A Study to Explore the Lived Experience of Camping and Associated Effects of Escapism: A Green Exercise Approach

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MSc by Research

Contents

i: Abstract

Aims: The aim of the current study was to investigate the lived experience of camping, with a particular focus on the associated experiences of escapism, and the potential impact of camping on psychological health and wellbeing.

Method: Four semi-structured interviews took place to gather data. Participants were asked to reflect on their most memorable camping experience, and through prompts and probes we were able to explore each experience fully. Following transcription, Colaizzi's (1978) seven step analysis process was used to identify key themes and provide a fundamental structure of camping.

Findings: Five themes were identified throughout the transcripts: getting away, appreciation of the natural environment, relationship maintenance, tranquility and relaxation, freedom and adventure/exploration. These were used to produce an all-encompassing exhaustive description of camping, which was reduced to a fundamental structure.

Conclusions: Camping does provide feelings of escapism and had a positive impact on mental health and wellbeing. Furthermore, camping can improve relationships, become a respite, help with self-esteem and provide an escape. Further research is required to determine how common these aspects of the experience are.

Chapter 1: Background

1.1: Personal Interest

As a happy camper of around seven years, I have been aware for a while now how the great outdoors impacts positively on my own personal feelings of health and wellbeing. I have stayed on many different campsites and even taken part in 'wilderness camping'. Camping is not just a place to sleep or a cheap alternative to a holiday- rather, I perceive camping to be an all-encompassing experience. Everything from the location to the company, the activities, to the food, all contribute to the positive impact on my being. I like to stay on a basic site that has toilets, showers and perhaps a small convenience shop. I dislike club houses, preferring to spend evenings outdoors sat around a fire. Company needs to have a mutual appreciation of the experience; the preferred location is quiet and green. Food is cooked over an open fire, and beer is often slightly warm. Although, not every camping experience has been a pleasant one; I can think back to when it rained non-stop, the tent leaked and I forgot to pack pillows, towels and the ground sheet, or the trip when the campsite may as well have been the hard-shoulder on the M1.

It was my initial interest and usual enjoyment of camping that led me to looking at the prospect of conducting research in the field. Through general reading around environmental psychology, a number of key terms or concepts appeared relevant and consistent in the literature. Physical activity is more commonly referred to as exercise, particularly in the arena of environmental psychology; therefore I will remain consistent by using the term 'exercise'.

1.2: Green Exercise

'Green exercise' is often loosely defined as exercising in the natural environment. By 'natural environment', I am referring to general outdoor green spaces: parks, woodlands, fields and forests. It encompasses daily activities like walking, cycling and gardening and is available to most people, without requiring specialist equipment or knowledge. The benefits of exercising have long been publicised, and with the emergence of research around the benefits of exposure to nature, a synergistic relationship appears to be present (Green Exercise, online).

Green exercise has shown to have a positive effect on physical (Cimprich & Ronis, 2008) and psychological (MIND, 2007) health and wellbeing. There is a growing evidence base for its promotion and it is steadily being included in policy and practice (Change4Life, online). The growing number of care farms in the UK, which will be discussed in more detail later, recognises the effect of the outdoor environment and green exercise on individual wellbeing (Care Farming UK, 2013). The 'Change4Life' campaign endorsed by the NHS aims to improve physical health and wellbeing by targeting three main risk-factors to public health; poor nutrition, alcohol consumption and finally, exercise (Change4Life, 2013). The campaign targets nutrition by suggesting healthy recipes and sensible portions, it targets alcohol consumption by outlining the recommended guidelines and exercise, by suggesting activities that can be done at home or locally. Although individuals are encouraged to exercise in natural environments like parks, or even to go out and enjoy the garden, regrettably no direct link is made to the impact this environment could also have on mental health and wellbeing (Change4Life, 2013). Natural England (online), who are funded by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) however, understand the impact of the natural environment on both physical and mental health. They aim to promote the use of the natural environment to the public in various ways, from giving seminars to funding research into green exercise. They propose the 'Natural Health Service' where physical and mental health issues are targeted before they become problematic, and aim to reduce such issues as diabetes, obesity and depression (Natural England, online).

1.3: Green Care

Green care is slightly different to green exercise in its aims, forms and availability. Although only recently emerging, it differs from more standard 'green exercise' and 'contact with nature' in that it aims to have a positive impact on health, society and education (Haubenhofer et al, 2010). Green care provision in the Western society involves all aspects of care, including health promotion initiatives and social rehabilitation. In the UK, a favoured technique of green care is therapeutic horticulture, where cognitive therapy strategies are utilised alongside gardening tasks to achieve clinical goals (Haubenhofer et al, 2010).

The emergence of care farms in the UK is again a relatively new phenomena, potentially brought about by the increasing evidence of the benefits of the outdoors on health (Ulrich et al, 1991; Pretty et al, 2005; MIND, 2007) as well as the growing need for farmers in the UK to diversify (Care Farming UK, 2013).

The aim of such places is to provide day care facilities for those with varying physical and mental health needs, such as those suffering from cancer and drug/alcohol addiction as well as psychological issues like depression. Care farms are also available to children with learning or behavioural difficulties. A programme of activities may be offered, utilising various parts of the farm in order to deliver a therapeutic experience. Care farms may also offer structured and regular care for adults and children with various learning difficulties (Care Farming UK, 2013). Clients are often referred by governmental agencies such as Social Services, but can refer themselves in some circumstances. The research evidence base of the effects of care farms is steadily growing, and a report by Elings (2011) summarises a wealth of research, concluding that care farms can have a beneficial effect for multiple client groups, from elderly people with dementia to individuals with a history of drug and alcohol addiction, as well as children with ADHD and people with learning difficulties (Elings, 2011).

Throughout my research career, I hope to contribute to our understanding of green exercise, and empower others with this knowledge, encouraging more and more people to gain the benefits I have and do from the great outdoors.

1.4: Thesis Overview

The aim of the current study is to explore the lived experience of camping.
Chapter two of this thesis details a review of the relevant literature; looking at theory and previous research related to camping and green exercise. This will include the effect on physical health and wellbeing, as well as the psychological impact. This will provide a rationale for the current study.
Chapter three details the methodology and the method of the current study. The chosen methodology of descriptive phenomenology is discussed and the study design and related procedure outlined. The participants of the current study are introduced with a participant

portrait, along with details of my pre-suppositions.

Chapter four details the findings of the current study and how the varied layers of the analysis process, driven by the method of Colaizzi (1978), have contributed to such.

Chapter five provides a discussion for the thesis, drawing back to the policy outlined in chapter one and literature covered in chapter two. This further consideration of the policy and academic literature contributes to my musing over of what I perceive to be the key aspects of the reported findings and the fundamental structure of the experience. I explore how the current study compares to previous empirical findings and I consider its contribution to knowledge and its wider implications. Based on this discussion, I provide suggestions for future research.

Finally, chapter six, the conclusion chapter, summarises the current study from its onset to closure, providing a brief but detailed overview of the phenomenon under investigation.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

To try and determine what research had been conducted in the camping arena, especially in relation to health and wellbeing, I conducted an organised literature search, using terms such as 'green exercise UK', 'camping UK', 'care farms UK' and 'green exercise camping'. I used Summon, which is a university based search engine, to conduct my search; it encompasses multiple databases including PSYCInfo, PubMed, CINAHL and MEDLINE. A number of peer-reviewed articles were retrieved, but none directly related to the lived experience of camping for non-clinical populations. Similarly, none related to general health and wellbeing of non-clinical populations. There were however, a small number of papers focused on clinical populations in relation to camping (Bekesi et al, 2011) and clinical populations in relation to green exercise (MIND, 2007). In all the articles retrieved, there was reference to key theories. The review will commence with an overview of these key theories. In relation to such, I will consider empirical evidence from the green exercise, green care and camping areas, which have been carried out with clinical populations. I will also outline the relevance of escapism in relation to the current literature. The chapter will conclude with a brief summary of what I perceive to be the key issues in the literature. I will outline the rationale for the current study given this literature review, and the dearth of peer-reviewed empirical evidence. I will then detail the aims and objectives of the current study.

2.1: Theoretical Relevance

In reading articles related to camping and wellbeing it was realised that a number of key theories are implicated with this area of study. Most work in this area has been driven or framed around these theories. It is therefore important to detail these and consider their implication for this body of research.

Kaplan and Kaplan (1989; 1995) proposed Attention Restoration Theory, Ulrich et al (1991) proposed a stress-reduction model, and Wilson (1984) outlined the Biophilia hypothesis, all of which relate to the positive effect the natural environment can have on individuals' health and wellbeing.

2.1.1: Attention Restoration Theory

In 1995, Kaplan outlined his Attention Restoration Theory (ART). He suggested that people have a certain capacity in their mind to direct, or focus, their attention on a task and process information. The ability to focus and concentrate in everyday life is important at work, at home and indeed in study, being useful for problem-solving and preventing human error. Over time and use, Kaplan stated that the capacity to direct attention, or concentrate, becomes fatigued. This can be a problem for multiple reasons. Kaplan (1995) stated that once the capacity had become depleted, individuals' may find it difficult to focus on tasks, leading to poor productivity. Other issues include individuals becoming irritable and taking risks to complete tasks due to impatience. This raises the question of how best this capacity to direct attention could be restored.

Kaplan (1995) found sleep to be a relatively effective method for restoration, however he stated that sleep alone was insufficient. He proposed that the best way to restore the capacity to direct attention would be to take part in activities that did not require attention. He theorised that activities requiring involuntary concentration would allow the voluntary concentration part of the mind to rest. Kaplan (1995) specified that the surroundings, and associated activities, must meet four requirements.

Firstly, the environment and activity chosen *must not require direct attention*, or concentration. Although there are no specific rules; the individual needs to engage with the environment involuntarily. The term 'fascination' was used to describe the way we can engage with activities on a relatively surface level (Kaplan, 2005) but is often substituted with 'involuntary attention'. Kaplan (1995) developed the work on concentration carried out by William James (1892) when looking at the 'attention' part of the theory; considering the implications of 'voluntary' attention and effort. Activities that may require voluntary attention include things like driving, crossing the road or navigating through crowds; where you need to be actively concentrating on what you are doing for accident prevention or error. Involuntary attention on the other hand allows you to engage but not concentrate specifically and walks in nature are often exemplified (Kaplan, 2005).

Secondly, the individual *needs to be away*; either physically or mentally, from their usual surroundings. Kaplan (1995) highlighted that if an individual were to physically travel away but take all of those troubling thoughts and struggles with them, the experience would not be of restorative benefit. Therefore the added idea of a 'conceptual shift' was most important here; the idea that you can escape the drain on your attention, which can occur by simply shifting your focus to something else (Kaplan 1995). This poses questions as to whether the move needs to be mental, physical or both. A mental escape is arguably more important, especially in relation to the idea of 'attention restoration'; it is the mind that needs the rest. A physical shift can be of significant help to encouraging the mental restoration though, and depending on the individual, a mental shift can be difficult to achieve without a change in the physical surroundings. My understanding of the theory is that although it is a mental restoration that takes place, Kaplan (1995) thought it helpful to state that a change in environment was the way to achieve this more easily.

The *extent of the chosen environment* is the third criteria in Kaplan's theory. The environment must be rich enough to maintain this 'fascination' or involuntary attention. There needs to be enough to see and experience to engage the mind (Kaplan 1995).

Finally, the chosen environment *needs to be compatible* with the person and the purpose of the restorative experience. The environment needs to facilitate the activities you want to take part in or the sights you want to see in order to be restorative.   By adhering to these four factors, Kaplan (1995) suggested that the direct attention capacity could be restored and the individual would be able to concentrate once more.

In relation to the proposed study, it is clear to see how camping could meet these four requirements for a proportion of the population. Camping often takes place in the natural environment; that provides a tranquil setting with no need to direct attention, which meets the first criteria. In relation to the second criteria, camping usually involves going away- either physically in to the countryside, or mentally by pretending to be elsewhere, maybe even in the back garden! The natural environment is forever changing (especially if walks/bike rides are participated in) which maintains the fascination and meets the third point related to Kaplan

(1995). Often, people go camping because it is something they enjoy doing, meeting the fourth point regarding compatibility.

A practical application of ART was demonstrated by Cimprich and Ronis (2003) when research was carried out using a sample of breast cancer patients. Newly diagnosed breast cancer sufferers were assigned to experimental or control groups; with the experimental group taking part in some form of outdoor activity for around twenty minutes three times a week. At times of ill health, concentration and cognitive functioning are important, but unfortunately, due to the added stress of illness, patients can be more prone to fatigue. The research found concentration levels to be significantly improved in those patients in the experimental group, showing that the environment can assist in those who are of ill health too (Cimprich & Ronis, 2003).

White (et al, 2013) studied a large sample of over four thousand in order to determine what kind of environments offer the most restorative experiences. They found that overall, coastal locations offered the most in terms of restoration, and urban parks offered the least (White et el, 2013). They also studied the impact of having the company of children, and found that less restoration took place when children were present compared to going alone. They found that as well as the coast, forest environments and mountainous landscape also offered similar levels of restoration (White et al, 2013).

Harting, Mang and Evans (1991) also looked at the different types of restorative environments using a mixture of experiments and field studies. The measures used included a self-report and several physical tests, and found that great restoration took place in natural environments. The importance of qualitative self-report methods in research into green exercise must be acknowledged, as changes or improvements can be physiological and psychological; for some it may be one or the other, or even both. Although quantitative methods are vital in measuring physiological changes, it is possible that these methods could miss improvements or factors influencing health and wellbeing, simply because the researchers may not have included it to measure (Coolican, 2004). Qualitative methods in general for this topic area are more likely to capture each improvement and benefit of green exercise because individuals are less limited on

what they can say and so can state everything they feel (Coolican, 2004).

Kaplan's (1995) attention restoration theory is cognitively-focused. Although there is an acknowledgement of individual differences implied in the 'compatibility' element of the theory, this is limited and does not recognise the wider experience of the individual and how this may impact upon restoration.

2.1.2: Stress Reduction Model

Ulrich et al (1991) disagreed with Kaplan's focus on the nature of concentration, or fascination as Kaplan termed it, and felt that a more general model of restoration through general stress reduction was appropriate. Research was carried out on a sample of students to support this theory, and involved showing all participants a work safety video, depicting some serious injuries caused by carelessness in the workplace. Participants were then split into six groups, each shown different videos; two involving nature (no people or animals) and the other four showing urban environments. Measures were mainly physiological, including heart rate and blood pressure, but also included a self-report scale of feelings such as anger and fear. They found that both mentally and physically the nature videos had more of a restorative influence on the participants. A point I considered when evaluating this research was, is it possible to simulate nature, and experience the benefits of it properly when watching it on a video? I understand that the results showed a positive impact on restoration and stress-reduction; however I wondered how the findings might have been different if the participants were physically taken out into a natural environment.

