An Investigation into the Benefits and Processes of Adventure Training Among Disaffected and At-Risk Populations

By

Martin Evans, M.Sc., B.A.

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Abstract

Despite the popularity and potential value of adventure activity (AA) programmes, support for the potential claims of these therapeutic interventions to change behaviour, improve social relationships and improve self-concept has been mixed. The present study is an ethnographic investigation into the effects of participation in AA with a particular emphasis upon self-concept that seeks to move beyond description into one of explanation concerning the processes by which changes may be elicited. The study sample consists of three intervention programmes for disadvantaged and at-risk populations. The first is a Pathways to Employment project for disadvantaged youth ($n = 10$); the second, a Youth Offending Team programme for at-risk youth ($n = 9$); and the third, a JobMatch programme for unemployed adults ($n = 33$).

Findings indicate that the AA programmes made an important and meaningful contribution towards the positive development of self-concept and may also facilitate positive behaviour change among participants. A number of affective and cognitive components emerged strongly from the data that show improvements to self-esteem, mood and self-confidence (self-efficacy). These in turn appear to effect behavioural changes exhibited and reported by participants. Participants describe improvements in attitudes and behaviour expressed as being more ready to overcome anxiety in fearful situations, take on new challenges, act in a more agentic and self-determined manner and be more trusting of others. A number of elements such as the concept of ‘challenge by choice’, the application of constructive dissonance and the personal characteristics of instructors/staff created an autonomy-supportive environment that facilitated participants to engage internal sources of motivation which appear to play a significant part in the adventure training process. Findings also suggest that the AA represented mastery-oriented situations engendering cogent perceptions of risk and danger allowing displays of competence described as ‘self-esteem moments’ that accounted for elevated levels of self-esteem and self-competence.
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my parent -

Captain Theodore Evans
&
Margaret Evans

“Gwell Dysg Na Golud”
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Chapter 1:  
Government Initiatives and Investment in Physical Activity

1.1:  Introduction

Sports and physical activities play a key role in delivering the Government’s strategy to empower individuals by raising aspirations; alter their attitudes towards themselves, their community and wider society; improve skills and educational opportunities and change behaviour by encouraging them to be more responsible, law abiding and productive citizens.

1.2:  Purpose of Study

This study is an attempt to evaluate three Government sponsored intervention programmes that employ adventure activities (AA) directed at disaffected, at-risk populations and, as such, may be viewed as falling within the area of policy research. The investigation attempts to analyse the effectiveness of these interventions in order to determine their capacity to develop human and social capital in one of the most deprived regions in Wales.

The principal aim of the current study is to analyse the experiences participants have within an AA programme that may explain the possible processes by which they exhibit and report changes to the way they feel, think, and behave. As a preliminary first step in this investigation it is necessary to identify the nature of the outcomes emerging from the adventure activities under study. The establishment of outcomes may help to determine whether the Government is justified in its investment in these programmes. Determining programme outcomes may either undermine or support such investments. The Government expects participation in physical activity to improve aspects of the self-concept which it is anticipated will pay a dividend in developing social and human capital.

In essence, this investigation centres upon an overarching question: What are the processes that account for the outcomes observed in the adventure activity programmes under study? In addition to the overarching question, three subsidiary
questions are presented: What is the significance of dissonance within the adventure education approach? What is the impact of competence on the self-concept? What are the interpersonal implications resulting from participation in adventure activities?

1.3: The Political Agenda for Sport and Physical Activity

The UK Government is a major investor in sport with an estimated £2.2bn expenditure in England (Department of Culture, Media and Sport, 2002) and £750m investment in deprived areas over a ten year period throughout the UK (DCMS, 2001). The Government’s primary investment in sport is a commitment to promote health. Along with a host of other measures, sport is considered to contribute to improved educational outcomes, reduced crime and greater social inclusion (DCMS, 2002).

The UK Government has adopted the Council of Europe’s definition of sport which is inclusive of all physical activity (DCMS, 2002):

There are many different definitions of sport. The Council of Europe defines it as: “all forms of physical activity which, through casual or organised participation, aim at expressing or improving physical fitness and well-being, forming social relationships, or obtaining results in competition at all levels” (DCMS, 2002, p.21).

Coalter, an authority on the benefits of sport and an advisor to the UK Government considers that the Government’s policy towards investment in sport is characterised by a dual purpose. First, extending social rights of citizenship and second, emphasising a range of wider social benefits presumed to be associated with participation. In essence, sport is presumed to address multifarious aspects of social exclusion by reducing crime, increasing employability and improving health, at the same time contributing to community development and social cohesion. This implies that participation in sport may produce outcomes that improve weak or negative aspects associated with depressed urban populations (Coalter, 2008). The Policy Action Team report (DCMS, 2001) recognises the powerful impact that sport offers by providing creative and innovative ways in which disengaged individuals can re-engage, equipping them with the skills and confidence to re-join mainstream society. Former DCMS Secretary, Chris Smith,
claimed that “sport can not only make a valuable contribution to delivering key outcomes of lower long-term unemployment, less crime, better health and better qualifications, but can also help to develop the individual’s pride, community spirit and capacity for responsibility that enable communities to run regeneration programmes themselves” (DCMS, 1999, p.2).

Shortly after gaining power, the Labour Government, in the late 1990s, set in motion a new policy agenda for sport. According to Coalter (2003) this ‘new’ agenda can be explained in terms of a changed policy context centred upon the ‘Third Way’, characterised by the development of politics between the state and the market. This involves a desire to strengthen both social capital (social relations within communities and the wider society) and human capital (empowerment, improved self-organisation, improved education and employability). In effect, this embraces a core desire to “move social policy and provision from a simple ‘redistributionist’ approach which promotes ‘passive citizenship’, to the promotion and enabling of ‘active citizenship’” (p.41). The underlying notion of social and human capital is to create a ‘stakeholder’ society thereby strengthening civil society (Coalter, 2008). In essence, the ‘Third Way’ reflects a defining transformation from viewing urban regeneration largely in economic and infrastructure terms to one which emphasises the development of people (Coalter, 2003).

More recently, the Government’s vision of building a ‘Big Society’ is supported by the Conservative Party’s National Citizen Service. This is an ambitious Government initiative to develop skills and attitudes that encourage youth to become engaged with their communities, and to become more active and responsible citizens. The National Citizens Service is an eight week voluntary programme for sixteen year old teenagers that focuses on personal and social development delivered through Outward Bound (OB) residential programmes (Appendix A).

