present). Relational transitions were the ways in which participants responded to and managed being part of a group and being alone, whereas behavioural transitions refer to shifts in behaviour such as exerting, giving up and giving away control and wanting and relinquishing routines. Lastly, perceptual transitions were changes in judgements, the way participants shifted in how they perceived themselves and the way they perceived the landscape (e.g. safe, scary, a wilderness etc.).

Nanschild (1997) also found that changes in physical, emotional and relational aspects were mentioned as beneficial qualities of participant (all women) experiences. This research did not comment on psychological, behavioural or perceptual aspects as part of experience, however. Perhaps this is because they were not regarded by participants as beneficial. Though the current research does not argue that these aspects were beneficial to participants, they were found to be part of a central process – transitional experiences – that did play a part in the benefits that participants gained from/after the WSE.

Fluctuating aspects were experiences of disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating. Disconnecting and connecting experiences most prominently occurred between the everyday landscape and the WSE landscape/nature, particularly whilst entering and exiting the WSE landscape. These aspects mostly took place between landscape conditions rather than group conditions. However, participants did fluctuate between connecting and disconnecting from the group during, for example, the journey phase and solo phase, which also involved adapting and negotiating aspects of group dynamics and of being by oneself. Studies have found that people go through a process of connecting with nature (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993). For example, a group of women during a structured outdoor trip (Hinds, 2011) and solo backpackers (Coble *et al.*, 2003) were found to connect to nature and the environment. Williams *et al.* (1992) also showed that people connected to wilderness or wilderness-like places, finding people created unique meanings attached wilderness. This concerned long-term wilderness recreation participants, however, which is not representative of the sample in the present research. To my knowledge, there is no research to-date that has highlighted or found the various fluctuating aspects illustrated in the current research, and therefore seems to address a gap in the literature.

The nature of participants' experiences was also challenging. Disconnecting from everyday life and connecting and adapting to nature and aspects of the WSE structure was difficult for some participants with mediating aspects, such as cultural influences, contributing to that challenge. Adapting and negotiating aspects of the group elements of the WSE were also found to be challenging for some. Challenging experiences were also associated with the physical and psychological demands of the WSE landscape and journey route. Going over rough terrain and up steep hills was reported as difficult, but most participants enjoyed this challenge, gaining a sense of achievement. A few participants found parts of the journey unpleasant and was related to a diminished sense of control and to the unexpected nature of the challenge. The solo phase was also psychologically demanding, involving negotiations with fear and apprehension. Fear was often related to getting hurt by another individual (implied by talk around 'axe men' or murderers) or from wild animals (e.g. a fox), and was particularly experienced at night time. Psychological strategies seemed to be employed by participants to combat these fears as they reported their fears dissipating as time went on, which was also shown by Coble *et al.*, (2003).

Although studies have reported people's experiences of challenge during wilderness experiences and structured outdoor and therapy programmes, they have been mainly concerned with challenges associated with group and physical elements. Sklar's (2005) study, investigating a therapeutic wilderness challenge intervention, also identified challenge as an important aspect of 'youth at risk' experiences. In accordance with the current findings, active physical and psychological experiences were characteristic of challenge. However, challenge was not related to Sklar's (2005) findings of personal growth, social growth and social experiences. Indeed, social challenges of the WSE were viewed as negatively affecting participant's experience. Patterson *et al.* (1998) found that challenge was one of the most meaningful aspects of wilderness visitor experiences, but that unexpected challenge was generally judged negatively. This supports current findings and, although tentative since only two participants had negative associations with unexpected challenge, it implies that this aspect of experience should be considered in the design and running of a structured outdoor and therapy programmes. The role of challenge is unclear, however, and should be explored further.

Participants' experiences of being part of a group were interesting and unexpected. Group elements of the WSE were both resisted and enjoyed by participants, with half tending to resist rather than enjoy. A distinct difference between the two is not evident however, as experiences of being with others were

often ambivalent and changeable; participants fluctuated in their feelings and opinions about group membership, reporting both seeking and relinquishing the group. Generally, participants enjoyed meeting new people, listening to each other and sharing their experiences, and two participants found the group providing a more supportive role when injured or physically and psychologically struggling. Yet these were not reported as being particularly beneficial to their overall experience, and feelings that being part of a group was a distracting or intruding aspect of their experience were particularly prominent and re-occurring.

Empirical evidence concerning group components are mixed, with studies on outdoor therapy programmes showing that group elements are an important aspect of experiences for adolescents (Autry, 2001) and adults (Revell *et al.*, 2013; Sklar, 2005). Some studies exploring wilderness experiences have found that being part of a group is beneficial (Hinds, 2011), whilst others have not (Heintzman, 2006). Same-gender groups were also found to be empowering, beneficial and to enhance wilderness experiences (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2008; Nanschild, 1997). These studies highlight that benefits were related to group trust, emotional safety, and sharing common life changes (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999), as well as feeling less pressure to take on gender roles (Heintzman, 2008) and group bonding (Heintzman, 2008; Hinds, 2010). Relationships with others, rather than just being in a group, thus seem important (see also Revell *et al.*, 2013). Revell *et al.* conducted an international online survey to collect participant perspectives of helpful aspects of outdoor therapy experiences. In this context, relationships with group members were found to be the most important contributing aspect of experience. Perhaps the participants in the current research, for whom the group element was not beneficial, did not manage to form relationships with other group members fully enough (or at all). The ambivalence and changeable nature of how the group element was perceived and experienced, and the adapting and negotiation of this element shown in this research, indeed might suggest that forming relationships with group members was difficult. This difficulty may have required a lot of effort and distracted from connecting to and focusing on nature and self, which possibly could be why the group element was undesirable. The literature, however, places considerable emphasis on group elements, suggesting that they are important and positive elements to negotiate as part of a structured outdoor experience. Evident here though, is that these elements can also be a negative aspect to adapt to and negotiate.

Participants also reported expectations (expecting that group dynamics were going to be something to negotiate) and apprehensions about group dynamics (hoping that everyone got along and dreading it if they did not, before

the WSE, as well as experiences of tensions within the group during the WSE). Though studies on structured experiences have found people had expectations of others concerning personality and group dynamics (Arnould & Price, 1993) and clients having apprehensions and anxiety about group dynamics on therapy programmes (Kyriakopoulos, 2010), these are few and far between. Notably, these studies did not find that these aspects negatively impacted on their experience. The group feature of structured outdoor and therapy programmes would benefit from further and more specific investigation.

Control, trust and choice were other important aspects of participants' experiences. Participants' reported adapting to diminished control, which was associated with being led and part of particular structure (e.g. group, walking and solo elements), and negotiating with changing feelings of trust and choice. As previously highlighted, studies have found group trust to be particularly important, but this was not found in the current research. This is perhaps because of the indecisiveness of participants, their dissonance about wanting to be part of a group and doing the WSE for themselves. Research on outdoor therapy have also found group trust to be significant and trust and alliances between the participant and leader, staff member and therapist, to be central to benefits gained from outdoor interactions (Autry, 2001; Kyriakopoulos, 2010, 2011; Sklar, 2005). Participants had to have trust in me, some more than others (e.g. participants who struggled more physically or psychologically). Overall, the participants reported they trusted me and did not mind putting their trust in me, but descriptions about shifts in and out of control, rebelling and exerting control, suggest that there were (at times) tensions associated with my leadership or the WSE structure, or both.

Certain reports also implied that choice was important in that lack of choice was frustrating (e.g. everyone having to be ready in the morning by the same time and having to have a similar routine of sleeping to others) contrasted with feelings of freedom and relaxation when participants went off on a small walk on their own, or during the solo phase where they could sleep whenever and for however long they wanted. The solo phase did put constraints on experience though, in that it required participants to stay within a 30 metre distance from their tent (for safety reasons). While some participants reported on this constraint during the solo, it was not said to have had a negative impact on their experience. Not having this restriction could have enhanced the experience however, but this may compromise safety. It would be useful to explore this feature of the WSE and participants' experiences of it more specifically, as freedom of choice, autonomy and personal control have been found to enhance and promote restorative experiences (Coble *et al.*, 2003). Although attempts at encouraging personal control and autonomy were

made through the simplicity of WSE design (e.g. by not planning too many activities) and the laissez-faire nature of the leadership style (e.g. by encouraging people to go at their own pace, leading from behind and showing route progression on the map) perhaps more could have been put in place to promote these aspects, including trust, by forming a more in-depth working agreement between participants and leader.

In contrast to these more challenging aspects, the WSE was relaxing and restoring for some participants, particularly during periods of time in conditions where they felt they were connecting, and could connect, with nature more intimately (e.g. the solo). Feelings and perceptions of escaping life and responsibilities contributed to these more restorative aspects of experience and to feelings of freedom. Feeling freedom was a particularly prominent and memorable feature of experience and one that was strongly associated with the landscape/nature. Nature and landscape were aesthetically pleasing and participants experienced heightened awareness, noticing nature in much more detail than they would in their everyday landscape. These more restorative and focused features of experiences, as well as centring of attention, have been noted by several studies (e.g. Arnould & Price, 1993; Coble *et al.*, 2003) and are found to mainly arise in conditions of solitude and simplicity (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Hinds, 2011). These latter two studies have also found that a combination of having positive relationships with others and complete immersion in the landscape contributed to the benefits of experience, but they strongly argue that solitude is a crucial element, which is reflected in the current research.

The aspects of experience highlighted in the current research could also be linked to features of 'peak experience' (e.g. Herbert, 1996). For example, using an open-ended questionnaire survey, McDonald *et al.*, (2009) found that distinctive elements of wilderness settings (escape, aesthetic quality, connection to nature, restoring experiences and heightened awareness) were all considered aspects of experience by wilderness visitors. Support is also given to Kaplan and Kaplan's (1989) theory of attention restoration, finding that being away (getting away) was beneficial, with people's motivation being driven by escape from overly demanding aspects of everyday life. Kaplan and Kaplan's ideas of 'fascination' were also demonstrated by the way participants noticed nature and by the times where they managed to experience being in the present (e.g. focused attention). Experiences of being 'in the here and now' and feeling freedom, for every participant, brought a sense of overall happiness, which Hartig, *et al.*, (1997) has also highlighted.

Similar findings to Hennigan's (2010) study are also shown here. Hennigan explored therapeutic potential of experiences in nature more generally and among

women. Like that study, participant's experiences seem to benefit from time away from cultural contexts and part of that benefit is that this distance increases embodied experiences, such as feelings of physical strength and sense of smell and touch. Sensual experiences were most noted in the transition from nature to everyday life, where some participants reported that everyday smells in a town centre were stronger, including their own odour (being smelly), and showed a connection to nature. In a way, as Hennigan (2010) suggests, this connection to nature supported a positive body image. One participant reported, for example, after not showering during the WSE, being smelly around others in a train station did not matter as much as it would normally and instead other people were considered smelly. Two participants also described their experiences of relinquishing their social 'mask' and could just *be*. There seems, therefore, to be a beneficial quality derived from people's relationship with cultural influences during human-environment interactions, in that recognising them and relinquishing them can lead to positive experiences that can arise during and after the WSE.

Another aspect of experience that was particularly surprising and unexpected, was the protective behaviour participants demonstrated in relation to the experience in general and their individual and group experience. Participants both guarded their own intrapersonal journey (reflection and focus on self), their interpersonal journey (being part of a group) and 'unique' journey (e.g. created by being part of a novel and new kind of experience that they were the first to access). This aspect of experiences of structured outdoor experiences, to my knowledge, has not been noted in previous research: Though Arnould and Price (1993) showed that people have protected expectations in order to avoid disappointment, there is little evidence elsewhere of the protective behaviour demonstrated in the current research.

Experiences were also reflective, which is a feature that has also been noted by others (Coble, *et al.*, 2003; Brookes *et al.*, 2006; Hinds, 2011) and in the current research was an aspect that led participants to gain perspective on and an appreciation for life. This will be more fully discussed whilst answering research question three in section 9.2.3 as it relates more to what stayed with participants after the WSE. Overall, the nature of people's experiences is complex, nuanced and dynamic with many positive and challenging aspects and transitions taking place during the WSE. It is therefore crucial to access more experiences in more detail and to specifically and systematically target areas of investigation.

9.2.2 What aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making become apparent during a WSE?

Human-environment/landscape interaction and meaning-making are about reactions and responses to the landscape and to the constructs of landscape that make sense of these (e.g. ideas about wilderness and artefacts). They are also about reactions and responses to the context – the WSE structure – such as being led, group elements and phases (e.g. exploration, journey and solo phases). Essentially, meaning-making is the process of making sense of something; it results from an interaction of some kind. It also works vice-versa as meaning-making can be the instigator of interaction with something. Human-environment interaction thus forms part of meaning-making and hence they are discussed together.

There are a number of aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making that become apparent during the WSE and these are evident in transitional experiences. The elements of transitional experiences – fluctuating aspects, conditions and dimensions – are essentially aspects of human-environment interaction. The interaction that participants had with various conditions (WSE landscape/nature, group elements and the everyday) involved a process of disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating and this interaction led to many dimensions of transitions, such as relational (e.g. wanting and resisting being with people) and emotional transitions (e.g. feeling safe, feeling freedom and being scared etc.) (see figure 9.2). Aspects of this human-environment interaction were also found to indirectly contribute to the benefits that participants experienced. For example, some participants' experiences of connecting with the landscape/nature and disconnecting from the everyday landscape (to a degree) provided feelings of freedom and escape, which provided participants with a sense of perspective. These benefits then led some participants to re-experience nature as it provided an outlet and a safe haven.

Meaning-making also occurs in this intersection between transitions and conditions. This meaning-making is created by the three mediating aspects (cultural influences, past experiences and expectations and preconceptions) shown in figure 9.2. Whether participants utilised or resisted them impacted on how enabling or intruding these aspects were, and subsequently on people's perceptual and emotional reactions to the different conditions. For example, past experiences in childhood (childhood memories) were enabling for participants, taking them back to playful and freeing feelings. Expectations and preconceptions that the WSE should be therapy was resisted by some and intruded on their experiences. Lastly, cultural influences were the most prolific and influential

aspect that mediated experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction and refers to participants' use of and resistance to cultural ideas, ideals and norms and they enabled, and intruded upon, participants' experience. Cultural influences also encompass artefacts. Because of the prominence of cultural influences during participants' experiences of the WSE, particularly artefacts, they are explained more fully as they best demonstrate aspects of human-environment interaction and meaning-making.

Objects, cultural artefacts and people (others people and those in the group) can disturb and distract from participants' experiences of nature and being with nature. This is something that Baer & Gesler (2004) identify, when they talk about ambivalence and nuances. This emphasises the shades of meaning between two descriptors. Baer and Gesler, for example, talk of shades of meaning. Dark (negative) and light (positive) shades are often referred to in the literature, grey shades of meaning however, typically, are not. Often, it is in these greyer shades of meaning where interesting and surprising things might occur. This seems to better describe the data related to the WSE, aptly captured by Wenger (1999) who states: "Meaning exists neither in us, nor in the world, but in the dynamic relation of living in the world" (p. 54).

Meaning-making about the landscape was shown to be mediated through language and culture throughout the themes, and the everyday seemed to be used as a benchmark. These manifested mainly as artefacts existing in three categories, physical (e.g. fences, paths, buildings), symbolic (e.g. fairy-tale and horror characters) and societal (e.g. norms, values, routine). These categories emerged from the data but align with Cole's (1996) explanations of levels of artefacts (to be discussed further below). This search for order in one's environment thus supports the Gibsons' ecological theory of development where the ways people tend to seek order, regularity and patterns to make sense of their world is hypothesised (Gibson & Pick, 2000). Also, participants' references to films and TV programmes provides support for previous research conducted by Murphy (1999), which found that media influenced people's perceptions and experience of natural environments, in particular wilderness.

Artefacts provided subtle insights into cultural influences. Fantasy and fairy-tale was associated with daytime, horror with night time; whereas luxury items were thought of in relation to both daytime and in the evening. In addition, the objects identified as distracting and representing human presence varied from person to person and showed that people's perceptions vary. There were some common agreements about fences and paths being distractors, but other artefacts had ambiguous meanings. What was found is that these artefacts influenced

participants' overall impression and judgements of how 'wild' the landscape was. Luxury artefacts (having them or not, and the importance associated with them) were referred to by participants as a reference point. This may also be regarded as the participants' ways to self-regulate themselves, where they are trying to maintain a balance between pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and confirms that environment and person are interrelated; the environment is not just a setting in which things exist and where happenings occur. In doing so, it lends support to the environmental self-regulation hypothesis (Korpela *et al.*, 2001). Expectations and preconceptions again influenced these. This interaction with artefacts in the environment also seems to be supported by Bronfenbrenner's ideas of proximal processes (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The interaction, interpretation, and reference to artefacts in the landscape could be said to be like a transferring of meaning, which in-turn influenced participants in that environment, and subsequent realisations and awareness about constructs and influences in other environments (e.g. the everyday).

McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998) offer some useful insights when suggesting that experiences within a natural setting result from a transaction between people and the natural environment. They state that experiences are not determined simply by nature, people do largely create their own experiences based on their needs, past learning and selective focussing on features of the environment. Experiences are then partially based on active cognitive processes that involve interpretation of stimuli from the environment, and therefore "the environment becomes the product of perception not the cause" (McIntyre & Roggenbuck, 1998, p. 405). In simple terms, McIntyre and Roggenbuck (1998) argue that people enter natural and remote locations with preconceived ideas and expectations. As neutral as a natural environment may seem to be, the personal histories and cultural values of facilitators and participants will shape and colour the character of their attitudes and behaviours within the natural environment.

The way participants have used artefacts to make sense and meaning of their environment is perhaps not a surprise since culture is about a shared way of living and is about making sense of the world with meanings. As shown in this research, people interpret what is around them by using interpretations of cultural norms and values (Harzing & Van Ruysseveldt, 2004). Human meaning, action and interaction are thus mediated through artefacts. Meaning is often shared in a cultural milieu and embodied in artefacts. Human interactions in particular shape and are shaped by artefacts and their uses (Cole, 1996). According to Cole, artefacts enable semiotic mediation of human action and are used at different levels: primary artefacts (words, writing instruments, technology); secondary

artefacts (norms, values, traditional beliefs, laws, rules); and tertiary artefacts (notions of context, novels, imagined worlds, play, creative representations, schemas, etc.). Importantly, this is part of Cole's cultural-historical theory in which he proposes that it is helpful to separate between the material (*i.e.* more concrete artefacts) and the ideal (e.g. a more abstract artefact, like language) properties of the artefacts, since each have equal influence in mediating human actions.