Ulrich (1984) carried out research looking into the stress-reduction qualities of nature on patients who had had gall bladder surgery. Patients in the control and experimental groups were matched according to previous medical history, age and weight amongst other factors, to prevent other factors affecting the outcomes, and they measured factors such as use of pain relief, length of hospital stay and post-surgical complications. One group had a view of a natural setting, whilst the other group had a brick wall. They found that the group with a natural view had a shorter hospital stay, less complications and less prolonged use of strong pain relief than the wall group. Furthermore, the nature group had more positive comments in the medical

notes, suggesting good spirits, than the wall group. The stress-reducing impact of the nature view enabled speedier recovery and a more pleasant hospital stay (Ulrich, 1984).

Whitehouse (et al, 2001) carried out research in a children's hospital to determine whether a garden provided a stress-reducing benefit for patients and their families. They found that, although more needed to be done to promote the gardens presence, the overall impact on stress-reduction was effective; it was perceived as a place of healing and restoration (Whitehouse et al, 2001). This supports Ulrich et al's (1991) model of achieving overall stress reduction through contact with nature.

Ulrich et al's (1991) stress reduction model shifts away from the cognitively-focused proposition from Kaplan (1995) and instead tries to demonstrate more generally how natural environments can be a good 'all-rounder' for stress reduction, which can then impact positively on physical health and wellbeing. His supportive research carried out on hospital patients (Ulrich, 1984), although demonstrates a positive change, ignores potential external influences. Despite patients under study being matched for height, weight and previous medical conditions, there is no mention of other potential variables that could influence patients' recovery time and mood. Social support structures could play a large role; number of visitors to the patient and perceived support from family upon leaving hospital for example. Also, mental health status and attitudes towards surgery could have been measured prior to it taking place; this could impact on the results.

2.1.3: Biophilia Hypothesis

The Biophilia hypothesis was outlined by Wilson (1984) and details how humans have a natural affinity with the green environment, and living things, in terms of an innate response. He suggests that the love of life, and living things, helps to maintain and preserve it. Of course, this inclusion of living things covers the natural environment. Wilson's psycho-evolutionary model suggested a restorative response in a non-threatening situation would be a valuable asset in terms of natural selection. Wilson stated that the human body would be biologically prepared to learn this response to the natural environment, acknowledging that this response may not come automatically to everyone (Wilson, 1984).

Kahn (1997) discusses research carried out by Kaplan and Kaplan on humans' suggested preference of life on the savannah, reporting that people did prefer scenes of nature over scenes depicting built up cities. This is in-keeping with Biophilic ideas that humans are pre-programmed to be attracted to settings similar to those that we evolved in. However, Kahn (1997) outlines methodological flaws in this research, questioning whether the scenes were preferred due to an innate affinity with the depicted environment, or a liking of the specific photograph; perhaps for the colours or the angle at which it was taken rather than an innate affinity with the setting.

Heerwagen (2009) summarises the research on the growing success of biophilic design. This concept uses ideas and research around the Biophilia hypothesis, showing the positive impact of natural environments on health and wellbeing, in the design of buildings. Previously championed by Ulrich (2002) who found that gardens in hospitals improved many aspects of health and recovery, Heerwagen (2009) concludes that daily contact with nature is essential. She concludes, from the literature, that this can be attained from multiple sources; plant pots, trees in the street, roof-top gardens and more, and should be made available for everybody to benefit from (Heerwagen, 2009).

The over-arching question for each of these research topics; from attention restoration through stress-reduction and even in to 'natural affinity' is defining the very concept of 'nature'. Does an inner city park count as nature? Or does it need to be far away from roads, buildings and urban life? It is difficult to define a one-for-all description of what counts as nature, as it will vary greatly from person to person. Somebody who lives in a city and is used to traffic, noise and the bright lights may define nature as somewhere quiet with greenery and tress; this would likely be met by most city parks. However someone more used to a suburban setting may require more from their 'nature'; it may need to be further away from cities and provide a greater shift.

Ideas of nature may vary cross-culturally too, which needs to be accounted for, and for some it may need to fulfil certain criteria: trees, water or wildlife to name but a few (White et al, 2013). These impact upon the existing and potential future research, for example in the cases where

little or no differences were found, perhaps the individual did not experience substantial enough contact with nature.

The efficacy of the evolutionary Biophilia hypothesis is difficult to establish because it is difficult to test. Can we really ascertain that individuals enjoy scenes of the natural environment due to a pre-disposed natural affinity with nature? Or could the preference be down to something much simpler- the effortlessness of the natural environment, and the slower pace of life? With more rigorous testing and further research, the Biophilia hypothesis could be further supported; however the essence of *why* people prefer natural environments needs to be recognised, as well as an acknowledgement of those who do not prefer natural settings.

Finally, it must be acknowledged that not every person will find natural environments restorative, stress-reducing or even feel an affinity with nature; and even for those who do, it may not be for the 'right' reasons. A significant change in environment for the usual city dweller may restore feelings of calm- not because it is nature, but because it is different. The simplicity of the natural environment may be the draw, rather than an innate response.

2.2: Green Exercise and Mental Health

As discussed in chapter one, the policy and planning around green exercise is in the early stages, although it is slowly being recognised that the outdoors can be beneficial for clinical populations and service-users. Thus far, the provisions offered to these groups appear to be derived from individual interest rather than a wealth of evidence. Current health promotion strategies, such as the Change4Life campaign (NHS, online) focus on the improvement of physical health through exercise, and as yet do not appear to recognise the impact this may have on mental health too. Natural England (online) distributed thirty million pounds in funding for projects that help encourage people to spend time in the natural environment, and understand the impact it can have on physical and mental illness. Target populations have included Black and Ethnic Minority populations with little experience of spending time in the natural environment. They have also funded projects to help those with disabilities gain access to nature (Natural England, online). Recognising the benefits on both physical and mental health is an important step towards nature initiatives becoming mainstream in terms of health

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promotion.

Individual charities are realising these benefits however, and as such have evaluated their provision and published their results. The mental health charity MIND carried out their own research with some of their service users, looking into the effects of the natural environment on mental health and overall feelings of wellbeing. They studied a variety of outdoor activities including gardening, walking, cycling and conservation groups. They found that ninety-four per cent of the one hundred and eight participants studied reported that green exercise had benefited their mental health, with ninety per cent also saying that green exercise improved their physical health (MIND 2007). They also found, when studying the differences between outdoor versus indoor exercise, that half of the sample exercising indoors reported an increased feeling of tension, compared to none of the outdoor exercisers (MIND, 2007). This research, although on a relatively small scale, shows how much a positive impact green exercise can have on individuals suffering mental ill-health. The research did however lack a control group of non-clinical populations, which would have been interesting to compare differences with.

In 2010, Barton and Pretty carried out a multi-study analysis to try and determine the best dose of green exercise. To understand the impact on mental health, they measured mood and self-esteem. They found that the participants suffering from mental ill-health showed the one of the greatest improvements in self-esteem, indicating an improvement in mental health (Barton and Pretty, 2010). They also found that improvements took place regardless of the green environment, which varied from 'urban green' to wildlife habitats (Barton and Pretty, 2010).

Barton and Pretty's (2010) research on different 'doses' of green exercise raises an interesting point to consider; can infrequent camping breaks provide the same benefits to health and wellbeing as green exercise as it is usually considered- frequent exposure to nature? Other than the small proportion of people that live outdoors permanently, through choice or not, camping trips are often undertaken as a holiday. This may impact upon health and wellbeing differently to more 'traditional' modes of green exercise; frequent nature walks or gardening for example.

This concept of getting one large 'dose' of green exercise infrequently, instead of frequent, smaller 'doses' is yet to be explored empirically, although Barton and Pretty's (2010) multi-study analysis provides an introduction, and suggests that there is indeed a difference. Small doses, of up to five minutes, demonstrate the greatest changes on both mood and self-esteem. This decreases for activities lasting ten to sixty minutes and half-days, then increases again for full day activities. This could suggest that longer exposure to green exercise has a beneficial effect on mood and self-esteem (Barton & Pretty, 2010).

The possibility that camping may have a detrimental effect on individual wellbeing needs to be considered. Clearly, if an individual has an unpleasant camping experience, they are unlikely to go camping again; however there may be more serious repercussions on their physical or mental health. Undeniably, camping presents unique challenges both in terms of living and communicating. As Garst (et al, 2010) identifies, camping often involves living in a relatively basic set-up with few amenities or home comforts which, for some individuals, can be difficult to cope with rather than a break from home life. Without modern technologies such as mobile phones, televisions or even radios, it is understandable that some individuals can feel isolated.

2.3: Camping Services

The popularity of camps in America offering day care services, treatment programs and specific camping experiences is also on the increase. Services such as MSPP Interface (online, 2013) act as a referral scheme for parents wishing to send their children to summer camps with a mental health focus, and can direct parents to camps all over the States. Camps offer services to children with a wide range of needs, such as those suffering with the bereavement of a parent, children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, right through to cancer patients and those struggling with the general demands of modern life. This shows that the physical and mental health benefit of nature is progressively being recognised in the States (Haubenhofer et al, 2010).

At present in the UK, there are a limited number of services similar to those in the States, possibly because research in this area is relatively new, and the political agenda is yet to be fully informed. However, the facilities that are available include weight management camps such as More Life, running from Leeds University Carnegie Campus (MoreLife, online). It aims to

provide an educational experience regarding food choices as well as opportunity for children and young people to meet new friends, learn new skills and sports and improve their confidence. As part of a country-wide initiative to reduce childhood obesity by 2020, the evaluation report provided in 2010 states that although numbers of obese children had not decreased, they had not risen in line with predictions (Cross Government Obesity Unit, 2010).

It is becoming increasingly evident that the natural environment can have restorative benefits for people with existing physical and mental illnesses, which provides the justification for research carried out in Hungary. A camp was set up in 2001 for children and young people suffering from a variety of chronic physical illnesses, including diabetes, cancer and juvenile arthritis (Békési, 2011). Data were collected two months prior to and two months after attending camp, using an adapted KIDSCREEN 52 questionnaire and analysed using SPSS 15. Variables measured included psychological wellbeing, physical wellbeing and social acceptance. The researchers concluded that there were significant positive changes in at least one of the questionnaire sub-scales for 27.8% of the attendees (Békési, 2011). This research provides an interesting overview of the potential quality of life changes that can be brought about by camping programs. However, if qualitative methods had been used, more detailed findings could have been illuminated, or even unexpected findings could have been discovered, as answers would not be limited to the contents of the questionnaire.

As a health promotion initiative, green exercise has been identified as a helpful way to boost mood and reduce blood pressure, as well as improve self-esteem more successfully than exercise alone (Pretty et al, 2005). Pretty et al (2005) conducted an experiment using a hundred participants split in to five groups of twenty. The procedure involved running on a treadmill whilst viewing projected images; urban pleasant, urban unpleasant, rural pleasant and rural unpleasant. The control group were shown no images. They found reduced blood pressure and improved self-esteem in the control group, demonstrating the effects of exercise alone (Pretty et al, 2005).They found that in the urban pleasant and rural pleasant groups, self-esteem was significantly greater than in the control group, highlighting the impact of *green* exercise. Surprisingly it was the rural unpleasant group that had the most significant effect on mood,

depressing participants. This is thought to be because of the threat to the environment depicted in the images projected (Pretty et al, 2005).

2.4: Defining Escapism

I have chosen to include escapism as a concept throughout the current study. Although there are other concepts relevant to green exercise that I could have examined, such as the social aspect and communication, I chose escapism because I perceive it to encompass many different ideas; escapism can be mental or physical, and I feel it contributes to the overall benefits of green exercise significantly. Also, there is a lack of research evidence on the impact of escapism on health and wellbeing. MIND (2007) service-users reported escape as an important part of the green exercise experience, and Kaplan (1995) includes 'being away' as one of the four vital components of attention restoration. Throughout this section, I aim to detail what escapism means to different people as discussed in the literature, how it is relevant to the field of green exercise and to explore different ideas around escapism.

Escapism is an interesting concept with many different definitions according to the context in which it is being experienced. In terms of escapism and green exercise, MIND note in their Ecotherapy report (2007) that four key principles are identified in reasons why people enjoy green exercise; natural and social interaction, activity, sensory stimulation and escape.

It is therefore important to discuss what escapism means to different people, what people enjoy about escapism and the possibility of escapism being a significant factor in fully embracing the benefits of the natural environment. The following is how the people taking part in green exercise have reported to conceptualise escape:

"Getting away from modern life, relaxing (as a contrast), time alone or with family, a time to think and clear the head, peace and quiet, tranquility and freedom, privacy, escape from pressure, stress and the 'rat-race', recharging batteries" (Pretty et al., 2005- cited in MIND, 2007).

It is important to note that not every experience of escapism is a positive one; there is

anecdotal evidence to suggest that escapism is experienced through excessive drug use and alcohol consumption as discussed on BlueLight (online, 2002). As a forum in the public domain, members of BlueLight explain how they use opiates to escape from their own mind and try to create a life that is livable. Members also describe how the use of alcohol consumes the body and mind; however do look for alternative forms of escapism such as reading (BlueLight, online). This is an acknowledgement that escapism, such as in the form of drugs or alcohol, is not a healthy choice.

In terms of more positive experiences and uses of escapism, green exercise is not the only way people find their escape. Video games and sexual relationships are anecdotally linked to escapism (Vickers, 2013); although evidently these pursuits can be abused and therefore transformed into negative experiences too; Zychik (2012) goes as far as to suggest that escape is the cause of sex addiction. Zychik (2012) wrote a book detailing his experience as a sex addict, and found that the escapism it provided drove some people in to a deeper addiction. Clearly, there are differences in positive and negative ideas of escapism, with the negative ones perhaps seen as self-destructive and dangerous. Escapism through nature may be less likely to be perceived as a negative because the end result is less likely to lead to ill-health or addiction, and ultimately is likely to be more socially acceptable in a Western society. Although escapism through video-games, sexual relations and even alcohol consumption does not necessarily always lead to harm or addiction, cultural constraints mean these methods are often frowned upon where nature escapes most likely would not be.

It interesting to note that ultimately, each person seeking escapism is likely doing it for similar reasons; to seek comfort, seek hope, and escape from the mundane and often harsh realities of modern life. To be able to forget about worries and troubles, even if just for a short while can help people get through the low points in life (BlueLight, online).

2.5: Outlining the Rationale

Having looked at the relevant theory and research evidence available, the potential benefits of green exercise for clinical populations/service users has been demonstrated. Green care has

also been discussed, and its impact on clinical populations in the therapeutic arena.

Care farms and weight management camps in the UK are improving physical and mental health and wellbeing by utilising the natural world (Care Farming UK 2013) and European research is paving the way for more focused 'green' mental and physical health facilities in this country (Haubenhofer et al, 2010). Research also shows the positive effect green exercise and nature can have on the general population, and having discussed escapism and what it can mean to different people, its inclusion in the proposed study can be more clearly defined and justified.