In 1998, under the aegis of the Social Exclusion Unit, the Labour Government published ‘Bringing Britain Together: A National Strategy for Neighbourhood Renewal’ to tackle social problems such as underemployment, poor health, low incomes, poor housing, high crime, poverty and family breakdown (DCMS, 2001).
‘Bringing Britain Together’ (1998) is a Cabinet Office report commissioned to develop an integrated and sustainable approach to the problems of the worst housing estates in the UK. This document proposed eighteen action teams tasked with taking forward the Government’s programme of policy development. Policy Action Team 10 (PAT 10): Arts and Sport, under the direction of the DCMS, was commissioned to draw up an action plan to maximise the impact of arts, sport and leisure in neighbourhood regeneration. PAT 10 reported in 2000 and 2001 (DCMS, 2000, 2001) on the extent to which sport has contributed towards the Government’s people-centred policy agenda, with the aim to develop social and personal capital.

Findings from these reports portray somewhat disappointing reviews. PAT 10 (DCMS, 2000) reports that benefits are frequently overlooked by providers of programmes and barriers remain. The report indicates that projects are programme-centred rather than focused on the needs of participants. There is an emphasis on short-term funding that appears to be inadequate to support or promote programmes that are long enough to achieve sustainable benefits. PAT 10 (DCMS, 2001) is a little more positive, reporting that projects undertaken are helping individuals to engage in “training and employment, lead healthier lifestyles, keep out of trouble and enjoy safer and more attractive environments” (p.77).

The Government’s investment in sport is part of a ‘basket’ of measures perceived to benefit individuals and the communities in which they live and add to the common good of society. According to Coalter (2003) the claims for the potential benefits of participating in sport are:

(i) Physical fitness and health
(ii) Mental health/psychological well-being
     Anxiety/ stress/ sense of well-being
(iii) Personal Development
     Self-concept/ self-esteem/ confidence/ improved focus of control
(iv) Socio-psychological benefits
     Empathy/ tolerance/ social skills/ team work
(v) Sociological impacts
     Community identity/ coherence/ integration
     (Coalter, 2003, p.44).
Participation in sport is assumed to have intermediate impacts on the individual expressed as increased fitness, improved sense of wellbeing, enhanced self-efficacy and self-esteem and the development of social skills. These improvements are presumed to lead to intermediate outcomes identified as changes in behaviour, such as reduced drug use and alcohol dependence, improved healthy lifestyles, reduced anti-social behaviour, improved educational performance and increased employability (Coalter 2008). Unfortunately, the evidence supporting these claims is somewhat limited suggesting that “there is a lack of systematic monitoring and evaluation of the presumed outcomes of sport-based projects, with often limited local evaluation expertise and funding” (DCMS, 2002, p.44), despite a long-held assumption “among policy makers and practitioners that sport and other physically demanding activities have a part to play” (Utting, 1996, p.55).

According to the DCMS (2002) only health benefits from physical activity are supported by the evidence. This is well documented in the sport science and medical literature. As such, appropriate levels of physical activity (ACSM, 1990; Blair et al., 1992), are the most likely to achieve good outcomes for the Government in terms of cost savings to the NHS (DCMS, 2002). Physical inactivity costs for the UK have been estimated at £8.2bn (DCMS, 2002), and participation in physical activity should be used within a strategy for reducing these costs. For example, if 5% of physically inactive individuals became physically active, calculations estimate that this will result in a £300m annual saving to the NHS (DHPAHIP, 2004). In addition to direct savings to the NHS from increased physical activity levels among the general population, self-esteem has also been highlighted in the Government’s strategy for health. Increasing children’s self-esteem appears to play a significant role in the Government’s holistic approach to health. Not only is improved self-esteem important to children’s emotional and mental wellbeing, but it is also perceived as important as a means of empowering them to make the right health choices (Appendix B).

The DCMS (2002) state that there are indications that participation in sport is associated with educational benefits. This view is supported by Pederson and Seidman (2005) who found that involvement in team sports was associated with
higher self-esteem and greater academic achievement. Involvement in team sports served as a protective condition for academic outcomes, indicated by participants having a greater affection for school and being more likely to enter higher education and have higher academic performance compared to their non-athletic counterparts (Eccles & Barber, 1999). Investigating a sample of fourteen out of two hundred social inclusion projects in England, Long and colleagues (2002) found that these projects provided educational benefits to participants and that these were attributable to various aspects of personal development that were “largely presumed to flow from self-esteem and confidence, but also involve the kind of social skills essential to co-operate with others” (p.4).

With regard to crime the DCMS states that:

some practitioners also report positive results from schemes that use sport to help to reduce crime and social exclusion. However, systematic evidence is lacking here... (DCMS, 2002, p.45).

The evidence for sport and physical activity having an impact on crime and delinquency is mixed. Some studies demonstrate that participation in sport is positively related to youth adjustment and a number of developmental aspects such as improved self-esteem, social skills, assertiveness, and self-control (Findlay & Coplan, 2008; Linver et al, 2009). Whereas other investigations have indicated that vigorous physical activity is related to greater risk of juvenile delinquency among male participants (Faulkner et al., 2007) and, compared with non-athletic activities, there is a greater risk of delinquency associated with participation in sport among urban adolescent males (Gardner et al., 2009). With specific reference to outdoor education programmes, Wright (1983) found that adapted Outward Bound (OB) programmes for delinquent youth demonstrated positive improvements to self-esteem, self-efficacy and locus of control. However, these improvements do not appear to have a chronic effect. Castellano and Soderstrom (1992) found that completion of an outdoor wilderness programme resulted in significant reduction in juvenile delinquent behaviour immediately following the programme and at twelve month follow-up. These authors also stated that recidivism rates had decayed to the point that they were no longer significant at two year follow-up. Nichols (1997) offers a comprehensive review of the evidence and processes that may explain how sport and physical activity programmes can
reduce criminal behaviour among youth. He concludes that a simple explanation of the programmes’ effectiveness in reducing crime is distraction. Morris and colleagues (2003) report that 74% of sports intervention programmes, for at-risk youth, provided them with diversionary activities “that ‘entertain’ youth as an alternative to other more antisocial behaviour” (p.2). A number of alternative explanations have been posited: to some extent crime is attributed to boredom on the part of youth and that there is evidence to suggest that sport may offer an alternative source of excitement; achievement in sport for at-risk individuals provides self-esteem that they are unlikely to obtain from educational achievement or other forms of social status; sport may develop cognitive competencies such as the ability to solve interpersonal problems, improve social skills, self-control and locus of control, the ability to reason abstractly and feel empathy with others; sport may also offer positive role models as alternatives to the delinquent peer group (Nichols, 1997).