Jenlink and Jenlink (cited in Kincheloe & Horn, 2007) also make a point of stating that artefacts stimulate and enliven learning. Cultural resources, like the artefacts Cole (1996) describes, therefore influence learning, reflect human culture (patterns of human behaviour and thought) and contain information about human practices and beliefs (Solomon, 1993). Cultural resources mediate thinking and activity and are "distributed dynamically interpersonal relationships among people, their artefacts, and their environments" (Salomon, 1993, p. 139). They are material and non-material items that may be categorised as contemporary (e.g. modern buildings, towns, cities, pylons, roads etc.), historic (e.g. buildings, settlements, passageways, sites of important events and landscaping), and ancient (e.g. rock shelters, temporary campsites, sacred places, human remains, burial sites, milling and quarry sites etc.). Material items include natural or manufactured objects that have meaning to people in contemporary communities and artefacts left behind by past communities. Artefacts represent interpersonal activities, physical objects and the use of physical space, and help define culture. Providing enough information for context is, therefore, important as an artefact loses meaning when contextual detail is compromised – the surrounding conditions of something provide an insight to its meaning (Krippendorf & Butter, 2007).

The above literature thus suggests that cultural artefacts pervade human life, shape aspects of human-environment interaction and contribute to human meaning-making. Despite the presence and use of cultural artefacts in everyday life, these do not appear to have been identified and discussed in the literature as influences on participants' structured experiences in nature. However, cultural artefacts were significant cues and symbolisers during this WSE and in particular, contemporary artefacts were highly evident and influential in participants' interactions with the WSE environment. Contemporary artefacts were disturbing for some participants, as they found that the presence of these items ran counter to their expectations of the environment and thus the foundations of the WSE on the whole. This led to a measure of disappointment and ambivalence towards the place for some, especially for those who thought that they were going to be in an environment with no obvious references to contemporary life and culture. Other participants who perhaps had previous experience or lower expectations of the

landscape and the WSE did not express as much discomfort. As well as previous experience, however, pre-trip 'marketing' may also have had an influencing role in relation to participants' expectations and perception of place (noted in chapters 4 and 6). Overall, this human-environment interaction demonstrates an intricate and dynamic relationship within place, space and time.

Space, place and time are implicit elements of people's experiences and meaning-making during the WSE and human-environment interaction. Each element informs and defines the other and contributes to experience, meaning and interaction. Tuan (1977) provides a humanistic and ecological perspective on the meaning and experience of space and place, and aptly elucidates their dynamic nature:

In experience, the meaning of space often merges with that of place. "Space" is more abstract than "place". What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value ... The ideas 'space' and 'place' require each other for definition. From the security and stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa. Furthermore, if we think of space as that which allows movement, then place is pause; each pause in movement makes it possible for location to be transformed into place (p.6).

In this sense space can be unknown, undefined and consequently can often be unnoticed. It is only when a space becomes known that it emanates to be something else, something more stable – a place (e.g. a place to go to and escape from). Place exists because of the development process which space affords; without knowing space one cannot know place. Space is therefore often more dynamic and transitional than place.

This helps explain the transitional nature of participants' experience further since they were adjusting to different spaces (in nature, being in a group and being alone) within a different place (the WSE landscape). For example, none of the participants had been to that particular place before they participated in the WSE and thus some aspects were new to them. Certain aspects were also familiar to them, such as grass, trees and undulating terrain, as all of the participants had had some sort of exposure to aspects of nature or countryside prior to the WSE (these details were reported in pre-experience interviews and questionnaires). It was

perhaps being in (and going to) a novel place that prompted (or at least partially prompted) the transitional process participants experienced, disconnecting, connecting, adapting and negotiating in/with/to/from different places (WSE landscape and the everyday landscape) and spaces. Furthermore, these transitional experiences and the degree to which they fluctuated, ebbed and flowed may have been influenced by the extent to which participants were able to attach to the WSE place and connected with nature. It is not possible to fully ascertain whether or not participants formed an attachment to place or not, as this was not a specific agenda of the current research. However, some tentative comments can be made from the findings that may contribute to understanding this dynamic interplay between a person, place, space and time. For example, only two participants (Sam and Sarah) expressed that they wanted to return to the WSE landscape itself, with two participants (Alex and Joe) reporting that they either wanted to or had managed to re-access that type of landscape, or a more remote one again (e.g. the Lake District and the Isle of Skye).

Another important aspect of place-making and establishment of place for many cultures is personalising space by building structures and boundaries; but as Tuan (1977) notes, the meaning of space and place shifts and merges. For example, an area of open space can be made into a number of places depending on what structures and boundaries are placed. By placing a number of sculptures in an open space, the area becomes a 'sculpture park' and a place where people come and visit. However, that same open space becomes a very different place if houses are built in the area. The place, rather than being a place to visit, becomes a place of residence, home and community for people. In both contexts, the inclusion of objects such as paths, roads and fences create clear marked boundaries. Even without these elements, the sculptures and buildings themselves create boundaries for the places, in that where the sculptures and buildings cease to be, the particular 'place' ceases to be. In a way the participants were place-making by setting up their tents; where the tents were became their camping spot. The space that the tent created also added a dynamic aspect to experience, creating a sense of vulnerability, a barrier between them and nature, but also at times was experienced as a shelter and comforting place. Places are therefore, in part, created by boundaries and are hence contained, secure spaces.

Conversely, spaces without boundaries rarely become places; they are boundaryless and thus are regarded as more free (Tuan, 1977). With this in mind, perhaps the journey phase of the WSE, the constant moving from one camping spot to another to different areas of the landscape, meant that it was considered more as an expansive space than a place. Participants often referred to the WSE

landscape as an 'open space' for example. The term place was rarely, if at all, mentioned. In this sense, participants may have perceived the landscape as 'boundaryless' and this may have been one aspect that contributed to their experiences of 'feeling freedom', which was a particularly prominent aspect of their experience, one that they enjoyed and wanted to recapture.

Transitional experiences and attachment are also bound by time. Participants' relationship with time in the WSE landscape also contributed to transitional experiences within place and space and may have contributed to the extent they attached to place (e.g. formed a relationship or connection with the WSE landscape). During the WSE, particularly the solo phase, the participants were encouraged to relinquish their watches. Being without a watch meant that participants' perception of time varied. Some participants were comfortable with this and others were not (i.e. some participants adapted and negotiated this aspect of the WSE comfortably and others have less so). How participants adapted and negotiated this element may have contributed to their experiences of disconnecting (from the everyday structure and norms) and connecting to place (and to self). The solo phase of the WSE may have contributed to participants' transitional experiences in other ways, such as a 'pause' (Tuan, 1977), and contributed to participants' sense of, and attachment to, place.

Specifically, Rapoport (1972) highlights that, "The essence of place lies in the quality of being somewhere specific, knowing that you are "here" rather than "there" (p. 331). To know whether you are here or there one must pause to be able to apprehend where you are. This experience, or 'knowing', that you are here rather than there was particularly captured by participant's reports and recollections of their solo experience. During the day of the solo participants generally found it difficult to attend to what was around them and what they were feeling and experiencing then and there. Being in the present was challenging at times as intruding thoughts about responsibilities, personal troubles or boredom interfered and interrupted participants' experience of place and space. Experiences of being in the 'here and now' fluctuated, as did participants' emotions (e.g. feeling happy or bored) and perceptions (e.g. of time and landscape). Participants' experiences of timelessness (i.e. of time not mattering) during the WSE, particularly the solo phase, also suggest that time informs a person's adaptation and orientation in environments (physical and social). This suggestion follows from and is supported by a number of studies (e.g. Effron *et al.*, 2006; Zhong & DeVoe, 2010), which suggest stimuli, even inanimate stimuli (e.g. artefacts), can influence rhythms and time.

Time is related to place in different and varied ways and “shapes human life and behaviour” (Zakay, p.578). Distinctions between perceived, chronological time and psychological time (how humans experience time) are useful and help identify nuances in experience of space and place. According to Zakay (2012) “Psychological time is discrete and non-continuous, non-linear, highly context-dependent and, as in a dream, does not necessarily flow from the past to the future” (p.578). Participants’ experiences of time and timelessness suggest that they experienced psychological time. Interestingly, in their experience of time there seemed to be a tension between chronological time and psychological time; some participants vacillated between wanting to know the time (and using the sun to do so for example) and enjoying the sense of timelessness. This suggests that chronological and psychological time can co-exist, and influence experience. Psychological time is therefore crucial in understanding how various human behaviours are shaped. Chapter 5 explored a number of dimensions of psychological time and the perception of duration, including retrospective timing (e.g. reflections) and prospective timing (e.g. expectations) (Zakay, 2012). The current research aptly explains how gaining sense of place is bound by time and supports the ideas in the literature presented here, such as there needing to be a ‘pause’ (Rappaport, 1972; Tuan, 1997) for a sense of place to be experienced, psychological time (Zakay, 2012), and that space is more abstract than place (Tuan, 1977).

Additionally, this research shows that space is therefore not a “passive container of life...space is also socially produced and constructed, dynamic and ambiguous, claimed and contested” (Kitchin, 1998, p. 344): space is “an absolute container of static, though movable, objects and dynamic flows of behaviour” (Gleeson, 1996, p. 390). The way I feel in the Scottish Highlands, my home ground, is vastly different to my experience of the Alps or Caucasus mountains. This is because I have a greater connection with the Scottish Highlands since it is the place where I grew up and learnt the skills and knowledge I needed to become a mountain leader. The Scottish mountains were my ‘retreat’, where I found space to think and feel. It was where I first started to connect with landscape and to myself. Walking through and being with the spaces and places of the Highlands allowed me the time and space to notice details in the surroundings, to appreciate those details and to notice how I embodied the experience. Consequently the Scottish mountains are impregnated with greater meaning for me; but aspects of that place, like the quilts of purple heather, rugged terrain, remoteness and small unidentified paths, are all meaningful features that distinguish the place from other places and contribute to the connection and sense of place. The elements that Tuan, Kitchin and Gleeson each claim, that space is not passive but movable,

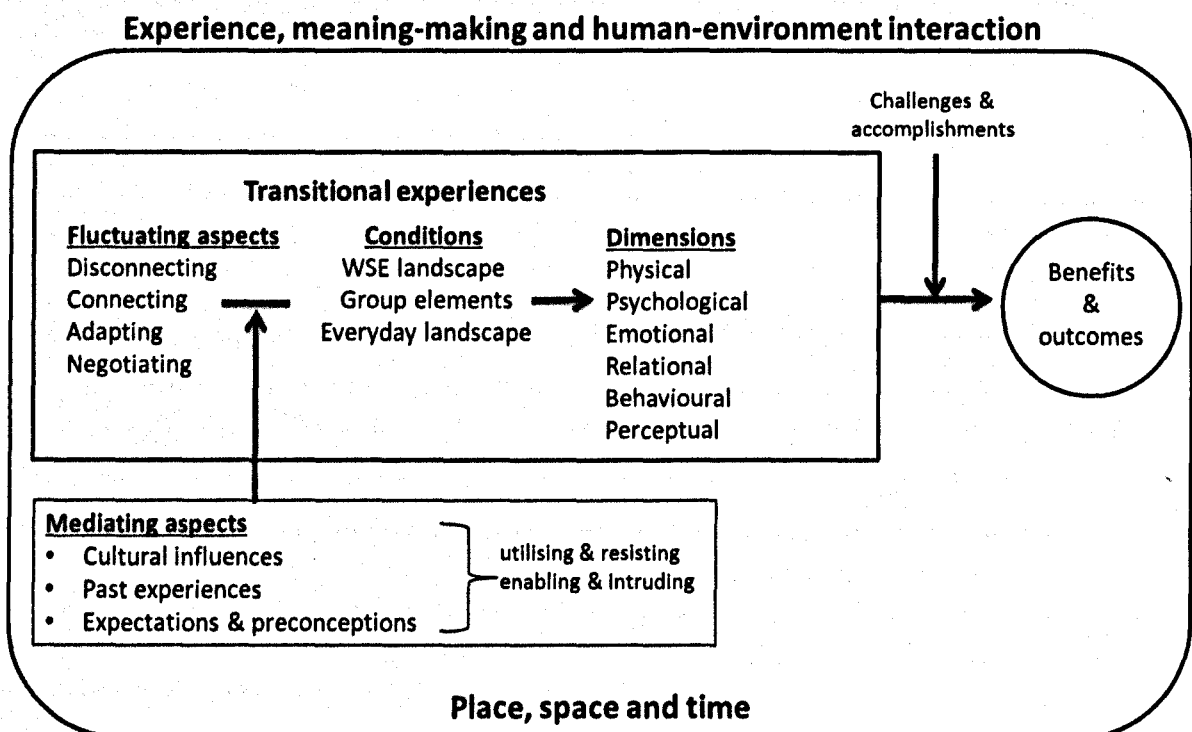
highlight well the complex and dynamic nature of exploring experience and meaning-making of place and space.

In sum, in every environment there are artefacts, they constantly surround us. We interact with pre-existing artefacts in environments and also bring new artefacts into environments. We react to these artefacts, consciously and subconsciously, and use them to fit our purposes in many ways depending on what our current needs and potentially future needs are. In relation to the current research, artefacts were used as reference points and as tools (e.g. equipment). Our reactions can manifest themselves as actions, changes in mood or emotive responses, which can impact on experience of environment and place.

People live and move between places and spaces all the time. The constancy and enduring nature of space and place means that often people are not aware of, or do not differentiate between, different places and spaces. This can leave spaces and places unnoticed and undervalued. The 'taken for granted' nature of space and place highlights the importance of exploring how they are experienced and how people make meaning from them. Finally, because of this dynamic interplay of experience and meaning-making in place, space and time, they have been added to the illustrative diagram (figure 9.4).

Figure 9.4. An illustrative interpretation of the findings and their relationship within place, space and time.

This diagram shows additions to the diagram provided in figure 9.2. Illustrated is the relationship that experiences and meaning-making had within **place, space and time** and further illustrates human-environment interaction.



9.2.3 What stays with people after experiencing a WSE?

What stayed with participants were the meaningful and memorable aspects of experience during and after the WSE. These identified from post-experience interviews, follow-up interviews and journal entries written after the WSE. Many of the examples can be found in chapter 8 since it concentrates specifically on benefits and outcomes, but examples are also embedded in sections/themes throughout the analysis as meaningful and memorable experiences frequently represented numerous other aspects of experience. Those aspects that are identified and clarified here are also features that were provided more than once in the data, with many re-occurring several times.

Broadly, meaningful and memorable aspects were benefits, challenges and accomplishments. Benefits were: gaining a sense of freedom and escape; gaining confidence and a sense of competence; gaining a sense perspective on, and appreciation for, life and the things we have; and gaining a sense of awareness and sensitivity to one's environment and its influence. These all generally contributed to a sense of wellbeing. Challenges were related to terrain and physical hardship, and connecting to nature and connecting to self, and accomplishments were related to achievements participants had felt they had made. Aspects of these benefits and challenges have been discussed whilst answering the first two research questions and so this section will be briefer in its descriptions of these.

Gaining a sense of freedom and escape was mainly facilitated by the landscape – by nature – and associated with getting away, being away from everyday life, responsibilities, pressure and obligation. Feeling freedom was therefore intimately linked with cultural influences and the ability to relinquish them, and partly may have contributed to gaining a sense of perspective and appreciation. Many studies report benefits of being away from everyday pressures (Heinzman, 2006, 2009; Hinds, 2011; Patterson *et al.*, 1998) and from being somewhere with a sense of remoteness (Gaspell *et al.*, 2003), but rarely have they found such prominent examples of freedom, and meaning associated with freedom. Nor have authors documented its enduring nature, since few studies investigating people's experiences of nature conduct follow-up data collection.

Some of the things that led to feelings of freedom and escape also interrupted and distracted from this feeling. Memories of struggling with unwanted distractions from, and interruptions to, their experience were strongly

recollected in post-experience data and the follow-up nine months after the WSE. These were: responsibilities and everyday life, 'other people', incongruent artefacts in the landscape (e.g. those that represented human presence and impact), social challenges and pressures/dynamics (e.g. dealing with rules and conflict), and physical challenges (e.g. dealing with the terrain and injuries). Challenges thus spanned the physical, social and psychological domains, supporting previous research (Patterson *et al.*, 1998; Sklar, 2005). Those challenges that were met and overcome were fondly remembered in contrast to those that were hard to overcome. Additionally, the meaning related to these benefits motivated a number of participants to re-access them by going on walking trips to mountain ranges or sitting by a local river. This implies that they had the confidence to do so, despite any apprehensions and challenges regarding ability, experience or skill levels prior, during or after the WSE. To my knowledge, this motivation to re-access the experiences has not been documented in the outdoor experience literature.

Gaining confidence and a sense of competence has already been discussed, to a degree, in the answers to the previous two research questions, but they will be explained in relation to the ways confidence was an enduring aspect. Confidence was seen to build as a consequence of overcoming fear, doubt or uncertainty about ability, and with the way they thought they were going to deal with the situation. This is seen to transfer into everyday life in the ways that participants re-accessed nature and aspects of the WSE. Examples of this are two reports from study one relating to Sam and Tori's experiences, and one woman from study one and two, Alex. Sam gained a renewed sense of confidence and competence in relation to her physical and psychological strength with the landscape and challenge of going up a steep hill taking her back to past challenges that demanded her physical and psychological strength – her experience of cancer. This was powerful and memorable for her, and something she recollected as eliciting a strong emotional response. Tori reported the benefit of having time to reflect on relationships and family issues, describing that when she returned home from the WSE she had a much clearer and determined idea about what to do about these issues and subsequently carried out the plans to re-establish a relationship with a family member that she had made during the WSE solo phase. Further positive action that was taken after the WSE as a result of a gained sense of confidence and competence was Alex's reports of her self-led walking trips to the Lake District and the Isle of Skye. Her reports were shared joyfully and with pride during a follow-up interview, which further suggest enduring benefit and meaning.

These and other achievements were also recollected and related to confidence building; such as dealing with 'letting go' of control and 'getting to the top'. Re-accessing nature and aspects of the WSE were thus a positive consequence from gaining a sense of confidence and competence. These examples show that beneficial experiences from a WSE are transferrable and can be enduring. This kind of transferability into everyday life has also been shown by Ewert and McAvoy (2000) and Kyriakopoulos (2010, 2011), but not others (e.g. Autry, 2001), suggesting that transferability of benefits is possible but perhaps not predictable or assured. Development of confidence through structured outdoor programmes has also been shown elsewhere in the literature, referred often to 'self-esteem' (Barton & Pretty, 2010; Hattie *et al.*, 1997; and Pretty *et al.*, 2007). The current research convincingly supports such findings.