Previous research surrounding green exercise has often focused on the improvement of symptoms of physical and/or mental health issues in clinical populations (Bekesi et al, 2011; MIND, 2007). This has often involved measuring variables quantitatively, such as the use of an adapted KIDSCREEN questionnaire analysed using SPSS in the study carried out by Bekesi et al (2011), before and after a green exercise intervention. The use of qualitative methods in health psychology is steadily increasing (Pope and Mays, 2006) however quantitative approaches continue to dominate, perhaps due to their scientific nature providing solid answers.

Previous green exercise research using qualitative methods (Garst et al, 2010; King, 2012) has been successful when used with non-clinical populations, which encouraged me to consider their inclusion in the current study.

The purpose for qualitative methods, and in particular a phenomenological research design, in the current study was to gain insight into the experience of camping as detailed by a non-clinical population. This allowed green exercise concepts to be explored not only through the alternative lense of a non-clinical population adult, but also in much more depth than can be gained from a quantitative approach; participants could be prompted to think about *why* and the meanings attached to their words can be discovered.

Previous methods to study camping have included both quantitative (Bekesi et al, 2011) and qualitative methods (Garst et al, 2010) but phenomenological approaches have not been utilised. Garst et al (2010) opted for a discursive social psychology approach when exploring forest camping experiences in the US, however the analysis of the findings was geared towards

assisting managers rather than exploring the lived experience of camping. As the current study aims included the impact camping may have on individual health and wellbeing, a phenomenological approach seemed more suitable, with the focus on the individual and their perception of the experience.

Descriptive phenomenology in particular searches for essences within individual experience, and the researcher is encouraged to 'bracket' off personal assumptions in order to fully immerse in these experiences. Through the descriptive phenomenological approach, I can describe the subjective experience as it is perceived by the individual, as they report it from their own experience. This will not be lead by normative assumptions or other preconceptions.

Researchers such as Haubenhofer (2010) and charities such as MIND (2007) are eager to ascertain that green exercise can have a beneficial effect on the general population and is not just for those with physical or mental health issues. To do this, more research on green exercise needs to be carried out on non-clinical populations.

The current study aims to explore the lived experience of camping in the UK. By studying a range of participants, it is anticipated that an array of people can present different views on what camping means to them. It is important to acknowledge that there are many different 'types' of camping in the UK; from standard holiday camping on managed campsites, to wildness and wild camping with no sites or set agenda, right through to organised activity camps, where equipment is waiting for you with an itinerary of activities. For the purpose of this research, camping experiences similar to my preferred camping experience (outlined in chapter one) will be looked at. This is because camping experiences similar to mine avoids extreme wilderness or extreme structure, and there is a wide range of levels of camping experience that can be included. I am interested in looking at individuals' experiences that have a choice with their time, and subsequently what they choose to do with it.

Further aims to be addressed include, but are not limited to, what do people get from camping? Why do they go? And how do they feel about the experience before, during and after their camping trip? The participants will be encouraged to describe their experiences in detail, describing everything from location to emotions.

The following chapter details the methodology and method of the current study.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Method

Over the course of the following chapter, I will outline the chosen methodology, method, process of analysis and the participants, including a detailed portrait of each, and a description of their interview.

3.1: Methodology

The current study's aim is to explore the lived experience of camping. This aim suits a phenomenological approach for several reasons. Firstly, the key words 'lived experience'; this approach allows full exploration of the phenomenon, camping, and allows the participants to build the picture as they see it. Also, I am looking at all aspects of the experience; from accommodation and location to reasons for going and highlights of the trip. With a phenomenological design and associated methods, I can remove limits and barriers that might be encountered in order to paint a complete picture of the essence of the experience (Langdridge, 2007).

A descriptive phenomenological methodology was adopted to carry out this research (Langdridge, 2007) because the key aims of the research involved people describing and explaining their life experiences in their own ways and terms.

Phenomenological psychology, originally founded by Husserl in the 1900's, advocates that there is no 'fixed reality' and aims to study the individual lived experience (Langdridge, 2007). It suggests that individuals' perception of even the same experience will be different, as each person's perception will be influenced by their ideas of reality; constructed by previous experiences, morals and beliefs. Phenomenology suggests that there is no 'real' world that we can know objectively, and instead objects only enter an individual's reality should they choose to perceive them. Following Husserl's lead, other theorists built upon and developed their ideas of phenomenology; both existentially (Heidegger) and hermeneutically (Gadamer & Ricoer) (Langdridge, 2007).

A key concept in descriptive phenomenology is epoché, which essentially involves bracketing off any pre-conceptions about the phenomena under study, in this case 'camping'. Langdridge

(2007) discusses the 'natural attitude'; how we generally see the world, and how this can influence how a phenomenon is researched. By 'bracketing off' or acknowledging my pre-conceptions about camping, I am able to prevent simply re-presenting my existing understanding of it, and instead reveal new features and look at it in a different way, creating the 'phenomenological perspective'. Whilst there is still debate as to whether true epoché can ever be achieved, followers of Husserl, me included, believe that it can. By employing techniques, like the reflexive journal, and being honest and aware of any ideas, thoughts or feelings I have throughout the research, as well as pausing, looking back and re-evaluating the decisions I have made, I can achieve epoché. By addressing each of the pre-suppositions I had about the participant and their experience of camping, I was able to bracket them off and immerse myself in their experience throughout data collection and analysis process. My pre-suppositions about the participants are outlined in 3.4.1.

The research necessitated that participants construct their own experiences, and their reality, in order to gain sufficient understanding; therefore the epistemological focus is constructionism. As an individual, I do not believe in objective truths; I think meaning and knowledge are created by each individual, and therefore meaning is constructed in different ways by different people. One person's experience or knowledge of a phenomenon can be entirely different to another's, and this can arise from previous lived experience (Langdridge, 2007). In relation to the current topic, two people may have had specifically similar camping experiences (e.g. camping by a lake in a field with no other civilisation for 3 miles) and one of those people may have enjoyed the peace and quiet whereas the other may have felt isolated and bored. One person may say they love camping based on this experience, but the other may have loathed it for the similar experience. Different people attach different meaning to similar experiences (Langdridge, 2007).

3.2: Data Collection

In order to meet the research aims semi-structured interviews were used to collect the data. Semi-structured interviews were chosen to elicit the richest information from each participant, ensuring I could make the best use of the time I had with them. As a researcher, I could prepare

in advance prompts and cues for each thematic area I needed to explore in the interviews for when they were required.

Phenomenologically, semi-structured interviews allow the participants to build up their picture of their lived experience, describing in their own words how they perceived the camping trip. As the interviews were semi-structured, I could make sure that all of the questions I had would be asked, whilst being able to take a flexible approach to interviewing, changing question order as and when required. Question order could be changed and questions could be added or removed if necessary (Runswick-Cole, 2011). Furthermore, descriptive phenomenology necessitates very detailed and focused personal accounts of individual experiences; not something that could be easily accessible in focus groups. There would be a risk that individuals would not 'open up' about their true thoughts and feelings about camping in front of strangers. Semi-structured interviews also work well within the descriptive phenomenological paradigm chosen, and provide the ideal data set for use with Colaizzi's analysis (Colaizzi, 1978). Structured interviews were an inappropriate method because although my questions would have been asked, there may have been topics, ideas and aspects of the experience that I would miss, and it would not have offered a true representation of the experience, as it would be limited by the questions I choose.

An alternative method I had considered was a focus group, as it would be interesting to see how people compared their experiences and commonalities could be easily identified, but as the participants recruited were a range of ages and social backgrounds, participants may have been more likely to limit what they said, due to embarrassment or fear of offending the other members of the group (Langdridge, 2007).

3.3: Data Analysis: Using Colaizzi

Colaizzi's (1978) seven stage analysis process was used to analyse the interviews. This process provides a rigorous analysis, and each step stays close to the data, ensuring it is a thorough analysis. Also, the end result provides a concise yet all-encompassing description of the phenomenon, validated by the participants that created it. Colaizzi's (1978) analysis procedure is specifically designed as a method for a descriptive phenomenological analysis and as such

meets the requirements of the current study. Should a more generic, thematic approach be used instead, the clarity of the methodological focus may be lost.

Stage one of Colaizzi's (1978) analysis is similar to many other forms of phenomenological analysis, and involves the researcher becoming familiar with the transcripts by reading them through several times. Stage two instructs the researcher to identify *significant statements* (Colaizzi, 1978). Significant statements are statements that pertain to the phenomena under study; in this case, reasons why people go camping. Stage three involves formulating meanings from each of the significant statements. This is a tricky step; as it is vital not to read beyond the text, however the researcher must go into more detail about what the participant meant by the statement. At stage four, the significant statements and their formulated meanings are grouped into clusters of themes. Once the themes are organised, the fifth stage can commence. An exhaustive description of the phenomena under study is produced for stage five of the analysis. This involves encompassing the theme clusters identified and providing a description from them. Stage six sees the exhaustive descriptions reduced down into a fundamental structure of the phenomena. This is a short description of the phenomena, using all of the themes, that manages to capture the essence of the topic. Finally, in stage seven, the fundamental structure of the phenomena is passed back to the participants, to ensure that it is a representative description of their experience.

3.4: Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited via personal contacts. The people I chose to invite to take part in the study had been selected because I know they have previous experience of camping. They cover a range of ages and backgrounds, and therefore should be a fairly representative sample (Langdridge, 2007). Participants were given a brief verbal explanation of the research aims, and left with a participant information sheet to read.

Considerations were made having opted for recruiting participants via personal contacts; it may be identified as a conflict of interest, and I did not wish to coerce any of the participants in to taking part. Following an initial, verbal, expression of interest, participants were given the participant information sheet detailing the study and what would be required of them

(Appendix 1). They were left with this for a week, which included an instruction to contact the researcher only if they wished to take part. There was an assurance that they were under no obligation to take part, and would not be subject to any direct persuasion from the researcher in reaching this decision. Consent forms were also signed by participants (see Appendix 2).

The positive and negative impact of knowing the participants on the research is important to consider. Rapport during the interviews was sometimes easier to build because I knew the participants and had some understanding of their circumstances prior to the interview; however this could also make it a bit more awkward than perhaps it would have been were we strangers, as the situation was different to that in which we were accustomed to talking. There was also the possibility that the participants might hold back parts of the experience that they may have otherwise told a stranger: details that they thought I already knew, or details that they did not want me to know. This could have possible implications on the findings. However, the procedure involved in descriptive phenomenological analysis encourages the researcher to bracket off assumptions, including those related to prior knowledge of the participants; therefore the impact of this should be minimal.

Four interviews were carried out, to collect around four hours of raw data. Participants were briefed on the aims of the research and asked to describe their last camping experience. They were encouraged to bring along photographs/souvenirs to help illustrate their stories. This technique helped in many ways; for some it helped them to remember aspects of the experience that they might have otherwise forgotten, and for others, it helped to put them at ease throughout the interview. Having an alternate focus, instead of just on them talking, helped me to establish a rapport with Jane, as she could show me pictures that I had not seen previously. As well as taking the focus off her, for Catherine the pictures acted as a prompt, reminding her of parts of the experience that she had forgotten to mention. These details all help to build a bigger picture of the overall experience, and so the photograph method was an important step.

Interviews were guided to ensure the focus did not remain solely in one area of the holiday; a comprehensive description of the tent specifications is not wholly necessary to understanding

the experience. By 'guided', I mean that I was able to roughly steer the progress of the interview through the use of open questions and the odd prompt; for example, if the participant appeared stuck for something to say, I could ask about the activities they took part in or query a picture. This was a useful method as I could ensure I covered all of my thematic areas without standing with a list of questions. Adherence to ethical considerations was of paramount importance, therefore interviews took place in participants homes, or in as in one instance, a public place (library). Participants were encouraged to talk about the trip including what they did, favourite and least favourite parts of the holiday, and how it compared to other holiday experiences.

Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim before analysis took place. Data were stored securely on a password protected computer, and the recordings were destroyed following transcription.

3.4.1: Participant Profiles and Pre-Suppositions

The first participant was Nicola. She is a thirty year old charity worker and lives with her husband. They make regular camping trips in the UK, and the experience she chose to reflect on was a walking holiday she went on with her partner some years ago. The trip involved walking over eighty miles over the course of just under two weeks, stopping off to camp somewhere new each night. They carried all the required equipment with them, so could pick and choose how far to walk and where to stay each day. The interview took place in Nicola's home and was the first of the four.

In terms of pre-suppositions, I had to be careful to bracket off my own experience of a similar walking holiday whilst interviewing Nicola. I found I could compare and contrast a lot of the things she talked about to my own trip, and a lot of the feelings she felt were similar to mine. I made sure Nicola was not aware I had been on a similar trip before and during the interview, as I wanted her to tell me about her experience without holding back. Sometimes when you know somebody has similar knowledge or life experience to you, it alters the way you talk about it; you might hold back in certain areas for fear of their judgement. Also, you might not talk about areas that you think the other person has a mutual understanding of, therefore go in to less

detail. I wondered if it might help Nicola reflect; knowing that I knew a bit about what she was saying and understood the feelings she was describing, but ultimately decided not to tell her until after the interview, where we could have a more informal chat and compare experiences. I think Nicola's description was more true to her than it would have been if she had known prior to the interview taking place. In terms of analysis, I needed to ensure I did not see my own experiences in Nicola's and twist the data to fit my thoughts about it.

Catherine was the second participant. She is a twenty-seven year old administrative assistant and has recently moved in with her partner of eight years. As well as camping around six times a year, the couple have also travelled extensively together. The camping experience Catherine chose to reflect on was a trip to the Lake District with her partner. They stayed in a farmer's field and camped next to Bassenthwaite Lake. Other than clean running water, there are no other facilities and the nearest town was a couple of miles away. They stayed for a couple of nights, shared walks and campfires and were alone for most of the holiday. The interview took place in Catherine's home and was the second. No changes were required to the interview guide and all thematic areas were covered. As Catherine is a good friend, throughout the analysis I had to be careful not to go beyond the data and include things she did not talk about in the interview, but that I know she has said to me in the past. As I know Catherine well, I had to try and bracket off my friendship and take the data at face value, in order to stay close to the descriptive phenomenological approach and extract the essence of Catherine's experience. Throughout the interview, I encouraged Catherine to speak freely and try not to over-think what she was saying to help me; I think this was successful and when the interview got going, she appeared to forget about the Dictaphone and that it was an interview and just talked about the holiday.

Jane was the third participant to be interviewed. She is a twenty-one year old full-time University student and went camping with her then-partner to a campsite with facilities. They went for a weekend to Sowerby Bridge, visiting local Shibden Hall and enjoying campfires at night. The couple had originally intended to go abroad but due to financial constraints opted for

a camping trip instead. Shortly after the camping trip, Jane and her partner separated. The interview took place in the University library. I booked a group study room and ensured it was soundproof before the interview commenced.

