Adventure experiences during professional training in Psychology

By:
Elri Martins

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Dr. Lourens Human

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE

Welcome to the world of adventure experiences. Our journey begins by going on the adventure of exploring the context in which this research project took place as well as looking at the research question, goals and structure of the journey. Join me for the adventure of exploring the world of experiential learning…

1.1 CONTEXT

In order to orientate the reader as to the context of this research project, I would like to begin this experience by introducing you to the two very different worlds. These worlds, the academic context and the experiential setting, collided to shape the environment in which this research project took place.

Throughout the following pages I will attempt to introduce to you the relevant academic context for this research project. It all started at the Counseling Psychology Master of Arts (MA) Programme of the Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria (UP), located in the city of Pretoria, South Africa

1.1.1 University of Pretoria (UP)

UP is a tertiary academic institution situated in Pretoria, South Africa. Looking at its vision (University of Pretoria [UP], 2007a), UP strives to be an internationally recognised leader in higher education, focusing on quality and excellence. Also, UP aims to be known for local relevance and international competitiveness through continuous innovation. UP strives to be chosen for its research solutions as well as its culture of being inclusive, enabling and value driven, by a variety of individuals. This is aimed at the rich diversity of South African academic talent. UP's final vision is to acknowledge its prominent role in Africa by being a symbol of national inspiration, reconciliation, pride and hope committed to its social responsibilities.

According to their website, the mission of UP is to be an internationally recognised South African teaching and research university and a member of the international community of scholarly institutions that (UP, 2007b):

1. Provides excellent education in a wide spectrum of academic disciplines;
2. Promotes scholarship;
3. Creates flexible, life-long learning opportunities;
4. Encourages academically rigorous and socially meaningful research
5. Enables students to become well-rounded, creative people, responsible, productive citizens and future leaders;
6. Is locally relevant;
7. Creates an intellectually stimulating and culturally vibrant, pleasant and safe environment in which its students and staff can flourish; and
8. Is committed to effective, efficient, caring and innovative approaches to teaching, research and community service, client-centred management and administration, and good governance.

Let us briefly look at UP's Psychology Department, which lies at the heart of this research project.

1.1.2 Department of Psychology

The Department of Psychology is one of the departments, which form the Faculty of Humanities within UP. Extensive academic training is offered there in the form of undergraduate and postgraduate training courses which can be further explored by visiting their website at www.up.ac.za. The focus of the department is on understanding the discipline and developing critical conceptual skills. According to Prof Maria Marchetti-Mercer, the Head of Department; "The purpose of receiving training in psychology is ultimately not only to gain insight into the fascinating field of human behaviour but also to learn how to apply this knowledge to different personal and professional contexts" (UP, 2007c).

Three different MA programs are offered by the Psychology Department of UP. These include: Clinical, Counselling and Research Psychology programs. Students may apply for these courses after finishing a three-year undergraduate degree as well as their honours degree in psychology at an accredited university. They then undergo an intense selection process. The group that is selected for MA counselling psychology carries on to do their degree (MA I) plus a 12-month internship (MA II) (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2002). In order to register with the Professional Board for Psychology, students must then write the Professional Board exam and if passed they will be able to register as psychologists with the Professional Board of Psychology of the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA). For the purpose of this study I will be referring in particular to the MA Counselling Psychology course. (Human, 2006, 2008)

1.1.3 MA Counselling Psychology Program

1. Scientist-Practitioner Model

The MA Counselling Psychology program is a full-time postgraduate training program accredited with the Professional Board of Psychology of the HPCSA. The vision and mission of UP as indicated previously is an important determinant that played a role in the structuring of the program. The training is based on the scientist-practitioner model, which entails that both the researcher (theoretical knowledge in psychology) and practitioner (practical experience, personal identity and ethical stance) component of the student is attended to and developed (Beyers, 1981; Human, 2006, 2008). The program was developed to meet the requirements set forth by the Professional Board of Psychology of the HPCSA (Health Professions Council of South Africa [HPCSA], 2007).

The program is presented over a two-year period and structured in such a way that it consists of three pillars: Academic, Practical and Professional development pillars. These are introduced below.

2. Three Pillars
   a) Academic

The first year of study (MA I) involves full-time theoretical lectures, presented by a variety of academics. Together, these lectures count to 50% of the students' final marks. The other 50% is contributed by the research project and article that must be completed during the two years. During the MA I year the following theoretical subjects are offered (these are divided into core and elective subjects):

SLK 801

Fundamentals of Psychology (core), consisting of Neuro-Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Psychopathology and Professional Practice Courses.

SLK 806

Psychological Assessment (core), consisting of Basic Interviewing Skills and Psychological Assessment Techniques courses.

SLK 802

Counselling Psychology (core), consisting of Cognitive-Behaviour Thinking and Practice, Systemic Thinking and Practice and Narrative Thinking and Practice courses.

SLK 804

Community Psychology (elective), consisting of Principles of Psycho Educational Program Development, Principles of Psycho-Educational Program Implementation and Principles of Psycho-Educational Program Evaluation courses.

SLK 805

Sport Psychology (elective); consist of Principles of Psycho-Educational Program Development, Principles of Psycho-Educational Program Implementation and Principles of Psycho-Educational Program Evaluation courses.

b) Practical

Throughout the MA I year, the students also gain practical experience in class as well as at various institutions accredited with the HPCSA, which are essential for the application of the newly learned knowledge. The following organizations

supply the platform for this practical application of the newly acquired knowledge; Stabilis Rehabilitation Centre, Student Services (UP), Student Services (Tshwane University of Technology), Itsoseng Clinic (UP), Epworth Children's Village and Mindsense Counselling and Learning Centre for the Community Psychology elective module the students take part in various community projects or and for the Sport Psychology elective they take part within a performance specific context at TuksSport and a developmental context in the Street Kids Project.

At these different institutions the students have the opportunity to work with clients on an individual basis or to present various activities and reflection sessions to diverse groups of people. Career counselling is also done as well as psychological assessments. When required the students also had to present workshops to a various clients. Depending on what elective module the students chose they work with either AIDS support groups or sport groups in addition to their other practical experiences. The MA II year involves a one-year internship also at an HPCSA approved institution, which includes some of the above-mentioned institutions amongst others.

c) Professional development

Professional development of the students is an important aspect of the training program and is required by the Professional Board of Psychology of the HPCSA (Human, 2008). Eriksen and Kress (2006) suggested in their article, "DSM and Counselling Identity", that the following can be seen as values inherent in professional counselling. Firstly they state that counsellors need to play a role in encouraging growth and development of their clients, thus focusing on and aiming for wellness. Secondly they describe that it is expected of counsellors to provide services that are sensitive and culturally competent, them thus having "multicultural competence" (Eriksen & Kress, 2006, p. 206).

As future psychologists it is important for the students to really understand themselves, their own strengths and weaknesses. Symington (1996) indicates

that it is required that would-be psychologists undertake personal therapy for themselves. The relevance of this is to assist them in reaching knowledge of their true self and also to assist them emotionally to do so. Professional development of the students is addressed in the following three ways in the in the MA Counselling Psychology program. The aim of the three elements that will be discussed here are mainly to encourage the students' personal and especially professional development as future psychologists.

Firstly the students are guided and assisted in their personal growth and development, throughout the MA 1 and MA II year by their supervisors during weekly supervision sessions. During these sessions present cases are discussed in a confidential manner where the supervisor will aim to give the student the necessary guidance to grow and learn from these practical experiences as practitioners and people. Secondly the students participate in a Cultural Kaleidoscope experience, which aims at enhancing their personal growth and development through introducing them to a multitude of diverse circumstances and opinions. Thirdly, during the first half of the first year of the course, students participate in a one-week adventure-experience training program at Glenmore Ecoventures. The aim is to encourage the professional development of the students by focusing on their professional identity through group therapy and adventure activities. This is seen as a very important part of their personal and professional development especially in terms of group therapy. This was also the physical context for the adventure experiences that this research project focused on.

During the training week the students work together as a team and individually to complete various activities and tasks, most of which are novel, very challenging and sometimes anxiety provoking. They are expected to work well as a team and trust themselves and their fellow students. Their perceptions and current views of themselves, their capabilities and views of those around them will continuously be challenged. Experiential learning is thus expected to take place. This is a form of learning on which I will elaborate further in the next

chapter, the literature study. Before we move on, let us quickly look at the research question, goals and structure of the study.

1.2 QUESTION

The research question of this research project was: "How do students experience adventure during professional training in psychology?"

1.3 GOALS

1.3.1 General Goal

The general goal of this research project was to understand how students experience adventure during professional training in psychology.

1.3.2 Specific Goals

The specific goals of this research were to:

1. To do a literature review. (Building blocks for the adventure experience)
2. To describe the research inquiry. (Equipment for adventure experience)
3. To conduct the research project. (The adventure experience)
4. To write the research report. (Reflection on the adventure experience)

1.4 STRUCTURE

In this introductory chapter we looked at the context, research question and goals of the research. This was done to orientate the reader with regards to this research project. In chapter 2 an in-depth literature study will be given followed by the methodology in chapter 3. The results will be discussed in chapter 4 followed by the conclusions and recommendations in chapter 5. In the next chapter we will thus look at the literature, the building blocks for our adventure experience. We will dig deeper into the two above mentioned contexts and what they might entail.

CHAPTER 2
BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE

The previous chapter attempted to brief the reader with regards to this research study. The aim of chapter 2, the literature review is to give an overview of the research "topic" and to attempt answering the research question from previous research works. The three building blocks of this adventure experience are: 2.1 Traditional Learning, 2.2 Experiential Learning and 2.3 Adventure Related Experiential Learning (AREL).

The research question of this research study was: "How do students experience adventure during professional training in psychology?"

2.1 TRADITIONAL LEARNING

What does the academic world; a vast world of knowledge, classes, books, pens, paper reading, texts, examinations and research, expect of us? Is it to seek studies done on similar topics trying to find answers to research questions, or just to assist us in understanding the questions better? To answer this, consideration must be given to the concept of how all knowledge is acquired, namely, by learning. How and why it happens and in what ways it has changed. The context of this research study is mainly that of an academic institution where learning is the primary function. Following this, we will need to explore learning and the various forms of it, by starting with traditional learning. We will have a quick overview of traditional learning (2.1.1) and then look at some research on traditional learning (2.1.2).

2.1.1 Overview of Traditional Learning

Thinking of traditional learning the first picture that comes to mind is that of the teacher standing in front of the class reciting information which needs to be memorised and then instructing the pupils how to do it. It is thus teacher-centered with the teacher being the expert (Human, 2008). The context is that of a four-walled classroom, desks, pens,

paper, books and a black board. The teacher speaks and the students listen, and at times students are given the opportunity to ask questions. This then, in time, is followed by the dreadful evaluation or examination process, done by the teacher. To understand the reasoning behind the above we will briefly investigate the definitions and theories underlying such thinking.

2.1.2 Research on Traditional Learning

In the field of psychology there are various definitions and forms of learning. Sternberg (2001) suggested that psychologists generally define learning as: "any relatively permanent change in behaviour, thoughts and feelings of an organism – human or other animal – that results from prior experience" (p.197). When we are aware of the change, and when the change is maintained over time, our learning has been conscious, deliberate and lasting. Learning is said to take place through experiences individuals gain (Louw, Van Ede & Louw, 1999). This type of learning is also usually more direct and teacher-centred (Human, 2006). Various learning theories give different perspectives on how learning processes take place. These include for instance the cognitive, behavioural and experiential learning theories. The difference between cognitive learning theories and behaviourist theories is in the role the individual plays in his or her learning process (Meyer, Moore & Viljoen, 2000).

In cognitive learning the individual plays a much more active mental role in learning. Information is acquired, analysed, evaluated, memorised and recalled (Kolb, 1984). Attention, perception, memory and thinking are also involved.

In behavioural learning the individual learns in a more passive manner from its environment. Behavioural learning takes place through direct experience (learning through association/classical conditioning, instrumental or operant conditioning), observational learning (observation and mimicking, other people-identification) or self-regulation (giving reward and punishment to oneself) (Baron & Byrne, 2003; Meyer, et al., 2000).

Hopkins and Putnam (1993) suggested experiential learning as an alternative to behavioural and cognitive learning, as has been shown by Kolb (1984). The aim of this research study was to focus specifically on learning from an experiential perspective. Experiential learning thus underlies this research study and will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

2.2 EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

Below we will look at an overview of experiential learning (2.2.1) and where it fits on the learning style continuum (2.2.2). Then we will move on to look at the role reflection (2.2.3) plays in experiential learning, taking us to the experiential components in academic courses (2.2.4) and ending off with research on experiential learning (2.2.5).

2.2.1 Overview of Experiential Learning

Exploring the experiential learning context is somewhat different and more risky than attempting to understand the academic context. Limited empirical data is found to substantiate claims and suggestions about the effectiveness of experiential learning in creating change and learning (Newes, 2001). Experiential learning can be defined as "learning by doing, with reflection" (Beyers, 1981; Gass, 1993; Human, 2006, 2008; Priest and Gass, 1997). Bell (1993) explains that experience exist through interpretation therefore, it is produced through the meanings given to it and also suggested that the interpretations of lived experiences depends on a context and is specific. Sheldon and Arthur (2001) suggest that one's direct experience results in behavioural change and that this is the basis of experiential learning.

In attempting to further understand the term experiential learning, let us start with Kolb (1984) who suggested that the term experiential learning relates to "the central role that experience plays in the learning process" (p.20). Kolb (1984) also stated that the experiential leaning theory is holistic in that it is a combination of behaviour, perception, cognition and experience. Experiential learning seems to have found its

origin in the work of Dewey, Lewin and Piaget (Kolb, 1984). As early as 1938, John Dewy, one of the people who established the roots for experiential learning stated; "All genuine education comes through experience" (Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995, p. XI). Dewey (1938) juxtaposition's traditional learning with experiential learning in the following manner:

Table 2.1 Traditional learning versus experiential learning

Traditional learning	**Experiential learning**
Imposition from above	Expression/cultivation of individual
External discipline	Free activity
Learning from text and teachers	Learning through experience
Acquisition of isolated skills and technique by drill	Acquire them as means of attaining ends which make direct vital appeal
Preparation for more or less remote future	Making most of opportunity of present life
Static claims and materials	Acquaintance with a changing world

Also according to Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995), Kurt Hahn originally incorporated experiential learning in school programmes in order to equip students with skills, which they went on to implement in their work environments. Hahn's methods were also based on the idea to help children develop a sense of worth. This was known as service learning (Kraft & Kielsmeier, 1995). Kielsmeier (1989) suggested that young people grow up in a society that may be information rich but that is experience poor. This is similar to recent times where children have access to acquire large amounts of knowledge but very rarely the opportunity to apply the knowledge gained

Druian, Owens and Owens (1980) explored common elements found in three experiential education programmes. The three programmes were Outward Bound, Foxfire and Experience Based Career Education (EBCE). The purpose in all three programmes was related to the educational need and the programme content. The context of each programme was divided into four main components namely (1) *realism* (the reality of the activities or experience), (2) *challenge*, (3) appropriate *level of risk* and (4) *diversity*. In addition to these main components, the programmes also included

various other, secondary elements shortly mentioned below: (Druian, et al., 1980)

1. The *characteristics* of the participants were seen as the one additional element focusing, on factors such as voluntary participation.
2. Another element focused on *learning strategies*, the sequence and interrelationship of learner activities. This element is based on four assumptions of how people learn:
    a) Learning by doing real tasks
    b) Carrying serious consequences
    c) Learning happens best by following a systematic process, which leads them to where they want to be
    d) Adolescent learning and reinforcing of basic skills is as effective out of the classroom as in it
3. The different *roles participants* need to play were also an element to be considered. These roles might include that of observers, leaders, active learners and advocates.
4. Another element was the *instructor roles*, including for instance, that of a leader and facilitator.
5. The *outcomes of the learning activities*, aimed to help the students take ownership of their outcomes or achievements.
6. The final elements were *management and support*, and *programme outcomes*, investigating the experiential components found in education.

Having looked at the definition and context important in experiential learning as well as the different elements to consider in ensuring the quality of experiential learning programmes, let us take note of where experiential learning, as a specific style of learning lies on the learning style continuum as suggested by Herbert (1981).

2.2.2 Experiential learning as a learning style

Herbert (1981) describes experiential learning as being on the opposite side of the learning styles continuum than command or transmission learning (aspects of traditional

learning). He also explains that as you move towards experiential learning the involvement of the learner becomes more active and that of the teacher is reduced. Herbert identifies six variables that determine where a learning style will be placed on the continuum. The six variables are reality, risk, responsibility, predictability, analysis and reflection. These would be explained as follows

The *reality* of an experience is what ties information to be learned to the experience (Herbert, 1981). A situation perceived as more *risky* but with an atmosphere of support and trust also strongly determines the amount of learning that might take place. This means that some level of difficulty needs to be overcome, whether it is of emotional, physical, social or intellectual nature (Dewey, 1938). The higher the perceived risk, the higher the positive consequences seem to be, up to a certain level. This relationship between performance and psychological arousal was named the Inverted U Hypothesis in 1908 by Yerkes and Dodson (as cited in Leunes & Nation, 2002). This theory illustrates that an optimal arousal level is found in all behaviour. Above and below this level, poor performance can usually be expected. *Uncertainty* or *unpredictability* plays a key role in the importance of the reality and risk elements. Not knowing exactly what to expect may make an experience seem more risky that what is really is (Herbert, 1981).

If the participant makes a personal commitment and investment in the experience, and makes their own decisions they seem to be more dedicated to take *responsibility*. Herbert (1981) indicates that in this way of thinking teachers are not responsible for the students' learning but rather to help them learn. Teachers should also rather plan for all the possible options the participant might take rather than making the decisions for them. This will make the experience less predictable. Finally, students should decide for themselves what is to be learned from an experience and this is done through effective and thorough *thinking* and *reflecting* on the experience (Herbert, 1981). Thus supporting the notion that, experiential learning is learning by doing and reflecting on it (Beyers, 1981; Human, 2006, 2008).

To summarise all of the above variables of an experiential learning experience: the learners are placed in a demanding and realistic context, where they are expected to

master new skills. This is followed by responsible and challenging action in which they apply the new skills. The risk and unfamiliar situation results in an imbalance and the need to move out of a comfort zone in order to restore this balance (Sheldon & Arthur, 2001). Thereafter the opportunity for analysis and reflection on the experience and how it relates to life should be given which ultimately leads to learning and a meaningful experience. Reflection is thus an integral part of experiential learning. This is supported by Dewey's (1938) understanding that learning can be seen as thinking about experiences Having mentioned reflection as an important variable to consider when placing experiential learning on the learning style continuum, it makes sense to look a little deeper into what is meant by reflection.

2.2.3 Experiential Learning and Reflection

Bert Horwood (1991) defines reflection as 'bending back'. This involves looking for connections and discrepancies by thinking about the past. This bending and folding ensures that new meanings will be developed, moulded and reframed by the reflective process over time. Horwood also adds the following terms to describe the reflection process: deliberation (methodical and slow), rumination (thorough chewing), pondering (weighing or judging) and musing (aimless speculation). When all of these components are combined the goal of reflection will be achieved, namely: "to construct meaning out of their experiences" (Horwood, 1989, p227). Reflection seems to determine whether experiences are boring and worthless or memorable, significant and transforming. (Horwood, 1991)

Learning through reflection can be understood as a means to discover connections and construct nets and maps of past and present experiences. By integrating the past into the present we may be able to project into the future in a purposeful way. Normal everyday experiences are transformed into significant, transforming and memorable experiences through reflection. Another important factor to consider is to include emotions into the reflection process to make sure the process is not only cognitive and intellectual (Horwood, 1991). Reflection should always at some point in time be done alone. Horwood (1991) suggests that an experiential learning program should offer adequate

conditions for private reflection time followed by a group or social interaction in which participants can express their newly discovered connections.