Gaining a sense of perspective on and appreciation for life relates to participant experiences of valuing home comforts, and 'simple' things like running water. An example of this is from a woman in study two, Sarah. She reported a change in the way she viewed life, noticing nature more in everyday life whilst walking in the city and going to nature such as a river bank when feeling anxious, gaining great pleasure and reflection time in watching ducklings swim in the water. Sarah also showed a growth of self-awareness and perspective. Particularly memorable for her was solo experience and her realisation that she could 'be still'. It was during her time alone with nature that she concluded that she had found her 'outlet' – nature. This supports previous work by Pearson & Smith (1986), who showed wilderness experiences reduce stress and anxiety. More generally it illustrates a sense of wellbeing gained after, and as a consequence of, experiences during the WSE. A male participant from study two indeed mentioned explicitly and directly that he had an increased sense of 'wellbeing' when he returned back to everyday life, finding the transition to impact on his 'usual' behaviour and routine and that he had intense feelings of still being connected to nature. I can only speculate on this matter, however. More in-depth investigation into participants' backgrounds before a WSE perhaps would be beneficial. Nevertheless, support is provided for various studies that also found that structured outdoor experiences (Fredrickson & Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2006; Hinds, 2011) and therapy programmes enhanced wellbeing (Kyriakopoulos, 2010; 2011). Sarah's realisations about herself and ability to be still also support authors who have reported increases in self-awareness (Kaplan, 1995) and self-esteem (Barton & Pretty, 2010) during experiences in natural environments.

The most profound experiences generally occurred during the solo phase. The benefits of time alone are well documented (Angell, 1994; Knapp & Smith,

2005; McKenzie, 2003; Nicholls, 2009) with Fredrickson & Anderson (1999) finding that complete immersion in the landscape is beneficial. They also state that spiritual experiences were optimal when combined with being with others. Spiritual aspects were not pronounced in this research and perhaps this was due to the difficulties participants had with adapting and connecting (e.g. bonding) with the group. Nevertheless, this lends further support for the inclusion of short or extended periods of time alone. Participants' preferences for the length of solo varied in the data; thus it is important to negotiate an appropriate length with the participants, whilst also balancing it with the aim of the programme or experience.

Gaining a sense of awareness and sensitivity to one's environment and its influence refers to participant experiences of embodiment and to meaning created by interaction with artefacts. Participants' experiences of embodiment were profound and memorable and relate to instances where participants gained an increased sense of self-awareness, whilst also feeling relieved from pressures to self-present or socially perform. This refers to reports from participants, previously discussed in section 9.2.1, that described being able to relinquish her social 'mask' and just *be* and to reports about caring less about physical appearance. This elicited one participant to relinquish the label of being an 'ex-drug addict', feeling the same and equal to other group members through the duration of the WSE. This was poignant and thought-provoking for that participant, but she reported that this recognition of personal value did not persist when she returned to everyday life. Nevertheless, it was a feeling and value that they made clear they eagerly wanted to re-access. This recognition of personal value supports research by Autry (2001), but in relation to outdoor therapy. A possible question that may arise from this is, what is then the role of therapy if similar beneficial aspects can be attained from structured outdoor experiences? Autry (2001) also found that there was a disconnect between experience/therapy and transferability of valued aspects into everyday life. These experiences of a renewed sense of value may also support ideas from Russell & Farnum (2004) about walking and solo elements acting like a cleansing phase, which were also found to be fostered by being away from the familiar.

Characteristically, these experiences were most often experienced and strongly felt during the solo phase, whilst alone and away from people, but also seemed to transfer to their daily life. For example, some participants cared less about how they looked or smelt shortly after the WSE. Whether this extended further than short-term meaning is unclear however. These experiences prompted reflection on, and subsequently greater awareness of, the influence of

one's environment, particularly the effect of cultural influence. The beneficial and distinguished experience of embodiment and its long-term impact supports other work on outdoor experiences (Hennigan, 2010), including studies that reported increases in self-awareness in natural environments (Kaplan, 1995). It may also support studies that have found personal growth was a benefit of outdoor experiences (Nanschild, 1997; Sklar, 2005). Support is also provided for Bobilya *et al's.* (2009) study that found significant life events like these were particularly related to the solo phase of wilderness experiences.

Finally, particular artefacts and the way they impacted on participants' experiences were also commonly and passionately recollected by participants. Artefacts that interrupted or intruded upon experience were most memorable, such as fences, established paths and buildings. The incongruence of these artefacts, in relation to participants' expectation about how the landscape would look and be, disrupted connecting to place and led to participants feeling disappointed and frustrated at times. This was mainly because these types of artefacts were associated with human impact. Consequently this interaction with artefacts also elicited greater awareness of human impact, and highlighted, to some, the difficulty in accessing wilder, more remote areas. Other people, such as other walkers outside the WSE group, were also an unwelcome presence in the landscape and again elicited memorable emotions of anger and frustration about this intrusion on *their* experience and *their* place. Encountering other people has also been found to be associated with people's worst memories of wilderness experience (Murphy, 1999). Negative associations with certain aspects of human presence in the wilderness (such as plant damage and litter) has also been shown by Lynne & Brown (2003) but they were related to different aspects to those found in the present study, such as litter, plant damage and fire rings. The most closely related feature was trail corrosion, but this could only be tentatively related to the negative presence of a path in the present study, as the two may mean very different things to people. These enduring and memorable aspects of experience, related to interaction with artefacts in the landscape, to my knowledge, thus seem not to have been reported in the literature, suggesting a further avenue for research.

Overall, these examples suggest that WSEs – and natural environments more generally – can give rise to powerful, transferable and durable experiences. It is important to be aware that these beneficial and meaningful features of participants' experiences overlap and influence aspects of each other. More research on WSEs is needed, however, in order to identify common and more generalizable findings.

9.3 The WSE structure and comparisons of studies one and two

Decisions that were made about the design were considered in table 4.1 in the methodology chapter, the theoretical bases of the WSE structure therefore will not be considered here. Instead, a discussion will take place that critiques aspects of adventure therapy (AT) where the need for higher intensity, adrenaline eliciting, activities in nature is questioned and explored. Additionally, comparisons between studies one and two and their possible impact on experiences and context are discussed.

9.3.1 The WSE Structure

One of the fundamental areas that AT builds its approach around is risk-taking based 'contrived' activities to treating an individual or group (Gillis, 1992). This aspect is the main way that such programmes incorporate aspects of challenge; despite any shifts into using natural spaces and situations more, the emphasis is still on higher intensity activity. What has been demonstrated in this thesis is that challenge comes naturally from the activity of journeying through and being with nature. For many who may have not experienced wild places before, the journeying and exposure is perhaps challenging enough. There thus appears to be no need for additional activities to be incorporated for therapeutic benefits. The danger is that higher intensity activities will distract away from the importance and benefits of just being with nature. Just doing nothing and being 'in the here and now' was documented as one of the most enjoyable and beneficial aspects of the WSE, and contributed most to feelings of freedom. A less stressful environment like this has also been shown by other studies to be more likely to foster 'peak learning' (Leberman & Martin, 2002). Additionally, by implementing an extra level of challenge, there is danger that it will reduce a person's confidence rather than build it. For example, Leslie's struggles with the rough terrain suggest that the level of challenge in the environment needs to be carefully considered. Increasing the level of challenge and demand also questions the extent to which a programme can be inclusive.

Another aspect of the WSE that challenges the structure and design of outdoor therapy programmes, in particular, is the need for direct intervention. The nature of the group or individuals in a programme might influence this to an extent, but what the WSE research suggests is that nature and the aspects of such experiences are enough to be beneficial and perhaps work alongside other therapies. There seems no need to bring direct therapeutic intervention into a WSE environment. The non-judgemental features of nature and natural environments

are of great value and should not be underestimated or compromised in terms of beneficial potential.

Such an argument has support from elsewhere: wilderness experience is intrinsically rewarding rather than there being any need for activity (Driver *et al.*, 1987); and research from Hartig *et al.*, (1991) also reports that experiences in natural settings may have psychologically restorative outcomes, despite no formalised intervention being imposed on a person's 'problems' or 'issues'. Additionally, as noted earlier in this chapter, the solo experience was the most profound experience, suggesting that it is an important part of a programme. It was a particularly reflective solo and supports other research specifically in this area (e.g. Daniel, 2005; McKenzie, 2003; Russell & Phillips-Miller, 2003).

The group element must also be considered. What came through in the findings is that being part of a group was generally regarded by participants as a distraction to their experience in nature. The nature of being part of the group was dynamic though, as participants seemed to go to and fro between wanting to be part of a group and not. Tensions that arise between social norms and pressure seemed to confuse and compromise the purpose of being with nature and although the group element was regarded as enjoyable by some, it was not seen as a crucial element of the WSE. A question then is whether a group experience is beneficial or necessary? One of the advantages of group-based outdoor programmes is that more people can be involved and such an approach is more cost, time and resource-effective. Also, the participants did not have comparative experiences without a group, so it might be that subtle and more positive group-related elements were not considered by them.

In terms of leadership, generally the style that was adopted was reported to work well. The open, relaxed and flexible nature of the leadership allowed participants to feel free and in control. This however was a compromise and made more difficult when time was more pressured, suggesting that the duration of an outdoor experience should be considered extensively alongside other aspects like resources, location, and participant requirements. There seems a great need to concentrate efforts in research on examining more closely the impact of different leadership styles on participants. Additionally, leadership, whether in the outdoors or in research, is always going to be a position of power; as Etherington (2004) aptly highlights, "Power is something that often evokes discomfort. If we accept that we are powerful when we write about other people's lives, we can constantly monitor the ethical issues that emerge as the research unfolds." (p. 226). This idea needs to be generalised to reflections upon leadership.

Another important aspect to consider when evaluating the findings is that participants volunteered for the WSEs, suggesting that to some degree they were drawing from self-regulating influences. The self-regulation hypothesis (Korpela *et al.*, 2001) is based on people who recognise their relationship with the environment, seek out restorative environments and people develop places in which they can have an emotional balance. This suggests then that by merely volunteering for the WSE, the participants were to an extent demonstrating environmental self-regulation (Korpela *et al.*, 2001).

The data also suggests that being still with nature was particularly challenging, despite motivation and enthusiasm to be still. In particular participants in study two seemed to find it to be more difficult. This may be due to a number of factors:

1. Study two involved shorter exposures to nature and time was more pressured, than in study 1;
2. The study two landscape contained a greater number of cultural artefacts than study 1, which may have triggered thoughts back to the everyday and thus to unwanted thoughts/responsibilities;
3. The study 2 landscape was less remote than study 1, and it took less time to reach the location from York and less time to reach the solo locations.

These factors may have contributed to reducing the potential for being still in a more reflective space.

9.3.2 Studies One and Two: Comparisons and WSE Considerations

Comparing the experiences of study one to study two, the second WSE seemed more bound and pressured by time. Participants also said that not enough time was provided to enjoy the exploration phase on weekend one and the journey phase on weekend two adequately. I also shared this view and thought it could also have been due to the structure of the WSE being interrupted by a two week interval. The reduction of a continuous length of time meant that the planned group discussion on day three of weekend one did not take place. Furthermore, though the number of hours on the WSE remained the same in studies one and two, the duration and distance covered during each phase differed: duration of walking was longer and distance covered was less. This changed the dynamic of the WSE in study two and, from a leader's perspective, the second study felt at times rushed and dictated by the watch rather than by natural cycles in the day. This was unfortunate as Nicholls (2009; 2008) particularly highlights the benefit of adopting

an unhurried approach and this kind of experience was achieved and noted by many in study one, suggesting that with an appropriate design it is possible.

The pressure of time and decrease in flexibility within the structure of the WSE, also impacted on my style of leadership. For example, when time was pressured during study two, I felt I had to take a more direct authoritarian role so that objectives were accomplished and consequential disruptions did not arise. I was uncomfortable with this role and did not enjoy employing it as I felt it was unnecessary and avoidable if more time was factored into the WSE. These issues may have contributed to the change of 'atmosphere' that the participants and I experienced during the WSE, which felt more tense to me and to some of the participants. Despite these issues, the second WSE was generally well received by participants (because for most it was their first experience) and for most of the participants these concerns did not seem to impact on overall impressions. Qualities in environment, duration and type of involvement with the environment have previously been found to influence experience and perception of the environment (Kaplan, 1995) and thus these occurrences in the two WSE's further validate these.

Comparison of transitions, studies one and two: Generally transitions appeared more abrupt and experiences less profound in meaning when considering the data from most participants (except Sarah) in study two compared to study one. This is likely to be due to difference in structure and the shorter durations of phases. This may have meant that it was more difficult to access feelings of freedom, because disruptions and distractions from everyday life (e.g. responsibilities) made it difficult to be 'present' in the place. Data from Alex particularly provides an insight into the difference in experiences and transitions for her, between the two WSEs. However, study two participants did suggest that feelings of freedom and connection were felt, and for some thoughts of everyday life were less evident than for others. This suggests that despite the differences, these differences may be relative; and with perhaps an alteration in the design of the WSE, shorter experiences with an interval between are still an option to be explored further.

Terminology: Whilst collecting data in the first study it became clear that the structure and function of the WSE, and the communication of these details, had an influence on the expectations of the participants and subsequently their experience. For this reason I became increasingly conscious of the terminology I used during the research and with the participants. For example, there was an element of confusion for the first study. 'Wilderness therapy' (WT) was referred to as an example of a structured outdoor programme, stating that some of its

principles were influential in the WSE. It became apparent, after study one and attending an International Adventure Therapy conference, that WT was not an appropriate term for me to use to describe the experience I was providing. This revelation emerged after a group discussion that comprised a wide range of practitioners and academics working in the area of WT and outdoor education. In this group discussion, we were discussing whether programmes that are labelled, designed, and advertised as 'therapy' are comparable to programmes that are not termed as 'therapy' but have therapeutic outcomes. That is, can programmes with therapeutic outcomes claim that they are 'doing' therapy? The debate was mixed and although the consensus leaned towards 'no', the debate was heated, and in the literature there seems to be little consensus (Friese *et al.* 1998; Russell, 2006).

Lack of consensus in the literature and there being multiple versions of terminology for labelling outdoor structured experiences/therapy, led me to discard these options, which became increasingly misaligned with the ethos/milieu and endeavour of the research. It was, therefore, necessary that a second strand of inquiry was included in the research – a critique of the 'wilderness' concept – which took place in the literature review and continues in the findings and discussion. Such an inquiry, due to the limits of the thesis and time available, was not exhaustive and went to the depths required to address this issue within this research endeavour.

9.4 Alternative Approaches

With small-scale studies there is always an issue with being able to generalise. A possible way of addressing this would be to conduct multiple individual case studies on these types of experiences and then use them to compare and contrast (McLeod, 2010). This may also mean that causality can be ascertained more clearly. In the current study, establishing causality is not possible. A strength of this research, however, is that it does not strive to find results that best fit any particular preconceived idea or theory. This thesis acknowledges and values detail and complexity; nuances and ambivalence are neither ignored nor devalued. Multiple sources of information were collected creating a rich and extensive dataset. This meant that personal and socially reflective processes could be accessed and considered in the research. The detail provided in taking this approach, both in the data collection and the presentation of the analysis allows readers to make up their own minds as well as there being the researcher's interpretation. What would have further enhanced this approach is having multiple analysts, a team-based approach, allowing for multiple alternative interpretations on the data to take place. This research is also reflexive but this element could have

been further developed, with triangulation through different interpretations of the data considered.

Another issue for consideration is whether, that when recruiting for WSEs the researcher/ leader should be involved in the consent procedure. This is perhaps more viable if a team-based approach to future research was utilised. This would enable consultations and negotiations to take place independently, via a mediator. This would be especially important with perhaps more vulnerable groups of people.

Participants were provided with the data transcriptions to check for accuracy so as to improve the trustworthiness of the research. However, providing full opportunity for member checking (Holloway & Todres, 2003), such as a draft of the thesis document or summary findings, or presentation and gaining personal statements from participants on their impression of the work, would have improved the ethical rigour of the project. This was an aspiration at the start but unfortunately time did not permit.

To examine experiences of an outdoor landscape more 'purely', the research may have needed to examine naturally occurring data (like someone walking in the park or local hills), with the participant having more autonomy over what they did, where they went and for how long during the WSE/landscape. This would be a suggestion for future research.

There would be value in conducting a multiple individual case study approach, as noted above. In this thesis, the inclusion of a single case study was considered, in relation to the participant who experienced both studies one and two. However, space precluded such an addition. A multiple case study approach, which would capture the complexity of experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction would help describe in more detail, and perhaps with more accuracy, the processes and events that unfold over time. It could also account more for context.

To examine the benefits and effectiveness, a more developmental approach, with exposure to more than one WSE, would also be useful. Alex's data suggests that repeated supported experiences can enhance the positive effects of being in nature. She showed increased a confidence and sense of gaining competence through more exposures to WSEs. In addition, it would be helpful to consider ways of placing greater levels of control and power in the hands of the participant, rather than the leader (or researcher as in the present case). This may lead to ways of making structured experiences in nature more beneficial and sustainable. A possible approach to making the experience more sustainable, and by that I mean transferable and enduring, would be to provide more training and

shorter experiences prior to a WSE, and possible after. There is tentative support for the benefit of providing multiple experiences from the positive reports and transferability of benefits experienced by Alex, who participated in both studies. To explore this further a collaborative inquiry would be suitable (Reason, 1995). To this end, I hope to publish a case study of Alex's experiences in the next year and also to finish a paper, currently in draft form, which will be co-authored by Alex.

9.5 Implications and future research

Research Implications: Revell *et al.*, (2013, p.1) have recently argued that: "further investigation into the meaning attached to being outdoors and how this might affect/impact upon the therapeutic relationship is needed". The findings from this examination of people's experiences, meaning-making and human-environment interaction during a WSE highlight a number of qualities, intricacies and benefits. The current research, therefore, aptly responds to this call for further investigations into the meaning. Though the WSE was not a therapy programme the rich findings of this thesis could prove useful in providing an insight on how certain aspects of the natural environment might impact upon the therapeutic relationship. For example, the dynamic interaction that took place with artefacts and the effect of this on emotion, perception and meaning-making, may be useful to therapists working out of doors.

Though it is recognised that the results from this study cannot be generalised, they may highlight to practitioners and "decision makers" that such an approach to structured outdoor experiences is viable, affordable, and beneficial to implement in services since it is relatively low cost. Though practitioners or service staff would need to be trained in outdoor leading before embarking on using the same, or a similar, design themselves, outdoor leaders can also be used for this kind of activity. Guidance from service staff can then supplement the experience by relating to specific expertise whilst working with people who are perhaps more vulnerable. Generally though, due to the simplicity of the WSE structure, and there being no aspect of therapy involved, with appropriate guidance it is a feasible approach to implement elsewhere. Therefore further research in this arena could seek to trial WSEs in different contexts and with different groups. As research increases in the practice of WSEs, comparisons may then be made to determine if different contexts and groups elicit differing experiences and benefits.