As I have not known Jane for very long, it made it easier to interview her than Catherine. I did not feel I had much to bracket off prior to or during the interview, as I knew little of her ex-partner or the experience she chose to reflect on. This did make establishing a rapport a little trickier, although as Jane is a cheerful character, she made this much easier. Also, the use of the photographs helped to reduce the intensity that a focused, one-to-one conversation with a relative stranger can produce, and allowed both of us to relax.

The final interview was with Lydia, a twenty-five year old marketing manager. She currently lives with her partner, but chose to reflect on a camping experience that took place before they met. She was the only participant to discuss a camping trip with she went on with friends, and talked about when she went to Malham for the weekend. Lydia's friend had just lost her mother and the girls were trying to take her mind off things. She stayed on a campsite with facilities and they participated in a long walk and played games in the tent at night. The interview took place in Lydia's home.

Similarly to Catherine, Lydia is a good friend and I employed the same bracketing techniques, particularly throughout the data analysis. Lydia was quite laid back about the interview from the start, and her reflection felt natural and genuine. As I also know the girls she went camping with, it was easier for Lydia not to get too distracted by trying to explain the details; who was who, what had happened to her friends' mother, and instead could focus more on the experience of the trip.

As I have included pre-suppositions I had about the participants, it feels appropriate to include the pre-suppositions and thoughts I had about the phenomenon under study: camping. As outlined in Chapter One, my personal experiences of camping have usually been good. Most of the trips I have been on I have enjoyed, and I would most likely recommend camping to people who I think would appreciate it like I do. However, I want to make sure that throughout the data collection and analysis, I do not let my own feelings and experiences of camping influence

the findings. This is important at all stages and for all participants; I am aware that I have shared similar experiences to each of them, but it is vital that I focus on *their* experiences only. In the interviews and the analysis, I made sure to include any discussion around the negative sides of camping too. By including a topic area about negative parts of the trip, and ensuring I explored the downsides of the camping experience too, I was able to ensure I did not 'gloss over' the unpleasant parts and keep the interview impartial. In the analysis I made sure I used the whole transcript, taking into account the negative parts of the experience too.

After four interviews, I felt no further interviews were required. The interviews I had were detailed, descriptive and contained rich data, and participants were beginning to say similar things. This could be because each of the participants reflected on relatively similar camping experiences. Due to the time and resource constraints of a Masters, as well as the intense analysis I had decided to use, I felt I had sufficient data.

For the purpose of the current study, I wanted to contribute as adequate a description of the topic under study, the lived experience of camping, as I could. According to Ihde (1986, p.72) "The noema is now seen to contain two possibilities, and two possibilities as variations are relatively more adequate than one". Noema in Husserlian terms refers to the object of thought (Ihde, 1986). This ascent from apodicticity, the 'certainty which, on critical reflection, also includes the inability to imagine otherwise' (Hermberg, 2006 p.121) to adequacy occurs because another way of looking at the phenomena appears, thus adding depth and detail to the fundamental structure. Clearly, the larger the sample size, the more descriptions and experiences of the phenomena there are to draw upon when producing the essential structure, going some way to achieve adequacy. After four interviews, I noticed similar concepts, ideas and elements of the experience were drawn upon: relaxation, escape and getting away, adding to the adequacy of the fundamental structure. I understood that having gathered details of four experiences, I had made a non-transitive ascent; that is, camping could not be defined by one experience (Ihde, 1986). Indeed, had more interviews taken place, the fundamental structure may have altered, but the similarities between experiences drawn upon lead me to think that the difference would be slight.

Through Colaizzi's analysis, I could define a fundamental structure of the experience, which would satisfy the research aim. I understood that from the four in-depth interviews I had, alongside the very detailed analysis process I planned to do, a relatively adequate fundamental structure could be achieved.

3.5: The Analysis Process

I chose a descriptive approach as opposed to an interpretive one as I wanted to explore the lived experience of camping, from the people experiencing it only. With descriptive phenomenological approaches, it is possible to immerse yourself into the data and get a vivid sense of the phenomenon, with minimal interpretation (Langdridge, 2007). Clearly, there is a level of interpretation at stage three of the current analysis process as detailed in section 3.3; however through bracketing out my being, and staying close to the data, interpretation is minimised. Descriptive phenomenology is useful for meeting the aim of my research: 'what is the lived experience of camping?' as it provides a succinct yet all-encompassing answer; especially helped by the analysis I have chosen to use, detailed below.

Colaizzi's analysis (1978) was used as it was appropriate for the type of data gathered and the phenomenological research design. Having looked at Giorgi's method compared to Colaizzi's (Giorgi, 2006) and despite criticism of the process by Giorgi (2006) I chose to use Colaizzi's (1978) method. Although there are similarities, Giorgi's method involves reading, identifying meaning units and assessing their psychological significance, before producing a description of the phenomena (Langdridge, 2007). Although this is similar to Colaizzi's method, I preferred the methodical seven stage process. This was for a number of reasons; firstly, the data are re-examined and reduced down in more steps, allowing time for reflection at each stage. I think that developing the theme clusters allows a different level of exploration and discussion of the phenomena, which was an important part of my research investigating the lived experience. Taking the data from theme clusters, right down to a short fundamental structure at the end of the analysis not only provides a useful, concise description, but it also can be seen to come directly from the data. Colaizzi's (1978) process allowed a detailed exploration of each transcript, and the identification of the relevant material through the extraction of significant

statements. This meant that for the current study, I could leave out what I perceived to be irrelevant details and concentrate on the essence of the camping.

As Colaizzi's is an involved methodology, it made the most of each transcript. There are points at which the process of analysis can be validated, by discussing it with supervisors, and a final validation process at the end takes place where participants could see the outcome and comment on whether it was an accurate and fair representation of their experience, contributing to the overall trustworthiness of the study. Giorgi (2006) criticises this final stage, stating that the participants account and researchers' analysis take place in different perspectives and therefore cannot be judged properly. The participant recounts their experience in the 'natural attitude' but it is then analysed in a 'phenomenological perspective' (Giorgi, 2006). Giorgi comments that the experiencer is not always best placed to comment on the analysis of the experience, as the lived experience differs from the *meaning* of such experience (Giorgi, 2006). Though I can understand Giorgi's point of view, I feel that for studying this phenomenon of camping, a final validation process by the participants is helpful for added understanding of the phenomenon and will assist in overall trustworthiness. Respondent validation should not be ruled out because of potential discord between the 'natural attitude' and the 'phenomenological perspective'; as in this instance, it was interesting to see whether or not the participants felt that the fundamental structure was resonant of their experience. The participants did agree that it was a representative account of their experience, and this confirmed that my analysis was trustworthy.

3.6: The Trustworthiness Debate

Trustworthiness in qualitative research continues to be a topic of hot debate in the psychological research sector, especially with the use of qualitative methods increasing in popularity (Shenton, 2004).

Throughout the research process, from design, to collection to data analysis, I have been mindful of my thoughts and feelings, and how they might be affecting the research process. According to Langdridge (2007), taking a reflexive approach in qualitative research is a vital step

towards reliable research. Guba (1981, cited in Shenton, 2004) believed four criteria needed to be considered in the quest for quality in qualitative research; confirmability, credibility, dependability and transferability. Taking them in turn, I will try to determine how 'trustworthy' the current study could be considered in terms of these concepts, as well as how descriptive phenomenology may not adhere to these ideas.

Firstly, credibility relates to whether or not the research recorded the intended phenomena. According to Shenton (2004) this can include considering up to fifteen separate elements; having read through them I have concluded that not all are appropriate to consider. Indeed, the very concept of 'credibility' in descriptive phenomenological research is difficult to consider, as the 'phenomenon' to be recorded is the participant experience (Todres, 2005). Although I can be fairly confident that I captured the participant experience (my method was appropriate to this, and the validation process at the end confirmed this) I cannot be sure that the phenomenon was 'measured', as it cannot be quantified or determined.

Shenton (2004) states that using appropriate methods is one way of ensuring 'credibility', and appropriateness is determined by whether the methods have been used before to study the research area. Although green exercise is only recently emerging, research has tended to use quantitative, laboratory methods (Pretty et al, 2006; Ulrich et al, 1991). That said, King (2012) used a series of interviews and focus groups when studying the experience of allotment gardeners; which is similar to my approach. Using a random sampling strategy also contributes to Shenton's (2004) ideas of credibility, and is something I struggled with. Only a small amount of willing participants were available to take part in my research, however they were a range of ages, social and employment backgrounds and with different marital statuses. According to Todres (2005) participant sampling in descriptive phenomenological research should be more concerned with quality than quantity; after all, 'three good descriptions [of the phenomenon] are better than twelve poor ones' (Todres, 2005 p110). Having an external source to discuss the research with is also helpful in achieving credibility, states Shenton (2004) as the researcher cannot truly detach from the project. I met frequently with supervisors in order to discuss the project and ensure I was achieving epoché (Langdridge, 2007). As a key concept in descriptive

phenomenological research, epoché and the reflexivity it requires enables researchers to achieve a level of credibility.

Transferability is defined as how much the findings of my study can be applied in other situations. Although there was reasonable variety amongst the types of experiences my participants reported on (two camped on a site, one camped on a farm and the other a mixture of these), in relation to the broad spectrum of types of camping holidays, it is relatively limited. I think it may be difficult to apply the same themes and fundamental structure to somebody taking part in an activity camp, or somebody going on a wilderness walk. Shenton (2004) notes that in qualitative research, the results are contextual, therefore transferability is difficult to achieve. He goes on to say that even if similar studies are carried out, and different results are found, it does not necessarily mean that the study is untrustworthy, and that finding out why the results altered could be as interesting as the results. I would agree with Shenton (2004) that to produce transferable results from one research project is unrealistic. Todres (2005) adds that transferability is an open question, which is worthy of debate; can it be argued that the types of camping experiences I have studied could be exactly replicated to study again? I think not, because the experiences the participants chose to reflect on were really quite specific; any missing elements would likely affect the results- and camping walks are not always the 'everyday'.

Dependability is an interesting idea to muse in relation to the phenomenological design of the current study. It questions whether the same results would be discovered if the research were to be carried out again. I think similar results are likely to be found, but in the nature of the current study it would be dependent on too many factors. As my participants were reflecting after a period of time about the trips, I think it would be differently remembered as time passes. If Jane had still been with her partner, her reflection may have altered. If Nicola had argued with her partner prior to the interview, she might have reflected on their experience differently. I see why 'dependability' is important in some lines of qualitative research, but cannot see that it is an appropriate measure for the current study of lived experience and is not

a necessary determinant of phenomenological research.

The final of the four criteria is confirmability, which refers to how objective the qualitative researcher can be, so as not to influence the findings. As a follower of Husserlian descriptive phenomenology, I feel that this level of objectivity is achievable; whereby the researcher can bracket off their own experiences, thoughts and pre-suppositions to an extent that they can completely immerse themselves in the participants' world. I was assisted in my achievement of confirmability by the use of epoché and a reflexive journal, and although some may disagree that beliefs and pre-conceptions can be completely suspended throughout the process of the research, I think through careful reflection and re-evaluation this can be achieved.

Overall, I think the current study could be argued as 'trustworthy'; I took steps to ensure confirmability and credibility, and I think transferability can only really be measured by repeating the research in relation to different camping experiences. Although I disagree with the fundamental ideas behind dependability, in relation to the current study at least, I think similar themes would be identified should the research be repeated. As a qualitative, descriptive phenomenological researcher, at least some of the above concepts seem impossible to 'measure'; it seems to go against what the aim of phenomenology is. Rather than gaining a view of a life-world, you are still trying to quantify it into 'tick-boxes'. That said, I think some are well worth considering throughout the research process. For example, points about gaining a small but quality sample could help you to make best use of your time with participants or thinking about whether the fundamental structure might be relatable to other, similar life-worlds could help to generate ideas for future research.

Interestingly, Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) argue for a radically different way of evaluating the adequacy of qualitative research, stating that it is required in order to take qualitative methods in psychology seriously. Although they suggest that there is no way of guaranteeing accuracy in qualitative methods, there are a number of methods that can be employed by the researcher to improve the overall evaluation. These include steps such as ensuring the theoretical findings

are congruent with, and grounded from, the data throughout the levels of analysis (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992). This can be seen in the current study: the emergent themes are grounded in the transcripts, and this can be verified at each level of data analysis. Furthermore, Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) suggest that being reflexive, and keeping a written record of this, is helpful when evaluating qualitative research, and is another criterion that I adhered to throughout the research process. One other criterion suggested by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992) relates to validating the findings by ensuring they are recognisable to the participants that provided the data. This links with the final stage of Colaizzi's (1978) analysis process that I completed, further adding to the adequacy of my research, according to Henwood and Pidgeon's (1992) criteria for assessing the adequacy of qualitative research.

Chapter 4: Findings

In line with Colaizzi's (1978) analysis process, the first three stages were followed; reading the transcripts through, extracting significant statements and formulating meanings from such. Significant statements are extracts from the transcripts that relate to the topic under study; why people go camping. After the meanings were formulated from these statements, the statements were clustered into groups that related to similar ideas, which became the basis of the five themes. This took a considerable amount of time, ensuring each theme title encompassed all of the statements, and resulted in the five presented themes: 'Getting away', 'relationship maintenance', 'tranquillity and relaxation', 'appreciation of the natural environment' and 'freedom and adventure/exploration'.

4.1: Getting Away

'Getting Away' was the most common theme of the five, with twenty five related significant statements and formulated meanings. In keeping with the phenomenological approach to this study, it is important to note that whilst the theme is produced from all of the transcripts, the four individuals conceptualise 'getting away' in different ways.

For Nicola, it was about 'getting away from all the distractions of modern life'. She used camping as an opportunity to 'get away without the stresses and without the worries that we'd had for the last few months'. Nicola described her home environment as quite a stressful place to be at the time, noting how 'the credit crunch was just biting and we were in a bad place financially' and it seemed that she, and her partner, were looking for an escape from this on a budget, which led them to camping. Having usually stayed in bed and breakfasts or hotels, Nicola was not necessarily an experienced camper, but states how her partner was 'at one with outside' which gave her some comfort. She also describes how camping gave her 'the proper sense of being away'; providing the required escape from home. Nicola also found that the escape camping provided allowed her to spend quality time with her partner 'that we weren't getting at home at the time'.