Quay (2003) indicated, from a constructivist point of view, in reflection there is a process of active adaptation where we incorporate new information into our existing knowledge. This concept is much the same as described by Piaget's use of the term, adaptation (Pulaski, 1980). There is an intimate connection between participation and the context (social and cultural) in which it occurs. This is described as 'situated learning' (Quay, 2003). The adventure activities being used in the multiple activity adventure-based training programs all have some very important common characteristics or effects; they all induce or result in some kind of experiential learning (Druian, et al., 1980). Experiential learning thus seems to come from reflecting on the experiences we have in various contexts.

Schön (1987) portrays the importance of reflection in another context, in professional practice in his book: "Educating the Reflective Practitioner". He describes the value of 'reflect-in-action' as when "our thinking serves to reshape what we are doing while we are doing it" (Schön, 1987, p. 26). It seems that the source of professional knowledge is generated more from reflection than from applying theoretical ideas (Horwood, 1991; Schön, 1987). Schön (1987) also suggests that theory should be constructed by practice and not the other way around. Thus practitioners gain professional knowledge from reflecting on practice. In this manner experiential learning can and has been used not only to teach life skills but also to teach mathematics, science, history, arts and language for instance. Reflection thus plays an important role in experiential learning and learning in general.

In conclusion, looking at this section, having an experience and then reflecting on it seems to be important in experiential learning. Following this, the context and quality of the experience also plays an essential role in learning. From another angle Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995) indicated that, "genuine learning must involve the individual in a social learning context, be carried out in a range of learning environments, and be of perceived relevance to the learner" (p. XII). Understanding the value of reflection thus,

the next step would be to investigate the experiential components found in education as a whole.

2.2.4 Experiential Learning and Academic Courses

Education seems to speak a dual language. On the one hand it's a vigorous process to acquire skills and knowledge, as Peggy Walker Stevens (1981) neatly put it: "in a typical secondary school, students are lectured at and questioned by a random series of adults who specialize in certain subject areas (p. 221). This first process includes didactics, hermeneutics, problem solving and philetics. On the other hand education is a rigorous personal experience by expression of these abilities. This relates more to experiential learning. Jernstedt (1980) is of the opinion that learners seem to learn more effectively when participating actively in their own learning. The structure of the learning activities seems to guide how knowledge is acquired. Jernstedt also suggested that, when you combine experiential learning and academic courses, this may lead to linking acquisition of knowledge with the actual ability to use this knowledge. According to Walker Stevens (1981), "In a well-planned experiential program, academic knowledge in a variety of disciplines can be integrated with skills and experience" (p. 221).

Experiential learning, as a method of educating, and the change it inspires can take place in two types of contexts, a classroom experience and an outside the classroom experience, including experiential laboratories and extended group-living experiences (Jernstedt, 1980; Kraft, 1990). Experiential learning in classroom settings would include for example demonstrations, recalling personal experiences, learning from experiences in novels and instructor modelling. According to Jernstedt (1980) the purpose of experiences outside of the classroom is to give the opportunity for planned experiences in a prescribed environment. These might then serve as resource material, which could be used later as intellectual content for the particular course. It was also found that these experiences seem to assist in bridging the gap between the content of the course and individual's own experiences after the course. (Jernstedt, 1980)

Experiential learning aims to make use of the whole person in the learning experience. Jernstedt (1980) found that experiential learning includes the following:

1. Learning must be an active interaction between the student and the environment
2. The whole person is used
3. Persistent and accurate learning is produced
4. Results seem to last longer and also feel better
5. Aids the building of a foundation that promotes the development of a more integrated learning style later in life

To be able to understand the value of experiential learning in the academic context intensive research is required. Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995) use adventure experiences to, for instance, explain research. We will now look at some research that has been done on experiential learning to assist us in explaining experiential learning.

2.2.5 Research on Experiential Learning

Firstly it is important to gain awareness that there are some concerns regarding researching experiential learning. This is specifically related to the difference between researchers and practitioners when it comes to doing this research. In his study, Ewert (1987) researched, amongst other things, the researcher practitioner gap. Here he presented a variety of differences between researchers and practitioners and how these affected the outcome of the various research studies. Seemingly from a practitioner perspective Ewert (1987) stated that; "All too often, research in experiential education becomes an experience in data generation rather than the production of meaningful findings" (p. 377).

Ewert (1987) raised another concern relating to experiential education including such a vast variety of elements, such as behaviour, emotions, education, reflection and so forth making it challenging to research this theory. As experiences are important sources of data that can be measured, the researchers may make wrong interpretations about the data. This may take place due to a variety of reasons such as involvement of the researcher's own subjective experience or possible inaccurate observation. Poor

reasoning and ending the research too early may also be reasons for wrong interpretation (Babbie, as cited in Ewert, 1987).

In a study done by Conrad and Hedin (1981), in which they reported students' responses from 30 experiential learning programmes, they found that experiential learning had a positive influence on a variety of levels of development of the individuals. These included development in the social, intellectual and psychological domains. Interestingly they found that the longer the programme was, the better the effect. If this is applied to the current research project one may come to two possible conclusions:

1. The adventure week may be understood as a too short experience
2. The adventure week is a continuing experience because the week is incorporated in a two year academic course, making it more long-term.

Age also played a small role in the effectiveness; the older participants tend to show a slight greater growth. They discovered that the characteristics of experiences of students were of the most powerful predictors of growth (Conrad & Hedin, 1981).

In more research done, Järvinen (as cited in Warner Weil & McGill, 1981) evaluated the application of experiential learning to the professional development of qualified nurses. These nurses were making the transition to nursing educators. Students reflected in personal diaries on the programme. The programme utilised Kolb's 1984 experiential learning theory as the basis of the course, focusing on four stages: active, reflective, abstract and concrete. In this study Järvinen found that the nurses seemed to better understand their developmental needs, personal and professional. He believes that it happened due to this process (Järvinen, as cited in Warner Weil & McGill, 1981**).** On completion of the study it was suggested that students or participants should be encouraged to continually develop their own activity and the evaluation of themselves. This is following the belief that the process will enable them to become reflective practitioners in their future jobs.

Conrad and Hedin (1981) described experience as something we cannot fully comprehend because it is so vast and complex. They conclude by stating that this is the

reason for difficulty with learning from it. As the researcher I will mainly attempt to describe and draw meaningful conclusions from the participants' experiences. Experiential learning seems to play a much larger role in learning than what meets the eye. One of the mediums through which experiential learning is applied is that of adventure, known as AREL or adventure learning (AL). This started from the 1940s, up to the 70s, when Outward Bound, the adventure wing of experiential education formed. Let us now take a thorough look at the role adventure plays in experiential learning.

2.3 ADVENTURE RELATED EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING (AREL)

Having looked at the academic world and how it defined and understood learning we moved on to a specific type of learning known as experiential learning. Experiential learning introduces us to a world of learning, outside the classroom and focusing on experiences. There are various contexts in which experiential learning can be valuable but for the sake of this study, we will look at one specifically, known as AREL. This section is divided into three main sections: *background*, *how* it takes place and *why* it is important. In the *background* section, we will start with an overview and history of AREL (2.3.1) followed by a look at the role of adventure in education (2.3.2). Then to try and understand *how* AREL takes place we will examine adventure programming (2.3.3), the adventure process (2.3.4) and the facilitation process (2.3.5). Lastly to observe *why* this type of experiential learning is important we will explore some theories on AREL (2.3.6) and finish off by looking at some research done in the field of AREL (2.3.7).

2.3.1 Overview of AREL

To attempt to understand AREL let us look firstly at how it can be defined and then at the elements necessary for an adventure experience to occur. Adventure experiences and outdoor activities have been explained in a variety of different ways. Let us start by defining some other concepts found within the context of adventure and experiential learning namely; outdoor recreation, outdoor leadership and outdoor education.

Priest and Gass (1997) describe *outdoor recreation* as outward leisure, outdoor pursuits and human powered outward recreation. The definition of recreation involves activity and leisure combined. Leisure can be understood as voluntary, intrinsically motivated experiences, where the experience is a state of mind (Priest & Gass, 1997). "*Outdoor leadership* is an area within experiential education that involves purposefully taking individuals/groups into the outdoors for: recreation or education; teaching skills; problem-solving; ensuring group/individual safety; judgment making; and facilitating the philosophical ethical, and esthetic growth of participants" (Ewert, as cited in Hayashi & Ewert, 2006, p.223). *Outdoor education* on the other hand is comprised of two aspects: Environmental Education (pertaining to ecosystemic and ekistic relationships) and Adventure Education. Adventure education in this regard pertains specifically to interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

Priest and Gass (1997), states; "We can use facilitated adventure experiences to enhance learning. By manipulating perceived values of risk and competence while keeping real values at acceptable levels, facilitated adventure experiences are possible." (p. 19). Thus, when a person gains knowledge and skills from an adventure-related experience it is a learning process. This learning process can be defined as AREL. For an adventure experience the following need to be present: voluntary participation, intrinsic motivation, experience as a state of mind and an uncertain outcome (Priest & Gass, 1997). This uncertain outcome can be understood as a certain risk factor that needs to be present. Risk is present when there is a real potential of harm or losing something of value whether it be physical, financial, social or mental loss or harm.

Risk is only one of the elements necessary for the creation of an adventure experience. The following key elements need to be present for an adventure experience to occur. The adventure experience must be (Miles & Priest, 1990; Neill, 2005; Priest & Gass, 1997):

1. The participation in activities is voluntary and free of choice
2. It should be intrinsically motivating to participants

3. The outcome of the experience must be uncertain
4. The social and physical environments must be unfamiliar
5. Participants should be expected to complete some of the tasks

Priest and Gass (1997) also added that certain learning outcomes need to be achieved through the experience. Rohnke (1990) adds to the above requirements that the participant should be competent in engaging in the adventure activity. Having defined AREL it would be valuable to now look at how it has been used in education.

2.3.2 Adventure-Based Education

Kurt Hahn can probably be seen as the father of adventure education (Miles & Priest, 1990; Newes, 2001; Priest & Gass, 1997; Richards, 1990). Hahn brought forth Outward Bound, which is one of the most widely recognized programmes that use adventure training-programmes (Schoel & Maizell, 2002; Sheldon & Arthur, 2001). These programmes, according to Newes (2001) service a wide variety of populations, some of these including youth at risk and cancer victims as well as the general public. Kraft and Kielsmeier (1995) asked whether adventure is only an activity "needed by those who use the methods adjunct to therapies, to 'cure' at risk youth, or to reawaken stagnant business executives?" (p. 4). We will see from this research study that adventure has many more uses in other contexts.

These adventure courses mentioned in the previous paragraph are designed to be educational programmes, which aim to help people find meaning through group and individual encounters where unfamiliar environments provide physical stress (Druian, et al., 1980). This is done in learning settings that is outdoors where challenges needed to be overcome, as indicated earlier. Participants are faced with situations, which are unfamiliar and uncomfortable where they are forced to move out of their comfort zones during experiential learning. Adventure education involves direct and purposeful exposure to adventurous activities in an effort to facilitate both intra- and interpersonal growth (Meyer & Wenger, as cited in Sheard & Golby, 2006; Priest & Gass, 1997).

Having looked at the background of AREL and its value in education we've also noticed that adventure education must have some structure to it. This takes us to the *how* section where we look at adventure programming (2.3.3), the adventure process (2.3.4) and the facilitation process (2.3.5) to help us understand how AREL is practised.

2.3.3 Adventure Programming

In adventure programming the same activities can be used for different purposes. All adventure programmes discussed below are to some extent growth orientated. The focus of each adventure programme is different and this determines the programme design. Emphasis will be placed on varying elements of the programme or activity by the use of debriefing strategies (Schoel, Prouty & Radcliffe, 1988), discussed later in this research study. The above-mentioned elements help us to distinguish between adventure programmes. Adventure programming may be used in encouraging change in the following four contexts (Miles & Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997):

1. Recreational
2. Educational
3. Developmental
4. Therapeutic

Schoel, et al. (1988) has a different framework for naming these contexts and understands them to be as follows:

1. Recreational
2. Academic education
3. Physical education
4. Counselling and Therapy

In the following few paragraphs we will have a closer look at these four contexts.

1. Recreation

In the recreational context the goal of the adventure experience is to have fun, become reenergized or to learn a new activity (Priest & Gass, 1997). These adventure recreation programmes have different lengths and goals, for example in leisure the goals are that of personal and interpersonal growth (Schoel et. al., 1988).

2. Education

The goal of adventure programming in education is to enhance knowledge, to understand new concepts and also to enhance awareness of needs (Priest & Gass, 1997). Priest (in Miles & Priest, 1990) indicates that in adventure education, change might take place. Change happens in groups or individuals when exposed (in a direct and purposeful manner) to "challenge, high adventure and new growth experiences" (Miles & Priest, 1990, p. 114). This is done for instance by giving challenging and problem solving tasks to individuals or groups. In addition adventure can also be used in active learning where the participants solve real life problems or where subjects (e.g. English) are taught (Schoel, et al., 1988).

3. Development

Development includes learning new and effective behaviours and methods of participation in different settings, therefore improving overall behavioural functioning (Miles & Priest, 1990). A section where this is also relevant is using adventure learning for personal, team and practical development in the organisational context (Dwyer, 2006; Hwang, 2003). Schoel, et al. (1988) refers to a similar group as the physical education group. Here individual challenge, physical well-being and group co-operation, discussed in groups and focused on the activity, are of main importance.

4. Therapeutic

The goals for therapeutic uses of adventure programming include encouraging, changing or modifying of dysfunctional behavioural patterns, teaching coping strategies, habilitation and rehabilitation (Miles & Priest, 1990; Schoel et. al., 1988). Sheldon and Arthur (2001) suggested that adventure therapy provides opportunity for success while focussing on the clients' abilities and strengths. A more specific goal is improvement of the self-concept, in which the following elements are addressed (Schoel, et al., 1988):

a) trust-building
b) challenge/stress

c) peak experiences
d) goal setting
e) problem-solving
f) humour/fun

This is achieved through goal setting, monitoring general participant functioning and participating in the adventure activity. According the Schoel, et al. (1988), behaviour is crucial to the adventure counsellor and is thus treated with support, insight, reflection, repetition, confrontation or left alone. In her study on experiences of extreme sports, after reporting that her participants felt increased levels of self-confidence and self-esteem, Willig (2005) suggested further study should focus on how participating in extreme sports may have therapeutic consequences. In their study on a rehabilitation program for severe brain injury, Walker, Onus, Doyle, Clare and McCarthy (2005) found an outdoor adventure course to be valuable in achieving goals such as group cohesiveness, development of social skills and community integration.

In conclusion, results or change expected to come from adventure programming can be divided into four basic broad contexts (Miles & Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997; Schoel, et al., 1988). These basic contexts are:

1. Recreation
2. Education/cognitive: learning of facts and gaining knowledge
3. Developmental/physical education: learning technical skills
4. Therapeutic/counselling/affective (emotional): which includes social and emotional development, thus inter (between people) and intrapersonal (within the individual) development.

To achieve the various outcomes of the different adventure programs one need to look at the stages in which adventure experiences are expected to take place. These stages collectively create the adventure process.

2.3.4 Adventure Process

The adventure process is more complex than just doing any activity and then expecting to gain something from it, whether it is recreational, therapeutic, developmental or educational gains. Mortlock (as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997) describes the following stages of adventure:

Stage one: Play

In Stage one there is no fear present and new skills could be learned.

Stage two: Adventure

In the adventure stage, there is some fear that challenges the individual, but they are still totally in control.

Stage three: Frontier Adventure

A high element of fear, feelings of lack of control and physical harm are typical characteristics of the frontier adventure stage. Outdoor experience as found in stage two and three may make life worth living for some individuals.

Stage four: Misadventure

The misadventure, stage four is characterised by high amounts of fear and personal dissatisfaction. This may lead to failure and unacceptance, sometimes even irreversible negative outcomes. People may learn a lot from their experiences during this stage, if it is survived.

Fear played an essential role in this theory on the stages of adventure (Mortlock, as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997). A few methods to cope with this fear in the adventure context are desensitization, flooding, modeling and rehearsal. These are relevant to mention but will not be discussed in this research study.

Having looked at an example of the various stages of an adventure experience we will now attempt to understand *how* the various adventure programming goals/outcomes can be achieved. This will assist in gaining some control in determining the outcomes of a specific adventure process. The process of facilitation of adventure experiences is the key to discovering or revealing the different experiences adventure programming may

offer (Priest & Gass, 1997). One role of facilitation is to make sure the various goals/outcomes of these adventure programmes are reached.

2.3.5 Facilitation Process

Facilitation seems to be the key to unveil the various values that lie within an adventure experience. The different facilitation strategies used will determine what the outcome will be (Schoel et. al, 1988). Thus, facilitation plays an important role in determining whether the experience will be only recreational or whether it will be educational, developmental or even therapeutic (Miles & Priest, 1990).

The Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (Colman, 2003) defines facilitation as; "The act or process of assisting the process of something or making it easier" (p. 265). In this research study the role of facilitation lies in assisting the participants to achieve different goals in their adventure experience. In the facilitation process participants are encouraged to reflect on their experiences, evaluate good and bad experiences, analyse mistakes, failures and successes, consider the impact of their actions and ideas, anticipate consequences of their actions, commit to new behaviours and understand how to use their new learning, growth and change (Priest & Gass, 1997). Therefore we shall take a look at some facilitation styles and then at guidelines on how facilitation is incorporated into adventure programming.

Priest and Gass (1997) describe six generations or styles through which facilitation developed throughout the years:

1. Letting the experience speak (1940s):

   In this style there is no interference by the facilitator. The participant participates in and then learns from their experience.

2. Speaking on behalf of the experience (1950s):

   The experience is interpreted for the participant, by the facilitator, who is seen as the expert.

3. Funnelling or debriefing the experience (1960s):

   Participants learn by reflecting on their experiences. This reflective

process is guided by the facilitator's questioning.

4. Frontloading the experience, directly (1970s):

   Prior to the experience, a discussion takes place. This is meant to help focus and orientate the participants, while participating in the specific activity. This discussion is known as pre-briefing.

5. Framing of the experience (1980s):

   In this style, a metaphor for the activity is derived from the participant. This metaphor has an important link to certain aspects of the participant's life. Comparing the metaphor and experience to life experiences during reflection, may assist the participant to learn from them. This style is similar in some ways to that of frontloading.

6. Frontloading the experience, indirectly (1990s):

   In this style paradox is used. The participant is told, for instance, that they are not really expected to complete because it will probably be too hard for them. This is expected to motivate them to try even harder to achieve this specific goal. This style could be used instead of direct frontloading or framing experiences, when these are not effective.