As there is a dearth of empirical studies on people's experiences of structured outdoor experiences and outdoor therapies, the aspects of experience, meaning-making and human-environment interaction, as well as the benefits and

enduring features of experience derived from the study, may be of interest to practitioners and academics. Even though this was the first time that a WSE has been implemented, and only two studies were conducted, the results did emphasise a positive experience, and for most, an experience that participants would, and did (e.g. Alex), do again. The impact of this WSE on experience and participants' sense of freedom and escape, confidence and competence, perspective and appreciation, and awareness and sensitivity, as well as an overall sense of wellbeing, makes one wonder what participants could gain once the WSE has been refined and their experiences understood in a number of contexts. For example, there were aspects of the WSE design that may have negatively influenced participants experience and would need further consideration. By referring to 'wilderness' I set up a context in which any other people were almost inevitably going to be seen as intruding since one of the defining qualities of a wilderness is its lack of people. Usefully, however, this highlighted the dynamic and influential relationship between people and their environment, as well as between people and constructs of landscape (e.g. ideas about wilderness), which created greater insights into human-environment interaction and meaning-making. This framing was also minimised in the second study, referring to 'wild place' instead of wilderness, and walking and solo experience instead of wild place experience. However, perhaps a more neutral term like 'natural environment', or simply 'outdoor' when describing the landscape would be more appropriate. However, the term WSE, I would argue, is a useful label for the experience provided. Research that asked participants more explicitly about their perceptions and experiences of framing, labels and terminology would help ascertain the best way forward on this matter, and may have deeper implications for other labelled outdoor programmes that use terms such as wilderness (e.g. wilderness therapy and wilderness experience).

Additionally, perhaps these findings could be used as a stepping stone for further longitudinal research into WSEs or similar kinds of structured outdoor experiences. Although longitudinal data was collected as part of this study, through post-experience interviews, focus groups and nine month follow-up interviews, it may well have been beneficial to extend this follow-up. Further research may also lead to findings that may confirm or refute this small-scale study. Thus, longitudinal studies with data stemming from an array of participants, WSE's and contexts (i.e. different locations and different purposes e.g. service driven or service-user driven) may provide more reliable data that can be generalised more widely.

It is recognised that themes may be captured under different terms such as self-esteem, peak experience or flow experience. However, a concerned attempt was made throughout analysis not to 'fit' or push the data into anything that it was not, especially into any pre-ordained categories or theory. In doing so, I argue that I have captured experience that more easily relates to the participants, whom are at the core of this enquiry. When they read, or watch me present, the research I wanted them to be able to connect with it, and to an extent, still feel like it was their experience. I think sometimes researchers forget the impact of research and the implications it can have on the participants. Though what the participants actually have to go through is monitored and protected through ethics, training and reflexivity, the impact of the writing up of research that participants have been so intimately involved in, is less considered. This does not mean that a level of abstraction and depth during analysis was compromised, however. Indeed this consideration may have enhanced analysis. Research that used a number of different styles of analysis would highlight transferability of results though, and may inform researchers and practitioners on how best to capture such nuanced *and* personal things as experience and meaning-making.

This potential for future research reinforces the need to view this study in context; it is acknowledged that this examination was a small, qualitative study that provides an in-depth view of people's experiences of a custom-designed structured outdoor experience, suited to UK conditions. Additional studies in practice and theory are of paramount importance. Further research may lead to the development of guidelines and resources for effective reflection, application of phases (e.g. how best to transition between exploration, journey and solo phases, as well as entering and exiting the WSE landscape) and overall experience design. These may be used by training leaders or practitioners and may inform services and service-users.

There is certainly a need for more creative and affordable ways to meet the needs of people more generally (e.g. time away, relaxation, physical exercise, exposure to nature). The built up world is expanding and mental illness is increasing leading to strain on the NHS and waiting lists. Mental illness accounts for over a third of all illness in Britain and 40% of all disability. The total cost to society is 77bn each year in lost earnings, productivity and reduced quality of life (Frumkin, 2001). Indeed, Frumkin (2001) claims people need to connect with and value nature more than ever now. Services also need to support and reach people who have further needs like those experiencing mental health issues. Men in particular have often been reported to suffer in silence, with services finding it difficult to access this group. Contact with nature is also considered by many as

crucial to mental health and wellbeing (Kellert & Wilson, 1993), with a recent observational study in the UK concluding that physical activity in natural environments reduces the risk of poor mental health to a greater extent than physical activity in other environments (Mitchell, 2012). On the basis of this, Mitchell also argues for the protection of access to natural environments for physical activity and should be promoted as a contribution to improving mental health across the country.

Political and Policy implications: The political dimension of this research, as McLeod (2013) highlights, is that structured outdoor experiences have the potential to increase environmental awareness and foster environmental stewardship. These inexorably link to encouraging people to be more sustainable in their behaviour, contributing to efforts associated with climate change. Though there is little evidence here to suggest that environmental stewardship was fostered, there were findings regarding environmental awareness. One participant, Sarah, started noticing nature more in the city where she lived. This increased awareness may have the potential to lead to environmental stewardship. Participants were self-selecting, however, and pre-experience data suggested that most participants had a predisposition towards nature and environment. Irrespective of this, the WSE may well have the potential develop these aspects. Beame's (2010) study of adolescent experiences of a trip to Ghana, however, found that environmental awareness fostered during the experience did not translate back to society and home life, suggesting that further research needs to ascertain the best context, or conditions that foster such shifts.

McLeod (2013) also refers to the importance of understanding concepts such as 'landscape', 'nature' and 'wilderness' in relation to their broader social and political meanings. Indeed, it is also inferred by the present research that meaning is an important aspect to consider. Support for further investigations also comes from Murphy (1999). From interviews with 20 undergraduate students he found a number of factors that were influencing the creation of meaning for wilderness and concluded that media was the greatest factor. This present research provides a largely comprehensive insight into these meanings, with chapter 7 devoted to themes related to landscape and wilderness. There is also considerable discussion regarding terminology at the beginning of the literature review, revealing the complexity of this area and lack of consensus regarding which term to use in structured outdoor programmes and publications. This present study thus provides the basis for future research.

These discussions around environmental stewardship, and the benefit of natural environments highlight, important aspects for policy. These findings support a common widespread argument, across research into health and therapeutic benefits of proximity and activity in natural environments. This study is one of many studies investigating and evaluating the benefits of being close to and doing activity in nature. Studies in green exercise, walking your way to health initiatives, natural health services, walking and talking therapies and outdoor therapies all provide similar support, suggesting that greater emphasis needs to be placed in policy about protecting the environment and supporting access to it. These last two arguments must go hand in hand, however, as though I support the use of the natural outdoors, it is important that approaches, including my own, do not jeopardise or compromise the safeguarding of these environments as, without them, many of the benefits associated with them are likely to disappear with them. Natural environments need, therefore, to be protected from becoming, or continuing to be, a commodity for society. A more ecological or holistic approach in policy is thus required in the existing paradigm for public health and natural environment (Pretty *et al.*, 2003).

Although progress has been made within policy, with more NHS support of walking schemes and green exercise, these ideas remain “on the margins of public health and environmental policy” (Pretty *et al.*, 2003, p. 32). Indeed there have been recent attempts to increase the value of natural environments by actually placing a money value on them, for example, in a recent white paper (DEFRA, 2011). Structured experiences, like those proposed in this study as well as others (e.g. green exercise, health walk groups, green gyms and blue gyms) are likely to increase and promote physical activity as well as contribute to emotional and psychological wellbeing. Pretty *et al.*, (2003) for example reports that the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS), in 2002, indicated a 10% increase in adult physical activity would benefit England by £5000 million per year, saving 6000 lives. Indeed, they also argue that the benefits to wellbeing could outweigh them. The National Obesity Observatory (NOO) also estimated that there are 300 million people worldwide who can be classified as obese (Cavill & Roberts, 2011). This NOO document also highlighted that less is known about the associations people have with aesthetic features of the natural environment, or the benefits of them. They also note that the bulk of the research into the influences of the environment has come from the US. This is an important aspect to highlight and one that is made several times in this thesis. The natural landscapes of the US are very different to those in the UK and thus caution over US-based results is advised.

Getting the policy right and supporting these various methods and enterprises that support people in connecting with the outdoors will help improve physical health in the UK, as well as elsewhere. The long-term changes in awareness and attitudes towards nature that arose in the current study also suggests that, with more comprehensive support of WSE style approaches, environmental consciousness may be raised across society. Aspects like spending time alone with nature can be accessed without any support from a leader and thus is more accessible and inclusive. By providing more support for further research and practice it would create more opportunities and possibilities for transformations and actions that support sustainability outcomes.

The present research contributes to this growing area in the UK and to the movement of using outdoor spaces more for health and wellbeing benefits. Indeed, this research addresses a gap in policy regarding the important role of the meaning associated with activity and experiences in natural environments. For example, recent NICE (2012) guidelines on ways of promoting walking and cycling as forms of travel or recreation, state nothing of the influence and beneficial role of meanings associated with places and space, nor of the importance of the meaning-making process. Additionally, in the guidelines on physical activity and environment they mention only recommendations for access to open spaces, such as parks, coastal rivers and forest pathways (NICE, 2008), which although beneficial, does not cover the protection of more remote natural environments. Neither does it provide provision for more creative kinds of access and support – something more than just transport provision. This is not encouraging, even if it is a progression from the complete absence of any mention of natural environment in the 2006 guidelines for promoting health and physical activity in adults (NICE, 2006). Furthermore, a recent study has identified that there are disadvantages and barriers to using the great outdoors that need further consideration. For example, how the outdoor space is perceived influences usage, concerns for personal safety and ease of access to natural environments (Gladwell *et al.* 2013).

Though progress needs to be made in policy, there have been developments, particularly around service-led and personalisation agendas, giving greater emphasis to people being part of treatment rather than having it imposed upon them. Some foundations, therefore, seem to be there in policy, but perhaps more evidence is needed rather than more policy; some policy exists but little public practice (e.g. NHS). The groundwork is there, but there now needs to be a boost of support for further empirical research on specific ways of interacting and connecting with nature. Such efforts may provide the momentum needed to implement these ideas and methods in practice. Many recent studies have

confirmed the benefits of natural environments and nature (e.g. Gladwell *et al.* 2013). MacKerron and Mourato (2013) provide a new line of evidence on the links between nature and wellbeing, piloting new innovative research methods and informing the UK National Ecosystem Assessment (NEA) with potential to develop *Mappiness*. *Mappiness* is a native software application (app) for Apple iPhones that records spatial and environmental behaviour and maps where people are, at what time, and how they are feeling (e.g. how happy they are). However, "little is known about the mechanisms that are important for delivering these benefits" (Keniger *et al.* 2013) and with the '*Mappiness*' study in mind, the themes of the present research, about landscape and artefacts, could enhance the data collected by these surveys. Moreover, recent studies tend to be quantitative in approach with little focus on the richness of experiences in natural environments. Quantitative approaches, like those produced by green exercise academics, are valuable, but we must not forget the value of immersive and in-depth understandings of experiences and meaning as, essentially, these are the essence of human life and knowledge. What is required now is further investigation into the design, implementation and cost of structured outdoor experiences and how best to optimise their benefits and positive environmental consequences.

As well as promoting an increase in consciousness in the general public, such efforts should also be supported among academics and practitioners. There seems to be a growing body of literature in the UK regarding the benefits, characteristics and need for protecting these precious places (e.g. Irvine *et al.*'s [2013] study based in Sheffield, UK. This is encouraging, as other countries, like the US, have long been conducting the kinds of investigations into their natural wellbeing and health resources. It seems as though there is an emerging critical mass of research on this area in the UK. However, more efforts, as well as support for these efforts, are required; future research should include evidence about how to optimise and harness these benefits, and support people to access them.

Practical implications: One of the defining features of this WSE is its simple design. This study showed that a simple approach to structured outdoor experience is both viable and beneficial. Employing an unhurried approach to leadership and only having two main features – walking through and being with nature (i.e. the solo experience) – provided an enjoyable and enriching experience that was fondly remembered. This finding supports other studies that found positive benefits of applying an unhurried approach, providing opportunities to reflect (Nicholls, 2009). Consequently, I would urge practitioners to use a similar approach when embarking on their own therapeutic, or therapy, related outdoor experiences.

Furthermore, the meaning and benefit related to the solo phase of the WSE, although not generalizable, cannot be ignored. Present findings suggest a greater focus on the solo phase in structured outdoor experiences may be beneficial. Solo experiences, for example, could be implemented on their own, without a lengthy exploration and journey phase, and accessible places where people could re-access them more easily. Indeed Nicholls (2008) reports the benefit of self-initiated time alone, providing some support for this idea. She also mentions the importance of having a positive mind-frame to enjoy time alone. Support is given to Nicholls (2008) in that positive mind-frames were found to be a factor that determined whether the experience and solo phase was enjoyed or not (e.g. boredom or frustration were a manifestation of a more negative mind-frame). Having a place nearby that is more accessible to participants may mean that they have more autonomy and control over when and for how long they engage in alone time. This greater control may more likely lead to positive mind-frames. The extent to which the solo would work in less remote and more accessible environments is unclear however. I can only speculate that the solo phase has the potential to be beneficial as its own, separated experience.

Framing experiences/WSEs appropriately, describing to participants in detail what the landscape will be like, is also suggested to be useful to carry out. Photographs could facilitate this framing. The current research shared photos at the end of each WSE and was greatly enjoyed by participants, and encouraged recollection and reflection. Photographs may also enhance debriefing aspects of structured outdoor experiences, helping people share with group members as well as family and friends. This may encourage story-making which has been found to enhance the meaning of wilderness experiences (Patterson *et al.*, 1998).

Establishing a good balance between group and solo elements may also be important and perhaps is one aspect to consider the most from these practical implications. This is due to the lack of consensus about group benefits (Heintzman, 2008). The present study shows participant's fluxing dispositions towards being part of a group. Framing and appropriate group bonding before a trip therefore may be advisable. Forming a collective and more in-depth working agreement with participants may also foster better relationships within the group and enhance trust and control among participants. Additionally, asking participants what conditions they would prefer – either walking with the group or walking alone – may mean that unpleasant experiences can be avoided or minimised. This may, however, compromise the positive aspect of challenge related to benefits of the WSE and other structured outdoor experiences. Indeed, there are studies that have found participants valued group elements highly (Revell, *et al.*, 2013).

Meanings associated with landscape, such as cultural meanings related to with artefacts, also offer reflection for practice. The meanings that participant's formed in relation to place seemed to impact on emotion, perception and experience. Place meanings have been shown to be important elements of place attachment and thus have an impact on experience of the outdoors (Brookes *et al.*, 2006). Place attachment and place meanings are therefore important to consider. A way perhaps to support the development of positive place meanings and attachment is to provide a structured experience that is more gradual; starting with a short walk in a day, then to a day walk, and then to a weekend perhaps. Participants could also have more say in location, route choice and duration of structured experiences. This increased level of control may also lead to more enduring benefits (e.g. increased knowledge, confidence and competence may lead to greater access to natural environments and increased wellbeing). However, this openness and reduced structure to a WSE could put dissuade people's participation. People, especially those with little previous experience, may feel overwhelmed by the choice and responsibility, and thus either not participate or not enjoy the experience.

Although shared here are speculative suggestions for practice, they offer useful considerations for design and implementation of structured outdoor experiences and, more specifically, future WSEs.

10. Conclusion

Essentially a large proportion of psychology is about understanding the human condition; understanding people, their behaviour, thinking, emotions and the environments that contribute to changes in these and their manifestations. In a sense this thesis encapsulates the effort of such an endeavour and whole-heartedly embraces the complexity and challenges inherent in doing so. The approach of the thesis values the nuanced and the ambivalent nature of how people experience and make meaning and sense of their experience and environment.

Insights into the meanings associated with being in the outdoors as well as the processes that are actually inherent in these experiences are provided. Such process-orientated research in this area has not yet been offered by the literature (Revell *et al.* 2013). The present study contrasts with much of the literature in this field in that rather than focusing only on outcomes, process is also examined and valued. A gap in the research is therefore bridged by the current findings.

Interaction with environment and landscape was found to be intricate and bound by cultural influences, with dynamic transitions and interactions happening within place, space and time. Transitional experiences were a central aspect of experience that contributed to understanding meaning-making, human-environment interaction and what stays with people. These experiences were shown to have a number of features: fluctuating aspects, conditions, dimension and mediating factors. Being still fostered the greatest sense of achievement, despite being challenging, and was a beneficial and memorable aspect of the WSE. Participants also found meaning related to artefacts in the landscape, showing that understanding meaning is crucial if we are to harness the beneficial qualities of natural environments. Central feature for practice is to establish a good balance between group and solo elements.

This research brings an empirical awareness around these details of human experience in natural environments. In doing so, an intimate and in-depth insight is gained into specific characteristics of landscape in the UK. This awareness could well be useful in structured experiential work in the outdoors, as well as national surveys such as *Mappiness*. Surveys have been carried out on UK residents on perceptions of wildness (e.g. Carver *et al.*, 2002) but none of them have examined perceptions, experience and meaning of place and environment to the degree that this current research has. It therefore, provides a unique window onto such personal, shared and nuanced inter-relationships between person and environment.

The insight into the relationship between people and landscape provided by this thesis suggests that natural environments may be therapeutic for some, but not for others; their therapeutic potential may change over time; and defilement is mixed within them. We therefore need to be open to assessments of the efficacy of therapeutic landscapes by diverse participants in the healing process (Baer and Gesler, 2004, p. 410).

As it is a UK based study that predominantly involves more woman than men it makes a contribution to research in this field. It is well known in the literature (e.g. Cole, 1994) that woman appear less in research in this area. Research is still dominated by studies on adolescent populations, despite there being a solid body of research (Cole, 1994), and despite there being therapeutic applications to survivors of incest, rape and physical and emotional assault, studies that focus on empowering woman are relatively few (Caulkins *et. al.*, 2006; Warren, 1996).

When one stands back and looks at the landscape of this thesis, the intermeshing of the themes is clear. Considering all the findings together they suggest that experience of an environment involves a complex combination of factors. If we consider space, place and time then one can start to understand the interconnectedness of the processes, outcomes and stages resultant of this research. Transition processes and types fluctuate as one moves into different times of day, and different spaces (e.g. personal or social spaces). Being still with nature for a long period of time was considered profound. What may the influencing factors be in this? Time was (relatively) undisturbed and was continual, and the space and place was open, peaceful and contained attractive features. When one considers the physical, symbolic and societal themes, these tell a different story about space, place and time.

Different spaces, places and times of the day, including interaction with artefacts and their cultural meaning, provide different experiences of connectedness and separateness to nature. All these influenced, in part, the extent to which participants felt they could engage in the environment and be still. These processes and people's perceptions of landscape provided and created spaces of challenge and achievement. It was when participants had time to attend to their surroundings and to themselves that the benefits and challenges of being still became clear. Being still thus appears to be important and is a useful strategy on outdoor experiential programmes. Being still was the contributory force to the emergence of feelings of freedom and escape, perspective and appreciation, awareness and sensitivity, and development of confidence and competence. It

seems then, that being still in nature allows one to attend to spaces, attach to place, relate and compare to other places and value a natural sense of time.