Nicola appreciates the mental and physical escape that camping provides, which is something

Catherine can also relate to. She too likes to 'get away from it all round here' and says 'it's nice to get away from gadgets'. Catherine's ideas around getting away also involve the quality time with her partner that she gets, saying that 'I think it's too easy if you're somewhere else to escape each other…walk away…or be distracted by the tv'. Catherine works as an administrative assistant and finds that she especially appreciates camping for the escape from work. She says 'I work in an office, so I spend every day staring at a computer, cooked up'. Escaping her computer at work in the office may compliment the escape from gadgets at home. Catherine finds that she appreciates being away from this usual environment and especially outdoors, saying 'it was just so nice to be outside', however is eager to distinguish that being away in the countryside is different; walking round town 'which is a busy, bustling place with shops and everything' isn't the same for her, and does not have the same effect.

Lydia on the other hand likes the 'getting away' element in a different way. She feels that when she is at home, or on other kinds of holidays, she doesn't relax properly or leave things, because 'there's always something to occupy you, whether it's the telly, your phone or your work, you rarely just stop and leave stuff'. She says that she likes how camping 'forces you' to leave things. For Lydia, getting away and relaxation go hand-in-hand, and she finds that without the escape from the everyday it's difficult to 'chill out properly'. Lydia notes how a change of scenery and the opportunity to escape reminders of home can help to de-stress too; she went camping with friends after one of the group lost her mother to a brain aneurism. The purpose of the trip was to get away from the painful memories and reminders, to 'take her mind off things', which wouldn't have been so easily done at home.

Jane saw 'getting away' as important to getting her relationship back on track. She felt that the home environment was adding to her partner's stress, which in turn 'brought down the whole him and me thing'. Getting away from the everyday allowed Jane and her partner the 'together time' that they were not getting at home to become close again. Jane's partner found his job particularly stressful, so getting away from work for a while could allow him to relax, which the environment could assist with- although Jane did not blame her partner, or his stress, stating that 'we both need a holiday'. Jane felt that by getting away from the usual environment and

enjoying a holiday together might help to get the relationship back on track, which seemed to be a focus of the trip. It did not matter to Jane that they were still close to home; to get away from the normal surroundings was enough.

I think the theme 'getting away' is a link to the concepts of escapism discussed in the introduction. In the discussion chapter, ideas around escapism as provided by the natural environment and camping will be explored in more detail.

4.2: Appreciation of the Natural Environment

The second identified theme involved the participants' appreciation of the natural environment that they encountered whilst camping. Nineteen significant statements and formulated meanings contributed to this theme overall, and for this theme, although there were subtle differences, each participant tended to enjoy similar things about the environment.

Nicola enjoys the natural environment both at home in her local area as well as whilst away on camping holidays. She enjoys the beauty and the simplicity of nature, stating 'You'd just be walking along, and the scenery is beautiful…it's just quiet and tranquil and all you can hear are your own footsteps and the river trickling away next to you'. For Nicola, it is not just about appreciating the environment whilst on holiday. She also states how she and her partner do quite a lot of walking at home because 'it's nice to get out and about in our local area' and enjoy 'walks from my childhood'. Nicola enjoys the peacefulness of being outside in natural settings, and gains feelings of positivity from being outdoors. She found, after her camping experience, that she was 'yearning to be outside more and more' and felt that it had 'a positive effect on me'. She distinguishes between being outside in a natural environment and in a setting such as a city, stating that 'I like the peacefulness of being outside- in nice places'. To Nicola, the pleasure of spending time in nature relies on the environment being pleasant; not necessarily familiar, although she enjoys reliving her childhood walks, but the tranquillity of the surroundings and beauty of the natural scenery is an important part of her appreciation of such.

For Catherine, the appreciation of the natural environment also takes place both at home and

on camping holidays. She identifies the psychological effect being outside has on her, saying 'When I go for a walk, I just- when I get back, I feel happier' and is also keen to note that this can take place in the local environment too; 'I kept saying how beautiful it was…You just don't think you get that where you live'. For Catherine, the freedom and space that comes with the natural environment is a positive aspect, she says 'There's nobody else most of the time and you've got your own space and you can shout if you want to and nobody is over-hearing you'. This is an important part of the experience for Catherine, as she previously described how people camping too close to her making noise spoilt a particular camping experience. Catherine also appreciates the fresh air that comes with spending time outside, stating 'fresh air is probably the biggest draw'. As she works in an office environment, it means Catherine often cannot spend time outdoors and often feels 'cooked up'. This encourages her to appreciate the time that she does get to spend outdoors in natural environments; a contrast to her everyday office.

For Jane, the prospect of being outside in nature 'was kind of a bit more exciting than spending a night in a hotel'. It was an alternative experience that offered the chance to explore an exciting outdoor world and new place, instead of the hotel or Bed and Breakfast that she would normally choose. She acknowledges that camping is a different kind of experience altogether, one that allowed her to appreciate the natural world.

Lydia describes the natural environment that she spent time in whilst camping as 'quiet, tranquil, steady and what most people would describe as boring' which puts a slightly negative spin on the account of the experience and the environment, but she goes on to say that 'it was what we needed at the time'. Lydia is happy to accept that the camping experience does not sound wild and exciting, but the quiet and different setting was what mattered to her at the time. Helping her friend to take her mind off the loss of her mother, the girls chose Malham 'because it isn't too far and it's nice scenery' which shows that aspect was an important part of the trip.

4.3: Relationship Maintenance

The third theme, relationship maintenance, was an unexpected finding of the research. It was a

consistent theme with all of the participants despite there being a mixture of friends, new couples and long-term partners. Nineteen related significant statements and formulated meanings contributed to this theme. As each participant's circumstances, and relationships, were different, it's important to clarify the meaning of the experience in terms of their relationships individually. However, it can be stated that all four enjoyed camping in particular for the relationship maintenance opportunity it provided.

An important part of the camping experience for Catherine is spending time with her partner of nine years; she states 'we just go to spend some time together really, it's somewhere we can escape to'. She notices at home that it is all too easy to be distracted by work or television, and this makes it easy to avoid confrontation or the resolution of issues. Whilst away camping or out walking, she has her partner's 'undivided attention' and this allows them to talk properly and sort out any problems. Catherine likes that they have no interruptions to their time together.

For Lydia, on a camping holiday with friends, she states that 'it's always nice to re-affirm your friendships with people by spending some quality time together'. She notes that at home, she can be too busy with work and her friends can be too busy with partners to make time for each other, so when they go away together they can confirm their relationships. Lydia also talks about one member of the camping group and how she 'saw a bit of a different side to her' than when at home, and she 'probably got to know her a bit better' which in turn improved their relationship at home. Although Lydia was camping with friends, this shows that the relationship maintenance properties of camping can be applicable to friendships as well as romantic relationships.

Jane felt her relationship was breaking down prior to the camping trip. She said 'we both needed a weekend away and some together time because we were arguing quite a lot' and describes the holiday as an opportunity to 'chill out really, spend some time together'. Jane saw the camping holiday as an ideal time to reconnect with her partner and the camping trip could help him to de-stress. She felt that the holiday came at a good time, as they were drifting apart. Being able to spend time alone with her partner, away from the home environment, allowed

Jane to feel close to him again and it helped to bring them together. Although the relationship did break down in the end, Jane said that before the camping trip 'we'd never spent a long period of time together without any animosity…It was good timing', which demonstrates that the couple had an enjoyable time whilst camping and it did their relationship good at the time. Jane felt that this could not have been achieved at home, as her partner was becoming withdrawn, but the nature of the camping experience brought him back out of himself and gave them a chance to reconnect.

Nicola found that the camping experience enabled her to spend time with her partner that she did not feel she was achieving at home. She found that by going away camping together they could dedicate more focus to each other and 'reinforce our bond that we had'. Nicola described how they 'needed to get away' to spend time together; an interesting choice of wording with the 'need' rather than 'want', and a phrase that Nicola uses multiple times. This suggests that the couple feel they can reconnect more effectively and on a deeper level whilst away from the home environment, and the stresses that this represented for them at the time. The experience for Nicola and her partner was one of relaxation and restoration; an opportunity for them to forget about what was happening at home and remember what was important to them; each other.   She also comments on how the natural environment facilitates more effective communication; 'it's just us two and we get chance- there's no distractions- you get chance to speak to each other and have a conversation in a calming environment'.

4.4: Tranquility and Relaxation

The fourth theme identified was tranquility and relaxation, which played an important role in each of the camping experiences, apart from Jane's. Jane did not mention the importance of tranquillity or relaxation in relation to her trip with her partner, perhaps because the purpose of the trip was more focussed on the repair of their relationship and excitement of a holiday. Some individuals went away intentionally to seek a tranquil, relaxing experience and for others it was an added extra. Tranquillity and relaxation tended to go hand-in-hand and participants found it difficult to have one without the other. Lydia finds it difficult to relax properly when in alternative environments to the tranquil one camping provides, whilst Catherine finds the

tranquility of such an environment an aid to relaxation. Each individual has different ideas about what tranquility and relaxation involves and what it means to them and their experience.

Nicola appreciates the simplicity of the natural environment, and finds 'the peacefulness of being outside in nice places' an enjoyable part of the experience. She also notes the subtle sounds; 'the river trickling away', 'all you can hear are your own footsteps' as well as the beautiful scenery as creating a tranquil setting. Nicola identifies that this kind of experience cannot be gained from any setting, pointing out that only the peacefulness of being outside in nice places provides this.

For Catherine, relaxation is an important aspect of her camping trips. She too paints a simple picture; 'all you want to do is sit down and chill out…sat there watching the sun set with a beer, all warm in my jacket'. Catherine enjoys the down time around the tent, watching nature's entertainment in the form of the sunset, and although she likes walking when she goes camping, relaxing in a 'tranquil' setting is important to her.

The trip Lydia chose to reflect on for the purpose of the research was very much a relaxing experience in a tranquil setting, although she did draw comparisons with a very different experience- camping at Leeds festival. She noted that she only camps at the Leeds festival as there are no alternatives, and is eager to highlight 'when I go on camping holidays, I like a bit of tranquility and if you can't chill the negatives about camping will get to you'. It seems that for Lydia, there is a camping holiday mind-set that she must embrace in order to gain the benefits from the experience: the ability, and opportunity, to relax is clearly important to her. To Lydia, the relaxing part of camping is important too because she feels she doesn't often relax to the same extent at home. She comments that 'when you're at home you don't chill out properly because there's always something to occupy you'. The tranquil environment, as well as the escape from the everyday, allows Lydia to 'just stop and leave stuff'.

The concept of tranquility is an interesting one, common to all participants but Jane. Nicola and Lydia both use the specific word 'tranquil', and for them it refers to the peaceful setting and the calming environment that they are in. To be in a 'tranquil' environment is an important element of their trip, and although not referred to as a feeling, it appears to relate to feelings of

relaxation. Catherine infers that without a peaceful environment (described by Nicola and Lydia as 'tranquil') she struggles to enter a state of relaxation.

4.5: Freedom and Adventure/Exploration

The fifth theme involves the freedom experienced by the participants, and the urge to explore the surroundings. Although only six significant statements and formulated meanings were identified across the four transcripts, they were too important to the experiences to leave out. The concept of freedom was slightly different for each participant, as were ideas around adventure and exploration, but the common denominator seemed to be that camping brought these feelings out in the individuals under study.

Nicola simply says 'the freedom was amazing' as she reflected on her walking holiday, which she camped along the way. She described it as 'our little adventure that we decided to embark on together'. Nicola's experience was an adventure in itself, and so it was likely that feelings of freedom would present themselves due to the nature of her trip; walking along a path with no specific itinerary. However the adventure she reflects on focuses more on how the experience was a team effort; it was a mission that they could accomplish together and enjoy all along the way. She describes the experience as 'quite an exploration for us, well for me definitely' which alludes to a spiritual journey as well as a physical one. After the experience Nicola found herself viewing the world differently and 'yearning to be outside more and more'.

Lydia's ideas around freedom involved her relationship status; having just broken off a long-term relationship, she described feeling 'quite free in a way' and just going away with her friends felt like a new experience, despite having holidayed with them before. Lydia was beginning a new chapter in her life, starting a new job and enjoying being single and the freedom that this gave her. The camping experience added to this feeling, leaving her positive about the future.

For Catherine, 'part of going camping for me and Bob is we do a walk'. Often, camping trips have a purpose, which involve exploring the surroundings through walking. Catherine states that she enjoys the walks as well as the relaxation side of the trips, and alludes to the idea that

if it weren't for her partner's love of adventure she probably wouldn't embark on such trips. However, she enjoys the experiences, and camping holidays would not be the same without the adventures they have. To Catherine, adventure means activity, and it needs to involve moving. She reflects on challenging walks they have faced together- 'when we went to Bassenthwaite we did Scafell Pyke'- and laughs about her partner's future plans, saying 'he wants me to do the 3 peaks but I'm not!'. Catherine acknowledges that it is her partner that pushes her to do these activities, but the way she laughs and easily gives in shows she enjoys the adventure.

Jane describes her camping trip as 'kind of like a bit of an adventure, and I like that aspect of it'. She likes the idea of camping in the relative unknown and sees it as a positive part of the experience. Having been camping before, Jane could be sure the fundamentals of the experience would be the same, but the exploration of a different place whilst camping appealed to her.

Having explained the five identified themes, the analysis then condenses the themes into an exhaustive description of the phenomenon (below). The purpose of the exhaustive description is to encompass each of the themes and condense the individuals' experiences.

4.6: Exhaustive Description

Camping provides a great escape for friends and couples alike. Participants talked about how it provided an opportunity to really get away- physically from other people, work, home and the day-to-day scene they were accustomed to, as well as mentally; having the ability to 'really chill out' and 'unwind properly' without the distractions of home life in the form of gadgets, televisions and chores. This kind of getaway is unique to camping: it cannot be gained even from other holidays like city breaks and travelling abroad. Camping trips provide an alternative relationship maintenance strategy, for both couples and friends. A commonality among the individuals under study found that being away, mentally and physically, in such a calming environment was the ideal situation to resolve any issues as well as reinforce existing bonds. Spending time together whilst on pleasant camping trips, as well as taking part in other outdoor pursuits, encouraged deeper connections and bonding. Both tranquility and relaxation were important elements of individuals' experiences. Camping often takes place in settings that offer

these features and people found that contributed significantly to the idea of being 'away'. The individuals under study also found that being in the tranquil environment facilitated the relationship maintenance discussed above. Interestingly, the paradoxical presence of both tranquillity and adventure appeared in both Nicola's and Catherine's interviews.

Each individual discussed the appreciation of the natural environment in different ways; for some, it was the beautiful escape from the everyday that it provided, for others, it was the simplicity of nature and the endless countryside. Regardless of reason, the importance of the natural outdoor environment was paramount to the experience. The natural environment that camping so often provides gave individuals the inspiration to explore their surroundings. The freedom provided by the boundless countryside gives a sense of adventure that generally cannot be procured from other types of holidays.

Lastly, the exhaustive description is reduced to a fundamental structure of the phenomenon. Shorter still, this paragraph aims to sum up the essence of the camping experience.