Physical activity programmes appear to be either designed to promote positive youth development¹ (Fauth et al., 2007; Feldman & Matjasko, 2005; Gerstenblith et al., 2005; Mahoney et al., 2005) or to occupy time as a distraction² (Gardner et al., 2009). Irrespective of whether for development or distraction reasons, programmes predominantly feature team sports which operate in school extracurricular programmes and, to a lesser extent, within a community context. Thus, by far the most common activities for youth are team sports (Pedersen & Seidman, 2005).

Perhaps, because of the weight of popularity of team sports, most research has focused on this area, rather than the appropriateness and effectiveness of the activity type. However, other reasons for this lack of focus may include difficulty in evaluating the research evidence for AA programmes. In a review of nineteen adventure-based activities Moote and Wodarski (1997) state that several issues emerge which make it difficult to evaluate adventure-based programmes. Many studies make it unclear who or how many individuals lead and deliver programmes and the techniques of delivery are rarely mentioned, which makes comparisons

¹ i.e., reduced incidence of delinquent behaviours, improved social skills, enhanced academic performance and persistence, high self-esteem
² i.e., prevent antisocial and delinquent behaviours
difficult. Research designs emerge as a concern, with few studies employing control groups, utilisation of various measurement instruments, unclear sample sizes and over-reliance on self-reports, with only three studies using observational data. However, despite methodological deficiencies, the majority of studies report positive outcomes from participation, particularly in self-esteem and self-concept.

With specific relevance to the present study, Coalter (2003) reports that the type of sport undertaken has some significance. Much of the debate concerning participation in sport and its perceived benefits feature traditional competitive team sports rather than adventure activities. However, Coalter distinguishes between criterion-based and norm-based sport:

- criterion-based activity enable participants to establish their own standards. Norm-based approaches require participants to achieve standards of performance established by others. Research evidence suggests that for many vulnerable young people, criterion-based activities are more effective in developing self-esteem and confidence (Coalter, 2003, p.46).

Outdoor activities can be classified as criterion-based; they are non-competitive, often requiring only individual effort rather than having to rely on others, lack codification of rules and regulations (other than safety considerations) and emphasise personally constructed goals where the individual overcomes personal challenges. At-risk adolescents tend to “reject organised, competitive mainstream sport because it contains components similar to those which they have already failed to resolve - adherence to formal rules and regulations, achievement of externally defined goals and competitive and testing situations” (p.47).

1.4: Physical Activity: From Social Control to Social and Personal Benefits

The history of sport, and its use as a tool of social control, is the story of the origins of contemporary sport and physical education itself. During the early industrialisation of Britain (1780 - 1830) the English public schools\(^3\) witnessed hostile attitudes by school teachers towards games, such as those expressed in

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\(^3\) Only seven English public schools existed at this time: Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Shrewsbury, Westminster and Winchester.
1800 by head teachers who viewed those who played games as ‘flannelled fools and muddied oafs’ meting out floggings to boys who persisted in their participation. Attitudes steadily began to change when the social value of games became apparent to the educational establishment; now head teachers expressed to their pupils ‘play up, play up and play the game’ (Honeybourne et al., 1996).

During the barbarian phase (1790 – 1830) schools were unruly, where constant antagonism and tension existed between teachers and pupils. At school, boys engaged in the sports that they participated in at home, which involved hunting with hounds, resulting in conflict between the school and local landowners and gamekeepers. Boys also indulged in horse racing that encouraged gambling together with their much loved hunting and shooting excursions saw them frequenting local inns and taverns where they participated in other vices, such as drinking and consorting with whores. Subsequently, school teachers made efforts to terminate these nefarious sporting activities which, not surprisingly, lead to further conflict (Davis et al., 1994).

During the phase of ‘muscular Christianity’ organised games appeared as spontaneous recreation, which was encouraged by more progressive head teachers, such as Thomas Arnold at Rugby School. He regarded games as having a controlling influence on his pupils within the confines of the school grounds, but they also “highlight the more moral features of teamwork, such as self-discipline, loyalty, courage; character-building qualities suitable for the prospective leaders of society” (Wesson et al., 2000, p.238). Games flourished and developed within these institutions and in 1864 the Clarendon Commission reported, “that the system of team games followed by the [public] schools was the main developer of character” (Davis et al., p.318).

Social segregation was evident in a rapidly developing industrialising nation and sports recreation mirrored this division, based on the inequalities of society at this time. The industrial period saw the development of sport along very clear social lines, dominated by the middle-class who continued to promote the games that originated in the public schools (Honeybourne et al., 1996). Social inequality was also reflected in the education system, where physical education for working-class children saw a less subtle emphasis on social control compared to their public
school contemporaries, but nonetheless amounted to the same ends. In 1870, Parliament passed the Elementary Education Act, creating a state education system by establishing Board Schools where physical education comprised of only drill taught by Army NCOs, based on the ‘Army Field Exercise Book’. The intention of this form of physical education was to improve the fitness of Army recruits and to instil discipline among working-class boys (Davis et al., 1994).

The English public school system was to influence Robert Baden-Powell and Kurt Hahn, two influential educational thinkers who founded the Boy Scout Movement and Outward Bound (OB). The principal aim of the Scout Movement, established in 1907, was the development of ‘good citizenship’, based on the ‘Scout Law’, which embodied self-discipline, responsibility, and consideration for others. The middle and upper-classes bought into the idea of scouting on the grounds of the moral and physical character training it offered the nation’s youth. Discipline was the main selling point to parents and head teachers. However, it was the taste for adventure that attracted the boys, and later girls. Scouting caught their youthful imaginations, regardless of social class, and spoke to them compellingly about adventure (Boehmer, 2005).