Expectations and preconceptions, cultural influences and past experiences all influenced these processes and shifts. They shaped and formed ideas about the landscape, perception of the landscape and experience in it. It seems that when one walks into the wilderness, despite walking into the 'unknown' or the 'unfamiliar' (to a degree) one has a sense of its purpose; a person walks in with boots, a rucksack, food, water and some form of shelter. Wilderness experience is associated with a cultural history.

Fundamentally, this thesis further refines details of the ways in which the benefits of contact with nature can be harnessed to help people reconnect with nature and with themselves. Meaning and experience are central to understanding process and change. They are also important to the stories of people's lives. Meaning and experience shape our mood, emotion and thought, and influence our perceptions. It is therefore, vital that this intricacy is acknowledged when studying experiences in nature in the future if we are to build knowledge and understanding of the relationship between humans and nature. This thesis provides a comprehensive basis upon which to start and continue such an endeavour in the UK.

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Appendix A: Wilderness Programme Questionnaire

Name:

Age:

Gender:

University and programme of study:

Year of study:

Previous courses or work experience:

Please give as much detail as you can/ as possible in the following questions:

Health:

Do you suffer from any allergies (i.e. penicillin) or illnesses (i.e. Asthma)?

Please detail any medication you take?

Please detail any current or past injuries you have had.

Have you or your family have any history of heart problems?

Please note any other medical history or treatment details (e.g. previous surgery, therapy or medication)?

Please give details of how you exercise, and on average how often and how long you exercise?

Please give details of any hobbies you engage in?

Experience:

Have you ever gone hill-walking before? If yes where and for how long?

What are your thoughts and feelings about the outdoors or doing outdoor activities?

Please provide details of previous camping experiences?

Have you had any experiences of camping alone?

Are you willing to share a tent?

What is your involvement in watching or/and participating in sports and recreation activities?

Opinion about the research:

What are your reasons for participating in the research?

What benefits are you hoping to get from your participation in the Wilderness Programme?

What are your thoughts about this research project?

Opinions about the environment:

What are your thoughts about the countryside and green spaces (i.e. parks, meadows, woodland) and their significance to you and others?

What are your interests in nature and the environment?

What do you think constitutes as wilderness or as a wildland?

PLEASE SEE NEXT 2 PAGES FOR EQUIPMENT AND EMERGENCY CONTACT DETAILS

Equipment:

Top size:

Trouser size:

Feet size:

Do you have personal insurance to cover loss or damage of equipment?

Please place a **Y** next to all the kit you have, place a **B** next to any equipment you are going to or are willing to buy, and place a **X** next to any equipment you don't have and not wanting to purchase.

Kit provided by the researcher for each participant:	<i>Quantity</i>	Y, B, X
Tent	X 1	
Walking poles	X 1	
Cooking pan and plastic plate	X 1	
Gas	X 1 (large)	
Jacket	X 1	
Waterproof trousers	X 1	
Boots	X 1	
Gaiters	X 1	
Rucksack (50-60litres)	X 1	
Torch	X 1	
Cooker	X 1	
Group first aid kit	X 1	
Map (laminated)	X 1	
Midge repellent	X 1	
Sleeping bag	X 1	
Lighter	X 1	
Batteries (AA & AAA)	X 2 each	
Purification tablets	X 12	
Large durable waterproof bin bags	X2	
roll mat	x1	

Participant kit list	Quantity	Y, B, X
Thin Socks	x6	
Thick socks	x6	
Underwear	x6	
Sun hat	x1	
Warm hat	x1	
Gloves	x2	
Scarf	x1	
Walking trousers	x1	
Shorts (optional)	x1	
T-shirt	x3	
Thermal bottoms (optional)	x1	
Long-sleeved or thermal top	x1	
Fleece	x1	
Something to sleep in (PJ's)		
Toiletries		
Torch	x1	
Fork, knife, spoon and cup.	x1	
Pen Knife (Optional)	x1	
Sun cream (min factor 15)	x1	
1 litre drinking bottle (hardy)	x2	
Plastic water proof bags	x2	
Spare shoes	x1	
baby wipes or facial wipes	x1	
Food		

If you have any of your own gear it is advisable to use them instead of group kit.

Emergency contact details:

Name:

Relation:

Address:

Contact no:

Appendix B: Recruitment Presentation Slides

Background

- Psychology graduate of Stirling University.
- Doing a 3 year funded PhD at YSJ.
- Passionate about the wilderness, our environment and general outdoors, and how it affects adult mental health.
- 7 years experience of hill-walking
- 5 years serious mountaineering experience (summer, winter and Alpine)
- 3 years mountain leader experience

Research Project plan

- **Meeting** : discussing project details, consent issues and questions (either individually 30min max or group meeting 1hour max).
- **Questionnaire:** exploring participant background and experience information.
- **Pre-programme interview:** wherever convenient for the participant (45 min).
- **Training:** i.e. working with the camping and cooking equipment, walking with weight, fitting outdoor gear etc (half a day).
- **Wilderness Programme:** 5 days
- **Post-programme interview:** collect diaries and discuss the programme (1 hr).
- **Feedback/debriefing session:** either via e-mail, phone, group or individual discussion.

The Wilderness Project programme

- **Set up base-camp:** Travel out in the afternoon and set up base-camp
 - **Exploration phase:** 1day
 - **Solo phase:** 24hours
 - **Journey phase:** 3 days
- You will be asked to keep a reflective diary throughout the outdoor programme and return the diaries at the post-programme interview.

- Total days outdoors = 5 days & 5 nights
- **DATE:** Sunday 13th – Friday 18th of September 2009.

Location

Cheviot Hills (Northumberland area: - photos were then shown.

Further information

- Max of 6 people in a group and min of 4.
- Cooking equipment will be provided to cook your own food (often as a group).
- There will be two facilitators (myself and Dr Jacqueline Akhurst).
- **Transport:** Myself and my co-facilitator will transport participants to and from the location of the Wilderness Therapy programme by people carrier.
- Personal insurance will be necessary (group insurance).
- Aiming for the **pilot study to take place in early September**
 - However, dates are flexible to anytime in September that suits the most people.

Selection

- The first people to confirm they can participate and commit to dates will be placed on the programme.
- Any remaining people that wish to take part will be placed on a reserve list and asked to complete the questionnaire and attend the pre-programme interview and training day.
- Prerequisites:
 - Health: You do not have to be really fit but you need to announce any injuries you have or old injuries or medical conditions that may affect you whilst outdoors and exercising.
 - Time commitment: You need to be able to commit to all the components of the programme (you can of course withdraw at anytime).
 - No previous experience needed: You do not have to have had any previous experience of hill walking, camping or any exposure to the wilderness or wild country.

Privacy

- Anonymity:
 - Your name or other personal data will not be used in such a way that the individual could be identified.

- Confidentiality:
 - All information provided by you will be treated as confidential and will only be discussed between myself and Dr Akhurst, and Dr Potts.
 - However due to the nature of the programme full confidentiality and anonymity cannot be assured.
- Withdrawal:
 - At any time you have the choice to withdraw. However, following the completion of the study you will have one month to withdraw your data after which you will be unable to withdraw.
- Data for the research will be collected by the following methods:
 - Questionnaire
 - to attain general background information
 - Interviews x2 (pre & post programme)
 - visually & audio recorded
 - Daily group reflection and discussion
 - audio recorded
- Diaries
 - research & private
- Please note:
 - You will not be under constant surveillance and if you do feel at any time on the programme that you are then please notify either of the facilitators.

Equipment

- All essential walking, cooking and tent equipment will be provided (see handout for detailed list).
- You will need to provide:
 - Sleeping bag (can be provided if needed)
 - Food
 - Luxuries
 - Clothing
 - Toiletries
 - Medication
 - (see handout for detailed list)
- If you have any of your own gear it is advisable to use them instead of group kit.

Benefits

- Valuable reflective and experiential work that can go towards your counselling degree and CV.
- You will be facilitating innovative research in the area of adult mental health in Britain.
- First hand experience of how a research project can be structured, organised and accomplished.
- You will find out what its like to be a participant in academic research and use the experience to facilitate considerations (such as ethics) you will have to make when you conduct your final year project.
- Hopefully you will also obtain an experience of personal growth and value.
- **Considerations / risks**
- Research will be taking place mainly in an uncontrolled outdoor environment.
- I and the university cannot assure your personal physical or mental wellbeing, but every safety precaution will be made during the programme to keep the risk to the min.
- I will make every effort to keep anonymity but this also cannot be guaranteed.
- Confidentiality will only be broken if you disclose information that is of harm to yourself, harm to others, or is a child protection issue.

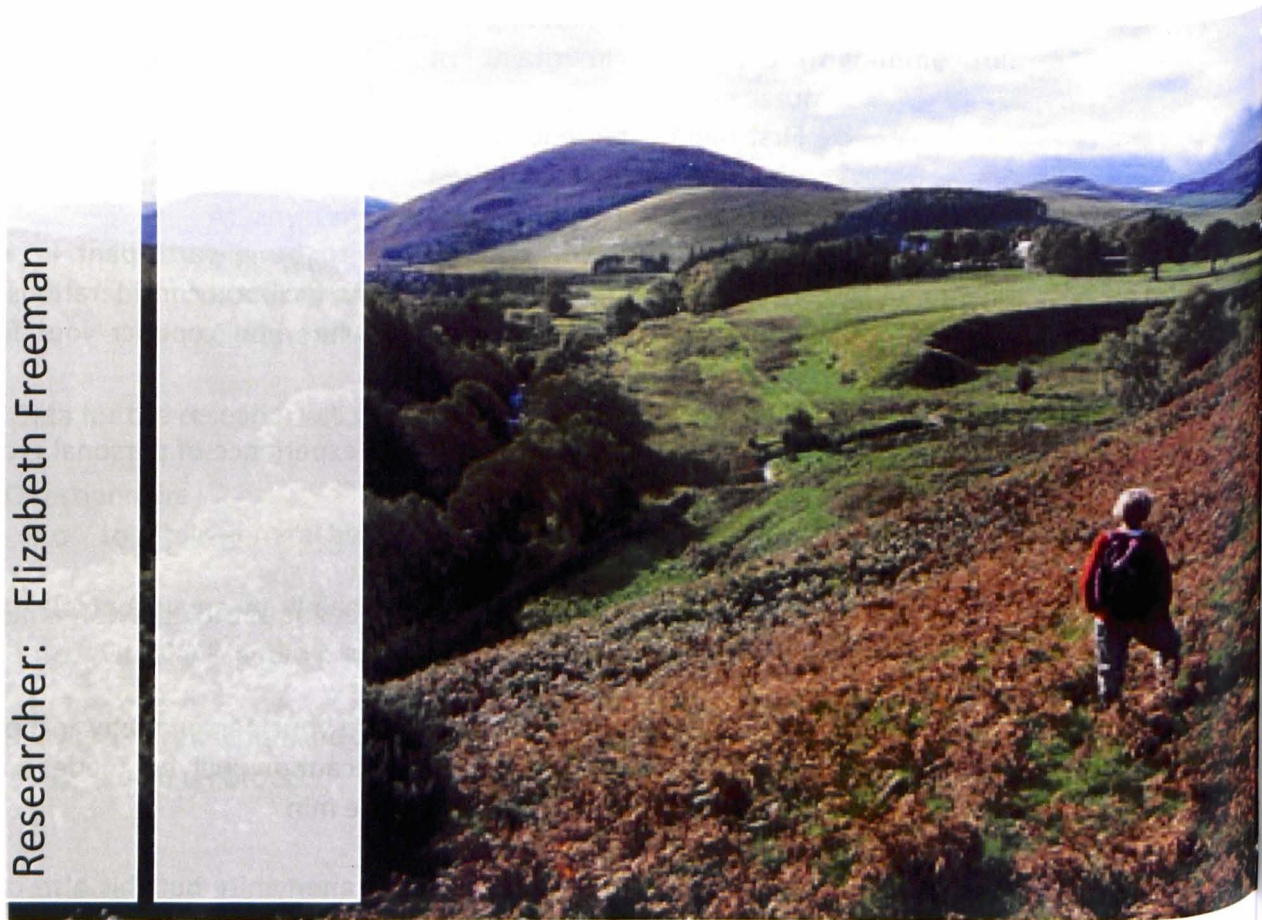
Minimising risk

- **Mountain Leader (ML) qualified**
 - **First Aid (BASP – outdoor specific)**
 - **Health and safety precautions** will be applied during each stage of the research project, especially during the training day and wilderness programme.
 - **Risk assessments.**
 - **Components of the research project will be terminated if:**
 - Any psychological distress or harm arises, or has high potential to arise.
 - Weather conditions become a high risk to individuals.

Appendix C: Participant Handout

Participant Handout

Researcher: Elizabeth Freeman



Wilderness Programme Project

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Wilderness Programme Project

1. Aims of the project and why

Health and wellbeing in the UK has decreased considerably over the last two decades. For example a quarter of adults are obese (Department of Health, 2006) and 1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem (Layard, 2004). Methods put in place by the government and other organisations to date have had little effect on increasing wellbeing in adults. Furthermore, due to the growing crisis of climate change, the issue of reconnecting people to nature and the wilderness, in order to encourage behaviour change, has become high on the agenda within eco-psychology and ecology. Wilderness programmes offers a valuable opportunity and environment for such a re-connecting process to arise and develop, and for the promotion of physical and psychological wellbeing to ensue (Maller *et al*, 2005).

Wilderness programmes has been employed and developed predominantly in North America and Australia. A large body of research agrees that the wilderness has powerful natural therapeutic qualities and that with the incorporation of therapeutic practice wilderness programmes can produce encouraging positive outcomes. The therapy has been found to be effective at; encouraging people to re-evaluate the value of nature in a more positive light, healing people from common mental health problems such as stress and anxiety, and promoting wellbeing in general (Eggleston, 1998; Friese & Pitman, 1995; Pretty, 2004; White & Hendee, 2000). Wilderness programme is an alternative therapeutic tool that can operate as a preventative as well as an intervention method for mental illness.

Evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of wilderness programme is significant. However, the majority of the literature concerns adolescents and problem youth whilst wilderness programme and its effects on adults have had little attention. Similarly, much of the literature derives from North America and Australia with very little research sourced in the UK. Thus, the investigation of wilderness programme and its effect on adult wellbeing is both innovative and valuable within the UK context. Also, resource in the UK in terms of "wilderness" is questionable and thus it is hoped that the proposed research will help verify whether the UK can operate and develop such a programme effectively.

2. The research project plan

If you agree to take part in the research, you will be asked to participate in the following activities:

- **Meeting:** discussing project details, consent issues and questions (if we individually meet – 30min maximum, but if we meet as a group - 1hr max).
- **Questionnaire:** collecting background information (e.g. demographics)(15-20min)

- **Pre-programme interview:** involving a relaxed discussion about your hobbies, lifestyle etc whilst being video and audio recorded. The interview can take place at a date and time convenient for you (40 min).
- **Training:** i.e. working with the camping and cooking equipment, walking with weight, fitting outdoor gear etc (Half a day).
- **Wilderness Programme:** (see section 3 below)
- **Post-programme interview:** collect diaries and discuss the programme (1hr).
- **Feedback/debriefing session (questionnaire):** either via e-mail, phone, group or individual discussion (15-20min)

3. Location:

- Northumberland area – Cheviot Hills.

4. The Wilderness programme:

- **Set up base-camp:** Travel out to Mounthooly Bunkhouse, Northumberland in the afternoon and set up base-camp. Travel time will be approximately 2 hours drive in a people carrier provided by the researcher.
 - **Exploration phase:** 1day
 - **Journey phase:** 3 days
 - **Solo phase:** 24hrs
- Total days outdoors = 5 days & 5 nights

The exploration phase involves the participant walking a circular journey (with a maximum duration of 6 hours) from the base-camp out in the surrounding area and back to base-camp carrying only a day sack. The exploration phase will allow you to gradually adjust to your environment both physically and mentally, and will also aid the facilitators to evaluate the group's physical ability and group dynamic.

During the Journey phase participants will be guided by a facilitator on a journey in the area (i.e. a-b-c) with a maximum amount of 8 hours walking each day. Participants will be required to carry a fully packed rucksack consisting of all the relevant equipment that they will need to camp and survive in the wilderness (e.g. food, tent, sleeping bag, clothing etc).

The solo phase will involve participants camping in an isolated area with only a tent, sleeping bag, clothes, food, torch, cooking gear and diary. You will be asked to switch off your mobile phone during this phase and to wander no further than 20 metres from your tent. The reason for these restrictions is so that you can experience the environment without any technology, distractions or luxuries of everyday life (i.e. books, magazines, games).

Please note:

You will be asked to keep a reflective diary throughout the wilderness programme and return the diaries at the post-programme interview. Additionally you will be asked to take part in a reflective group discussion in the evenings of the wilderness programme which will be audio recorded.

5. Further information:

- Max of 6 people in a group and min of 4.
- Cooking equipment will be provided to cook your own food (often as a group).
- **Transport:** I and my co-facilitator will transport participants to and from the location of the Wilderness Therapy programme by people carrier.
- **Personal Insurance:** Personal insurance will be provided and covered by the university. However, you will need specific insurance (like travel insurance) if you want the loss or damage to equipment to be covered.
- **I am aiming for the wilderness programme to take place in early September 2009.**

6. Selection:

- The first people to confirm they can participate and commit to dates will be placed on the programme.
- Any remaining people that wish to take part will be placed on a reserve list and asked to complete the questionnaire and attend the pre-programme interview and training day.
- **Prerequisites:**
 - **Health:** You do not have to be really fit but it is important for your own health and safety that you disclose any injuries you have, old injuries or medical conditions that may affect you whilst outdoors and exercising.
 - **Time commitment:** You need to be able to commit to all the components of the programme (you can of course withdraw at anytime).
 - **No previous experience needed:** You do not have to have had any previous experience of hill walking, camping or any exposure to the wilderness or wild country.

7. Privacy:

Data for the research will only be collected from the following:

- **Questionnaire x2**
 - To attain general background information
 - Research feedback and evaluation
- **Interviews x2**
 - Pre & post programme
 - Video & audio recorded
- **Diaries**
 - You will be provided with a diary which you can keep any thoughts, feelings, emotions, ideas and sketches in. You can of course bring your own diary for your own private use or write in the back of the diary given to you. Anything you mark 'private' in your diary will not be used in the research.
- **Daily group reflection and discussion**
 - Audio recorded

Please note:

You will not be under constant surveillance and if you do feel at any time on the programme that you are then please notify either of the facilitators.

Withdrawal: you may withdraw at any point during the study. However, following the completion of the study you will have one week to withdraw your data after which you will be unable to withdraw.