Any of the above mentioned styles are valuable depending on what the goal of the adventure programme is. According to Priest and Gass (1997), in a recreational adventure programme letting the experience speak for itself and speaking for the experience may be the most valuable styles. Debriefing or funnelling the experience may work best in an educational context. Additional to this style, directly frontloading and framing the experience may be of most value in the developmental use of adventure programmes. Finally for the therapeutic contextual use of adventure programmes the styles; framing the experience and indirectly frontloading the experience, will probably be most effective. These styles are used (according to the goals to be achieved) during the following three phases of adventure programmes: briefing, activity and debriefing (Gass, 1993; Groff & Dattilo, 2000; Human, 2006; Miles & Priest, 1990; Schoel & Maizell, 2002; Schoel, et al., 1988).

1. Briefing

During the briefing session information is introduced to the participants (Human, 2006). This may include the following; information regarding the activity and its components, new meanings to be understood or expected from the activity and/or transmission of learning from the previous activity's debriefing session to the current briefing session. Briefing has two components according to Schoel and Maizell (2002); grounding the adventure and framing the adventure. Grounding pertains to what is going to happen during the session and the activity, including details on the activity, safety considerations and what is expected from the participants. Framing focuses on connecting the activity and experience to the participants' daily lives (Schoel & Maizell, 2002).

2. Doing the activity

During this section of the adventure process the participants participate in the actual activity for instance high rope activity, abseiling, rafting and kayaking.

3. Debriefing

In adventure based counselling the purpose of the debriefing discussion is to enhance growth (Schoel & Maizell, 2002). Debriefing suggests that the participants reflect on the activity and process in order for them to discover their own learning outcomes through the experience. Debriefing sessions are usually the tools, which ensure academic knowledge is transferred to real life situations (Jernstedt, 1980). This debriefing discussion usually takes place as a group discussion. Debriefing according to Schoel and Maizell (2002) is about "the experience, but it is also its own experience" (p. 236). The structure of the debriefing session may be a follows:

a) Experience
b) Reflection ("what happened?")
c) Generalization ("so what?")
d) Transference ("now what?")
e) New experience

The above structure correlates strongly to Joplin's (1981) five stage model of experiential learning. The five stages are; focus, challenging action, support, feedback

and debriefing. It is important to note action-reflection and the continuous support and feedback. The learning taking place during adventure experiences seem to get transferred into real life situations. Gass (in Priest & Gass, 1997) suggested that this takes place in three different ways: *Specific transference of learning*, *non-specific transference of learning* and *metaphoric transfer of learning* Thus adventure experiences do not only have value in themselves but also seem to have value in the transference that takes place into real life situations (Gass in Priest & Gass, 1997).

Having discussed adventure programming, the adventure process and styles of facilitation, now a closer look can be taken at the various theories on adventure experiences through which important changes are believed to take place. This introduces us to the 'why' section of this research.

2.3.6 Theories on Adventure Experience

Why do people participate in adventure experiences? What motivates them to do so? What happens to them during their adventure experience? Baldwin, Persing and Magnuson (2004) suggested that "theory specifies the mechanisms through which learning and personal changes occur in adventure education" (p. 169). To help us understand more about the adventure experience, we will focus on understanding some of the philosophical and educational theories, which form the basis of adventure experiences in the following paragraphs. These include (Priest and Gass, 1997):

1. Adventure experience paradigm
2. Adaptive dissonance
3. State of flow
4. Models of motivation

Let us start by looking at the adventure experience paradigm.

1. Adventure Experience Paradigm

The adventure experience paradigm as found in Priest (1990) and Priest and Gass (1997) discuss the level of perceived risk involved in an adventure experience. This is compared to how competent the participating individuals perceive themselves to be thus

determining the magnitude of the perceived challenge. According to Davis-Berman and Berman (2002) the "concept of perceived risk is a cornerstone of most outdoor adventure programs" (p. 305). They did however warn that emotional safety should be a major concern when creating a perceived risk (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2002). In this paradigm six conditions of challenge may take place, depending on the amounts of risk and competence (Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997):

a) In the *exploration and experimentation experience* the participant perceives himself/herself to be very competent and no or very little risk is involved.
b) There is a slight risk involved and the individual feels a little less during the *adventure experience.*
c) For a *peak adventure experience*, the participant's perceived competence and perceived risk should be balanced. This result in them being challenged by the experience. Schoel, et al. (1988) describes peak experiences as being intense, high impact experiences.

In the following three experiences the risk progressively increases labeling them as:

d) *misadventure*
e) *devastation*
f) *disaster*

In this stage, the risk then becomes uncontrollable and the individual's competence decreases until they are not able to deal with the situation. This could be very dangerous to any participant, on a physical as well as emotional level and should be avoided if possible.

How do we know when each of these conditions may take place for different individuals? Adaptive dissonance may give us some insight into this question.

2. Adaptive Dissonance

The individuals themselves determine very much, when which of the conditions or experiences will take place. During the peak adventure experience individual differences determines, to a great extent, the adaptive dissonance experienced (Priest & Baillie, as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997). Adaptive dissonance is difference between a participant's expectations and the actual reality of the outcome, "between the way things are perceived by the learner and the way that learner would like them to be"

(Priest & Gass, 1997, p 21). This can also be described as a difference between the desired future and the current situation. For a peak adventure to occur, it is important to ensure that the participants correctly perceive their competence and the risk factor. This may be made possible by the structure, control and supervision of the activity. This balance in perceived risk and competence, leading to a peak experience is also described by some as a state of flow.

3. State of Flow

When persons are fully involved in their intrinsically rewarding activities, excluding boredom and worry, they are said to experience a state of flow (Priest & Gass, 1997; Willig, 2005). This principle is in some ways similar to the theory of optimal arousal that leads to optimal functioning and experience. This can also be understood by the inverted U hypothesis as explained by Yerkes and Dodson (Leunes & Nation, 2002). Under-arousal (boredom) as well as over-arousal (elevated anxiety) will prevent individuals from experiencing an optimal state of arousal or state of flow. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggest that the intrinsic feelings of personal competence, well-being and enjoyment that people achieve during adventure experiences motivate them to participate in these activities again in the future. These authors also suggested six characteristics that may lead to a flow experience:

Heightened awareness of self
Feeling of control over their environment and themselves
Immediate feedback on the process of achieving their goals
Action and awareness merge resulting in uninterrupted concentration
Focus centres on a *limited stimulus field*
Experience is *autotelic* in that participants will try to produce this same state again, no matter their initial motivation for doing an activity

Throughout her study, Willig (2005) referred to the importance and experience of ‘flow’ for individuals who participate in extreme sports.

4. Models of Motivation

Achieving a state of flow, acts as one possible motivation for participating in adventure experiences. Some other factors that might motivate participants are the choice of behaviour, ability to sustain their behaviour, direction and intensity of the effort and the resulting behavioural change (Priest & Gass, 1997). Priest and Gass (1997) also suggest some more theories of motivation that will influence adventure programming. These include the goal theory, expectation theory, self-efficacy theory attribution theory (locus of control), effectance and competence motivation theory and the combined theory known as the risk-taking and competence effectance. Let us briefly look at each of these theories.

a) The Goal theory

In the goal theory the participants are motivated and committed towards clear and specific goals that they set on their own or maybe with some assistance from the facilitators.

b) The Expectancy theory

With the expectancy theory participants want to know whether their efforts will lead to some performance and what the value of this will be. Here the facilitator plays an important supportive and training role.

c) The Self-efficacy theory

The self-efficacy theory states that expectations of participants will vary according to strength (how long to hold on the expectations), magnitude (degree of certainty) and generality (degree to which benefits may be transferred to another situation).

d) The Attribution theory

Causality, stability and controllability are important elements of the Attribution theory in which a person's locus of control plays a key role (Weiner in Priest & Gass, 1997). This locus of control pertains to what an individual attributes his/her successes and failures to, internal/external, stable /unstable circumstances. In other words, what they believe causes them to fail or succeed.

e) The Effectiveness and Competency theory

White (as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997) describes that the effectiveness and competence theory suggests a participant's motivation depend a lot on the perceived competence of their own abilities to have an effect on their environment.

f) The Risk-taking and Competence theory-combined

According to Priest and Klint (as cited in Priest & Gass, 1997) the final motivation theory, the risk-taking and competence theory combines all the above theories by proposing that your experience will determine the type of feedback loop you fall into. This will be a determinant of your reactions to the next similar situation. This model focuses on three possible feedback loops, the positive (eustress), neutral and negative (distress) feedback loop. Misadventure will for instance feed back into the negative/distress feedback loop where adventure will probably feed back into the positive/eustress feedback loop.

Having some level of understanding of these theories and motivations it is now valuable to look at studies done, specifically related to AREL.

2.3.7 Research on AREL

The current research study is similar to a study done by Human (2006) whose aim was to enhance the personal growth and professional development of psychology masters students. These similarities lie therein that participants also consisted of the MA Counselling Psychology group (1999 year group), also from the UP. These students also participated in an adventure course and their written reports were also analysed from a phenomenological perspective, using Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological research method. The study differs from the current study in that he used AREL, in the form of ropes courses for this, and this was only participated in for one day. (Human, 2006)

Human (2006) found the following: "The students experienced challenges to their personal boundaries, became aware of their own anxiety and how they cope with it, the

roles that they fulfil within a group, the re-establishment of group cohesion, and trust/distrust in themselves and other people" (p.229). Human concluded by describing how the use of adventure activities in experiential learning may assist to enhance the students' personal growth and professional development (Human, 2006; Carlson & McKenna, 2000). Human (2006) suggested that one limitation to his study was that only little emphasis was placed on the "transfer (of) their experiences on the ropes courses to their professional lives" (p. 229). This question was focused on in this current research study. Another limitation was that only one adventure activity was used for one day. In the current research study the two year-groups of participants participated in various adventure activities over a week.

Human (2008) did another study; on the 2001 year group Ma Counselling Psychology students of the UP. In this study his focus was from a narrative position and more specifically focussed on the participants' professional development. Here he found that the adventure program resulted in unique outcomes being created for the participants, changing narratives from having an individualistic character to a more collective character. (Human, 2008)

Hatch and McCarthy (2005) did a study on the group functioning of seventy-six members of college student organisations. These participants participated in a half-day low-element challenge course. They found evidence for an "increase in cohesion, personal, and group effectiveness stemming from challenge course participation" (Hatch & McCarthy, 2005, p.257). In their study on a group of student teachers, Carlson and McKenna (2000) reported that individualising, peer group influencing, goal formulation, anxiety, peer group support, supportive environment, coping mechanisms, professional outcomes and subjective perceptions were the emerging themes. In his paper on the value of adventure learning in an organizational context, Dwyer, (2006), showed the relevance of adventure learning in enhancing personal knowledge and also practical understanding within the organizational context. Hwang (2003) indicated the impact of adventure on teamwork attitudes of participants. In another study on the value of adventure, Eilers (1997) spoke about her own personal growth through the medium of adventure.

In phenomenologically studying the experiences of participants of extreme sports, Willig (2005) concluded that the following themes: context, challenge, suffering and other people were found in all of the participants' descriptions of their experiences of the particular phenomenon. Martin and Leberman, (2005) did quantitative and qualitative research on the outward bound experience and found that the participants experienced an increased level of self- confidence, self-awareness leading to personal growth. Similarly, Loeffler (2005) did a study on participants in a college-based outdoor program, including activities such as backpacking, rock-climbing, and kayaking and found the following emerging themes: Self-discovery and gaining perspective, connections with others and spiritual connection with the outdoors.

Collectively these studies suggest that adventure based experiential learning does result in some form of change or development whether it is personal; self-awareness, self-discovery, gaining perspective, personal knowledge, awareness of boundaries, trust, coping mechanisms or professional; teamwork, connection with others, practical knowledge and roles (Carlson & McKenna, 2000; Dwyer, 2006; Eilers, 1997; Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Holman and McAvoy (2005); Human, 2006, 2008; Hwang, 2003; Loeffler, 2005; Martin & Leberman, 2005; Nadler, 1995; Ng, 2001). The overall effects of adventure therapy thus seem to be positive and ongoing (Neill, 2003).

As we have explored literature on experiential education and adventure-based education is widely available. It does seem that less information exists regarding the use of adventure in post-graduate psychology training. Thus the research question could not fully be answered by the literature. Literature did give some indication as to what type of experiences could be expected and what could have influenced this. In the previous and current chapters, the goals of the research study followed by research on the literature, pertaining to the topic was fully investigated. In the following chapter we will explore the context and also the research method used in this research study.

CHAPTER 3
EQUIPMENT FOR THE ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE

Having thoroughly explored the building blocks of experiential learning and adventure, we should be prepared and ready to continue on our adventure experience. But, before we continue lets swiftly look at the equipment that was necessary for this experience. This equipment includes the people who were chosen to explore their adventures and the equipment and method, so to speak, which made this experience possible. In other words, the goal of this chapter is to describe the research inquiry that was followed during the research study, by stating the research context(s) (3.1), research participants (3.2), research position (3.3), research data (3.4), research quality (3.5), research ethics (3.6) and relevance of the research (3.7).

3.1 CONTEXT

There are two contexts relevant to this research study, one being the academic context (3.3.1) and the other the organisational context (3.3.2). Let us take some time to look at these and the roles they might have played.

3.1.1 Academic Context

As mentioned earlier, two contexts are relevant to this study, firstly let's look at the academic context, which is the Psychology Department of UP. Amongst various other courses three Master of Arts (MA) Psychology courses are presented at UP. These courses are: MA Research Psychology, MA Clinical Psychology and MA Counselling Psychology (Community or Sport specialization) (Human, 2006). The context relevant to this study is the last one namely the MA Counselling Psychology course which is presented over a period of two years. During this course students are trained as practitioners and researchers/scientists (Human, 2006, 2008). The current research study is the main requirement of the latter.

As an MA Counselling Psychology student, I was required to write a proposal on a topic of my choice. Because of the thesis being written in this academic context it had certain influences on me as a researcher. I had to, for instance focus more on the theoretical than the practical aspects, do thorough research instead of portraying my opinion alone and learn how to communicate in a written manner that would make sense to any reader. It was important for me to be aware of these influences during my research. I had to learn to embrace this research study as experiential learning.

There are conflicting interests when looking at the different aspects of this study. The one is an academic context in which the acquisition of knowledge in order to generalise is important and the other being the experiential context in which individual experiences and reflection are of immeasurable value. The challenge was to attempt considering both frameworks in doing and presenting the research while being aware that I was more drawn to one than the other. I tend to show more interest in the experiential context. This is perhaps due to my love for nature and adventure, sports and new challenges. In spite of this preference the next context to explore is the organisational context.

3.1.2 Organisational Context

In their MA I year of training, the MA Counselling Psychology students (of which I was one) participated in an adventure programme. The multiple activity adventure programme included the following adventure activities: an obstacle course, sea kayaking, abseiling, mountain biking and group therapy sessions (which to most of us showed similarities to adventure programmes in being risky, challenging and unfamiliar!)This programme was conducted at the facilities of Glenmore Ecoventures. Each of the different activities, except the group sessions was done in the following manner. First there was a *briefing* of the activity, then the *activity* took place after which *debriefing* was done. It was the adventure facilitator's role to guide this process/activity. The layout of the programme for the week was similar for each day. The following is an example of the programme:

Table 3.1 Day programme for MA Counselling Psychology students at Glenmore Ecoventures

07h00- 07h30	Coffee and Tee
07h30- 10h00	Group Session
10h00- 11h00	Brunch Time
11h00- 17h00	Adventure Activity
17h00- 18h00	Free Time
18h00- 19h00	Supper Time
19h00- 19h30	Free Time
19h30- 22h00	Group Session

Having taken part in this adventure experience myself it was important to try and understand the influence of this on the analysis of the data and the writing of the report. I realised that I would draw from my experience when reminded of it, as I read through the experiences of others. In an attempt to lessen this effect I applied a technique known as *bracketing* as discussed in section 3.5.4 of this chapter. My aim was also to regularly reflect on my thoughts and emotions during the analysis process. I was also aware of the fact that I am fascinated and excited by the adventure experience and thus had to take care not to look within the text for similarities to my experience. The consequences of this could then ultimately have made it my experience and not the participants', which directly opposes the goal of the research study. Talking about participants we will now take a closer look at the people involved in this research study.

3.1 PARTICIPANTS

Three categories of participants took part in this study. The first category includes the sample of participants (3.2.1) whose reports on their adventures experiences were used as the data for this research study. The second included the facilitators (3.2.2) and myself as the researcher (3.2.3).

3.2.1 MA Counselling Psychology Students (participants)

A non-random purposive sampling method was used for this research study. This means that the researcher selected the members of the sample based the specific characteristics according to the goals of the research (Strydom & Venter, 2002; Whitley, 2002).Whitley (2002) also mentions another sampling method relevant to this study known as convenience sampling. All of the participants had to participate in the adventure week and reflect on this experience as part of their training, it was thus convenient for me to use the data. Singleton in Wilson and Washington (2007) explained that "in phenomenological research, sampling strategies focus on identifying and locating participants who are considered experts on the phenomenon under study" (p. 64). They also suggested that the "participants are either living the experience or have lived the experience" (Wilson & Washington, 2007, p. 64).

The sample for this research study consisted of two groups of students who participated in the MA Counselling Psychology course at UP in two consecutive years, making this a cross-sectional study. All the participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) Postgraduate MA Counselling Psychology students at the UP in either 2005 or 2006 and (b) participated in the adventure training 'camp' in the two respective years, that was compulsory for them in order to complete this degree. The first group of 8 students participated in the adventure experience in June 2005. The second group of 11 students (excluding myself) completed this adventure course in July 2006. The demographic detail of these groups consisted of a range of ages and races as well as both sexes as can be seen in the table below.

Table 3.2 2005 and 2006 Group Participant information:

2005 Group

Participant	Age	Gender	Race
Participant A	31	Female	African
Participant B	24	Male	European
Participant C	41	Female	European
Participant D	22	Female	Indian
Participant E	47	Female	European
Participant F	44	Female	European
Participant G	25	Female	European
Participant H	28	Male	European

2006 Group

Participant	Age	Gender	Race
Participant I	31	Male	European
Participant J	34	Female	African
Participant K	26	Female	African
Participant L	29	Female	European
Participant M	24	Female	European
Participant N	30	Female	Coloured
Participant O	28	Female	European
Participant P	24	Female	European
Participant Q	26	Female	European
Participant R	31	Female	European
Participant S	42	Male	European

African includes all the various african cultures
Eupean includes cultures such as Greek, Scottish and so forth

3.2.2 Facilitators

The activities and processes occurring during the adventure week were all facilitated by certain individuals:

1. **Activity Facilitator:**

The activities were facilitated by X, an ARA Level 2 Qualified facilitator. It was his responsibility to introduce the activity to the participants and then to guide them through it (Priest & Gass, 1997). Although thoroughly involved and securing the safety of the participants, he never took on the role of the leader and avoided interfering with the group process, unfolding amongst the participants.

2. **Group Facilitators:**

Prof Dave Beyers (BA (US), BTh (US), Licenciate Theology (US), BA Honours

(Psych) (UNISA), MA Clinical (Psych) (UNISA), DPhil (OFS), practicing clinical psychologist and retired lecturer at the UP department of psychology) and Dr Lourens Human (MDiv Practical Theology (UP), MA Counselling Psychology (RAU), PhD (Psychology) (UP), practicing counselling psychologist and course co-ordinator and lecturer at the UP department of psychology) facilitated the group therapy sessions during the adventure week. They used the co-therapist technique where one therapist guided the group sessions and co-therapist had the function mostly of an observer (Yalom, 1995). According to Yalom (1995) the advantages of this method of group therapy lies in that "together, their cognitive and observational range is greater: their two points of view generate more hunches and more strategies" (p. 414).