Baden-Powell used adventure to lure youth into ‘healthy’ pursuits and build a sense of duty and patriotism, through character training. According to Harris (2006), as a military commander Baden-Powell was aware that many potential recruits for the Boer War had been turned away as medically unfit. Not only did he have concerns regarding the nation’s ability to defend itself, but he also “thought that the average modern working boy had an ‘attitude’ problem” (p.25) he saw them as soft and lazy. He believed that society was producing ‘loafers’, legions of directionless youth devoid of goals in life who lacked moral conscience characterised by unhealthy indulgences such as gambling, drinking and wasting their time hanging around street corners.

Scouting would provide a form of social control, reflected at the time in the St. Michael’s parish magazine, Southfields (1911) which reflects the public’s perception of scouting as a panacea to remedy societies’ problems associated with crime and immorality:
We know what the Boys Scout Movement is doing for our boys. It is making them into good citizens. The raw material of boyhood is turned into the useful, courteous, self-reliant, upright, honourable, and chivalrous Scout, whose law it is to do a good turn to somebody every day, and help other people at all times (Harris, 2006, p.105).

It is difficult to ignore that Scouting projected middle and upper-class values. Boehmer (2005) states that essentially this movement was a means to “distribute public school values to a wider social pool - of lower middle-class and even working-class boys - than the public school was able to reach, while simultaneously, by emphasizing obedience to authority, keeping the class structure intact” (p.xxii). Baden-Powell’s conception of the Boy Scouts, as an organisation to promote health and patriotism, can be viewed as somewhat anachronistic. However, his vision still resonates today in terms of providing youth with positive role models, promoting good citizenship and addressing many issues relating to disaffected youth.

Kurt Hahn, founder of Salem School and Gordonstoun School, is amongst the most innovative educational thinkers of the 20th Century (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993) and one of the giants of experiential education (Knapp, 2010). At Salem, a number of educational innovations were introduced that included the ‘Training Plan’. This was an exercise in self-supervision which grew out of Hahn’s sense of the prevalence and danger of self-deception, and the importance of learning to recognise one’s own weaknesses (Flavin, 1996). A further innovation was the morning ‘Break’ that was performed for one hour four times a week which, according to Miner and Boldt (2002), was an opportunity to build self-esteem. The ‘Break’ was a scheme of physical activity based on athletic skills of running, jumping and throwing, that was more than just physical training but also developed character (Hogan, 1968). Each pupil competed against themselves as Miner (1990) reflects from his experience of administering ‘The Break’:

When I was put in charge of The Break, I became a fascinated witness to its remarkable results. It was not just the average performance that would have put the average American schoolboy to shame. The great satisfaction lay in seeing the physical duffer discover that through trying from day to day; he could do much better than he would have dared to dream. He had learned, in Hahn’s phrase, to “defeat his defeatism”. You could see him shed - Hahn again - “the misery of his unimportance”. His new-found confidence would carry over into his peer relationships, his classroom performance... (Miner, 1990, p.60)
At Gordonstoun School, Hahn started the Moray Sea School which provided a physically rugged and challenging short-term course of twenty-eight days for industrial apprentices, police cadets and adjudicated youth aged between 14½ - 18 years, to develop character and teamwork (Miner & Boldt, 2002). Hahn set up the Moray Badge Award for local youth, designed to develop physical fitness, tenacity and compassion. Eventually, in 1956, with the blessing of Hahn’s former pupil, this became known as The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme (Flavin, 1996).

In 1940, Gordonstoun was forced to re-locate to Aberdovey, Wales, during which time Hahn joined forces with Laurence Holt owner of the Blue Funnel Shipping Line. Hahn and Holt, in 1941, opened ‘The Aberdovey Sailing School’ later to be known on Holt’s suggestion as ‘Outward Bound’ (OB), to prepare seamen for the hazards of naval warfare. The course was a twenty-eight day survival programme, designed to increase both physical and psychological endurance (Flavin, 1996).

After the war, other organisations and a growing number of LEAs became involved in Outward Bound (OB) “recruitment would depend more and more upon the contribution the school could make to the general development of ordinary citizens” (Hogan, 1968, p.83). The opening of the White Hall Centre in Derbyshire, in 1950, brought the concept of OB into the education mainstream with many more LEAs establishing residential outdoor education centres (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993). Currently, OB operates in thirty-three countries world-wide in addition to the UK (OB, 2012).

In the post-war period, most of the staff were former military officers, some of whom were former pupils of Kurt Hahn, who placed great importance on the physical nature of outdoor training. These individuals, in time, were gradually replaced by school teacher trained instructors, with a different life experience and philosophy and, because of the general decline in fitness levels among young people, the ‘sacred cows’ of athletic prowess and endurance training have been replaced by less physically demanding activity (Hogan, 1968).

OB made significant changes by 1965, reflected by a new conceptualisation of the role of outdoor education, influenced by wider educational developments, “the language of character and leadership and other aspects of the Hahnian educational
vision, had come under sustained challenge from within the organisation, and the rhetoric of character-training was gradually abandoned, replaced with an emphasis on the ‘softer’ aims of self-discovery and personal growth” (Freeman 2011, p.23). This has not been the case in the US, true to Hahn’s emphasis on physical challenge, transplanted by British instructors facilitating the early US programmes. A physically robust programme still exists, with one or two home grown innovations such as the three day solo survival exercise, a forty to seventy-five mile expedition and a gruelling six mile endurance run (Miner and Boldt, 2002). The American OB programme is a physically demanding course, described by Freeman (2011) as an experience that embodies a contemporary variant of a secularised version of muscular Christianity.

1.5: Issues Relating to the Volume and Quality of Research in Adventure Education and Training

A review of AA conducted in remote locations described as therapeutic wilderness programmes by Gibson (1979), reported improvements in self-esteem, interpersonal relationships and decreased hostility. However, these studies were anecdotal in nature, placing a question mark over their validity and, according to Gibson, empirical studies fair no better, stating “that all of these studies suffer from minor to serious methodological shortcomings” (p.24). This said Gibson is clear that wilderness programmes are effective in providing positive changes in self-concept, behaviour and social functioning. Similar findings were reported in an earlier review by Crompton and Sellar (1978).

