

THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS OF AN ADVENTURE-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

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**(MEdPsych)
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SUPERVISOR: MS M M OSWALD

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DECLARATION

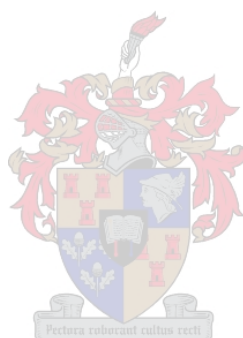
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ABSTRACT

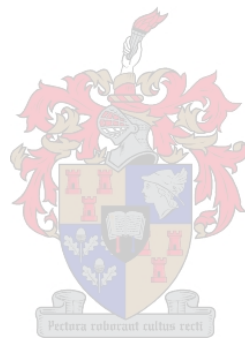
The effect of poverty, opportunity-deprived and unstructured home environments, HIV/Aids, violence and crime put more and more children and youth at risk of becoming increasingly involved in high-risk behaviour. The Western Cape Education Department (WCED) recognises the fact that the school is an ideal setting to reclaim youth, by redirecting them away from self-defeating and destructive ventures, through enhancing resilience and developing self-esteem. However, strong community links and intersectoral collaboration will be essential to support schools in their efforts to become reclaiming environments. Supportive strategies and various alternative modes of intervention should be explored in order to assist schools. Adventure-based education programmes, and in the case of this study, wilderness rites of passage programmes, are examples of alternative types of intervention that could be considered to support school communities.

The aim of this qualitative study was to explore the perceptions of youth about their wilderness rites of passage experience and the value they perceive the experience had for their lives. The researcher operated in an interpretive/constructivist paradigm. A qualitative research methodology was employed, which included purposive sampling to select participants, the use of individual interviews, documents, records, observations and reflections to collect data, and content analysis to analyse data.

Research findings arrived at indicated that participation in a wilderness rites of passage programme contributed to the personal growth and development of the participants and thereby, through strengthening their protective factors, enhanced resilience. Wilderness rites of passage programmes can therefore be a major contributing factor towards school support for young people. Findings also highlighted that young people in the South African context are in need of caring school communities and adult mentorship. Young people are in need of support, discipline, guidance, as well as experiences of trust, love and care. School environments should change from being places of disappointment and become places of safety and growth. Such a culture of care possibly could curb the anger,

resentment and distrust of youth and support learners who are experiencing or manifesting emotional or behavioural difficulties in schools.

Keywords: perception, adventure-based learning, wilderness rites of passage, experiential learning, Circle of Courage, adolescence, emotional and behavioural difficulties



OPSOMMING

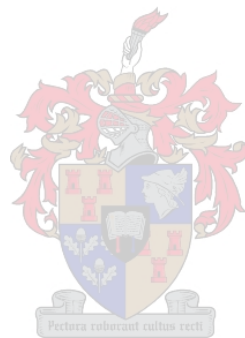
Die gevolg van armoede, ongestruktureerde huislike omgewings met 'n gebrek aan geleenthede, MIV/Vigs, geweld en misdaad stel meer en meer kinders en jongmense bloot om toenemende hoë risiko gedrag te openbaar. Die Wes Kaaplandse Onderwys Departement (WKOD) verklaar dat die skool 'n ideale omgewing is waar jeug teruggewen kan word deur hulle weg te lei van selfverydelende en verwoestende ondernemings met die verhoging van veerkragtigheid en die ontwikkeling van die selfbeeld. Sterk gemeenskapsbetrokkenheid en intersektorale samewerking sal egter noodsaaklik wees om skole te ondersteun in hulle pogings om omgewings te word wat daarin slaag om jeug terug te wen. Ondersteuningsstrategieë en verskeie alternatiewe maniere van intervensie sal ondersoek moet word om skole by te staan. Avontuurgebaseerde-opvoedingsprogramme, en in die geval van hierdie studie, wildernesdeurgangsrite-programme, is voorbeelde van alternatiewe tipes intervensie wat oorweeg kan word om skoolgemeenskappe te ondersteun.

Die doel van hierdie kwalitatiewe studie was om die sienings van adolessente te ondersoek jeens hulle wildernesdeurgangsrite-belewenis en die waarde wat hulle voel die ervaring vir hulle lewens gehad het. Die navorser het binne 'n interpretatiewe/konstruktivistiese paradigma gewerk. 'n Kwalitatiewe navorsingsmetodologie is gevolg en het die volgende ingesluit: doelbewuste seleksie om te bepaal wie die deelnemers was, individuele onderhoude, dokumente, rekords, observasies en refleksies om data te genereer en inhoudsanalise om die data te analiseer.

Navorsingsbevindinge dui aan dat deelname aan wildernesdeurgangsrite-programme bygedra het tot die persoonlike groei en ontwikkeling van deelnemers en daardeur, met versterking van hulle beskermende faktore, is veerkragtigheid verhoog. Wildernesdeurgangsrite-programme kan dan 'n belangrike bydraende faktor tot skoolondersteuning vir jongmense wees. Bevindinge het ook uitgewys dat jongmense in die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks 'n behoefte het aan besorgde skoolgemeenskappe en volwasse mentorskap. Jongmense benodig ondersteuning,

dissipline, leiding en belewenisse van vertrouwe, liefde en sorg. Skole sal van omgewings van teleurstelling moet verander en omgewings van veiligheid en groei moet word. So 'n besorgde kultuur kan woede, wrewel, en wantroue in jeug teëwerk en leerders ondersteun wat emosionele en gedragsprobleme ondervind of openbaar in skole.

Sleutelwoorde: persepsie, avontuurgebaseerde leer, wildernesdeurgangsrites, ervaringsleer, *Circle of Courage*, adolessensie, emosionele en gedragsprobleme



The financial assistance of the National Research Foundation (NRF) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at, are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the NRF.



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This acknowledgement would not be complete without mention of God, Creator of mankind and wilderness, and His astounding grace.

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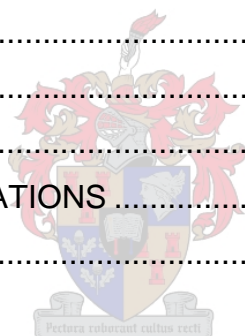
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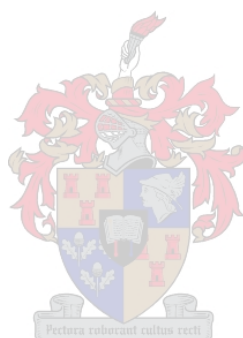
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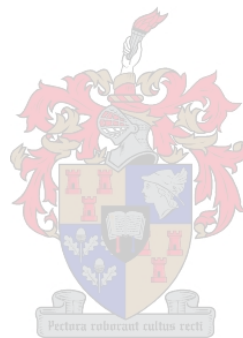
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CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT AND RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCING THE ENQUIRY

This research enquiry aims to explore wilderness rites of passage as an adventure-based experiential learning tool through an interpretivist/qualitative study. The study functions on the assumption that a wilderness rites of passage programme can serve as a valuable intervention strategy for school communities aiming to support youth who are manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional or behavioural difficulties. The enquiry will explore the perceptions of youth in the Western Cape, who have participated in an adventure-based education programme. The researcher hopes to gain more understanding of the youth's perceptions of the long-term impact the wilderness rites of passage encounter has had on their lives.

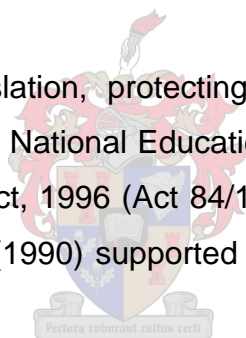
With regard to responding towards emotional and behavioural difficulties in youth, it should be noted that the shift in paradigms in the philosophy of science, from the positivist to the social constructivist perspective, has led to a related shift in education and psychology. Within the new paradigm, the focus no longer falls on the individualistic and curative but rather on a holistic and collaborative approach (Mittler, 2000; Swart & Pettipher, 2005). Challenging behaviour is no longer defined from a medical deficit perspective, which emphasises the control and punishment of inappropriate behaviour (Steyn, 2005). The emphasis has shifted towards a human rights and developmental, strength-based and restorative perspective, which aims at educating and reclaiming youth at risk of manifesting challenging behaviour (Steyn, 2005; WCED, 2005a).

As a result of the paradigm shift, South Africa has ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1990) in 1995 (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002). The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) legally binds the state to undertake appropriate measures for the implementation of the survival, developmental, protection and participation rights of children. The rights recognised in the CRC find expression in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act, 1996 (Act 108/1996). The Bill of Rights is grounded in the principle of respect for the rights and dignity of all. The Bill of Rights, Article 28, Chapter 2,

relates to the rights of children in particular and specifies that the best interests of the child should be of the utmost importance in all matters that concern the child (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002; Biersteker & Robinson, 2000).

In adherence to the rights recognised in the CRC, South African policy and legislation emphasise that children must be protected from any form of psychological or physical violence, injury or abuse (Department of Education, 2000a). Policies set parameters within which services to children are to be delivered through a wide range of different agencies acting on a national, provincial or local level (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000). The National Programme of Action for Children (NPA) (National Programme of Action Steering Committee, 1996 in Biersteker & Robinson, 2000) has been appointed as the vehicle to integrate and implement policies and plans of government departments and NGO's in order to promote the wellbeing of children and address childhood adversity (Biersteker & Robinson, 2000).

As a result of policy and legislation, protecting the rights of children, corporal punishment was abolished by the National Education Policy Act, 1996 (Act 27/1996), and the South African Schools Act, 1996 (Act 84/1996). The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) supported this move (Porteus, Vally & Ruth, 2001; Steyn, 2005).



The move away from the traditional use of control and punishment, set in motion by the CRC, strengthens the transformation process in education, which supports the nurturing of a culture of respect, tolerance and care, and encourages the building of self-discipline, self-confidence and self-esteem of individuals (Department of Education, 2000a; Porteus et al., 2001).

The transformation process in education is linked to Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001), which states that the school has to undergo a process of transformation in order to accommodate and address the diverse needs of all learners. This is possible if founded on a value system of "mutual acceptance, respect for diversity, a sense of belonging and social justice" (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 8).

According to Porteus et al., (2001) schools can impact society through the establishment of a culture of human rights, active democracy and responsible participation at the school level. One of the main priorities of education is to restore the value systems of society through values education. The Department of Education states that as part of the transformation process of education, values are placed in the centre of the new policy framework for education and training (Department of Education, 2000b). In short, the focus of new legislation falls on the development of a culture of democracy and peace celebrating human rights and the values of justice, equality, freedom and tolerance (Department of Education, 2000a). If the principles and values of equity, tolerance, openness and diversity can be instilled in schools, it may also spill over into society. This celebration of human rights can prepare children as citizens for democracy. In this way, education has the potential to influence change in society (Porteus et al., 2001).

However, the South African context poses a major challenge to the development of a culture of democracy and peace. Many children are placed at immense risk to experience emotional difficulties and manifest challenging behaviour in the light of the impact of HIV/Aids and poverty on society (Coetzee, 2005; Prinsloo, 2005). Children live in chronic poverty in overcrowded homes where proximal relationships are potentially unstable and where they are exposed to alcohol and possibly drug abuse and domestic violence (Dawes & Donald, 2000). Family life is breaking down and a disharmony exists in the relationships between parents and children (Prinsloo, 2005). In general, there is “an increasing loss of honesty, integrity, chastity, diligence, a pride in work well done, and respect for the lives and possessions of others” (Prinsloo as cited in Prinsloo, 2005, p. 453) resulting in an increase in corruption, crime, violence, moral and sexual licentiousness, egotism and greedy materialism (Coetzee, 2005; Prinsloo, 2005).

Given the above circumstances, challenging behaviour in schools is one of the major problems that South African educators have to face (Prinsloo, 2005). Debilitating effects of factors such as poverty, HIV/Aids, substance abuse, violence and crime put an increasing number of children and youth at risk of manifesting inappropriate behaviour, leaving more and more educators unable to deal with the situation

(Coetzee, 2005; WCED, 2005a). Disruptive behaviour in general and a reluctance to accept authority result in the disempowering of educators (Prinsloo, 2005).

The abolition of corporal punishment has left many school educators without alternatives to deal effectively with unacceptable learner behaviour. Discipline problems including violence, vandalism, bullying and disruptive classroom behaviour, undermine instruction, create environments not conducive to learning and pose a threat to the school population (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler & Feinberg, 2005). This situation calls for the implementation of alternative disciplinary practices and procedures to educate and reclaim vulnerable learners (WCED, 2004). Positive behaviour in schools must be encouraged by equipping educators to identify, manage and respond to challenging behaviour in a developmental and restorative way, thereby guiding youth towards pro-social and responsible behaviour (Coetzee, 2005; WCED, 2005a).

Proactive and constructive alternatives to corporal punishment are essential and should contribute to the growth of wellbeing in children and youth resulting in respect, tolerance and responsibility (Department of Education, 2000a). Such efforts will contribute to a positive culture of learning and teaching in schools and a safe and orderly school environment promoting “academic excellence, positive socialisation, responsible citizenship, and healthy lifestyles” (Coetzee, 2005, p. 185).

This is also in line with what the World Health Organisation (WHO) defines as a health-promoting school where health is defined as the absence of disease as well as a state of entire physical, mental and social wellness (Du Preez, 2004). Such a holistic view recognises the interrelated connections between mental states and physical wellbeing. Health is strongly connected to wellness models, which focus on the biopsychosocial/spiritual systems of individuals (Myers & Sweeney, 2005; Van Niekerk, Van Eeden & Botha, 2001). Health promotion should therefore attempt to develop and strengthen the functioning of individuals and communities in a variety of domains and purposefully seek to develop supporting environments that nurture health for the whole school population (Engelbrecht, 2001; Lazarus, Daniels & Engelbrecht, 1999).

In striving towards health promotion, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) aims “to combat the root causes of crime and violence by assisting schools in their efforts to become centres of excellence with strong community links to promote youth development” (WCED, 2005b, p. 1). In 2001, the WCED has published the Policy On Special Education Services For Learners Manifesting Or At Risk Of Experiencing Emotional And/Or Behavioural Difficulties (WCED, 2005a). This policy provides a support model for vulnerable youth. The support model emphasises prevention, early identification and intervention, and positive youth development. Instead of following the traditional punitive route of detention, suspension or expulsion, school-based developmental programmes implement practices that support positive school environments and provide developmental, educational and therapeutic programmes and restorative interventions. In order to fully integrate the approach, all relevant policies have been aligned with the reclaiming and restorative philosophy (Coetzee, 2005).

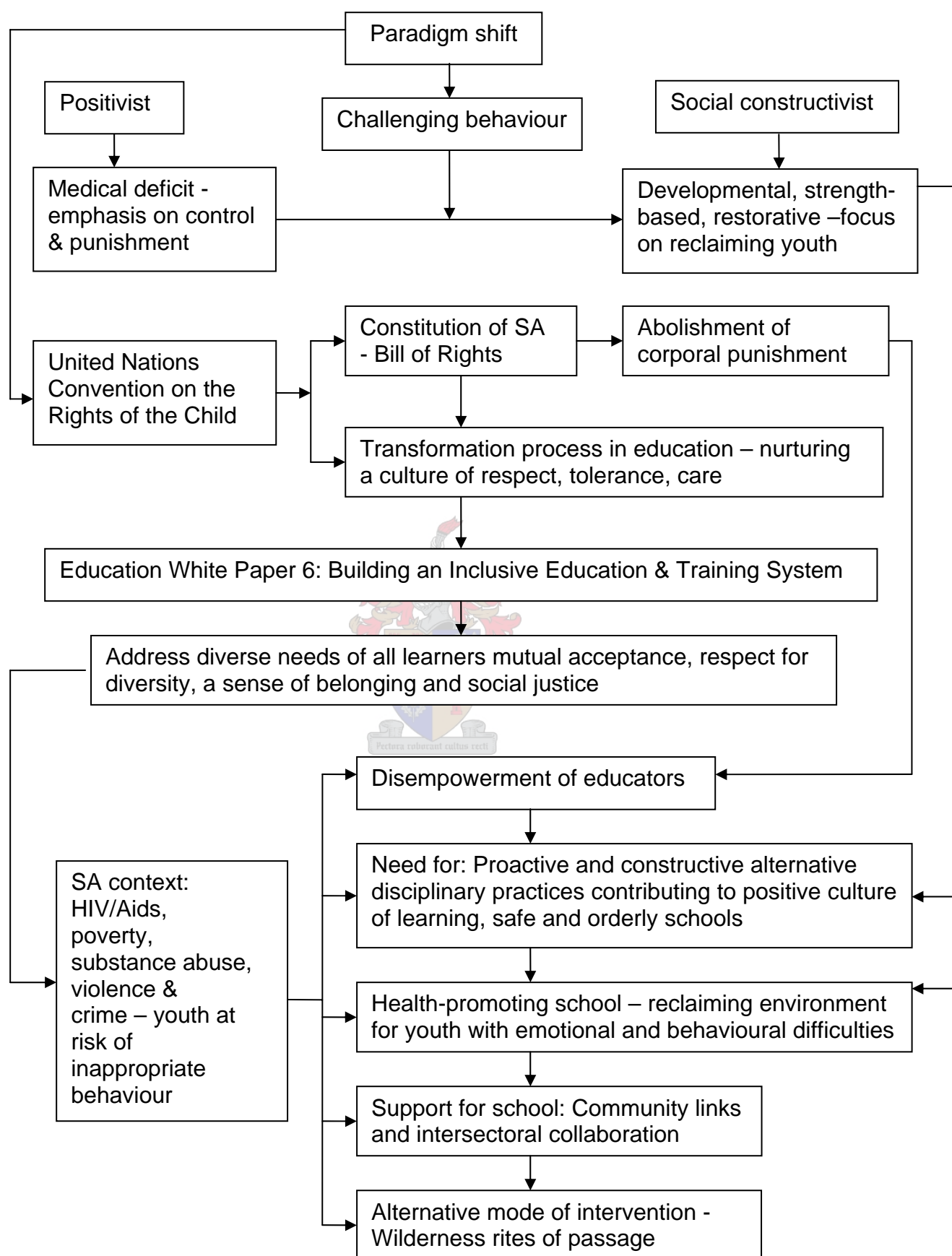
The policy providing the support model was followed by the release of the Minimum Standards For Special Education Services For Learners Manifesting, Or At Risk Of Experiencing Emotional And/Or Behavioural Difficulties (WCED, 2004) and the Strategy For Encouraging Positive Behaviour And Responding To Challenging Behaviour In Public Schools (WCED, 2005a). The Positive Behaviour Strategy focuses on prevention, intervention and school-based support programmes as well as youth care centres and special centres for vulnerable youth (Coetzee, 2005; WCED, 2005a). The timeliness of this strategy is evident as conditions for teaching are worsening and educators, according to Gaum (2004), daily have to face unacceptable learner behaviour. “A lack of knowledge about and a lack of skills in effective behaviour management practices have fuelled a sense of hopelessness and failure in educators trying desperately to cope with a deteriorating situation” (Gaum, 2004, p. 1). The strategy is based on a restorative approach towards challenging behaviour and promotes a reclaiming school environment. Learners are re-directed away from self-defeating and destructive ways and are enabled to grow and experience themselves as whole and competent, progressing towards independence and responsibility and developing a greater sense of wellbeing and self-worth (WCED, 2004).

The WCED recognises the fact that the school is an ideal setting to reclaim youth by redirecting them away from destructive ventures, through enhancing resilience and developing self-esteem and responsible pro-social behaviour. This is supported by the Children's Amendment Bill of the Republic of South Africa 2006 (Insertion of Chapter 8 in Act 38 of 2005). It clearly states that prevention and early intervention programmes must focus on promoting the wellbeing of children and the realisation of their full potential. However, strong community links and intersectoral collaboration are essential to support schools in their efforts to become reclaiming environments in order to promote the wellbeing of children (WCED, 2005a). Therefore, supportive strategies and various alternative modes of intervention should be explored in order to assist schools and ensure the sustained impact of the school's reclaiming environment.

One type of intervention strategy that may be explored for its efficacy to support schools is wilderness rites of passage programmes. Research findings have demonstrated that wilderness rites of passage encounters have a positive effect on the development of self-esteem and social skills and that it can significantly enhance youth resilience and mental wellbeing (Davis, 2003; Neill & Dias, 2001; Russell, 1999). Wilderness rites of passage programmes are recognised in South Africa as one of the innovative responses to the challenges faced by vulnerable youth (Allsopp & Thumbadoo, 2002). It is used on a regular basis as a suitable option for diversion (Steyn, 2005; Wood, 2003). Diversion is defined as a strategy in the youth justice system and is supported by the Child Justice Bill (Republic of South Africa, 2002) and by the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, which is responsible for managing the transformation process of the child and youth care system (Steyn, 2005). Diversion, being based on restorative justice philosophy, aims to channel youth offenders away from formal prosecution into programmes that help young people to understand why offences occur, and what they can do to repair the damage caused (Steyn, 2005).

Figure 1.1 provides a schematic presentation of the introduction to this study.

Figure 1.1: Schematic presentation of the introduction to the study



1.2 PROBLEM STATEMENT

If wilderness rites of passage programmes have such a significant impact on youth offenders that it is recognised as a suitable option for diversion, it makes one wonder why it cannot be implemented as a school-based strategy for the health promotion of learners who are manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Despite literature claims of the efficacy of wilderness-based adventure experiences significantly impacting the self-worth and resilience of youth, little research has been done on the perceptions of youth in South Africa explaining the impact their wilderness rites of passage encounter have had on their lives in terms of long-term outcomes. This study aims to explore a specific type of adventure-based education programme, namely wilderness rites of passage. The researcher is interested to find out how youth participants perceive their wilderness encounter as influencing their lives in order to explain why wilderness rites of passage will be a viable prevention/intervention option for schools in dealing with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It is assumed that insight gained from this study can further the field of developing support for school communities in order to optimally provide for learners who are at risk of manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties. Understanding the meaning that youth ascribe to activities may help with providing appropriate activities focused on maintaining the interest of, and supporting adolescents. Awareness gained from this study can make a contribution to a vast field that still needs to be explored.

1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY

In the light of the problem statement, the researcher will attempt through a qualitative study to explore the perceptions adolescents associate with a wilderness rites of passage encounter and the long-term impact they perceive the encounter has had on their lives in terms of outcomes.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The primary research question this study aims to answer is:

- What are the perceptions of youth regarding adventure-based education with specific focus on their wilderness rites of passage encounter and how do they perceive the encounter has had influenced (impacted) their lives?

The following sub-questions have been formulated:

- How do the participants explain the wilderness rites of passage process and their responses to the process from their own point of view?
- Which factors in the process are deemed most effective and have had the greatest impact on participants?
- What role can wilderness rites of passage play in supporting youth at risk of manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools?

1.5 RESEARCH PARADIGM AND -DESIGN

1.5.1 Research paradigm

Research must be done within a certain paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Paradigms are all-encompassing systems of understanding, which define the practice and thinking of the researcher along three dimensions: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology stipulates the nature of the reality to be studied. Epistemology focuses on the nature of the relationship between the researcher and the knowledge he/she seeks to gain. Methodology provides the researcher with practical guidelines on conducting the study in order to gain the knowledge he/she believes is out there (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999).

This study will be embedded in an interpretive/constructivist paradigm. This combination of the interpretive paradigm and constructivism claims that there are multiple realities. Each reality is created through a process of social construction resulting in a particular phenomenon that has different meanings to different people (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). The interpretive paradigm is a way of studying human experience through an empathetic identification with the individual. It is essential to understand the experience from the perception of the participant (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). The researcher wants to make sense of a phenomenon and should become a natural part of the context in which the phenomenon occurs, engaging with participants in an open and empathic way (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The researcher tries to understand the “lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt in Mertens, 2005, p. 13).

Kelly (2002b) presents a combined approach to interpretive research. He combines ‘first-person’ or ‘insider’ views, which incorporates the empathic understanding of phenomena within the context, with ‘third-person’ or ‘outsider’ views, incorporating

distanciation or an understanding from outside the context. He argues that even when a context is fully understood from the inside, certain aspects about the context will only become evident when examined from the outside (Kelly, 2002b). In the process of interpretive research, a balance between the insider and outsider views must be maintained.

The constructivist paradigm explores how people in a specific setting have constructed reality (Patton, 2002). It looks at their perceptions, beliefs and explanations and the consequences of their constructions for themselves and those with whom they interact (Patton, 2002). Guba and Lincoln (2005) state that meaning-making activities are of fundamental concern to constructivists, because activities of meaning-making shape action and/or inaction (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

Being embedded in the interpretive/constructivist paradigm then, the researcher will seek to understand the perceptions of participants of their wilderness rites of passage encounter and how they perceive the encounter has influenced their lives.

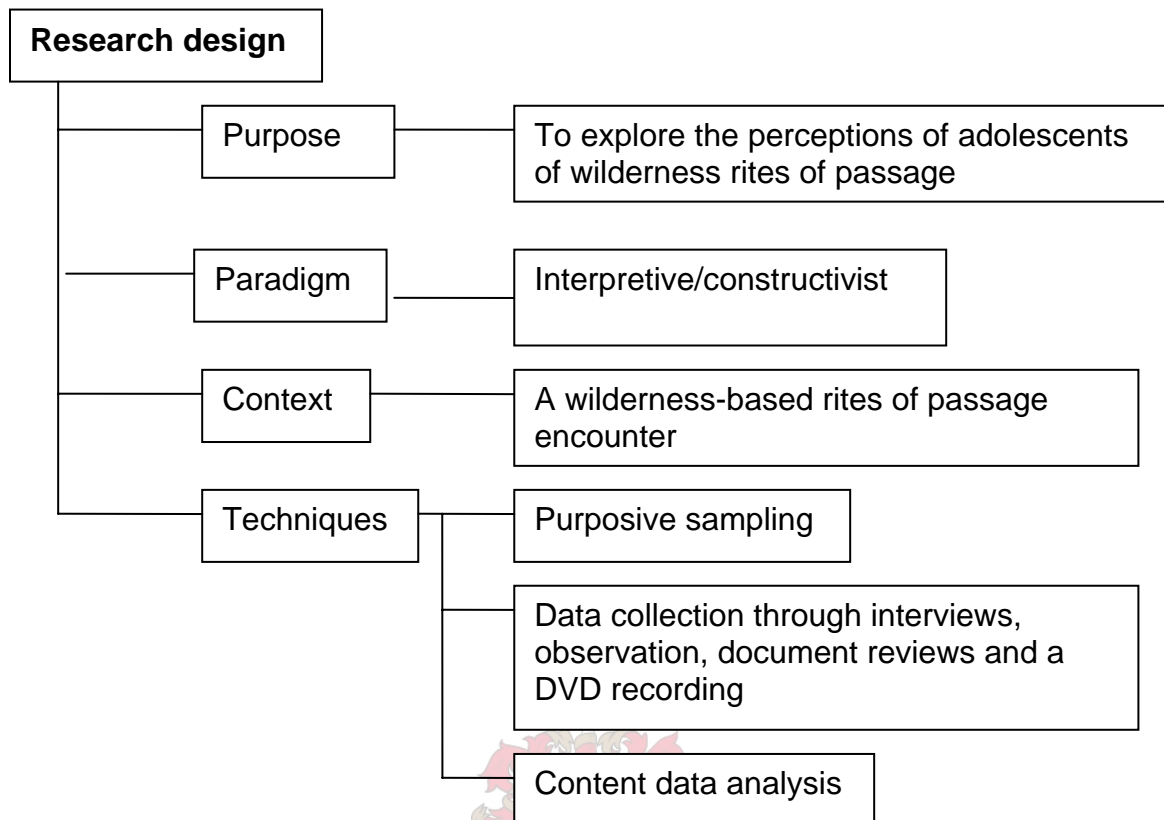
1.5.2 Research design

“A research design is a strategic framework for action that serves as a bridge between research questions and the execution or implementation of the research” (Durrheim, 1999, p. 29). The research design provides the plan that will guide the researcher in conducting the study, in order to ensure that valid and sound conclusions will be produced (Babbie & Mouton, 2001; Durrheim, 1999).

Different research designs attempt to answer different research problems and therefore employ different combinations of methods or procedures (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Durrheim (1999) describes the research design as a combination of four dimensions: the purpose of the research, the paradigm informing the research, the context within which the research is conducted and the relevant research techniques that will be employed for data collection and analysis.

Figure 1.2 provides a schematic presentation of the research design, applicable to this study.

Figure 1.2: Schematic presentation of the research design



1.6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study will be undertaken in the form of a basic qualitative study. The basic qualitative study seeks to understand a phenomenon and the perceptions of the people involved (Merriam, 1998).

The basic qualitative study typifies the characteristics of qualitative research. Qualitative research is interested in the meaning making process of people and how they make sense of their worlds and the experiences they have (Merriam, 1998). The goal of qualitative research is to describe and understand, rather than to explain and predict human behaviour (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher is on a quest to gain understanding of a particular context and the nature of the interactions within that context (Patton in Merriam, 1998).

This study will therefore seek to understand the meanings participants attach to their experience of wilderness rites of passage.

1.6.1 Selection of participants

Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) define the target population as all group members to whom the researcher wishes to generalise the results of the research. The sample group includes all the individuals from whom data will actually be collected since it is impossible to collect data from all group members in the target population.

Purposeful sampling is one option a researcher has for selecting a sample. Purposeful sampling is done according to relevant criteria based on the purpose of the research (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004; Patton, 2002). The aim of purposive sampling is to assist the researcher in getting a range of illuminative ideas from information-rich cases allowing him/her to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Kelly, 2002a; Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Patton (2002) identified several different strategies in order to purposefully select illuminative cases. One relevant to this study would be criterion sampling – selecting specific cases that meet some predetermined criterion in order to illuminate the research questions under study and allowing an in-depth enquiry of the phenomenon (Patton, 2002). For the purpose of this study, participants, from whom information of central importance to the purpose of the study will be derived, will have to meet the following criteria: adolescents who have completed an Educo Africa programme for vulnerable youth within twenty-four months preceding the study.

1.6.2 Method of data collection

Merriam (1998) states that researchers conducting basic qualitative studies typically use three main methods for collecting data: observation, interviews and the reviewing of documents and records. These methods will also be used to collect data in this study.

The purpose of observation is to enhance the understanding of the context within which interactions take place (Patton, 2002). Observations added to interviews can provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. Interviews employ techniques of observation “to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed” (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, p. 673).

Kelly (2002a) states that speaking entails more than the mere production of words. Bodies speak through gestural language. Research is limited when the focus only falls on people's verbal descriptions of experiences. Words alone can be deceptive and people can refrain from giving an open and honest account of their feelings and thoughts. It is necessary to move beyond the words and to employ the visual sense, as a mode of making sense of gestures and bodily interactions, to understand most aspects of a person's experience (Kelly, 2002a). The method of observation, therefore, provides opportunities to move beyond the selective perceptions of people when being interviewed (Patton, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews will be conducted in this study. This form of interviewing allows for casual conversations in order for the researcher to become more aware of the meanings ascribed by participants to phenomena (Mertens, 2005; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Thereby, the participants become co-enquirers instead of research subjects (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). Open-ended questions are used to ensure coverage of important issues, yet allow for flexibility in responding (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002).

Documentary resources such as records, documents, letters and artefacts can be useful in qualitative research. Organisations all leave document and record trails that could hold great potential as data sources regarding the background of specific situations and insights into the dynamics of day to day functioning (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Documents and records make information, which cannot be observed and will otherwise be unavailable, more accessible to the researcher (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004; Patton, 2002). Personal documents, such as, letters written after the programme, give individuals the opportunity to give expression to their views (Redfield in Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) also consider audio or video tapes and artefacts as documents and records. It has great potential as a data source as it can give the necessary background information and insight into the dynamics of the phenomenon under study.

1.6.3 Data analysis

Content analysis will be used in this study. It refers "to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to

identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). In qualitative content analysis the researcher starts by preparing transcripts of the raw interviews. The analysis starts when the entire text is read to get a global impression of the content. The text is then re-read to start identifying units of meaning. As the researcher works through the data, the units of meaning are labelled with codes. Related codes can then be categorised after which different categories are also labelled. Categories reveal themes that are constructed from the data. Each theme can be used as the basis for an argument. The themes are evidence with which to substantiate the arguments about the emerging knowledge claims of the researcher (Henning, Van Rensburg & Smit, 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

1.7 A REVIEW OF KEY CONCEPTS

Before an outline of this study is given, certain key concepts need to be clarified.

1.7.1 Perception

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2002) define perception as how people understand the meaning of things. Different people will perceive the same phenomenon in different ways. Jordaan and Jordaan (2004) argue that the term ‘perception’ not only refers to the processing of information but also to the interpretation and assigning of meaning to information received through the sensory systems. People experience and apply their created meanings to their particular situations, thereby affecting their attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.

1.7.2 Adventure-based learning

Adventure-based learning mainly “focuses on intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships and on facilitating behaviour change, personal development and human growth through actual lived experiences” (Human, 2006, p. 217). It is a form of experiential learning that uses physically or psychologically demanding adventurous activities in order to provide participants with the opportunity to accomplish compelling tasks (Human, 2006; Kriek, 2005). The essence of adventure-based education is to provide controlled exposure to challenging experiences through employing real and/or perceived risk in a group atmosphere characterised by warmth and support (Kriek, 2005; Neill & Dias, 2001). Opportunities are created to express

verbal and non-verbal insights prior to and after the activity to enhance the transfer of lessons learned to behavioural change (Kriek, 2005).

1.7.3 Wilderness rites of passage

“The practice of going into the wilderness for insight, growth and healing has existed for millennia. Members of communities around the world, throughout history, have on occasion, left their homes and journeyed in the wilderness. The journey revolves around the growth, in various spheres, of the individual and also of the community to which he or she returns” (Robertson, 2000, p. 48).

As in nature, the lives of people are marked by seasonal change. In wilderness rites of passage, the importance of marking the movement from season to season is recognised. By marking the essential thresholds, people start to realise their potential and become aware of opportunities for inner growth (Educo Africa, 2000).

“In the natural world we find mirrored the cycles and seasons of life. A journey up a mountain forms a metaphor for life’s passage; the dying winter is followed by the buds of spring. The wide clear horizons allow the heart to stretch open, the gentle space and sanctuary of the wilderness makes the ideal setting for contemplation, healing, reflection and growth. Going out into nature is also going in. A wilderness ‘rites of passage’ experience, guided by Elder role models, uses this concept to shed light on internal issues during times of transition and transformation” (Educo Africa, 2000, p. 94).

Traditionally three phases are included in a Rites of Passage process: *a time of severance*, acknowledging the movement away from the past and preparing for the changes ahead, *a threshold process* including a time of solitude and incorporation involving mentoring, and finally *the return* to the community (Educo Africa, 2000).