3.2.3 Researcher

As the researcher, I was also a participant in the 2006 group of this research study. I did my undergraduate training in Sport Psychology at UP where I had research design subjects and completed various short research studies for this purpose. I also completed my Honours degree in Psychology at UP and completed this with a research essay and qualitative research study. I then did my MA I year of the MA Counselling Psychology course in 2006. I completed the MA II year (2007) of this full-time two-year course as an intern at Stabilis Treatment Centre, a substance dependence rehabilitation centre. At Stabilis Treatment Centre I gained experience in a multidimensional context specifically focused on group, individual and family therapy.

I am currently completing my MA Counselling Psychology (Sport) degree at UP, which requires that I complete a research study as part of the course. After completion of my 12-month internship and this research study I will move on to write the board exam. This is required by the Professional Board of Psychology of the HPCSA, in order for me to register and practise as a counselling psychologist in South Africa (Beyers, 1981; Human, 2006). At present I am unemployed and working full-time on my research project.

After getting to know our partners in this adventure experience, let us take a look at the

position that was used in this research study.

3.3 POSITION

To do a research study one needs to use a certain design and position from which you will work. These will now briefly be introduced to ensure the reader understands the perspective from which I, the researcher, viewed and did this research study. We will explore how I used a qualitative research design (3.3.1) and worked from a phenomenological perspective (3.3.2), taking a look also at some phenomenological research (3.3.3).

3.3.1 Qualitative Research Design

The research takes on the form a qualitative research design. There are a variety of different research designs that fall under the umbrella of *qualitative* research according to Fouche (2002). These include: ethnography, phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interactionism and grounded theory. This study observed and aimed to describe the experience of the participants from a phenomenological perspective. This design was chosen because I was exposed to it during my honors year in psychology at the UP and wanted to explore it even further.

Allison and Pomeroy (as cited in Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006), suggested that traditional quantitative methods may be inappropriate for the ever-changing realities experienced during a challenge course programme. They encouraged researchers interested in experiential learning to move from asking questions of efficacy and the question of "Does it work?" toward asking questions of "What processes are at work in this situation?" or "What are participants' perspectives on the experiential education program?" (Allison & Pomeroy, as cited in Wolfe & Dattilo, 2006, p. 96). Martin and Leberman (2005) found in their study that “qualitative responses encapsulated the value and “real” meaning of these personal experiences” (p. 44). In addition to following a qualitative research design, I also worked from a specific perspective,

known as phenomenology. More specifically, Husserl's descriptive phenomenological tradition will be followed (Laverty, 2003). Willig and Stainton, (2008) compared qualitative descriptive research and qualitative interpretive research and found that different from describing the experiences, "the latter aspires to generate an understanding of how people come to experience the world and themselves in a particular way" (p. 8). We will look firstly at what phenomenology is and where it came from (3.3.2) followed by some phenomenological research that has been done (3.3.3).

3.3.2 Phenomenology

In this section we will have a look at phenomenology, its history and some of its traditions and then we will look more specifically at Giorgi's view on phenomenology.

1. **History and Traditions of Phenomenology**

The field of *phenomenological psychology* differs from traditional empirical psychology in that phenomenological psychology is interested only in the essence of a phenomenon and not in the facts as such (Van Manen in Wilson & Washington, 2007). This means that the theory tries to explain these essences as unities of sense within the realm uncovered by a typical phenomenological-psychological reduction (Kockelmans, 1987). Neel (1977) reported that it "focussed upon the individual's experience itself and sought to understand human activity in the light of such an experience" (p. 419). This view was supported by Wilson and Washington (2007). In short, the primary objective of phenomenology is to describe human experience as it is lived (Merleau-Ponty, 1962; Valle & Halling, 1989).

Edmunt Husserl was seen as the founder of phenomenological philosophy in the 20th Century (Giorgi, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003; Olive, 2008). "In the process of tackling logical problems, Husserl developed a new perspective towards philosophical problems that he came to call phenomenology" (Giorgi, 2008, p 34). Husserl's descriptive transcendental phenomenology focused on discovering the essence of human experience while Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology focused

more on an interpretive understanding of experience (Annells, 1996; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003; Ryba, 2008;). In his book, *Being and Time*, Heidegger (Heidegger, 1927/1962) described the superficial meaning of *phenomenology* to be "the science of phenomena" (p. 50). To differentiate some more, Husserl mentioned that the researcher needed to bracket his/her past knowledge and experiences in order to correctly describe the essence of the participant's experience (Laverty, 2003). Heidegger and Gadamere on the other hand encouraged the researchers to use their experiences and assumptions while reflecting on and attempting to understand others' experiences (Annells, 1996; Laverty, 2003). Many others followed in their footsteps, one in particular, Amedeo Giorgi, editor of the Journal of Phenomenological Psychology (Giorgi, 1998). This research study used a phenomenological research method developed by Giorgi, but before elaborating on this let us look at how Giorgi views phenomenology.

2. Giorgi's view on Phenomenology

Giorgi (2008) understood phenomenology in the following manner:

> "We are not trying to understand the individual. We are trying to grasp a typical *essence of a psychological phenomenon*. Since it is an essence we are *describing*, the individual details as such do not matter. Moreover, this is a descriptive task. With the help of *imaginative variation* one describes the essential features of the phenomenon as they *intuitively* present themselves to the *consciousness* of the researcher. It has to be emphasized that this is not a theoretical effort."
>
> (Giorgi, 2008, p 51)

The above quote by Giorgi echo's his views on phenomenology through several of his published articles and books (Giorgi, 1997, 1999; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). I will attempt to give an explanation of some terms in this quote as an understanding of how Giorgi looked at phenomenological psychology. We will look at some key aspects deemed as characteristics of phenomenological psychology. These were mostly influenced by the works of Edmund Husserl and Maurice Merleau-Ponty amongst others (De Castro, 2003, Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). In aligning himself with French

existential phenomenologist philosopher Merleau-Ponty, "who thinks phenomenology is best understood in the light of the phenomenological method" (De Castro, 2003, p.4), Giorgi based his work on the following characteristics of phenomenology: (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi, 1997)

a) Descriptive
b) Intentionality
c) Attitude of reductionism
d) Search for essences

a) Descriptive

Description, according to Mohanty (in Giorgi, 1997) is to articulate the intentional objects of consciousness within the constraints of intuitive evidence by using language. Basically, it is to describe something as it appears. Different from interpretation, description does not bring a perspective to the phenomena (Giorgi, 1997). In phenomenological psychology and its research methods the aim is to take the everyday 'life-world" (lebenswelt) (Husserl, 1913/1982) experiences of people and give a detailed and concrete description of these (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2008; Laverty, 2003; Merleau-Ponty, 1962) Descriptions given by ordinary people are done from a 'natural attitude' (Giorgi, 1997).

It is important to understand that a phenomenon is understood as a 'given'. This means "the presence of any given precisely as it is given or experienced..., it is its presence for the experience that counts", thus how it is perceived or what it means (Giorgi, 1997, p. 237). Phenomenology is concerned with describing how this phenomenon is lived (Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003). The consciousness of a person plays an important role here. This will be explained in the next section, intentionality. "The method of phenomenology is foremost in its attempt to safeguard intentionality by pure description of what presents itself in experience" (Beshai, 1971, p.216).

b) Intentionality

Intentionality is the next important characteristic we need to investigate. We will start off by looking at how Corriveau (1972) understood this term:

> "Phenomenological psychology enlarges the depth and breadth of its descriptive view- point on human behaviour by beginning its study with a radically different perspective on man, most notably, the constant awareness of human intentionality and the concept of "behaviour" as man's basic relatedness to a situation, indeed, to the world."
>
> (Corriveau, 1972, p. 9)

The concept of intentionality originated with Brentano, Husserl's teacher. Husserl changed it in order for consciousness to be understood as consciousness of something (independent of consciousness itself), thus directed towards an object (Giorgi, 1997; Laverty, 2003; Wentz, 2005). Corriveau (1972) explains, Merleau-Ponty believes that "the most fundamental structure is the relationship of intentionality, i.e., being-in-the-world, being-for-the-world, and being basically directed to the world" (p. 32). According to De Castro (2003), "intentionality refers to the intentional act to which every human being is related to the world and objects" (p. 4).

In relating intentionality to consciousness, consciousness will always be consciousness of a particular thing (De Castro, 2003). Giorgi (1999) explains that: "the essence of consciousness is intentionality" (p. 79). This means that a person will always be, in relation to an object. Giorgi (1997) described this intentional relation in stating that, "to be in a state of desire implies that something is desired, or that to know means that one knows something" (p. 238). Wentz (2005) explains that intentionality is all about the relational context as it reveals a 'world'. This socially shared world is understood, as mentioned earlier, by the term "life-world" (lebenswelt) (Wentz, 2005; Corriveau, 1972). Consciousness also has another function, "to bestow meanings on the objects which are constituted by it" (Giorgi, 1999, p.79). In phenomenology, there is a search for these essences, which

constitutes phenomena or object.

c) Search for Essences

In descriptive phenomenology there is a search for the essences of an experience. Beshai (1971) understands this in the following manner:

> "Because experience is a real means by which man relates to the world, and because the intentionality of behaviour cannot be studied without the intentionality of experience, phenomenology as a method has to concern itself with the eidetic structure, or the essence of phenomena."
>
> (Beshai, 1971, p.216)

When the essence of a phenomenon is discussed it refers to what the phenomenon cannot be without, what it is made of (De Castro, 2003; Edie, as cited in Laverty, 2003; Giorgi, 1999). These can also be described as the structure or unchangeable features of the phenomenon (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi, 2008). The researcher's goal will be to describe these essential features of phenomena. Giorgi (2008) explains that these features intuitively present themselves to the researcher's consciousness, assisted by imaginative variation. Firstly let us look at what he means by 'intuitively presents themselves'.

Giorgi (2002) describes phenomenology as a "philosophy of intuition" (p. 9). The phenomenological perspective therefore aims to look at and understand the meanings of experiences, also taking into account the experience of the researcher/observer. We will later observe the value of intuition in the phenomenological research method. Another term mentioned in the previous paragraph, was that is imaginative variation.

Giorgi (1997) indicates that "free imaginative variation is a natural method for discovering essences (p. 244). Wentz (2005) understood it in a similar manner. In this method, the aim is to see whether a phenomenon remains identifiable or the

same when changing various parts of it. The researcher needs to come up with new options, by applying imaginative variation the researcher will be able to determine which parts or structures of the phenomenon is essential in its existence (Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003). Imaginative variation is a very important concept of the phenomenology of Husserl (De Castro, 2003; Wentz, 2005). Another very important characteristic of phenomenological psychology as used by Husserl is that of assuming an attitude of phenomenological reduction (Wentz, 2005).

d) Phenomenological Attitude of Reduction – phenomenological attitude, bracketing, sensitive to discipline

For the final characteristic let us look at a quote by Giorgi (1997) supported also by Giorgi and Giorgi (2008):

> "The purpose of the phenomenological reduction is precisely to understand the natural attitude better", without it "no phenomenological claims for the analysis could be made."
>
> (Giorgi, 1997, p. 243, p. 244)

In explaining what is meant by attitude of reduction, it is essential to understand that something experienced by a person is seen as a phenomenon (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). In assuming the attitude of reduction the phenomenological psychologist avoids looking for causal relationships or conditions or try to understand why things are or what laws and concepts plays a role. Phenomenological reduction assists the researcher in keeping what presented itself in the natural attitude (that of the participant) (Giorgi, 1997). How it this possible when the researcher herself also has a perspective of her own on the phenomenon being studied?

In answering the above question once again we turn to Giorgi (2002) who mentioned that in phenomenology, it's important to understand the role of subjectivity and not to try and eliminate it. This obstacle is confronted by Olive (2008) in stating that: "by avoiding preconceptions, the researcher is able instead to rely on intuition, that is,

what is phenomenologically present, to grasp essential psychological meaning of the experience, and is thus able to escape the danger of finding only what is expected" (p. 87). It is therefore important, within the attitude of reduction to bracket any past knowledge that one may have of a particular phenomenon to see it more clearly (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003; Wilson & Washington, 2007). In phenomenology bracketing is totally implemented and on a regular basis (Giorgi, 1999). One should also be "sensitive to the perspective of his or her discipline (psychology, sociology, etcetera) and with a sensitivity to the phenomenon being researched (learning, group dynamics, etcetera.)" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 244).

We now have some idea of the characteristics of phenomenological psychology, most important to Giorgi. The following quote by Giorgi aptly summarizes these:

"Consciousness refers to the awareness of the system, "embodied-self-world-others," all of which (and aspects and parts of which) are intuitable, that is, presentable; and precisely as they are presented, without addition or deletion, that is the strict meaning of phenomenon. Phenomenon within phenomenology always means that whatever is given, or present itself, is understood precisely as it presents itself to the consciousness of the person entertaining the awareness. Intentionality means that an act of consciousness is always directed to an object that transcends it. Phenomenology is concerned with the phenomena that are given to experiencing individuals, because nothing is possible if one does not take consciousness into account, but all of the givens must be understood in their given modalities, as phenomena, that is, not as real existents. Within phenomenology this is possible because one is concerned with the objects of intuition to which consciousness is necessarily directed, and these objects do not have to have the characteristic of being "real." Even when they are experienced as "real," that characteristic is bracketed and they are analyzed in their phenomenal status."

(Giorgi, 1997, p. 238)

Now, phenomenological psychology when it is applied in the phenomenological research method is under scrutiny.

3.3.3 Phenomenological Research

This section on phenomenological research consists of firstly looking at some history and traditions of phenomenological research followed by information on Giorgi's phenomenological research method.

1. History and Traditions of Phenomenological Research

Colaizzi, one of Husserl's students (in Beshai, 1971) describes two methods in phenomenology: the method of individual reflection and that of phenomenal study. The phenomenal study, of relevance here, aims to collect descriptive data and priority is given to the intentionality (meaningfulness) of the experience, over the experimental design (Beshai, 1971). Wentz (2005) argues that in phenomenological research methods the "research is descriptive, uses phenomenological reductions, investigates the intentional relationship between persons and situations, and provides knowledge of psychological essences (that is, the structures of meaning immanent in human experience) through imaginative variation" (p. 170). This statement is echoed in Laverty (2003). Creswell (1998) similarly suggested that the process of reduction, analysing specific statements and searching for possible meanings in data is what constitutes a phenomenological data analysis.

In their chapter on phenomenological psychology Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) mentioned four types of phenomenological research methods in psychology in the 21rst century. These are: Goethean pre-philosophical experimental phenomenology, Grass-roots phenomenology, Interpretive phenomenology, Descriptive pre-transcendental Husserlian phenomenology and Husserlian phenomenology based on a return from the transcendental. The type that concerns this specific phenomenological study is the fourth type, Descriptive pre-transcendental Husserlian phenomenology. This method was originally developed by American psychologist Amedeo Giorgi based on works by

Edmund Husserl (1982) and Merleau-Ponty's (1962) insights (Giorgi, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Olive, 2008; Wentz, 2005). The following section will attempt to give some insight into the phenomenological research method developed by Amedeo Giorgi.

2. Giorgi's Phenomenological Research Method

In creating a phenomenological research method, Giorgi (2008) stated that: "all I did was adapt a pre-existing philosophical method in such a way that it could be used for studying psychological phenomena within a scientific context (p. 34). According to Giorgi (2002) "the goal of phenomenology is to arrive at a structural understanding of specific and concrete experiences by being fully and critically present to situations where the desired experiences take place" (p. 10). The goal of the phenomenological research methods is to eventually give a "careful description of the structure of the lived experience of that phenomenon in a particular type of situation" (Giorgi, 2008, p. 41). The meaning of the lived experiences of participants, the essence of a phenomenon is thus described in a phenomenological study (Creswell 1998; Giorgi 1997, 1999; Giorgi &Giorgi, 2008; Laverty, 2003; Olive, 2008; Valle & Halling; 1989). This method place emphasis on the descriptions from research participants, and concentrate on the structuring activities of experience (Creswell, 1998). It is thus qualitative and descriptive. The phenomenological research method developed by Giorgi consists of the following series of steps (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi 1997, 1999, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008).

In the first step the data is collected by obtaining concrete descriptions of a lived phenomenon (in which the researcher is interested) from the life-world of the participants, as understood from the natural attitude. In the next step an attitude of phenomenological reduction is assumed by the researcher, where past knowledge about the phenomenon is withheld, no existential claim is made for the description and sensitivity is given to the discipline from which the researcher is working. Thirdly, the aim is to get an understanding of the whole by reading all the data. This helps the researcher familiarise herself with the data and to start the process of discovering relevant lived meanings. In the fourth step the reader starts from the beginning of the

data again, this time with the aim is to break it up into ‘meaning units’, in other words, manageable parts. These meaning units are formed by the researcher’s activity and attitude.

In step number five the first actual transformation of the data takes place. Raw data from the natural attitude of a participant is transformed into expressions with disciplinary value. The researcher depends of intuition in this step followed by imaginative variation. Each meaning unit is related to the topic being studied. The sixth step entails expressing the structure of the phenomenon or experience. Again free imaginative variation is utilised in order to ensure that the essences/structures found are crucial to the existence of the described phenomenon. In the current study, this structure will be based on the concrete lived experiences of several participants. This structure pertains to essences and their relationships. In a further step the structure is checked against the transformed meaning units and finally Transformed meaning units are now compared and integrated to give a sense of the whole, a structure of the phenomenon under study. This it lastly compared to literature.

As the researcher, my aim was to describe the essence of the participants’ experience of the lived phenomenon, the adventure week. In his study Giorgi (2008) states that: “Phenomenological researchers use several participants in order to come up with a better single finding concerning the phenomenon or several instances in order to understand the individual’s way of experiencing the phenomenon” (p 37). This was also mentioned in Giorgi (1997). It is partly for this reason that the experiences of 19 participants were analysed and not only of one individual. Having looked at the position assumed in this study, we will now get a clearer picture of the process of how the data was handled.

3.4 RESEARCH DATA

The data for this research study was produced, analyzed and reported by means of the following process: data collection (3.4.1), data transcription (3.4.2), data analysis (3.4.3) and data reporting (3.4.4).

3.4.1 Data Collection

My aim as the researcher was to get a thorough/concrete description and detailed picture of the participants' beliefs, perceptions and experiences (De Vos, 2002; Giorgi, 1997, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). As part of the adventure experience all participants were asked to write essays on the following two topics; (1) about their experiences of the training camp and the various adventure activities and (2) on how they believe this experience will influence them as professional psychologists, in the form of a personal journal. This research study thus uses a document study procedure and the type of data is known as the primary source as it is the "original written material of the author's own experiences and observation" (Strydom & Delport, 2002, p. 322). It is noted that the writing of the essays was in part done in retrospect. This could have resulted in participants forgetting parts of their experience, whether it being physical or emotional elements, possibly somewhat influencing the reliability of the data. The students gave verbal consent to the lecturer and course leader, Dr L. H. Human, for the data to be used in this study. Their written consent was obtained in order for me to use these essays as data for the research study.