In the intervening years since these first reviews were published, there still appears to be less than an adequate volume of research. In the mid-1990s one of the last meta-analytical studies involving forty-three therapeutic wilderness programmes was conducted by Cason and Gillis (1994), who report a lack of published studies available to be reviewed. However, these authors found an average ES of .31 that translates into a 62.2% improvement in seven categories of outcome measurements, including self-esteem and locus of control, compared to non-participation. A number of relevant findings emerged, indicating that longer programmes had higher ES (.58), and there were no significant differences
between client groups: adjudicated youth, inpatients, emotionally challenged and ‘normal’ adolescents.

In a second meta-analysis Hattie and colleagues (1997) remark that “in searching for articles to include in this review we were struck by the number of research papers that read more like programme advertisements than research” (p.45). These authors included ninety-six studies published between 1968-1994 ranging from durations of one to one hundred and twenty days ($M = 24$ days), involving individuals aged from eleven to forty-two years. Findings reveal an average ES of .34, which equates to a 65% improvement compared to non-participants, a comparable finding with Cason and Gillis (1994). These authors state from the adventure programmes under study, the effect size “of .34 is most comparable to achievement and affective outcomes from typical education interventions” (p.55). The effects of the adventure programme for self-concept are greater than those typically found in classroom-based programmes and that effects “on self-esteem (.26) exceeds that of other educational programmes (.19)” (p.70). In agreement with Cason and Gillis (1994), ES were greatest for programmes longer than twenty days, and largest effects were found for self-concept, while marked increases were observed in social competence, cooperation and interpersonal communication.

1.6: Utility of Study

During the early stages of the research process, researchers are instinctively aware of concerns regarding relevance and usefulness of their research. Awareness translates to a justification of and an interest in the overarching research question presented to a potential readership.

Constructing a justification for their research, the researcher confronts two interrelated considerations. The first concerns the establishment of the importance and relevance of the investigation and the second concerns the identification of interested consumers.

The relevance of this study centres upon an apparent lack of research undertaken in the area of adventure education. This has been noted by Cason and Gillis (1994)
who, citing Godfrey (1980), state that many practitioners and providers of AA “intuitively ‘know’ that adventure programming is effective for adolescents, they are often at a loss when asked for some research data by a board of directors or funding agency to support their claims” (p.40). This apparent dearth of research conducted in AA was first commented upon by Crompton and Sellar (1978) who stated that “the majority of the literature is found in masters’ theses and doctoral dissertations rather than in scientific or professional journals” (p.28). Although this is a somewhat dismissive comment and an implicit slight to the quality of postgraduate research, it does however emphasise the lack of research popularity within this area.

In the three decades since Crompton and Sellar’s comment, the situation still remains largely unchanged in terms of the volume of peer reviewed research undertaken in the area of adventure activities. There remains a relatively small number of research papers published, compared with the volume of research conducted in the traditional Olympic sports. A search of the sports database, focusing on papers presented since 1960 to 2012, has revealed that 3,118 studies on the benefits of sport and exercise on the self-concept have been published compared to 1,381 studies on the benefits of AA.

Despite the popularity and potential value of outdoor adventure training, support for the developmental effectiveness of these programmes has been assessed as mixed, particularly with regard to self-esteem and self-concept (Haney & Durlak, 1998).

The empirical evidence has not substantially supported the positive impact of outdoor experiences on either self-concept or self-esteem constructs. In Shore’s (1977) words “the findings are mixed, methodologically flawed and often confused (p.35)” (Langsner & Anderson, 1987, p.238).

The aims and objectives of therapeutic outdoor programmes are fairly clear according to Gibson (1979), as they claim to change behaviour, enhance emotional adjustment, improve self-concept and improve relationships with others, “what is not so clear is how these goals are accomplished or what it is about the wilderness programmes that produce the desired changes in the participants” (p.22). Ewert (1987a) also reflects this view, stating that documenting the benefits of these programmes has little use, whereas explaining how and why these may accrue
carries greater value. However, he does suggest that “moving beyond description into one of explanation will prove to be as difficult as it is necessary” (p.23).

The 2011 riots in England have intensified the debate regarding Government policy. The Conservative Government’s ‘National Citizens Service’, (Appendix C) supports the vision for building the ‘Big Society’ through Outward Bound (OB) programmes, that purport to develop skills and attitudes needed for youth to become more engaged with their communities and become active and responsible citizens (Cabinet Office, 2012). In some small way this investigation may add to the debate, and in so doing, findings and conclusions may be of interest to policy makers and practitioners within the field of adventure education. I have been encouraged by the interest shown in this research by programme leaders, their teams and executive officers from the local authority.

1.7: Structure of the Thesis

Chapter two outlines the developments and applications of adventure education with a specific focus on Outward Bound training. The chapter also highlights the theoretical perspectives from which an analysis of AA programmes can be based. The chapter concludes with a review of previous research into the benefits emerging from adventure education programmes.

Chapter three focuses on the undervalued contribution of experiential learning and the unique characteristics of adventure education, compared to other modalities of outdoor experiential pedagogy.

Chapter four raises the issue of self-concept development as the intended principal aim expressed by many outdoor adventure programmes. It features esteem and efficacy, with a focus on the politicisation of self-esteem. The chapter highlights the importance of self-esteem as one of the intended intermediate impact outcomes stated by the Government in its national strategy for neighbourhood renewal, delivered through its agenda for sport. A number of issues relating to self-esteem are raised, including its complexity and diversity, how self-esteem is
affected by competence and success, how individuals with varying levels of self-esteem function and the consequences of success and failure on self-esteem.

Chapter five describes and explains the concepts involved in ethnographic research undertaken in this study, within a constructivist-interpretive model that also establishes the arguments appertaining to validity and reliability issues. This chapter also outlines the operational foundations upon which this study will be constructed and conducted, as it relates to data collection and analysis. The Chapter also provides a comprehensive description of the three intervention programmes under investigation.

Chapter six is the first of two analytical chapters that focus on emerging themes from content analysis and interview data, together with observations made in the field that relate to the Pathways to Employment and YOT programmes.

Chapter seven is the second analytical chapter based on interview and observational data emerging from the JobMatch programme. The chapter focuses on elements emerging from chapter six and endeavours to provide a reasoned argument and explanation for the outcomes that have emerged, together with an attempt to identify the specific processes that are likely to affect the processes of development within these programmes.