1.7.4 Experiential learning

Beard and Wilson (2002) argue that the interaction between the self and the external environment can result in learning and therefore they define learning as “the process

whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb as cited in Beard & Wilson, 2002, p. 16). However, they also add that despite the fact that experience underpins all learning, it does not necessarily result in learning for one should “purposefully engage... in direct experience and focused reflection in order to increase knowledge, develop skills, and clarify values” (Association for Experiential Education in Breunig, 2005, p. 108). Therefore, experience-based learning is a process of participation in which knowledge is constructed, skills are acquired and values are enhanced from direct experience (Human, 2006; Luckner & Nadler, 1997). “Experiential learning occurs when individuals engage in some activity, reflect upon the activity critically, derive some useful insight from the analysis, and incorporate the result through a change in understanding and/or behaviour” (Luckner & Nadler, 1997, p. 3).

1.7.5 Circle of Courage

The Circle of Courage is described by Brendtro, Brokenleg and Van Bockern (2005) as the four universal values, necessary for positive youth development. According to the Circle of Courage, all children need to experience Belonging, Mastery, Independence and Generosity. Instead of defining the problems of youth according to traditional perspectives in terms of deficits, the focus in the Circle of Courage rather shifts to a preoccupation with strengths and developmental needs. A broken Circle of Courage, where a sense of Belonging is replaced with split families, hostile schools, and rejection from peers, instil in children feelings of alienation from positive adults and peers. This can cause them to drift away emotionally and morally. When Mastery is replaced by a feeling of failure, disconnected youth will not develop to their full potential. The lack of opportunities for Independence deprives youth of opportunities to make responsible decisions, thereby breeding irresponsibility. Instead of being exposed to Generosity, children are exposed to a world where most things are valued according to wealth and worth. This preoccupation leads to selfishness and the stunting of the natural ability to care and contribute to others (Brendtro et al., 2005).

1.7.6 Adolescence

Meyer (2005) defines adolescence as the transition period between childhood and early adulthood. Adolescence starts with sexual maturation or when puberty starts.

For girls this is the onset of menstruation and for boys the first seminal emission. These provide definite criteria for the beginning of adolescence, but it is more difficult to define the end of this period in the life cycle (Meyer, 2005). In South Africa adolescence legally ends at the age of 18.

The main developmental tasks during adolescence are the forming of a self-identity and realistic but positive self-concept, autonomy from parents, gender role identification and internalised morality (Meyer, 2005). Kroger (2007) states that identity development entails experiencing changes in social expectations to become sensitive to and start developing genuinely meaningful identity-defining psychosocial roles, values and life goals.

Together with emotional and sexual development and bodily maturation, the adolescent also has to cope with adapting to relationship changes with adults and peers, educational development and vocational preparation. This could contribute to the adolescent experiencing inner conflict and emotional turmoil (Finestone, 2004; Gouws, Kruger & Burger, 2000).

1.8 STRUCTURE OF THE PRESENTATION

Following the above layout, the structure of the presentation will be discussed in short.

In Chapter 1, the study is contextualised and its relevance is explained. An outline of the problem statement, research aim, -paradigm, -design, methodology of the study and a review of key concepts are provided.

In Chapter 2, a review of literature that pertains to Wilderness Rites of Passage as an adventure-based education programme is explored.

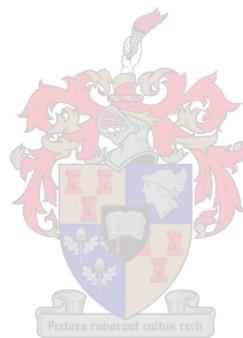
In Chapter 3, the research paradigm, design and methodology of the study are described. The collection, analysis and verification of data, as well as ethical considerations related to the study, are explained.

Chapter 4 focuses on the implementation of the study. The research findings will be produced and discussed in detail.

In Chapter 5, the study will be concluded. Focus will also fall on the limitations and strengths of the study and recommendations for further research will be made.

1.9 CONCLUSION

This chapter included the motivation for the study and focused on the problem statement and the aims of the research project. The research design, methodology, methods of data collection and analysis and relevant key concepts were briefly discussed. The chapter was concluded with an outline of the structure of the presentation.



CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

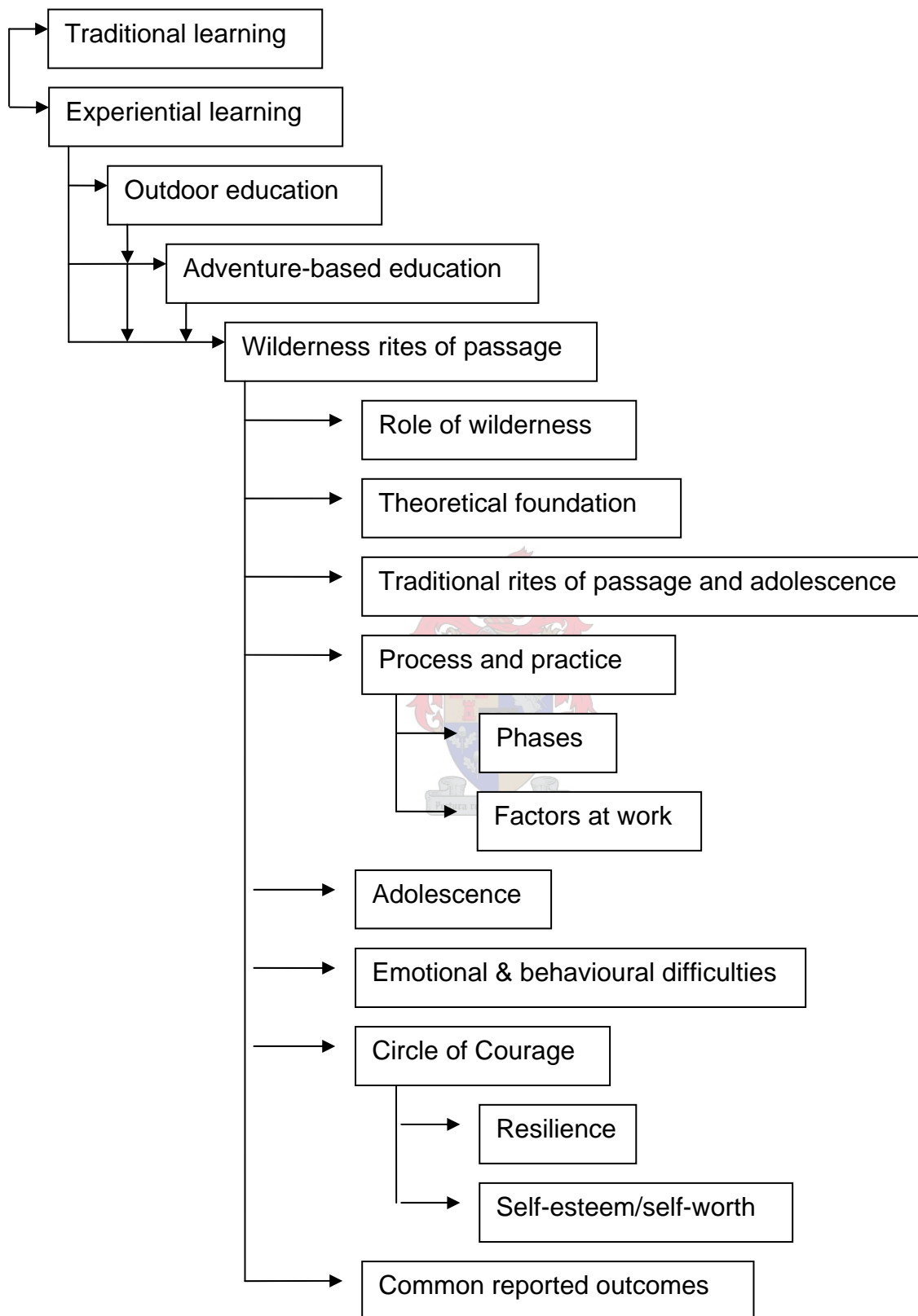
2.1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of reviewing literature relevant to this study is to advance the argument of the study as conveyed in Chapter 1. In addition, the literature review will serve as an important source for planning and conducting the research as well as for explaining expected and unexpected findings (Henning et al., 2004; Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). A review of literature, as discussed in this chapter, will focus on an adventure-based education programme, employing 'wilderness rites of passage' as an approach. This chapter will synthesise available literature into a conceptual framework, illuminating wilderness rites of passage as a suitable approach to promote the health of learners who are experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is argued that insight gained from this study, can further the field of developing support for school communities in order to optimally provide for learners who are manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Numerous prevention and intervention programmes have been designed in an attempt to support youth who display socially unacceptable behaviour. In South Africa, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk, has reconstructed the child and youth care programmes by embracing a strengths perspective, based on positive psychology (Brendtro et al., 2005), and adopting the reclaiming philosophy as one of its foundation philosophies (Roberts, 2000). The Committee has adopted the Circle of Courage as the basic model for strength-building interventions. Adventure-based education programmes are recognised worldwide as strength-building interventions for youth manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties (Neill & Dias, 2001). The literature review will cover basic forms of learning, and will elaborate on adventure-based education programmes as an experiential learning medium. Specific focus will then fall on the theoretical framework of wilderness rites of passage. The Circle of Courage, as basic methodology in wilderness rites of passage programmes, will also be discussed.

Figure 2.1 provides a schematic presentation of the literature review.

Figure 2.1: Schematic presentation of the literature review



2.2 TRADITIONAL LEARNING

The two basic forms of learning are traditional and experiential learning (Coleman & Kirk in Human, 2006). Traditional learning is described as teacher-centred, as the emphasis falls on the teacher as central role player, transmitting knowledge and skills, and systematically reinforcing correct responses from learners through practice and drill exercises (Pollard, 2005). The learner has a passive role while the teacher is in charge, selecting, pacing and evaluating learning activities. The subject matter may not connect with the existing understanding or be relevant to the daily experiences of learners (Pollard, 2005). The orientation of traditional learning can either be cognitive or behaviourist. Cognitive learning focuses on “acquiring, analysing, memorising and recalling information” (Human, 2006, p. 217). Behavioural learning focuses on stimulus and response conditioning. This overshadows the individual’s “internal thought processes and personal experiences” (Human, 2006, p. 217). The lack of building meaningful understanding can result in a reduction of motivation and achievement (Pollard, 2005).

2.3 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Experiential education is described as an alternative approach to the cognitive and behaviourist approaches (Hopkins & Putnam in Human, 2006). Being learner-centred, it focuses on the learner acquiring skills (Human, 2006). The process entails the participation in activities and upon completion, reflection on these activities (Priest & Gass in Human, 2006). Learning takes place through fun filled, active and exhilarating experiences (Long, 2001). In experiential learning, the learners need to be aware and involved in a process that is deeply meaningful to them. The holistic self, as in body, thoughts, feelings and actions are involved (Andrews, 1999; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). An essential aspect of experiential learning is the opportunity to transfer learning from the specific experience to other situations and settings of everyday life (Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Wilson and Beard (2002) argue that experiential learning can take place indoors and outdoors but that the opening of doors presents a learning arena that provides “an endless array of experiences... to interact with the terrain, the natural elements and the spirituality associated with the outdoors” (Beard & Wilson, 2002, p. 92). Outdoor education is therefore recognised as an essential component of experiential education (Andrews, 1999; Long, 2001).

2.4 OUTDOOR EDUCATION

Outdoor education is based on the philosophy that optimal learning occurs through direct and purposeful contact with and guided reflection on the learning experience (Priest & Gass, 1997). The experience in the wilderness becomes a metaphor for what lies beyond what is known and safe in the outside world (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). Relationships between people and the natural environment play a major part in outdoor education. Priest (in Priest & Gass, 1997) has identified four relationships that play a role in outdoor education: *Interpersonal relationships* refer to how people get along in a group and include aspects such as communication, cooperation, trust, conflict resolution and problem solving occurring in a group context. *Intrapersonal relationships* refer to how individuals get along with themselves and include aspects such as the self-concept, confidence and self-efficacy. *Ecosystemic relationships* refer to the interdependence of organisms in an ecosystem. *Ekistic relationships* refer to the interactions between humanity and resources in the natural environment.

Outdoor education can be sub-divided into adventure and environmental education (Priest & Gass, 1997). The focus in adventure education falls on inter- and intrapersonal relationships while environmental education is concerned with ecosystemic and ekistic relationships (Priest & Gass, 1997). In the next section, the focus will fall on adventure-based education programmes.

2.5 ADVENTURE-BASED EDUCATION

The adventure education process entails the following: a variety of physically or psychologically demanding outdoor activities, engagement in a remote and unfamiliar natural setting, experiential learning in a group setting, employment of real and/or perceived physical or psychological risk, meaning making through insights inferred from verbal and non-verbal interactions before and after the activity and connecting the structure of the activity with the resolution of the problem. Making this connection contributes to the transfer of lessons learned and possible behavioural change (Haluza-DeLay, 1999; Human, 2006; Kriek, 2005; Priest & Gass, 1997).

Adventure-based education programmes are structured around a sequence of cooperative group activities, aiming to improve interpersonal skills, capacity to trust,

and self-esteem of group members (Alvarez & Welsh in Moote & Wodarski, 1997). The group provides emotional safety and support for all members through reciprocal interaction and the sharing of strengths and weaknesses (Priest & Gass, 1997). Establishing interpersonal relationships within groups, contributes to changed behaviour and personal development (Human, 2006). Emphasis falls on increasing participants' sense of self-confidence and pleasure in their physical selves and in being with others, developing mutual support within the group and enhancing familiarity and identification with the natural world (Ronke in Moote & Wodarski, 1997).

Other elements involved are problem solving, decision-making and communication skills, as well as personal challenges where competence is tested against mental, social and physical risks (Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Priest & Gass, 1997). Risk is structured in such a way that participants perceive it as enormously high. In actual effect, risk is much lower than perceived and is used as a tool to produce change and growth (Priest & Gass, 1997). Selye (in Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988) introduces the idea that avoidance of situations, that normally evokes a stressful response, is an ineffective way of dealing with stress. He suggests that by approaching challenging activities with the right attitude 'eustress' can be promoted. This more balanced response tends to promote physical and mental wellbeing. Adventure experiences provide a climate that promotes change by increasing the motivation to change through the use of eustress and clear feedback concerning consequences of appropriate and inappropriate behaviours (Selye in Schoel et al., 1988).

The unfamiliarity and ambiguity of previous experience with adventure activities cause participants to project a true representation of their behaviour patterns and personalities onto the unfamiliar situation (Kimball in Priest & Gass, 1997). The encounter with adventure offers great freedom, and upon interpreting the challenges, the participants respond to it. The greater the freedom and the higher the stress experienced, the more likely the participants will 'project' unique and individual personality aspects onto the situation (Kimball in Priest & Gass, 1997). Careful observation of these responses can allow the accurate identification of life-long behaviour patterns, dysfunctional coping mechanisms, intellectual processes, conflicts, needs and emotional reactions (Kimball in Priest & Gass, 1997).

Besides for the controlled exposure to challenging situations, there are other key elements that need special mentioning: *Trust building* – Trust building activities prove to group members that the group is trustworthy in risk situations and foster reliance on one another. *Goal setting* – Individuals experience psychological success when opportunities are given to define personal goals. Success increases when the goals are a realistic challenge, are related to the person's central needs and values and when clear paths are defined that will lead to accomplishing these goals (Lewin in Schoel et al., 1988). *Peak experiences* – Maslow defines peak experiences as acute identity experiences of a positive kind. Things just 'come together' and because of the positive and joyful aspects thereof, it can be used as beacons for the group. Such validating times bond participants to the group and to a deeper understanding of the healing and growth processes that are active during an adventure activity (Schoel et al., 1988). *Humor and fun* – Humor and laughter act as mechanisms to fight stress. *Problem solving* – Participants are put in situations where they continually have to work as a team in order to solve specific problems. Chances of achievement increase as participants learn effective problem-solving skills and stay motivated to persist in spite of difficult or stressful situations (Schoel et al., 1988).

The response of participants to the seemingly insurmountable tasks assists them in overcoming self-imposed perceptions of the capabilities of the self (Priest & Gass, 1997). The product of adventure education is the development of the individual through increased self-knowledge and the fostering of intra- and interpersonal growth (Meyer & Wenger in Shread & Golby, 2006). It also improves psychosocial functioning by enhancing self-esteem, establishing an internal locus of control, and improving life skills in conflict resolution and problem solving (Bloemhoff, 2006; Neill & Richards in Shread & Golby, 2006). These aims are congruent with the aims of positive psychology, which seeks to foster personal development and growth, psychological wellness and optimal functioning (Linley & Joseph in Shread & Golby, 2006). "Positive psychology is a constellation of personality styles (e.g. mental toughness, hardiness, dispositional optimism), positive self-concept (e.g. self-esteem, self-efficacy) and positive emotions and moods (e.g. positive affectivity)" (Sheard & Golby, 2006, p. 5). Research findings confirm that purposeful exposure to adventurous activities can enhance the development of desirable positive psychological characteristics such as hardiness, mental toughness, self-esteem, self-

efficacy, dispositional optimism and positive affectivity (Shread & Golby, 2006). Therefore, adventure-based education results in precisely the outcomes positive psychology aims towards.

The underlying justification for adventure therapy is that humans need “to encounter the edges of their physical and psychological possibilities in order to enhance their capacity to deal with everyday life” (Neill & Dias, 2001, p. 35). Enhancing resilience is regarded as a primary goal in programmes aiming to establish mental health and wellbeing (Neill & Dias, 2001). Killian (2004) argues that resilience can be nurtured through the promotion of positive self-esteem and self-efficacy. Self-esteem increases through “mastery of a skill or task, through perceived respect from peers, and through one’s feelings of competence” (Lerner & Kline, 2006, p. 529). Experiential programmes, offering challenges within a supportive and facilitative environment, can create shifts in self-concept and enhance self-esteem (Killian, 2004; Schoel et al., 1988). Carl Rogers indicates that:

“the person with a clear, consistent, positive and realistic self-concept will generally behave in a healthy, confident, constructive and effective way... such persons are more secure, confident and self-respecting; they have less to prove to others; they are less threatened by difficult tasks, people and situations; they relate to and work with others more comfortably and effectively; and their perceptions of the world of reality are less likely to be distorted” (Fitts as cited in Schoel et al., 1988, pp. 13-14).

Literature discloses that exposure to challenging adventure experiences combined with a perceived supportive group environment, positively relates to heightened self-esteem and growth in resilience (Mundy in Bloemhoff, 2006; Neill & Dias, 2001). A wilderness rites of passage programme is an adventure-based medium. A review of literature mainly distinguishes between wilderness therapy and wilderness experience programmes.

2.6 WILDERNESS RITES OF PASSAGE

Russell (1999) states that wilderness therapy falls within the broader field of wilderness experience programmes. Wilderness therapy is based on the wilderness

experience, but focuses on therapeutic assessment and therapeutic intervention for the treatment of behavioural difficulties and the evaluation of outcomes (Russell, 1999). The wilderness is thus approached with therapeutic intent (Powch in Russell, 2000).

Wilderness experience programmes, on the other hand, focus on conducting outdoor adventure pursuits and activities, such as, primitive survival skills and reflection, to enhance personal growth, social responsibility and leadership development (Kimball & Bacon in Russell, 2001). Friese, Hendee and Kinziger (1998) define wilderness experience programmes as organisations taking participants into the wilderness for the development of their human potential. Specific goals may be pursued through wilderness experience programmes, such as, changing challenging adolescent behaviour, recovering from chemical dependency, spiritual renewal, team building, physical challenge and the building of character. The wilderness provides healing, inspiration and challenging opportunities in order to accomplish these goals (Friese et al., 1998).

Experiences in the wilderness, combined with rites of passage, have a healing and inspirational power that enhances the personal, social and spiritual development of individuals (Davis, 2003; Ibbott in Beringer, 2004). Based on a model constructed by Russell (2000), aspects of wilderness rites of passage encounters to be addressed are: a) the role of wilderness, b) a theoretical foundation, c) the process and practice and d) common reported outcomes.

2.6.1 The role of wilderness

Wilderness is a place of peace, self-discovery and renewal where opportunities are provided to slow down and reconnect to what is essential for individuals (Hart in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). It is a “spiritual, healing and growing place where reflective experiences are available as an antidote to the pressures of modern society, and for life renewal and transition” (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998, p. 8). Wilderness leads to spiritual awakening.

Despite a long tradition of utilising wilderness for this purpose, the use of wilderness as a means of personal and leadership development has grown since 1962 when

Outward Bound introduced their wilderness challenge model in the United States (Russell, 2001). This model was founded by the German educator, Kurt Hahn. His approach to education was experience- and value-centred and focused on character development (Russell, 2001).

Wilderness experiences are based on biophilia, which refers to the genuine need in people for positive contact with nature and the tendency to seek experiences in nature (Kellert & Wilson in Davis, 2006a). These experiences are sustained by “the healing and inspirational elements and challenge opportunities of wilderness” (Friese et al. as cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 11). Meeting this need can lead to positive mental health, reduction of stress and enhanced development (Kahn in Davis, 2006a). The wilderness environment, according to Beringer (2004), possesses healing powers that facilitate the attainment of personal restoration and transformation. Nature offers “a sense of place, of belonging, of emotional healing; that which the complexities of societal living often fails to provide” (Roberts, 2000, p. 5), causing people to lose their vision, beliefs and values (Hart in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998).

Davis (2006a) highlights the spiritual aspects of the wilderness and describes the wilderness experience as creating a spiritual emergency. Spiritual emergency refers to the psychological distress caused when individuals experience the integration of radical encounters as extremely difficult (Assagioli, Dembrowski, Grof & Grof in Davis, 2006a). In other words, spiritual emergency expedites and heightens the spiritual awakening, or spiritual emergence. According to Davis (2006a), wilderness rites of passage experiences are similar to a controlled spiritual emergency because the potential risks and benefits of a radical spiritual awakening are present.

2.6.2 Theoretical foundation

Beringer (2004) proposes that ecopsychology is a viable alternative theoretical framework for adventure-based programmes. Davis (2006b) connects wilderness rites of passage, as a nature-based psychological practice, to the territory of ecopsychology. The underlying argument of ecopsychology is that over-riding questions about who we are, and how we grow and heal, are inseparable from our relationship with the physical world (Davis, 1998). The relationship between humans and nature is seen as a deep bond and reciprocal communion (Davis, 1998). He

argues that denying this bond will result in a source of suffering for the physical environment and the human psyche (Davis, 1998). Reconnecting humans and nature brings healing to both. One method by which to awaken this connection is a wilderness rites of passage experience (Foster & Little in Davis, 1998).

Davis (2006b, 1998) links ecopsychology with transpersonal psychology. He bases his argument on the fact that mental health benefits as well as transpersonal aspects, including elements of spiritual connection and transformation, can be found in ecopsychology (Reser in Davis, 1998). Transpersonal psychology is inclusive of other psychological approaches, spiritual disciplines and culturally diverse wisdom about psychopathology and mental health (Davis, 1998). It focuses on human experience, self-transcendence and mystical states of consciousness as understood within a psychological framework (Davis, 1998). Transpersonal psychology attempts to recognise, understand and realise the unitive, spiritual and transcendent states of consciousness (Lajoie & Shapiro in Davis, 1998). Transpersonal practices expand the awareness of self, beyond the regular boundaries, identifications, and self-images of the individual, towards recognition of the fundamental connection, harmony, or unity reflected with others and the world (Walsh & Vaughan in Davis, 1998). A sense of peace, love, joy, support, inspiration and communion with the natural environment become “exemplars of the spiritual quest” (Davis, 1998, p.2). Davis (1998) argues that ecopsychology, besides for being a “necessary element in sustainable environmental work and effective psychotherapy” (Davis, 1998, p.2) can therefore also be seen as a path to the spiritual.

Wilderness rites of passage encounters tend to impact the spiritual dimension of a person (Davis, 2006a; 2003; 1998; Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). Adler (in Myers & Sweeney, 2005) views spirituality as central to wellness and mental health. This means that wilderness rites of passage experiences can therefore be linked to wellbeing and mental health. This connection is highlighted by literature, indicating that common reported outcomes of wilderness rites of passage encounters, as discussed later in this chapter, include the enhancement of components recognised in different wellness models. These include the intra-psychic constructs as mentioned by Van Niekerk et al. (2001), the biopsychosocial/spiritual systems based on the holistic approaches proposed by Adler and Matthews (in Van Niekerk et al.,

2001) as well as the second-order factors of the Indivisible Self model of Myers and Sweeney (2005).

Wilderness is recognised as a place to seek transformation and optimal psychological health (Wilber in Davis, 1998), therefore, theory on psychological health is incorporated in the theoretical framework of wilderness rites of passage. As stated in Chapter 1, the World Health Organisation defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing” (Du Preez, 2004, p. 45). The illness/wellness continuum, however, describes health as more than just the constant balancing of the physical, emotional, social and intellectual aspects of a person. It stresses the importance of spirituality as an indispensable dimension of wellbeing (Sarafino in Du Preez, 2004). Psychological health, as in wellbeing, has been identified through the positive psychology movement (Seligman in Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Positive psychology, in working towards a balanced view of people, focus on the strengths and virtues of people instead of emphasising what is wrong with them (Brendtro et al., 2005).

Van Niekerk et al. (2001) identify early conceptions and current perspectives on psychological wellbeing. Early conceptions are based on the following intra-psychic constructs: self-knowledge, ego strength, self-esteem, personal goals, self-efficacy and self-actualisation. Current perspectives focus on improving the quality of life and building of capacity. Van Niekerk et al. (2001) link psychological wellbeing to holistic approaches proposed by Adler and Matthews (in Van Niekerk et al., 2001). A person is thus seen as a biopsychosocial/spiritual system where the influence of each of the systems is bi-directional. Van Niekerk et al. (2001) distinguish between the physiological, psychological, social and spiritual subsystems. The physiological subsystem includes physical exercise, nutrition and the immune system. The psychological subsystem includes cognition, affect, behaviour, self-concept, interpersonal relationships and symptoms of mental disorders. Political, economic and cultural stability impact the social subsystem whereas strong belief systems influence the spiritual subsystem.

Myers and Sweeney (2005) defined wellness as the new paradigm in health care and a strengths-based approach to mental health care (Smith in Myers & Sweeney, 2005).

They proposed the Wheel of Wellness model in the early 1990s. Recognising spirituality as having “positive benefits for longevity and quality of life” (Myers & Sweeney, 2005, p. 273), they placed it at the core of the Wheel of Wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Adler viewed spirituality as central to wellness as it “incorporates one’s existential sense of meaning, purpose, and hopefulness toward life” (Myers & Sweeney, 2005, p. 273). Factor analytic studies, based on the Wheel of Wellness, led to the creation of the new, evidence-based Indivisible Self model of wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). The higher order wellness factor emphasised the indivisible whole, rather than the components, and the interaction between the identifiable sub-components. The five second-order factors were identified as the essential self, the creative self, the coping self, the social self and the physical self.

The *essential self* has four components – spirituality, self-care, gender identity and cultural identity. The *creative self* focuses on the characteristics that give each person a unique place among others in social interaction. It includes five components – thinking, emotions, control, positive humour and work. The *coping self* has four components – realistic beliefs, stress management, self-worth and leisure. The *social self* has two components – friendship and love reflecting social support. The *physical self* has two components – exercise and nutrition. Additional third-order factors focus on contextual variables where the Indivisible Self, is affected by, and has an effect on, the surrounding environment (Myers & Sweeney, 2005).

Wilderness rites of passage experiences are then grounded in ecopsychology, and aspects of transpersonal psychology. It also closely links to the wellness models in terms of the impact it has on the various components of wellness. It is therefore embedded within and supported by a broad theoretical framework. However, literature concerning traditional rites of passage must be reviewed with respect to its target groups, purposes and practices in order to determine its relevance to adolescents and youth manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

2.6.3 Traditional rites of passage

Many cultures have designed rites of passage to mark life transitions (Davis, 2003). Van Gennep (in Bell, 2003) defines the term “rite of passage” as a rite accompanying

any kind of change in “social state, age, place, or life cycle stage, such as birth, puberty, marriage, or death” (Bell, 2003, p. 41). Rites of passage fall within the category of rituals that mark the passage of an individual through the cycle of life, “from one stage to another over time, from one role or social position to another, integrating the human and cultural experiences with biological destiny: birth, reproduction, and death” (Eliade as cited in Rudner, 2002, p1).

In the original text, Eliade (1958) explained pre-modern man’s purpose for rites of passage. Traditional indigenous initiation was described as representing “a body of rites and oral teachings whose purpose is to produce a decisive alteration in the religious and social status of the person to be initiated” (Eliade, 1958, p. x). Initiation marked a basic change – the individual emerging from his/her ordeal became a totally different being from the one before the initiation (Eliade, 1958; Northcote, 2006). The purpose of puberty initiation rituals of pre-modern man was to gain the right to be admitted among adults. Adolescents had to pass through a series of initiatory ordeals and upon successful completion were recognised as responsible members of the community. Initiation was an introduction into the human community and into the world of spiritual and cultural values (Eliade, 1958).

For the adolescent to be worthy of the sacred teaching, he/she first had to be prepared spiritually (Eliade, 1958). Youth gained access to the traditional knowledge through receiving instruction, witnessing secret ceremonies and undergoing a series of ordeals that signified a ritual death followed by a new birth and a return to the fellowship of the living (Eliade, 1958; Wengle in Kottler & Swartz, 2004). Ritual death marked the end of childhood, ignorance and irresponsibility and the emergence of another mode of being, a status unattainable by the uninitiated (Eliade, 1958). Initiation revealed how seriously pre-modern societies assumed their responsibility to receive and transmit spiritual values (Eliade, 1958).

Rites of passage included rituals. Rituals were events with a social meaning and symbolic action. The focus was on a social rather than a natural change (La Fontaine in Rasing, 1995). The sacred entered the lives of and granted identity to participants, transforming them, “communicating social meaning verbally and non-verbally, and offering the paradigm for how the world ought to be” (Cox, 1998, p. x).

Rituals transformed individuals from one social state to another, into new modes of being (Cox, 1998; La Fontaine, 1985).

Life cycle rituals marked transitions, from previous roles to new ones within the community (Cox, 1998). During the transition period, initiates did not possess a clearly defined role in the community. They were in a state of liminality (Latin meaning threshold) and were often considered dangerous (Cox, 1998). During the time of crossing the threshold, rites of passage aimed to ensure that initiates did not act in harmful ways, or became involved in dangerous forces. Transition, therefore, included *rites of separation* ensuring a proper departure from the prior status, *rites of transition* ensuring safety during the liminal period and *rites of incorporation* ensuring proper identification with and recognition in the new role (Cox, 1998).

Rites of passage of pre-modern man hold clear implications for post-modern man. Historically, rites of passage have been used by societies to facilitate a rapid transition from childhood into adulthood (Eliade in Gavazzi, Alford & McKenry, 1996). Gavazzi et al. (1996) argue that many difficulties concerning adolescence in contemporary society are linked to society's underutilisation of rites of passage. Without rites of passage rituals, youth lose essential opportunities to gain understanding of values. Adolescents, who are left on their own to find transitional markers from childhood into adulthood, can cause various societal problems (Weibel & Grimes in Bell, 2003). They tend to fill the void, created by the absence of socially prescribed transitional markers, with informal indicators of adult-like behaviours, such as, the use of drugs, consumption of alcohol and sexual intercourse (Gavazzi et al., 1996; Northcote, 2006). Such alternative rites of passage behaviours are misguided attempts to mark their transition into adulthood (Davis, 2003).

Fleischer (2005) argues that the lack of modern day rites of passage has considerable implications for psychological development and social organisation. "The lack of culturally-sanctioned rites of passage and mentoring youth toward the definition of a well-functioning adult is seen as contributing significantly to individual and social dysfunction" (Fleischer, 2005, p. 180). Kessler (in Fleischer, 2005) argues that education could embrace a variety of approaches in guiding youth to find constructive ways to express their spiritual longings and find purpose in life. It is

understandable then, that wilderness rites of passage programmes are gaining favour as a potential approach with which to develop healthy and well-adjusted individuals and to foster responsible adult behaviour (Brendtro, Bockern & Clementson & Delaney in Bell, 2003; Eliade in Gavazzi et al., 1996). Bell (2003) and Gavazzi et al. (1996) state that professionals are increasingly becoming interested in using the concept of rites of passage as a prevention and intervention effort with regard to adolescents. In the light of the above, the need for modern day rites of passage is further explained through a closer look at adolescence as a time for initiation.

2.6.4 Adolescence: a time for initiation

Adolescence, according to Cohen, is “a bridge of knotted symbols and magic between childhood and maturity, strung across an abyss of danger” (Cohen as cited in Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b, p. 7). It is a confusing time but also hugely creative. It speaks of anticipation – a longing to be magically transformed. “It demands ritual space, a time and a place where young men and women can become introduced to the unknown man and woman inside themselves” (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b, p. 8).

According to Pinnock (1998a), it is essential to deal with the needs and excesses of adolescence through ritual guidance and initiation. Adolescence must be recognised as “...a process, a becoming, a transformation. ...a time filled both with danger and enormous potential for growth” (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b, p.10). In the past, rituals of transformation had one goal – gaining the respect of adults (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). At a moment marked in time, through some sort of ceremony, young men and women stepped over a threshold, from conventional into ritual space. This was a symbolically ‘heated’ situation. They realised that before they could become an adult, an infantile being in them had to die (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). Instead of condemning youthful experimental wildness during this period of liminality, ritual practices captured their intensity. The focus was on teaching and empowering youth, while protecting the stability of community life against unbridled adolescent energy.

Rites of passage formed a foundation of social learning within the community. It was an educational experience that required the participation of familiar and trusted adults. Its purpose was to transmit society's knowledge and accumulated wisdom from one generation to the next. It prepared youth for future membership with society, and for accepting responsibility to participate actively towards maintaining and developing the society (Nyerere in Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). Therefore, rites of passage could be defined as rituals of initiation facilitating a clearly defined transition from childhood to adulthood (Eliade in Gavazzi et al., 1996). In its application, the needs of youth and society were adequately addressed.

Youth demonstrate a need for "support, discipline, assistance, protection, teaching and basic physical requirements as well as for experiences of trust, love, values, customs and spiritual traditions" (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b, p. 77). Adolescents need support, structure and guidance to successfully complete the transition from childhood to adulthood (Davis, 2003). There is an awesome power when the relationship between adults and youth involves guidance, building trust and discipline and the sharing of specific knowledge, specialised skills and positive character traits (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b).