As a participant in the adventure week, I also had to write these essays and thus shared this experience with the participants of this research study. As the researcher and also a MA Counselling Psychology student, it was necessary to bracket my experiences to set aside any prejudgements. In order to get a picture of the experiences of the participants, I relied on the emerging psychological meanings and my phenomenological intuition (Creswell, 1998; Giorgi, 2002; Olive, 2008).

3.4.2 Data Transcription

The data was received in the form of reflective descriptive essays. The essays were then copied and converted into column format, by me the researcher, in order to make the identification of the meaning units easier.

3.4.3 Phase 3: Data Analysis

The *Duquesne Phenomenological Research Method (DPRM)* (Giorgi, 1997, 2008, Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008; Van Vuuren, 1991) was used in analysing the data. Being interested in *how* the phenomenon was lived as suggested by Giorgi (2008), this measure was expected to assist me, to arrive at the structure of the subjective experiences of the participants, of this particular phenomenon. The participants' essays on the two questions were analysed using the DPRM.

Seven basic steps, as thoroughly discussed in section 3.3.3. and summarised in Van Vuuren (1991) was followed in analysing the data from the essays. They were the following: (Van Vuuren, 1991, p. 55-56)

1. Overall Perspective: researcher gets an overall perspective of the data
2. Natural *meaning units* are identified which reflect the central themes in the data
3. Revelatory description: what is relevant to the study
4. Situated structure: the data is organized into a coherent account
5. General structure: the data is organized into a coherent general account of the structure of that type of experience independent of the specific context
6. Extended description: the *central themes* and processes integrated into a summary
7. General structure: the data from several participants are used

After analysis the data was reported in the following manner.

3.4.4 Reporting

Giorgi (2008) explained that: "the result is not a definition of the phenomenon, but a careful description of the structure of the lived experience of that phenomenon in a particular type of situation" (p. 41) and "the structure is not a summary of the empirical facts but rather a way of understanding the lived experience in an essential way. (p. 47). After analysis, the structure of the transformed meaning units and central themes that were found in the data analysis was shared with the reader and examples from the data were used to illustrate these. It was also related to literature. This discussion was followed by a summary to attempt to create a sense of the whole of the participants' combined experiences to describe the essence of the particular phenomenon being studied (De Castro, 2003). An important question to now answer, after looking at obtaining and using the data, is how the quality of this research was ensured.

3.5 QUALITY

As the researcher, I aimed to keep the quality of the research at a high level by applying the criteria of Credibility and Transferability (3.5.1), Dependability and Reliability (3.5.2), Conformability (3.5.3) and Bracketing (3.5.4).

3.5.1 Credibility and Transferability

Credibility wants to ensure that the participants' experiences is correctly identified and described (De Vos, 2002). I attempted to ensured credibility by thorough analysis of the essays. Through an in-depth analysis of the data I spent a lot of time with the essays. In this manner prolonged engagement with the data was ensured. Having also been part of the adventure week, I could easily grasp the context in which the experiences were lived and recorded. It is noted though, that only the participants themselves can truly judge the credibility of this study.

I attempted to ensure transferability by providing a detailed description of the

participants and the research context, and giving clear parameters as to the theoretical concepts or assumption, being that of phenomenology as understood by Giorgi, that were used in this study (De Vos, 2002; Krefting, 1991).

3.5.2 Dependability and Reliability

By giving a dense description of the research method, data collection and analysis I attempted to ensure dependability (Krefting, 1991). Dependability was also attempted by the research being done with two groups of two different years participating in a similar experience. It is thus important to mention that there would have been slight contextual differences between the experiences two year groups, but essentially the core elements were similar, that being the facilitators, venue and basic program. Coding-recoding was also used where the researcher analysed the data at a certain point in time, left it for a while, and then analysed the data once again (De Vos, 2002). The two sets of data analysis were then compared with one another.

The reliability of the data was ensured by the fact that participants kept a detailed journal during the week and could refer back to this when they wrote the essays at the end of the week. Using a methodological tool known as triangulation ensured that various descriptions of the same phenomenon was studied (De Vos, 2002), which led to the findings being more reliable.

3.5.3 Conformability

Conformability was ensured as the data analysis and results was presented to an independent psychologist for evaluation as suggested by De Vos (2002).

3.5.4 Bracketing

I had to take care during interpretation of the results because of my personal involvement in the specific experience as suggested by Creswell (1998). It is the researcher's aim to bracket all knowledge, these include established beliefs from

personal experiences, theories, past knowledge (Giorgi 1985, 2008; Olive, 2008; Wilson & Washington, 2007).This had to be done because one tends to seek information to reinforce one's personal beliefs and experiences. As the researcher, I attempted to focus solely on the information given by the participants about their experiences and be mindful of my preconceptions with regards to the phenomenon being studied by regularly reflecting on my presuppositions during analysis of the data (Wilson & Washington, 2007). I attempted to work with all the data, whether or not I saw it as relevant. It must be noted though that although my aim was to give only the information given by the research participants, the results and discussion cannot be solely objective (Wilson & Washington, 2007). I was challenged to also look at the present research study as another adventure experience to embark on, taking you as the adventurers with me, to have your own personal experience.

After looking at how the quality of the research study was guaranteed the ethics surrounding this research will be mentioned.

3.6 ETHICS

As the research makes use of human participants it is always important to consider the ethical issues involved. Firstly it must be ensured that no physical or psychological harm comes to the participants (De Vos et. al., 2002). Due to the fact that reports of experiences was used in this research the possibility of injury are not relevant. The participants gave verbal consent to the course leader, which gave the researcher permission to work with the data given by them. They were also asked to complete a consent form in which they gave consent and where the researcher agreed to treat all the data as confidential. Ethical considerations would have been more pertinent if the participants were under age or if the researcher was directly involved in facilitating the adventure activities. A sensitive point to be acknowledged is that I realise as the researcher that the experiences were reduced into units in order to generalize. This might leave some participants to feel that their individual experience were not important. Having looked at the above, how relevant is this research study?

3.7 RELEVANCE

This study is expected to come to some structure, through phenomenological analysis, of the essence of the phenomenon of AREL programs in training postgraduate students. In a similar phenomenological study on the adventure experiences of MA Counselling Psychology students, Human (2006) suggested that further research should include a study on a larger variety of activities as his only focused on a ropes challenge course. He also suggested that the experiences over a few days should be investigated as well as the influence of the adventure experiences on professional development of future psychologists. This current study is relevant because it was done on data of experiences of a variety of activities, over a whole week, with two different year groups and focused on the personal as well as professional development of these participants.

Furthermore, the results can be kept in mind in future planning of training programs in different courses and degrees as it is sure to indicate some essential essences without such a program should not be. This might be especially valuable in human sciences fields of study. The research results can also be a valuable source of research on experiential learning, activity–related experiential learning, and adventure training as well as on using phenomenology as a valuable method in researching these respective phenomena. This can assist in further research being done on this topic or related topics. As the researcher, I found that there is a lack of research on AREL programs pertaining specifically to professional post-graduate training in psychology done from a descriptive phenomenological perspective. The research is also relevant to the broader concept of experiential learning and its possible application in training or educational organisations and programs.

In summary we have looked at the context for this research study followed by the participants and how they were chosen. Thereafter the researcher's position, a phenomenological perspective as well as the phenomenological research method, was clearly stated and discussed. The quality of the research and how this could be ensured trailed by a discussion on important ethical considerations followed. Finally the

relevance of this research study was highlighted, where the value thereof for future use, whether it be in a practical or theoretical manner was suggested. In the following chapter we will finally attempt to answer the research question by looking at the research results in detail.

CHAPTER 4
REFLECTION ON THE ADVENTURE EXPERIENCE

In this chapter we look at the results of the phenomenological data analysis. From here, we will continue to a discussion on the findings from the analysis of the research material and onwards to the conclusion chapter. In the final chapter, all the chapters of this adventure experience are summarised to form a whole, making recommendations from the research study and its findings.

As indicated in chapter 3, the data from two consecutive year-groups of MA Counselling psychology students (2005/2006) were analysed. I analysed the essays in which the participants had to reflect on their experiences of a specific adventure week. Their reflections were guided by two topics:(1) To write about their experiences of the training camp and the various adventure activities and (2) To write about how they believe this experience will influence them as professional psychologists. During the analysis and interpretation of the data, while looking for "the unity and consistency of diverse experiences" (Giorgi, 1985, p. 176), many meaning units were consistently highlighted. These were categorised under two main sections: The first and larger section, Personal Development (4.1) could be seen as the major facet in which change took place. The second main section is Professional Development (4.2) as a psychologist. It is noted however that professional development is also influenced by the personal development of the participants. Keeping this in mind I still decided it would be relevant to this study to point out meanings found from the participants' essays specifically related to their development as psychologists.

The meaning units were seen as the main combined experiences of the participants during their adventure experience. Meaning units were then transformed to "convey the psychological meanings contained in the natural attitude expressions with the help of imaginative variation" (Giorgi, 2008, p.39). These transformed meaning units will be referred to as themes. Associations between these themes were identified that seemed to be most relevant to the general structure of the phenomenon and the themes were

reduced, resulting in four themes under each main section. The themes that emerged from the data analysis can be illustrated in the following manner:

Table 4.1 Data Structure

Main Sections	**Themes**
4.1 Personal Development	4.1.1 Self-awareness
	4.1.2 Challenging Boundaries
	4.1.3 Learning
	4.1.4 Group Cohesion
4.2 Professional Development:	4.2.1 Comfort versus Discomfort
	4.2.2 Trust
	4.2.3 Individual Differences
	4.2.4 Creating Space

Each of these themes was discussed using descriptions from participants (1.). These were then combined (2.) and related back to literature (3.) and the relevance of this theme to the structure of the phenomena as a whole. To ensure the relevance of each of the elements I checked it against the original data asking: What does the statement reveal about this phenomenon? How is this relevant? (Giorgi, 1985). In the final section of this chapter the findings on personal development and professional development is summarised (4.3) to indicate the essential structure of the experiences as found by the current study. The aim is to give a thorough description of the participants' experiences in the given structure.

4.1. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The phenomena of this particular adventure experience as part of their formal training in becoming psychologists, created a variety of responses from the 19 participants. Although, in reading each participant's essay as a whole it seemed that each individual had a very unique personal experience during this week, there seemed to be a thread of

similar underlying experiences throughout their discussions. These elements were grouped together under the section of personal development. Each of these experiences or themes had in some way or the other affected, changed or developed the individual in a personal manner and seemed to be an essential part of the structure of the particular phenomena. Martin (1999) suggested that interaction with a group can result in changing how we perceive ourselves. There were a large number of themes which surfaced from the essays, but the following four seemed to be the most crucial to the structure of the phenomena throughout the participants' discussions. These themes were; self-awareness (4.1.1), challenging boundaries (4.1.2), learning (4.1.3) and group cohesion (4.1.4). These will be followed by a conclusion of the findings on personal development (4.1.5)

4.1.1 Self-awareness

During the adventure week all 19 the participants experienced, in some way or another, an increased level of self-awareness. This becoming aware of themselves seemed to have happened through the process of reflection prompted by the activities and group sessions. This is reflected in the following statements of the participants:

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant P (2006):

> *"I now, for the first time in my life, realise that while it is so easy for others to confide in me, I have always felt that I can't do the same. Meantime, it's me making it so damn tough!!! Here I was blaming others for not probing further when I admit to not doing well, yet my manner would tell them not to dare move closer.*

Participant P realised that she had felt she showed much interest in others' emotional well-being, but that this was rarely reciprocated. She expected them to 'probe' even though her message to them was to not come near. She realised that she gave double messages to people around her which resulted in people not reacting the way she

expected them to.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"The reason for feeling that was I battled to pinpoint, but remember having the sense that although I am in a group setting, I am working hard on myself and perhaps I am not sharing it with others. For me to keep things to myself, is all too familiar…it is really an old friend of mine. Silencing some of my experiences became a way that I showed I am strong and independent, but only created in the long run, a person who achieved a lot yet cheated myself from taking that leap of expression how I feel. I have, for too long, depended too much on myself, and I chose in that moment, to learn to let go."*

During reflection in her essay, participant Q became aware once again that she tend to keep her personal experiences to herself. She realised again that she perhaps did not share with others. In order to be seen as 'strong and independent', many of her experiences were silenced and expression was not given to them. She came to the realisation that she had depended too much on herself for too long and made the decision to change this.

Participant A (2005):

> *"It got me thinking about who exactly I am. The abseiling got my emotions in turmoil."*

Participant A indicated a starting point in the process of thinking who she is, mentioning emotional turmoil due to the abseiling.

Participant C (2005):

> *"This morning things that struck me in group were the fact that I lost the impetus of being the architect of my life. I am so busy with the dream I have that I lost the being."*

Participant C came to the realisation of losing the drive of designing her own life and

thereby losing her own 'being'.

Participant H (2005):

> *"In myself a great deal of known undealt issues surfaced. Especially relating to my views on performance, competition and possibility.*

Participant H mentioned a surfacing of issues relating to his views on certain topics including performance, competition and possibility.

Participant I (2006):

> *"I became aware that I felt safer in a system where I can work towards goals which are known and achievable."*

Participant I pointed out a newly found awareness of feeling safer in a system that can provide structured, achievable and known goals.

Participant P (2006):

> *"When observing my behaviour during this week, I noticed that I have a specific pattern of behaviour when I have been hurt. I tend to withdraw, and even if this is short-lived, it definitely has an impact on others' behaviour. During my emotional disclosure I came to the conclusion that I have always felt that I am the one for ever checking up on others, yet this never seems to be reciprocated."*

Participant P indicated noticing a pattern of behaviour such as withdrawing, when getting hurt. She showed an awareness that this behaviour then affected others and feeling that she is the one to check up on others and not the other way around.

Participant N (2006):

> *"For the first time I saw myself through others' eyes. I always feel that I talk, but people do not hear what I am trying to say. The group made me realise that although I feel all the emotions inside, I do not show it externally.*

Participant N mentioned seeing herself thought others' eyes for the first time and realising, with their help, that she keeps her emotions to herself. This is in contrast with her usually felling that others are not hearing what she is trying to say.

Participant M (2006):

> *"During the week I observed more, learned more and grew more. I observed in the sense that I started seeing things that ordinarily I may not have seen- how people reacted in different ways and how I reacted in different ways depending on the circumstances."*

From the experiences of the adventure week, participant M indicated noticing people's reactions more in various contexts and also becoming aware of her own reactions in various situations.

Participant S (2006):

> *"I realise that I am quite a dominant person and my natural tendency is to want to lead, rather than listen and follow."*

Participant S became aware of his natural tendency of being dominant and a leader, rather than a listening follower.

Participant D (2005):

> *"On a whole, the interaction that took place in the group this week allowed me to explore myself through the participation in physical activities and it allowed me to get to know the people in my group a bit better as well."*

Participant D indicated how the adventure week prompted self-exploration and getting to know others in the group. Again the importance of reflection was noted.

2. Combined experiences

Instead of looking for the imperfection in others participant P decided to look at her own actions and seems to have become more aware of herself. Participant Q indicated an increased awareness of her inner workings of where she did not allow herself to be vulnerable with others, which led to her not giving expression to her feelings for fear of being seen as weak or dependent. She seemed to realise that she was no longer satisfied with this, which set the stage for change. Participants A, C, H and I all have one commonality, a type of a self-awareness they developed somewhere during their adventure experience, using words such as 'it got me thinking', 'that struck me', 'issues surfaced' and 'I became aware'. All of them came to some insight into their own functioning or thinking. These were very individual and personal experience although all experienced some form of reflection on their experience.

By becoming more aware of themselves, participants P, N, M and S noticed some patterns in their behaviour or thought processes. Participant N seemed to show an increased awareness of herself with the help of others. From the adventure experience participant M showed an increased awareness of her own and other people's reactions in different situations. By realising his natural tendency to lead and not follow, participant S showed an enhanced self-awareness. Participant D summed up the adventure experience by indicating the value of the combining the group interaction and the activities in exploring oneself. The participants were seemingly not previously conscious of how these various factors had affected their lives, behaviour, thoughts and feelings and how these then affected their world. By reflecting on these patterns and notions they have started a process of enhancing their self-awareness from where personal change could result.

3. Literature

As Priest and Gass (1997) explained it: "Indeed, reflection on experience is a necessary precursor to learning, for without reflection, learning loses much of its potential value." (p.17). Once the participants took the time to focus and reflect on their experiences of

the day or the week in general, they became more aware of their own behaviour, thoughts and feelings. Holman and McAvoy (2005) portrayed results from their study on 193 participants to include increased self awareness and self-understanding. From the current study participants became aware of the effect their behaviours, thoughts and feelings had on others, their surrounding environment and their lives. Some also started to make sense of their past experiences through noticing certain patterns in their own behaviour. This awareness then created the opportunity for change and growth in the participants.

Similarly to the current study, in their study on the outward bound adventure experience, Martin and Leberman (2005) found that: "the main effects of the course were an increase in participant self-awareness and self-confidence" (p.56). Similar results were also found by Loeffler (2005) on participants in a college-based outdoor program and Willig (2005) in her study on individuals who participate in extreme adventure sports. Carlson and McKenna (2000) found that participants reporting on their experiences of an adventure based program mentioned personal outcomes and subjective perceptions as some of their experiences. Similarly and increased awareness of the self can also be seen in looking at Eilers' (1997) report of her own experiences of an adventure based program.

When comparing the current study's results to that of Human (2006) who had similar participants at the same institution participating in a similar adventure experience we notice the theme of participants becoming aware of themselves in different manners throughout the results of the study. The results from the current research study thus confirm that of various others, in finding that all participants experienced form increased self-awareness during this adventure experience. By developing a general awareness through participating in the adventure week phenomenon, many participants started to notice some of their own boundaries and how these affected their functioning. Following self-awareness most of the participants came to some realisation with regards to their personal boundaries.

4.1.2 Boundaries/Limitations

Of the 19 participants, 14 mentioned that they experienced their boundaries or limitations being challenged during the adventure week. This happened in different ways for each participant and was thus quite an individual experience. Although an individual experience, most underwent some level of discomfort or confrontation during the process.

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant C (2005):

> *"That was the start of the week's experience in which I would be achieving more with my physical limitations that I would prior to my injuries."*

Participant C looked back on how, at the adventure week she achieved more than what she had before she had her injury resulting in various physical limitations.

Participant D (2005):

> *"The last activity that we were involved in was abseiling and that was the most difficult activity mentally for me to do because I was so afraid of letting go and going over the cliff…helped me to get down that cliff despite the anxiety that I was experiencing."*

Participant D reflected on abseiling as being the most difficult on a mental level. This was due to her fear of letting go. Even though anxious, she eventually did do it with the assistance of others.

Participant F (2005):

> *"Okay, in the sense of understanding as sometimes discomfort is very important. The big wave that was going to break on the kayak was symbolic to me as facing my fears. The fact that I was able to face my fear head on meant that I need to*

challenge myself daily to face whatever fear I have head on."

Participant F compared her kayaking experience with her fears in life and indicated an understanding of the value of discomfort in this process. Being able to face her fear head-on in the kayak encouraged her to face more of her fears in daily- life.