Chapter eight is the discussion chapter, which attempts to interpret and comment upon the findings emerging from the two previous analytical chapters as these relate to various psychological theories. It addresses the overarching question and the subsidiary questions put forward, with the aim to describe and explain the processes by which AA are likely to account for the impacts that they appear to make in terms of social and personal development.
Chapter 2: Benefits and Theories Underpinning Adventure Education

2.1: Introduction

This chapter describes the development and provision of adventure-based education in the UK and the theoretical foundations that underpin this approach to experiential learning. There are a number of psychological models that have been applied to the adventure education field that attempt to explain how AA programmes affect those taking part in them. Key models under discussion include: dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957); self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977); attribution theory (Weiner, 1985); and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991, 1995). The chapter concludes with a review of the benefits AA programmes offer participants in terms of intrapersonal and interpersonal development.

2.2: Developments and Applications of Outward Bound Training

The influence of OB in the UK has been instrumental in founding other training organisations such as Brathay Hall Trust (vocational youth training), Leadership Trust (corporate outdoor management and development) and facilities such as Hafod Meurig (a residential training centre for at-risk youth) (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993). OB has been even more prolific in Canada, US, New Zealand and Australia, spawning organisations such as the Association of Experiential Education (Priest & Gass, 2005). In the US, OB provides training for a range of special populations that include: adjudicated youth (i.e., those who have been sentenced by due process of the law), the physically and mentally disabled, recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, and combat veterans (Greene & Thompson, 1990).

OB is also recognised as the largest leading organisation of outdoor adventure-based experiential learning in corporate professional development (Ewert, 1990). From its inception in 1941, OB has provided training for British companies which has been according to Hopkins & Putnam (1993), “hailed as the essential requirement to enable Britain to compete successfully in world markets” (p.50). This provision continues into the present, with a number of commercial
organisations offering a range of outdoor management development (OMD) training to some of the UK’s leading blue chip companies that base much of their programming on the OB curriculum, the original providers of such services (Krouwel & Goodwill, 1994). One such company highlighted by Hopkins and Putnam (1993) is the Leadership Trust, Ross-on-Wye, a respected market leader “specifically [promoting] leadership competence at the personal, team and organisational levels” (p.55).

In the UK, OB courses appear to focus on school children as their principal client group. They claim that their courses build social capital by bringing children together from different schools, creating wider social networks thus breaking down barriers that exist within communities; develop more supportive relationships between teachers and pupils; and improve skills for learning, particularly teamwork, problem-solving and improved behaviour in and towards school. The Outward Bound Trust (OBT) acknowledge that measuring outcomes such as increased confidence, better self-awareness and improved self-esteem is difficult because these are almost entirely subjective. Despite the lack of empirical evidence to determine positive outcomes, clients continue to have faith in and support their programmes (OBT, 2011).

In 2011, OB provided training for 26,493 individuals on a range of courses from three days to three weeks. In the UK, however, only 1.8% of all participants now undertake the three week expedition course, a course comparable with the original twenty-eight day courses similar to those still offered in other countries such as Canada and the United States. Most participants take part in ‘Adventure & Challenge’, a five day course that involves adventure activities such as abseiling, and a one day and night expedition (OBT, 2011).

Variation in the duration of courses is a problematic research issue. Hattie and colleagues (1997) argue that ignoring the length of a course will result in piecemeal attempts to determine the outcomes of the outdoor adventure experience. In a meta-analysis of adventure programmes, Cason and Gillis (1994) found significant positive correlations between the length of the programme and ES, suggesting that “adventure programmes are more effective if they are longer” (p.44).
2.3: Theoretical Perspectives in Adventure Education

The premise of adventure education, according to Priest (1990), is to provide an opportunity for the individual to change both interpersonal competencies (e.g., cooperation, trust and conflict resolution) and intrapersonal aspects of the self-concept (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy and confidence) that may be acquired from direct and purposeful exposure to adventure challenges. In order to analyse and interpret how these aspects of the self may change during adventure activities one should, according to Priest and Gass (1997), examine “several theories and models addressing how motivational principles affect adventure participants” (p.48). The following theories are included in Priest and Gass’ theoretical framework for adventure programmes: Self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977); attribution theory (Weiner, 1985); Rotter’s (1966) concept of locus of control; and White’s (1959) notion of competence-effectance. Klint (1990) suggests that these theories offer a useful starting point to understand the process of self-concept development through adventure education. Festinger’s (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance will be included in this review to expand upon the effects of the inherent dangers adventure activities hold for participants and the impact it has on intra- and inter-personal development, together with Deci and Ryan’s (1995) self-determination theory that may account for the self-actualisation needs of competence, relatedness and autonomy, fulfilled by active participation in the adventure experience.

2.3.1: Cognitive Dissonance Theory

In his theory of cognitive dissonance, Festinger (1957) proposes that individuals strive towards consistency within themselves. He states that “there is the same kind of consistency between what a person knows or believes and what he does” (p.1). Festinger points out that inconsistent behaviour is the exception and when it does occur, the individual attempts to rationalise the inconsistency, although individuals are not always successful in explaining away inconsistency and attempts to achieve consistency may fail. In these circumstances where the inconsistency is unresolved, a state of psychological discomfort occurs. Conflicting cognitions, that
is, “any knowledge, opinion, or beliefs about the environment, about oneself, or about one’s behaviour” (p.3) that are inconsistent will result in a state of discomfort which the individual is motivated to reduce. In the presence of inconsistency and discomfort, the individual will not only attempt to reduce it but will also actively avoid situations and information that are likely to exacerbate it.

Festinger has replaced the word ‘inconsistency’ with the word ‘dissonance’ and ‘consistency’ with the term ‘consonance’. He states that these two terms relate to relationships between pairs of cognitions called ‘elements’, which can be either relevant or irrelevant to one another. Elements are

the things a person knows about himself, about his behaviour, and about his surroundings. These elements then are “knowledges”, if I may coin the plural from the word. Some of these elements represent knowledge about oneself: what one does, what one feels, what one wants or desires, what one is, and the like. Other elements of knowledge concern the world in which one lives: what is where, what leads to what, what things are satisfying or painful or inconsequential or important, etc. (Festinger, 1957, p.9)

Festinger recognises that not all relationships between dissonant elements are of equal magnitude and therefore the drive to reduce dissonance will depend on the level or degree of the magnitude of the dissonance. He proposes that when dissonance exists between two elements, the dissonance can be eliminated by changing one of the elements. This can be achieved by changing the action or feeling which the behavioural element represents, that is, by reducing its importance; by changing an environmental cognitive element; or by adding a new cognitive element.