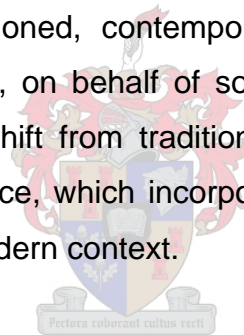
Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton (1998b) argue that, in the absence of older men and women, who intervene to shape youth, discipline them and instruct them on becoming a man or a woman, youth will create their own structures and rituals of initiation. This may lead to disastrous consequences, because youth cannot initiate one another. Self-generated initiations are dangerous and counter-productive (Davis, 2003). Even if adolescents do not get into serious trouble their self-generated initiations leave them unfulfilled with unanswered questions about whether they are fit for adulthood (Davis, 2003).

Furthermore, Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton (1998b) argue that in order to change adolescent behaviour, it is essential to understand what captures adolescent attention. This involves being aware of unmet needs, discouragement, the sense of insignificance, powerlessness, incompetence and a loss of self-esteem and self-control. On the other hand, it also involves mobilising the adventurous spirit of youth, satisfying the deep need for ritual, increasing resilience and creating meaningful

relationships with significant adults. Somé (in Davis, 2003) argues that the wild and dangerous energy of youth is an unending longing for initiation. Therefore society has to help young people to focus and “transcend their wild energy, demonstrate their worth, and be accepted into a community” (Somé as cited in Davis, 2003, p. 5).

In traditional cultures, older men and women would spend time with the young people and share the stories of their lives. Through this, youth were guided and mentored through their turbulent teenage years (Rudner, 2002). However, in Western society the practice and meaning of rites of passage have almost disappeared, leaving youth wandering, not knowing how to respond to the persistent calling that hungers for the unknown, for adventure and for risk (Rudner, 2002). Today, youth are left to seek out their own initiations through dangerous and risky behaviour in order to satisfy their need for a sense of belonging and adult respect (Rudner, 2002).

In the light of the above-mentioned, contemporary wilderness rites of passage programmes attempt to respond, on behalf of society, to youth’s deep longing for initiation. The focus will now shift from traditional practice of wilderness rites of passage to a process and practice, which incorporate different phases and factors, appropriately developed for a modern context.



2.6.5 Process and practice of wilderness rites of passage

2.6.5.1 Phases

Rites of passage can be compared to a universal quest or a Heroic Journey that centres on a solitary trial and move through different phases (Davis, 2003). After completing these phases, the hero has a new place, and reflects a new status in the community (Davis, 2003). Adolescents have a need to test their courage, to be accepted and to become heroes (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). Their capacity for formal-logical thinking (Vygotsky in Karpov, 2003) makes them capable of associating with those who seem able to transcend the constraints on their lives and disregard conventions (Egan & Gajdamaschko, 2003). Adolescents therefore easily identify with a heroic character’s confidence, self-reliance, persistence and ingenuity and as they move through the phases of the journey, they share in the transcendence (Egan & Gajdamaschko, 2003).

Literature discloses that life contains a succession of phases: Rites of Separation, Rites of the Threshold and Rites of Incorporation (Andrews, 1999; Bell, 2003; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). The first stage separates the initiate from the role he/she fulfils in the community (Bell, 2003; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). A transition period follows during which the initiate experiences a symbolic death and rebirth (Bell, 2003; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). This liminal/transition phase is described by Turner as “being ‘betwixt and between’ a former role and future status” (Turner in Bell, 2003, p. 42). Liminality is “linked to death, to being in the womb, to invisibility, to darkness” (Turner in Rasing, 1995, p. 35) meaning that this period of becoming is hidden in the wilderness where initiates are geographically separated (Rasing, 1995). “This period presents challenges, communicates cultural norms and promotes new skills that an initiate will need to have in order to integrate into her/his role in the community” (Turner & Bruner in Bell, 2003, p. 43). In passing through the undefined liminal realm, rules are suspended and the individual often does what is forbidden. Such rites of transgression are spontaneous and unconventional and not embedded in societal norms (Educo Africa, 2000; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b) for ritualised liminality employs structures different from the structures of society.

The phase of incorporation involves mentoring and guidance, and a re-entry into the community with a new role and social identity (Educo Africa, 2000; Kottler & Swartz, 2004; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). Being ready to embrace adult roles and responsibilities, the initiate’s return involves a celebration during which achievements and newly acquired skills are acknowledged. The community welcomes the initiate back and exerts pressure through expectations and constraints regarding the new role. The newly acquired knowledge and skills, together with the social pressure, work together to support and sustain the transformation process (Bell, 2003).

Russell, Hendee and Phillips-Miller (2000) identify the following phases in the wilderness experience process: a) The *cleansing phase* includes the removal from destructive environments and cultural stimuli such as dress, music and food. A minimal but healthy diet is followed and participants are taught basic survival and self-care skills. b) The *personal and social responsibility phase* includes modelling and practicing appropriate social skills and cooperative behaviours. c) The *transition and aftercare phase* involves the preparation to return to the community and

implementation of the self-care, personal and social responsibility skills that have been mastered.

Van Gennep (in Andrews, 1999) argues that all three phases of a rite of passage bore intense significance. He emphasises the ritualistic structure that accompanies changes in social identity, which is acknowledged by the community. Turner (in Andrews, 1999) on the other hand, places more emphasis on the transitional stage. He argues that the first and third stages simply detach initiates from their old places in society and return them “inwardly transformed and outwardly changed” (Turner as cited in Andrews, 1999, p. 36) to new places. The focus shifts from social status to personal transformation. This sense of personal transformation manifests itself in the form of changed behaviours and attitudes (Andrews, 1999).

Turner (in Andrews, 1999) identifies three main dimensions of liminality: *Sense of community* – Through eliminating social status and authority, which delineate and separate people from one another, a sense of connection or community is created. The breaking down of distinctions, redefine social relationships and form solid connections, which unite individuals above social bonds (Turner in Northcote, 2006). *Sense of self* – The sense of community does not result in a loss of individual identity but rather encourages individuals to be true to themselves and to shed their distinctive roles. Social roles and relational hierarchies shape actions and interactions. The social structure defines the individual as ‘someone’ with a clearly designated role (Burrige in Andrews, 1999). Liminality, on the other hand, causes participants to become ‘no one’ and provides the potential for personal change because the self is released from the “presentation of self in everyday life” (Goffman as cited in Andrews, 1999, p. 39). *Sense of place* – The disconnectedness from the authentic self also manifests itself in a sense of being disconnected from the natural environment. The wilderness becomes a physical and a symbolic setting for a journey, building a sense of the true self and of community while at the same time being connected to the natural environment (Andrews, 1999).

Davis (2003) goes beyond the three phases and indicates that rites of passage typically have five phases: *Preparation* involves the clarification of one’s purpose for going on a wilderness rites of passage trip as well as preparation for the trip. There

is a constant focus on the intent, that is, what is hoped to be gained from the encounter (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). *Severance* focuses on letting go of the old self and old roles and a symbolic dying. This phase ends with a sacrifice ceremony symbolising the end of the old role of the self, honouring the good and valuable parts in the old self and signifying the willingness to let go. *Threshold* symbolises crossing the threshold from the familiar world into the unknown world with its expanded meanings and possibilities. This involves a period of solitude and fasting and opening to the vision. *Return* focuses on reincorporation and rejoining the community. It is a rebirth and new beginning, a phase where insight gained and the vision received are integrated into the life of the individual. *Implementation* is a period for further integration of experiences and implementation of the vision in the life of the participant. The vision must be realised in the form of attitudinal and behavioural changes and a task to do.

Similarities exist between wilderness rites of passage and adventure-based activities. The first and second phases of rites of passage are experienced when youth are separated from society and taken to unfamiliar wilderness environments (Bell, 2003). The liminal phase is replicated when youth discover that the coping mechanisms of previous roles are no longer sufficient. “When the initiate is stripped of all he/she knows and understands – the sources of knowledge of self and society – he/she is likely to develop a freer, deeper understanding of the system from which he/she has been removed” (Myerhoff as cited in Bell, 2003, p. 44). By placing youth in unfamiliar environments and immersing individuals in new and unique situations, the expectations and preconceived notions of success linked to the previous roles are removed (Gass in Bell, 2003).

With the background knowledge on the different phases in the wilderness rites of passage process, and before focusing on common outcomes normally associated with wilderness rites of passage encounters, the emphasis will first fall on factors in the process that facilitate change in participants.

2.6.5.2 Factors in the wilderness process promoting changes

Wilderness-based adventure programmes are claimed to be feasible options for addressing problem behaviours (Caulkins, White & Russell, 2006). Several recently

published studies suggest its efficacy in significantly reducing psychological problems and antisocial and delinquent behaviour (Caulkins et al., 2006). Three main elements, unique to the wilderness experience, foster change in participants: *Wilderness* refers to the environment acting as a restorative environment. *Physical Self* refers to physical activities designed to challenge and allow success in order to foster an enhanced image of the self. *Social Self* relates to youth learning cooperative behaviours allowing them to form close interpersonal relationships (Caulkins et al., 2006; Russell, 1999).

Wilderness environments restore people by distancing them from familiar environments, excessive demands for direct attention, tension and stress. In addition to *being away*, is *soft fascination*. The natural scenery engages attention, but does not require direct attention, thereby allowing room for reflection, which, in turn, facilitates recovery from mental fatigue (Kaplan & Kaplan in Russell, 1999).

Russell (1999) focuses on activities and processes that promote learning and personal development, related to the Physical Self, and improve interaction among participants, related to the Social Self. Wilderness experiences provide challenging opportunities to learn a multitude of skills. Self-preservation motivates participants to focus on the development of social skills and peer relationships. Cooperation, communication, responsibility for the self and the group, and trust among group members, are required to solve problems related to comfort and survival in the wilderness. Improved social skills and peer relationships also contribute to the social and emotional development and self-worth of youth. Group cohesion and a sense of belonging provide support and security, which foster a view of self as being competent. This is particularly important, as behavioural difficulties are associated with a low self-concept (Russell, 1999). Evidence also strongly suggests that behavioural difficulties are often a manifestation of social skill shortcomings. A lack of pro-social skills can cause disruptive and anti-social behaviour and inhibit the ability to build interpersonal relationships (Mathur & Rutherford in Russell, 1999).

The review of literature has identified key factors incorporated into wilderness experiences that facilitate change in participants. According to Caulkins et al. (2006), the following factors significantly influenced participants: *the solo* (time alone and the

opportunity to reflect on life), *the establishment of relationships* through a non-confronting and caring approach by programme and staff (genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy), *the role of nature and wilderness* (providing physical exercise and beautiful scenery), *primitive wilderness living* and *peer feedback* (Caulkins et al., 2006; Russell, 2000).

Russell et al. (2000) identified the following factors to impact participants: During the *cleansing phase*, being absent from the familiar culture, under vast and open wilderness conditions, a sense of vulnerability was created which was experienced as quite humbling. During the *personal and social responsibility phase*, participants experienced an appreciation of wilderness conditions and a sense of reduced distractions. During the *transition and aftercare phase*, the cleansing effect of wilderness living and the simple and primitive lifestyle had the most significant impact on participants.

Factors reported by troubled adolescent females of their wilderness experiences, are categorised as either general or substantive impacts (Caulkins et al., 2006). General impacts of low intensity, which have manifested earlier in the experience, are *reflection* (a relaxed state of thought occurring with simple physical movement and allowing participants to let their thoughts wander) and *perceived competence and accomplishment*. Substantive impacts of high intensity, which have emerged later in the experience and have had spiritual/emotional characteristics, are: *awareness of surroundings, self and others* (a heightened awareness of the immediate environment; enhanced awareness of the self refers to becoming aware of the consequences of actions and the development of empathy), *timelessness* (an altered perception of time relieving the stress of everyday life) and *self-efficacy* (increased faith and the personal assurance that one is able to overcome emotional and physical obstacles). The ideal is that general and substantive impacts be transferred to other aspects of life (Caulkins et al., 2006).

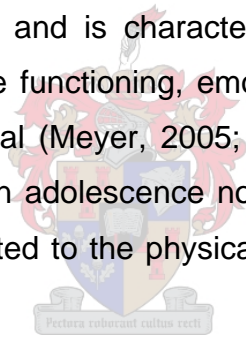
Studies have demonstrated that wilderness experiences have a positive impact on the self-concept of youth (Gibson & Wright in Russell, 1999). It is an intervention option for the development of more appropriate and adaptive social skills and cooperative behaviours. Outcomes of wilderness encounters can be, increased

interpersonal competence, decreased defensiveness, and increased social acceptance (Gibson & Porter in Russell, 1999). Sachs and Miller (in Russell, 1999) report a significant impact on cooperative behaviour in a school setting after the completion of a wilderness programme.

In order to better explain why wilderness rites of passage could effectively impact vulnerable youth, the next sections in the review of literature will focus specifically on adolescence as a developmental stage and the concept 'emotional and behavioural difficulties' (EBD).

2.6.6 Adolescence as a developmental stage

Adolescence is the transition period between childhood and early adulthood (Meyer, 2005), normally characterised by mood disruptions, conflicts with parents and risk behaviours (Arnett in Moneta, Schneider & Csikszentmihalyi, 2001). Adolescence starts with the onset of puberty and is characterised by rapid physical changes, significant maturation in cognitive functioning, emotional intensity and an increased sensitivity regarding peer approval (Meyer, 2005; Newman & Newman in Moote & Wodarski, 1997). Discussions on adolescence normally entail identity formation as well as developmental tasks related to the physical, cognitive, emotional, moral and social dimensions.



Erikson (in Kroger, 2007) proposes the psychosocial task of identity versus role confusion as the central task covering adolescence as a whole. This model of Erikson has been edited to incorporate the crisis of group identity versus alienation that youth face in the early adolescence phase, ranging from approximately age 12 to 18 (Newman in Carr, 2006; Newman & Newman in Meyer, 2005). During the late adolescence phase, starting at approximately age 18 and lasting for three to four years, the adolescent has to face the psychosocial crisis of identity versus role confusion (Newman in Carr, 2006; Newman & Newman in Meyer, 2005). Erikson describes identity versus role confusion as "having a clear sense of who one is and where one is going" (Erikson in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 147) versus the "inability to fix on the kind of person one wants to be" (Stone as cited in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 147). During this period, youth will "struggle to develop ego identity, become preoccupied with physical appearance and involved with group identity"

(Erikson in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 147). Kroger (2007) argues that this stage is built upon the resolutions gained in preceding stages and lays the groundwork for entry into adult life.

Kroger (2007) divides adolescence into three stages: early, middle and late adolescence. Early adolescence is defined as the time from 11 to 14 years, mid-adolescence as the time from 15 to 17 years and late adolescence as the time from 18 to 22 years. Kroger (2007) agrees that the key psychosocial task of early adolescence is affiliation versus abandonment. The theme of being accepted or left behind is an apparent identity concern in this phase. Kroger (2007), however, argues that mid-adolescence portrays the beginnings of Erikson's identity formation process. The identity-related development continues into late adolescence where the growth of a more autonomous self involves the capacity to develop new forms of intimacy with others (Kroger, 2007).

Meyer (2005) suggests that identity formation involves making a career choice, internalising morality and identifying with a gender role. The adolescent experiments with different roles and identities from the surrounding environment in order to move from childhood security towards adult autonomy (Meyer, 2005). Marcia (in Kroger, 2007; Meyer, 2005) expands the identity development theory of Erikson by identifying four ways of resolving the identity crisis. *Identity achievement* is a strong commitment or personal investment with regard to a career and value system after undergoing a period of exploration. *Identity moratorium* is the investigation of different alternatives in the midst of the crisis. During *identity foreclosure*, no crisis is experienced. Values and commitments are adopted without exploration. A commitment is mainly based on what significant others have committed themselves to. During *identity diffusion*, no crisis is experienced, no meaningful alternatives are investigated and no commitments are made. Adolescents often move from identity confusion or foreclosure to the moratorium status before the achievement of identity is obtained (Kroger, 2007). Once they establish a clear identity, a strong commitment to vocational, social, political and religious values and principles will follow (Carr, 2006).

The establishment of heterosexual relationships and dating behaviour help with the process of clarifying sex role identification. Youth learn to value themselves as males or females and start exploring their own sexuality (Newman & Newman in Meyer, 2005).

Changes in physical appearance involve the maturation of the reproductive system, the development of primary sexual characteristics, i.e., menstruation in females and ability to ejaculate in males, and secondary sexual characteristics, i.e., auxiliary hair, breasts and changes in voice (Meyer, 2005). Changes in height and the redistribution of the body weight can influence the satisfaction with body image (Alsaker in Carr, 2006; Meyer, 2005). Hormonal changes, such as raised testosterone levels in males, can contribute to aggression and dominance. In females, higher oestrogen levels may contribute to positive mood and increased activity, whereas lower levels can contribute to poorer moods (Carr, 2006).

At approximately the age of twelve, children enter Piaget's final developmental stage known as the formal operational period (Carr, 2006). The child is then able to use logical principles to solve abstract problems, predict logical consequence of actions, detect logical inconsistencies, and have a capacity for relativistic thought. Their behaviour is influenced by situational factors (Carr, 2006). A limitation characterised by this stage is, for instance cognitive egocentrism, which is the assumption that others think and feel the same about matters as they do. Adolescents are not yet able to realise that others may have a different philosophical perspective than themselves and do not share their pre-occupation with their own thoughts and ideals. This makes the solving of interpersonal problems difficult especially if it entails logical conflicts and contradictions (Carr, 2006; Meyer, 2005).

Adolescent egocentrism triggers the imaginary audience and the personal fable (Elkind in Meyer, 2005). The imaginary audience occurs when youth believe that they are always the focus of attention. Being always on a stage in front of others, they anticipate the thoughts and reactions of the people in the audience. The personal fable is the adolescent belief that their feelings and experiences of unanswered love, loneliness and despair are unique and special and that nobody else suffer as intensely as they do (Elkind in Meyer, 2005). Adolescent behaviour is

often reckless and dangerous. This relates to the concept of the personal fable: dangerous and risky behaviour are allowed within the illusion of being indestructible (Meyer, 2005).

Vygotsky describes adolescents as thinking beings (Karpov, 2003). Their transition to formal-logical thinking opens up a whole world to them, which makes them capable of “self-analysis, the analysis of their feeling, and their place in the world” (Vygotsky in Karpov, 2003, p. 150). Adolescents are not merely passive recipients of social norms and values but are actively constructing themselves and their relations to the world. During peer interactions adolescents test, master and internalise social norms and models existing among the adults in their society. The use of these internalisations for self-analysis leads to the development of self-awareness or personal identity (Bozhovich, Dubrovina, Elkonin & Dragunova in Karpov, 2003).

Concept formation enables adolescents to create a “systematic, ordered, categorical picture of reality” (Vygotsky as cited by Mahn, 2003, p. 133). The adolescent becomes aware of the interconnectedness underlying external appearances and of the interdependencies within spheres of activities and among separate spheres. The adolescent, therefore, becomes “aware of the ‘self’ as a conscious being in a complex social system” (Vygotsky in Mahn, 2003, p. 133) and understands that like himself/herself, the actions of other individuals are motivated by their own very unique internal worlds.

Adolescence is characterised by intense emotions, fluctuating between highs and lows (Meyer, 2005). Their awareness of complex emotional cycles increases and they use complex strategies to autonomously regulate their emotions (Carr, 2006). Their strategies to self-regulate are guided by a concern with moral principles and beliefs. They increasingly use self-presentation strategies for impression management and become aware of how important mutual and reciprocal emotional self-disclosure is in making and maintaining friendships (Carr, 2006). The awareness that their actions can result in approval/disapproval of significant adults results in the internalising of standards of conduct (Kochanska in Carr, 2006). This internalising process permits adolescents to experience complex feelings such as pride, shame and guilt.

Cross (2002) proposes that adolescents share similar feelings, such as cynicism, bitterness, loneliness and aimlessness. They often show no faith in the future and lack a sense of belonging. In this transitional state of development between youth and adulthood, they search for meaning. Amid influences affecting their thoughts and feelings, adolescents are often expected to accomplish identity formation and find self-worth without guidance from adults.

Bronfenbrenner (in Cross, 2002) specifies that the four worlds of family, school, peers and work or play influence the way adolescents act or react in situations. These worlds play essential roles in the development of adolescents. When these worlds are not in balance the adolescent may become alienated. Bronfenbrenner (in Cross, 2002) defines this as a lack of a sense of belonging. Youth who are alienated potentially could get into a lot of trouble. Having lost a sense of belonging in one or more of their worlds, they may not fit in with school or society, and may lack skills and values that can help them to act responsibly as members of society. Trouble comes when two or more worlds simultaneously cause feelings of alienation, and the other worlds do not provide adequate comfort. Alienation includes feelings of powerlessness (inability to influence choices), social isolation (acute loneliness or separation from social group) and normlessness (individual value systems inconsistent with the value systems of society) (Dean in Cross, 2002). An additional factor related to alienation is the loss of a sense of control over one's life (sense of having limited power to control own life).

As part of moral development, adolescents use a person's intentions as the primary criterion to evaluate the morality of an act (Carr, 2006). Rules are seen as useful social conventions to judge the wrongness of an action. The ability to make mature moral judgements does not necessarily lead to moral conduct and pro-social behaviour (Carr, 2006). The internalising of standards of good conduct will affect behaviour (Kochanska in Carr, 2006). According to Gouws et al. (2000), the peer group plays a critical role in the development of a value system. The peer group provides an opportunity for adolescents to evaluate the values and norms with which they have grown up. This could confirm or strengthen the value system or lead to the adolescent judging and questioning the outlook of parents. As peer acceptance is essential, the adolescent can conform to the standards and limits set by the group.

This especially happens in the case of parental neglect and rejection. Adolescents surrounded by a deviant environment can subsequently adopt the deviant value system of the surrounding subculture (Gouws et al., 2000).

During adolescence, close bonds with peers and membership of a group are extremely important for identity development. The peer group gives opportunities for emotional intimacy, support and understanding, companionship and fun (Meyer, 2005). Part of the process of gaining independence from their parents is that adolescents share greater intimacy with friends than with parents. Parent-child conflict frequently happens as this forms part of the process of gaining autonomy (Meyer, 2005). The peer group becomes the main location where social growth and change take place. Peer pressure is a central process and can induce many risk-taking behaviours. Role testing and the challenging of moral values also form part of this stage. As part of the identification with a particular peer group, adolescents spend much time with the peer group, which expects loyalty to the group and commitment to adhering to group norms (Meyer, 2005).

Gouws et al., (2000) distinguish the following functions of the peer group in the life of an adolescent: a) *Emancipation* – the peer group becomes the safe environment from which adolescents operate to gradually gain their independence. b) *Search for individual identity* – the peer group provides an opportunity to develop an individual identity as it gives feedback about aspects such as personality, appearance and behaviour. Additionally it assists in learning about conflict resolution, and attaining self-knowledge, self-insight and self-evaluation. c) *Social acceptance and support* – the peer group meets the need for friendship and companionship and offers opportunities to practise social skills. d) *Frame of reference and experimentation base* – the peer group acts as a reference framework where the adolescent can experiment with new roles and behaviour patterns. e) *Competition* – the peer group provides a platform for competition in order for adolescents to establish what they are capable of, compared to others. f) *Social mobility* – the peer group offers the chance to come into contact with individuals from different sexes, races and socio-economic classes. g) *Recreation* – the peer group participates in different leisure activities. h) *Conformity* – the need for acceptance motivates the adolescent to conform to the values and customs of the group.

The peer group provides the opportunity for youth to go through a process of self-evaluation (Carr, 2006). Kaplan and Sadock (in Moote & Wodarski, 1997) argue that having a sense of individual self-worth as an adult is established on the attainment of competence during adolescence. Being accepted into a peer group can strengthen the self-confidence by satisfying individual social needs and giving a sense of belonging. Not becoming part of a peer group can cause feelings of alienation leading to a decrease in self-worth (Meyer, 2005).

2.6.7 Emotional and behavioural difficulties

According to Prinsloo (2005), the most common emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools are behaviour patterns that interfere with classroom routine, such as, attention-seeking and disruptive behaviour. These include aggressiveness, negativity, disobedient attitudes, a refusal to accept discipline, a lack of motivation and enthusiasm, causing a disturbance through excessive talking and the leaving of seats at inappropriate times. Difficulties like stealing, truancy, vandalism and the use of drugs or alcohol, are more serious, but do not disrupt the learning process and classroom atmosphere to the same extent as the above (Prinsloo, 2005).

The causes of emotional and behavioural difficulties are complex (Rutter et al. in Steyn, 2005). Literature in the past has often focused on the causes as deficits and deviance in youth (Thacker, Strudwick & Babbedge, 2002; Thomas, 2005). It is essential to distinguish between the medical/psychiatric model postulating that problem behaviour originates from within the individual, and the ecosystemic model proposing that the individual forms part of a variety of networks and that understanding is only gained by considering all aspects related to these networks (Thacker et al., 2002). Within an ecological framework the focus no longer falls on the dispositional aspects of youth, but on the interaction between different factors occurring at community, family and individual levels (Moffitt in Steyn, 2005) or differently put, on environmental and biological factors (Zionts, Zionts & Simpson, 2002).

Environmental factors are external factors related to relationships with parents and family members, experiences at home, the school and the community (Zionts et al., 2002). Family factors include low household income depriving youth of privileges

and supportive environments, alcohol or drug abuse, family discord and violence, often resulting in abuse and neglect, and coercive and hostile parenting practice, which include aggressive and inconsistent methods of discipline and frequent and harsh criticism (Prinsloo, 2005; Rutter et al. in Steyn, 2005; Zions et al., 2002). Another factor, which must also be taken into consideration, is unfavourable experiences at school (Prinsloo, 2005). Garbarino, Pollitt, Van der Merwe and Dawes (in Steyn, 2005) argue that chronic exposure to social disorganisation can normalise and reinforce deviant and aggressive behaviour and can result in antisocial tendencies in children and youth. Community factors indicating social disorganisation include the debilitating effects of poverty and the HIV/Aids pandemic, unsupervised adolescent peer groups, criminal and gang activities, community violence, permissiveness with regard to moral values, substance abuse, and physical and sexual abuse (Brooks-Gunn et al. in Steyn, 2005; Oelofse in Steyn, 2005; Prinsloo, 2005; Zions et al., 2002).

Biological factors or individual characteristics include genetics, neuropsychological and cognitive deficits, malnutrition and allergies, temperament, physical illness, impulsivity and a distorted information processing style (Kauffman in Zions et al. 2002; Rutters et al. in Steyn, 2005). Prenatal and perinatal illnesses, or inappropriate levels of specific bodily chemicals, may also be causes of emotional disturbance and behavioural difficulties (Zions et al., 2002). Social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, related to biological factors and individual characteristics, are divided into two broad categories defined as internalising and externalising difficulties (Cooper, 2005; Cowie, Boardman, Dawkins & Jennifer, 2004; Hardman, Drew & Egan, 2005).

Youth demonstrating internalising difficulties direct behaviours more at the self than at others. Internalising difficulties are of an emotional nature (Hardman et al., 2005). The affected person internalises his/her difficulties and becomes for instance anxious or depressed (Cowie et al., 2004). Depression is “characterized by sadness and misery, poor concentration, lethargy, social withdrawal, loss of interest in things and a negative view of oneself, the world and the future” (Cowie et al., 2004, p. 4). Young people who are depressed may experience a change in eating habits, exhibit problems such as difficult, disobedient or aggressive behaviour, or display anxiety or suicide intent. Suicidal thoughts and feelings of hopelessness and futility are

common among youth with depression. Adolescent feelings of unease and uncertainty about personal identity and body image often accompany the increase of anxiety in youth (Cowie et al., 2004). Anxiety can include social withdrawal, seclusion, shyness, sensitivity and behaviour, implying a retreat from the environment instead of responding in a hostile way to it (Von Isser, Quay and Love in Hardman et al., 2005). Anxiety can take the form of generalised or separation anxiety, or specific phobias, such as obsessive-compulsive disorders, social phobia and panic disorders (Cowie et al., 2004; Finestone, 2004). Other forms of internalising difficulties could include (Cooper, 2005; Finestone, 2004): *truancy and school refusal* (the persistent and frequent failure to attend school for reasons considered illegitimate by the school), *withdrawn behaviour* (excessive avoidance of contact with others to such an extent that it interferes with participation in school activities and social functioning), *elective/selective mutism* (consistent and persistent failure to speak in specific situations where speaking is expected) and *substance misuse and abuse*.

Due to the fact that externalising behaviours demonstrate behaviour problems more visible to people in the surrounding area, youth with externalising behaviour are easily noticed because of the disruption they cause (Cowie et al., 2004). They “may be described as engaging in behaviours that are directed more at others than at themselves” (Hardman et al., 2005, p. 236). Externalising difficulties could be characterised as aggressive, noncompliant, defiant, resistive, disruptive, dangerous, antisocial and/or confrontational (Cooper, 2005; Hardman et al., 2005).

According to Cooper (2005) and Finestone (2004), externalising behaviours include: *disaffection* - attitudes and behaviours indicating discontent with values of an institution, and behaviour and discourse consistently challenging these values, *conduct disorder and delinquency* – verbal and physical aggressive behaviour towards others, destruction of property, deceitfulness, theft, disruptiveness, negativism, irresponsibility, defiance of authority and serious violation of rules and norms of society, *oppositional defiant behaviour* – a frequent loss of temper, actively defying or refusing to comply with adult rules and requests, deliberately annoying others, often blaming others, being touchy and easily annoyed by others, often angry, resentful, spiteful and vindictive (Cooper, 2005), *attention deficit/hyperactivity*

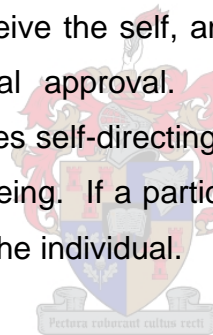
disorder – “chronic, pervasive and debilitating problems in controlling attention and/or impulsivity and motor activity” (Cooper, 2005, p. 108), *autistic spectrum disorders* – “debilitating impairments in the quality of the child’s social interactions when compared to others of the same developmental stage” (Cooper, 2005, p. 108; Finestone, 2004), communication problems and restricted and repetitive and stereotypical behaviours. Von Isser et al. (in Hardman et al., 2005) add the following types of externalising behaviours: *immaturity* inconsistent with developmental expectations, involving preoccupation, short attention span, passivity, daydreaming and sluggishness, and *socialised aggression*, involving gang activities, cooperative stealing and social maladjustment.

When looking at emotional and behavioural difficulties, Bowers (2005) argues that emphasis normally falls on the behaviour aspects but that the emotional aspects are in many instances ignored. His research suggests that anger is experienced as the emotion most likely to be linked to social, emotional and behavioural difficulties. The expression of anger “depends heavily on the goal of preserving or increasing esteem: self-esteem, the esteem of others, or both. There has to be somebody or something to blame for some perceived harm to the individual” (Lazarus in Bowers, 2005, p. 90). Not only physical harm but also a form of rebuke or sense of disrespect can stimulate anger. Another aspect of anger to be taken into consideration, is that it easily masks other underlying emotions (Bowers, 2005). Emotional difficulties, related to anger and aggression, are likely to have deeper underlying emotions such as jealousy, depression/sadness, shame/guilt and envy (Bowers, 2005).

It is generally accepted that thoughts and emotions are intertwined (Lazarus & Neu in Bowers, 2005) – what a person thinks about a situation, will subsequently affect the feelings; how the person feels again will affect the individual’s thoughts. Emotional difficulties will go hand-in-hand with difficulty-induced thinking (Lazarus & Neu in Bowers, 2005). Children with emotional and behavioural difficulties experience situations more or less intensely or differently than others (Bowers, 2005; Rutter et al. in Steyn, 2005). Cognitive elements lead children with emotional and behavioural difficulties to demonstrate (a) extreme displays of emotion, which seem unusual or unreasonable, (b) abnormal displays of emotion, which contradict age-appropriate

expectations, and (c) an absence of certain apparent normal emotions (Bowers, 2005).

Biological factors and individual characteristics may increase susceptibility to emotional and behavioural difficulties, but youth do not demonstrate emotional and behavioural difficulties exclusively because of biological factors. The cause is rather a complex interaction between biological factors and the environment (Zionts et al., 2002). Cooper (2005) argues that social, emotional and behavioural difficulties can be explained in terms of Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Cooper, 2005). Lower level needs must be met before needs higher up in the hierarchy can be met. These biologically programmed needs start at the physiological level and move to the safety, affiliation, self-esteem and self-actualisation levels. The physiological and safety levels focus on survival. Once individuals feel secure, they can start focusing on the social world, showing concern for and interacting with others. Affiliation gives way to concerns about how others perceive the self, and the enhancement of the image in ways that will encourage social approval. Once a balanced self-esteem is established the individual becomes self-directing – an autonomous, responsible, pro-social and independent human being. If a particular lower-level need is not met, the levels above will be irrelevant to the individual.



Pringle (in Cooper, 2005) again, claims that social and cognitive competencies are intertwined with four basic categories of emotional needs: the need for love and security, the need for praise and recognition, the need for new experiences and the need to exercise responsibility (Pringle in Cooper, 2005). Glasser (in Cooper, 2005) elaborates on the role of needs and suggests that different overlapping needs must operate in balance with one another: the need to play and have fun, the need to be free to make choices, the need to exercise power and influence, the need to belong to a social group and to love others, and the need to survive. The emphasis falls on the basic need of human beings to exercise control over their lives. Glasser (in Cooper, 2005) suggests that all behaviour is aimed at satisfying one or more of these needs. Problems occur when there is an imbalance.

The implication of the frameworks of Maslow, Pringle and Glasser is that if the biologically embedded motivational drives are not met, positive engagement in

school activities cannot be expected of a child. Free and autonomous functioning is directly linked to the effective handling of insecurity and dependency. Challenging behaviour can thus be seen as an expression of unmet emotional needs. This view is confirmed by Finestone (2004) who argues that behaviour is a mode of communication. Behavioural messages can only be effectively understood if the context within which the behaviour has occurred and the individual's developmental stage are known. Needs and sensitivities differ across different stages of development and will therefore impact displayed behaviour. Human development takes place in several different areas. The physical, intellectual, social, moral and emotional developmental areas must therefore be taken into account in order to understand individual behaviour (Finestone, 2004).