4.7: Fundamental Structure

Camping provides the ideal escape for friends and couples alike. The tranquil and relaxing environment provides the ideal setting for relationship maintenance and reinforcement with friends and partners, whether there are issues to resolve or otherwise. The freedom experienced by individuals encouraged adventure and exploration, which in turn allowed them to appreciate the natural environment.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter I will examine how the current study has addressed the original research aims. I will discuss how the study fits with past theories as introduced in the Background chapter including Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995), the Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984) and Ulrich et al's (1991) suggestions about how contact with nature can lead to more general stress reduction in order to improve health and wellbeing. More specific research and theory will then be discussed in relation to particular thematic findings of my research, including concepts of escapism, leaving the comfort zone and Duck's (1981) topographical model of relationship dissolution. The potential impact of the research on current policy and practice will be outlined, including how health practitioners can utilise the research findings to help the general public improve their health and wellbeing. Suggestions for further research will be made and a reflection on the use of the method, including limitations, will conclude.

The original research aims were as follows:

1. What is the wider lived experience of camping?

2. Does camping improve mental health and wellbeing in non-clinical populations?

3. Does camping provide feelings of escapism?

Having gathered the data and subjected it to a rigorous descriptive phenomenological analysis process (Colaizzi, 1978) the fundamental structure of the lived experience of camping was devised:

"Camping provides the ideal escape for friends and couples alike.
The tranquil and relaxing environment provides the perfect setting for relationship maintenance and reinforcement with friends and partners, whether there are issues to resolve or otherwise. The freedom experienced by individuals encouraged adventure and exploration, which in turn allowed them to appreciate the natural environment"

Firstly, I will outline the relevance of the theory from the Literature Review in relation to the current study findings. This shows how the participants 'appreciated the natural environment'. Following this, the remaining structure will be deconstructed and discussed in relation to other relevant research and theory to allow the reader to engage with the phenomenon under study: camping.

5.1: Theoretical Comparisons: 'To Appreciate the Natural Environment'

In relation to Kaplan's (1989; 1995) Attention Restoration Theory, the research carried out is supportive. As described in the introduction, camping meets the four stipulated criteria required for the restoration of the capacity to direct attention. In the current study, Catherine feels restored and ready to go back to work after her camping trips, having had a break away from the office environment. Nicola felt ready to face the real world again after her escape away, and Lydia's friend was able to go back to the family home with a more relaxed attitude, having got away from the fraught and upsetting environment that she perceived it to be. The concept of camping as a 'retreat' or 'respite' can be explored here; the participants in the current study used camping as a way of getting away, but this was not just to move from one environment to another, it was to restore, and so the type of environment and related activity was crucial to the effect. The possibility that this camping experience prepared them to face the everyday and work again presents itself, but how does camping provide these feelings? It seems that getting away is a requirement; even if the distance on paper is not far, activities must be different to those at home; they must be away from technology or gadgets, and be around simple things that require little in the way of equipment or thought. Walking is a good example of this, or starting a campfire; simple tasks that add to the experience, and encourage restoration. The type of environment is important too, as well as being away, the environment must facilitate restoration by being quiet, tranquil and calm. The idea of camping as a retreat or a respite is a viable one, as the common features of traditional spa retreats are similar to those of camping (Champneys, online). Looking at the location of spas and rehabilitation clinics; they are often in quiet locations, surrounded by greenery and water features to create 'a cocoon of

calm' where optimum restoration can take place (Champneys, online).

Additionally, research carried out by Altounji et al (2012) examined the efficacy of a retreat environment for paediatric haematology oncology nurses. A group discussion identified stress and risk of burnout, due to the difficult nature of the job. Nurses reported suffering from feelings of grief and struggles with moral and ethical dilemmas (Altounji et al, 2012). Nurses were subsequently invited along to a 'retreat', which involved spending time in an off-site location, specifically created to provide a therapeutic environment and allow nurses time to relax and reflect (Altounji et al, 2012). Activities included green exercise, in the form of hiking and walks on the beach, as well as inspirational talks and thank-you letters from former and current patients. Through overall feedback, the retreat was found to be of great value to the nurses (Altounji et al, 2012).

Not only is the restoration of the capacity to direct attention arrived at through camping, but the restoration of other qualities is also evidenced here too. After her camping adventure, Nicola felt ready to face the realities of home again; dealing with the money and job worries that had previously plagued her. Interestingly, she describes how, when the going gets a bit too much at home, she and her partner go away camping or walking, to restore calm once again. After their trip, Nicola felt ready to deal with the real world again, having had a complete escape from it all. For Nicola, going away to escape was part of the purpose of her trip, although it seemed that until that camping holiday, she did not quite realise how much the outdoors, and camping, could help to re-focus her mind and leave her feeling capable of dealing with the world again. She describes how, after that trip in particular, she and her partner yearn to be outside more and more, as if they had only just discovered this benefit.

Kaplan's theory (1995) states that the capacity to concentrate can only be restored when attention is not being consciously focused on a task, or concentration is not taking place. Nature fits so well with Kaplan's theory because it does not often require the direct attention of the individual experiencing it; therefore it allows that individual to concentrate on other things.

For the participants in my research, it meant they could turn their attention to other matters; relaxation, de-stressing and, in all four cases, their partners or friends. This also suggests that activities taking place in the camping environment should not be too demanding; they should not require too much thought and concentration, and with the type of camping holiday my participants engage in, it is unlikely that activities will require so much focus that restoration cannot take place. In contrast, other camping holidays such as organised activity camps or military style boot camps may prevent restoration from taking place; concentration and the completion of tasks may be too demanding of attention to allow it to happen. Also, the appreciation of the environment may be pushed out, with instead the focus being on exercise or 'getting through it'. In these kinds of trips, it may be that the restorative element of the camping experience is lost; and to some extent the appreciation of nature may be lost too, which matters a great deal to the overall experience. I think that the relative unstructured type of trips the current study participants embarked on, along with the exclusion of mentally taxing activities allowed them to experience the restorative element, and a freeing of the mind.

Whilst there is support for Kaplan's theory from this research, elements also support Ulrich's ideas. Ulrich (et al, 1991) focused on restoration through general stress reduction. Camping was repeatedly described by the participants as relaxing and the ideal opportunity to de-stress. This idea of improving health and wellbeing through general stress reduction, and the removal of the focus on the nature of the attention, is in line with Ulrich's proposals. The camping experience has the potential to reduce stress in many ways; the exposure to nature and a calming environment, escape from the everyday and a chance to take a step back from the world and normality to name but a few. When considering the stress-boosting properties of exercise too (Pretty et al, 2005; MIND, 2007), it is evident that camping has essential stress reduction qualities.

Alternatively, the Biophilia hypothesis (Wilson, 1984) theorises that humans have an innate affinity with nature and other species, and so are drawn to the natural environment. This means less effort may be required to adapt to the camping environment than it might to an

alternative city environment. Restoration in a non-threatening natural environment may well be a favoured trait in natural selection, and as such we may be biologically pre-disposed to benefit in these environments.

Grinde and Patil (2009) looked into the effects of spending time in environments devoid of nature, such cities and indoor spaces, with the Biophilia hypothesis in mind. They evaluated fifty studies and concluded that spending time away from green environments acts as a 'discord'. Unlike a mismatch, (an environment that is different to that which we are evolved to inhabit with no consequence) a discord creates a negative impact on health or quality of life (Grinde & Patil, 2009). It is suggested that stress induced by a lack of plants or natural environment may be unconscious, therefore the investment in green spaces in cities and even potted plants in buildings may help to improve this stress and overall quality of life (Grinde & Patil, 2009).

Camping as a form of green exercise clearly provides access to nature, and therefore has the potential to improve health and quality of life. In terms of supporting the Biophilia hypothesis, the current study does in some ways. Participants talked about feeling happier when they spend time outside, and one described her partner as 'very at one with outdoors'. However, as far as camping is concerned at least, there are contradictions too. The enjoyment of camping does not come naturally to all of my participants. With a distinction being made here between camping and spending time outdoors, it is important to discuss which of these may bring about the positive effect. For some participants like Lydia and Nicola, it seems that both camping and outdoors bring about positive feelings; put together, it serves to intensify the enjoyment. For Catherine, it seems that time outdoors brings about feelings of happiness, but she could probably live without camping; she goes to please her partner and for the outdoor time. For Jane, it seems that the time away brought about the positivity of the experience; neither the camping nor the outdoors were really discussed in this capacity, just the escape it happened to provide.

Catherine makes it clear she really only goes camping because her partner enjoys it. That said she does enjoy spending time outside whilst at home, walking in her local area, partially supporting Biophilia. Jane's interview contradicts the Biophilia hypothesis; she explains that she and her partner only really went camping because they needed a holiday and it was cheap, and she does not tend to spend time outside whilst at home either. Jane does not feature in the theme 'appreciation of the natural environment' because that was not why she went camping. The question of agency presents itself here; can camping be an enjoyable, relaxing and restorative experience if the individual themselves have not chosen to go? It seems so; for each of my participants, camping was a second choice for various reasons including money, time and convenience. However, they all enjoyed the camping trips and found them restorative in multiple ways.

The impact of repeated experiences compared to new experiences and the surprises they bring is a point to be discussed here. Repeated experiences have all the benefits of expectations; Catherine enjoys visiting the same campsite that she reflected on in her interview because she knows what to expect and is confident she will enjoy her camping experience as a result of this. Nicola on the other hand had a completely new experience; a walking holiday, staying in different locations each night. Nicola expressed excitement because of this, and it added to the freedom she felt throughout the trip. The new experience encouraged her out of her comfort zone and made the experience all the more memorable. That said, at the end of the trip when the destination had been reached, she enjoyed the familiarity of the final campsite, having stayed there before she knew what would be there and could plan around that. There is something to be said for the new experiences in terms of excitement, freedom and adventure; however the comfort and safety that repeated experience provides can also be just as enjoyable. The impact of repeated experiences on restoration could be more positive than that of new experiences; since you know what to expect, there would be less worry or anxiety about whether the experience would be enjoyable or not.

5.2: Camping: A Tool to Improve Mental Health and Wellbeing?

The findings of the current study have shown that camping, and being outdoors, can serve to alleviate stress. As discussed by MIND in their Ecotherapy report (2007) green exercise has already also been shown to help alleviate symptoms of mental health issues. Ninety four per cent of those under study reported improvements to their mental health after completing green exercise activities, which included walking, gardening and cycling. The current study has added to this literature, and provided another potential green exercise tool, as it shows positive feelings of health and wellbeing can be gained from camping. Camping is more likely to be seen as a tool to encourage green exercise as opposed to a form of green exercise in itself. Often when people go camping, outdoor activities will form a part of the trip, showing camping as an enabler. To argue that camping is green exercise in itself would be a difficult debate, as the act of putting up tents and sleeping in them is hardly 'exercise', although perhaps this could be the case for novice campers. Ultimately, it would depend on how the individual defined 'camping' and 'exercise'. For example, Catherine's idea of camping almost always involves a walk or a challenge, whereas Jane's idea of camping revolved around a holiday, an escape. Therefore, Catherine's style of camping could probably be called 'green exercise' but Jane's possibly could not.

5.2.1: Camping and Green Care

The concept of green care in the UK is starting to emerge, with the use of care farms and therapeutic horticulture becoming more and more accessible. Green care involves health promotion, education and social rehabilitation and in the UK, methods tend to follow horticultural therapy strategies (Haubenhofer, 2010). This involves a structured care and therapy plan, and uses plants and the natural environment in its delivery.

Camping in relation to green care could be an interesting idea to explore through further research in the future, although it could be difficult to meet the specific requirements of each

camper, and the ratio of campers and co-ordinators would need to be revised. That said, the beneficial effects of camping could be used with more general clinical populations, such as children with behavioural issues, and activities targeting more general skills, such as communication or leadership. Therapeutic horticulture has often been linked to ideas around escapism (King, 2012), which will be considered in more detail below.

5.3: Re-Defining Escapism: 'Camping Provides the Ideal Escape'

Escapism as a concept was briefly mentioned in the introduction (BlueLight, 2002; Pretty et al 2002, cited in MIND 2007; Vickers, 2013) but with the emergence of the theme 'getting away' in the analysis; it is appropriate and necessary to discuss this in more depth. What is it about camping that can provide escapism as opposed to other types of holiday? Clearly, in most cases holidays in general will provide escapism to an extent; being away from home and all that it represents, however for camping holidays it certainly seemed to be a dominant theme. In the current study, it seemed escapism arose from a break from home, and in particular the intrusive technology often encountered in everyday life. The meaning of escapism to each participant will help to further deconstruct the overall meaning of escapism as related to camping.

The participants under study all discussed how when they went camping, they got away or escaped something- for Nicola, it was the stress and worry she was experiencing at home at the time, for Catherine the pressures of work and spending long hours in the office. Lydia went away with friends, one of whom was trying to get away from the painful memories the home environment represented having lost her mother, and Jane wanted to get away with her partner to repair their relationship. It is clear that escapism was important to all of the participants in qualitatively different ways; for some it was about getting away physically, for others it was an emotional break and even a combination of the two. Having said this, participants did not state that getting away from such things was necessarily the driver of the trip- it was more of a happy coincidence. For Nicola, she consciously needed a break from home

and what she got was a break from reality. It was revealed in Catherine's interview that she felt her partner was the driving force behind their camping trips, but as we discussed more and more, it became evident that she appreciated the getaway from work that it provided for her too.

The question remains; what is escapism? And how can it relate to 'getting away'? What is it in relation to the explained phenomena, camping? Can it be truly defined by me as the researcher, and imposed on the participants to the same effect? With so many descriptions, definitions and ideas of the same term, it seems appropriate to discuss a few different ones to get a proper sense of what it could mean to my participants.

The Oxford English Dictionary provides the following definition:

Escapism: the tendency to seek distraction and relief from unpleasant realities, especially by seeking entertainment or engaging in fantasy (Oxford Dictionaries.com, accessed 07/09/13).

This description is relatable to the participants involved in my research; all were escaping something perceived as unpleasant in their everyday lives at that time. That is to say, that Nicola may not always have financial worries and Catherine may not always need to get away from work; but at the time of the camping trip, each participant had got to the point where they needed a break. Some sought entertainment whilst away, and there is an element of fantasy in some of the descriptions, but this definition is not all encompassing of the phenomena and the kind of escapism camping specifically provides.