Cognitive dissonance theory over the five decades since its introduction has, according to Harmon-Jones and Mills (2009), been applied to a wide variety of psychological topics. Aronson (2009) has stated that it is truly astonishing that by combining cognition and motivation, dissonance theory has inspired a wide variety of research providing a powerful explanation for a swathe of human behaviour from decision making to curing individuals from snake phobia.

One such development of cognitive dissonance theory relevant to the current study involves the role of the self-concept in the dissonance process. A former student and colleague of Festinger, Elliot Aronson, has conducted much research in the
dissonance/self-concept field, with a particular focus on “speculating about how a person’s self-esteem might interact with the experiencing and reduction of dissonance” (p.121). Aronson, E (2009) argues that “dissonance theory makes its strongest prediction when an important element of the self-concept is threatened, typically when a person performs a behaviour that is inconsistent with his or her sense of self” (p.110). In order to reduce dissonance individuals:

strive for three things:

1. To preserve a consistent, stable, predictable sense of self.
2. To preserve a competent sense of self.
3. To preserve a morally good sense of self.

Or, in shorthand terms, what leads me to perform dissonance-reducing behaviour is my having done something that (a) astonishes me, (b) makes me feel stupid, or (c) makes me feel guilty. Needless to say, the three strivings can be in conflict with one another. (Aronson, E, 1992, p.305).

Joshua Aronson and colleagues (2009) have applied Steele’s (1988) self-affirmation theory as a means of demonstrating the value of self-affirmation perspective in Festinger’s original formulation of dissonance theory. The reasoning for approaching dissonance from a self-affirmation perspective is that, “although it is a broad theory, addressing self-esteem maintenance processes underlying an array of phenomena, a good deal of the published research on self-affirmation theory has sought to provide alternative explanations for dissonance effects” (p.128). According to these authors one advantage of the self-affirmation approach focuses on the centrality of the self as an element in the dissonance process because changing the individual’s self-concept may be an effective means of reducing dissonance.

Cognitive dissonance is the principal developmental ingredient in the adventure education process. In this context it has been referred to as ‘adaptive dissonance’ (Priest & Gass, 1997), ‘creative dissonance’ (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993), and ‘constructive dissonance’ (Ewert, 1989). According to Ewert (1989) the source of dissonance is the adventure activity’s ability to evoke fear, anxiety and doubt in participants. What Hopkins and Putnam (1993) also refer to as the inherent characteristics of the adventure activity that are novel, frightening and where participants generally feel they can exercise little control; creating the dissonance that individuals attempt to resolve which compels them to adopt new behaviour
and thus meet these challenges. Facing the adventure activity dissonance is also represented by the conflict between the perceived danger and risk, and thoughts the individual holds concerning their ability to complete the challenge. Berry (2011) states that dissonance occurs when participants process conflicting thoughts about the activity, for example, “That climb looks dangerous and I might fall to my death” versus “My belay partner is responsible and capable of supporting me if I make a mistake and I’ll be OK”. During these moments “the participants will be unwilling to accept both outcomes at the same time and is therefore often motivated to resolve the dissonance by attempting the climb” (p.33-34).

Hopkins and Putnam (1993) make the point that in order to create dissonance and enable individuals to strive towards mastery the demands of the activity must be matched with the participant. Thus, matching the challenge of the activity with the participant has been described by Martin and Priest (1986), with reference to Priest’s 1990 adventure experience model, as the interplay of risk and competence in the ‘peak adventure zone’ (cf. Figure 3.2) is “the point at which personal competence matches perfectly with situational risk, creating optimal arousal and resulting in maximal performance” (p.19). Boniface (2000), in an examination of this paradigm and Csikszentmihalyi’s (1975) Flow Model, identifies uncertainty as an important factor in evoking dissonance in the adventure challenge process, suggesting that otherwise these models would be reduced to a simple skill-challenge equation. Boniface contends that to omit uncertainty would be to misinterpret these models. She believes that “peak adventure involves a degree of uncertainty and, as applied to Priest and Martin’s Model, some dissonance between perceived competence and risk [is necessary]” (p.65). In other words, according to Bunyan (2011) “there needs to be a small gap or ‘dissonance’ between the perceptions of individual competence and the risk encountered” (p.12).
2.3.2: Self-Determination Theory

Self-determination theory has been described as a macro-theory of human motivation that embraces issues relating to personality development: self-regulation; universal psychological needs; life goals and aspirations; and the impact of social environments on motivation, affect, behaviour and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Vallerand and colleagues (2008) have stated that self-determination theory (SDT) has been applied to a diverse range of research areas including education, work, relationships, physical activity, health, psychotherapy, *inter alia*. It provides a broad theory of motivated behaviour at both micro and macro levels which makes available “empirically informed guidelines and principles for motivating people to explore experiences and events, and from that reflective basis, to make adaptive changes in goals, behaviour, and relationships” (Ryan & Deci, 2008, p.186).

SDT assumes that humans are active growth-oriented organisms who are predisposed to engage in interesting activities, to experience their abilities, to establish personal relationships and integrate this into the self (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Deci and Ryan (1995) state at the heart of SDT is the concept of self that acknowledges Maslow’s notion of self-actualisation. This plays a central role in the growth-oriented and needs-based interactive processes that underlie human development outlined in SDT. According to Deci and Ryan (1991) SDT is an organismic-dialectic metatheory which above all else acknowledges the human being as an active living organism, the development of which involves the integration of new experiences and regulatory processes into the integrated self. These authors consider that “there is a nascent self - a set of innate interests, potentials and processes (most notably the organismic integration process) - that develops as the person engages in the dialectical integration with unintegrated aspects of itself and the surroundings” (p.239). Organismic integration refers to two tendencies individuals have in creating unity and coherence in their regulatory activity and experiences. The process involves first, differentiating and arranging aspects of one’s interests and capacities into a higher-order organised structure with other aspects of the self; and second, “there is the tendency towards interacting in a coherent and meaningful way with others so as to experience
satisfying personal relationships with individuals and a harmonious relation to the larger social order” (p.243). The dialectic, in development terms, involves the integrative tendency of the self that results when individuals experience and assimilate events through which they acquire a sense of agency. This according to Deci and Ryan (1991) is a central feature of human nature that involves seeking out optimal challenges and attempting to master and integrate them into the self. Agency appears to be a key factor in self-development within SDT and is a critical aspect of integrating self and true self-esteem. Being autonomous underpins the processes by which individuals interact and integrate into the self, various challenges presented by the environment. Deci and Ryan (1995) conceptualise these as a motivational process. According to these authors, motivated behaviour falls along an autonomous controlled continuum and as such SDT provides an account of how variations in motivation explain why some individuals possess secure and others fragile self-esteem (Deci & Ryan, 1995).