In the light of the above-mentioned emphasis on needs, the focus will now shift to the Circle of Courage as it highlights the importance of focusing on strengths and developmental needs when intervening in the lives of children (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

2.6.8 Circle of Courage

The South African Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk embraces a reclaiming philosophy and strengths perspective (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). The reclaiming philosophy is based on a fundamental respect for the child, and "an understanding that in order to develop a secure sense of self in the world, the child must feel held within a 'Circle of Courage'" (Roberts, 2000, p. 19). Courage is essential in surmounting the difficulties of life (Tillich in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). Prevention strategies must include the cultivation of courage, a sense of responsibility and hope (Seligman & Peterson in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). The Circle of Courage provides a big picture of the needs of all children. It transcends differences in cultures and theories by focusing on universal goals of effective intervention, contributing to positive growth (Brendtro et al., 2005). The Circle of Courage, then, comprises the principles of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, otherwise called universal developmental needs (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

Belonging is a community-based concept reflected in the Afrocentric concept of *ubuntu* and the belief that “it takes a village to raise a child” (Brokenleg as cited in Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002, p. 222). Belonging is fostered when the child experiences a network of care, feels included and is “living with and loving other human beings who return that love” (Menninger in Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern, 2002, p. 48). Children form attachments with people who meet their needs. From these attachments, children seek to model and learn from significant others (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005). Belonging speaks of significance and acceptance. It develops when one is a participant in a community of mutual respect, care, safety and support (Coopersmith, Flach, Werner, Wolin in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

A sense of mastery is achieved when competence in cognitive, physical, social and spiritual areas are developed. This results in recognition within the community as well as inner satisfaction (Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002). Mastery is developed through the achievement of challenging tasks that are neither boring nor overwhelming. This fulfilment of the need for competence results in the sense of joyful accomplishment and enhances the motivation for further achievement (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005). Success and Mastery eradicate feelings of helplessness and inferiority and produce social recognition and the ability to acknowledge the achievements of others (Brendtro et al., 2002). The sense of success fosters satisfaction and a sense of efficacy encouraging motivation (Coopersmith, Flach, Werner, Wolin in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

Independence, in terms of the Circle of Courage, is a principle of “guidance without interference” (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern as cited in Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002, p. 222). The emphasis is on the development of inner discipline through opportunities to make age appropriate decisions (Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002). A sense of autonomy fosters independence, which, in turn, fosters a sense of personal efficacy and responsibility for behaviour. The focus of positive growth is to find a balance between the need to attach and the need for autonomy. When youth sense they lack control over their lives, the result would either be learned helplessness, or rebellion (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005). Answering to self-imposed goals and not to the demands imposed by others, and having a sense of control over a personal destiny strengthen self-management, (Brendtro et al., 2002).

Independence is evidence of having power and exerting personal discipline and responsibility, independent thought and action. It is the ability to control behaviour and gain the respect of others and in the process to stifle the feelings of powerlessness and helplessness (Coopersmith, Flach, Werner, Wolin in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

The Circle of Courage emphasises the role of the community in helping a child to achieve a sense of harmony and balance (Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002). Generosity, fostered through altruism, is essential for social harmony. . Helping and caring for others give meaning to life and increase a sense of self-worth (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005), a goal most youth strive towards. Youth whose lives are in turmoil sometimes wrestle with the spiritual questions of meaning for their lives. Meaning follows when youth are able to invest in a purpose beyond themselves (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). A sense of purpose is instilled by caring for and contributing to the lives of others and breaking free from the preoccupation with the self (Brendtro et al., 2002). Generosity speaks of the adherence to moral and ethical standards and showing compassion and empathy. A generous person is productive in family and community life and responds to the needs and suffering of others. This fosters a sense of purpose, which makes life spiritually fulfilling (Coopersmith, Flach, Werner, Wolin in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

The Circle of Courage integrates the research findings of key studies on resilience and self-worth done by Coopersmith, Flach, Werner and Wolin (in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). Coopersmith (in Brendtro et al., 2002), in agreement with other researchers, adds that significance, competence, power and virtue or in terms of the Circle of Courage, belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are the components of resilience and self-esteem.

2.6.8.1 Resilience

Resilience is defined as the ability to cope with difficult challenges of life and to be able to bounce back in the face of hardship and adversity (Brendtro et al., 2005). Although there is little consensus about a definition for resilience in theoretical and research literature (Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker, 2000), most scholars presume that an individual exposed to considerable threat or adversity will, despite these major

assaults on the process of development, avoid negative outcomes and achieve positive adaptation (Luthar et al., 2000; Rutter in Bloemhoff, 2006).

Jessor (in Bloemhoff, 2006) has identified five interrelated domains of protective factors. Protective factors are environmental and individual safeguards buffering negative impacts of risk and fostering successful adaptation and competence (Rutter in Bloemhoff, 2006). These include genetics, social environment, perceived environment, behaviour and personality. Although Jessor (in Bloemhoff, 2006) includes intelligence (genetics) as a possible protective factor, Luthar (1991) sees it as a vulnerability factor due to the fact that intellectual ability tends to make an individual more sensitive to the environment. Jessor (in Bloemhoff, 2006) defines social environment as neighbourhood resources, and interested and caring adults. Supportive relationships must be present at home, school and in the community (Benard in Thomsen, 2002). Perceived environment comprises a sense of acceptance and belonging. Behaviour is the ability to work with others, to resolve problems in a non-violent manner, and enjoyment of and perceived competency in activities, while personality comprises positive attitudes towards the future and values attached to achievement.

Luthar (1991) and Henderson and Milstein (in Thomsen, 2002) mention various other aspects of personality as protective and compensatory processes that can modify the effect of life stresses. Luthar (1991) focuses on: *Locus of control* - Having faith in one's own control over the environment acts as a protective factor. Individuals, who believe they are powerless to control events that are happening to them, become passive in their coping abilities. Active attempts are made to cope once they believe that there is a way to control events or outcomes. *Social expressiveness and interpersonal skills* and *ego development* act as significant protective factors against stress and are compensatory factors for improving competence levels.

Henderson and Milstein (in Thomsen, 2002) distinguish between personal characteristics that are dispositional and other internal characteristics that normally can develop with additional help. Dispositional characteristics include, for instance, having an easy temperament and the ability to elicit positive responses from people. Internal characteristics include having empathy, outstanding communication skills, a

sense of humour concerning the self, a sense of personal identity and self-efficacy, the ability to act independently and demonstrate problem-solving skills, the ability to withdraw from situations or people that are unhealthy, and lastly, having a sense of purpose and a positive future.

Kaplan (2006) substantiates the interrelatedness of all the above-mentioned domains. The argument is that theoretical structures should take into account individual, environmental and situational factors interacting with and influencing each other. This in turn influences a variety of variables at different stages of both the developmental cycle and the progression of social structures (Kaplan, 2006).

Dawes and Donald (2000) argue that a complex set of interactions between the child, the family, the school community and the neighbourhood must be taken into account with respect to its influence on the development of the physical and psychological capacities for successful coping in the midst of intense adversity. Resilience resides in the capability to significantly and meaningfully connect with others (Jordan, 2006). Engagement in a relationship, which is contributing to all relevant people, places the focus on mutuality. All people have a need to be appreciated and valued and to contribute to the wellbeing of others. Therefore, mutually growth-fostering connection is the key to resilience (Jordan, 2006). "Growth-fostering connections are characterised by mutual empathy and mutual empowerment and produce the following outcomes: zest, a sense of worth, productivity, clarity, and a desire for more connection" (Miller & Striver in Jordan, 2006, p. 82). "Resilience implies energy, creativity, and flexibility to meet new situations. Sometimes it involves courage, the capacity to move into situations when we feel fear or hesitation. Courage is not an internal trait; it is created in connection" (Jordan, 2006, pp. 85-86).

Girls especially need courage as research suggests that girls are more prone to depression and self-criticism during adolescence than boys are (Jordan, 2006). Females tend to seek connection as a response to stress, making female coping styles more relation-oriented (Lazarus & Folkman in Jordan, 2006; Taylor in Jordan, 2006). When girls are supported to value connection and relationships, courage and subsequent resilience will be fostered, as they become aware of their natural inclination toward connection (Jordan, 2006).

In contrast to girls, traditional models of healthy development for boys emphasise the necessity for boys to develop autonomy and individualistic coping styles (Pollack, 2006). The essence was on silencing boys in the expression of their vulnerable self, repressing their yearnings for love and connection, and encouraging the building of an impenetrable wall of toughness around them (Pollack, 2006). Pollack (2006) defines this 'boy code' as a socialisation system for masculinity, disconnecting young males from "healthy relations with one another, with potentially supportive adults and from a full range of emotions within their own selves" (Pollack, 2006, p. 66). Boys, forced to hide behind a mask of masculine invulnerability, are allowed to express one emotion – anger, or are left to experience their pain and problems in isolation. This results in the expression of feelings through external means, such as, by engaging in inappropriate negative type of behaviours (Hendel, 2006; Pollack, 2006).

A study done by Pollack (2006) reveals that beneath the 'mask of masculinity' many boys are in developmental and emotional crisis impinging their resilience. Predominant feelings are: anxiety, loneliness, despair, sadness/depression, fear and confusion associated with becoming men and leading a sad, lonely disconnected adult life (Pollack, 2006). This may explain the portrayal of boys in today's society as "biologically doomed by testosterone to be violent, limited in how they may healthily express normal masculinity and as emotionally toxic, psychologically unaware, emotionally inept, physically dangerous creatures" (Pollack, 2006, p. 68). Pollack (2006) argues that the expectations of society have compromised the genuine resilience of boys. In terms of building resilience, Schore (in Pollack, 2006) places emotional connection, central to the development of wellness and resilience in children and youth.

2.6.8.2 Self-Esteem / Self-worth

Besides for stifling resilience in youth, unsuccessful social experiences also lead to "disappointment, frustration, feelings of incompetence, a lack of self-worth, and a poor self-concept" (Silver in Lerner & Kline, 2006, p. 528). Feelings within themselves and the way the outside world responds produce concepts of frightening surroundings in which children feel insecure and view themselves as incompetent. "They do not receive the normal satisfactions of recognition, achievement, or affection" (Lerner & Kline, 2006, p. 528). It is generally accepted that adolescents

with low self-esteem are predisposed to adopt risk behaviours (Wild, Flisher, Bhana & Lombard, 2004). Self-esteem is defined as “a subjective, evaluative phenomenon which determines the individual’s characteristic perception of personal worth” (Battle as cited in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 153). This includes feelings of self-worth (Gouws et al., 2000; Wild et al., 2004).

Kernis (2005) argues that focusing only on whether the self-esteem is high or low will not give sufficient predictions for objective outcomes such as predicting challenging behaviour. The self-esteem level on its own “provides an incomplete picture of the role of self-esteem in psychological and interpersonal functioning” (Kernis, 2005, p. 3). In order to gain a full understanding the multiple components of self-esteem must also be taken into consideration. Self-esteem must thus be viewed as a multidimensional structure composed of various components. These components include *stability of self-esteem*, *implicit self-esteem*, and *contingent self-esteem*.

Self-esteem level refers to the representations of people of their “typical, or general, global feelings of self-worth” (Kernis, 2005, p. 3) or in other words how they “typically feel about themselves across time and context” (Kernis, 2005, p. 4). Self-esteem stability on the other hand refers to the “magnitude of short term fluctuations that people experience in their contextually based, immediate feelings of self-worth” (Kernis, 2005, p. 4). An unstable self-esteem is thus described as short-term fluctuations in the extent to which people experience positive or negative feelings about themselves. Thus, stability of self-esteem is one component reflecting whether or not a person has a strong sense of self, anchored in secure feelings of self-worth (Kernis, 2005). A stable and high self-esteem is associated with self-regulatory styles reflecting agency and self-determination with a clearly defined self-concept (Kernis, 2005).

Ryan and Connell (in Kernis, 2005) distinguish between four different self-regulatory styles: *External regulation* – reflecting the absence of self-determination, the impetus for action is external to the person acting. *Introjected regulation* – involving minimal self-determination, an internally controlled state where applied contingencies of affect and self-esteem enforce or motivate a set of actions. *Identified regulation* – involving more self-determination as the individual identifies with the importance of the activity

for psychological functioning and growth. *Intrinsic regulation* – reflecting maximal self-determination as the individual “chooses to engage in actions purely for the pleasure and enjoyment they provide” (Kernis, 2005, p. 15). Whereas the self-regulatory styles of optimally functioning individuals consist mainly of identified and intrinsic regulation, the more unstable an individual’s self-esteem, the greater the engagement in introjected and external regulation (Kernis, 2005).

Epstein and Morling (in Kernis, 2003) make a distinction between implicit and explicit self-esteem. They argue that people operate according to two different psychological systems. The cognitive/rational system operates at a conscious level and follows linguistic and logical principles. Explicit self-esteem operates through the cognitive/rational system and reflects the feelings of self-worth that a person is conscious of. Interacting with the cognitive/rational system is the experiential system, which operates at a non-conscious level and operates according to affective experiences and heuristic principles. Implicit self-esteem operates through the experiential system and reflects the non-conscious feelings of self-worth. Implicit self-esteem, although on an unconscious level, still influences people’s thoughts, emotions and behaviours.

Contingencies of self-worth lie in what people believe they need to be or do in order to have self-worth (Crocker & Knight, 2005). They shape emotions, thoughts and behaviour and act as sources of motivation. Instability in self-esteem results from positive and negative experiences in the domains of contingency (Crocker & Knight, 2005). People allow certain events to have an impact on their self-esteem. James (in Crocker & Knight, 2005) defines the investment of self-esteem in selective events as ego-involvement. Instability of self-esteem results from being ego-involved in events or having contingent self-worth (Kernis in Crocker & Knight, 2005). People “seek the emotional high associated with success in domains of contingent self-worth” (Crocker & Knight, 2005, p. 1). Failure in the domains of contingency will threaten self-esteem. People will avoid failure, either by increasing their effort, or when they are uncertain of success, goals may be abandoned. They may become demotivated, or they will start preparing excuses or blaming others as defence manoeuvres, to deflect threats to the self-esteem in case of failure. When failures

cannot be dismissed with defence responses, a decrease will take place in the self-esteem (Crocker & Knight, 2005).

Another factor playing a role in psychological functioning is a well-developed self-concept. Self-concept is defined as “the total collection of attitudes, judgments, and values which an individual holds with respect to his behaviour, his abilities, his body, his worth as a person; in short, how he perceives and evaluates himself” (Byrne as cited in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 153). Self-concept refers to self-related beliefs regarding the physical, personal, family, social and moral dimensions of the self (Gouws et al., 2000). “When self-knowledge is confused and conflicted, it will fail to provide meaningful input into people’s behaviours and reactions and instead promote heightened responsiveness to immediately salient situational cues and outcomes” (Brockner in Kernis, 2005, p. 16). People with low self-esteem possess low self-concept clarity in the sense that their “self-concepts lack internal consistency and temporal stability and are held with little confidence” (Kernis, 2003, p. 2).

Kernis (2005) states that individuals with unstable self-esteem

“have feelings that are more affected by everyday negative and positive events... experience greater increases in depressive symptoms when faced with daily hassles... report greater tendencies to over generalize the negative implications of specific failures and to attribute negative outcomes to internal, stable, and global factors... have more impoverished self-concepts... regulate goal-directed behaviours sub optimally... and adopt a cautious, self-esteem-protective orientation toward learning as opposed to curiosity and challenge seeking” (Kernis, 2005, p. 20).

Wilderness rites of passage encounters are based on the principles of the Circle of Courage. Therefore, expected outcomes for wilderness rites of passage programmes will be enhanced resilience and self-worth. The next section will focus on outcomes commonly reported in the review of the literature.

2.6.9 Common reported outcomes

The wilderness encounter normally assists participants to focus on intrapersonal and social development and to develop environmental awareness and appreciation as

well as the enjoyment of nature (Beringer, 2004; Haluza-DeLay, 1999). Davis (2003) argues that the goal of wilderness rites of passage is not just to develop a relationship with the natural world or a stronger sense of self, but to create a sense of coming home (Davis, 2003). In the wilderness one finds oneself to be part of a larger whole. The need for control over the environment deepens into trust and a sense of harmony. Nature is no longer a background against which to be challenged and grow but rather supports the inner journey (Davis, 2003). Research supports the role of nature in mental health - there is a healing power when deep contact is made with nature (Davis, 2006a; 2003).

Wilderness experiences are linked to optimal mental health and resiliency through strengthening the following spiritual and psychological factors (Davis, 2006a; 2003):

- a) physical, cognitive and affective *relaxation and stress reduction* and a restoration of a sense of peace and tranquillity.
- b) *Hardiness* (attitude of internal control, thriving in the face of stressful life circumstances), *increased self-confidence and autonomy and improved self-esteem and capacity to cope, coherence, flow and compatibility*. Hardiness (Kobasa & Maddi in Davis, 2006a) is defined as a combination of an internal locus of control (self-responsibility and the opposite of helplessness), self-efficacy and perceived control, appreciating challenge as an opportunity for and a commitment to the self. Coherence is related to self-perceptions of being connected, whole and meaningful. Flow or optimal experience, mindfulness, involvement and engagement (Csikzentmihalyi in Davis, 2006a; Davis, 1998) include high intrinsic motivation and enjoyment, being able to self-transcend and balance demands and abilities, merging awareness and action and being present-centred and totally absorbed in activity (Mannell in Davis, 1998). Compatibility (Davis, 1998; Kaplan & Kaplan in Davis 2006a) refers to merging one's needs and capacities with what is offered by the environment.
- c) *Social support, intimacy and group bonding* as well as
- d) opportunities for *exercise and increased physical fitness*.

Davis (2006a) argues that nature is an essential element in many transpersonal experiences. Transpersonal psychology is concerned with optimal mental health and psychological development. The focus is on "mystical and spiritual experiences, inner peace, compassion, trust, fully-realized aliveness, and selfless service" (Davis, 2006a, p. 5). Nature, for instance, is a trigger for peak experiences. Maslow (in

Davis, 2006a; Davis, 1998) defines peak experiences as experiences of optimal mental health, which can be compared to intense spiritual or mystical encounters with life-transforming consequences, or moments of transcendent joy, beauty, peace and harmony.

Davis (2003) argues that wilderness experiences mirror and reinforce certain qualities, attitudes, and self-concepts of participants. "Familiar environments reflect familiar roles and identities. The more unfamiliar the environment, the greater the potential for deep change. A wilderness setting tends to reflect to adolescents new and different aspects of themselves" (Davis, 2003, p. 11). Upon exposure to the power of wilderness, the essential nature of the individual emerges. The wilderness mirrors and supports the genuine, intrinsic and natural qualities of participants. They come into contact with their own power by letting go of self-images that are dying and embracing the birth of new self-images. Personality structures necessary to cope with difficult situations in the past are replaced by more balanced and resilient structures fostering the emergence of mature and responsible adult qualities (Davis, 2003).

Foster Riley and Hendee (1998) report benefits related to the self and to other. Benefits related to the self imply "various degrees of depth of self-connection ranging from self-awareness (shallower) to feelings of self-reliance and empowerment (deeper)" (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998, p. 7). Benefits related to other reflected an outward focus on 'other' rather than 'self' including "feelings of oneness and interconnectedness to all things" (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998, p. 7).

Foster Riley and Hendee (1998) state that reported benefits of wilderness vision quests, forming part of wilderness rites of passage encounters, suggest a process of connecting to the self, which culminates in feelings of reliance, strength and empowerment, and connecting with all things which reflects an outward focus and leads to experiences of spirituality. They argue that a strong connection with the self in nature acts as a preparation for spiritual experiences in nature. Vision questing involves time alone in nature while fasting. It has been practiced for centuries in various traditional cultures (Cruden in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). Time alone in the wilderness is utilised to search for insight regarding the self and the direction and

purpose for the next life phase (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). Reports of rites of passage practices, involving vision questing and fasting for adolescents, are found among Native American and African cultures, the Australian Aborigines and the Mayan Indians (Bjerre, Elkin, Gilmore, Mahdi, Storm, Tedlock & Tedlock in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998).

Rites of passage's initiation and renewal practices are valuable because it is a confirmation of the importance of the individual to the community. A safe and valuable transition test, bridging one life phase to the next, is provided. The transition requires discipline and guidance, which results in participants' enhancement of self-esteem and development of character. By enforcing the common beliefs and values of the community during the transition, great social value is provided for the tribe (Van Gennep in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998).

Webb (in Luckner & Nadler, 1997) confirms the impact of the wilderness by arguing that individuals often become entangled in an inner-war arising from the discrepancy between the true person and the image that society projects onto the person (Webb in Luckner & Nadler, 1997). Once individuals are able to remove themselves from this state of confusion they are pulled towards their inner selves. A connection to the environment and their own vulnerability allow for a re-alignment to the true selves. It quietens the ego's voice so that the inner voice can be heard. The connection to the environment often results in people realising the imposed restrictions and influences that have formed their lives and they start sensing a deeper personal meaning and purpose for being. A wealth of literature and research substantiates the positive effect of utilising nature and adventure-based activities to increase the self-esteem, alter the locus of control, reduce anti-social behaviour and improve problem-solving skills (Webb in Luckner & Nadler, 1997).

Whittington (2006) explained how, in an extensive all-female wilderness programme, adolescent girls challenged conventional notions of femininity in a variety of ways. They developed perseverance, strength, determination, confidence to speak out, decision-making skills and leadership skills. They started questioning conventional ideas of being feminine by challenging assumptions regarding the abilities possessed by girls and the ideal images of beauty. The experience changed their stereotypic

concepts of healthy eating styles and body image. They could rely on the feelings of accomplishment and pride experienced during the encounter to help them through difficult times. It gave the reassurance that they are able to accomplish a goal. Skills necessary to collaborate with others and becoming more interpersonally oriented were also gained, such as, cooperation, compassion, nurturing of and considering the needs of others. Significant relationships with other girls were cultivated.

Goldenberg, McAvoy and Klenosky (2005) have found that outdoor adventure experiences contribute to the development and strengthening of important personal values. These values have a positive effect on the lives of participants: the transference of skills to everyday life, fostering awareness, improvement and fulfilment of self, providing the opportunities to achieve personal goals, growing feelings of self-confidence, esteem and a sense of accomplishment and the building of warm relationships with others. Research done by Cross (2002) indicates that wilderness-based adventure education specialises in nurturing a sense of community and increasing a sense of belonging. As a result, adolescents demonstrated lower perceptions of feeling alienated - they had opportunities where each had adult roles and responsibilities to fulfil, their special place in the group was acknowledged and explicit norms were provided which lessened the sense of powerlessness, isolation and normlessness. They also gained a stronger sense of personal control - they were trusted and supported to make important choices requiring personal accountability (Cross, 2002).

Clark, Marmol, Cooley and Gathercoal (2004) argue that physically and emotionally demanding group experiences in the wilderness result in participants becoming more resilient, confident and socially responsible. One's sense of safety and personal comfort depend on the adaptive functioning in a small social group in a wilderness environment. Wilderness experiences result in increases in self-esteem and ego strength, and the development of positive self-perceptions. Participants become less defensive and more socially accepting. Wilderness therapy results in "statistically significant improvement on immature defence and maladaptive behaviour scores, and on dysfunctional personality patterns, expressed concerns, and clinical syndromes scores" (Clark et al., 2004, p. 225). Physically and emotionally

demanding outdoor experiences are effective in bringing about positive character change.

Clark et al. (2004) provide empirical evidence showing that wilderness therapy can be efficient for adolescents with clinical concerns on Axes I, II and IV. Large effect sizes were found for certain clinical syndromes such as eating dysfunctions, anxiety, depression and suicidal tendency. Moderate effects were found for proneness to substance abuse and a delinquent predisposition. Large effects were also found for identity diffusion, devaluation of self, disapproval of body image, sexual discomfort, social insensitivity, family discord, and childhood abuse (Clark et al., 2004).

From the above-mentioned literature, a conclusion can be drawn that the most significant outcomes associated with wilderness-based adventure programmes are the positive effects on participants' self-concepts and resilience, and the enhancement of appropriate and adaptive social skills (Cheshire & Lewis, 1996; Hendee & Pitstick in Roberts, 2000; Russell, 2000).

2.7 CONCLUSION

Based on the literature review, the need for intervention in the lives of adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties has become clear. Wilderness rites of passage programmes have been identified as a possible way to capture the attention of youth (Pinnock, 1998a; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). On the one hand, it addresses the unmet needs, discouragement, the sense of insignificance, powerlessness, incompetence and a loss of self-esteem and self-control (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). On the other hand, it mobilises the adventurous spirit of youth and triggers the development of the individual, through increased self-knowledge, fostered intra- and interpersonal growth, and strengthened self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-actualisation. In addition to this, the wilderness experience enhances life skills in areas, such as, conflict resolution, problem solving, decision-making and communication and fosters a sense of autonomy, identity and meaning in life.

The focus of wilderness rites of passage encounters is on enhancing psychological health and wellbeing. The components from the various wellness models as

discussed in this chapter, which have been positively impacted by wilderness rites of passage, include self-esteem, self-knowledge, self-efficacy, self-actualisation and youth resilience. Capacity is built in the *physiological* (e.g. physical exercise), *psychological* (e.g. increase in pro-social awareness and behaviour), *social* (e.g. building of interpersonal relationships) and *spiritual* (e.g. developing a sense of personal destiny) subsystems. Wilderness adventure programmes encourage changes in the individual as an 'indivisible self' (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). These changes subsequently influence the roles and responsibilities the individual fulfils and form an essential component in the process of becoming a well-adjusted person (Bell, 2003; Russell, 2000).

As noted by Bacon and Kimball (in Roberts, 2000) the foremost task of education must be to build pro-social values in youth through creating powerful experiences that will spontaneously call forth the capacity within youth. Wilderness adventure programmes provide opportunities for activities where the struggle against the elements of nature demands greatness. Such activities provide a powerful short-term learning experience for youth who normally cannot be reached by traditional methods (Bacon & Kimball in Roberts, 2000). It is therefore evident that due to its efficacy in strengthening protective factors that enhance resilience, wilderness rites of passage programmes can be a major contributing factor towards school support for young people manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In Chapter 3, the research design and methodology followed to gain insight into the perceptions of adolescents with regard to their wilderness rites of passage encounters will be discussed.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND -METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 1, the aim of this study was to attempt, through a qualitative study, to explore the perceptions adolescents associate with an adventure-based education programme, or more specifically, a wilderness rites of passage encounter, and the long-term impact they perceive the encounter had on their lives in terms of outcomes. The following sub-questions were formulated:

- How do the participants explain the wilderness rites of passage process and their responses to the process from their own point of view?
- Which factors in the process are deemed most effective and have had the greatest impact on participants?
- What role can wilderness rites of passage play in supporting youth at risk of manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools?

In order to fully explore the research questions, the researcher has selected a research paradigm, research design and research methodology. The research problem determines the design and combinations of methods and procedures to be followed so as to answer the research questions (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

In this chapter the paradigm, design and methodology selected for this study will be discussed in detail. The focus will also fall on the sample selection and methods that were used to collect, analyse and verify data. The emphasis will finally fall on ethical considerations relevant to this study.

3.2 THE RESEARCH PARADIGM

As discussed in Chapter 1, this basic qualitative study has been embedded in an interpretive/constructivist paradigm. A paradigm is a system of “interrelated ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions” (Durrheim, 1999, p. 36). The paradigm impacts the nature of the research problem and the way in which the problem is explored. It, therefore, plays a central role in the research design.

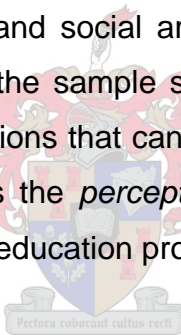
The paradigm will be discussed in more depth, later in this chapter, as a specific dimension of the research design.

3.3 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design provides the plan according to which the research will be conducted (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The design entails four dimensions: the purpose of the research, the theoretical paradigm, the context within which the research is conducted and the research techniques utilised for the collection and analysis of data (Durrheim, 1999).

3.3.1 The purpose of the research

The purpose of the study relates to the object of the study as well as the type of study conducted (Durrheim, 1999). The object of the study is also known as the unit of analysis (Babbie in Durrheim, 1999). There are four different units of analysis: individuals, groups, organisations and social artefacts (Babbie in Durrheim, 1999). The unit of analysis will influence the sample selection, methods of data collection and eventually the types of conclusions that can be drawn from the study (Durrheim, 1999). The object of this study is the *perceptions of adolescents* in the Western Cape concerning adventure-based education programmes.



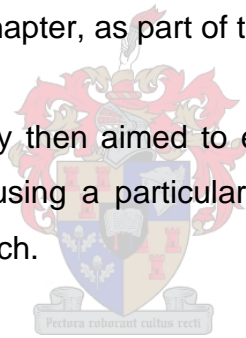
Besides for focusing on the object of the enquiry, the purpose of a study is also reflected in what the researcher aims to attain through the study. Durrheim (1999) distinguishes between three types of research: a) exploratory, descriptive and explanatory research, b) applied and basic research and c) quantitative and qualitative research.

Studies of an exploratory nature focus on “preliminary investigations into relatively unknown areas of research” (Durrheim, 1999, p. 39). The goal of the research is to find new insights into a particular phenomenon by using an inductive approach to form “more general but speculative hypotheses” (Durrheim, 1999, p. 40). The main aim of a descriptive study is to describe a phenomenon through descriptions, classifications or the measuring of relationships (Durrheim, 1999). An explanatory study, on the other hand, focuses on providing causal explanations of a phenomenon (e.g. determining whether one variable causes another) (Durrheim, 1999).

Durrheim (1999) distinguishes between applied and basic research. Applied research aims to contribute towards issues of a practical nature such as providing information to facilitate problem solving and decision-making. Basic research, on the other hand, advances the fundamental knowledge of a particular phenomenon by refuting or supporting theories underlying the phenomenon.

Quantitative research is linked to positivism and qualitative research to phenomenology or interpretivism (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). In positivism, reality is seen as “stable, observable, and measurable” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). In interpretivism “multiple realities are constructed socially by individuals” (Merriam, 1998, p. 4). Quantitative research focuses on collecting data in the form of numbers, which is then analysed by using statistics. Qualitative research involves the collection of data in the form of written or spoken language, and analysis of data by identifying and categorising themes (Durrheim, 1999). Characteristics of qualitative research will be discussed in depth, later in this chapter, as part of the research methodology.

In conclusion, this research study then aimed to explore the object, defined as the *perceptions of adolescents*, by using a particular type of study, defined as basic, exploratory and qualitative research.



3.3.2 The theoretical paradigm

As explored in Chapter 1 and mentioned above, this study has been embedded in an interpretive/constructivist paradigm. The interpretive perspective highlights that human action is inherently meaningful (Schwandt, 2000). The researcher in his/her attempt to understand a particular action tries to find the meanings that constitute that action. The interpretive paradigm operates within certain dimensions (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999; Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The *ontological dimension* acknowledges that reality consists of individuals' subjective experience and that the lived experience must be taken seriously. The *epistemological dimension* maintains that understanding is gained through interaction and empathetic listening. The *methodological dimension* relies on the subjective relationship between the researcher and the participants (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 1999). In the process of getting to know the lived experience of participants (Patton, 2002), the researcher participates without distancing him/herself from personal prejudices.

“The constructivist paradigm grew out of the philosophy of Edmund Husserl’s phenomenology and Wilhelm Dilthey’s and other German philosophers’ study of interpretive understanding called *hermeneutics*” (Eichelberger in Mertens, 2005, p. 12). Inherent to the constructivist paradigm is the assumption that knowledge is socially constructed (Mertens, 2005). The researcher therefore studies “the multiple realities constructed by people and the implications of those constructions for their lives and interactions with others” (Patton, 2002, p. 96). The focus is on establishing the meaning attributed to activities and how this relates to behaviour (Eichelberger in Mertens, 2005). The ontology of the constructivist paradigm states that reality is socially constructed. Therefore, the goal of the researcher is to gain understanding of multiple social constructions (Mertens, 2005). Its epistemology maintains that the meaning making process entails a personal and interactive involvement between the researcher and participants. The methodology involves the use of interviews, observations and reviews of documents (Mertens, 2005).

The interpretive/constructivist paradigm maintains that reality is created through the process of social construction (Guba & Lincoln in Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). In other words, the phenomenon is socially constructed and has different meanings to different people (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). The focus of research is to make meaning of the constructions held by people in specific contexts through a process of interpretive understanding (Mertens, 2005).

According to Schwandt (2000), the process of interpretive understanding (*Verstehen*) has the following features: a) Human action is viewed as meaningful. b) There is an ethical commitment to show respect for and fidelity to the everyday, intersubjective world or life world of people. c) It emphasises that human subjectivity contributes to knowledge without sacrificing the objectivity of knowledge – it is thus possible to understand the subjective meaning of action in an objective way.

Interpretivism is in a sense hermeneutic because in order to understand a particular action, the situation in which human actions make meaning, must be understood. This view draws upon the notion of the hermeneutic circle – in understanding the part, the inquirer must understand the whole and vice versa (Schwandt, 2000). Smith and Osborn (2003) and Denzin (2002) argue that interpretive research implies a double

hermeneutic circle or a two-stage interpretation process: The participants, sharing their lived experiences, are the centre of their life stories as they try to make sense of their worlds. The researcher, on the other hand, interprets these life stories and is thus at the centre of his/her interpretation thereof. The two interpretive circles overlap to such a degree that it enables the researcher to live his/her way into the participants' life stories (Denzin, 2002).

Embedded in the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, then, the researcher sought to come to an understanding of the perceptions of participants of their wilderness rites of passage experience. In exploring the perceptions of youth, with regard to their wilderness rites of passage encounter, the researcher also attempted to establish how youth participants perceived the encounter as contributing to their lives.

3.3.3 The context

Research takes place in a specific context. Within the interpretive/constructivist paradigm, this qualitative study took the form of a naturalistic enquiry. In other words, the research was done in a non-manipulative and non-controlling form, permitting events and social interaction to unfold naturally (Durrheim, 1999).

Since the field work for this study was conducted at Educo Africa, the organisation and programme ought to be discussed in detail as part of the context.

3.3.3.1 The organisation

- History and background

Educo has originated in Canada in 1969. In 1994 Educo Africa has been established in South Africa as an independent organisation associated under the auspices of the Educo International Alliance (Educo, 2006a; Steyn, 2005). Educo Africa focuses essentially on youth development (Educo, 2006a). Its aim is to strengthen society's foundation by reinstating basic life values in youth, through strengthening their belief in themselves and their future (Educo Africa in Steyn, 2005).

- Vision and values

Educo Africa is committed to facilitating the healing, empowerment, training and development of individuals (Educo, 2006a). They provide leadership, developmental

and intervention programmes through outdoor and wilderness-based experiential learning (Educo, 2006a; Steyn, 2005; Suleiman, 2002). Programmes are rooted in a belief in the “therapeutic power of wilderness, the rich value of dialogue, deep reflection, and rites of passage methodology” (Educo, 2006a, p.1). An environment is created where people can grow, develop and heal and where the relationship with the self, with others and with the natural world is improved (Educo, 2006a). The values are the development of leadership and personal mastery, community strengthening and collaboration, diversity and multiculturalism, environmental awareness and the spirit of adventure, challenge and discovery (Educo Africa in Steyn, 2005).