8. Equipment:

Kit you will need to provide for yourself:	
Food	
Thin Socks	x6
Thick socks	x6
Underwear	x6
Sun hat	x1
Warm hat	x1
Gloves	x2
Scarf	x1
Walking trousers (no Jeans)	x1
Shorts (optional)	x1
T-shirt	x3
Thermal bottoms (optional)	x1
Long-sleeved or thermal top	x2
Fleece or jumper	x1
Something to sleep in (optional)	x1
Toiletries	
Torch	x1
Fork, knife & spoon.	x1
Sun cream (min factor 15)	x1
1 litre drinking bottle (not thin plastic)	x2
Spare pair of light shoes (e.g.crogs)	x1
Plastic waterproof bags	x5
Packet of baby wipes	x1

If you have any of your own gear it is advisable to use them instead of group kit.

Kit provided:
Tents
Pots/ pans, plates, cups
Gas
Jackets
Waterproof trousers
Walking trousers
Boots
Gaiters
Rucksack
Sleeping bag
Torch
Gas tripod/attachment
Group first aid kit
Map
Midge repellent
Purification- tablets (to purify the water)

9. Benefits:

- Valuable reflective and experiential work that can go towards your counselling degree and CV.
- You will be taking part in innovative research in the area of adult mental health in Britain.
- First hand experience of how a research project can be structured, organised and accomplished.
- You will find out what its like to be a participant in academic research and use the experience to inform decisions (such as ethics) you will have to make when you conduct your final year project.
- Hopefully you will also obtain an experience of personal growth and value.

10. Considerations / risks:

- Research will be taking place mainly in an uncontrolled outdoor environment.
- I and the university cannot assure your personal physical or mental wellbeing, but every safety precaution will be made during the programme to keep the risk to the minimum.

- I will make every effort to maintain anonymity (i.e. names will not be published). However, full anonymity (i.e. between participants) cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of the wilderness programme and group work involved (i.e. you will all know each other's names).
- Confidentiality will only be broken if you disclose information that is of harm to yourself or harm to others.

11. Minimising risk:

- **The researcher is Mountain Leader (ML) qualified** and is trained in outdoor specific **First Aid** (British Association of Ski Patrollers (BASP)).
- **Health and safety precautions** will be applied during each stage of the research project, especially during the training day and wilderness programme.
- **Risk assessments.**
- Components of the research project will be **terminated** if:
 - Any psychological distress or harm arises, or has high potential to arise.
 - Weather conditions become a high risk to individuals.
- **Personal insurance** will be necessary (group insurance).

12. FAQ's:

Q: When will everything take place?

A: The questionnaires will be sent out within a week of the consent form being signed. The pre-programme interview will take place before the training session which will take place a week before the wilderness programme.

The wilderness programme will take place during either the second or third week of September. The post-interview will take place 1-3 weeks after the wilderness programme followed by an online feedback/ evaluation questionnaire which you will have 1 week to fill in. However, dates will remain as flexible as possible in order to fit with your priorities and needs.

Q: Do I need to be really fit to take part in the research?

A: No, as long as you have no major physical disabilities or health problems. If you have any doubt then please discuss your concerns with the researcher.

Q: Will I be able to manage the wilderness Programme?

A: Each programme component will be set at the level suitable for the group and its fitness.

Q: I don't have any experience of hill-walking, does that matter?

A: No, your experiences on the programme are more likely to have an effect if you do not have any previous experience of outdoor activity and thus is preferable.

Q: Are there going to be any tasks or individual or group therapy whilst there?

A: No, the only set activity in the evenings after walking and cooking will be reflective group discussion which will be assisted by facilitators.

Q: Will I have to share a tent?

A: Sharing a tent with another group member (preferably same sex) is part of the programme. However, it is in no way compulsory and if you do not wish to share then you will be supplied with your own tent. You can either notify the researcher before the programme or there will be spare tents at hand if anyone changes their mind on the actual programme.

Q: Will a first aider be present throughout the study?

A: Yes.

Q: Can I keep part of my reflective diary private?

A: Yes, you can use either the back pages of your diary for your private use, write in a completely different diary, or mark P beside any writing that you wish to remain private and not used as data within the research.

Q: Can I take my mobile phone?

A: Yes, but you will be asked to switch your mobile off for the duration of the solo phase.

Q: Where will our water come from?

A: Throughout the duration of the programme you will be drinking water from fast flowing streams high up on the hills as this is the safest water to drink. When at camp water from rivers and streams will be boiled before drinking or using for cooking – this will kill any germs that may be in the water. However, purification tablets (often used by the army and expedition mountaineers) that purify the water will also be provided. Issues such as water will be discussed thoroughly at the training day.

Q: Do I need to provide my own food during the wilderness programme?

A: Yes, you will need to provide your own food for the duration of the wilderness programme. You will be advised at the Training session about what is the best food to take.

Q: What happens if I don't have all the equipment on the participant list?

A: Notify the researcher and she will try and provide you with the equipment. If she is unable to provide the equipment for you then you will be asked to buy it, but this is highly unlikely.

Q: Will I be able to have access to the results of the research?

A: Yes, the results will be available for viewing by February 2010. Please contact me near this time and I will be happy to send you a copy of the results.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Lizzie Freeman

Appendix D: Consent Form

Investigating Wilderness Programmes and its Potential Role in the Promotion of Wellbeing in Adults.

My name is Elizabeth Freeman and I'm a Psychology PhD student studying at York St John University. I'm looking into the effectiveness of Wilderness Experience Programmes as an alternative and complementary therapeutic experience for adults.

So what are Wilderness Experience Programmes? They allow a therapeutic journey to take place, and people are given the opportunity to learn and grow through group and individual experiences in a natural isolated environment.

The current research project is a precursor for more extensive research that will take place next year that will explore the experiences of adults experiencing mental health problems whilst participating on a Wilderness Experience Programmes. Therefore your participation will be invaluable for the progression and effectiveness of subsequent research.

The main component of the research is the wilderness programme which will involve 5 days and 5 nights of walking and camping. The programme has 4 stages;

1. **Set up base-camp:** Travel out in the afternoon and set up base-camp
2. **Exploration phase:** 1 day
3. **Journey phase:** 3 days
4. **Solo phase:** 24 hours

Data for the research will be collected by the following methods; a questionnaire (in order to attain general background information), interviews x2 (pre & post programme) which will be video & audio recorded, daily group reflection and discussion (audio recorded), and diary.

Please note:

- You can withdraw at any time during the study, but you cannot withdraw your data following the study.
- You will **not** be under constant surveillance and if you do feel at any time on the programme that you are then please notify either of the facilitators.
- Your name or other personal data will not be used in such a way that the individual could be identified.
- All information provided by you will be treated as confidential.

There will be two facilitators (myself + colleague) on the wilderness programme. I personally have over 5 years mountaineering experience, have a summer Mountain Leader (ML) qualification and up-to-date outdoor specific first aid training.

However, there are a number of risks that you need to be made aware of before you agree to participate in this research and they are that;

- The research will be taking place mainly in an uncontrolled outdoor environment.
- I and the university cannot assure your personal physical or mental wellbeing, but every safety precaution will be made during the programme to keep the risk to the minimum.
- I will make every effort to maintain anonymity (i.e. names will not be published), but full anonymity between participants cannot be guaranteed due to the nature of the wilderness programme and group work involved.
- Confidentiality will only be broken if you disclose information that is of harm to yourself or to others.

Although there are risks involved in this research there are also potential benefits. It is hoped that you will gain a valuable reflective experience that will contribute to your personal growth and development, and gain an interesting insight into the wilderness and its therapeutic qualities. Additionally, you will be getting first hand experience of how a research project can be structured, organised and accomplished. You will also find out what it is like to be a participant in academic research and use the experience to inform decisions (such as ethics) you will have to make when you conduct your final year project. Moreover, you will be taking part in innovative research which will contribute to existing research within the area of adult mental health.

Overall, your participation would involve you;

- Completing a short questionnaire(15-20min)
- Completing a collection of four inventories.....(15-30min)
- Attending a pre-programme interview.....(40min),
- Training session.....(1/2 day),
- Wilderness programme(5 days & 5 nights),
- Completing a collection of four inventories.....(15-30min)
- Post programme interview(1 hr)
- Focus group.....(1hr - 1 ½ hrs)
- Keeping a reflective diary throughout the wilderness programme.

If you feel like you can commit to the time required for the wilderness project then please fill in the form on the next page and return it to the researcher.

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this study, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

- ◆ I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher.

YES / NO

- ◆ I have read the participant handout and consent form, and understand that the research will involve: *participation in one questionnaire, the completion of inventories before and after the wilderness programme, a ½ day training session, 2 interviews, a 5day and 5 night wilderness programme, keeping a reflective diary for the duration of the wilderness programme, and participating in a focus group.*

YES / NO

- ◆ I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation, but that after one month following the study I will not be able to withdraw my data.

YES / NO

- ◆ I understand that all information about me will be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study.

YES / NO

- ◆ I understand that any visual / audiotape material of me and written information (e.g. diary entries and questionnaires) will be used solely for research purposes.

YES / NO

- ◆ I understand that you will be discussing the progress of your research with others - Dr Jacqueline Akhurst and Laura Potts - at York St John University.

YES / NO

I freely give my consent to participate in this research study and have been given a copy of a participant handout and of this form for my own information.

Print Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix E: Training Session Presentation Slides.

Overview

- Equipment
- Packing the rucksack
- Camping skills
- Clothing
- Food
- Outdoor ethos
- Hygiene
- Hotspots
- Feet
- Water
- Personal Insurance
- Communications
- Finalizing details
- Kit

Equipment

- How to wear the rucksack – on the hips off the shoulders
- Plastic bags for rubbish and dirty clothing
- Must keep kit dry
- Important to keep lighters dry and hexi cubes.
- Midge head net and repellent

Packing the rucksack

- Demonstration – staff room
- Bottom level
 - Sleeping bag
 - Spare set of clothes (in separate waterproof bag)
 - Clothing
- Middle level
 - Warm kit (or top pouch of bag)
 - Cooking gear and toiletries
 - Spare shoes (optional)
- Top level
 - Waterproofs
 - Food
 - Torch
- Balanced weight

Camping skills

- Location choice (be flexible – depends on terrain)
- Sheltered
- Water source

- Even ground
- Putting up a tent in wind
- Secure pegs in diagonal corners
- Buddy buddy system
- No cooking inside tent (porch)
- Gas away from direct sunlight
- Put food in plastic bags and up high if possible
- Leave no trace you were there

Clothing

- Layering system
- Base layer (thermal top or T-shirt)
- Mid layer (micro fleece)
- Outer layer (waterproof jacket)
- Avoid cotton
- Tips
- Use clothing that is comfortable, stretchy and flexible (Ladies sports bras-comfortable flat straps)
- Quick drying
- Spare dry clothes in case of bad weather.
- Warm clothing in the evening
- Demonstration – in staff room

Food

- 2 nights at bunk house
- Can bring more substantial meals
- Group dinner?
- 3 nights camping
- 1. Nutritious
- 2. Lightweight
- 3. Quick

Tips:

Eating a little bit and often is the way to go + a good warm meal at night (full of Carbohydrates).

Carry sweets in pocket to nibble on and keep your blood sugars and energy up.

- **Breakfast and snacks**
- Porridge (milk or water + sugar)
- Snacks:
- Cereal bars,
- Chocolate bars
- Nuts, raisins and seeds
- Dried fruit
- Kendal mint cake
- Tablet / fudge
- **Lunch**
- Ryvita, oatcakes (or other hardy biscuits)
- Pita bread

- Cheese (hard or soft)
- Fruit (tangerines or apples – heavy) + snack food
- **Drinks**
- Hot chocolate
- Sugary juice powders
- Tea / coffee + milk powder
- High-energy Lucozade powders

- **Avoid**
- Fizzy drinks
- No alcohol
- **Main meal**
- Couscous (Ainsley Harriot or Aldi) (3min)
- Instant Pasta + Sauce (3-5 min)
- Instant Rice +sauce (3-5 min)
- Dried soups
- Dried potato
- Dried meat
 - Tuna (packet rather than tinned)
 - Sardines in tomato sauce
- Mathesons sausage
- Ham
- Corned beef
- Vegetables (green beans (– Lightest), carrots, broccoli, courgette)
- Seeds
- **Emergency rations/ spare food**
- Nuts
- Dried fruit
- Kendal mint cake, chocolate or fudge.
- **Avoid**
- Tinned food
- Smelly food
- Messy food
- Lots of packaging (bulky and more rubbish)

- You want to minimise weight and rubbish so loose the metal and loose unnecessary packaging. If need to transfer the food into a more flexible and lightweight container or freezer/zip bag.

Outdoor ethos

- Respect to other walkers and to the environment
- Carry out all your rubbish
- Leave no trace that you were there – camping
- Toileting – dig and burn paper and away from water sources

Hygiene

- Showers and toilets at Mounthooly bunkhouse.
- Baby wipe showers (or environmentally friendly products)

- Use trowel to dig for no 2's and burn your paper with a lighter
- Pee away from water sources
- Tooth paste – use a little amount away from water sources and wash away with water.
- Alcohol gel for hands

Hotspots

- On the hips
- Shoulders
- Heels
- Feet ankles

Feet

- Prevention
 - Zinc oxide tape
 - Being aware of your body
 - Early identification
 - Stopping and addressing the problem
 - Telling someone
- Prevention before intervention
- Talk and zinc oxide (demonstration)
- Be aware of rubbing and hot spots and deal with them
- Compede

Tips:

- Pull up socks and tighten boots regularly
- If you are buying new boots walk around in them to break them in
- Make sure good fit and you don't move around a lot
- Spare socks always to be carried.

Water

- Hydrate, Hydrate, Hydrate
 - To avoid dehydration:
 - Should have 1 litre before going to bed in the evening and 1 litre in the morning and 2 litres during the day.
- Only collected from white water upstream
- Chlorine purification tablets
 - What they do
 - How to use them
 - Neutralising tablets
- Takes taste away
- Millets £4.99 (student discount)
- Boiling water
 - Can be done at night and left to cool for next day or use chlorine tablets. but will use up gas
 - Hot drink for the day

Personal insurance

- Not covered by university
- E.g.
- Camera
- Mobile phone
- Post office

Communications

- Mounthooly bunkhouse – no reception
- Owner has a phone
- There are places during the walk where we will have reception
- Only use mobiles in an emergency otherwise leave turned off to save battery power

Finalising details

- Equipment
- Transport
- Meet up at Mounthooly.
- Two nights at Mounthooly

Friday timings: finish around 1300 /1400, arrive in York 1700ish

Appendix F: Submission Of Proposed Research Project To The Research Ethics Committee

Name of researcher(s)

Elizabeth freeman

Title of research:

Investigating Wilderness Therapy and its potential role in adult mental health services in the UK.

Name of Research Supervisor (if applicable)

Dr Jacqueline Akhurst and Dr Laura Potts

Objectives:

To explore the qualities of Wilderness Therapy for typical adults;

- What are the effects of Wilderness Therapy on the wellbeing of typical adults?
- Which qualities of Wilderness Therapy are most successful at promoting wellbeing in typical adults?
- What are the underlying processes of Wilderness Therapy?
- What is the longevity of Wilderness Therapy?
- Can Wilderness Therapy functionally exist in the UK?

Please give a brief justification of your proposed research project:

Health and wellbeing in the UK has decreased considerably over the last two decades. For example a quarter of adults are obese (Department of Health, 2006) and 1 in 4 people will experience some kind of mental health problem (Layard, 2004). Methods put in place by the government and other organisations to date have had little effect on increasing wellbeing in adults. Furthermore, due to the growing crisis of climate change, the issue of reconnecting people to nature and the wilderness, in order to encourage behaviour change, has become high on the agenda within eco-psychology and ecology. Wilderness Therapy offers a valuable opportunity and environment for such a re-connecting process to arise and develop, and for the promotion of physical and psychological wellbeing to ensue (Maller *et al*, 2005). Wilderness Therapy creates a situation where people can interact as a 'living community' and experience the natural consequences of their behaviours (Russell, 2001). Thus most of the therapy happens in the context of the experiences. The role of the therapist is to "facilitate the process by which a person engages the wilderness, either alone or with others, and engages healing from that interaction" (Powch, 1994, p16).

Wilderness Therapy has been employed and developed predominantly in North America and Australia. A large body of research agrees that the wilderness has powerful natural therapeutic qualities and that with the incorporation of therapeutic practice Wilderness Therapy can produce encouraging positive outcomes. The therapy has been found to be effective at; encouraging people to re-evaluate the value of nature in a more positive light, healing people from common mental health problems such as stress and anxiety, and promoting wellbeing in general (Eggleston, 1998; Friese & Pitman, 1995; Pretty, 2004; White & Hendee, 2000). Wilderness Therapy is an alternative therapeutic tool that can operate as a preventative as well as an intervention method for mental illness.

Evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of Wilderness Therapy is significant. However, the majority of the literature concerns adolescents and problem youth whilst Wilderness Therapy and its effects on adults have had little attention. Similarly, much of the literature derives from North America and Australia with very little research sourced in the UK. Thus, the investigation of Wilderness Therapy and its effect on adult wellbeing is both innovative and valuable within the UK context. Also, resource in the UK in terms of "wilderness" is questionable and thus it is hoped that the proposed research will help verify whether the UK can operate and develop such a therapy effectively.

Additionally, the current research project is intended to act as a precursor for a much larger study concerning adults with common mental health problems that will take place in 2010. The research will therefore provide not only valuable information, data and knowledge about Wilderness Therapy for the public and academic peers, but also for the larger follow-up study.

Please outline the proposed sample group, including any specific criteria:

Female and male typical adults aged between 18 and 45 years who are physically and mentally able i.e. no current injuries, no major old injuries that are likely to re-occur, no serious history of cardiac problems, and no diagnosed or suspected mental health problems will be recruited. Also, participants should not have an extensive experience of walking in and experiencing the wilderness. A history of low exposure to the wilderness is desirable.

Describe how the proposed sample group will be formulated:

Permission, authorisation and support have been received from the Counselling Studies course co-ordinator at York St John University, Dr Alan Dunnett, which will allow me to recruit students from his course. Recruitment will involve a short e-mail detailing the research project and will ask the student to reply via e-mail or telephone if they are interested in the project. The e-mail will be sent out to all the counselling students in year 1, 2 and 3 and a convenience sample will be taken.

Upon reply I will organise a group meeting where I will discuss the full details of the research project with the aid of a power-point presentation and a detailed participant handout, which will detail everything covered in the recruitment presentation including additional information on each issue. In order to reduce any pressure that might be felt at the end of the presentation the meeting attendees will be asked to declare their decision of whether they want to participate or not by e-mail or telephone and reply within 2 weeks.

Throughout the sample group formulation the course Counselling Studies course co-ordinator will be kept fully informed of the progress of the recruitment.