Participant G (2005):

"With regards to my development, I came to the realisation that I find it difficult to push my comfort boundaries without the support of others. As previously mentioned, I felt more uncomfortable doing the abseiling, even though I had done it many times before, because I was on my own. Whereas, in comparison to the kayaking, where I have a greater fear of water than of heights, I felt more comfortable as I had the support and shared the experience with my partner. I have come to the realisation and the start of my new adventure is that I have to learn to take the risk on moving out of my comfort zone without people there to do it with me."

Participant G realised, when reflecting on various activities the importance of having the support of others in order for her to push her own boundaries. She mentioned her discomfort with doing abseiling, although she had done it before, due to the fact that she was on her own. She compared the abseiling experience with that of kayaking, which she feared more but felt more comfortable in doing due to having the support of her partner. She realised that she was therefore more willing to push her boundaries when supported by others and mentioned that she had to learn to do this on her own also.

Participant I (2006):

"From this group session I purposefully decided to take a step back and observe how the group functions without my assistance. Initially it was a challenge not to help and I had to learn that others could do fine without me. This realization made me wonder what drove me to always take on that role. It also helped me to consider my identity as a person and to challenge the principles I had laid down for myself."

Participant I reflected on his decision not to help others and thus discovered how the group functioned without him. Initially this was a challenge and he had to accept the fact that other people can function without him. This made him question the rules he lives by.

Participant J (2006):

> *"This also challenged me to overcome one of my handicaps, that one of not being able to ask for help and feeling guilty after receiving it. I have learned to take more risks and even give constructive criticism to some members without feeling that I have offended them. This has contributed to my feeling emotionally safe within this group... This week's experience has taught me about taking more risks and learning to move beyond my comfort zone."*

In her discussion participant J shared overcoming her 'handicap' of not asking for help and feelings of guilt surrounding this. She speaks about learning to take risks and give criticism without feeling guilty. This resulted in her feeling emotionally safe in the group while teaching herself to risk going beyond her comfort zone.

Participant N (2006):

> *"With the obstacle courses I started to challenge the "limitations" I have put on myself and I enjoyed myself. I came to the realisation that I underestimate myself, because I always tell myself that I am scared and that I cannot do something. If it were not for the fact that I pushed myself a little further I would have missed out on some awesome experiences."*

In doing the obstacle courses, participant N started to challenge her self-imposed limitations and realized that she underestimated herself. This happened by telling herself that she was too scared and could therefore not do something. She came to the conclusion that she would have missed out on 'awesome' experiences, had she not been willing to push herself more.

Participant O (2006):

> *"The self discovery obstacle course extended on this experience by highlighting two limitations of mine: my fear of heights and claustrophobia. On both occasions, group members provided the safety net for me to succeed these challenges. This truly tapped into my trust in certain members of the group and even in the group as a whole. I found that this interpersonal experience (the support of the group) helped me overcome a personal limitation and culminated in a sense of personal empowerment. This rippled into feedback from members of the group in terms of the boundaries I set. Although setting boundaries has been an area I've developed based on prior life experience, I was unaware of the affect this has on others and I was surprised at the level of explicitness in my behaviour."*

Participant O reflected on how the obstacle course led her to become aware of two personal limitations. These were her fear of heights and claustrophobia. With the safety supplied by group members she was able to succeed, overcoming these fears and completing the challenges. She mentioned the role that trust played in her overcoming her limitations resulting in a sense of personal empowerment. This highlighted issues surrounding some of her boundaries of which she was unaware of the effects it had on others and the explicitness of her behavior.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"I challenged myself to risk more in that moment. I put anxiety in its place and walked up to the adventure, believing…truly believing that I could do this one…the one that counts. As I geared up and I felt anxiety take a hold of me, I posed a sensible question to myself: Why do people abseil anyway? As I leaned back and exhaled, I let go of fear and left everything at the top of the cliff.*
>
> "*I opened up honestly about how I have struggled from time to time in asking and receiving help and therefore I trusted more in the eleven other people sharing that moment with me."*

Participant Q reflected on how the abseiling activity made her choose to risk more, setting aside her anxiety, confronting the activity while believing in her ability to do it and mentioning how it was important to do so. When preparing for the activity, she started to feel anxious and questioned why people participated in abseiling and then she let go, abseiling down the cliff and leaving the fear at the top. In the second quote participant Q spoke about opening up to the group and sharing how she struggled to ask for and receive help and this resulting in trusting the group more.

2. Combined experiences

It seemed that participant C overcame some boundaries which she had not been able to overcome even while she was still physically able. In reflecting on the adventure week, participant D indicated overcoming a mental boundary of being afraid to let go when she conquered this fear in doing the abseiling activity with the help of others. Similarly, in challenging herself to risk more at the abseiling activity and believing more in herself, it seemed that participant Q decided to take control and face this boundary holding her back. By doing this she moved past these limitations and in the process, was able to leave the fear and anxiety behind! In another event participant Q overcame another boundary with regards to asking for help, by trusting the group and sharing this with them. In realizing the role discomfort plays in challenging one's fears, participant F spoke about facing her fear of the wave while in the kayak and compared this to facing her fears in daily-life. This seemed to remind her to challenge her boundaries daily in order to overcome them. Participant G seemed to come to the realisation that she was more willing to face risky situations with the support of others in comparing her abseiling (individual) and kayaking (partnership) experiences. This made her aware of the role others played in her willingness to push her own boundaries gave her the opportunity to challenge herself to also push her boundaries without the support of others.

Participant I's adventure experience revealed that he tended to carry others' burdens. Being uncomfortable with not helping others presented to be a boundary for participant I, for his own personal growth and sometimes even for the growth of those around him.

Reviewing the old and placing new boundaries by realizing others can function without him was challenging. Participant J seemed to have learned to challenge her boundaries by risking and moving beyond her comfort zones when it came to asking others for help. This led to her experiencing feeling more safe within the group. Participant N decided to challenge her own self-imposed limitations/boundaries and self-doubt through participating in the obstacle courses. In doing so she realized the value in pushing her boundaries, as it led to new 'awesome' experiences. During the obstacle course participant O became aware of some of her personal limitations, fear of heights and claustrophobia. She reflected on how, with trusting others and allowing them to help, she succeeded in the activities which led to a sense of personal empowerment. This brought to the fore some personal boundaries and also their effect on others around her, also highlighting how explicit her behavior was.

3. Literature

Priest and Gass (1997) mentioned that "By responding to …tasks, participants often learn to overcome self-imposed perceptions of their capabilities to succeed. They are able to turn limitations into abilities; as a result, they learn a great deal about themselves and how they relate to others" (p.17). As can be seen by the above discussions, the adventure experience played a valuable role in the lives of many of the participants regarding their personal boundaries. Different boundaries of the participants seemed to have been challenged, from boundaries relating to the outdoor context, to boundaries relating to their physical body to those relating to their mental and emotional barriers. Some boundaries were set or renewed while others were challenged, a process of personal development.

These findings resonate those of Human (2006) who found that participants' boundaries were challenged whether they were "personal boundaries, physical and/or psychological (p. 223). Human mentioned how this challenging of boundaries might have a positive effect on a participant's self-esteem. This is supported by Priest and Gass (1997) who spoke about how rope courses play a role in enhancing a person's self-esteem because it offers the opportunity to experience a sense of accomplishment.

Discomfort, fear, anxiety and taking risks seemed to be aspects that were usually present in situations where a person's boundaries were challenge. These had to be accepted and overcome in order for the boundaries to be challenged. Willig (2005) explains the relevance of this from her findings that if a break occurs with one's known routines and comfort, stretching yourself, this may result in lifting a person to another level. Eilers (1997) described how adventure therapy assisted her in taking risks. In their studies Human (2006) and Carlson and McKenna (2000) also mentioned the role anxiety played in these adventure experiences while boundaries were being challenged. In their study Martin and Leberman (2005) also mentioned how the adventure activities took the participants out of their comfort zones. Another component that stood out from the participants' discussions was the importance of feeling emotionally safe during these occurrences if boundaries were to be challenged. It seems that the individual needed to feel safe and supported which assisted them in pushing their boundaries. The theme of trust and support is discussed more thoroughly in 4.1.4.

Finally, it seems that most participants learned something about themselves and also experienced some form of change or initiation of change during the adventure week. Learning /Change was then also the next topic mentioned by most of the participants.

4.1.3 Learning

The Oxford Dictionary of Psychology (Colman, 2003) defines *learning* as: "Any lasting change in behaviour resulting from experience." I will thus use learning and change interchangeably in this section. When looking at the previously discussed topics and the definition of learning it seems that most participants experienced some sort of change during their adventure experience. About 15 of the 19 participants acknowledged specifically that they had learned something during their adventure experience. This change or learning process took part on a variety of different levels whether it was on a physical or self-awareness level. Below are some descriptions of the changes experienced by participants during the adventure experience.

1. Individual experiences

Participant A (2005):

> *"This experience has given me a whole new way of looking at where my limitations come from."*

Participant A reflected on how the adventure experience assisted her in looking at where her limitations came from in a novel way.

Participant D (2005):

> *"By this I mean that I want to be more able to explore the things in my life that are perceived as risky of difficult and getting out of my comfort zone more. As were learned on this week, adventure is a state of mind and I would like to be open to exploring different experiences in my life with different people in my life."*

Participant D mentioned wanting to explore more risks and difficult situations, thus moving outside her comfort zone. She also reflected on learning that adventure is a state of mind and indicated how she would like to be more open to having experiences with various people in her life.

Participant G (2005):

> *"I learned a lot with regards to the role of the facilitator in group sessions, in additions to the processes which take place in the group, and the role adventure can play."*

Participant G mentioned learning about the role of the facilitator in group sessions, the group process and the role of adventure.

Participant I (2006):

> *"During the group sessions, I learned a lot about therapy and the handling of individuals. From the week I learned that activities give reflection on people's*

personalities and behaviours. We could actually realise certain things about ourselves during the activities."

["Tydens die groepsessies het ek baie oor terapie en die hantering van individue geleer. Uit die week het ek ook geleer dat die aktiwiteite baie refleksie op mense se geaardhede en hul optrede gee. Ons kon fisies sekere dinge van onsself gewaarword met die aktiwiteite."]

In reflecting on the adventure week participant I mentioned gaining knowledge on therapy and on how to deal with individuals. He learned that activities provided insight on people's personalities and behaviours. Participant I also mentioned how participants learned things about themselves during the activities.

Participant J (2006):

"I have learned to take more risks and even give constructive criticism to some members without feeling that I have offended them. I realized that I learned a lot from the interactions of other group members."

Participant J mentioned learning with regards to taking more risks and giving constructive criticism without feeling that she offended someone. She mentioned realising that she learned from interacting with other group members.

Participant K (2006):

"As the week progressed, I also realised that being more familiar with each individual's boundaries, it also made it easier for me to have meaningful relationships with that particular person. The experiences also helped me to think out of the box. I am realizing more and more that there is no set recipe for a therapeutic process, one has to try and work with what is presented at hand, if that does not work, try something else while keeping the client/s in mind all the time."

Participant K experienced that becoming more aware of the other participants boundaries made it easier to have meaningful relationships with them. She also

mentioned how the experience taught her to think out of the box, realising that the therapeutic process has no set recipe and that a therapist therefore needs to focus on what is presented. Alternatively they must try something else with the client in mind.

Participant M (2006):

> *"I learned more about myself in that I learned that I don't always have to be right. In the beginning of my diary I wrote more about what physically happened and as the week progressed I looked more into what I was feeling when things happened."*

In reflecting on her adventure experience, participant M mentioned learning about herself; specifically that she does not always have to be right. She also indicated that when looking at her diary entries they changed from focusing on her physical experiences to focusing on her feelings during the experiences.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"I learned that day that my creativity can be used in most things I do, and it is not just confined to pen and paper."*

Participant Q mentioned learning that she can use her creativity in most of what she does and that it is not only restricted to pen and paper.

2. Combined experiences

Participant M described her learning as gaining knowledge about herself in acknowledging that she doesn't always have to be right. She also reflected on how her diary entries changed from focusing on the more superficial physical experiences to focusing more on how the experiences made her feel, possibly indicating how she learned to reflect in a more meaningful manner on her experiences. Participant A mentioned how the adventure experience taught her to observe her limitations in a novel way. This was especially relevant to where these limitations originated from. Similarly, participant Q learned the value of an existing skill she had. She seemed to learn to let go

of some of the limitations she placed on her creativity, opening up new possibilities beyond pen and paper.

From the adventure experience participant K seems to have learned the value of familiarising yourself with the boundaries of others in order to have more meaningful relationships. She also mentioned learning how to think out of the box, especially therapeutically where she realised there is no set recipe thus challenging the therapist to focus on the particular client. In her discussion, participant D linked her experience at the adventure week with her life. It seems that she experienced some change in how she perceived risks, expressing a need to explore the unknown or different experiences with different individuals and moving past her comfort zone. Perhaps by stating this, she was already starting to expand her comfort zone and taking a risk. The participant learned that adventure is a state of mind and indicated some realisation that risks may also sometimes be just that.

Participant G reflected more specifically about learning in terms of the process of group sessions. She mentioned learning about the role of the facilitator and also leaning about the role of adventure in this process. Participant I differentiated between learning from the group sessions on the one hand and the activities on the other. In the group sessions he specified learning about therapy and how to treat individuals. To him, the value of adventure activities seems to lie in how they highlight certain aspects of individual personalities and behaviours, but also in how they taught individuals about themselves. Participant P spoke about learning from her interaction with the group members. Like some of the previous participants she also learned to challenge herself to take more risks specifically related to giving constructive criticism to others.

3. Literature

In looking at the discussions relating to learning, one sees the value of learning in an experience such as the adventure experience. Most, if not all of the participants experienced some form of experiential learning on some level during this adventure experience. The type of learning varied from learning to take more risks and exceed

your own limitations, to learning to change one's perceptions of others or of oneself to learning about how the process of group participation unfolds. For instance, Loeffler's (2005) participants mentioned developing skills in dealing with relationships and also changing how you look at life. In another study, Hatch and McCarthy (2005) indicated a change in personal effectiveness and group effectiveness. While reflecting on her own experiences of adventure therapy, Eilers (1997) described how participating in adventure therapy resulted in a variety of changes in her life such as trusting more, risking more, and learning to deal with personal issues. In his study Dwyer (2006) mentioned the value of adventure in developing a person's personal knowledge and your understanding on a practical level. Learning new skills was one of the outcomes from the research done by Holman and McAvoy (2005) on 193 participants.

Throughout the discussing of the results of his study, Human (2006) mentioned how his participants, also counselling psychology masters students, experienced change and learning within a variety of themes; challenging boundaries, learning how to deal with anxiety, learning the importance of group functioning and learning to trust yourself and others. Finally in summary, Nadler (1995) mentioned how participation in adventure activities such as ropes courses can result in psychological and physiological changes. Thus from the participant discussions it seems that some form of experiential learning did take place to some extent during the adventure week. This is not an indication though of how lasting the effects of this learning experience will be.

The process of change or learning seemed in many occurrences to be influenced by the presence of others. This is supported by Martin and Leberman (2005) who suggested from their study that most of the learning came from the group environment. Trusting in the support of those around you seems to make this process happen easier. As a result of this, individual growth and support from the group seems to continue to strengthen the group's cohesion. This was then also the next topic that was highlighted during the data analysis.

4.1.4 Group Cohesion

Yalom (1995) describes group cohesiveness as: "the condition of members feeling warmth and comfort in the group, feeling they belong, valuing the group and feeling, in turn, that they are valued and unconditionally accepted and supported by other members" (p. 48). Of the 19 participants, 12 described how, during the adventure experience the group seemed to draw closer.

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant B (2005):

> *"The challenges got progressively more difficult, but in the beginning the focus was on the physical ability of the group. The reflection thereafter appeared to be more superficial. One thing this did do is 'kick-start' some group cohesion because we had to help each other with a common goal in mind. In the group discussions, personal issues began emerging when there seemed to be more trust as a result of cohesion."*

Participant B reflected on the adventure week by referring to how the challenges got more difficult and how the focus in the group changed from the physical ability of the group, a more superficial focus. He then mentioned that this phenomenon did initiate group cohesion due to the shared goal amongst the participants. Then participant B indicated that more personal issues were being discussed possibly due to increased trust as a result of the group cohesion.

Participant D (2005):

> *"On the obstacle course that day our group started off as being more separated in terms of there being individual contributions but as the activities and the day progressed we found ourselves getting closer and that there was more team work and unity as a group. It was amazing in the sense that we all trusted each other so easily and that we trusted in the process as well."*

Looking at the obstacle course specifically, participant D mentioned how the there were initially more individual contributions in the group but that this changed throughout the activities and the day as a whole. This eventually resulted in the group members becoming closer, the team working together and more unity in the group. She also expressed her amazement at the sense that the group trusted each other and also the process.

Participant M (2006):

> *"The fact that the week brought the group as a whole closer together was amazing. The process that we went through as a group and the bonds that were formed was something that I don't feel ever would have happened in a class setting. For me I felt comfortable in the setting we were in and so expressed more than I feel I would have if we had been in a classroom."*

Participant M pointed out her amazement with how the adventure week brought the group together. She further noted that the process their group went through and the bonds that formed would not have happened to them in a classroom setting. She mentioned feeling comfortable in the setting to express herself more than what she would have in the classroom.

Participant P (2006):

> *"It was amazing to be able to feel the group bonding, and I am 100 percent certain that this would not have happened if we were to be back in Pretoria."*
>
> *"I was (once again) amazed at how we managed to stand together as a group, and motivate each other to continue, even if the task at hand seemed impossible."*
>
> *"The group served as a safety net when I needed them most, and I realised that it is not necessary to always have a façade of being strong."*
>
> *"The physical activities served the purpose of reinforcing group cohesion, and*

forced us to work together as a group in order to reach our goal."

Firstly, participant P mentioned her amazement at how the group bonded and noted that she did not believe that this would have happened back in Pretoria. Secondly she pointed out again how amazed she was at how the group stood together, motivating one another even in the face of a daunting task. She finally indicated that the group functioned as a safety net when she needed it, allowing her to realise she was allowed to be fragile. She also noted that the purpose of the physical activities was to reinforce the group cohesion because the group was forced to work together in order to reach their goal.

Participant S (2006):

"What follows is conflict as the injured/invisible person reacts to an individual or the group, there's feedback from the group to justify it's actions and finally there's the opportunity for deeper revelation if the person feels safe, followed by support and closure. This was the process that made the group more cohesive…"

Participant S reflected on the process where conflict results from an individual feeling injured or invincible reacting to another individual or the group. Then the group justifies its actions through feedback creating possibility for deeper revelation, if the particular individual feels safe. Participant S then mentioned that this is followed by support and then closure and indicated that this is how the group becomes more cohesive.

2. Combined experiences

Participant B describes how the physical challenges and reflection thereupon 'kick-started' the group cohesion, due to the common goal amongst the participants. The group cohesion then seemed to set the stage for trust, followed by the emergence and also the discussion of personal issues. Initially participant D reflected on how separated that group's functioning was at the onset of the activities. Then, similar to Participant B, Participant D noticed how the physical activities (obstacle course) eventually started to

encourage teamwork and team unity as the day progressed. This developing group cohesion seemingly led to what was understood by participant D as trust between the individuals and in the process.