- Organisational structure and resources

A board of trustees provides overall guidance and is managed by an executive director. A democratic and participatory approach is followed. Besides for offices in Cape Town, Educo Africa accesses various wilderness sites on a needs basis. They frequently utilise The Groot Winterhoek Outdoor Leadership Centre in the mountain range east of Porterville. This conservation area offers a variety of opportunities for experiential learning, reflection and adventure (Educo Africa in Steyn, 2005). A large part of Educo Africa’s intervention programmes depend on donor funding and sponsorships (Educo Africa in Steyn, 2005).

- Approaches

Educo Africa’s programmes are rooted in the ‘Leave no Trace’, ‘Circle of Courage’ and ‘Rites of Passage’ approaches. ‘Leave no Trace’ entails planning ahead and being prepared by knowing the regulations and special concerns for areas to be visited. Travelling and camping are restricted to durable surfaces such as established trails and campsites, rock and dry grass. The approach includes proper disposal of waste, leaving natural objects such as rocks and plants, and cultural and historic artefacts, as they are found, minimising of campfire impacts and respecting wildlife (Educo, 2006b).

The Circle of Courage relates to the understanding that by being held within a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, a child can develop a secure

sense of self in the world. It also fosters wellbeing, responsibility and a willingness to contribute to the lives of others (Educo, 2006b).

Rites of passage refers to the natural world mirroring the seasons and cycles of life. Ancient cultures have strongly believed in recognising and celebrating the movement from one season or social role to another (Educo, 2006b).

“Elements of the ancient rites of passage are key ingredients of Educo programmes. The challenge to discover and recognise one’s strengths and weaknesses, the time for solitude and reflection on one’s life path, the mirroring back of one’s growth and learning, and assistance to transfer that in meaningful ways to lives back home, are all integral to our work and increasing the health of our society” (Educo Africa, 2000, p. 94).

3.3.3.2 *The programme*

- Rationale and aim

Educo Africa believes that a meaningful wilderness experience potentially can promote the perception of self and of the self in relation to others, and strengthen learning and pro-social behaviour, which can be implemented at home and in the community (Roberts in Steyn, 2005; Steyn, 2005). Educo Africa’s wilderness rites of passage courses aim to develop individuals through experiential learning and wilderness-based activities. The focus is on strengths, the discovery of potential and development of competence (Steyn, 2005).

- Programme content and implementation

Programmes are flexible and are planned in collaboration with client agencies in order to meet the needs of young people (Steyn, 2005). Programmes offer opportunities for action learning (experiential education through rock climbing, abseiling, hiking, and trust and team building challenges) and the development of emotional and spiritual awareness (Gamble & Roberts, 1998; Steyn, 2005). Programmes also include time for group discussions and personal reflection. “Solitary time in the wilderness, journal writing and personal storytelling facilitate the youths’ self-understanding and increase their sense of wellbeing” (Gamble & Roberts,

1998, p. 1). Rites of passage courses involve clarifying life expectations and facilitate the transition into adulthood (Roberts in Steyn, 2005).

Programmes are implemented in a systematic way. Participants enter into an agreement with Educo Africa, stipulating the roles and responsibilities of participants and facilitators. This happens during the initial meeting, which is usually held two weeks prior to the wilderness encounter (Roberts in Steyn, 2005).

Wilderness rites of passage employ a wide range of methods including a vision quest or solo experience (time for reflection, spent alone in the wilderness), mirroring (reflection of participants' unrealised strengths and abilities), rituals (marking meaningful accomplishments and thresholds of change), games and activities (promoting trust and interaction), adventure activities (challenging individuals to discover strengths and endurance), daily chores (cooking and cleaning encouraging cooperation, trust and caring for others) and journal writing (writing to explore feelings and thoughts) (Roberts in Steyn, 2005).

Upon returning from the wilderness, support is a key element to sustain the positive elements of change acquired in the wilderness. Educo Africa fosters partnerships with youth development agencies, schools, children's homes, shelters and places of safety in order to provide long-term support after the completion of a wilderness programme (Educo Africa in Steyn, 2005).

The aforementioned information regarding Educo Africa sketches the background in the light of which the research methodology will now be discussed. The methodology refers to the combinations of methods and procedures followed during the qualitative research process. These include the methods followed to select participants and collect, analyse and verify data.

3.3.4 The research techniques

The research design normally provides detailed information on techniques employed in the sample selection, data collection and analysis (Durrheim, 1999). These aspects will be discussed in more depth, later in this chapter.

3.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As discussed in Chapter 1, this study has been undertaken in the form of a basic qualitative enquiry. The interpretive/constructivist paradigm is typically associated with qualitative research. Qualitative research is an umbrella term covering various forms of enquiry (Merriam, 1998). The qualitative research paradigm refers to inquiries attempting to study human action from the perspective of the people involved. The aim is to describe and understand, rather than to explain or predict human action (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) and Merriam (2002) indicate the following characteristics of qualitative research: a) The researcher demonstrates interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed and how they make sense of their lived experiences. b) The researcher is the primary instrument in collecting and analysing the data. c) Fieldwork is done in order to observe human action in its natural setting. Patton (2002) argues that fieldwork involves direct and personal contact with an individual. The idea is to gain understanding of his/her reality in an empathic and non-judgmental way. d) An inductive analytical strategy is followed in order to build towards theories. e) The product is rich in description to convey the findings related to the phenomenon. f) Samples mostly focus on small groups of participants selected in a non-random and purposeful fashion. g) A research design is used, flexible and responsive to changes.

3.5 SAMPLE - SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

A purposive sampling strategy has been used in this study. Purposeful sampling “yields insights and in-depth understanding” gained from “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 2002, p. 230). Purposeful sampling has a variety of different strategies to purposefully select information-rich cases (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling is one such strategy and involves cases based on specific predetermined criteria (Mertens, 2005; Patton, 2002).

The predetermined criteria for selecting participants in this study were: a) Young males who had been participants in a wilderness rites of passage course within 24 months preceding the interview. This limited timeframe reduced recall difficulties and

recollection complications. b) Youth had to be younger than age 23, as this is recognised as the end of adolescence, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Since wilderness rites of passage encounters for males and females can differ, the researcher decided only to focus on encounters featuring males. Male participants were more accessible as an analysis of profiles showed that Educo Africa's wilderness rites of passage programmes for vulnerable youth received more male participants than females. Steyn (2005) reported that an analysis of the profiles of 270 participants showed that 203 were male and 67 were female.

The fact that Educo Africa's programmes for wilderness rites of passage for females were presented in provinces other than the Western Cape also played a role in the decision to focus solely on males in this study. Since a lot of emphasis in Chapter 1 fell on documents of the Western Cape Education Department, the researcher was of the opinion that participants selected, should be residing in the Western Cape.

Another reason for selecting only male participants was that in order to explore the questions under study more fully, a documentary on an Educo wilderness rites of passage encounter was used as part of the data collection. The 50-minute TV-documentary, "Vision to Dream", was broadcasted by SABC-TV on Freedom Day in April 2006. The TV-documentary, based on the life of Coleridge Daniels and his and Educo Africa's wilderness rites of passage work with vulnerable youth, provided a step-by-step description of such an encounter at the Groot Winterhoek Outdoor Leadership Centre in the mountain range east of Porterville. The researcher decided to follow up on the participants in the documentary and to explore their perceptions of the wilderness encounter. Five participants, who formed part of the documentary, were available to be interviewed. Three participants of other encounters, not forming part of the documentary, were also interviewed, in order to get a variety of views. The participants were referred to Educo Africa by child and youth care agencies. It was felt that the young people could benefit from outdoor-based capacity building interventions.

According to Patton (2002) there are no rules for sample size in qualitative research because the sample size depends on the research questions, the purpose of the

study and what can be done with available time and resources. The meaning and insights gained from the study depend more on the information rich cases under study, and the researcher's ability to analyse data, than on the sample size (Patton, 2002). In this study, the researcher has selected a small sample size of eight participants. Kelly (2002a) argues that in-depth interviews of six to eight sampling units suffice for a homogenous sample that does not have much variation in terms of certain features (Kelly, 2002a). The sample in this study can be described as homogeneous since all participants were male. Table 3.1 presents biographical information of participants related to this study.

Table 3.1: A presentation of the biographical information of participants

Parti- pants	Current age	Age at the time of the encounter	Home language	Educational qualifications	Current involvement
P-1	19	18	English	Grade 10	Training programme
P-2	19	18	Afrikaans	Grade 11	School
P-3	21	20	Afrikaans	Grade 10	Training programme
P-4	20	19	Xhosa	Grade 10	Employed
P-5	21	20	Xhosa	Grade 8	Unemployed
P-6	21	20	Xhosa	Grade 11	Employed
P-7	22	21	Afrikaans	Grade 6	Training programme
P-8	20	19	Xhosa	Grade 10	Unemployed

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

The interpretive/constructivist paradigm accepts that data collection is an interactive process whereby the researcher and participants are personally involved, affecting one another through mutual interaction (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Qualitative enquiry endorses the notion that diverse perspectives on the same phenomenon might exist. The researcher has explored how each of the participants perceived,

interpreted and experienced their encounter with a wilderness-based adventure programme (Patton, 2002).

Newes (2001) argues that the time when data is collected in adventure-based research studies is an important factor to take into consideration. Data collected just before and immediately after the completion of the programme may be influenced by pre-trip emotionality or post-trip euphoria (Bandoroff in Newes, 2001). Therefore, it is advisable to collect pre-trip some time before the beginning of the programme (Fry & Heubeck in Newes, 2001). Similarly, the motivational level of the participants can influence post-trip data collected immediately after completion of the trip, especially when participants are anxious or excited to return home. Post-trip data collection must therefore be extended to include follow-up data in order to determine the long-term effects of the programme (Davis-Berman & Berman in Newes, 2001). Data collected from follow-up meetings can provide a more accurate idea of the impact of the programme, particularly if it includes information about additional treatment or support that participants have received. The environment individuals entered upon completion of the programme must also be taken into consideration as this can influence the impact of the programme (Newes, 2001).

Therefore, during the interviews with participants the researcher explored follow-up data, support received, as well as the environment entered after the trip, in order to eliminate the effect of post-trip euphoria.

Merriam (1998) states that researchers conducting basic qualitative studies typically use three main methods for collecting data: observation, interviews and the reviewing of documents and records. In this study, data collection methods have included 1) a review of literature, 2) interviews with past participants, 3) a review of documents and the Educo Africa TV-documentary, and 4) observation and reflection during the research process.

3.6.1 Literature review

Mouton (2005) argues that a review of the literature provides the following: the most recent, credible and relevant theorising and conceptualising regarding the field of study, the most widely accepted clarification of key concepts, valid and reliable

instrumentation and acceptable empirical findings. The literature review (Chapter 2) provides a clearer understanding of the nature, dimensions and complexities of adventure-based programmes. Above all, it highlights the potential of adventure-based programmes as alternative intervention strategy for youth manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties, thus confirming the need for this research study.

3.6.2 Interviews with past participants

A semi-structured interview is a flexible data collection instrument (Smith & Osborn, 2003). This form of interviewing allows engagement in a dialogue whereby the participants are viewed as the 'experiential expert' on the topic and is allowed maximum opportunity to tell his/her story (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The participants, therefore, become co-enquirers instead of research subjects (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 2002). The semi-structured interview makes use of an interview schedule, which serves as a basic checklist during the interview to ensure that all relevant topics are explored (Patton, 2002). The interview schedule is attached as Addendum A.

In order to learn more about how participants experienced wilderness rites of passage, open-ended questions were asked during the interview. Open-ended questions permitted participants to decide on the direction they wanted to take and the words they wanted to use to express their feelings, thoughts and experiences (Patton, 2002). This was important, since the aim of the study was to gain understanding of the perceptions of participants. The preferred language of the participant was used during the interview. In the case where Xhosa was the participant's first language, English as the second language was used. All the participants, who were Xhosa first language users, had full command of English, therefore, a translator was not used.

3.6.3 Documents and the Educo Africa TV-documentary

In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon under study, Educo Africa availed documents for the researcher's perusal. These documents included background information on the organisation and various activities, as well as a training guide and systems hand book, which provided the

necessary information on the variety of methods used in order to facilitate the greatest possible impact towards meeting the needs of the participants.

Personal documents, such as, letters written after the programme, give individuals the opportunity to give expression to their perceptions. Reading these documents can contribute towards gaining understanding of the authors' views of events (Redfield in Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher has had the opportunity to explore personal letters and reflective journal entries of some of the participants.

Documents and records not only include typical paper products, but also audio or video tapes, and artefacts (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Mertens and McLaughlin (2004) consider video material as having great potential as a data source. Educo Africa has availed the "Vision to Dream" TV-documentary to the researcher as it provides a detailed description of a wilderness rites of passage programme for vulnerable youth. The majority of young men in this study have participated in the TV-documentary. The rest of the participants have been exposed to similar programmes.

Participant letters, reflective journal entries and a transcription of the documentary were analysed, together with transcriptions of the interviews and field notes, to identify particular themes, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 4.

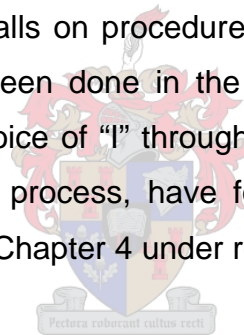
3.6.4 Observations and reflections

The purpose of observation is to enhance the understanding of the context within which interactions take place (Patton, 2002). Observations added to interviews can provide a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon under study. Interviews employ techniques of observation "to note body language and other gestural cues that lend meaning to the words of the persons being interviewed" (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2000, p. 673). Kelly (2002a) states that research is limited when the focus only falls on people's verbal descriptions of experiences. Words alone can be deceptive and people can refrain from giving an open and honest account of their feelings and thoughts. Bodies speak through gestural language (Kelly, 2002a). It is, therefore, necessary to go beyond words and employ the visual sense as a mode of

making sense of gestures and bodily interactions to understand more aspects of a person's experience (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, Kelly, 2002a).

The use of a tape recorder facilitated this method of data collection as it enabled the researcher to observe and take notes of facial expressions and reactions, which would otherwise have been lost. Being relieved of note taking increased the researcher's ability for empathic listening and interaction with participants as real people and, therefore, promoted a friendly and relaxed conversational atmosphere.

Reflexivity explores the researcher's input in the research process. It emphasises the importance of self-awareness and ownership of the researcher's perspective (Patton, 2002). Patton (2002) argues that in cases where the researcher takes the stance of a third-person and communicates through the passive voice, a sense of objectivity, control and authority is projected. It creates an impression of distance and detachment and the focus falls on procedures instead of the real live humans. Since much of this study has been done in the third person, the researcher has decided to also bring forth the voice of "I" through reflexivity. The reflections of the researcher, during the research process, have formed part of the data collection process and will be discussed in Chapter 4 under research findings.



3.7 PROCEDURES

Permission to conduct research was requested from Educo Africa. Correspondence in this regard is attached as Addendum B. Once permission was granted, Educo Africa identified potential participants. Having identified potential participants, consent had to be negotiated with gatekeepers. The gatekeepers were contact persons at organisations or institutions where the youth were involved, at the time of the research. Contact was first made by Educo Africa to negotiate consent and to gain co-operation from the gatekeepers. This procedure was followed in order to act ethically in terms of Educo Africa not breaking confidentiality by revealing the contact details of past participants without consent. The process was expedited by Educo Africa's long and trustworthy relationship with the gatekeepers. Once consent was given, the researcher established contact in order to introduce and to explain the purpose of the study. The gatekeepers made appointments for the researcher to meet the participants at the various organisations or institutions. Informed consent

was then established with participants themselves before interviews could take place. A letter regarding consent to participate in the research is attached as Addendum C. Educo Africa negotiated personally with the two participants who were not members of an organisation or institution, and helped with the arrangements for the researcher to visit them at home.

3.8 DATA ANALYSIS

Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe data analysis as the process of working from raw material in interviews to evidence-based interpretations presented in an accurate and thorough report. Analysis proceeds in two phases (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Phase one focuses on data preparation involving the preparation of transcripts and coding data. Phase two involves analysing the data in order to answer the research questions and draw theoretical conclusions (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). As mentioned in Chapter 1, content analysis has been used in this study. Content analysis refers “to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p. 453). In other words, the researcher focuses on searching the content of the data texts for recurrent themes (Henning et al., 2004; Patton, 2002).

In exploring the personal experience and perception of participants of their wilderness rites of passage encounter the researcher followed the following steps: (Henning et al., 2004; Rubin & Rubin, 2005):

- The analysis started when the interviews and documentary were transcribed. Interviews conducted in Afrikaans were translated directly into English capturing original ideas and meaning. Participant letters, reflective journal entries and field notes of the researcher’s observations and reflections were added to the transcribed data.
- The entire text was read to get an over-all impression of the content and to identify important ideas and events in the interviews. The text was then re-read to start identifying units of meaning.
- As the researcher worked through the data, the units of meaning were labelled with codes. The particular labels given are termed codes. Each code had a clear and consistent definition referring to the same subject across all the interviews.

- Related codes were then categorised after which different categories were also labelled. Categories revealed themes that were constructed from the data. Each theme was used as the basis for an argument. The themes became evidence with which to substantiate arguments about the emerging knowledge claims of the researcher.

The following practical steps as suggested by Smith and Osborn (2003) were also followed:

- There was sustained engagement with the text in the transcript to increase familiarity with the content and complexity of the text. The left-hand margin was used to annotate interesting or significant comments. After this free textual analysis, the researcher returned to the beginning of the transcript. The right-hand margin was used to document emerging themes. Initial notes were transformed into concise phrases capturing the essence in the text.
- Once all the transcripts had been analysed, emergent themes were listed on a sheet of paper. In the initial list, the order was according to the sequence in which they appeared in the transcripts. The second list involved a more analytical ordering as the researcher attempted to make connections between themes. Themes were clustered together and checked with what the participants actually said. Next, a table of themes were compiled where clusters were given names, representing the subordinate themes.
- A final table of subordinate themes was constructed. Main subordinate themes were then identified. Final themes were now translated into a narrative account where themes were explained and illustrated.

A transcribed interview is attached as Addendum D to reveal the process of coding. The codes used were in the form of abbreviations as indicated by the examples in Table 3.2. All data, with a similar code, were then organised under the same code. An example of this process is attached as Addendum E. Related codes were then categorised under a specific theme. An example of the categorising of related codes is attached as Addendum F. Identified themes and categories pertaining to this study, are reflected in Table 3.3.

Table 3.2: List of codes for possible themes

Team:toget	Team/Belonging
Team:work	Working together
Back	Background/past
Care:ot	Caring for others
Nat:effect	Effect of wilderness
Peace:past	Acceptance of what happened in past
Mot	Motivation
Dec	Decision making
Multi	Multicultural exposure
Suffer:ot	Awareness of suffering of others
Self:es	Self-esteem
Solo	Solitude

Table 3.3: Themes and categories related to interviews with past participants

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. The process followed in the programme	Theme discussed as a whole
2. Factors having an impact on participants	Wilderness Teambuilding initiatives Journaling Circle time Solitude Adventure challenge activities
3. Outcomes identified by participants	Development of self Knowledge and skills gained Changed outlook Improved relationships
4. Ways to support youth in schools	Awareness of impact of systemic context Emotional connection to self and others Mentoring

3.9 DATA VERIFICATION

Guba and Lincoln (in Mertens, 2005) indicate the criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research as credibility, transferability, dependability, confirmability and authenticity.

3.9.1 Credibility

Credibility refers to the question whether the way the participants really perceive social constructs corresponds with the way the researcher portrays their perspectives (Mertens, 2005). There are various strategies that a researcher can use in order to enhance credibility. The strategies relevant to this study are 'member checks' and 'triangulation'. *Member checks* involve verifying with participants the developing constructions during the process of data collection (Mertens, 2005). Participant perceptions and opinions have been summarised and clarified during the interview as well as at the end of the interview to enhance the researcher's understanding of what has been said, and increase the ability to accurately reflect the participants' viewpoints. *Triangulation* involves the checking of factual data for consistency of evidence across a variety of sources (Guba & Lincoln in Mertens, 2005). The literature study (Chapter 2) and documents and "Vision to Dream" documentary, received from Educo, correlate with information provided by the participants. Kelly (2002c) refers to methodological triangulation involving the use of multiple methods to investigate the research questions. Interviews, observation and field notes, as well as the review of documents and a TV-documentary, in the form of a DVD recording, have been used as methods in this study.

3.9.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the degree of similarity between the site of study and the receiving context (Mertens, 2005). The readers are required to determine the similarities between the research study and their own contexts, based on the extensive and careful description of time, place, context and culture provided by the researcher (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). Kelly (2002c) refers to generalisability as the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts. Smaling (in Kelly, 2002c) defines generalisability as 'transferential validity' or the ability of the study to provide answers in other contexts. Transferability is the foundation allowing other researchers to use findings in making comparisons with their own work (Kelly, 2002c).

An in-depth explanation of the research process and discussion of the research findings can result in a greater transferability to other contexts (Guba & Lincoln in Babbie & Mouton, 2001). One important aspect of the research process, impacting the transferability of a study, is the process of data collection. Research findings will be influenced by the data collected. It is therefore essential to approach participants in such a way that their responses will be trustworthy and representative of what they believe. Lewis (2005) argues that the questioning style and ways of prompting can distort the responses of youth. He suggests that statements prompting a response, rather than direct questions, can elicit dependable views. Research shows that general open-ended questions rather than free recall or specific questions limits responsiveness to implied suggestions and encourages a flow of uninterrupted talk (Lewis, 2005). This approach, as suggested by Lewis, has been followed in the data collection process.

3.9.3 Dependability

The qualitative enquiry process, related to data collection, analysis and interpretation, must be documented to ensure that it can be tracked and publicly inspected (Mertens, 2005). A dependability audit, related to a detailed description of the research process, can confirm the quality and appropriateness of the research process (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). In an effort to increase the dependability of the study, the researcher has provided a detailed description of the collection, analysis and interpretation of data. Addenda A to F are attached in order to clarify the enquiry process.

3.9.4 Confirmability

Confirmability indicates that logic is used specifically in the interpretation of qualitative data and that data and the interpretation thereof are not part of the researcher's imagination but can be traced back to a source (Mertens & McLaughlin, 2004). A confirmability audit attests to the fact that data "can be traced to original sources and that the process of synthesizing data to reach conclusions can be confirmed" (Guba and Lincoln in Mertens, 2005, p. 257). The confirmability and dependability audits can be conducted in conjunction with each other. Since it is impossible to provide readers with all the 'raw material' in order to evaluate the

research, an account of how evidence has emerged and has been processed can be made available (Kelly, 2002c). Readers must be provided with an audit trail (Miles & Huberman in Kelly, 2002c), which is a detailed account of the data generating and analysis process (Kelly, 2002c). Chapter 1 and 3 of this study have provided an in-depth account of the research process and can thus be seen as strengthening the confirmability of this study.

3.9.5 Authenticity

Authenticity refers to a fair presentation of all perspectives, values and beliefs (Guba & Lincoln in Mertens, 2005). There is a need to increase cultural sensitivity, collaboration and respect and to tailor research procedures according to the population being studied (Sieber in Mertens, 2005). Lewis (2005) argues that authenticity of the context in which views are collected is an essential principle to be taken into account in research related to youth with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The context must be true to the participant. The fact that the interviews for this study have been held in contexts familiar to the participants has increased the authenticity of the study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Research is considered as ethical if it conforms to the standards of conduct of scientific enquiry (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The researcher remains accountable for the ethical quality of the study and must ensure that the enquiry is conducted in an ethically proper manner. The “Ethical Code of Professional Conduct“ of the Professional Board for Psychology, Health Professions Council of South Africa (in Babbie & Mouton, 2001), has been the guiding principle for the research done in this study.

Voluntary participation: Participation in this study was completely voluntary and participants truly understood their right to refuse to participate (Mertens, 2005).

Not harming participants: The revealing of research information related to this study will not produce unpleasant effects for participants such as embarrassing them or endangering their lives (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Informed consent: The intended research agenda, design and reporting of data must be discussed with participants on an equal-status basis (Pollard in Mertens, 2005). They have to be informed of all the possible risks to themselves (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). Throughout the process of planning, implementation and reporting of the research study, those who are oppressed and least powerful, must be equally heard (Mertens, 2005). The consent letter of participants needs to be accompanied by a letter in which the organisation gives consent to the use of its site and name (Henning et al., 2004).

Informed consent applicable to this study included the following: Approval was obtained from Educo Africa to conduct the research. The letter requesting permission to conduct research is attached as Addendum B. Participants were asked for their consent to be part of the research. Research participants were thoroughly informed about the goal, procedures, advantages and disadvantages of the research project. Interviewees implied consent by agreeing to an interview. Prior to the interview, all participants signed a letter regarding consent to participate. The participants and researcher signed two copies – one for the participant and one for the researcher. All aspects of ethical consideration were covered in this letter. A copy of the consent letter is attached as Addendum C. Participants were also asked whether they had any objections to the use of a tape recorder.

Anonymity and confidentiality: Protection of identities is an effort to protect participants' interests and wellbeing. Anonymity refers to the situation when a researcher cannot identify a given response with a given respondent. Confidentiality refers to the case when a researcher can identify a given person's responses but the respondent is assured that it will not be revealed publicly. It also refers to not revealing participants' identities or linking comments with their names (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Confidentiality also entails keeping interview data in a safe place or destroying evidence that links information in interviews to specific individuals (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). To assure that the participants' identities do not become public, identifying information can be removed as soon as further contact with the participant is no longer necessary (Babbie & Mouton, 2001).

Regarding anonymity and confidentiality in this study, numbers (e.g. P-5) were used to still distinguish between participants without revealing their true identities. Interviewees had the right to say which information they wanted to reveal anonymously. Confidentiality was ensured and no person other than the researcher had access to the interview data not included in the research report. The researcher respected the right to privacy, non-participation and confidentiality and acted responsibly and honestly. All raw data were handled in strict confidence and remained the property of the researcher only.

Respect: Rubin and Rubin (2005) state that respect is shown towards participants when permission is asked to record conversations and to turn the recorder off if requested to do so. Permission needs to be asked to use answers worth quoting as quotation. The researcher has treated all research participants with respect.

Analysis and reporting: It is essential in research that the researcher adheres to the highest possible standards and readily indicates the limitations of findings and methodological constraints. Under all circumstances, researchers must guard against the misrepresentation of results as well as fabrication or falsification of data (Babbie & Mouton, 2001). The research report has been compiled as accurately, objectively and clearly as possible in order for the reading public to understand and gain benefit from the research findings.

3.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter the research paradigm, design and methodology of the study were discussed in detail. Methods used for collection, analysis, interpretation and verification of data were explained. Ethical considerations related to the research process were highlighted. The research findings will be discussed in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in Chapter 1 and 3 the primary research question this study aimed to answer, was:

- What are the perceptions of youth regarding adventure-based education with specific focus on their wilderness rites of passage encounter and how do they perceive the encounter has had influenced (impacted) their lives?

The following sub-questions had been formulated:

- How do the participants explain the wilderness rites of passage process and their responses to the process from their own point of view?
- Which factors in the process are deemed most effective and have had the greatest impact on participants?
- What role can wilderness rites of passage play in supporting youth at risk of manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools?

An exposition of the research findings will be presented in this chapter in answer of the research questions. Findings are presented under the following headings: 1) Interviews with past participants, 2) Educo Africa TV-documentary and documents, 3) Field notes of the researcher's observations and reflections during the research process and 4) Participant reflections. Following the exposition of findings will be a detailed discussion of the identified themes and categories as an integrated whole.

4.2 EXPOSITION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.2.1 Interviews with past participants

Table 4.1: Themes and categories related to interviews with past participants

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. The process followed in the programme	Theme discussed as a whole
2. Factors having an impact on participants	Wilderness Teambuilding initiatives Journaling

	Circle time Solitude Adventure challenge activities
3. Outcomes identified by participants	Development of self Knowledge and skills gained Changed outlook Improved relationships
4. Ways to support youth in schools	Impact of systemic context Emotional connection to self and others Mentoring

4.2.1.1 *The process followed in the programme*

Before mentioning how the participants in this study have explained the wilderness rites of passage process and what their responses have been to the process, it is important to mention that a wilderness rites of passage course usually follows the same sequence of phases, namely the Preparation, Separation, Threshold, Reincorporation and Implementation phases. Although the participants interviewed for this study have attended different wilderness rites of passage courses, the phase sequence basically have remained the same.

The majority of participants in this study were able to passionately talk about their personal processes; however, they were not necessarily able to differentiate among phases. They saw the encounter in its entirety and often made mentioning of the journey as a whole, instead of focusing on the underlying parts and aspects.

The process started with an initial meeting a few weeks prior to the commencement of the course. The majority of young people in this study reported that they benefited a lot by attending the meeting. Some of the participants mentioned that they were scared to meet the other people who would be part of the encounter. They were excited about the prospect of attending the course but at the same time felt lost. However, the initial meeting gave them a chance to start forming ideas of the other participants and course instructors. Their first impressions comforted them and eased their main concerns and fears about the strangers they were joining on a

course in the wilderness. The meeting was also valuable in terms of the information they received concerning practical issues, such as, what the course was all about and what they could expect. One of the participants responded as follows:

“The initial meeting was valuable because there you could get an idea who is going with and what you can expect and that is better than if you only came and left and when you leave you may not feel comfortable. It was good for us to see one another and to talk a bit even if it was not much so that you can have an idea where you were standing with the others” (P-2).

The participants in this study identified the following aspects as part of the Preparation phase: they could meet the other participants and the course instructors, they received information about the course and formed a good idea of what they could expect, they were encouraged to see the course as an opportunity to make a new start, they were invited to take up the challenge to complete the course, and they had a chance to verbalise a personal goal for the course.

Upon leaving the city a few weeks after the initial meeting, the participants indicated that they were given an opportunity to separate themselves and leave behind the things that belonged at home. They built a stone circle and committed themselves to look after one another and be true to themselves and to the process. Two of the participants made these valuable comments about the Separation phase:

“We were standing and we turned our backs on things we left behind at home. We picked up stones and placed it in a circle and made promises to look after one another” (P-7).

“We did some commitments which was very good, we had to commit with one another that you won’t lie or hide away. You will talk it through with yourself, and work through everything, because if you lie, what good will it make?” (P-8).

The young people mentioned that once in the wilderness, they spent much time sharing stories about their backgrounds and past events. They had to face the unpleasant memories of what happened to them in the past as well as the wrong actions they had taken. Sharing caused a release of great pain and suffering. The majority of the participants in this study mentioned that they sometimes sat and cried together as they felt each other’s pain. While listening to and talking about the

stories of the past they realised that verbalising the past was setting them free. By letting go of past failures and disappointments, pain and sorrow, they gained a new perspective on life. Set free from the baggage of the past and allowed to feel like children again, carefree enough to dream, they started focusing on the future.

Crossing the threshold entailed precisely this: the young people left the past behind and started to focus on their dreams and goals. They started to realise what it entailed to become a responsible man. Making a new start was the essence for the majority of the young men in this study. They shared their excitement with one another and looked forward to apply the newly acquired knowledge. One participant expressed the insight he had gained as follows:

“I learned about the journey, where you go and what to leave behind at the camp. Just go forward, don’t look backwards, if you look backwards you’ll stay where you are now, you’ll never succeed” (P-7).

A celebration marked the end of the Threshold phase and the start of the Reincorporation phase. The young people enjoyed celebrating their achievements and their newly acquired knowledge and skills. The instructors used this opportunity to motivate the young men to keep to their goals and dreams, and to embrace adult roles and responsibilities. The young people felt encouraged and ready to return home. One participant referred to the celebration in the following way:

“I will always remember the morning when we go home. It was like we were going into the wilderness. They gave us the Educo T-shirts. Their words motivate me, every time they give a T-shirt they talk about it, the behaviour. That is the moment that touched me a lot. When we came back, I was often thinking about what they said” (P-5).

Reincorporation involved rejoining the communities where the young people came from. Becoming part of community life was difficult for a majority of the participants in this study. One participant mentioned that it was especially challenging to get used to the noise and the traffic. He realised that the real world did not allow space for privacy. People also did not make an effort to listen to one another. His overall perception of life changed and as a result, he felt that not just himself, but also those around him, had changed. Other participants felt that it was disappointing when

people at home did not initially recognise the huge change in them and still saw them as the same as before. Fortunately, the insight they had gained in the wilderness, kept them from falling back into past behaviour patterns and engaging with actions that might have had hurtful consequences. The participants aimed to stay alert, to love the good and reject the bad. One participant stated that his way of motivating himself was to stay focused and to forget about the past. He was adamant to show people the change that had taken place in him and this kept him motivated:

“The choice I made when I climbed into the taxi to go home was, you are going home, show your people you are not the same. Show the people, came into my head every time. ...What was important was to put my mind on everything that was good, forget about the time that passed, because if I’m reminded the whole time of the time we had, the things that I’ve stored there will maybe come up again and start to play with my mind” (P-2).

After the course, the young people attempted to implement what they had learned. Some participants applied for jobs, enrolled in training programmes or returned to school. Others started by seeking healing in their relationships with family members.

“My goal was to be with my family. I haven’t been with my whole family. My main goal was to meet with my father, to talk and I must also forgive. Actually it was also a commitment to my goal. I must first commit and then I will achieve my goal” (P-8).

Pectus roburant cultus recti

The wilderness rites of passage process functions interdependently with certain factors utilised by course instructors to ensure optimal development and growth in course participants. The factors are integral to the process.

4.2.1.2 Factors having an impact on participants

According to the participants, the following factors had the greatest impact on their lives: being in the wilderness, participating in teambuilding initiatives, keeping a daily journal, attending circle time, going on a solo and partaking in adventure challenge activities.

- **Wilderness**

The young people reported that the wilderness invited them to focus on essential things. There were few distractions. The peaceful environment provided a place to

be still and come to the realisation that the time for change was then and there. The young people mentioned that the communities where they came from did not allow for time to become still and listen to oneself. They therefore grabbed the opportunity provided by their time in the wilderness to relax and to ponder on aspects of their lives that could possibly change in order to bring about success in life, such as returning to school. One of the young people emphasised the following:

“In the wilderness you can think normally. You realise things. Here you hear lot of noise, music, here you do, you don’t think. Wilderness is fine when you want to think. One can do your own thing. You relax there. Nothing is disturbing you, it is special” (P-6).

Participants reported that they experienced the natural environment as a source of inspiration and guidance. One participant mentioned that he could almost hear the trees talking and in that encounter he found new ideas. Another participant shared his appreciation of nature. He felt that the beauty of nature gave him a sense of freedom. His remark was as follows:

“...on the last day at base camp, early in the morning, I was sitting there and was watching the sun coming up. I said to myself when I looked at this place, this thing was beautiful. It was the beautiness of the place that set me free” (P-5).