The Oxford English Dictionary definition seems a more appropriate definition for the types of escapism one finds often discussed online, relating to many different ideas- from drug use, sex addiction and alcoholism to online gaming, competing and green exercise (Vickers, 2013; Zychik, 2012; Pretty et al 2005). Firstly, the online gaming community seems to provide an endless source of escapism for its players. An online forum presents preliminary PhD research findings into the experiences surrounding escapism and online gaming, reporting that escapism

is conceptualised as 'a break from reality', 'therapeutic', 'everywhere' and 'an enabler' amongst others (The Syndicate, online). For sex addicts, escapism is viewed differently; one person described being 'lost in my escapism' and describes using alcohol, prescription medication and sex to 'escape my life' (Zychik, 2012). Clearly there is a world of difference between the concept for a sex addict and an online gamer; with further differences too between the online gamer and the camper. By putting each of these experiences in a discussion of escapism together, there is an acknowledgement of a connection; all are leisure activities and are seen as such by those participating in them.

Escapism in the current study comes primarily from the 'getting away' perspective, but also the theme entitled 'Freedom and Adventure/Exploration' brought about feelings of escapism too. For Catherine, the point of going camping was to engage in some sort of activity like a challenging walk or kayaking, and to spend time with her partner. The contrast of the adventures she had whilst camping to the usual office environment provided the escapism for her. Similarly, for Nicola, the experience of the walk and the freedom it provided for her was so different to the rigidity of her home life, it was an ideal escape.

The nature of the environment appeared to be vitally important to the participants' experiences of escapism in their accounts of their camping trips. Surroundings need to be tranquil, peaceful, quiet, green, beautiful, serene and calm, irrespective of what activities were to be done. The tent and its immediate surroundings were the source of the retreat. Without at least some of these features, escapism cannot be fully experienced. The surroundings cannot just be different from home; they have to set the scene.

Taking into account how escapism has been defined before (BlueLight, 2002; Vickers, 2013), and how escapism is explored by my participants, I think a fair definition for escapism brought about by green exercise, and camping specifically, would be: the inclination to get away from the usual reality; be it physically, mentally, or relationally, or a combination, to a pleasant, natural environment.

Clearly, these feelings of escapism will be brought about only by certain types of camping. Many factors will influence whether the experience brings about feelings of escapism, including the intensity of the connection to nature, the individual themselves and their current health and wellbeing. Camping in quiet, natural settings is a completely different experience to camping, say, at a festival. Lydia describes this contrast in her interview, and it is an important factor in considering the essence of the camping experiences reported by the current study sample. There are also differences within more 'standard' camping holidays; wilderness camping compared to children's activity camps are almost opposite ends of the spectrum, certainly in terms of the question of agency. If parents have volunteered their children to go away to camp, it takes away the choice of the child. With wilderness camping, the individual can walk where they want to, stay where they want to, and participate in activities only if they want to. This freedom of choice could contribute to the level of escapism experienced, because the freedom in itself helps with escapism. It could be that escapism is experienced more fully on wilderness camping trips. However, those children attending summer camps away from home may experience escapism and ultimate freedom, being away from parents and the family home for a period of time. It is possible that the concept of freedom, and impact it may have on escapism, is all relative to the person experiencing it, and their personal lived experience.

5.4: The Importance of Relaxation and Tranquility 'The Tranquil and Relaxing Environment'

A vital part for all of the themes, the importance of tranquillity and relaxation on the camping trips reflected on by my participants cannot be under-estimated. It was an important part in the choice of where to go on a camping trip, and often the two concepts, though distinct, go hand in hand and can depend on each other. Without tranquillity, relaxation can be difficult to achieve.

Tranquillity and relaxation offer the backdrop for a 'retreat' or respite that camping can provide, as discussed in chapter 5.1. Without these components, participants would not have

the environment that fosters relationship maintenance, feelings of escapism will not present as they would not be 'getting away' from the usual urban scene, and appreciation of the environment would not take place. This shows the importance of these elements on the overall experience. Lydia noted the importance of tranquillity throughout her interview, in relation to her feelings of escapism and having a calming environment to catch up with her friends. She drew comparisons with the Leeds festival she attended, specifying that it was not the same experience, and camping was not as it should be at whilst there, as these features lacked. Catherine requires tranquillity and relaxation whilst away, in order for the restoration process to take place, and Nicola's experience hinged upon the tranquillity of the environment. When reflecting on her favourite part of the experience it involved feelings of relaxation in the tranquil environment whilst walking along the riverside.

Relaxation techniques are linked with the improvement of many physical and mental health issues such as asthma, pain, anxiety and depression (NCCAM, 2013) and although camping is not necessarily considered a relaxation technique, the participants I interviewed reported feelings of relaxation whilst on their camping trips.

5.5: Strengthening Relationships 'The Perfect Setting for Relationship Maintenance'

The idea that camping could be used as a relationship maintenance strategy was an unexpected and important finding. Common amongst all participants, regardless of the relationship with the camping companion, this interesting and unique finding is a valid contribution to knowledge. Looking at Duck's (1981) theory of relationship dissolution, he proposes that there are four models of dissolution: pre-existing doom, mechanical failure, process loss and sudden death (Duck, 1981). Mechanical failure and process loss cite poor communication from one or both members of the relationship as possible causes of relationship dissolution; therefore communication is clearly an important factor.

The reason camping may work as a relationship maintenance and repair strategy could be that

communication is often at the heart of the trip. Few distractions mean that campers actually talk and 'have a proper conversation' as Nicola stated. A combination of unstructured days, a calming environment and activities that often promote talking (such as walking, fishing, kayaking) encourage communication all day long. Even non-activity based camping trips provide opportunities for conversation, just sitting round the campfire at night.

So often individuals do not realise that the communication they engage in at home is surface; it tides you over from one day to the next. You might discuss dinner, your work day or current affairs. Whilst away camping, conversations can occur on a deeper level, because there's nothing to stop you from chatting- no favourite television programme to watch or work to go to. This holds the key to relationship maintenance for my participants.

There is a link here to ideas of temporality in that whilst away camping, there are distinct differences in feelings of time; at home, the participants seemed to feel too busy to engage in deeper interactions with their friends or partners, instead waiting until they had chance to do so whilst away.

Romantically speaking, each participant was at different stages in their relationship and the maintenance and repair meant different things. Catherine did not have any issues to resolve with her partner before they went camping, but they find when they go that they can prevent any issues from forming, by enjoying positive interactions and communicating with each other. According to Duck (1981) this is a vital part of preventing relationship dissolution through mechanical failure. Negative interactions and poor lines of communication eventually lead to relationship dissolution through mechanical failure (Duck, 1981). Alternatively, when communication is poor, or input is one-sided, relationships may not reach their full potential. This was termed process loss by Duck (1981).

Jane felt the opposite to Catherine when she went on her camping trip, knowing that her relationship was in trouble and something needed to be done. She explained that interactions they had at home were negative and that her partner was withdrawing by spending time alone

and not talking to her. By going away together she hoped that this would change, and fortunately it did. They enjoyed the time that they spent together whilst camping and maintained a happy relationship for some time after the trip. By having no demands on their time from work or friends, and having the space they needed to explore their issues, they could work through them together.

Having said that camping can help with relationships breakdown due to mechanical failure and process loss, it could also be argued that camping can help with the pre-existing doom model. Duck (1981) proposes that some relationships break down due to a badly matched couple. Although camping cannot change people, and make them a better match, the opportunity it provides for really getting to know somebody in a short space of time would highlight these compatibility flaws and bring the relationship to an end more quickly perhaps than if in the usual surroundings. This would leave each person free to move on and find somebody more suitable.

Ultimately, keeping good lines of communication open and participating in pleasant interactions with each other are an important part of preventing relationship dissolution (Duck, 1981) and camping has been shown in the current study that it can facilitate both of these, thus presenting a viable relationship maintenance strategy.

5.6: Pushing Limits and Leaving the Comfort Zone: 'Freedom, Adventure and Exploration'

Going out of your comfort zone has long been anecdotally linked with improving self-esteem, which has a positive impact on feelings of wellbeing (Robbins, 2013; Esteem News, 2013). For Nicola, the experience she reflected on was one where she really pushed her limits, challenged her capabilities and went beyond anything she had done before, but by coming out on top and succeeding, she felt exhilarated and proud. The experience showed her a different side to herself, and improved confidence and self-esteem through achievement. This raises a complex

issue; for some, camping was enjoyable and improved feelings of health and wellbeing through restoration; the opportunity to relax, escape from home and enjoy nature. The experience allows the individual time to ponder, think and de-stress. However, for others, the experience allowed them to enjoy some of these factors- getting away from the everyday- but push out of the comfort zone too. This may not be seen as traditionally 'relaxing'. That said, pushing limits does not necessarily mean through extreme physical or mental exertion; it can relate to the individual simply doing something out of the ordinary. This does not have to cause stress or worry, often quite the opposite, and can help with the overall feelings of wellbeing afterwards. Also, achievement has been brought in to the debate. Nicola experienced a great sense of achievement after her camping and walking holiday, a feeling that added to her overall positive reflection of the trip, and added to her improved feelings of wellbeing. A sense of achievement in doing something you previously thought very difficult, or even not possible, was reported as a factor in improved self-esteem, which contributed to overall improved wellbeing, for MIND service-users taking part in a green exercise study (MIND, 2007). This raises the question as to whether greater improvement in self-esteem may be achieved through more 'structured' camping holiday; where goals are set and can be celebrated when they are achieved. This is almost contradictory of the 'tranquillity' and 'being away' elements, as it sets a target that you may feel under pressure to meet- deducting from the relaxing experience- and reminiscent of work or personal targets at home.

Catherine's camping trips tend to follow a similar structure; the camping is the accommodation rather than the sole purpose of the trip. When she goes with her partner, they take on a new challenge, and as she completes each one Catherine's confidence in her 'outdoor self' grows, impacting on her 'home self'. Combined with the feelings of happiness she has from spending time with her partner, enjoying the outdoors and being away from work, this completes the picture for Catherine; there are two different 'beings' dependent on environment.

Issues relative to temporality can be identified in Catherine's experience in particular too. As she completes the challenges set on her camping trips, and her confidence in the 'outdoor self'

grows, this positively impacts upon her 'home self'; this confidence grows too, and her thoughts about her future being change. She gains clearer understanding of her capabilities through challenging them and this allows her concept of her existence to evolve. In the present, she understands what she achieves- by looking at her past, she sees improvement, leaving her with expectations of the future. Her perception of herself changes, and her lived time alters; whilst away, everything slows down. In Husserlian phenomenology, there are three levels of temporality, the first is the world time; the time on the clock face or the day on the calendar. For Catherine, she understands the length of time she is away for (a weekend) but the second level, her internal time, cannot be measured by clocks, it is her internal world. The third is the awareness of this internal time, the 'living present' (Koza, online). This allows Catherine the opportunity to savour the time away and take things at a slower pace, making it feel like longer (Koza, online). It seems that the camping experience seems to slow time down for each of the participants in the current study; for Jane, it gave her time to discuss issues with her partner that they did not feel they had time to do at home. For Catherine, the usual fast-pace of her work/home life slowed, enabling her some much-needed respite and relaxation time. The change of environment and going away changes the perception of time for the participants, and there are many potential reasons. Being away from responsibilities in the home and workplace, away from deadlines, out of the usual routines and being 'on holiday' could all contribute.

5.7: Practice Recommendations

Now that the findings have been reviewed, and the links with appropriate models and theories have been made, it is necessary to outline the impact of the research and contribution to knowledge it makes.

Camping as a source of positive escapism is an important contribution to knowledge because positive experiences need to be capitalised on. This may help to reduce the number of people seeking escapism turning to negative sources instead. Some individuals seeking escapism that

are already involved in negative outlets such as drug use or excessive alcohol consumption look for alternative sources, but turn back to the drink and drugs when they cannot find their escape (BlueLight, online). To have an available source of escapism promoted to populations seeking escapism could help them break the cycles they are trapped in.

Camping is already available to children with physical and mental health issues, as well as those with learning difficulties or specific needs, so the benefits of it are only just beginning to emerge empirically; this provision for clinical samples does not appear to be based on a wealth of academic evidence. Furthermore, the camps provided for the clinical populations work to a structure; they have an itinerary of planned activities- it could be argued that this is a positive aspect as activities are carefully chosen and designed for specific purposes such as learning social skills, improving self- confidence and improving fitness (Barracudas, 2010; The Camp Experts UK, 2011). This makes a difference in multiple ways; activities are organised rather than individuals as a 'free spirit' and also the question of agency remains- who has chosen to attend camp, the parent/carer or the child? How might this affect the experience for the children? And how might this have impacted on the findings from current research? Since this research is what many clinical assumptions and provisions are based on. The impact of my research is that camping has shown to have a positive influence on the wellbeing of non-clinical populations too, which could allow camping to become available to more and more people in the UK. Currently, the provision of camping services is limited, so any research demonstrating a positive effect could assist in making services available to all.

This leads on to the idea of camping being used as a respite or retreat for individuals. In the current study, Lydia's friend had suffered a bereavement and was using the trip as a retreat; away from the family home that held painful memories, giving her a chance to get her head together to go back and face it. Similarly, Catherine was taking a respite from work and Nicola from money and employment worries. The current study has shown the impact camping can have on those seeking a much-needed retreat, or just a little respite, from everyday troubles.

The possibility of camping as a prescribed respite is an interesting idea to explore; its uses for the bereaved already highlighted in the current study. It could also be used for people suffering illness from stress, since nature has been linked with stress reduction (Ulrich et al, 1991; Ulrich 1984). The idea that camping could help people who are in a time of need, but not a time of clinically diagnosed mental ill-health is viable; the escapism camping has shown to provide can provide the respite some people may need. Camping for non-clinical population adults has demonstrated a positive effect, but the grey area between clinical and non-clinical populations lacks research. Furthermore, populations at risk of developing physical health issues could benefit from the 'exercise' part of camping, leading to improved physical health. This relates to 'prescription camping' and instead of providing a respite or retreat for those at risk of mental ill-health, it could provide a kick-start to improving physical health, even more so if it was an activity-style camp.

5.8: Opportunities for Further Research

Due to the sample size of the current study, I think it would be helpful to conduct further research on a larger sample to research escapism further. This would allow the concept of escapism whilst camping to be studied in more detail, and also have the possibility of illuminating other, unexpected findings like the current study did with relationships. I feel escapism is important to research because of the potential impact it can have on other areas of wellbeing; how it can help restore attention, reduce stress and provide a break for those in need. Further research into this aspect of camping could impact upon many different populations; from those looking for a break from work or relationship troubles, to those looking for alternatives to their addictions. Research similar to the current study but carried out on a larger and more varied population in terms of age, sex and current health and wellbeing status could provide evidence to take the 'escapism by camping' concept to a further, even clinical, level.

Further research is required to investigate the use of camping in relationship maintenance. It

would be interesting to see if the finding presented itself in a larger sample, and also looking into different types of relationships, particularly that between a parent and child. I would research using participants who have been on family-orientated holidays; parents with children of varying ages could be recruited to see how they felt about the relationships they had with their parent/child on their return. This could provide a good opportunity to investigate the complex relationships between parent and child at different ages.