In her discussion, Participant M compares the adventure experience with that of a classroom setting. It seems that she believes bonds were formed in the group because of the adventure context. She explains how she was more comfortable in the outdoors setting, which helped her to express herself more. Again, similar to that of the other participants, participant P pointed out the value of physical activities resulting in a common goal to reinforce group cohesion. For participant P group cohesion seemingly meant standing together and motivating each other in facing the seemingly impossible and also acting as a safety net when she needed it. Like participant M, she also differentiated between the city and outdoors and the value of the latter in developing group cohesion. Participant S described the process of development of group cohesion. He seems to understand it as emerging from a certain conflict stemming from the group's feedback to a (hurt or invincible) individual and the individual's reaction to this. According to participant S, if the group creates a safe enough and supportive environment the process might lead to a 'deeper revelation' followed by closure for the individual. The role of group cohesion seems to be very important in personal development during the adventure experience.

3. Literature

Most of the participants gave credit to the physical team challenges demanding achieving a common goal, for the development of group cohesion. The process did not stop there. The cohesion resulted in trust which seemed to create a safe space, which set the stage for the sharing of personal issues. This newly developed trust played a vital role in the intensified growth of the individuals and group. Eilers (1997) mentioned how adventure therapy assisted her in trusting others. In sharing and dealing with the personal issues, the group seemed to draw even closer and open up even more as support and trust became the group's foundation. Trust seemed to create the safety net (as various participants described it) for participants to take risks. These risks usually

led to greater personal awareness and growth and more willingness to challenge oneself. Understanding this, Willig (2005) found that in participating in extreme sports (kayaking, rock climbing, etcetera) there "may exist a strong bond and strong feelings of camaraderie generated by being together during moments of great vulnerability (p. 694).

Again comparing these findings to that of Human (2006), we notice that he also discusses the theme of cohesion as an important result from his research on the role of ropes courses in personal growth and professional development of students. He found that "an adventure –based medium helped to restore the cohesion within the group (Human, 2006, p. 227). Similarly, Hatch and McCarthy (2005) found "immediate improvement in cohesion, group effectiveness, and individual effectiveness within the group" (p. 257) in their study on the long-term effects of challenge courses. In their study, Martin and Leberman (2005) indicated that most of the learning resulted from the group environment and that this was essential in the increase of participants' self-confidence and self-awareness. Loeffler (2005) found that participants seemed to connect with each other in an outdoor environment that required them to work together and support each other. In an organizational context changes in teamwork attitudes and team-spirit was noted after participation in an adventure learning programme. (Hwang, 2003, Ng, 2001).

4.1.5 Conclusion on personal development

After a thorough search for the essence of the adventure experience phenomenon we find what seem to be the four main themes particularly relating to the personal development of the participants. These four themes are as follows:

a) Al of the participants indicated an increased self-awareness whether it was physical, mental or on an emotional level.
b) Most of the participants indicated becoming aware of one or more limitation or boundary, being it physical, mental or emotional. Most of them then also indicated the experience of overcoming this boundary/limitation at some stage during their adventure week experience.

c) A large number of participants mentioned that they experienced some form of learning or change taking place within the adventure week. For some these were learning new physical or mental skills but for others is was learning about their own and the group functioning.
d) Most participants also indicated the forming of cohesion within the group and the role trust and support seemed to play in this process. They also spoke about the effect the closeness of the group had on how willing participants were to disclose personal information.

Thus, from this we assume increased self-awareness, noticing and overcoming of personal boundaries/limitations, some form of learning and the forming of group cohesion as essential structures related to personal development within the phenomenon of the adventure week as experienced by the two groups of counseling psychology masters students. These findings were supported by studies done by Carlson and McKenna (2000), Dwyer (2006), Eilers (1997), Hatch and McCarthy (2005), Human (2006, 2008), Hwang (2003), Loeffler (2005) and Martin and Leberman (2005). Whose studies suggest that adventure based experiential learning results in some form of change which could be personal; self-awareness, self-discovery, gaining perspective, personal knowledge, awareness of boundaries, trust, coping mechanisms or professional; teamwork, connection with others, practical knowledge and roles

The second main theme that emerged from the data analysis, apart from personal development, was professional development. We will now look at how some of the participants experienced various forms of professional development during their adventure experience.

4.2. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As individuals seemed to develop personally throughout the adventure experience, this had an influence on their professional development. All 19 participants indicated that in one way or another during the adventure week, they developed professionally. Below are the four most mentioned ways of how participants understood the effect of their adventure experience might have on their professional development as psychologists. These were especially important regarding therapy and relationships with clients. The main emerging themes in the current study relating to developing professionally included: comfort versus discomfort (4.2.1), trust (4.2.2), individual differences (4.2.3) the importance of creating space (4.2.4) in therapy. Each will again be discussed with regards to some individual experiences then these experiences combined followed by looking briefly at literature surrounding the theme. After completing all the themes a conclusion on the findings will be drawn (4.2.5).

One article specifically will be mentioned in particular in the literature section. We will look at Giorgi and Gallegos's (2005) article on '*Living through some positive experiences of psychotherapy*' in which they found phenomenological structures important in the phenomenon of having a positive experience of psychotherapy. The main themes which emerged from their study were the following: therapist could resonate with the client, the therapist is safe, trust in the therapist, the therapist cares and that the therapist is non-judgemental.

4.2.1 Comfort versus Discomfort

Comfort and discomfort and their effects are very individual experience. This theme is very similar to the *boundaries* theme related to personal development. Here, 14 participants experienced the value in challenging their comfort zones and experiencing discomfort for the sake of therapy, learning and personal growth. Let us look at how some of the participants expressed the theme of comfort versus discomfort.

1. Individual experiences

Participant G (2005):

> *"I must also be aware that I do not look to my clients for support to assist me in overcoming difficult situations which are going to cross my path. I am going to have to learn to challenge my comfort zones within the therapeutic situation and not avoid places clients what to go because I am uncomfortable with it."*

Participant G mentioned being aware to not look to her clients for support in difficult situations. She realised that she needs to learn to challenge her comfort zones in therapy in order not to avoid not going where patients need to go due to being uncomfortable with it.

Participant J (2006):

> *"This week's experience has taught me about taking more risks and learning to move beyond my comfort zone. This is similar to therapy in that as therapists we take risks by entering an unknown system and open ourselves up for acceptance or rejection by members of that system. This reminded that as a therapist I cannot go into therapy as a know-it-all expert and view the client as a tabula-rasa."*

In her experience participant J mentioned realising that she needed to move beyond her comfort zone and take more risks. She related this to therapy in that therapists take risks in entering the clients' system and may be accepted or rejected, reminding her that she should not enter therapy as a know-it-all expert but rather see the clients as a clean slate.

Participant B (2005):

> *"It was very painful to take part in the events, but it was very comfortable after the events. That in therapy boils down to discomfort that I and the client will experience during therapy and the comfort that comes afterwards."*

Participant B mentioned the pain of taking part in some events but then also the comfort

that followed afterwards. He compares this with therapy in which the therapist and the clients will experience discomfort but after which both will again experience comfort.

Participant N (2006):

> *"The group sessions helped me to understand the process of the day better and to see how adventure as a medium can be used to help people with their emotions and painful situations. Professionally I can be more sensitive towards clients who find it difficult to show emotions and I know by working on my own expressing of emotions I will be able to help my clients better in this regard."*

Firstly, participant N acknowledges the role of the group sessions in understanding the process of the day and also to understand the role of adventure as a medium in assisting people with their emotions and also painful situations. She then mentions the importance of becoming more sensitive to clients who experience difficulty in expressing their emotions and also indicates how by working on her own expression of emotions she will be better equipped to help her clients with it.

Participant M (2006):

> *"When thinking about my professional identity and how what I felt like before could have impacted on me working with groups, I think I realize that I need to express myself in order to contribute to others."*

In reflecting on her professional development and also how her feelings before impacted on her working with groups, participant M indicates realising that she needs to express herself more often in order for her to contribute to others.

Participant P (2006):

> *"I now realise that this is inhumane, as even psychologists are human and may need assistance every now and then. Not to say that I would ever expect that from a client, but I will keep in mind that in order to be able to establish a trusting relationship, I need to give a little of myself."*

A participant P came to the realisation that even psychologists may need assistance at some times, as they are also human. She mentions that she does not expect that assistance from clients but realises that she will need to give some of herself in order to establish a trusting relationship.

Participant S (2006):

> *"I will need to take risks with my clients by introducing new approaches that may be challenging for all of us. Change is in the order of the day in the field of psychology, not safe comfort zones."*

In reflecting on his adventure experience participant S indicates that he will need to take risks with his clients by for instance introducing new approaches into therapy and that this may be challenging for him and the clients. He concludes by mentioning change and not safe comfort zones as important in the field of psychology.

2. Combined experiences

Participant G seemed to grow professionally by becoming aware of the roles in a therapeutic context. She seemed to realise that she needed to, for the client's sake, challenge her own comfort zones as a person, no matter how uncomfortable it might be. Participant J also seemed to realise through the adventure week that she needed to risk more by moving out of her comfort zone personally as well as in therapy, even though not knowing whether this may lead to acceptance of rejection. She also noted not to have the mindset of being the expert, which may be a quite comfortable position. In his discussion participant B seems to indicate that the adventure experience made him aware of the role of discomfort and then followed by comfort during the events but also in therapy. He also mentioned that both the therapist and the client will probably experience both of these.

During her adventure experience and the group-sessions participant N seemed to realise that she lacked some sensitivity towards clients who struggle to show their emotions. She seems to comprehend now that in order for her to become more sensitive she will

need to express more of her own emotions which will then assist her clients in expressing their own emotions. This seems to mean challenging her own comfort zones, for her and her client's development and growth. Similarly, it seems that participant M realised that she needed to overstep her comfort zone and express herself more in therapy, in order for her to be able to contribute to others. Participant P also focused on the realisation that she needed to give something of herself, which may be uncomfortable, in order to establish a trusting relationship. She also mentioned even acknowledging that she needs assistance at times. In conclusion, it seems that participant S realised that psychology and therapy is not about feeling safe and staying inside your comfort zones but that it meant both the therapist and the clients has to take risks.

3. Literature

Sheldon and Arthur (2001) mention how risk and an unfamiliar situation, such as an adventure experience, results in an imbalance and one needs to move out of one's comfort zone in order to restore this balance. Having lived the adventure experience most participants became aware of the role of comfort and being uncomfortable in the process of learning and growing and in particular in therapy. Some participants in the current study mentioned challenging their own comfort zones in order to move to where their clients wanted to go. Others understood that being able to live with their own discomfort they would be an example for their clients to also follow suit. This could be in the form of being willing to ask for help, expressing of emotions or resisting rescuing the clients. Finally it seemed that most of them now understand that as during the adventure week, in therapy the therapist and clients will first need to work though the uncomfortable in order to reach the comfortable, probably resulting in some form of personal growth or learning.

Human (2006) found in his study that counseling psychology students experienced some form of anxiety and they attributed this to having been taken out of their comfort zones during their participation on the ropes course. This anxiety seemed to have led to some form of personal growth (Carlson & McKenna, 2000; Human, 2006). It could be

valuable to compare the physical risks and moving out of physical comfort zones in adventure activities with having to take emotional risks and staying with discomfort in a therapeutic setting. Richardson (1998) explains "neither the psychological discomfort or physiological arousal experienced is intended to overwhelm the individual, rather, mild levels of each are viewed as motivators for trying new strategies and skills" (p. 4).

Martin and Leberman (2005) found that the psychical activities took the participants out of their comfort zones and then they learned further from the group interactions. In comparing therapy and adventure experiences the amounts of risk and competence seems to play an important role in determining whether an experience is only exploratory, whether a peak experience is achieved or whether the result is a disaster (Priest, 1990; Priest & Gass, 1997). It thus seems to be the therapists' role to determine how much discomfort and risk is needed in a specific therapeutic context. In a phenomenological study done by Giorgi and Gallegos, (2005) they found that in truly caring a therapist can create a safe atmosphere in which it is easier for participants to extent their own safety zones. For therapist and client to challenge comfort zones a certain level of mutual trust seems to have to be present. Below we will see how participants reflected on this theme of trust during their adventure experience.

4.2.2 Trust

Nine participants seemed become more aware of the importance of trust in the therapeutic relationship, during their experiences of the adventure week. Let us look at some of the participants' expressions.

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant D (2005):

> *"It was amazing in the sense that we all trusted each other so easily and that we trusted in the process as well. In a therapeutic context that would be an essential ingredient for both the client and the therapist and in the past I used to focus more in the trust that the client has to have in the therapist."*

Participant D describes how during the adventure week the participants trusted each other and the process. Then she spoke about how this trust is essential in the therapeutic context, for both the client and therapist and how in the past she focused more on the client trusting the therapist.

Participant F (2005):

> *"The trust relationship is very important. I need to build a relationship of trust with my client and when he/she needs to describe very painful stories like the great wave in the sea he/she must feel safe with me and trust that he/she will be okay at the end of the ride."*

In the her reflection, participant P mentions the importance of the trust relationship between client and therapist in order for the client to trust the therapist and share painful stories and feel good about it afterwards.

Participant O (2006):

> *"This trust in my interpretations enhanced confidence in my abilities as a professional with regards to intuition and working with what the client portrays."*

Participant O focuses on the trust she needs to have in her own interpretations leading to more confidence in her abilities as a professional. She specifically mentioned this with regards to her intuition as well as working with whatever the clients portray.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"Through letting go of assumptions, and exploring more the stories les travelled; trusting more in the client and what they are giving me in the moment; and risking more as a professional, is something that I take with me and I have begun to be more courageous in putting into practice."*

In summarising her experience and what she gained from the adventure experience, participant Q mentions: letting go of her assumptions to explore the more unfamiliar

stories, to trust the client and what he gives them at that moment; and to be more courageous as a professional. These are what she wants to take with her and implement in practice.

Participant S (2006):

"In terms of my professional identity, I want to learn to test and trust my intuition."

Participant S explains that he wishes to learn to test and also trust his intuition after the adventure experience.

2. Combined experiences

Participant D showed that trust in a therapeutic context should entail not only the client trusting the therapist but also that the therapist trusting the client. Both should then also trust the process evolving between them as was the case of the group trusting the process during the adventure week. In her discussion, participant P portrays her role in building a trusting relationship with her clients. The value in this seems to lie in then creating a trusting space where the clients may feel safe enough to convey their own painful stories. She compares this to sharing her own experiences of the sea during the adventure week.

Participant O's mention of trust in the therapeutic context focused more on trust in herself and her own intuition and interpretations, and how she felt that this trust would lead to enhanced confidence in her own professional abilities. Similarly, participant S focused on trusting in himself and his own intuition in his professional identity. By reflecting on her entire adventure experience, participant Q summarises what seems to be the most valuable lessons to her. She mentions trusting in the client and what they give her, amongst others such as letting go of assumptions and risking more.

3. Literature

During their adventure experience, the participants explored the importance of trust in a therapeutic relationship. This meant that not only did the patient have to trust the therapist but that the therapist also needed to trust the patient. Mutual trust seemed to create a context for a workable therapeutic environment in which both the client and therapist may find value. Some participants focussed more specifically on trusting themselves and their own intuition during the therapeutic process while others mentioned trusting in the clients and what they bring to the therapeutic session. Giorgi and Gallegos (2005) found trust to be one of the most important structures of the phenomenon of having a positive experience in psychotherapy. Knowing that the therapist would not overstep boundaries and believing that the therapist would stick to what was said was some of the foundations they found to ensure trust.

In his study Human (2006) also found trust as one of the themes mentioned by counselling psychology students in training. Venter (2003) understands it in the following manner: “this seems to relate to the therapist being able to be with the client in every possible avenue during the therapeutic process” (p. 41). Venter then continues to explain that this doesn’t mean that the therapist understands the client’s internal world, but rather that the therapist is in a close and trusting relationship with the client. Thus trust within the therapeutic relationship seems to play a crucial role. As Yalom (1995) states: “successful therapy is mediated by a relationship between therapist and patients and that is characterised by trust, warmth, empathic understanding, and acceptance” (p 48).

Having looked at the experience of trust in the therapeutic context we now move onward to exploring the impact of individual differences as mentioned by the participants

4.2.3 Individual Differences

During the adventure experience nine participants specifically reported on realising the importance of being aware of the personal differences. This related to their lives as well as to the differences between clients. These differences would mean that clients should be treated differently to ensure an effective and constructive therapeutic process. Below we find how some of the participants experienced this theme of the adventure phenomenon.

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant A (2005):

> *"I also learned that people can do the same things but experience them differently. People are unique and one needs to treat them like that."*

Participant A mentions realizing that people experience the same things differently which makes them unique and they should thus be treated that way.

Participant D (2005):

> *"I will have to acknowledge that all clients are different and that it will have to be my challenge to motivate them to deal with their difficulties by getting them into contact with themselves."*

In reflection on the adventure experience participant D coming to the realization that all clients are different, which makes it the therapist's challenge to support or motivated them to get into contact with themselves and in doing so deal with their struggles.

Participant H (2005):

> *"Some clients will give more than other, some will be stubborn and some will not give the insight I seek, this is my stuff, I should not be working with clients based on these."*

Participant H indicates that client are different which will lead to some being stubborn or not giving what he wants and some will give more than others. He acknowledges that these are his issues and these should not determine how he works with clients.

Participant K (2006):

> *"My experiences in the adventure week helped me to be aware of my different reactions with different people/personalities, which also represent the reactions I am going to have with different clients and the different context I am going to find myself in."*

Reflecting on her experiences during the adventure week, participant K mentions that it helped her to become more aware of the difference in her reactions to different individuals and she showed an awareness of how this will also be relevant to her reactions in therapy in different contexts and with different clients.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"I believe there is room too for experimenting with what can be therapeutic for each individual I see – from poetry, to writing, to music, to making visual representations of the problem, to using nature and other metaphors. To use my senses in a different way, and use what the client has given – and to go with it, and trust it."*

Participant Q speaks about experimenting with different therapeutic methods for each individual, mentioning mediums such as poetry, writing, music, visual representations, nature and other metaphors. The participant also brings in the value of using her senses as well as going with what the client has given, and trusting it.

2. Combined experiences

Participant A seems to have learned that individuals perceive similar experiences differently and that it is therefore important to, in therapy treat individuals differently.

Similarly, participant D describes how it is important as a therapist to acknowledge the individual differences between in clients. According to her this will assist the therapist to better motivate the clients to get into contact with themselves in order to deal with their struggles. It seems that for participant H it was highlighted that his 'stuff' should not influence how he works with clients because there will be differences between clients with regards to how much they are willing to share and give in therapy.

In reflecting on the adventure week participant K seemed to have gained an awareness of her own reactions to different individuals. She then related this back to therapy and how she should thus be aware of different contexts and individuals and her reactions to these in the therapeutic setting. During the adventure week many possibilities or mediums to use in therapy seems to have been unveiled for participant Q. She mentions how these and using her senses could be experimented with for each client while using and trusting in what they have given in the therapeutic context.

3. Literature

To all the above participants the adventure week seemed to have played an important role in making them aware of the individual differences in clients. Giorgi and Gallegos (2005) found that there is "something about the personhood of the therapist that makes the clients connect with her (him) and thus fosters good therapy (p. 208). They describe this as the therapist resonating with the client and found this to be one of the most important elements in therapy (Giorgi & Gallegos, 2005).The individual differences in clients are a challenge to the therapist, who now needs to be very adaptable in their own way of working with each individual. This may create a space for experimenting with different methods of therapeutic intervention. The individuality of the clients will be influenced by and influence the context of therapy and how this is perceived. Individuals are also differently motivated.