In the vast open space of nature the young people found that it was easier for them to talk about their feelings and share their painful memories with others than when they were back home. They experienced that being in the wilderness opened up their hearts to share their pain with others and this prepared a way for peace to enter.

The cold and rainy weather was mentioned often. The exposure to the elements and unfamiliar surroundings increased their sense of vulnerability and forced them to participate and work together. The youth remarked that they had to rely on one another in order to survive. The following responses highlight the participants' perception of the importance of teamwork when facing the natural elements:

“In the wilderness I enjoyed seeing us struggling in the rain, how nice it was to be together and working together to stay out of the rain, how nice it

was to see how we worked together when it was raining and how we were looking after one another” (P-2).

“In the wilderness we learned how to be brothers to each other. If you don’t participate, you will not survive in nature. You have to work together to overcome the harsh conditions” (P-3).

- **Team building initiatives**

As already mentioned, the young people stated that participation and teamwork were essential for survival in the wilderness. They reported that different team-building activities, such as low ropes courses and icebreaker games, helped build team spirit. One participant described these activities and drew the conclusion that success depended on mutual trust, working together as a team and focus:

“The ropes was for building trust. You need to put the person through the rope to the other side. Just do what you see you can do, it’s about trust and teamwork and focus. We did it in groups not one by one. ...We had to stand on a piece of plastic and they fold it and you stand on it and you have to keep tight and hold each other. It’s all about teamwork” (P-7).

The participants in this study mentioned that getting to know one another and becoming friends turned their lives around. Coming from different backgrounds did not stop them from becoming brothers. At first, they did not know or trust one another. As trust was earned, the group bonded. They looked out for one another, motivating each other not to give up, but to press on and draw on the strength of the group. Together they had the power to complete the course. One of the participants summarised it clearly:

“We did not know each other and now coming together and bonding like that. It was like we all had the power. There were no one of us who was giving up, we were all committing ourselves to finishing the camp – that was nice because if one of us said no, I’m going home now because the camp is hard, we will motivate him to do the right thing and we did. It was very hard but we did it together, we worked as a group, as a team” (P-8).

- **Journaling**

During the course, youth were encouraged to keep a daily journal of what they were feeling and experiencing. The young men wrote about things that they were too shy to talk about. Journaling gave them the opportunity to reflect upon their lives, to gain

understanding and learn from it. Some participants mentioned that they not just reflected while using the journal, but also while walking long distances. One participant indicated that these times of reflection helped him to grow as he allowed himself to write, or even talk, about matters that were on his mind. Giving expression to this brought relief. His response was as follows:

“When you walk you think about that thing. It is a time to grow for me, now I think any time. ...If you do activities like writing on a piece of paper all your pain, to read your pain, sometimes if you don’t want to read it you can take your paper and say it, you can feel it. Every time you talk, something is coming off your shoulders, every time you talk” (P-5).

- **Circle time**

Spending time in the wilderness made it easier to talk to each other about personal issues. The young people felt that a platform was created for the sharing of stories when the instructors were prepared to share their stories first. The instructors became role models and brothers who had already walked the journey. The essence of this is captured in the following response:

“When you talk from experience, that helped me. When Mr Coleridge first talk about his pain, then I get very interested, he talked his real life stories and that give us motivation to talk about our stories” (P-8).

A growing sense of trust in one another and in the instructors helped participants to share their stories. Although there were a lot of pain and sorrow and sadness, the courage of one to open up, encouraged the rest to do the same. The participants stated that they talked about the dreams they had and how it was destroyed. Talking about their disappointments allowed repressed pain to surface. The young people walked alongside one another and wept together as they felt the other’s pain. The majority of the participants in this study said that experiencing this mutual care and empathy set them free. Their sense of freedom allowed them to talk openly about their goals for the future and what they wanted to become. The following response demonstrates the above:

“What helped me was to communicate with other people. That is the main thing. Every time in the wilderness we talked and talked and shared our experiences. It was like being in another world, no cars coming past the

road, no nothing, just us. Every time I experience, every time it goes dark there was something I left behind” (P-5).

- **Solitude**

Spending time alone in the wilderness forced participants to face their fears. The young people said that they had an incredible sense of risk as they were exposed to the elements and to animals like snakes, wild cats and baboons. This increased their awareness of their own vulnerability. Added to this was the fact that they were left alone without any food. They were allowed only water for 24 hours. The initial fear of having no food intensified when the hunger cramps started. They were forced to face this fear because there was no other alternative. Being left on their own, they had to rely on themselves and had to find solace on their own.

The majority of the participants in this study agreed that the solo was the worst part of the course. Some reported that they thought they would never be able to complete the solo. As they were going through the experience, they started to see the natural environment in a different light and became aware of their inner strength. Where they experienced the solo as terrifying at first, they gradually managed to find peace as the hours went by. They then were able to allow thoughts and feelings of the past to emerge to be meditated upon. Leaving the past opened the doors to start focusing on the present and the future. The young men reported that this brought relief. One participant summed up his experience as follows:

“My position was under the big rocks. I was hungry and told myself do not think about food. Before I go to sleep in the evening, I was sitting with the, what do you call it, things on the mountains, I was sitting and they were around me. It shows me that nature welcomed us, the wild cats, they were around us, they were doing nothing, not attacking us. I was alone. I could relieve my mind from what was pressing on it and I think where I was at and on what I had to focus and what will happen in the future” (P-4).

- **Adventure challenge activities**

The young people experienced the abseiling activity as very scary. They indicated that having surmounted this fear successfully, made them proud of who they were and what they achieved. In completing this, they learned to believe in their abilities. The participants mentioned that their success freed them from past failures and the hesitancy with respect to facing new challenges because of the fear of failure.

Abseiling became their symbol of success making them determined to transfer what they had learned in this situation to other difficult situations that they might have to face in the future. The young people reasoned that if they managed to complete this difficult activity, they could in fact accomplish whatever they put their minds to. In relation to the abseiling activity, one participant emphasised that believing in self played a major role in achieving something:

I will always remember that thing, you was on top of the mountain and then you come down. Abseiling, it was nice to see I can do it. Yoh, it was scary. The courage edge teached me you must believe in yourself. When you tell yourself to do something then nothing can stop you. I was scared. I think I cannot do it, I'm going to fall but then I do it, I go, I go, I was scared but when I'm down I see nothing was to be scared for" (P-6).

Upon explaining how the participants in this study perceived the process and the factors involved in their wilderness rites of passage encounters, it is also necessary to identify what impact the wilderness rites of passage encounter had on the lives of the young people.

4.2.1.3 Outcomes identified by participants

The participants indicated that the course supported them to develop within themselves, to gain life skills, to change their outlook and improve their relationships.

- **Development of self**

Having had the opportunity to leave the past behind, the participants felt that they had gained awareness and greater understanding of life. One participant mentioned that many things changed because he had the opportunity to let go of past things that were hampering him, such as a short temper. Letting go increased his awareness and ability to start anew:

"A lot of stuff was different afterwards. Before I went I was short tempered. When I came back I was more aware, I understand more. There was a lot of stuff that I was carrying around with me but I left it there. These things were left behind. It is done with" (P-1).

The opportunity to let go of troublesome thoughts and feelings in the wilderness also changed the young people's attitudes towards people. The ability to see themselves

in the position of other people led to an increased understanding that resulted in forgiveness. The participants mentioned that their sense of freedom from the past helped them to substitute their previous restlessness with a growing sense of inner peace. Instead of being on the streets most of the time, as in the past, they found it more pleasant to stay at home and keep themselves busy in productive ways.

The young people felt that they had learnt how to balance independence with being part of a team. Some young people reported an increase in their self-esteem, which impacted their lives at home, in school and with friends. Their capacity to handle stressful situations increased. And as they realised that they could exercise the choice not to ponder on things that upset them, they gained more freedom of mind. The young people became aware that they had a choice and this resulted in them taking life more seriously and acting more responsibly.

- **Knowledge and skills gained**

The participants in this study reported that they gained decision-making skills. They became aware that impulsive decisions could have unexpected consequences. The one participant responded wisely by comparing decision-making to a key:

“...decision making is the key of the box. That I will never forget, you cannot open a box if you haven't made a decision and that I will always carry with me. ...It is key, you have to decide what the wrong thing will be. That's why I will always carry it with me. I will not make a decision and then I do not know where it will take me” (P-2).

Other participants felt that having to trust and rely on one another in the wilderness increased their social skills and taught them how to manage their anger and develop their leadership- and communication abilities. The response of one participant was:

“It was really good to be away from the city. I got to learn about myself, my inner self, and how to control myself, my anger, everything. I learned how to trust, it was all about trust. Teamwork and trust” (P-8).

- **Changed outlook**

The young people stated that they had learnt to focus on the positive. Some realised that mistakes can be learning opportunities. They realised that their existence was

not meaningless but that they did have a purpose in life and that it was not too late to make a turn in the positive direction to pursue their goals and fulfil their purpose. The majority of participants in this study mentioned that their perceptions of people changed. They learnt about multicultural relationships and realised that a person from another culture could also be a friend. Most also realised that they were not the only ones who suffered but learned that other people also had difficult childhoods. Their awareness of their own suffering and the realisation that others might also suffer, evoked empathy and care towards other people. The young people contemplated practical ways to make a difference in the lives of others.

The focus of the participants shifted. They made peace with the past and came to a place where they could say they did not have regrets because what had happened had helped them to get where they were presently. Instead of waiting for opportunities to come their way, they realised that they had to stand on their own two feet and start making their own dreams come true. The time had come to stop messing around, to have the willpower to make changes in life and to aim at being a success in life. One of the participants shared the following:

"I changed. I couldn't see things that was right for me, only smoking the dagga and stealing. There I said to myself try to stick with the right not the wrong. After I stick with the right, things changed. I changed inside. I don't want to do any drugs anymore. I stopped smoking. You need to listen to yourself and need to think very well. The camp changed my life, so many things changed. Like the person I'm now, was because of the camp" (P-7).

- **Improved relationships**

Participants reported that they learnt to respect and appreciate people for who they were. They mentioned that, upon returning to their neighbourhoods, their relationships with family and friends, and people in general, changed. After a while, people sensed the respect they showed them and started asking about their attitude change. One participant responded as follows:

"My family, at first me and my family never communicated. When they sit together, maybe they are talking, it was boring, I just go. When I came back it was nice. I didn't help to sit with them, stay at home, watching TV

together, eating together and other normal things to do, not like before, before I never did that” (P-6).

In the light of the explanation of how the participants’ perceptions as to how the wilderness rites of passage have influenced their lives, the emphasis now shifts to the participants’ perceptions on how youth, who are experiencing or manifesting emotional and behavioural difficulties, can be supported in schools.

4.2.1.4 Ways to support youth in schools

The participants mentioned that there should be an increased awareness of the impact of systemic factors on the lives of young people. Young people also identified the need for the fostering of emotional connections to the self and others, as well as an increasing need for mentorship.

- **Impact of systemic context**

The young people in this study indicated that environments at school and at home impacted their school careers. The stories shared regarding their experiences at school revealed that the young people perceived teachers in general as unsympathetic, lacking understanding, having low expectations of learners, focusing on negative rather than on positive aspects of learners, having inflexible attitudes towards learners with learning problems and demonstrating unwillingness to provide appropriate learning support. The youth stated that learners showed a lack of interest in schoolwork, partly because they experienced the schoolwork as irrelevant to their circumstances and partly due to the lack of motivation with which the teachers presented the subject content. They said that teachers ridiculed learners in front of classmates and that fellow learners teased and bullied peers. However, the participants could also remember teachers who believed in the youth and who made life easier in school with their caring and supportive attitudes.

One of the participants has given a beautiful descriptive image about the impact of the home context on young people. He has explained that conditions at home can place young people in tight situations, which cause “knots” inside them. Once they move away into other contexts, such as the community or school environments, youth tend to manifest challenging behaviour patterns at inappropriate times and places. People will then brand these young people as problem kids, unaware of the

fact that the challenging behaviour was only a way of releasing the home-related stress inside of them. The effect of the stress is thus transferred from home to different environments:

“...it makes a knot and once you get out of the tight situation then you want to spread it to others at a difficult time and in the wrong place and when it comes out people will say they are problem kids but when they are at home they are normal kids but at home they are forced into a knot” (P-2).

From this, it can be gathered that young people in schools can benefit if teachers and other significant people realise that youth people do not necessarily demonstrate emotional and behavioural difficulties without a reason. Teachers and caregivers need to understand that challenging behaviour can be an attempt to release the pent-up stress and negative emotions and thoughts. It may be the language they often use to ask for support from adults. If their plea is ignored, disillusionment may lead to young people dropping out of school. However, a few of the participants reported that leaving school is not a good option, for life outside school is difficult, especially when living on the streets. They associate street life with trouble with authorities, drugs, aimless wanderings, sickness and diseases, and living in poverty with not enough food to eat or appropriate clothes to wear. One of the participants has shared his experience in this regard:

“I don’t want to live on the street because you are only in trouble and the police catches you, you don’t have a pozzie, you don’t know where to go. It changes you inside. There is drugs everywhere. Youth need to listen to them and need to think very well because being on the street brings you nowhere, you get sick and smoke too much you don’t wash and don’t have clothes to wear, no warm blankets, nothing” (P-4).

- **Emotional connection to self and others**

The majority of participants in this study highlighted the importance of receiving and also giving love and empathy. They were of the opinion that youth in schools would benefit from the love and care of families, other significant adults as well as peers. The young people stressed the impact that the forming of true friendships and the opportunities to interact with others, during the course, had on their lives. These trusting relationships created a platform of understanding and empathy where they

could share their experiences with others and grow in themselves. The opportunity to share increased their awareness of their own vulnerability and pain and their need to give expression to it. They no longer wanted to keep it to themselves.

The young people in this study expressed their concern for youth in schools and felt that they need opportunities to establish trusting relationships. The participants acknowledged that some young people do not allow others to come too close to them or to talk about their feelings and the things that trouble them. They could relate to this from their own past but said that connections with others and opportunities to share their stories, enabled them to let go of the pain that was keeping them bound to the past. Therefore, connection to others can result in positive change and encouragement in youth:

“When you’re bonding with other people your life can turn around, it is not bad influence, it is good influences” (P-5).

“...it is very important to be in contact with someone close to your heart that will lift you every time” (P-2).

A majority of the participants in this study mentioned that the opportunity the wilderness experience granted them to let go of the past set them free and motivated them to look to the future. They therefore felt that youth in schools would benefit greatly if they can be released from their painful past. It would also help them to start focusing on the positive aspects of their lives and discover a sense of purpose.

Regarding support for youth in schools, one of the young men in this study mentioned that his experience had taught him that when youth demonstrate bad behaviour, it does not help to react and become part of the pattern of bad behaviour. A better option would be for adults and peers not to mirror the behaviour and not to talk behind the youth’s back but to rather involve the youth by giving caring support in a group. The youth would then become aware of his misstep and because it has been handled in a caring way, might be more willing to change. His response was as follows:

“When some were acting bad, they didn’t have a problem, they didn’t react bad to him. They can tell you but they cannot talk after your back, they

would tell you in a group, they don't like this and this about you and then you begin to change because of their care" (P-5).

Some participants suggested that youth in schools would benefit from listening to the experiences, challenges and inspirations of fellow youth. The participants felt that through listening to the personal experiences of fellow youth, young people in schools can relate to situations similar to their own. By listening to true-life stories, youth can feel that they have the freedom of choice but they also have the opportunity to gain the necessary understanding to make an informed decision. The participants felt that this may encourage youth to focus on making decisions about what they consider to be in their best interest:

"I would like for other youth to go through the same experience but they must first learn from those who went first. Many young teenagers must go to get set free and to learn about good choices for their life" (P-5)

The young people mentioned that the people, who encouraged them and displayed belief in their potential, inspired and motivated them. Youth in school, therefore, need supportive and nurturing adults to keep them motivated. One participant mentioned that the lack of support, can lead to crippling feelings of abandonment. This can de-motivate youth, which in turn can stifle their growth and development:

"They need to come and visit them often to remind them of the choices they made and that they must support their choices because some children think you have left me here on my own, why should I now go any further, let me just live the way I was used to" (P-2).

- **Mentoring**

The participants have shared their concern that not all youth who are in trouble will have the opportunity to go on wilderness rites of passage courses that will turn their lives around. They have mentioned that an alternative can be that adults intervene, support youth in making the correct decisions, and then occasionally monitor their progress. Mentors can provide values education and teach youth decision making-, leadership-, problem-solving- and social skills. Youth need to know what is right and what is wrong; they need to know what is good for them and what is not. They need to know how to decide which way to take.

The participants have agreed that youth cannot guide youth. Young people can listen to one another and be companions on life's journey but what is essential is a special connection with an adult who gives guidance because he has also travelled a similar road; he can relate; he knows. The participants highlighted the fact that it will build trust when young people realise that the mentor knows what he is talking about. When he shares his story and demonstrates that he knows what the young people are experiencing, and that he understands their feelings, youth will believe that he will not guide them wrongly. When he speaks, they will trust him and listen to his guidance. One young person made the following remark:

“When somebody say something to you, and he knows what you are going to do and what you will experience and how you will feel when you do it then you want to do it” (P-2).

The participants felt that they had really benefited much from the course instructors who shared their stories. They suggested that adults should share their stories with youth because sharing from experience gripped the attention of youth and motivated them to talk about their own stories. Talking brought release from inner tension. Opportunities to verbalise thoughts and feelings would help youth in schools to find clarity with respect to the past, present involvements, and the direction of their lives. Clarity of this nature could motivate young people to make informed decisions. One participant's response in this regard, was as follows:

“If you're a human being, you have your own skeleton in your own closet, you have to set it free, that was the best thing in my life, I don't have fear with other things, I let my own skeletons in my closet out and I wait for new things in my life” (P-5).

Mentors can help youth to ask themselves about themselves. By doing this, youth can gain self-knowledge and become more aware of what their purpose in life is. Finding a purpose can give meaning to their lives and help youth in schools to make a new start. The participants have felt that making a new start definitely have impacted their lives. The young people, therefore, have agreed that youth in schools can benefit greatly by having a mentor who can guide them towards a new start. They have felt that a new beginning can break patterns of challenging behaviour because youth will be set free from the hold of the past. It can also support

emotional difficulties in youth, because of the inner transformation and the focus on powerfully living with a purpose.

Since all of the above-mentioned elements were involved in a wilderness rites of passage course, the majority of the participants in this study were of the opinion that young people experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools could benefit greatly from a wilderness experience similar to theirs. The following response highlighted this:

“When you are in the wilderness, they are your mother and your father, they are your brother and your sister. If you have something inside your heart that is bothering you, they will be there to help you. They will give you some love, they will care about you and they will also teach you what is right and what is wrong and also about your goals or your dreams so that if you have a dream you can concentrate on making your dream come true” (P-8).

As mentioned before, the focus of this study falls on how adolescents perceived their wilderness rites of passage experience. In order for the outsider to gain a better understanding of the experience of the participants in this study, the process they went through has to be illuminated. For this reason, the findings from an analysis of the Educo Africa TV-documentary and documents will be discussed as part of the research findings.

4.2.2 Educo Africa TV-documentary and documents

The 50-minute TV-documentary, “Vision to Dream”, has been broadcasted by SABC-TV on Freedom Day in April 2006. The documentary is based on the life and work of Coleridge Daniels and gives insight into his and Educo Africa’s wilderness rites of passage work with vulnerable youth. The documentary portrays the story of ten young men’s confrontation with the shadows of their lives, the celebration of their rediscovered potentials and their brave decisions to start afresh.

The documentary was availed to the researcher in the format of a DVD recording. Analysis thereof delivered information pertaining to the wilderness rites of passage process that Educo Africa usually follows when working with vulnerable youth. Information gained from the documentary provided a framework to enhance the

understanding of reflections and experiences of the participants. Of the eight participants interviewed, five formed part of the documentary. The other three participants in this study attended courses following a similar framework of action.

In order to gain a better understanding of the dynamics of the phenomenon under study, Educo Africa also availed documents for the researcher's perusal. These documents included background information on the organisation and its various activities, as well as a training guide and systems handbook, which provided the necessary information on the variety of methods employed to facilitate the greatest possible impact and meet the needs of the participants.

Table 4.2: Themes related to the Educo Africa TV-documentary and documents

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. The process followed in the programme	Theme discussed as a whole
2. Factors having an impact on participants	Theme discussed as a whole
3. Ways to support youth in school	Theme discussed as a whole

4.2.2.1 *The process followed in the programme*

The TV-documentary provides a detailed description of a typical wilderness rites of passage course and contains a step-by-step portrayal of the journey through the phases of Preparation, Separation, Threshold and Reincorporation. For this reason, it will be thoroughly discussed in this section.

The Preparation phase commenced a few weeks before the course started with an initial meeting where individuals were introduced to one another as well as to the course instructors. The participants were encouraged to see the course as an opportunity to change and as a pathway to greater vision and understanding. They were invited to participate as fully as possible and to become part of and committed to the process. The course instructors invited them to take time before embarking on the journey to set personal goals and intentions for the course.

The Separation phase started a few weeks later when they left Cape Town. The process of separating the self from the familiar was initiated. This part of the process was described as similar to embarking on a journey. When the traveler packed his

suitcase, he decided what should go with and what should be left behind. Similarly, participants had to face in a direction and severing ties with that they wanted to leave behind. This was symbolically enacted when they collected and placed stones in a circle, making a commitment to one another to give shape and form to the time together and to be committed to the group.

The journey incorporates the use of the Four Shields. The Four Shields speak of the South, the Shield of the Child, and the search for the child in the midst of all the shadow and darkness of the West. The child is no longer ignored and left behind, but is brought along to accompany the adolescent on the journey. The journey then moves from the West to the North, the Shield of the responsible Adult. Daniels, as the course instructor, explained in the documentary that:

“...the Four Shields speak of the four cardinal points, North, South, East and West. Similar to the four seasons, summer autumn, winter and spring and similar to the four stages of life – childhood, adolescence, adulthood and elderhood. It is part of life’s journey. From childhood you have to step into the adolescent phase and from the adolescent phase you need to step into the adult phase and from the adult phase you need to step into the elder phase. The one gives way to the other” (Daniels).

According to the Four Shields, youth often try to forget their painful childhood but in order to continue with the journey into adulthood, it has to be dealt with. Young people are encouraged to severe and let go of the pain but leaving the realm of the painful childhood does not mean leaving the child behind. Therefore, it is important to go back into the childhood and look for the good things that have happened there and to take that along. Therefore, the participants have been encouraged to go and find the child and to speak to the child in spite of the fears of what they may find. The important matter is for them to find the moments where the child has been happy and to hold on to that.

In order to take on the responsibility of adulthood, participants have to see their true selves. Before this can happen, they are first trained to become warriors. Daniels describes the Shield of the West as a dark shadow that brings no light. According to nature’s teaching, the sun comes up in the East and it goes down in the West so that it again can come up in the East. The journey of life is similar to this. In order to see

light the person has to go through darkness. The training to become warriors is to prepare the participants for the battle in the West.

In the West, the warriors have to acknowledge what they find in the shadow and then have to let go of the bad in themselves. Sticks are used as symbols of their lives. In order to see the hidden beauty of the stick, the layers of the sticks are peeled. This process represents the journey into the self where the participants have to look for the good and the bad in themselves. What is good is taken along on the journey, what is bad is left behind. Daniels described this part of the process in the documentary:

“We’re going to bring back the bark and the bark would resemble the issues that we are dealing with and then we will have a ceremony like when we die, we’re going to bury and let it burn and let go so when we’re finished we know we have dealt with what we needed to have dealt with and so we could see the child in front of us, able to engage with this child once again and allow the child to be part of us so that wherever we journey we journey with the child who is not wounded but is healed” (Daniels).

By acknowledging the child within, the journey can continue. In order to become a responsible adult, the young men have to discover their gifts and purpose on earth. The solo is their quest to discover in themselves their dreams and visions and to search in them what they want to become and be part of. According to the training guide and systems handbook, the quest is an experience of symbolically passing from one life stage to the next. The participants therefore move from a state of “letting go” to a state of “beginning”. Thus, in order to become a man, participants have to go in search of their gifts. They have to ask the question “Who am I?” Daniels has encouraged them to allow the child in them to come out and to communicate with the child. Participants have remained in their separate places for 24 hours. Upon returning, each participant has shared his experience and vision with the group.

The participants were given the opportunity to do abseiling, which symbolised the act of crossing the threshold. It represented the beginning of something new as well as

the start of the pathway leading the youth back to the communities where they came from.

The process was concluded with a celebration, signifying the beginning of the Reincorporation phase. The adults affirmed and motivated the young adults before they returned to their communities. The young people were reminded of their potential to become the best. In order to become the best they needed to know who they are and had to understand their purpose on this earth.

Upon explaining the wilderness rites of passage process, it is essential to also provide a short description of the factors used, as set out in the documents and the training guide and systems handbook. Focus will only fall on factors applicable to the participants in this study.

4.2.2.2 Factors having an impact on participants

The following factors were applicable to the young people in this study:

Role of wilderness - For many centuries, cultures have acknowledged that human beings are part of nature. Due to this connection, Daniels from Educo Africa emphasises the importance for humans to return to nature from time to time. Nature is medicine. As the wilderness inspires and gives sustenance, the spirit is re-awakened. Distractions are less in the wilderness and this provides opportunities to sit in silence and discover the inner voice of self. Listening to self usually offers guidance. The wilderness poses risk, which exposes one's vulnerability. Yet its vast open space also offers a sense of freedom from rules and restrictions. The combination of vulnerability and freedom triggers a spontaneous release of whatever is cooped up in oneself. As a result, balance is restored.

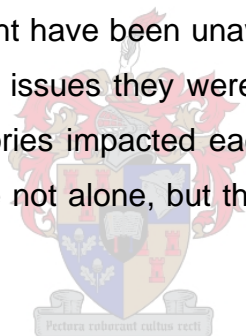
Empowerment – The young people were empowered through the teaching of life skills such as communication (e.g. during circle time) and decision-making skills. They were made aware of the consequences of impulsive decisions and actions and were encouraged to plan ahead and to look for the reason behind something before taking action. Resilience was built by making youth aware of their inner strengths

and resources. Activities like the warrior walk encouraged the youth to be true “warriors” who served a purpose greater than themselves.

Teambuilding initiatives - The focus of initiatives, such as games and activities like low ropes courses, was to encourage the youth to participate, communicate, and cooperate with one another, and to learn from each other. It provoked trust building and initiated relational growth and interconnections between group members.

Journaling - Keeping a journal invited youth to explore their feelings, thoughts, and experiences, and encouraged reflection.

Circle time - During circle time, participants sat together and shared their stories. They were witnesses to each others experiences, pain, transitions and talents. Through mirroring, their stories were reflected back to them to make them conscious of strengths and talents they might have been unaware of. It was a time where they experienced empathy and where issues they were struggling with were illuminated. Participants reported that the stories impacted each member of the group and had made them aware that they were not alone, but that others were in similar or worse situations than themselves.



Solo - During the solo or vision quest, the participants had to spend time alone in a natural place without food for 24 hours. Exposure to the elements and having to rely on themselves brought about a greater sense of inner peace and deeper insight into their lives.

Adventure challenge activities – Activities, such as abseiling and hiking, encouraged the participants to explore and discover new strengths and skills. The activities stretched youth and in many ways tested their limits of endurance and tolerance. The challenge was to transfer the lessons to daily life situations so as to bring about significant change in them.

Focusing on the process and the factors effecting change alone would not complete the picture. The TV-documentary also provided information necessary to answer the research question on support needed for youth in schools and the role that

wilderness rites of passage programmes could play in supporting youth who are manifesting, or experiencing, emotional and behavioural difficulties in schools.

4.2.2.3 Ways to support youth in schools

In the TV-documentary, Daniels sketches an alarming picture of the neighbourhoods from which the majority of the participants in the documentary come. In these neighbourhoods where there are no real parks, trees or gardens, the healing essence of nature is absent. Daniels argued that the lack of natural life reflects a lack of nurturing and care which is essential for bringing forth strong young people. There is little connection to the self, others and the land. This breeds a sense of alienation and a lack of trust. Everybody is in everybody's space. Houses are on top of each other, leaving no place to vent stress. The confined space breeds aggression and frustration. Everything that comes out is anger. Instead of being places of safety and growth, these communities breathe hopelessness and a lack of motivation, including a lack of motivation to attend school. What many young people have to call home, have become places of disappointment where they lose their dreams and sense of purpose. One participant shared his story in the documentary:

"When I ran away from home I was 6 years old. I went to the street asking money to people and also lying, saying all families are dead so they would feel ashamed of us. ...I had a dream, now I have ghosts, my dream was to go out there, to be the first black man here in Africa who is an astronaut, but it didn't happen. The youth, lot of them doesn't go to school, they are just here around" (P-8).

Daniels argues that many young people from these neighbourhoods have never been outside the borders of the communities they live in. Wilderness rites of passage courses take youth from their communities in order for them to discover another side to life, to regain hope and purpose, and to start dreaming again.

The TV-documentary indicates that youth need assistance and guidance to strengthen their self-love and deepen self-knowledge. This will foster self-believe and self-trust. This aspect is confirmed in the words of one of the participants on the documentary:

"I have to learn a lot from life, who I am, explaining myself" (P-5).

This portrays what is going on in the lives of the majority of young people in this study. They are in search of answering the questions “Who am I?” and “Where am I going?”. Youth, therefore, need guidance in this matter. Reflection is a wonderful tool where young people can start exploring their inner worlds. Another participant, revealing intense reflection, delivered a powerful message:

“Am I a person who likes to judge what other people do, who like to say you will never be better than me, who like to say you’ll never make it? Do I believe in myself? Do I trust myself in what I do in my life? Do I love myself? Do I pretend myself that I am a good person? Am I a learner or a destroyer?” (P-8).

In the documentary, Daniels claims that young people cry for significant adults to help them with the process of becoming men. They need parents and elders who show interest in them and support them to step over the threshold of adolescence into becoming strong and mature adults. The young people have confirmed Daniels’ claims by stating that youth desperately seek acceptance, care, love, and adults who believe that they have the potential to become the best. Because wilderness rites of passage courses meet these needs specifically, it has the potential to effect change in the lives of young people in schools.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the researcher also incorporated observation and reflexivity as data collection methods. Observation aimed to deepen understanding of the context within which the interactions with the participants took place. Reflexivity explores the researcher’s input in the research process. The purpose of reflexivity was to increase the researcher’s self-awareness of what was happening during the research process.

4.2.3 Field notes of the researcher’s observations and reflections during the research process

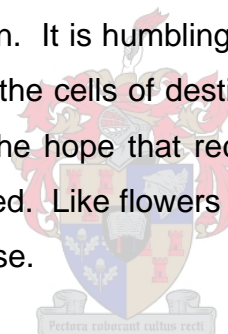
Table 4.3: Themes and categories related to field notes of researcher’s observations and reflections during the research process

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. The researcher’s personal experience	Theme discussed as a whole

2. Observations: TV-documentary	Theme discussed as a whole
3. Observations: Individual interviews	Theme discussed as a whole
4. Reflections: Outcomes of the programme in terms of the Circle of Courage	Theme discussed as a whole

4.2.3.1 *Personal experience*

As researcher, I can relate to the participants' deep and enriching experience of wilderness. In my own experience I have come to realise that wilderness reaches the deepest parts of the self. A wilderness experience gives confidence to stop hiding past failures and disappointments in dark corners, and to open the windows to set them free. The gaps in one's foundation are filled and the scattered parts of self are gathered to once again form a whole. The impact of wilderness comes without words. It mirrors back what hurried modern day living often hides away and covers with useless clutter. One comes face to face with one's fears. This is a very real and intensely vulnerable place to be in. It is humbling and in this place, one realises who one truly is. Wilderness triggers the cells of destiny and as these cells are given the opportunity to breathe again in the hope that recognises their existence, they grow and increase at an immense speed. Like flowers in the desert, with the coming of the first raindrops, the true self can rise.



4.2.3.2 *Observations: TV-documentary*

While watching the documentary I had a sense of finding gold. It became evident to me that during the course of the ten days the participants had been touched to the core of their being. This appeared to have caused a ripple effect from the inside out. I could not help thinking that if this could happen to these young people, it could also happen to others.

Through the days the participants spent together, one could sense the forging of the friendship bonds bringing the group together. At first, they seemed concerned and ill at ease as if they did not know how to relate to one another. They looked uncomfortable in their attempts to find their feet in an unfamiliar place where they were surrounded by strangers. After a while, they settled in and they started to bond and huddle together. Their individual strengths became collective strengths. They dropped their defences, which normally would prevent people from coming closer,

and started to display care for one another. They cried together, walked together and suffered together. The bond of unity in the group grew stronger. The uniqueness of each of the group members was celebrated. Together they survived the course; independently they survived the solo. They realised the strength of standing together, but they also realised the strength and abilities in themselves. They overcame their fears as a team by motivating one another, huddling together in laughter, talking and singing in spite of the cold or rainy weather. It was obvious that they enjoyed one another's company.

What also touched me was the re-awakening of their spirits. As they gained confidence, they allowed their spirits to rise and to soar higher and higher. They were no longer satisfied to walk on the ground, but became aware of their very powerful wings. They lifted off to heights where they dared to dream - to heights where they regained their vision. The mundane little things that kept them earthbound with stooped shoulders, started to disappear as the bigger picture emerged. They became strong young men. Letting go brought peace and a release, and they were able to enjoy life again. They embraced the new start and shared their hope for the future with each other.

4.2.3.3 *Observations: Individual interviews*

As I was listening to the participants a few months after their wilderness encounter, I could sense their freedom and the wisdom they gained. I could see the beauty in them, the hope they had in what might come and the trust they revealed in the process of transformation that started in the wilderness. Some were joyful to be in their training programmes, and others were disappointed about hanging around, not attending schools. All in all, they were different, different from the young people who attended the initial meeting before the course, different from the young people who courageously finished the course. One could sense a sustained energy, and awareness and insight into different aspects of life.

The participants were anxious at first. They wondered what I would ask them. When they realised that I only wanted them to share what was in their hearts, they started talking and the intensity of their feelings found its own way of expression. The participants took time before answering the questions. They gave answers that had

been carefully thought through. Words seemed precious to them. They had a peaceful and relaxed way of talking about their experience. The young people gave the impression that what they shared about their encounter came from the depth of their hearts. They showed an ability to verbalise their feelings and to share their joys, disappointments and sorrows. I sensed their pride when they talked about their successes. I was amazed at the valuable comments they made and their serious attitude towards life. As they shared their stories, I realised that the ideas and thoughts they shared were rooted in time. Reflection had become part of their lives. Sitting with the young people in their environments humbled me. I could only learn from them.