Indicate clearly what the involvement of the sample group will be in the research process:

Participants will be asked to complete a preliminary questionnaire and take part in a pre-programme interview, training day, wilderness programme, post-programme interview (after which the participant will be thoroughly debriefed) and feedback questionnaire. The first questionnaire will ask general background questions regarding health and previous experience (15-20 min). The second

questionnaire will involve brief feedback and evaluation questions about the research (15-20 min). Whilst both interviews will be semi-structured, the pre-programme interview will ask in-depth questions about details given in the questionnaire (40 min), whereas the post-programme interview will ask explorative questions about the participant's experiences on the wilderness programme (50min). Both interviews will be visually and audio recorded. The training day will contain all the relevant information needed to help prepare participants for their experience on the programme (1/2 a day). For example, topics such as health, hygiene, safety (personal & equipment), and outdoor skills will be covered.

During the wilderness programme participants will be asked to keep a reflective diary which will be handed in at the post-programme interview. Additionally, participants will be asked to take part in a daily reflective group discussion which will be audio recorded. The duration of the wilderness programme is 5 days and 5 nights and will take place in the Northumberland (Cheviot Hills) area. Participants and facilitators will be wild camping and sharing tents throughout the duration of the programme (except during the solo phase where each participant will have their own tent). Extra tents will be available if any participant feels uncomfortable with sharing a tent. Within the programme there are 3 phases; an exploration phase, a journey phase and solo phase.

The exploration phase involves participants walking a circular journey from the base-camp out in the surrounding area and back to base-camp, carrying only a day sack, for a maximum duration of 6hours. The exploration phase (1day) will allow participants to gradually adjust to their environment both physically and mentally, and will also aid the facilitators to assess the group's physical ability and group dynamic.

During the Journey phase (3days) participants will be guided by the facilitators on a journey in the area (i.e. from one camp to the next) with a maximum amount of 8 hours walking each day. Participants will be required to carry a fully packed rucksack consisting of all the relevant equipment that they will need to camp and survive in the wilderness (e.g. food, tent, sleeping bag, clothing etc).

The solo phase (24hrs) will involve participants camping in an isolated area with only a tent, sleeping bag, clothes, food, torch, cooking gear and a diary. Participants will be asked to switch off mobile phones and not to wander further than 20 metres from their tent.

Specify how the consent of subjects will be obtained. Please include within this a description of any information with which you intend to provide the subjects:

Consent will be obtained via a detailed form which will include a participant signature confirming an understanding of the research project, authorisation for the use of personal information for publication, and agreement of participation. The consent form will contain the following information; the researcher's background, justification for research, definition of Wilderness Therapy, the research components (i.e. a description of the programme plan and process), the research risks and benefits, and participant rights (i.e. withdrawal, confidentiality and anonymity) [please see the attached consent form for more detail]. To accompany the consent form a participant handout describing the research in more detail will be provided and participants will have to declare they have read

and understood it on the consent form before it is accepted. In addition, the handout will also be given to participants during the recruitment presentation to allow participants to take the handout home and read it thoroughly.

Following the recruitment presentation participants who reply with a firm interest will be asked to attend an additional individual meeting to discuss the consent form thoroughly and ask any other queries, questions or concerns about the research project. Consent will only be obtained if the participant shows full comprehension of what the research project will entail and of the time commitment required.

Indicate any potential risks to subjects and how you propose to minimise these:

The potential risks to participants are physical and psychological. Psychological harm could occur during the wilderness programme due to adverse group dynamics and / or exposure to an unfamiliar environment. To reduce the occurrence of adverse group dynamics participants will be closely monitored by 2 facilitators (Dr Jacqueline Akhurst and I), and interventions or programme termination will take place if necessary. Regarding the latter issue of an unfamiliar environment the same applies but the other components of the research project (i.e. the training day and exploration phase taking place prior to the wilderness programme) should allow for a gradual exposure and adjustment to the unfamiliar wild environment.

Psychological distress during the solo phase may also occur due to the atypical nature of the phase as it is not common practice for people to camp out for a 24hour period where they are completely isolated from human interaction. To reduce adverse effects of this phase participants will be made fully aware of what the phase entails and will be reminded prior to its commencement. Additionally, participants will be closely monitored during this phase by the facilitators and regular checks will take place. To ensure safety participants will have their mobiles, all the tents will be placed within viewing distance of each other and will be connected by string or tape so participants can follow it to the facilitator's tent at night in an emergency. Participants will also be reminded that they can withdraw from this phase or the whole project at any time.

If participants do experience some psychological distress during the programme, if unknown to the facilitators, it may reoccur during the post-programme interview if certain questions prompt disclosure. To minimise the potential psychological distress, participants will be provided with a list of services to contact for help at the debriefing which will take place at the end of the post-programme interview.

Physical harm such as back injury could occur during the training period as equipment and weight carrying will be tested. To prevent back injury occurring participants will be warned of the risks and given advice on appropriate use of the equipment before the training day will begin.

During the programme there is significant risk that participants may become injured especially knee, ankle, and foot injuries. To minimise these injuries only high ankle boots will be provided and allowed to be worn, participants will be taught how to strap up and protect their feet to prevent blisters during the training session, and walking poles will be provided to support and relieve some of the weight off the knees during the wilderness programme. Participants may also

experience aching backs or other back problems, but accurate rucksack fittings and thorough talks about how to wear and pack a rucksack during the training session should minimise the chance of injuries of this kind occurring. Regarding other possible grievances such as chafing and rubbing, facilitators will encourage the participants to ask and be aware of their own and fellow group member's welfare and declare any problems that they may be experiencing whilst on the wilderness programme. To reduce the chance of participants having adverse reactions to natural spring water supplied by the local streams, purification tablets will be provided in order to clean the water. Additionally, spare water bottles will be kept in a central location in order to collect in an emergency.

Risks to the participants due to bad weather can come in the form of hypothermia and trench foot if symptoms are not recognised and dealt with. To reduce the effects of bad weather all appropriate equipment (e.g. tents, waterproofs and waterproof boots) will be made available and used when appropriate. Furthermore, emergency kit (e.g. group shelter, spare socks, hat and gloves) will be carried by the facilitators and larger, heavier emergency equipment will be kept in a central accessible location (e.g. tent, sleeping bag and water). If hypothermia does occur then I have the relevant first aid training and knowledge to deal with it onsite and, at all times the facilitators will be carrying a mobile phone and everyone involved in the programme will be carrying a list of emergency numbers. If there is no mobile phone reception then one of the facilitators will go for help. Escape routes have been identified in case of such a problem. However, continual monitoring and good group and leader decisions will significantly minimise the chances of hypothermia arising. Trench foot occurrence will be minimised by information given at the training session where participants will be advised to change their socks everyday and always change into a pair of dry socks if their feet get wet. Additionally, spare socks will be carried by the facilitators and at all times first aid kits will be carried by each facilitator and by the group.

In order to further reduce the risks discussed above I will be undergoing a summer Mountain Leader Assessment (MLA) on the 17-21st of August. Completing and passing the assessment will provide me with a nationally approved and accredited summer Mountain Leader (ML) qualification.

The summer ML qualification allows an individual to lead a group of up to six people in the hills and mountains of the UK in summer conditions. Pre-requisites of the assessment are; a minimum of 40 quality mountain days of experience, a current 2 day outdoor specific first aid certificate and 5 days mountain leader training. I personally meet the pre-requisites, have worked for the Territorial Army (TA) as a summer mountain leader for a total of 5 weeks in the last 2 years, have over 30 days winter mountaineering experience and achieved the Winter Mountain Proficiency (WMP) award, have 21 days experience of Alpine mountaineering and Alpine Mountain Proficiency (AMP) trained, and have experience of participating in 3 large expeditions and helping in the organisation of another. In order to achieve the qualification the candidate must demonstrate good leadership, group management, navigation, organisation and safety practice (see mountain leader award handbook for more detail:

(<http://www.mlte.org/uploads/publications/16.pdf>). Therefore, achieving the ML qualification should reduce the risk to group members considerably.

The proposed location will be the Northumberland and Cheviot hill area. This area is chosen for its wildness, remoteness, accessibility, suitability of terrain, and proximity to York (in order to reduce travel time and reduce time commitment of participants). The location of the wilderness programme has been thoroughly evaluated and assessed, and a risk assessment was conducted which has determined the suitability of the location. During the reconnaissance issues such as terrain, camping areas, walking routes, escape routes, reception areas, toilet areas, and access were identified and evaluated. Of particular importance during the reconnaissance was the identification of safe water sources. In order to reduce the risks of participants getting ill or having a bad reaction from drinking the water from the streams, water will only be taken from fast flowing streams and rivers and water purification tablets will be provided and used.

Transportation will be organised by my co-facilitator and I and therefore we will ensure that seat belts will be worn for the duration of the journey. Also, every participant will be required to have personal insurance in order to take part in the wilderness programme. Furthermore, in order for participants to gain knowledge of safe practice and thus minimise risks themselves, all risks, safety precautions and personal hygiene will be thoroughly discussed at the training session and appropriate use of equipment (e.g. cooking gear, walking gear and tents) will be demonstrated clearly and at an appropriate speed.

Describe the procedures you intend to follow in order to maintain the anonymity and confidentiality of the subjects:

Anonymity during the research process will not be achievable due to the nature of the research. Participants will meet each other during the preliminary meeting and during the wilderness programme and thus anonymity is not attainable between participants. However, anonymity within the data (collected through questionnaires, interviews and diaries) will be upheld to the highest degree possible. Each participant will be allocated pseudonyms and will be referred to accordingly within the write up of the research project. Furthermore, full names will not be used within any information gathering or data documents and computer files will be tightly secured in a password locked computer.

To ensure confidentiality all documents containing information about participants will be securely held in a central location. Furthermore, participant information and data will not be disclosed to anyone other than those personnel who have had participant authorisation (Dr Jacqueline Akhurst and Dr Laura Potts). However, confidentiality will be broken if the participant discloses information that is of harm to themselves or others, or is an issue of child protection.

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Appendix G: Ethics Approval Letter from York St John University (2009)

Elizabeth Freeman
PhD Psychology
Faculty of Health & Life Sciences



1 September 2009

Dr Simon Rouse
Chair of Research Ethics
Direct Line 876901
e-mail: s.rouse@yorksja.ac.uk

Dear Elizabeth

RE: Investigating Wilderness Therapy and its potential role in adult mental health services in the UK.

REF: UC/1/9/09/EF

I can confirm that you have been granted research ethical approval for your research proposal submitted on the 4/8/09.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. i. J.", which is the signature of Dr Jacqui Akhurst.

CC Dr Jacqui Akhurst



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Appendix H: Ethics Approval Letter from York St John University (2010)

Lizzie Freeman
PhD Student
Faculty of Health & Life Sciences



22 April 2010

Dr Simon Rouse
Chair of Research Ethics
Direct Line 876901
e-mail: s.rouse@yorksja.ac.uk

Dear Lizzie

RE: Investigating the effects of wild place experiences on adult mental health in the UK

REF: UC/22/4/10/LF

I can confirm that your research ethics proposal, submitted on the 6/4/10, has been reviewed and approved. As I communicated previously, the only issue is clarification of the insurance cover and the health and safety situation. When these two issues are resolved could you confirm via e-mail.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Rouse".

Cc Dr Jacqueline Akhurst, Dr Laura Potts and Dr Stephen Gibson



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Appendix I: Pre-Programme Interview Guide

Context and briefing:

- Carrying on from questionnaire
- General background
 - o Talking about/ interested in opinions about the environment, exercise and yourself....are you happy to continue?

Preliminary questions

1. You have responded to the questionnaire and measures/inventories what did you think about them?
 - a. When you were filling your answers in did you find some of the questions difficult / challenging to answer? Explore ...

Exercise

1. Can you tell me a bit about how you exercise
 - a. How do you feel about yourself after exercise?
 - b. What are your thoughts about types of exercise in relation to your enjoyment and benefit you get out of it?
 - c. Do you have any concerns or thoughts about this component of the Wilderness Programme?

Group and individual experience

1. During the Wilderness Programme there will be individual and group experiences, what do you think will be more important to you – the group experiences or individual experiences or both?
2. Given past experiences in groups what role do you think you may take up in the group?

Reflexivity

1. One of the components of the Wilderness Programme is to keep a diary, what are your thoughts about reflecting in this way?
 - a. Is reflection something you do consciously in everyday life?
 - b. Give details ..., for example how might reflective thought be helpful?

Self Efficacy

1. Please tell me about your general confidence level when dealing with group situations and being on your own?
 - a. Could you tell me a little more about your views on self belief in a person's life
 - b. How important is it for you?

Wellbeing & Coping

1. As part of the research I will be looking at wellbeing and coping methods. Can you tell me about your situation at the moment...where you are at in life and in work, emotionally.

- a. Could you tell me about situations in the past where you've felt stressed or depressed ...
 - b. What are your feelings about stress and depressed feelings, have these feelings been a problem in the past?
2. How do you feel you cope with difficulties in your life (whether at home or at work)?
 - a. Do you feel you cope well or do you feel dissatisfied with the way you deal with difficulties that have confronted you?
- b. What methods or strategies do you use to deal with difficulties?

Positive thinking/attitude

1. How do you view yourself in terms of being an optimistic or pessimistic person?
 - a. Please tell me a little more / give examples ...

Environment

1. You have spoken a bit about your views on the environment and the outdoors in the questionnaire butWhen I say nature and the environment what first comes to mind?
 - a. Can you give me an idea of your thoughts and perceptions about nature and the environment (outdoors)?
 - b. Can you describe any emotions you have when talking about or experiencing the outdoors?
2. How would you describe the Wilderness Programme to another person who knows nothing about such a scheme?
3. Do you have any fears or apprehensions about the wilderness and staying out in it?
 - a. Can you give your thoughts and feelings about and towards nature and the environment? (questionnaire)

Ending questions

1. What are your expectations regarding the Wilderness Programme and research as a whole?

Appendix J: Post-Programme Interview Guide

Briefing and context:

Carrying on from the exploration of your thoughts and comments in the pre-programme interview and group discussions during the Wilderness Programme. Therefore some of the questions that were asked during these sessions may be re-visited.

Preliminary questions

2. How did you feel when filling out the inventories again?
 - a. When you were filling your answers in did you find some of the questions difficult or challenging to answer? Explore....
3. How was the Wilderness Programme for you?
 - a. What do you feel was the most memorable and important experiences during your time on the Wilderness Programme?
 - b. Can you tell me a bit more about that?

Exercise

1. Can you talk to me about how you found the exercise component of the Wilderness Programme?

Self Efficacy

2. Can you talk to me about your reflections you have about your levels of competence throughout the wilderness programme?
3. Can you talk to me about your confidence levels during and after the wilderness programme?

Reflexivity

2. Can you talk to me about how you found the reflective element of the Wilderness Programme?

Wellbeing & Coping (Positive thinking/attitude)

3. How do you feel you coped with all the components of the Wilderness Programme?
4. Returning to a question asked in the pre-programme interview – do you view yourself as a pessimistic or optimistic person?
 - a. Do you have any further thoughts about this?

Environment

1. Again re-visiting a question asked in the pre-programme interview when I say the word nature what first comes to mind?
2. When I say environment what first comes to mind?
3. Can you talk to me about your thoughts regarding the environment that the programme took place in?
 - a. Did you feel that the location was remote?
 - b. Did you feel the location was a wilderness?

Ending questions

1. Has this interview given you the opportunity to express your reflections -would you like to say anything else? (closure questions)

Post-programme interview questions for second interviewer:

Briefing and context: I'm just going to ask you a bit about the wilderness programme and how the research was run. I'm impartial so please feel free to express any opinions you like.

Group and individual experience

1. Can you please describe to me your thoughts and feelings about the group component/dynamics of the wilderness programme?
- a. How do you feel the group component affected your experiences during the wilderness programme?
2. Do you feel that other group members had particular roles within the group?
3. Do you feel that you had a particular role in the group?
4. On the last day of the wilderness programme during the group discussion you talked to the group about your reflections about your solo experience. Is there anything more you would like to say about your experiences during the solo phase?
5. What was it like when you were back home/ to everyday life?

Views on the Wilderness Programme

6. Looking back to the components and your experiences of the Wilderness Programme was there anything you didn't like?
7. Can you tell me about your views about Wilderness Therapy/experiences?
- a. Remembering back to your responses in the pre-programme interview do you feel that your views have changed? How?
8. How would you describe the Wilderness Programme, now after you have experienced it, to another person who knew nothing about such a scheme?
9. Would you partake in a Wilderness Programme again or recommend it to another person?
- a. Can you tell me a bit more about what you've mentioned?
10. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the Wilderness Programme and how the research was run?

Ending questions

1. Has this interview given you the opportunity to express your reflections -would you like to say anything else? (closure questions)

Appendix K: Focus Group Questions

1. From talking with you all and listening to your feedback about your experiences on the wilderness programme you all experienced many different feelings and thoughts whilst out there. So I thought it might be fun to go round the table and each say a word or two words that describes the programme and your experiences?
2. If anything pops into your head feel free to say it whenever.
3. First of all I would like to ask you all if you have any questions about the wilderness programme or the research project process that you would like to be discussed?
4. Please feel free to ask any questions throughout this talking session.
5. Can you talk to me about your thoughts around what you think fostered the emotions and feelings you experienced during the Wilderness Programme.
6. Can you talk to me about what you think it was about the environment that allowed for a self learning/awareness process to take place?
7. You are all counselling studies students; can you please talk to me about your thoughts on what your previous (therapeutic) knowledge brought to the whole wilderness programme experience?
8. Do you have any other reflections around this topic?
9. Throughout the whole research project I had different roles; as a researcher, interviewer, leader and as myself. Can you please talk to me about your thoughts in regards to my role during the wilderness programme?
10. Throughout the wilderness programme no participant observation took place and this was stated in the presentations preceding the programme. If participant observation was included in the wilderness programme what would your thoughts and opinions be on the inclusion of this type of data collection?
11. How was the interview process for you all?
12. Did you feel comfortable?
13. How do you feel about the journal component of the wilderness programme?
14. Was there enough guidance?
15. Enough time?

Appendix L: Ethics Addendum

Investigating Wilderness Therapy and its potential role in adult mental health services in the UK. REF: UC/1/9/09/EF

Proposal for follow-up sessions.

Within a period of a 13 months after the completion of the wilderness programme participants will be asked to participate in two follow-up sessions. It was felt necessary to incorporate follow-up sessions within the data collection process in order to evaluate the longevity of the wilderness programme. Each follow-up session will involve participants attending an interview and completing a selection of inventories: Schwarzer and Jerusalem's (1995) Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES); Carver *et al.* (1989) "Cope" scale; Quality of Life Scale (QOLS) (Burckhardt, *et al.*, 1989); and Scales of Psychological Well-Being (Ryff, 1989). The interview will last approximately 45 minutes and will explore participant's memories from the wilderness programme, subsequent experiences, and their opinions about the use of the wilderness as therapeutic environment. Upon the completion of the second follow-up session participants will be fully debriefed.