'The Kids with No Memory' (online) was a documentary following several children and young people who had suffered memory loss. Struggling to cope with the loneliness they felt due to the rarity of their circumstances, a camp was set up for them to meet others in similar situations from around the UK. Parents were invited along too, and the weekend was spent doing outdoor activities including horse-riding, nature walks and a falconry experience. Parents that attended camp with their children reported a better relationship with their child as they were able to communicate with them more effectively. This meant that they could understand their needs and capabilities more; a lesson that they could take home with them. This was a great opportunity for the children to understand that they were not alone in their suffering, meeting people with similar disabilities and being able to keep in touch with them via social media. Also, it allowed the parents the opportunity to meet other parents with children with such complex needs. The social support it provided worked in several ways; improving the quality of life of the children, their parents and improving their relationship with each other at home.

Research investigating unstructured camping trips for service-users is lacking, and could provide a valuable insight into the benefits and limitations of 'structured activities' versus a more 'free-spirit' approach. Undoubtedly, activities organised for clinical populations attending camp are specifically tailored to the needs of the campers attending (Camp Experts, online; Bekesi, 2011) however if camps were unstructured and a phenomenological research design similar to the one used in the current study were adopted, the findings could be surprising.

An important point to consider for future research is the impact of agency on the overall experience, the feelings of escapism, and how agency may affect not only the fundamental structure of the experience, but the overall impact on wellbeing. This would be interesting to research as it could influence many of the research ideas raised above; for example researching parent/child relationships- if the child has not chosen to go camping, how might this impact upon any potential bonding that could take place? It may make it less likely to occur. The impact of escapism, and implications of freedom of choice, may be different if your activities and itinerary is finalised and you have little choice in it, like at a children's activity camp. That said, activity camps are increasing in popularity amongst children; perhaps for alternative reasons to the quest for escapism- new skills, new friends and the escape from home and boredom in the holidays; perhaps this is how escapism is defined for children attending such camps.

5.9: Wider Implications for Policy

In terms of more general public health initiatives, the findings from the current study relate to the capacity of being outdoors and away, and the subsequent impact of this on wellbeing. The positive impact relates to physical, emotional and relational aspects of wellbeing; a holistic approach not yet recognised by current theory; Kaplan focuses on attention restoration, Ulrich on stress reduction. This research highlights the need for examining the bigger picture. How can green exercise help on a wider basis; all aspects of individuals' lives, rather than just focusing in on the smaller parts like effect on mental health symptoms or physical health improvements.

The role of health promotion practitioners aiming to promote wellbeing to the general public as well as service users would be vital in ensuring the successful inclusion of nature initiatives as a way to improve feelings of wellbeing. Starting broadly, then narrowing down to specific forms of green exercise could ensure maximum coverage of populations and therefore success. Some service users may wish to go down the route of horticulture, cycling groups or fishing. Camping could be an alternative option for those interested in it. It would be important to channel the

information carefully, to make relevant populations aware of the related findings.

Camping can be used as a retreat or respite which can prepare individuals for going back to the everyday; work, home and normal life. This has implications surrounding camping being 'prescribed' by health professionals to those in need of stress-reduction, relaxation, restoration, couples therapy, improved self-esteem and more. As a general public health initiative, it can implicate many populations. For example, in terms of general stress reduction, camping has been shown as a useful tool for aspects of this. The calm environment and relaxation element that so often goes with camping can assist with a range of physical and emotional health issues caused by stress, such as headaches, insomnia, depression and low self-esteem.

5.10: Reflecting on the Method

In consideration of the depth of findings achieved and the contribution to knowledge, I think the method and methodology I chose to use were the most suitable for carrying out the current study. Individual interviews allowed participants to explain and describe their experiences without anybody else interrupting or influencing what they might choose to focus on. This was my main concern with using focus groups. I think that when describing something that is personal to you, you may be more likely to hold things back for fear of judgement by others in a focus group setting. Questionnaires could have been an option, but I feel that the qualitative approach is lost, and questions can be difficult to word. In this instance, I think people participating would have gone down other routes; getting distracted with irrelevant details or writing too little; the data may not have been rich and my choice of analysis would have to be revised. The interview method gave me the richness in data that I needed to employ Colaizzi's (1978) process of analysis and as the participants were alone, I felt gave a true account of their experience. However, interviews are arguably very time consuming and involved; there is lots of preparation prior to the interview including arranging a mutually convenient time and place for the interview, preparing the interview guide and reviewing it as well as devising suitable, non-leading prompts and probes. Then there is the physical interview itself, followed by the

lengthy transcription process. That said, I think the flaws of the other methods would affect the findings too greatly, and so interviews were the only real option for the current study.

Colaizzi's analysis process is a lesser used model for data analysis, and has been subject to criticism from Giorgi (2006) who felt that the second stage, where significant statements are identified, excludes too much of the data. The significant statements are extracted, and then taken forward in the process, leaving the remaining parts of the transcripts behind; Giorgi (2006) felt that it does not encompass the whole experience like his method. For me, this was an interesting debate, due to the phenomenological research stance I was taking. Although I wanted to understand the phenomenon in its entirety, I found it helpful to be able to leave the irrelevant parts of the transcript behind. I felt I did not take this step lightly; I wanted to make sure that I did not leave anything behind that was important to the participants' experience, and reviewed my significant statements several times. Giorgi (2006) also criticised Colaizzi's third stage, where meanings are formulated, as Colaizzi does not make clear how this is done, or how strictly Colaizzi's method adheres to Husserlian phenomenological approaches. If formulated meanings deviate from the data Giorgi argued Colaizzi could be deviating from the Husserlian school. Finally, Giorgi disagreed with Colaizzi's seventh stage, where the analyses are returned to participants for a final validation process. As previously discussed in the method section, Giorgi felt that participants were not always the best judge of their analysed experience, as the analysis is done with the removal of the 'natural attitude' through bracketing. Without training, participants would be viewing the analysis with the natural attitude intact and therefore it would be looking at it from different phenomenological stances. As Colaizzi's method was an elaborate, detailed process, I felt it was ideal and made best use of the transcripts. I could leave parts of the transcripts that were irrelevant to the phenomena and experience, and discover themes running throughout the experiences. There are stages for validation from external sources throughout, which was helpful and I made use of by discussing my themes and fundamental structure with my supervisors. It was good to hear feedback from my participants too, and from their feedback I felt I had done a fair job in analysing their experiences. Colaizzi's process was time consuming, as it is so thorough, and I struggled

somewhat with identifying the significant statements and formulating the meanings, worrying that I had left something out or over-interpreted the data. I found that by going through the transcripts a few times and re-evaluating my formulated meanings, the end result was accurate and fair; which was corroborated by my participants.

Although my research sample size could be considered small, the level of detail attained from the interviews and subsequent analysis was ample. Further interviews would have been surplus to requirements as data saturation had been reached. This could be because each participant went on relatively similar camping trips.

5.11: Chapter Summary

Throughout this chapter I have demonstrated how the current study has answered wider research aims and outlined how the study has contributed to knowledge. Discussion has been had around the concept of escapism and how it is defined, and re-defined in relation to the lived experience camping. I have also demonstrated how the current study has contributed to existing theory, including Attention Restoration Theory, Biophilia hypothesis and Ulrich's general stress reduction model (1991). I have suggested how each theory does not necessarily give credit to the all-encompassing experience of camping; rather each contributes to specific parts of the experience. Proposals for further research have been made, and I have reflected on my use of the method. In the next chapter, I will summarise the full research project, from beginning to close, and sum up where, or to whom, this research may be useful.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise the research process from beginning to close, including the research strategy, findings and contribution to knowledge. This will include who the research may impact upon, who it could be useful to and how the research question has been answered.

In chapter one, I outlined my interest in the growing concept of 'green exercise', defining it loosely as taking part in exercise outdoors. I also described my thoughts on the perfect camping trip.

Chapter two saw a review of the relevant literature to this thesis. I outlined Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan, 1995), Ulrich et al's (1991) model of stress reduction and Wilson's (1984) Biophilia hypothesis. I discussed research and ideas around green care and green exercise initiatives used by mental health charity MIND (2007) and available camping services. I outlined some of the emerging health promotion strategies that capitalize on green exercise, including the MoreLife campaign (online). I also talked about different ideas of escapism, looking into types of escapism people currently choose to engage in and how this impacted on their health and wellbeing. The rationale for the current study was then put forward.

Chapter three was a description and justification of the chosen method; I explained I was going to use a descriptive phenomenological research design and talked about the Husserlian philosophy. I described the interview method I had chosen to use, and provided participant portraits. A debate on the quality of the current study ensued, and I concluded that my research took steps to meet some aspects of trustworthiness including confirmability and credibility, but others were difficult to measure, namely transferability, without a repetition of the research. I also discussed dependability in relation to the current study, and considered alternative ways of determining adequacy in qualitative research. Finally, I outlined Colaizzi's seven stage process of analysis that I had chosen to use to analyse the data.

In chapter four I presented the findings of my research. I identified five themes in the analysis: getting away, tranquility and relaxation, relationship maintenance, appreciation of the natural environment and freedom and adventure/exploration. I was then able to provide an exhaustive description of the phenomenon, before reducing this down further to a fundamental structure, which was as follows:

Camping provides the ideal escape for friends and couples alike.
The tranquil and relaxing environment provides the ideal setting for relationship maintenance and reinforcement with friends and partners, whether there are issues to resolve or otherwise. The freedom experienced by individuals encouraged adventure and exploration, which in turn allowed them to appreciate the natural environment.

Chapter five provided a thorough discussion of the findings, in relation to the theory and research identified in the literature review. I discussed camping in relation to attention restoration; explaining how camping meets the four criteria as stipulated by Kaplan, and also how each participant felt their ability to concentrate was restored alongside much more; drive for work, patience in relationships and ability to face the world once more. The Biophilia hypothesis was discussed in both a supportive and contradictory capacity; most felt better in one way or another after their camping trips, however not all of my participants necessarily felt a natural affinity with the great outdoors! Camping was perceived by them in different ways; as a holiday, as a couple's retreat, as a catch up with friends- not specifically as a way to spend time outdoors and get back to our ancestral environment. Although camping was looked back on fondly, the participants were keen to give an honest and critical account of their camping experiences- not leaving out any of the nasty bits- however all of them have since, and do still, regularly go camping. The nostalgia involved in reflecting back on the camping trips shows how even the negatives tend to be looked back on with humour, and the fondness with which camping experiences are remembered surpassed the challenges faced; with those successfully overcome transformed into achievements.

Camping was often described as the opportunity to relax and de-stress; the contact with nature and exercise element both contributing to such. This is in support of Ulrich's ideas (1991; 1984). I also discussed camping in relation to escapism, concluding that it could be considered an alternative form of escapism to the more negative alternatives. I also commented on the wider implications of my research, and who could benefit from it, which will be discussed in more detail below. I also made suggestions for future research, including examining parent/child relationships and the impact camping may have on these, and the difference an 'unstructured' camping experience may have on service-users' experience of camping. I commented on the impact these studies could have, and summarised the chapter with a reflection on my use of the method, concluding that it was the most appropriate way of carrying out and analysing the data.

Possibly one of the most important parts of carrying out research to me, after all the important decisions regarding choice of method, participants and analysis have been made, is being clear on who can benefit from it. This way, it can be taken forward; through publishing and review, there is the possibility it can be taken on board and disseminated to the populations who could find it helpful. I have found through carrying out the current study that the versatility of camping, and indeed green exercise, makes it available and beneficial to so many people. In my participants alone, the findings were multi-faceted. It can improve feelings of health and wellbeing in numerous ways: restoration of attention, stress reduction, positive effects of escapism, relationship maintenance, challenging oneself and everything that goes with each of these: happy and successful relationships, focus and drive at work, improved confidence, higher self-esteem and improved physical health. These findings alone could impact on many groups within non-clinical populations, including those coping with bereavement, struggling with relationship problems or suffering from stress at home or work. With more research, as proposed in the discussion chapter, further unique findings may be illuminated, and the promotion of nature initiatives in public healthcare may be revised.

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Appendices

Participant Information Sheet

A Study to Investigate the Lived Experience of Camping: A Green Exercise Approach

Researcher: Miss Rosie Morrow, School of Human and Health Sciences, University of Huddersfield

You have been invited to take part in the above named research project. The research is aiming to explore individuals' experience of camping holidays to see how it affects them personally. Should you choose to take part in the study, you will be invited for an interview to talk about your most recent camping holiday.

It is important that you read this sheet carefully before you decide whether or not to take part. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any queries, or wish to discuss the research further.

The study is concerned with looking at the effects of 'green exercise'; whereby exercise or activities are completed outdoors instead of in. This research is looking at an area of green exercise that has not yet been studied: camping.

You have been selected to take part in the study because of your interest and previous experience in camping. It is important to note that you do not have to take part. I will leave this sheet with you and if you have not contacted me to state your willingness to take part within a week I will assume you are not interested. If you choose to take part and decide at a later date that you want to withdraw, you may at any time without a reason. You may also ask to withdraw your interview after it has taken place, up to the point where I have written my thesis up for submission. You will be asked to sign a consent form before taking part in the research.

The research will involve being interviewed about your most recent camping holiday. You are invited to bring along photos or mementos from the holiday to help demonstrate your experience. It will last approximately one hour, and will be audio-recorded for my reference only. The interviews, transcripts and any other identifying materials will be kept secure, assuring your anonymity, and your name will not be disclosed at any point, maintaining confidentiality.

The information you will provide will be published as part of a Master's thesis, where some of your words may be used, however you will remain anonymous.

Should you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me on: u0970330@unimail.hud.ac.uk. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr Alison Rodriguez, if you have any concerns or queries: a.m.rodriguez@hud.ac.uk.

Thank you!

Rosie Morrow

University of
HUDDERSFIELD
Inspiring tomorrow's professionals

CONSENT FORM

Title of Research Project: A Study to Explore the Lived Experience of Camping: A Green Exercise Approach.

It is important that you read, understand and sign the consent form. Your contribution to this research is entirely voluntary and you are not obliged in any way to participate, if you require any further details please contact your researcher.

I have been fully informed of the nature and aims of this research ☐

I consent to taking part in it ☐

I understand that I have the right to withdraw from the research at any time ☐

without giving any reason

I give permission for my words to be quoted (by use of pseudonym) ☐

I understand that the information collected will be kept in secure conditions ☐

for a period of five years at the University of Huddersfield

I understand that no person other than the researcher/s and facilitator/s will ☐

have access to the information provided.

I understand that my identity will be protected by the use of pseudonym in the ☐

report and that no written information that could lead to my being identified will

be included in any report.

If you are satisfied that you understand the information and are happy to take part in this project please put a tick in the box aligned to each sentence and print and sign below.

Signature of Participant:	Signature of Researcher:
Print:	Print:
Date:	Date:

(one copy to be retained by Participant / one copy to be retained by Researcher)