One aspect that all participants mentioned was that they had realised that they had a purpose in life. They had dreams again. Although some did not have the words to express those dreams yet, they had an awareness of its existence. They revealed that they purposefully sought to fulfill their destiny in spite of hardships and stumbling blocks in their communities. We have mentioned to each other that change took time. It was a process. Not all could happen overnight.

4.2.3.4 Reflections: Outcomes in terms of the Circle of Courage

The young people in this study were encouraged to find their dreams and to make them come true. In the process of finding their dreams, they became aware of their own courage.

The young people experienced belonging through the process of becoming a group and fostering a team spirit. The sense of belonging allowed mutual care, empathy, peer teaching and the forming of trusting bonds of friendship. In these safe relationships, they dared to try as the fear of failure ceased. Upon achieving success, the cycle of failure was broken. The sense of mastery increased their ability to shift their focus from inside to the outside, to motivate one another and be aware of, and revel in the success of others. Mastery fostered independence. They realised their capacity to be self-reliant. Each engaged in his own inner journey, yet by sharing their stories, they were also engaged in the journey of each of the team members. They achieved independence and yet through caring for one another, they became interdependent. By gaining a sense of belonging, mastery and independence, they

became aware of the struggle of others. This fostered concern and motivated them to get involved in the lives of others giving them a purpose in life.

Personal documents such as reflective journals and letters written after the programme gave individuals the opportunity to give expression to their experiences of events. The researcher had access to personal letters and reflective journal entries of a few of the participants.

4.2.4 Participant reflections (journals and letters)

Table 4.4: Themes and categories related to participant reflections

THEMES	CATEGORIES
1. Factors having an impact on participants	Theme discussed as a whole
2. Outcomes identified by participants	Theme discussed as a whole
3. Ways to support youth in schools	Theme discussed as a whole

4.2.4.1 *Factors having an impact on participants*

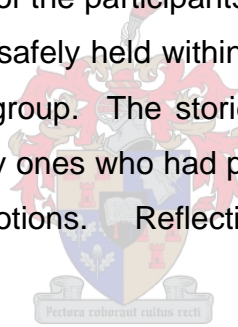
Data analysis of participant letters to Educo as well as reflective journal entries of participants revealed that the following factors had an impact on the participants: the wilderness, teambuilding initiatives, circle time, solitude and adventure challenge activities.

In their letters to Educo, the participants wrote about how much they appreciated the beautiful and inspiring landscapes and enjoyed listening to the sounds of nature. They stated that the silence surrounding them helped them to quiet down within and, through reflection, to start listening to the voices of their hearts. Their reflections revealed that the wilderness had a spiritual impact on them. They came in touch with their true selves and renewed their sense of purpose in the world. The young people mentioned that the unfamiliar environment and the exposure to the cold and rainy weather made them feel quite unlike themselves. They had to be flexible and creative in order to adapt to and deal with these conditions. This made them more aware of their inner strengths and existing patterns of behaviour, which could either be reinforced or changed.

Participant letters mentioned the value of teambuilding initiatives and living conditions, such as, sharing the same room, in building relationships. Living with the same people and sharing chores, experiences, and life stories, changed the young people's perceptions of people from different races, cultures and backgrounds. The young people responded that they became more sensitive to multiculturalism. They became brothers and this sense of belonging provided a platform for mutual support, motivation and peer teaching. One participant wrote the following:

"The first time we meet it was a tough time because it was mixed up, the coloured guys and Xhosa guys. It wasn't easy to communicate to each other. We were scared to talk to each other. But we got to know each other like brothers. I will always remember the guys that I was with, with everything that they were saying, like we will teach each other in every thing" (P-4).

Circle time involved deep and attentive listening to everyone. According to participant letters and reflections of the participants they felt that they could bear their souls to one another as they felt safely held within the circle of trust. This increased their sense of belonging to the group. The stories, the youth stated, helped them realise that they were not the only ones who had problems. They could relate to one another's experiences and emotions. Reflections from a participant's journal revealed the following:



"We were speaking about the dark things inside of us. Everybody listened. We all cried. I thought men cannot cry but there we all cried. ...We listened to one another. It's not just me alone in this world that has problems, it's everybody, but we have different problems" (P-1).

The solo provided an opportunity for the youth to be alone, to listen to and experience nature and self. The exposure to nature taught them to face their own vulnerability. The young people mentioned that they were afraid initially but as they overcame their fears, they became aware of their inner resources. Upon successfully completing the 24 hours, they felt strong and independent. The solo invited the youth to think about life and to become aware of their hopes and dreams. Throughout all this, their sense of purpose grew.

Abseiling was the one adventure challenge activity that was mentioned quite often. The youth wrote that this activity, which they had never done before, gave them the opportunity to face their fears. They stated that completing this activity made them feel proud of themselves. The participants gained self-worth and self-knowledge. Their capacity to also motivate others increased and by doing this, their own spirits lifted and they felt even stronger in themselves.

4.2.4.2 Outcomes identified by participants

According to participant letters, they had an increasing awareness of how they were developing in themselves. In addition to learning about responsibility and respect, they also gained the courage to stay focused on what they perceived to be right and to turn away from what they perceived to be wrong. One young man mentioned that he was aware that not all things could change in a short period of time. Change took time and the best way to continue with the journey was to take it one step at a time. An entry from his journal read like this:

“There are things that can change in myself, there are many things that have changed, but some of the things haven’t changed. Things take time. I can’t change everything in such a little time, but taking the journey step by step I can” (P-1).

The young people realised their strengths and willpower, and displayed confidence that they could change their lives and make their dreams come true. They agreed that their wilderness encounter was a foundation for continued future efforts. The participants realised that this could be a turning point - they could take control of their lives and make changes, such as to stop taking drugs or to return to school.

4.2.4.3 Ways to support youth in schools

The participant letters mention problems experienced by youth in schools. Youth have forgotten, or have never met their true selves and their life purpose. They live lives full of pain and sorrow, anger and rage. Hatred manifests in their hearts and trust becomes very difficult. Without significant others who care for and love them, they distance themselves and wallow in their anger, resentment and mistrust. When young people do not find support or are not motivated to keep on attending school, they drop out. The participants’ reflections reveal that in the absence of care and

guidance of adults, youth act out and become rebellious. They lose control and get into trouble with the authorities. In order to feel accepted, they can join street gangs or give in to peer pressure and do what their friends are doing - drinking, smoking and using drugs, or they start to steal, lie and manipulate to survive. One of the reflective journal entries read like this:

"I didn't trust anyone, because no one showed me how to love or trust. I did a lot of things my friends said we should, without questioning it. It cause a lot of trouble for me at school and I didn't go back. They didn't care, they just feel ashamed of me" (P-4).

The young people's reflections in this study reveal that youth in schools need to feel supported by adults. Young people thrive on emotional connection, empathy and love. Youth need people who believe in them, who are willing to reach out to them and to spread hope, show love, earn trust and have compassion. They need role models who provide hope and encourage them to make the right decisions, who teach them respect by living respectfully towards all, who extend helping hands and help them to discover that they belong. One participant wrote the following remark:

"I realised that this camp was my last chance not to do wrong things but to change my life. They gave us love and support and care. We were a family. It gave me hope and trust" (P-3).

4.3 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.3.1 Introduction

As mentioned before, this research enquiry has aimed to explore wilderness rites of passage as an adventure-based experiential learning tool through an interpretivist/qualitative study. The study has functioned on the assumption that a wilderness rites of passage programme could serve as a valuable intervention strategy for school communities aiming to support youth who are manifesting or at risk of experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

Literature shows that biological factors and individual characteristics may increase a person's susceptibility to emotional and behavioural difficulties, but youth do not demonstrate emotional and behavioural difficulties exclusively because of biological factors. The cause is rather a complex interaction between biological factors and

contextual disadvantages (Zionts et al., 2002). Cowie et al. (2004) argue that there is a need for the support of young people's natural resilience in the face of daily adversities in order to better withstand the influence of contextual disadvantages. This is in line with the Children's Amendment Bill of the Republic of South Africa 2006 (Insertion of Chapter 8 in Act 38 of 2005), which clearly states that prevention and early intervention programmes must focus on promoting the wellbeing of children, and the realisation of their full potential. The focus falls on strengthening and building children's capacity and self-reliance to address problems that may or are bound to occur.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk has reconstructed child and youth care programmes by embracing a reclaiming philosophy and strengths perspective, based on positive psychology (Brendtro et al., 2005). The reclaiming philosophy is based on a fundamental respect for the child, and "an understanding that in order to develop a secure sense of self in the world, the child must feel held within a 'Circle of Courage'" (Roberts, 2000, p. 19). The Circle of Courage is the basic model for strength-building interventions. Instead of defining the problems of youth according to traditional perspectives in terms of deficits, the focus in the Circle of Courage rather shifts to a preoccupation with strengths and developmental needs. The Circle of Courage focuses on the principles of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004).

Coopersmith (in Brendtro et al., 2002), argues that significance, competence, power and virtue or in terms of the Circle of Courage, belonging, mastery, independence and generosity are the components of resilience and self-esteem. Resilience, according to Reivich & Shatte (in Brooks, 2006) is the capacity to respond in a productive way when expected to manage the daily stress of life. The role it plays is as essential to broaden and enrich a person's life as it is to recover from setbacks.

Donald, Lazarus and Lolwana (2006) indicated that resilience is strengthened by three different types of protective factors: individual characteristics related to the child and characteristics related to the child's family and social support networks. Donald et al. (2006) elaborated on these: *Individual characteristics related to the child*

include effective communication and general problem-solving skills, a sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem and strong interpersonal skills, a sense of autonomy, identity and meaning in life and a strong internal locus of control making it possible to hope, plan and set personal goals. *Family characteristics* reflect caring and supportive relationships with competent adults, a family encouraging competence by living according to a strong, coherent and consistent set of values. *Characteristics of social support networks* relate to cooperative peer-to-peer interactions, significant people outside the family acting as strong role models and the awareness of local community contacts.

Findings from the interviews, review of documents and the Educo Africa TV-documentary, and observation and reflection during the research process have indicated that a wilderness rites of passage encounter as an adventure-based education programme offered a short-term learning experience, with long-term outcomes, for youth. As will become clear in the discussion, this experience fosters personal development and growth in terms of individual characteristics, the building of caring and supportive relationships with adults, and the awareness of a wider support network, all of which being essential to nurture resilience.

4.3.2 The value of wilderness rites of passage

Research findings correlate with Davis (2003) who indicates that rites of passage processes typically have five stages: Preparation, Severance, Threshold, Return and Implementation. The **Preparation stage** involves the clarification of one's purpose in going on a wilderness rites of passage trip as well as physical, mental and emotional preparation for the trip. The **Severance stage** focuses on letting go of the old self and old roles through a symbolic death. This stage separates the individual from the role he fulfils in the community (Bell, 2003; Kottler & Swartz, 2004).

A period of transition follows, which includes the experience of a symbolic death and rebirth (Bell, 2003; Kottler & Swartz, 2004). This liminal/transition phase is described by Turner as "being 'betwixt and between' a former role and future status" (Turner in Bell, 2003, p. 42). Davis (2003) labels this as the **Threshold stage** because it symbolises crossing the threshold from the familiar world into the unknown world of expanded meanings and possibilities. This involves a period of solitude, and fasting

and opening to the vision (Davis, 2003). The individual is in a period of becoming as he moves towards the new role.

The participants in this study reported that exposure to the elements and to animals increased their sense of perceived risk. Added to the fact that they had to rely on themselves increased their sense of vulnerability. Facing their fears raised their awareness of their inner strengths. Subsequently, their sense of mastery and independence increased. The solo was the young people's quest to discover their dreams and visions and to search in them for guidance as to what they would want to become and be part of. They moved from a state of confused adolescents to young adults who realised that responsibility co-occurred with thoughts and actions. The young people were given the opportunity to do abseiling. This symbolised the act of crossing the threshold. It represented the move from a state of "letting go" to a state of new "beginning".

Turner (in Andrews, 1999) identifies three main dimensions of liminality: Sense of community, Sense of self and Sense of place. A **Sense of community** is created through the elimination of social status, which normally separates people from one another. The breaking down of these distinctions, redefines social relationships, form solid bonds and unite individuals (Turner in Northcote, 2006).

Different team-building activities encouraged the young people in this study to participate, communicate and cooperate with, and learn from one another. These activities provoked trust building and initiated relational growth and interconnections between group members. The sense of belonging and caring for others were further developed during circle time that was set aside for the sharing of stories. They became witnesses to each others experiences, pain, transformations and abilities.

The sense of community does not result in a loss of individual identity, but rather encourages individuals to be true to themselves. It fosters a **Sense of self** and builds independence. Social structures identify the individual as 'someone' with a clearly defined role (Burrige in Andrews, 1999). Liminality, on the other hand, causes participants to become 'no one' and provides the potential for personal

change because the self is released from the “presentation of self in everyday life” (Goffman as cited in Andrews, 1999, p. 39).

The young people mentioned that they went through a process where they had to face their past and let go of the pain that confronted them there. They also had to look for the good times of the past and become children again who could dream. This enabled them to embrace their goals and verbalise their purpose. By getting to know a true part of themselves and by being able to define what they wanted from life, gave them a sense of meaning and hope for the future.

Modern day living causes disconnectedness from the authentic self which also manifests itself in a sense of being disconnected from the natural environment. The wilderness becomes a physical and a symbolic setting for a journey, which builds a sense of the true self and of community, while at the same time, a **Sense of place** by fostering a connection to the natural environment (Andrews, 1999). These experiences are sustained by “the healing and inspirational elements and challenge opportunities of wilderness” (Friese et al. as cited in Roberts, 2000, p. 11). The wilderness environment, according to Beringer (2004), possesses healing powers that can facilitate the attainment of personal restoration and transformation. While modern life causes people to lose their vision, beliefs and values, wilderness is a place of peace, self-discovery and renewal, which provides opportunities to slow down and reconnect to what is essential for individuals (Hart in Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998). It is a “spiritual, healing and growing place where reflective experiences are available as an antidote to the pressures of modern society, and for life renewal and transition” (Foster Riley & Hendee, 1998, p. 8).

According to the young people in this study, appreciating the beauty of nature was a source of inspiration. The lack of distractions and the peaceful environment helped participants to focus on essential things. They had time to sit still and listen to self. In the silence of the surroundings the young people could reflect and receive inner guidance. The unfamiliar surroundings and the vast open space, communicating freedom from rules and restrictions, helped them to break away from the image they would usually project to the world. They could show their true selves. This made it easier for them to talk about their feelings and share their painful memories. Nature

was medicine, it had a spiritual impact on the young people as they connected with their true selves, gained meaning, and a sense of purpose in the world.

The **Return stage** focuses on reincorporation and rejoining the community (Davis, 2003). It is a rebirth and new beginning where insight gained and the vision received are integrated into the life of the individual. This involves mentoring and guidance and a re-entry into the community with a new role and social identity (Educo Africa, 2000; Kottler & Swartz, 2004; Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b). The individual is now ready to embrace adult roles and responsibilities. The return involves a celebration where achievements and newly acquired skills are acknowledged (Bell, 2003). The **Implementation stage** involves further integration of experiences and implementation of the vision in the life of the individual. The vision is demonstrated through attitudinal and behavioural changes (Davis, 2003).

Completion of the wilderness rites of passage process has resulted in an increase of the psychological wellbeing of the participants. Young people have clarified their personal goals and experienced increased self-knowledge, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-actualisation. The wilderness rites of passage experience has impacted the participants on all the aspects of the Indivisible Self model of wellness (Myers & Sweeney, 2005). This model describes wellness as both a higher-order indivisible factor, and a factor consisting of five identifiable sub-components, including the following: The *essential self* refers to the change in spirituality. It incorporates a change in the participants' existential sense of meaning, purpose, and hopefulness toward life. The *creative self* involves the way of thinking, emotions, locus of control and positive humour. The *coping self* includes realistic beliefs, stress management, self-worth and leisure. The *social self* indicates the forming of friendships and reflects love and social support. The *physical self* refers to exercise and nutrition.

The **essential self** was impacted when the young men's outlook on life and people became more positive. They gained a sense of purpose in life and felt empowered upon realising that it was not too late to make a turn in the positive direction.

The **creative self** was empowered through learning life skills such as problem-solving and decision making skills. Having to trust and rely on one another in the

wilderness increased their social skills and taught them how to manage their anger and develop their leadership and communication abilities. The young people gained control over their lives. This made it possible for them to experience life more seriously and to act in a more goal-directed manner.

The **coping self** was strengthened by the young people becoming aware of their personal abilities. This increased their feelings of self-worth and influenced their overall approach to life. It fostered a sense of autonomy and identity.

The **social self** was empowered when the young people let go of troublesome thoughts and feelings, which improved their attitudes towards people and enhanced empathy and care. This in turn led to forgiveness, respect and appreciation for others. Their relationships with people in general were positively affected.

The **physical self** was affected through participation in adventure challenge activities, such as, abseiling and hiking, which provided opportunities for physical exercise. It encouraged the participants to explore and discover new personal strengths and skills and provided them the opportunity to face their fears in activities they never thought they could successfully complete.



The Indivisible Self model of wellness of Myers and Sweeney is based on Adler's theory stating that people can only be understood as integrated and complete beings. The focus falls on the whole, the interaction between the whole and parts, and the importance of the social context (Ansbacher & Ansbacher in Myers & Sweeney, 2005). Adler proposes that the holistic view, together with the concept of purposiveness, is central to understanding human behaviour (Corey, 2005). Humans set goals and behaviour then becomes unified in the context of these goals. Complete understanding is gained by knowing the purposes toward which the individual is striving.

Adler uses the term "guiding self-ideal" to represent the image of a goal of perfection towards which the individual strives in any given situation. This goal will necessarily then influence behaviour and outlook on life (Corey, 2005). He adds the terms "social interest" and "community feeling" which reflect a sense of identification and

empathy with other people. Social interest “tend to direct the striving toward the healthy and socially useful side of life” (Corey, 2005, p. 98). Growth in social interest will diminish a sense of alienation. Social connectedness creates a community feeling. Humans are socially embedded and seek belonging to groups of value to fulfil needs for acceptance, security and worthiness. A sense of belonging fosters courage to face and deal with obstacles in life (Corey, 2005). This clearly incorporates the principles of the Circle of Courage.

Belonging speaks of significance and acceptance. It develops when one is a participant in a community of mutual respect, care, safety and support (Coopersmith, Flach, Werner, Wolin in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). Mastery is developed through the achievement of challenging tasks, which are neither boring nor overwhelming (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005). Success and mastery produce social recognition and the ability to acknowledge the achievements of others (Brendtro et al., 2002). Independence is the principle of “guidance without interference” (Brendtro, Brokenleg & Van Bockern as cited in Coughlan & Welsh-Breetzke, 2002, p. 222). It fosters a sense of personal efficacy and responsibility for behaviour (Brendtro & Longhurst, 2005). Generosity is fostered through altruism. Youth whose lives are in turmoil sometimes wrestle with spiritual questions about the meaning of their lives. Meaning follows when youth are able to invest in a purpose beyond themselves (Larson & Brendtro in Brendtro & Larson, 2004). A sense of purpose is discovered by caring for and contributing to the lives of others and breaking free from the preoccupation with the self (Brendtro et al., 2002).

According to the participants in this study their wilderness experience enhanced the fostering of the principles of the Circle of Courage. Belonging and generosity were fostered by experiencing the establishment of relationships built on genuineness, unconditional positive regard, empathy and trust. Cooperative group activities aimed to improve interpersonal skills and fostered belonging. A sense of competence and accomplishment derived from the successful completion of seemingly insurmountable tasks fostered mastery. An increased awareness of surroundings, self and others encouraged independence and generosity.

It becomes clear that wilderness rites of passage experiences aid the development of the individual through increased self-knowledge and the fostering of intra- and interpersonal growth (Meyer & Wenger in Shread & Golby, 2006). It improves participants' psychosocial functioning by enhancing self-esteem and the internal locus of control, it enhances life skills in areas, such as, conflict resolution, problem-solving, decision making and communication, and it fosters a sense of autonomy, identity and meaning in life (Bloemhoff, 2006; Moote & Wodarski, 1997; Neill & Richards in Shread & Golby, 2006; Priest & Gass, 1997).

In the light of the above-mentioned, it is evident that participation in wilderness rites of passage strengthens protective factors that enhance resilience. For these reasons, the participants in this study have suggested that young people in schools can greatly benefit from participating in wilderness rites of passage courses. In the light of this, the focus now will shift to the perceptions of the young men interviewed in this study with regard to the need for caring school communities and adult mentors.

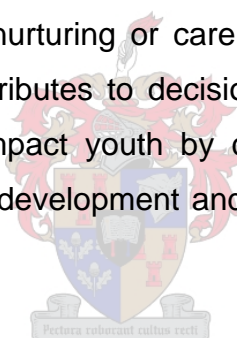
4.3.3 A need for schools as caring communities

Bronfenbrenner (in Cross, 2002) specifies that the four worlds of children, family, school, peers and work or play, influence the way young people will act or react in situations. When these worlds are not in balance the adolescent may become alienated and can potentially get into much trouble. They do not fit in with school or society, they lack skills and values that can help them to act responsibly as members of society, and they lose a sense of control over their lives. Alienation includes feelings of powerlessness, social isolation and normlessness (Dean in Cross, 2002).

Findings derived from the interviews, review of documents and the Educo Africa TV-documentary, and observation and reflection during the research confirm Bronfenbrenner's theory. The young people in this study indicate that home and school environments have become places of disappointment instead of being places of safety and growth. The lack of caring adults breeds anger, resentment and mistrust. These conditions cause disappointment, pain and sorrow, anger and rage. Youth experience a lack of motivation and purpose, which manifest in patterns of rebellious and challenging behaviour. Some of them can go as far as leaving school and living on the streets in adverse circumstances.

As young people spend a significant amount of time in schools, schools must offer opportunities to develop within a protective and supportive learning environment, which fosters characteristics that build resilience in children (Christiansen & Christiansen, 1997; Taub & Pearrow, 2006). Schools can be settings where children who face many environmental risks, can find structure and shelter (Doll in Taub & Pearrow, 2006). Noddings (in Doyle & Doyle, 2003) argues that there is a need to create a school culture of care that will reach beyond the borders of the school into the communities.

The development of caring relationships in schools can enhance the intellectual, social and emotional growth of youth (Baker & Bridger, 1997). Aspects, such as, alienation, lack of trust and understanding, lack of respect and personally meaningful connections to others contribute to the disconnection from school and hamper optimal functioning and development. The lack of nurturing or care and belonging creates a sense of alienation and isolation and contributes to decisions to drop out of school (Baker & Bridger, 1997). Schools can impact youth by creating a caring environment that supports learning and pro-social development and in which individuals are valued as an important part of a community.



A community is associated with the values of kindness, fairness and responsibility (Baker & Bridger, 1997). It seeks to meet needs to feel competent, connected to others and autonomous. Sergioivanni (in Baker & Bridger, 1997) argues that a sense of belonging provides a place in the community. Noddings (in Baker & Bridger, 1997) states that schools operating as caring communities shape caring relationships among individuals, engage children in values such as caring, respect and responsibility and encourage children to care for others. Joseph and Efron (2005) emphasise that a caring community focuses on nurturing relationships allowing emotional attachment, mutual respect and support. Focus is on the social and emotional health of all community members. Individuals thus immersed in a sense of community are more likely to act altruistically, develop social and emotional competencies and be academically motivated. They are less likely to act out from feelings of inferiority and are more likely to extend care to others within their communities.

4.3.4 A need for mentors

Literature emphasises the necessity of mentors in the lives of young people. Youth in search of answering the questions “Who am I?” and “Where am I going?” cannot answer these questions without the guidance of adults (Davis, 2003). Vygotsky describes adolescents as thinking beings (Karpov, 2003). Their formal-logical thinking makes them capable of “self-analysis, the analysis of their feeling, and their place in the world” (Vygotsky in Karpov, 2003, p. 150). Through interactions with peers adolescents test, master and internalise social norms and models existing among the adults in their society. The use of these internalisations for self-analysis leads to the development of self-awareness or personal identity (Bozhovich, Dubrovina, Elkonin & Dragunova in Karpov, 2003). The adolescent, therefore, becomes “aware of the ‘self’ as a conscious being in a complex social system” (Vygotsky in Mahn, 2003, p. 133). Erikson labels this process as the psycho-social crisis of identity versus role confusion (Erikson in Kroger, 2007; Newman in Carr, 2006; Newman & Newman in Meyer, 2005). He describes identity as “having a clear sense of who one is and where one is going” (Erikson in Moote & Wodarski, 1997, p. 147). Kroger (2007) argues that this stage lays the groundwork for entry into adult life. Davis (2003) is of the opinion that adolescents need support, structure and guidance to successfully complete the transition from childhood to adulthood and to gain specific knowledge, specialised skills and positive character traits.

The participants agree that youth cannot guide youth and that they need adults to intervene and support them. Mentors provide values education and teach youth decision making-, leadership-, problem-solving- and social skills. In addition to this, mentors can also assist young people with the process of stepping over the threshold of adolescence into responsible adulthood. The participants have indicated that adults must share their stories with youth because talking from experience grips the attention of young people and motivates them to talk about their own stories. Opportunities to communicate will help youth in schools to understand where they are going and what they are busy with. Mentors can help youth to ask themselves about themselves in order to gain self-knowledge and become more aware of what their purpose in life is. Finding a purpose can give meaning to their lives and can therefore help schools-going youth to make a new start.

Portwood, Ayers, Kinnison, Waris and Wise (2005) argue that schools provide an obvious setting where youth mentoring can be promoted. School-based mentoring programmes will not only effect change in the individual but will also impact the school as a whole as it contributes to a sense of community. A sense of community will foster a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school. This will serve as a protective factor for adverse behaviours (Simons-Morton, Crum, Haynie & Saylor in Portwood et al., 2005). Young people who form positive bonds with their school will most likely choose to engage in various pro-social behaviours. They will turn away from challenging behaviours such as fighting, bullying and truancy and improve in their attitudes towards self, others and school (Simons-Morton et al. in Portwood et al., 2005). Positive attitudes towards school will result in an improved school connectedness which will affect healthier behaviours among adolescents (Blum & Rinehard in Portwood et al., 2005).

Young people who are manifesting or at risk of experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties can benefit greatly from relationships, which provide emotional safety and protection, personal involvement and trust, and acceptance from adults (Visser, 2006). Closeness to mentors and feelings of mutual trust and empathy are associated with a willingness to share personal and emotional concerns with mentors (Parra, DuBois, Neville, Pugh-Lilly & Povinelli in DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005). The development of a close relationship may promote a sense of being important to a significant other, thereby strengthening self-esteem and other aspects of psychological wellbeing (Harter; Short, Sandler & Roosa in DuBois & Silverthorn, 2005).

The young people have demonstrated a need for “support, discipline, assistance, protection, teaching and basic physical requirements as well as for experiences of trust, love, values, customs and spiritual traditions” (Pinnock & Douglas-Hamilton, 1998b, p. 77). They have highlighted the devastating effect that the absence of care, trust and connection to the self and others can have in the lives of young people. Youth desperately seek acceptance, care and adults who believe that they have the potential to become the best. They need people who are willing to reach out to them and to spread hope, show love, earn trust and have compassion. They thrive on emotional connection, empathy and love. Trusting relationships create a platform of understanding and empathy where youth can share their experiences with others and

grow in themselves. Open communication channels between youth and trusted others could provide young people with the opportunity to let go of the past. A sense of purpose can only be discovered by letting go. Letting go will also help them to focus on the positive aspects of their lives. This can enhance their self-love which again will foster self-believe and self-trust.

In conclusion, Pinnock and Douglas-Hamilton (1998b) argue that in order to support young people it is essential to understand what captures adolescent attention. This involves being aware of unmet needs, discouragement, the sense of insignificance, powerlessness, incompetence and a loss of self-esteem and self-control. On the other hand it also involves mobilising the adventurous spirit of youth, increasing resilience and creating meaningful relationships with peers and significant adults. Resilient adolescents have the ability to develop or draw upon protective factors so that they can alleviate the negative influence of environmental stressors. Participation in wilderness rites of passage has the potential to strengthen protective factors that enhance resiliency. Therefore, these programmes can be a major contributing factor towards school support for young people at risk of experiencing or manifesting emotional and behavioural difficulties.

In the next chapter the focus will fall on the concluding remarks, recommendations and implications for future research, strengths and limitations related to the study.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUDING REMARKS, RECOMMENDATIONS, LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

As mentioned before, this research enquiry explored wilderness rites of passage as an adventure-based experiential learning tool through an interpretivist/qualitative study. The research findings suggested that wilderness rites of passage programmes could serve as valuable prevention and intervention strategies for school communities that aim to support youth who are manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional or behavioural difficulties.

This chapter will provide concluding remarks on the main findings of the research, discuss recommendations, mention limitations and strengths of the study, and make suggestions for further research. The chapter will conclude with the researcher's final reflections.

5.2 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The Children's Amendment Bill of the Republic of South Africa 2006 (Insertion of Chapter 8 in Act 38 of 2005) clearly states that prevention and early intervention programmes must focus on promoting the wellbeing of children and the realisation of their full potential. It focuses on strengthening and building children's capacity and self-reliance with respect to addressing problems that may or are bound to occur.

The South African Inter-Ministerial Committee on Young People at Risk has embraced the Circle of Courage as the basic model for strength-building interventions. It is established on the principles of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. Coopersmith (in Brendtro et al., 2002), argues that significance, competence, power and virtue, or in terms of the Circle of Courage, belonging, mastery, independence and generosity, are the components of resilience and self-esteem.

Resilience increases the capacity of children and youth to alleviate the negative influence of environmental stressors and, therefore, plays an essential role in the

support of learners who are manifesting, or at risk of experiencing, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Since South African policy and legislation expect school communities to respond to challenging behaviour in a developmental and restorative way, schools can benefit by employing interventions that guide youth towards pro-social and responsible behaviour, whilst fostering resilience.

The research findings arrived at in this study, revealed that completion of the wilderness rites of passage process resulted in increased psychological wellbeing for the participants. Their participation triggered the development of the individual, through increased self-knowledge, fostered intra- and interpersonal growth, and strengthened self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-actualisation. In addition to this, the wilderness experience enhanced life skills in areas, such as, conflict resolution, problem solving, decision-making and communication, and fostered a sense of autonomy, identity and meaning in life. Due to its efficacy in strengthening protective factors that enhance resilience, wilderness rites of passage programmes could be a major contributing factor towards school support for young people at risk of experiencing, or manifesting, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Research findings further suggest that young people can benefit greatly when engaged in relationships with adults, which provide emotional connection, personal involvement and trust, acceptance and guidance. As such relationships are often not available or not formed in the home environments, and since young people spend a significant amount of time in schools, schools present a setting and enjoy a unique opportunity to promote youth mentoring and a culture of care. The development of caring relationships with peers and adults in schools can significantly influence the pro-social development of youth.

A culture of care in schools will create environments where individuals are valued as an important part of a community associated with the values of kindness, fairness and responsibility (Baker & Bridger, 1997). The sense of community seeks to meet youth's needs to feel competent, connected to others and autonomous. Joseph and Efron (2005) emphasise that a caring community focuses on nurturing relationships, allowing emotional attachment, mutual respect and support. The social and emotional health of all community members is upheld. Individuals, therefore,

immersed in a sense of community, are more likely to develop social and emotional competencies and engage in various pro-social behaviours. They are less likely to act out from feelings of inferiority and are more likely to expand their sense of caring to others in their community. Such a sense of community fosters a sense of belonging and connectedness to the school (Simons-Morton, Crum, Haynie & Saylor in Portwood et al., 2005).

In conclusion, school-based developmental programmes must include practices that support positive school environments and provide developmental, educational and therapeutic programmes and restorative interventions. This is clearly set out in the Strategy For Encouraging Positive Behaviour And Responding To Challenging Behaviour In Public Schools (WCED, 2005a). Schools are required to employ a restorative approach towards challenging behaviour and to promote a reclaiming school environment where learners are re-directed away from self-defeating and destructive ways and enabled to grow and experience themselves as whole and competent, progressing towards independence and responsibility, and developing a greater sense of wellbeing and self-worth (WCED, 2004).

5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

As schools have to cope with increasing numbers of students with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the benefits offered by complementary programmes require consideration. Kessler (in Fleischer, 2005) agrees that education may embrace a variety of approaches in guiding youth to find constructive ways of expressing their needs and finding purpose in life. Fleischer (2005) suggests modern day rites of passage and youth mentoring programmes as it contributes positively to psychological development as well as social functioning.

Therefore, wilderness rites of passage may be considered as a potential strategy in supporting school communities to develop healthy and well-adjusted individuals and to foster responsible behaviour in young people. By being away from familiar settings in a wilderness programme, young people get the chance for meaningful participation in an accepting and supportive environment. The sense of community in an atmosphere of belongingness and security, trust and cooperation, non-judgmental support and encouragement, combined with respect for and acceptance

of individuality, effectively breaks the cycle of challenging behaviour. Being exposed to nature, and having to depend on peer companions and cooperative group work for basic survival, teach young people to think before they act. The wilderness provides the opportunity to learn by experience through natural consequences and proves its effectiveness in areas where conventional approaches often fail.

Collaborative partnerships between schools and programme managers can assist in planning wilderness-based experiential programmes in bringing about prevention or early intervention strategies on a larger scale for a wider range of young people. Increased school involvement in these programmes can lend appropriate support in ensuring the sustainable effective impact of the programmes after completion.

South African schools can start focusing on adopting the notion of caring school communities. This transformation will require the raising of educator awareness, departing from punitive measures to regulate learner behaviour, implementing wellness-promoting strategies, and establishing an educator support system for learners. Educators need to be made aware what the benefits are of displaying caring and supportive, non-judgmental and non-threatening attitudes towards learners with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Rigid approaches to control or punish challenging behaviour need to be replaced by flexible approaches that allow for interaction and support, and for building self-esteem by nurturing a sense of belonging, mastery, independence and generosity in learners. Since educators will play an essential role in establishing a culture of care in schools, programmes must be implemented to enhance and support their wellness and efforts.