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Appendix M: Wilderness Programme Risk Assessment (study one)

Venue: . College Valley, Cheviot Hills, Northumberland. Date of assessment 08.05.09									
Activity: 5 day walking trip with 4 nights camping in total.									
HAZARD	LEVEL OF RISK			WHO IS AFFECTED	CONTROL MEASURES	REVISED RISK			
	L	S	R			L	S	R	
Medication Issues Participants will bring their own specific medication. The leader carries paracetamol in the group first aid kit.	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will be asked to inform the leader of any medication they use or need whilst on the WPE. In a questionnaire participants are asked to disclose any allergies. This information will be carried by the leader for reference throughout the duration of the WPE. The group facilitator will be informed of how to access these in an emergency. 	2	4	8	
Types of terrain Heather, bog, and steep hills (risk of twisted ankle or pulled muscle)	4	3	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Warn participants of the danger and discuss how to reduce the chances of this happening. Only short distances of 'off path' walking will be attempted. Participants will have appropriate and fitted foot wear, equipment, and walking poles. 	3	3	7	
Fences to cross (risk of falling and scratches)	3	3	9		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will be advised on how to cross fences safely. Fences will only be crossed if necessary. 	2	3	6	
Weather (Hypothermia, Heat Exhaustion, Heat Stroke and Dehydration)	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Up to date weather forecast obtained for the 2 days. Weather to be monitored during the day and activities changed as appropriate. Participants will be advised of the risk heat and dehydration at training session a week before the trip. Participants will be encouraged to drink water regularly. There will be a number of water sources to keep water containers full. Participants will be advised to wear hats and put on sun cream (spare will be carried by the leader and group facilitator). 	2	4	8	
Loss of tent due to bad weather or fire	2	4	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Cooking areas are to be kept well away from tents Everyone to be briefed about safety procedure in case of fire. 	1	4	2	
Scold and burns from using stoves	2	4	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure there is a large container full of water available before stoves are lit. Ensure that participants are aware of the dangers and the correct usage of the stove. 	1	4	4	
Food poisoning from drinking dirty water and poor camp hygiene	4	2	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Participants will be advised to use anti-bacterial gel on hands before cooking, and to use correct eco- and hygienic toileting procedures. Chlorine tablets and water filters will be supplied to all participants. 	2	2	4	
Ticks(Lyme disease) and midge bites	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Warn everyone of the dangers of ticks and the need to check armpits, groin etc. Avoid laying in long grass and take care near bracken. If get a tick don't worry. Need to seek assistance. Need to use a pair of tweezers and twist to get out head parts. Keep tick and take to doctor to be tested. Not all ticks carry Lyme disease. Lyme disease symptoms are like flu. Needs to be treated early on with antibiotics. Insect repellent will be provided for biting insects. 	2	4	8	

Appendix N: Wilderness Programme Risk Assessment (study two)

Venue: North Nidderdale and Wharfedale area, East of Middlesmoor.				Date of Assessment: 22.05.10				
Activity: 2 weekend trips (Friday night to Sunday evening) 4 overnight camps in total.								
HAZARD	LEVEL OF RISK			WHO IS AFFECTED	CONTROL MEASURES	REVISED RISK		
	L	S	R			L	S	R
Transport issues Transport will be by mini-bus driving on small roads. (Risk of injury or death).	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	1. Participants will be asked to wear seat belts at all times. 2. Drivers will drive slowly with care. 3. The drivers from Beverley Park Centre for Outdoor Education will know the roads well.	2	4	8
Medication Issues Participants will bring their own specific medication. The leader carries paracetamol in the group first aid kit.	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	4. Participants will be asked to inform the leader of any medication they use or need whilst on the WPE. 5. In a questionnaire participants are asked to disclose any allergies. 6. This information will be carried by the leader for reference throughout the duration of the WPE. The group facilitator will be informed of how to access these in an emergency.	2	4	8
Types of terrain Heather and bog (risk of twisted ankle or pulled muscle)	4	3	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	4. Warn participants of the danger and discuss how to reduce the chances of this happening. 5. Only short distances of 'off path' walking will be attempted. 6. Participants will have appropriate and fitted foot wear, equipment, and walking poles.	2	3	6
Fences to cross (risk of falling and scratches)	3	3	9		3. Participants will be advised on how to cross fences safely. 4. Fences will only be crossed if necessary.	2	3	6
Weather (Hypothermia, Heat Exhaustion, Heat Stroke and Dehydration)	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	7. Up to date weather forecast obtained for the 2 days. 8. Weather to be monitored during the day and activities changed as appropriate. 9. Participants will be advised of the risk heat and dehydration at training session a week before the trip. 10. Participants will be encouraged to drink water regularly. 11. There will be a number of water sources to keep water containers full. 12. Participants will be advised to wear hats and put on sun cream (spare will be carried by the leader and group facilitator).	2	4	8
Loss of tent due to bad weather or fire	2	4	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	3. Cooking areas are to be kept well away from tents 4. Everyone to be briefed about safety procedure in case of fire.	1	4	2
Scold and burns from using stoves	2	4	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	3. Ensure there is a large container full of water available before stoves are lit. 4. Ensure that participants are aware of the dangers and the correct usage of the stove.	1	4	4
Food poisoning from drinking dirty water and poor camp hygiene	4	2	8	Leader, group facilitator & participants	3. Participants will be advised to use anti-bacterial gel on hands before cooking, and to use correct eco- and hygienic toileting procedures. 4. Chlorine tablets and water filters will be supplied to all participants.	2	2	4
Ticks(Lyme disease) and midge bites	3	4	12	Leader, group facilitator & participants	6. Warn everyone of the dangers of ticks and the need to check armpits, groin etc. 7. Avoid laying in long grass and take care near bracken. 8. If get a tick don't worry. Need to seek assistance. Need to use a pair of tweezers and twist to get out head parts. Keep tick and take to doctor to be tested. Not all ticks carry Lyme disease. 9. Lyme disease symptoms are like flu. Needs to be treated early on with antibiotics. 10. Insect repellent will be provided for biting insects.	2	4	8

NOTES:

Remember Risk = Likelihood x Severity

After control measures Severity stays the same but Likelihood is reduced so Revised risk should be significantly less.

If the risk of an activity is high and cannot be reduced you have to question whether the risk is justifiable for your client group.

Appendix O: Journal Guide (Study Two)

This 'Wild Place' Experience provides me with a unique opportunity to gain an understanding of peoples personal experiences of *walking through* and *sitting with* a 'wild place'.

Whatever your experience, pleasant or uncomfortable, sharing your experience of *walking through* and *sitting with* the environment / landscape is of value to the research. By experience I mean your; thoughts, feelings, and emotions; your mental and physical journey; your senses such as (touch, smell, sight, taste). I'm interested in what was, and what was not, meaningful to you.

Please be assured that everything that you write in this journal is confidential. The journal will be typed out and stored in a computer and all names changed before the findings are shared or discussed. You will also be provided with an opportunity to check what has been written before anything is seen by others.

Your willingness to share your thoughts and feelings is deeply respected and appreciated.

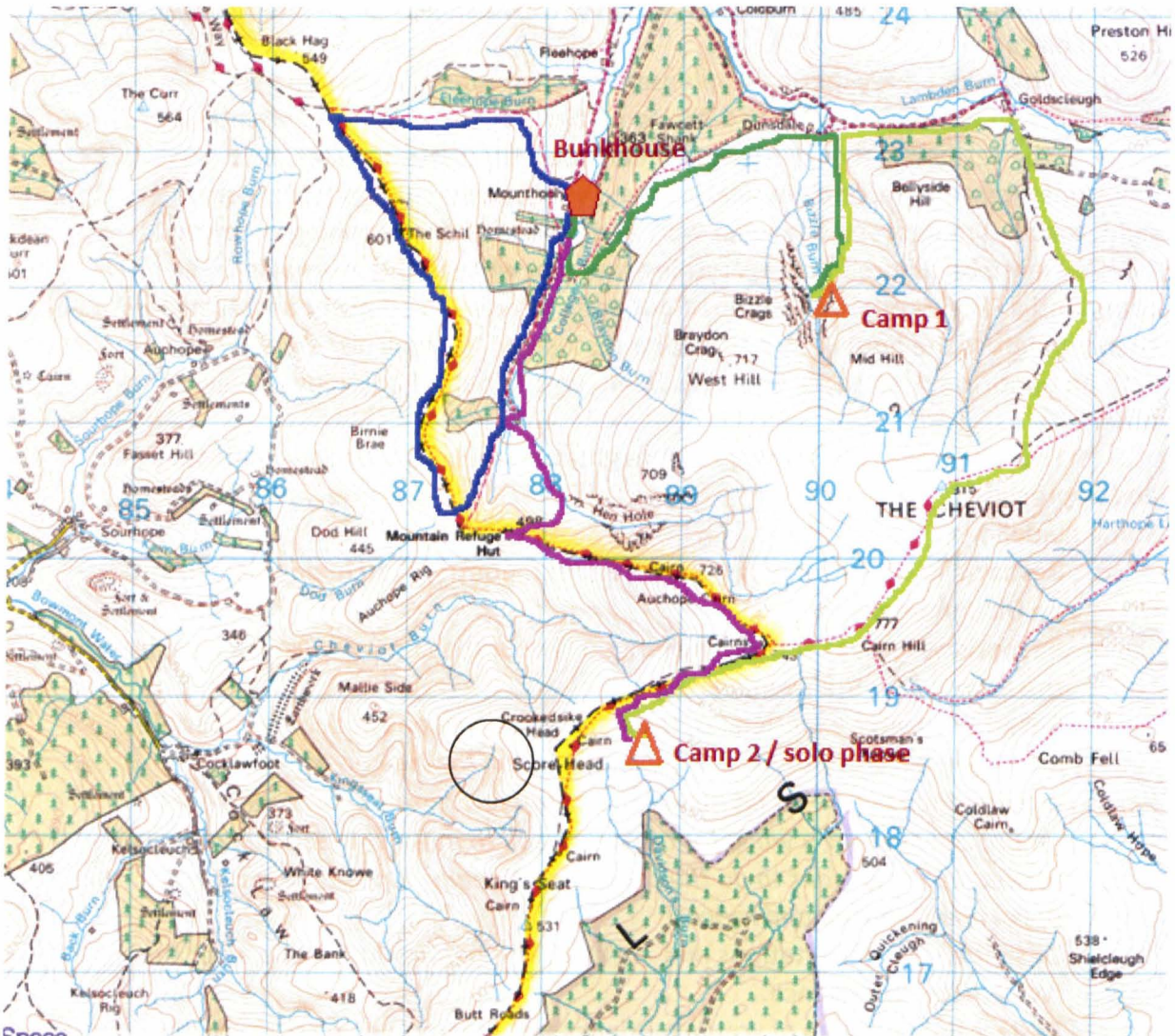
Some guidelines;

- **Respond** in whatever way you prefer; text, poetry, sketch, doodles, record on Dictaphone.
- **Respond** wherever and whenever you like; at the camp, whilst walking, in the morning, in the evening.
- **Respond** to your experiences, thoughts and emotions as soon as possible after they occur. (*If there is anything you wish to write or sketch whilst walking then please do let me, or the group facilitator, know and we, as a group, can stop for a while for a snack break to make this easier for you and others that may want to do the same. Additionally, lunch time is a good opportunity to stop and reflect.*)
- **Describe** your expectations and anticipations before during and after the 'Wild Place' Experience.
- **Reflect** the episodes of your experiences what is/was going on for you? What do you make of it?
- **Write freely:** I encourage you to write what comes to your head and to write in a free way. Please do not worry about grammar, structure or flow – write as your thoughts come.
- **Length:** Be as brief or expansive as you feel. There is no ideal length for your journal.

I encourage you to write in your journal during the two 'Wild Place' Experience weekends and when you are back home, to everyday life. You can keep an additional private copy of your reflections if you like. Additionally, feel free to write in your journal as soon as you receive it. Your Journals will be handed back to me at the 'check out' (which will take place about a week after the second weekend) so if you feel you would like to continue your journal writing after then please do.

Thank you

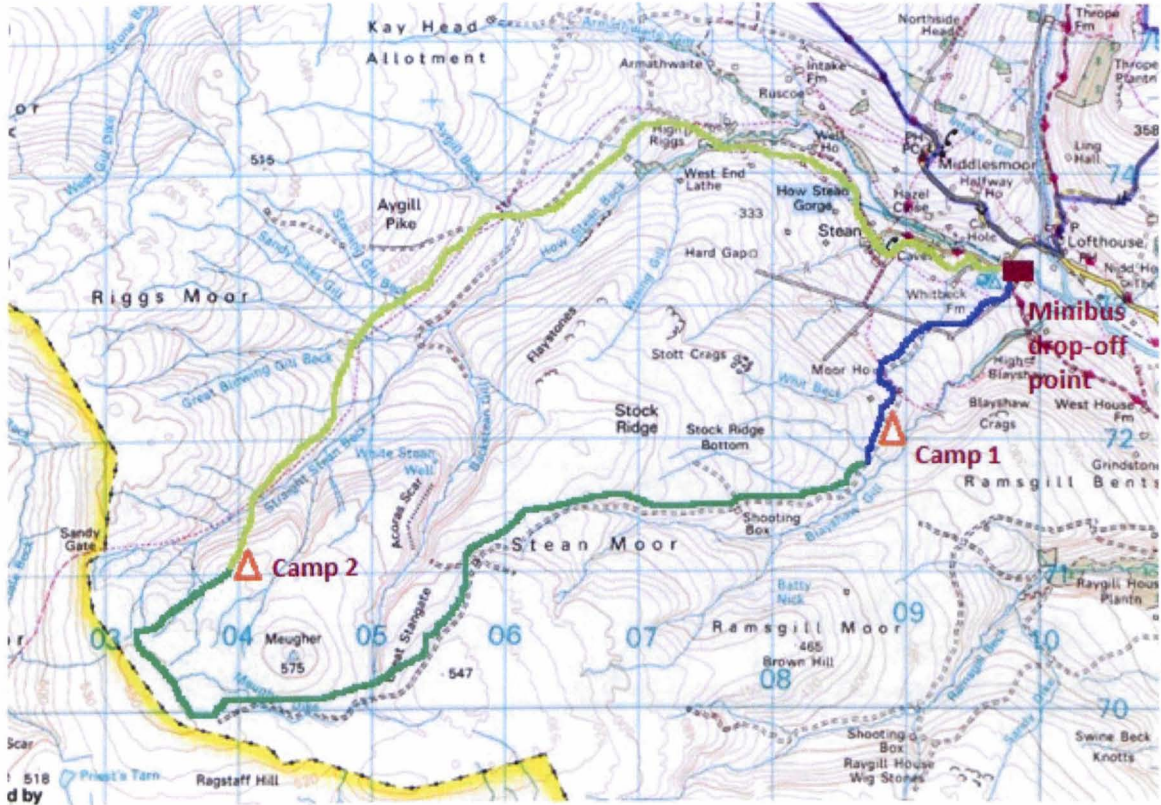
Appendix P: Study One Map and Phase Route



Key:

- Dark blue = exploration phase
- Dark green = journey phase 1
- Light green = journey phase 2
- Purple = journey phase 3
- Circle = solo phase
- Triangle symbol = wild camp
- House symbol = Mounthooly Bunkhouse

Appendix Q: Study Two Map and Phase Route/ Weekend 1



Key:

Dark blue = exploration phase

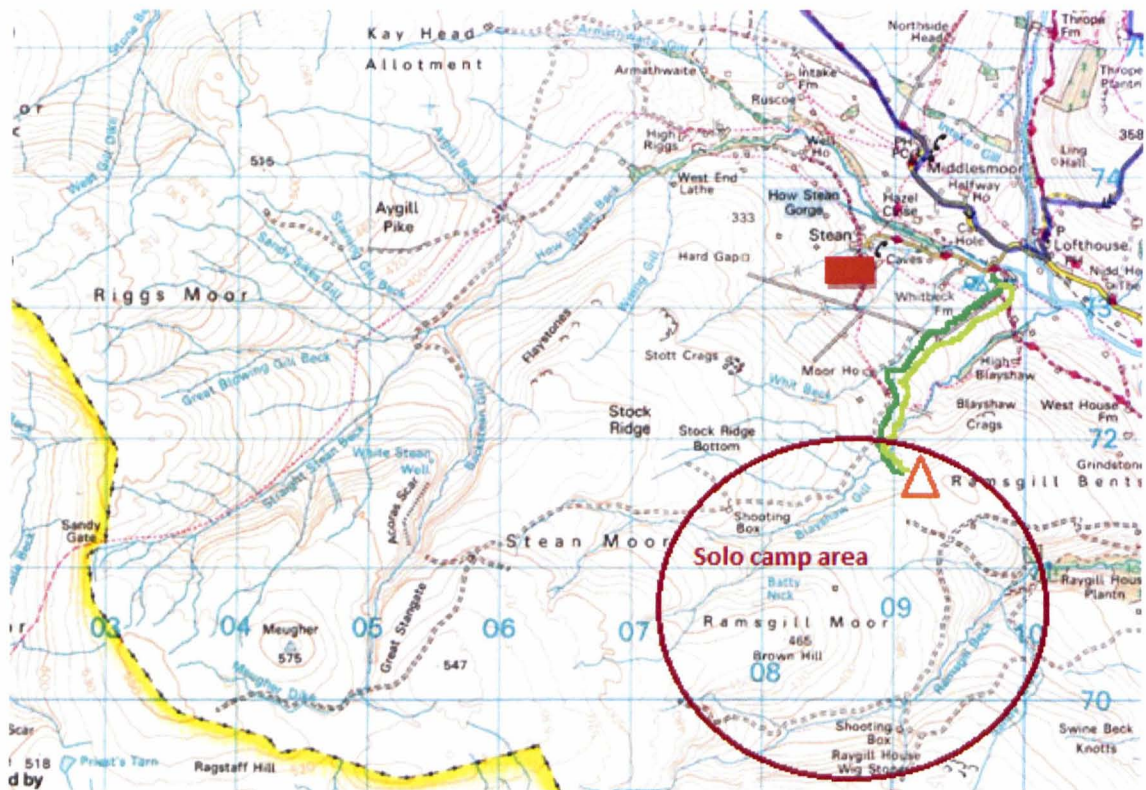
Dark green = journey phase 1

Light green = journey phase 2

Triangle symbol = wild camp

Square symbol = Starting and end point / mini-bus drop-off and pick-up point

Appendix R: Study Two Map and Phase Route/ Weekend 2



Key:

Dark green = journey phase 3

Light green = journey phase 4

Circle = solo phase area

Triangle symbol = wild camp

Square symbol = Starting and end point / mini-bus drop-off and pick-up point