Finally probably one of the most important realisations is that of the effect each individual has on the therapists. It is crucial for therapists to acknowledge this effect and their response to it even if it means moving out of their own comfort zones to do so. In

order for them to do this, they will need to be aware of their own assumptions and preferences, 'stuff' as one participant calls it. Giorgi and Gallegos (2005) found that the importance of a non-judgemental attitude by the therapist is only possible if the therapist acknowledges and appreciates individual differences.

In his narrative study on how counselling psychology students personally experienced an adventure program, Human (2008) identified the unique outcomes for each participant. He then created sets of questions to use in supervision which challenges these participants to look at what effect their previous and changing narratives might have on clients, thus focusing on the individual differences of therapists and the effect this might have in therapy. Similar to the current study's findings, the adventure experience in Human's (2008) research seem to have played an important role in highlighting each participant's individual character to themselves which again making them aware of how they might react in therapy and/or to various different clients/individuals or contexts. It seems that in these instances as mentioned by Horwood (1991) and Schön (1987), the source of professional knowledge was generated more from reflection than from applying theoretical ideas. The participants seemed to have gained valuable professional knowledge from reflecting on their experiences of the adventure experience. This is the bases of experiential learning, to learn by doing and then reflecting on the experience (Beyers, 1981; Herbert, 1981; Human, 2006, 2008).

Being aware of the fact that individual clients will have individual differences it seems that they will have to be treated differently to have an effective therapeutic process. The final theme that surfaced as a key element in the phenomenon of an adventure experience is that of creating space where change could take place. The therapist will seemingly have to be very flexible in creating space according to the needs of each individual client.

4.2.4 Creating Space

As discussed above, for an effective therapeutic process, the correct therapeutic space needs to be present. The adventure experience made seven of the participants more aware of the importance of such a space. Many also came to the realization as to their role in creating such a safe space in the therapeutic context. Below are some of their experiences.

1. **Individual experiences**

Participant B (2005):

> *"In therapy I think I will have to create more space for people to speak and then not focus so much on the content, but more on how they are telling their story. What it taught me was that we need to look at is how people express themselves, rather than what they are expressing sometimes. If this is holding them back from finding the alternative narrative, you as a therapist/facilitator need to somehow remove that aspect to create space for discomfort."*

Participant B explains how it will be his responsibility in therapy to create a space where clients can speak while focusing on how they are expressing themselves and their stories and not necessarily on the content of what they are saying. He then also sees it as his role to create a space for discomfort in finding what is holding the client back from finding an alternative narrative and removing it.

Participant C (2005):

> *"People need space to be and space to construct their world. That space needs to be respected and their construction facilitated and allowed."*

Participant C seemed to have gained an understanding that people needs space to construct their world, a construction which should be facilitated and allowed, and that this space must be respected.

Participant K (2006):

> *""This brings me to the realization that I have to relinquish my right to be in control sometimes, in order to allow the flexibility and the process to gradually progress to the desired goal for both the client/s and myself as the therapist… In terms of the flexibility of relationships based on the personal boundaries; when one establishes a relationship with a client/s, it important to explore the boundaries of each individual as to not over step the boundaries which can result to the person building up a wall against the therapist, which will result in a difficult therapeutic process as the relationship between the client/s and the therapist is important."*

Participant K mentions coming to the realisation that she needed to let go of her right to be in control at times, to allow flexibility and the process to develop the a specific goal for the therapist and client. She then mentions the role personal boundaries play in relationships being flexible and the importance in exploring and establishing these boundaries in therapy in order not to overstep them. The relationship between the client and therapist is important and this may lead to clients building a wall against the therapist, resulting in a difficult therapeutic process.

Participant Q (2006):

> *"I think my experience of retreating to "my place" in those adventures is a metaphor for how I should see my clients and attempt to retreat, with their help, to "their own place. Through letting go of assumptions, and exploring more the stories les travelled; trusting more in the client and what they are giving me in the moment; and risking more as a professional, is something that I take with me and I have begun to be more courageous in putting into practice."*

Reflecting on her adventure experience participant Q mentioned retreating to her 'place' during the activities. She explains this to be a metaphor for seeing how her clients may also want to retreat to 'their own place' during therapy, and that she should with their help attempt to join them. Then she also mentions ways in which she might create such as space, for instance: letting go of her assumptions, exploring the les familiar stories,

trusting the client and risking more professionally.

2. Combined experiences

Participant B indicated how therapy should be a creative process, where space needs to be created by the therapist for the client, especially a space where discomfort can be experienced. In this space it seems that is the therapist's role to help the client to overcome aspects holding them back from finding alternative stories, by focusing not on the content of their discussions but on the process. Participant C seems to have gained an understanding of the importance of space in the therapeutic context by showing how this space should be facilitated and respected in order to allow clients to construct their own worlds within it.

Participant K firstly mentions that she needs to be more flexible and allow the therapeutic process to gradually develop. She then portrays how boundaries must be understood and respected to have a place in the therapeutic setting, thus creating a safe therapeutic space. Overstepping these boundaries may result in resistance from the clients that may complicate the therapeutic process for both the therapist and the client. During her adventure experience, it seemed that participant Q felt at times some sense of retreating into her own place. This made her aware of how clients may also need to do this during therapy and she explained how as a therapist she would, if they allowed her attempt to join them As a therapist she seems to realise that she will need to create a safe space for a client to do this. She gives, letting go of assumptions, exploring more stories less travelled, mutual trust and taking risks as a professional as methods in which to attempt to create such a space.

3. Literature

In their phenomenological study on 'Living through some positive experiences of psychotherapy', Giorgi and Gallegos (2005) found an important structure for the above phenomenon to be a safe atmosphere as created by the therapist. This safe space doesn't necessarily have to be comfortable with no challenges, as one of their participants

mentioned. According to the findings of the current study, space seems to be created for different reasons for instance to enable a client to construct their own world, but also to allow for discomfort. Boundaries seem to be important in the creation of such a space and disrespecting them could result in the destruction of a healthy therapeutic space. The therapist seems to play an important role in creating a safe space through for instance risking and letting go of their own assumptions and trusting the clients. They could then possibly, with help of the client retreat with their client to the client's own safe place.

In looking at outdoor adventure programs, Davis-Berman and Berman (2002) warned that the emotional safety of the participant should be a major concern when creating a perceived risk. When looking at the participant's discussions this seems also to be relevant to the therapeutic setting where the therapeutic space should be an emotionally safe one where risks are taken and challenges are faced. This theme can be related to the other themes in that trust seems to be essential in crating this space, different individuals will need a different space and this space may create the opportunity for comfort zones to be stretched. In adventure therapy, Shoel, et al. (1988) seem to understand this space as common ground an mentions that "you becomes a different kind of role model on the Common Ground because you are allowing yourself to be known, to be vulnerable." (p. 129).

4.2.5 Conclusion on professional development

When looking at the above section it seems that all of the participants were able to take from their adventure and group experiences to enrich their professional identity. The individuals gained insight into various and different aspects of the therapeutic process. The main themes as mentioned by most of the participants were that of the role of comfort and discomfort in therapy, the awareness of the importance of mutual trust and trust in oneself, understanding how individual clients will need individual attention and therapeutic interventions, and the value in creating a safe therapeutic space as well as important factors determining this space.

Some participants seemed to have learned valuable lesions from the group therapy sessions while others learned from their own experiences and personal development. This suggests that personal development resulted to some extent in professional development if it was reflected on from this viewpoint. The influences of the adventure experience in making participants aware of their boundaries, having to take risks leading to anxiety and learning to trust as found by Human (2006), seems to have been a representation to how therapy also unfolds. This was clear when comparing what participants learned about therapy through the adventure process with what Giorgi and Gallegos (2005) found to be essentials structures in determining positive experiences in psychotherapy.

4.3 SUMMARISED FINDINGS

In conclusion from the findings of this research study the adventure experience seemed to create or initialize a variety of changes within each of the participants. The extent to and level on which the adventure experience had an impact on their lives varied greatly with each individual experience. The main themes that seem to underlie or the essence of how students experience adventure during professional training in psychology are thus the following:

On reflecting on their personal development the participants realized the following:

1. They became more self-aware
2. They became aware of and learned to challenge their boundaries
3. Learning and change took place in a variety of dimensions
4. They discovered how group cohesion took place and the importance this had on their personal development

Then participants also reflected on their professional development during the adventure experience and found that:

1. Comfort and discomfort played essential roles in therapy
2. Mutual trust and self-trust are crucial components for a healthy therapeutic relationship

3. Individual differences between clients should be respected and used, to create a unique therapeutic process for each individual client
4. The importance and advantages of creating and maintaining a safe therapeutic space was highlighted

It seems clear, by looking at only some of the quotes by participants, that none of them walked away from the experienced unaffected. This indicated that the adventure week was truly *experienced* by these 19 participants. The overall effects of adventure therapy thus seem to be positive and ongoing (Neill, 2003). Reflection seemed to have played an essential role in ensuring this learning and awareness. In conclusion, the final words of participants L and N seem to summarize the adventure experience week:

"As I left Glenmore I thought to myself how privileged I was to have had this opportunity to explore my strengths and weaknesses so that I can utilize them effectively in my career in helping others" (Participant L)

"This week meant a lot to me personally and professionally and it is something is can use in future." (Participant N)

CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSION

In conclusion let us look back briefly at the research question, the relevant literature (5.1) and research results of this adventure experience (5.2). Then we will summarise the findings in light of these (5.3). No research project is without limitations and therefore we will also discuss the limitations of this study and how these could be avoided in future similar research projects (5.4). These will be followed by some recommendations and the ending off of this research adventure experience (5.5).

5.1`LITERATURE REVIEW

When looking at literature, it was found that in research, experiential learning has been quite popular, in training, but not necessarily AREL. The experiences of nurses for example, were researched and experiential learning seemed to help them understand their own personal and professional development needs better (Järvinen, as cited in Warner Weil & McGill, 1981). Other studies highlighted the fact that experiential learning had a positive influence on the social, psychological and intellectual development of individuals (Conrad & Hedin. 1981). There were a variety of factors that determined this influence. Reflection on experience seemed to play a crucial role in any situation where experiential learning took place.

Further research indicated that AREL made students more aware of their own functioning, personal boundaries and roles resulting amongst others in inter- and intrapersonal growth as well as professional development (Carlson & McKenna, 2000; Dwyer, 2006; Eilers, 1997; Hatch & McCarthy, 2005; Human, 2006, 2008; Hwang, 2003; Loeffler, 2005; Martin and Leberman, 2005; Neill, 2003). Different types of adventure programming and contexts ensured this growth. Examples of these contexts are for instance the recreational, educational, developmental and therapeutic contexts. Factors, that were found to play an important role in adventure-related experiential learning was; the level of perceived risk versus perceived competence, uncertainty of

the outcome, voluntary participation, intrinsic motivation and the experience as a state of mind. Baldwin, et al. (2004) cleverly suggested that " it may seem odd to suggest that adventure education programs foster growth in the participants while at the same time asserting that there is little understanding of how this change occurs" (p168).

Adventure was described as having different stages. These stages and how they are managed determines if the adventure experience will be fruitful or experienced as a misadventure. Again this influences the amount of learning or growth that will take place. Facilitation was understood to be one of the main mediums with which to determine the level adventure activity is experienced on, whether it is only recreational or end up being therapeutic. Each facilitation style will have a different outcome. As with the facilitation styles there are also a variety of theories and motivations regarding adventure experiences and how these come to be. To some extent the literature could give some guidelines to answering the research question. This was based on previous studies. Each study was very different in terms of the aim of the AREL program. Very little research was found on the value of AREL in training postgraduate psychology students at a tertiary institution. It must also be remembered that the research question focused specifically on the experiences of these particular participants. The above summarized the findings of the literature study, now we will recap on the research methods and findings as presented in chapters three and four.

5.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS

The following are the main findings of the research project, the essence of what the adventure experience was for these nineteen participants. The phenomenological research method developed by Giorgi was used to analyse the research data from a phenomenological point of view (De Castro, 2003; Giorgi 1997, 1999, 2008; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). In analyzing the reported experiences of the 19 research respondents the findings were divided into two broad categories.

The first and most substantial category was termed personal development. According to

the experiences of most of the participants the following common elements were experienced. These are taken to be the essential structures in having such an experience. Most participants became more aware of their own functioning (behavior, thoughts and feelings) and the effect of this on their surroundings and those around them. It seemed to give them the opportunity to have a more direct influence on their own behavior and learning. This realization made many aware of the boundaries they set or lacked and the role these played in their lives and relationships. Except for becoming more self-aware and adapting or adjusting personal boundaries most of the participants experienced some form of learning or growth during their adventure experience. Different types of learning were experienced, from educational to personal. The last theme that most of the participants experienced was the development of group cohesion. As the adventure week progressed the team seemed to draw closer together and to connect on a more personal level which seemingly resulted in more trust and more sharing.

The second major category was that of professional development. All of the participants experienced some level of professional development during the adventure week. Let us look at the structures underlying experiencing professional development during an adventure experience. Firstly, most participants became aware of the role of comfort versus discomfort during the adventure week. They seemed to realize how these play an important role in a therapeutic context and how they should sometimes be accepted and at other times be challenged. Next the importance of trusting yourself, the client and the therapeutic process came to the fore. Many of the participants acknowledged how their adventure experienced also helped then to realize the importance of mutual trust in the therapeutic relationship. Participants also seemed to realize the importance of acknowledging individual differences, especially between clients. This means that the therapist needs to be flexible in therapy and also aware of how different clients affect them differently. Finally, most participants became aware of the value in creating a safe therapeutic space before any boundaries or perceptions could be challenged. For this to develop, respect and also trust seemed to be essential. In the following section the literature review and research finding are combined.

5.3 LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH FINDINGS SUMMARY

It seems that during their professional training in psychology the essence of the participants' adventure experience was the following:

1. Personal development:

   Participants seemed to become more self-aware; changed/adapted some of their boundaries; experienced some level of change and learning and they became aware of the development of group cohesion during adventure experiences.

2. Professional Development:

   Participants seemed to become aware of the value in challenging their own and their clients' comfort zones, by realizing the important role discomfort may play in therapy; mutual trust was highlighted during their adventure experience as an importance factor to ensure in creating a healthy therapeutic relationship and context; many seemingly realized the role individual differences might play in the therapeutic context and most participants seemed to learn about the importance in creating a safe space in the therapeutic environment to enhance participation and growth in clients.

These research findings correlate with research from the literature study suggesting adventure experiential experiences may enhance an understanding of personal and professional developmental needs, create awareness and influence the individual on a social, intellectual and psychological manner. It also correlated with research suggesting that individuals become more aware of their own functioning, boundaries and roles as well as that of those around them by participating in these adventure activities and then afterwards reflecting on them. This was confirmed in this research project's research findings.

Having looked at the research data from a phenomenological point of view, I concluded by mentioning the generalized structures this study found, using the phenomenological research method of Giorgi, which underlay this adventure experience as lived by the research participants. These thus describe the essence of this experience. If this study was done from a hermeneutic phenomenological (see chapter 3.3.2) point of view as

developed by Heidegger (Annells, 1996; Laverty, 2003), I would have searched for the meaning which comes from the relationship with and participation in the experience. If this study was done more from a hermeneutic phenomenological point of view my preconceptions as a researcher would have played a larger role, as well as the historical philosophies guiding my interpretations. I would also not have searched for the essence of the phenomenon of the combined adventure experience of all the participants but would have aimed more to interpret and understand the current but changing meaning that arose in my interaction with the individual texts from each participant. (Laverty, 2003)

Husserl and Heidegger thus differed in the way lived experiences are explored. Husserl focused on epistemological considerations, the importance of the researcher setting aside pre-conceptions with the assistance of bracketing while searching for the essence of a phenomenon. Heidegger's focus was more ontologically directed toward interpreting and understanding the continually co-constructed nature of reality while being in the world (Laverty, 2003).

Although having concluded to specific results being supported by the literature the study did have various limitations. It is important to acknowledge these as they can then be avoided in future research projects, similar to this one. This will assist in making future findings even more reliable and accurate.

5.4 LIMITATIONS

A limitation of the current study lies in the essence of describing another person's experience. As individuals people understand the same experience differently. This same rule applies to analyzing and describing the experience of another individual. Although bracketing was used, a limitation still lies therein that another researcher might have found different results from the same method of analysis of the same data. The researcher and audience should thus always be aware of this. Another limitation might be that because I participated in the same adventure experience as the participants

and know most of the participants personally this might have influenced my description and analysis of the data.

A limitation in this and similar studies that must be considered is that of the influence of the specific context in which the experience took place. This makes it difficult to determine the exact cause of the effects or changes the participants experienced. This could have been influenced by the group of individuals, group process, adventure activities, outdoor environment, training environment, personal factors and many others elements. The importance lies within the ability to be aware of these and not just ignore their presence.

The last limitation is that the experiences were grouped and the researcher looked for specific meaning units in analyzing the data. This reduces the individual experiences to more generalized themes amongst all participants, losing out on some of the individual experiences. This was the price to pay to get a general understanding of a group of participants' experiences. Also, focusing on the experiences of nineteen participants may thus have diluted the experience of each participant to some extent. Having looked at some of the limitations of the study the following recommendations could be made for future research projects.

Having looked at the limitations of this study, we conclude this research project by making some recommendations as to assist in improving the quality of future studies.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The first recommendation would be to suggest a similar but study from a hermeneutic phenomenological viewpoint, using the same data and thereafter comparing the results of each participant to the essences found in the current research study. I do acknowledge that this would be a lengthy process as the researchers will need to interpret and understand the meanings from each individual. Another suggestion would be to use interviews as a means of gathering data and then analysing these as suggested by Giorgi

(2008), Giorgi and Giorgi (2008) and Laverty (2003). I would also suggest a follow up study to this one, where each participant's experience is phenomenologically analyzed separately. A separate structure for each individual could be described for all who participated in the same phenomenon. These could then be compared amongst each other but also to the findings of the current research project. This could be done in order to get an even more comprehensive description of the structural elements underlying this particular adventure experience phenomenon.

The results of the study can be kept in mind in future planning of training programs in various courses and degrees. This might be especially valuable in human sciences fields of study. The research results might also be a valuable source of research on experiential learning and activity related experiential learning as well as on adventure training. It can assist in further research being done on this topic or topics related to it. This is important as the researcher found that there was a lack of research on adventure being used for postgraduate training specifically. Future studies might make use of personal interviews with questions based on the analysis of the data. This will ensure a more trustworthy interpretation of the data as it was reflected back to participants to check the accuracy of the descriptions and interpretations made by the researcher. Future researcher could also make their focus more specific for instance with the present findings, only focus on personal development or professional development, or even on the theme of learning. This would make the study richer in information on more specific themes.

In conclusion, I found this research study to be a valuable leaning experience. This is especially relevant to learning about the value of experiential learning and adventure experiences in education, training and therapy. The value of adventure experiences seems to be underestimated as only recreational, but actually have so much more to offer in education, therapy but also to life itself and therefore growth in general.

CHAPTER 6
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