Individuals seek to satisfy their physical and psychological needs (Van Niekerk et al., 2001). Ignoring these needs in schools can result in learners manifesting disruptive and challenging behaviour. Schools as communities of care can pro-actively prevent challenging behaviours by fostering the development of physical and psychological capacities in learners for successful coping in the midst of intense adversity. Jordan (2006) argues that resilience resides in the capability to significantly and meaningfully connect with others. All people have a need to be appreciated and valued and to contribute to the wellbeing of others. Therefore, mutually growth-fostering connection is the key to resilience. "Growth-fostering connections are characterised

by mutual empathy and mutual empowerment” (Miller & Striver in Jordan, 2006, p. 82). Schools, therefore, must consider becoming providers of social and emotional reciprocal support by promoting social acceptance and interaction, and positive peer assistance.

Pre-service and in-service teacher training require consideration of the rights of all children and youth and awareness raising of the lived experience of orphans and vulnerable children and youth. Professional development of educators can consider focusing on strategies for establishing positive relationships with youth, and managing irresponsibility and rebellion by mobilising positive youth involvement. Educators can also be trained as counsellors to enable them to arrange counselling interventions when needed. This will ensure that every learner will have someone to talk to or someone who can support him/her whenever needed. School counselling support groups can collaborate with circles of support in communities. A basic counselling background will equip educators to create a growth-promoting climate in which learners can become what they are capable of becoming. If educators reflect the attitudes of congruence (genuineness), unconditional positive regard (acceptance and unconditional caring) and empathic understanding, learners will be less defensive and more open to themselves and their world and will start behaving in pro-social and constructive ways (Corey, 2005). This will enhance the community of care at school.

5.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has certain limitations that need addressing in future research. The first limitation has to do with data collection. When the aim of a study is to explore the perceptions of adolescents, a large number of participants to be interviewed and a wide variety of data sources, provide for a thorough study of the unit of analysis. Although qualitative research claims that in-depth studies can involve a small group of participants, larger groups increase the transferability of the findings.

In doing future research focus group interviews can assist the researcher to explore the topic in depth through group discussions. Focus groups can convey key information and can be an efficient way to collect a wide range of information. These groups will also enable the researcher to identify possible information-rich

participants who will illuminate the questions under study by yielding insights and in-depth understanding. Besides for interviews, the researcher can also join a wilderness rites of passage course as participant observer. Participant observation can provide information that people are unwilling to provide in interviews. Asking participants to keep reflective journals, over a period of time, with respect to their experiences about the value of their wilderness rites of passage encounter for personal growth, can be an extra data source. By adding these reflective journals to data collected during interviewing and observing participants, triangulation is established. Because the researcher then uses multiple methods to investigate the phenomenon under study, the quality of the research increases as well as the credibility of the study.

The second limitation relates to the transformation of the participants' experiences on the course to their everyday lives back in their communities. In this study, the researcher has focused mainly on the effect of the experience. The manner in which participants have transferred their wilderness experiences to their everyday lives has not been emphasised. This may have been achieved by more follow-up interviews with the participants. By doing this, the quality of the research can also be enhanced.

The third limitation is related to the fact that the research population in this study consisted exclusively of young males. Educo Africa's wilderness rites of passage programmes for vulnerable youth also cater for young females. It is important to note that since the programmes can differ, males and females attend separate courses. In general, Educo Africa's programmes receive more male than female participants. Male participants are therefore more accessible. Another interesting factor, playing a role in sample selection, is that Educo Africa, in the past, has presented programmes for wilderness rites of passage for females in provinces other than the Western Cape. The researcher has focused on young males in this study because much emphasis in Chapter 1 fell on documents of the Western Cape Education Department and it was felt that participants should therefore be resident in this region. Therefore, in future, the research can be extended to also include young females as well as young males in other regions of South Africa.

The fourth limitation relates to the researcher's lack of first-hand experience of participating in a wilderness rites of passage programme. Participation might have enhanced the researcher's ability to understand the lived experience of the participants and the more subtle transformational factors and processes.

A fifth limitation is related to the field of positive psychology. The researcher has not embedded the lived experience of the participants and outcomes of the programme in positive psychology literature, except for the focus on self-direction in the work of Myers and Sweeney. As other relevant aspects are seen in the experiences of the participants, the researcher may also have explored concepts such as self-regulation, self-determination, personal growth, purpose in life and a sense of coherence. Future research studies in this field can consider using quantitative measures that are available within this field, to triangulate the effect of adventure-based education programmes with qualitative data.

5.5 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The young people in this study have provided insight into the domain of experiential learning, and more specifically of the value of wilderness rites of passage experiences within the categories of outdoor- and adventure-based education. The meaning and values that they associate with the activities can assist professional educators and researchers towards establishing an educational environment that optimally supports learners who are at risk of experiencing, or manifesting, emotional and behavioural difficulties.

The research was conducted several months after the participants completed a wilderness rites of passage programme. That enabled the researcher to determine the duration of the immediate impact, and whether the skills mastered were successfully transferred to aspects of daily living. The sustainability of the development and reinforcement of pro-social personal values by participating in wilderness rites of passage were proven. It would not have been possible to arrive at this conclusion if research focused on the immediate effect or if research had been carried out shortly after completion of the programme.

The research cannot be generalised but due to the sustainability factor, it is advisable to be aware of the fact that wilderness rites of passage courses have proved to be significantly meaningful and transformational for the young people who participated. Therefore, wilderness experiences may be considered as a potential strategy in supporting school communities to develop healthy and well-adjusted individuals and to foster responsible behaviour in young people.

This study can be used as a source of information with which to design strategies to improve school environments, teacher effectiveness, learner wellbeing and academic outcomes. Findings indicate that the use of cooperative group activities, in wilderness-based adventure programmes, improve interpersonal skills and capacity to trust, increase self-esteem, self-confidence and autonomy, and enhance personal growth and development of life skills, such as, problem solving-, decision making- and communication skills. These programmes nurture a sense of community, which provides emotional safety and support. The community of care fosters group relationships that contribute to changed behaviour, resulting in a change from a sense of isolation and powerlessness to a sense of belonging and mastery, and a change from meaninglessness to hopefulness and increased care for others.

5.6 FURTHER RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES

In this study, the researcher has attempted to give a detailed description of the perceptions of adolescents of their adventure-based education experiences. The sample population has been small, which inhibits the transferability of the research. This suggests that further research on a larger sample population will be advisable.

Further research on ways of maximising the transference of meaning to the social environment, as well as increasing the capacity to generalise skills learned in the programme to other contexts, would be valuable.

The literature review revealed that research has focused mainly on the experience of male participants. A general increase in psychological and behavioural disorders, such as mood disorders, eating disorders and anxiety disorders among female youth, substantiates the necessity for researching the experiences of female participants to

clarify the effects that wilderness rites of passage programmes may have on adolescent females.

Wilderness rites of passage as a school-based prevention or intervention strategy with which to address emotional and behavioural difficulties, requires further exploration. Future research can be conducted using different age groups, male- and females groups, and different demographic populations. Studies of follow-up participant support systems after wilderness rites of passage programmes should prove to be helpful. Further research could include exploration of the characteristics of the support system (the mode, frequency, and content of contact with participants), the effectiveness of the support system (its ability to maintain change and provide motivation for further change), and the extent of the participant's influence on peers and significant others.

5.7 REFLECTION

I am humbled by the magnificence of the insight gained from the participants, and other people involved. The research journey has made me aware of the impact that adults can have by acknowledging the potential of youth, showing faith in youth and supporting them, by creating a place of solace and care, understanding and mutual affection. The research process changed me - one cannot look at the changing of souls and not be touched. My dream was once again clarified, motivating me to encourage youth to chase their dreams and to build resilience to make catching those dreams more attainable.

5.8 CONCLUSION

This study focused on wilderness rites of passage and its contribution to building resilience and self-worth, in order to collaboratively support the WCED's Strategy for Encouraging Positive Behaviour and Responding to Challenging Behaviour in Public Schools. The aim of the WCED's strategy is to create "a culture of learning that promotes academic excellence, positive socialisation, responsible citizenship, and healthy lifestyles" (Coetzee, 2005, p. 185).

The WCED's strategy on positive discipline is linked to Education White Paper 6: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System. White Paper 6 states that the

school has to undergo a process of transformation in order to accommodate and address the diverse needs of all learners. This is possible if founded on a value system of “mutual acceptance, respect for diversity, a sense of belonging and social justice” (Swart & Pettipher, 2005, p. 8). Human diversity is to be valued and embraced and the participation and competence of every learner is to be promoted, regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, language, class, disability and HIV status (Swart, 2004). Swart and Pettipher (Swart, 2004; Swart & Pettipher, 2005) precisely echoes beliefs central to wilderness rites of passage programmes.

The creation of inclusive education contributes towards the creation of an inclusive and just society. If the underlying inclusive principles and values of equity, tolerance, openness and diversity could be instilled in children and youth, it could also spill over into society. The celebration of human rights can prepare children and youth as citizens for democracy. This will mean that schools, as small societies, can operate as a platform where children learn about equality and treating others with dignity in a caring community where each person feels they truly belong. A sense of belonging in a safe environment will promote self-management and social responsibility so much that schools firmly established in inclusion will enable children to promote understanding, tolerance, respect and friendship within their respective homes, families and communities. The philosophy underpinning inclusive and restorative practice, as it is reflected in the Education White Paper 6 and the WCED’s strategy on positive discipline, also resonates in the underlying theory of wilderness-based rites of passage programmes. That means that wilderness rites of passage programmes are outdoor classrooms where experiential learning takes place, based upon the values of inclusion.

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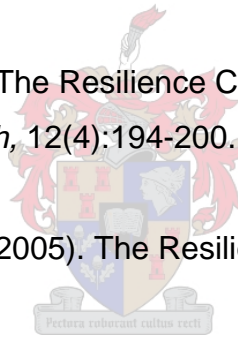
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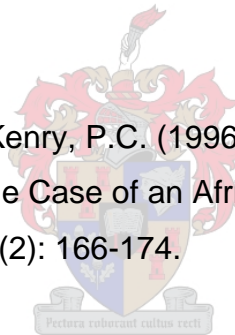
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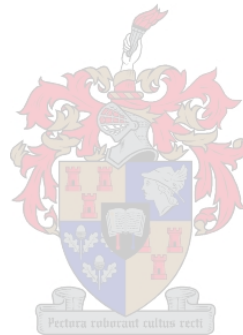
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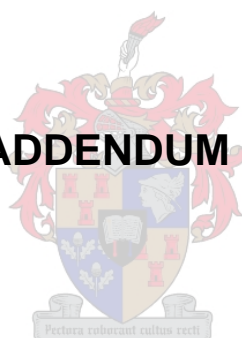
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ADDENDUM A



THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS OF AN ADVENTURE-BASED EDUCATION PROGRAMME

Interview schedule

1. Introduction and preliminaries

- a. Introduce self
- b. Motivation: explanation of purpose of interview
- c. Confidentiality and anonymity
- d. Format
- e. Length of interview
- f. Tape recorder
- g. Invitation and questions
- h. Consent

2. Demographic info

- a. Current age
- b. Age at the time of the encounter
- c. Home language
- d. Educational qualifications
- e. Current involvement – school, work etc.



3. Rapport building, informally getting to know participant

- a. Family background
- b. School background

4. Role of wilderness

- a. What is it about wilderness that makes you want to be there or not be there?

5. Factors in process having the greatest impact – factors and outcomes

- a. What things have you noticed about yourself that were different after the camp?

- b. What do you think caused these?
- c. How did you benefit from the camp?
- d. What things have been key to your experience?

6. Explaining the process

- a. What went through your mind before the camp?
- b. What did you want to achieve / What did you expect?
- c. Anything Educo did beforehand that helped you on the camp?
- d. How did you experience the camp?
- e. How was it for you to return? What was different?

7. Role wilderness rites of passage could play as support

- a. What is your experience regarding school?
- b. How can youth be supported in school?
- c. How would other youth benefit from a camp like this?

8. Recommendations

- a. What did you like most or least about the trip?
- b. What can Educo do differently?



9. Conclusion

- a. What will you always remember about your experience?
- b. Are there any questions that are important that I did not ask?



26 April 2007

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Dear Sir/Madam

REQUEST TO CONDUCT RESEARCH: M.ED. STUDY PROJECT

I hereby request permission to conduct the under-mentioned research study at your institution. The study seeks to explore wilderness rites of passage as an adventure-based education programme.

Title of the Project:

The Perceptions Of Adolescents Of An Adventure-Based Education Programme

Researcher:

Ms Ronel Bosch

Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions adolescents associate with a wilderness rites of passage encounter and the long term impact they perceive the encounter had on their lives in terms of outcomes. Your participation could aid me/the study in understanding the impact wilderness rites of passage could have on the lives of adolescents in order to explain why wilderness rites of passage will be a viable prevention/intervention option for schools in dealing with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Insight gained from this study could further the field of programme development for school communities in order to optimally support learners who are at risk of experiencing or manifesting emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Research Instrument:

The research will be undertaken with focus group interviews and individual interviews as methods of data collection. Semi-structured interview schedules will be designed to establish the past participants' perceptions of their wilderness rites of passage encounter.

Confidentiality:

All the information that I gathered in my conversations in connection with this study will be strictly kept confidential. All interviews will be recorded on audio tape and I will be the only person who will have access to these tapes. Once these have been transcribed the audiotapes will be destroyed. No information will be disclosed in the public domain without the permission of the participants or as required by law.

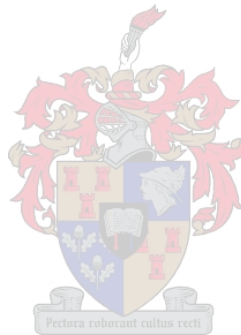
Identification of investigator:

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ronel Bosch (principal investigator) – bosch@iway.na or Ms M Oswald (Supervisor) 021 – 8082306.

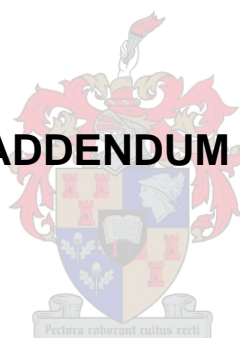
Yours truly,

Ronel Bosch
Researcher

Ms M Oswald
Supervisor / Lecturer
Dept Educational Psychology



ADDENDUM C



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**THE PERCEPTIONS OF ADOLESCENTS OF AN ADVENTURE-BASED EDUCATION
PROGRAMME**

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Ronel Bosch from the Department of Educational Psychology at Stellenbosch University. The results will be contributed to a research thesis. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you meet the criteria. This study seeks to explore wilderness rites of passage as an adventure-based education programme.

1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore the perceptions adolescents associate with a wilderness rites of passage encounter and the long-term impact they perceive the encounter had on their lives in terms of outcomes. Your participation could aid me/the study in understanding the impact wilderness rites of passage could have on the lives of adolescents in order to explain why wilderness rites of passage will be a viable prevention/intervention option for schools in dealing with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Insight gained from this study could further the field of programme development for school communities in order to optimally support learners who are at risk of experiencing or manifesting emotional and behavioural difficulties.

2. Procedures

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask your permission to be interviewed. This interview will take about an hour and a half of your time. The interview will be at a time and place that is convenient to you.

3. Confidentiality

All the information that I gathered in my conversations with you in connection with this study will be strictly kept confidential. All interviews will be recorded on audio tape and I will be the only person who will have access to these tapes. Once these have been transcribed the audiotapes will be destroyed. No information will be disclosed in the public domain without your permission or as required by law.

If extracts from our interview are used in the research report, a pseudonym will be assigned for you, should you prefer that your identity not be made known. The data of the study, in its original form, will however, be available to the supervisor of this study, for verification purposes.

4. Participation and withdrawal

Participation in this study is voluntary. Should you consent to be in this study, you have the right to withdraw during this study without consequences of any kind. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

5. Identification of investigator

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Ronel Bosch (principal investigator) – bosch@iway.na or Ms M Oswald (Supervisor) 021 – 8082306.

6. Rights of research subjects

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. You are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies because of your participation in this research study. If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact Ms M. Hunter-Husselman ph: 021-8084623 at the Unit for Research Development.

Signature of Participant

The information above was described to me, the participant, in Afrikaans/English. I was given the opportunity to ask questions and these questions were answered to my satisfaction.

I hereby consent voluntarily to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

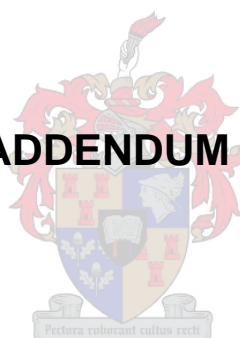
I declare that I explained the information given in this document to _____
(*name of Participant*). He/she was encouraged and given ample time to ask me any questions. This conversation was conducted in Afrikaans/English.

Signature of Investigator

Date



ADDENDUM D



A transcribed individual interview to review the process of data analysis used in this study

<u>Codes</u>	What is it about wilderness that makes you want to be there or not be there?	<u>Comments</u>
nat:effect team:toget team:work team:work care:ot memory:past nat:heal aware:self memory:past nature:need nat:peace	<p>In the wilderness I enjoyed seeing us <u>struggling in the rain</u>, how nice it was to <u>be together</u> and <u>working together</u> to stay out of the rain, how nice it was to see how we <u>worked together</u> when it was raining and how we were <u>looking after one another</u>. <u>Nature reminded</u> me of growing up on a farm, how it <u>healed</u> and <u>what I had</u> and <u>what I live with</u> and <u>where I come from</u>. This is what nature means to me. I shall like to have to do more with nature. It is <u>peaceful</u> and it is better for me than in the city.</p>	Wilderness exposure Belonging Team work for survival Caring Wilderness healing, memory Reflection Wilderness peace
focus dec peace:past	<p>What things have you noticed about yourself that were different after the camp? What do you think caused these?</p> <p>When we returned, everything changed around me, including my life, I started to <u>focus more positively</u> and I <u>made decisions more seriously</u> and I <u>do not regret</u> the way I turned and what I did and why I went on the camp, because it reminded me that <u>I am almost there</u>, that I have to <u>stand on my own legs</u> and have to <u>start walking</u> because nobody will teach me to walk. It <u>helped me</u> to be where I am now.</p>	Change Skills Acceptance Motivation Confidence Independence Motivation
multi multi real:ot ben real:ot	<p>How did you benefit from the camp?</p> <p>The camp helped me because I <u>did not have many Xhosa friends</u> and that camp <u>showed me that a Xhosa friend is just as well</u> as what my coloured friend will be to me. I <u>benefited a lot</u> and I learned a lot that there are <u>more children that are not in my</u></p>	Variety of friendships Culture sensitivity Not alone Awareness of others, empathy

suffer:ot	<u>same situation but maybe in a worse, maybe in a</u>	
not:al	I am <u>thinking I was the only one</u> who went	Generosity
real:ot	through that and I came to learn that there are also	Reaching out
reach	<u>people in life that suffer</u> and it made me think what I	Changes
ben	will do <u>what I can do about it</u> . I <u>benefited a lot</u> from	Interest
fam:change	the camp, because when I came back my <u>in-laws</u>	Leadership
vis	<u>could see</u> I had an <u>interest</u> again <u>in everything</u>	Serious attitude
int	there, I became the <u>captain of my soccer team</u> , I	Respect
lead	was chosen <u>head boy</u> . Everything became more	Self-esteem
lead	<u>serious</u> . What I got from the camp was <u>respect</u> . To	
att, res	appreciate more people for who they are.	
res	Something else, my <u>self-esteem increased</u> in	
self:es	school, in the classes, in my school work, my life	
	outside school, my free time with my friends. It	Team work
	helped me to <u>work together in a team</u> .	
team:work	What things have been key to your experience?	
	What stood out to me was when we each had to go	
	<u>out on our own for 24 hours</u> . It stood out to me	Solitude
solo	because in that time we had in the wilderness	
	<u>relieved me</u> to press my mind from what was	Reflection
	pressing on it and I <u>think where I was at</u> and <u>on</u>	Letting go past
peace:mind	<u>what I had to focus</u> and <u>what will happen</u> in the	Seeing present
	future.	Embracing
refl:past	What went through your mind before the camp?	future
refl:now	For me it was an <u>opportunity that I would not get</u>	
refl:future	<u>again, grab it with both hands</u> and all those things	Opportunity
	that you <u>stored up here on the inside</u> from	Challenge
opp	childhood when you were <u>on your own</u> and <u>had to</u>	Opportunity
chal	<u>walk alone through the thick sand</u> , here is a time to	
memory:past	<u>let go</u> now and what was the best is that you <u>buried</u>	Letting go
	<u>it there and it is there and it is over</u> .	
alo	What did you want to achieve / expect?	
alo		Information
letgo		
letgo		

<p>info prep prep strange mot commit mot strange trust comm group bond trust comm</p>	<p>They <u>informed</u> us before the camp <u>what we could expect</u>. I <u>knew it would be hard</u>, that it would be difficult, it <u>would not be like normal life</u>, because it is the wilderness and it is <u>people that you do not know at all</u>, but I told myself in my heart, that it is a <u>challenge, go for it and see if you can reach the top, if you reach the top then you know you can go further</u>. At the start I could see <u>no one knew</u> one another, <u>no one trusted</u> one another, <u>no one talked to one another</u>. <u>It built up and up and up and the day when we left everybody knew every one, everybody trusted every one and every one talked to every one</u>. That meant a lot to me. We still have contact.</p>	<p>Expectations Unfamiliar place and people Self-motivation Facing fears Individuals vs group Trust Communication Connections</p>
<p>prep info expec ben group bond group bond</p>	<p>Anything Educo did beforehand that helped you on the camp?</p> <p>The <u>initial meeting</u> was valuable because there you could <u>get an idea who is going with</u> and <u>what you can expect</u> and that is better than if you only came and left and when you leave you may not feel comfortable. It was good for us to <u>see one another and to talk a bit</u> even if it was not much so that you can have an idea <u>where you were standing with the others</u>.</p>	<p>Information Expectations Benefit Breaking ice Checking out</p>
<p>ret:sad ret:new start mot dec letgo letgo:new start</p>	<p>How was it for you to return? What was different?</p> <p><u>Returning</u> was not difficult. It was <u>sad to know our time together was over</u>. We shall now <u>go into our own directions</u>. What was important was to <u>put my mind on everything that was good, forget about the time that passed</u> because <u>if I am reminded of the time we had the whole time the things that I have stored there will maybe come up again and start to</u></p>	<p>Return Conflict: Sad vs Happy for new start Past dealt with, no longer issue, priority is new start Relationships</p>

<p>rel vis res att just beh dec lux mot vis mot change:comm change:dec care:ot memory:past emp emp sharing emp root:beh sup:ot letgo</p>	<p><u>play with my mind. Relationships with people changed</u>, people said <u>they can see</u> I have more <u>respect</u> and people wanted to hear my story and why I was so <u>positive</u> because I have gone through so many things, I had all the right in life to be on the street en all those things and I explained to them it is the <u>choices that you make that will take you where you want to be</u>. What I carry with me what I have learned there is not to get so used to <u>luxury</u>. The choice I made when I climbed into the taxi to go home was, you are going home, <u>show your people you are not the same</u>. Show the people came into my head every time, <u>things are not the same</u>, before you <u>did not know how to talk like this</u>, <u>how to make these decisions</u>, think bigger.</p> <p>How would other youth benefit from a camp like this?</p> <p><u>I think about it everyday because I grew up like children in homes and reformatories and youth centres, I understand what it is like, I understand what it is to suffer so I keep it with me. It all depend on the kind of problems the children have because some do not like to talk about it, it makes a knot, I was also one of those people, it makes a knot and once you get out of the tight situation then you want to spread it to others at a difficult time and in the wrong place and when it comes out people will say they are problem kids but when they are at home they are normal kids, but at home they are forced into a knot and every one with a knot. I think it would be good for them if they go on a wilderness camp and to go and leave the baggage there because that was the best for me. If they are too</u></p>	<p>Questions – people become aware of change Justify behaviour because of past</p> <p>Simplicity</p> <p>Persuade others to see change</p> <p>Awareness of different way of talking, thinking</p> <p>Empathy Generosity</p> <p>Systemic influence</p> <p>Support</p> <p>Letting go</p> <p>Support</p>
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outlook	young it would not work. It <u>depends how they are thinking</u> , if they can think for themselves and know	Perspective on life, awareness
outlook	<u>what is right and what is wrong</u> , because children is	
outlook	16, 17, 18 and they <u>still do not know what is right or wrong</u> , right is what their friends are saying and	
outlook	wrong is what their mothers say to them. It all <u>depends what they think, what is right and what is wrong</u> . I think it would be best if they can go on the	Self-knowledge Decision-making
insight dec	camp and if they can talk to them one to one to see <u>if he understands where he is going and what he is busy with</u> so that he can <u>take the right step for himself</u> , not for his mother or his father.	
exp fear exp	What did you like most or least about the camp? I didn't like the <u>snakes</u> . I <u>am afraid of snakes</u> . It is my worst fear, I am afraid <u>because a snake can kill</u> .	Wilderness exposure Facing fears Role model, mentor Need for connection, understanding,
role con	The <u>best part on the whole trip was Mr Coleridge</u> . Why I say this is when he talked, there was a <u>connection</u> that even if he says two words what you should do then you know the whole procedure. He is not a person <u>to say you must do something and then he has not yet done it himself</u> . When somebody say something to you, and he <u>knows what you are going to do and what you will experience and how you will feel when you do it then you want to do it</u> . That helped me a lot. <u>He had done it and we knew he went through it and we listened to the story of his life so when he says something he will not guide you wrongly</u> . Immediately when he speaks those two words then <u>you put your trust in him</u> .	Experience
expert expert		Trust
trust expert listen		Guidance
trust guidance trust		
smoke hab lux	What can Educo do differently? I would have been glad if they <u>left the smoking at home</u> because it only reminded me of my <u>habits</u>	Recommen- dations: smoking

smoke	and hobbies and luxury. I would have been very glad if I <u>could have been without the smoking</u> for the ten days because that would have been the <u>first</u>	
smoke	<u>step to stop smoking.</u> I <u>still struggle to stop</u>	
smoke	because there is still a few cigarettes. <u>If it could have happened then, I would have stopped by now.</u>	
visit prog	Thinking of coming back to the city, one thing that can change is <u>short visits</u> , not to check up on them just to <u>see the progress</u> they are making because some children <u>lose respect the moment when they</u>	Recommendations: follow-up - motivation
ret:dif ret:dif	<u>walk into their place</u> because <u>everybody see them as still the same as before.</u> They need to come and	Recommendations: clarity, motivation
visit sup sup	<u>visit them often</u> to <u>remind them of the choices they made</u> and that they <u>must support their choices</u>	
alo mot	because some children think <u>you have left me here on my own, why should I now go any further, let me just live the way I was used to.</u>	Recommendations: reminder journey
	What will you always remember from your experience?	
dec	What I will always carry with me is what Mr C said, <u>decision making is the key</u> of the box. That I will	Skills: decision-making
dec	never forget, you cannot open a box if you haven't made a <u>decision</u> and that I will always carry with	
cont comm dec	me. I asked him <u>why when he talks he is quiet for so long and then he talks again</u> , he said it is key.	Skills: communication
dec res	You <u>have to decide what the wrong thing will be</u> , that's why I will always carry it with me. <u>I will not make a decision and then I do not know where it will take me.</u>	Skills: thinking before doing
	Are there any questions that are important that I didn't ask?	
mot mot	You can ask what <u>motivated</u> me. What <u>changed me and what helped me to decide to go with was</u>	
imp		

fam rel	<p><u>my two little sisters. I didn't know where my mother was. When I came back from the camp I went and looked for my mother. I found her. She is now for almost a year with us and I am really glad about it. My sisters were my petrol they kept me going. I believed that if I can make it then I can help them to make it although there was nobody to help me to make it. When I came back from the camp I felt that there was a push, Mr Coleridge pushed me, I decided to do the best that I can and that helped me. Even if my mother wasn't there for me, I tried to get in touch with her to come and see my sisters and to check up on them because it is very important to be in contact with someone close to your heart that will lift you every time. My mother and I also talked through our problems.</u></p>	Systemic influence
mot		Resilience
mot		
mot		
kickstart		Resilience
dec mot meaning		Generosity, empathy
rel mot comm		Connection



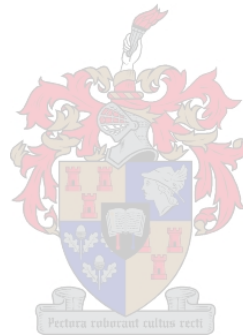


Codes: DVD

wil	<p>the natural environment: guidance, inspiration, and sustenance awaken spirit contained risk healing metaphorical aspect broader space to release what is held inside less rules, restrictions quiet moments able to sit there and listen that you discover that you can also listen to self connecting with nature we are a part of nature it's important for us to be in nature where the teachings are nature as a medicine</p>
comm/home	<p>confined space breeding aggression and frustration sense of helplessness sense of hopelessness no real parks, no trees, no gardens everything is just dead, there's no life no nature, no nurture the land does not even heal absence of presence of energies or the essence of nature no cosiness or warmth needed to nurture and bring forth strong young people no motivation to go to school lot of drugs moeras captive inside the borders of communities no opportunity to listen to self everybody is in everybody's face the houses are on top of each other there's no place to give vent everything that comes out is anger a sense of lawlessness a sense of not belonging no sense of generosity place of disappointment</p>
process	<p>to take young people out of their communities to show them that there is another side to life</p>
dream	<p>I had a dream, now I have ghosts each one of us have dreams and visions what we want to become and be a part of</p>
phys journ	<p>discover parts of nature pack what it is that you want with you everything else you leave behind</p>
spir journ	<p>discover parts of self find a space for you to stand and face in the direction cut off with that you have left behind</p>
pur	<p>created with a purpose</p>
ran away	<p>young asking money lying saying all families are dead so they would feel ashamed of us</p>

prep	<p>want to be part committed to the process opportunity to do something different with life opportunity to change say hey I'm here for the challenge will benefit from it willingness concern - looking forward to it but also not looking forward to many things that will be happening</p>
trust	<p>trust is not just given, need to earn it to learn to trust each other and to earn each other's trust</p>
group	<p>don't know each other beginning for group to get together</p>
stick	<p>let the stick call you presentation of self symbolises self</p>
stone	<p>pick up a stone place the stones in a circle pledge to each other make a commitment to each other</p>
dec	<p>decision / planning first think is this going to be right or is this going to be wrong it is a choice impulsivity no preparation lack of delayed gratification everything we say, everything we do, there's a reason behind it, so you can either take it with you or you can leave it behind continue on your journey forward and blame and not plan love what is good, reject what is bad let it go</p>
circle	<p>open the circle call upon the stories to come out the cornerstone of who we are the anchor of who we are life has beaten us, battered us, so we don't want to go to a place that doesn't heal, that doesn't bring forth good stories but it is a story mirror - shows to us, that it is not only you that sit in that place, there is others that shares that same special place with you in terms of not having a story we lay ourselves bare in front of each other</p>
needs	<p>he always supported me interest of parents friendships show of care to let go want to be part of want to feel the fire burning inside a period of testing help to cross over the threshold of adolescence into adulthood help to become mature adults, strong adults, real adults everybody at one stage wants to know who they are a deep inner yearning of wanting to understand who I was, who am I?</p>

discover gifts / purpose on earth
new beginning
want to achieve something in life
want to know that they are unique and beautiful
I have to learn a lot from life, who I am, explaining myself
someone who believe that each one of them have potential to become the best
need to know who you are
you need to understand your purpose on this earth
know the self
believe in self
trust in self
not to be judged
love the self





Reflections: letters and journals

<p>wilderness: exposure to elements: weather – cold, shivering appreciation: appreciate the beauty, beauty and inspiring landscapes spiritual aspect: way of opening up your soul, this allows for healing, deepening of your own spirituality, become more aware of own being, become more aware of values, hopes and dreams, to renew sense of purpose in a world, getting in touch with nature allows to get in touch with own true nature, recognise reflection in the mirror of environment to see what is often denied or ignored, be that beauty, strength, power, or shadows, uncovering more of true person, linking more vividly with each other and the natural elements, allows to explore the vast internal wilderness, the 'wild', often scary places of self reduced distractions: quieten down, look around and reflect, to listen to the voices of heart, mind and soul simplistic lifestyle: brings back to basics vast open space: opportunities to go off and be on one's own, vast, open space of wilderness vulnerability: making vulnerable, unfamiliar environment exposure to elements: tests capacity to improvise and adapt, physical challenges that force out of our comfort zones, physical challenge and discomfort symbolism: part of nature to represent person, letting go appreciation: listening to the river and nature circle time: speaking about things inside, singing, cry together, each took a turn and the others listened, bare the spirit of inner souls, tell childhood stories, could relate, everybody has this idea of belonging solitude: didn't think I could do it, we couldn't talk or be with others, a lot of stuff came to mind, I sang and when I sang I cried, felt pain thinking of my life, I also felt joy, scared and alone, conversations went back and forth in mind, all the pieces of the past came up to be chewed over, one by one teambuilding: live with other races in the same house, share the same room, share chores, share experiences, share our lives and history, we work as a team we make it easier to solve our problems abseiling: facing fears: overcoming this fear, can overcome other fears, reaching bottom – screamed because we can do what we want, felt great motivation – others: lifted spirit, felt strong</p>	<p>Factors having an impact on participants</p>
<p>development of self: I learned about responsibility, respecting others and property, gained courage to have the guts to stick with what feel is right changed outlook: as each one was telling his story, it was very exciting because I'd heard that I'm not the only one who was being brought up out of poor circumstances, all have willpower, can change our lives because we have the strength inside, make our dreams happen, I can do it, I am excited about the future, want to become a better person, I told myself this is where I will start setting my foundation before I make any effort further in the future, needed to get a grip on life, go back to school, stop doing drugs, learned if you want to do something, do it, realise not to do wrong things, we can work together, on the hike, if one guy falls, before he does, I must try and catch him, we can do this in back home -not fight each other but stand together, I'm a gangster. I don't want to do it anymore — it is nonsense, will only end up in jail or get shot improved relationships: learnt to appreciate differences and deal with them in caring way</p>	<p>Outcomes identified by participants</p>
<p>no true purpose, abandoned and left alone, no one to ease pain or sorrow, anger, guilt and rage, hates with a vengeance, don't TRUST anyone, have never been loved, alienation, did a lot of things my friends said we should, without questioning it, normalized behaviors - because it was the done thing, rebellious, everybody else was doing it, drinking, smoking, being naughty, rough, rebellious, out of order and into gangs, joined the street gangs, doing drugs, stealing, no support, motivation, school drop-outs emotional connection, empathy and love, people who have faith in youth, help to</p>	<p>Ways to support youth in schools</p>

clarify intentions and to gather courage, someone to reach out, support and care, to try and gain access to private dark castles, someone spreading hope, show love, earn trust, have compassion, helping hand extended in friendship, role models, hope and healing, respect, forgiveness, bond with a group be brothers - we are your family	
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