SDT accounts for the challenges faced by individuals in terms of assimilating and adapting to the social environment and central to this process is the concept of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation according to Deci and Ryan (1991) is a non-derivative motivational force, first conceptualised in the pioneering work of Harlow (1950) and later developed by White (1959) which postulates that motivation involves a number of psychological (i.e., non-drive-based) needs. Deci and Ryan (1991) consider four aspects that characterise intrinsic motivation: first, intrinsically motivated behaviour can occur in the absence of external rewards or punishments and is operationalized through the notion of ‘free-choice’; second, intrinsically motivated behaviours are engaged in, out of interest; third, interesting activities are optimally challenging and are likely to be enjoyable, what Csikszentmihalyi (1990) refers to as “an autotelic or ‘flow’ experience” (p.242); and the “final component of our characterisation of intrinsic motivation states that intrinsically motivated behaviours are based in innate psychological needs” (p.242).

Deci and Ryan (1991; 1995) suggest that there are three primary psychological needs:

The need for competence encompassing people’s strivings to control outcomes and to experience effectance; ...The need for autonomy (or self-determination) encompasses people’s strivings to be agentic,
to feel like the ‘origin’ of their actions, and to have a voice or input in determining their own behaviour. ...the need for relatedness encompasses a person’s strivings to relate to and care for others, to feel that those others are relating authentically to one’s self, and to feel a satisfying and coherent involvement with the social world more generally (Deci & Ryan, 1991, p.243).

SDT further proposes that the individual’s predisposition towards self-actualisation requires nutrition in the form of environmental supports in order to experience competence, autonomy and relatedness. It is the social environment that can either support or thwart these psychological needs and affect growth-development in positive or negative terms.

In SDT Ryan and Deci (2000) distinguish between various types of motivation based on different reasons individuals have for their actions and behaviours. The primary distinction is between intrinsic motivation (i.e., doing something because it is inherently interesting and/or enjoyable), and extrinsic motivation (i.e., doing something because it leads to a separate outcome - usually a material reward). However, Deci and Ryan (1991; 1995) consider that externally motivated behaviour can vary in the level to which it is autonomous or self-determined versus controlled (i.e., the difference in motivational intention between an internal versus external locus of causality). Deci and Ryan conceptualise different types of external regulation varying in their degree of self-determination, with some externally motivated behaviour becoming self-determined and integrated into the self. The process by which externally motivated behaviours become self-determined is described as ‘internalisation’. Internalisation is the process through which individuals make an adaptation by accepting the values and regulatory processes advocated by the social order, but are not intrinsically appealing to the individual. In Deci and Ryan’s (1991) view, “internalisation is a natural outcome of organismic integration that occurs as people encounter the challenges of achieving meaningful relationships with others” (p.255).

Deci and Ryan (1991) outline a developmental continuum of relative autonomy comprising four types of external regulation from varying degrees to which the regulation of a non-intrinsically motivated behaviour has been internalised. These include external regulation (behaviours that have not been internalised, prompted and sustained by external contingencies); integrated regulation (behaviours
motivated by internal prods and pressures that are not fully integrated - guilt is an example); identified regulation (behaviours that are accepted as personally important or valuable); integrated regulation (are the most autonomous form of extrinsic motivation and are accompanied by feelings of integrity of action and cohesion of the self).

Figure 2.1 is a representation of human motivation showing the types of motivation and regulation within SDT along a continuum of relative self-determination.

Figure 2.1 shows the regulatory styles over the self-determined continuum proposed by SDT from amotivation (i.e., actions that are not intentional described by Deci and Ryan (1995) as relating to external locus of control (Rotter, 1966); low self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977); Seligman (1972) and Abramson et al. (1978) learned helplessness), to intrinsic motivation each of which are associated with motivational process ranging from rewards and punishments through to inherent enjoyment and satisfaction all of which have a specific perceived locus of causality from impersonal/external to internal.

SDT has evolved into a number of ‘mini-theories’ which include: the original concept of cognitive evaluation theory (CET) that explains the significance of psychological needs on the individuals capacity to regulate behaviour for intrinsic
reasons; organismic integration theory (OIT) that describes the degree of internalisation based on extrinsically motivated behaviour; causality orientations theory (COT) which is concerned with individual differences regarding how individuals are oriented towards self-determining versus controlled regulation; and basic needs theory (BNT) that explains the function of competence, autonomy, and relatedness needs in regard to motivation and wellbeing (Deci & Ryan, 2002; Wilson et al., 2008).

2.3.3: Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy theory (SET) highlights the important role observational learning and social experiences have on the individual’s psychological states, behaviour and motivation. It is one of the most heavily subscribed-to theories of human behaviour in AA according to Ewert (1989), yet at this date according to Klint (1990) “only one published study has applied Bandura’s theory to the adventure experience” (p.166).

According to Bandura (1989) SET subscribes to a model of human agency, stating that individuals are neither entirely autonomous nor completely controlled by environmental influences, but rather “make causal contribution to their own motivation and action” (p.1175). The most central and pervasive aspect of personal agency is the individuals’ belief about their ability to exercise control over events that affect their lives. These beliefs function as principal determinants of human motivation, affect and behaviour which can be self-aiding or self-hindering (Bandura, 1989). The foundation of human agency is self-efficacy, which has been defined by Bandura and colleagues (1999) as a “belief in one’s capabilities to produce given attainments” (p.258).

SET is a cognitively-oriented theory (Bandura, 1977) that explains the role of cognition in the acquisition and regulation of behaviour in terms of processing information directly from vicarious and symbolic sources. The principal feature of which is a motivational process, rooted in cognitive activity that is concerned with the activation and persistence of behaviour. Bandura considers that motivation reinforces behaviour by creating expectations which in turn create a belief that by
acting in a specific way will result in anticipated benefits or avert future difficulties.

SET is based on the principal notion of expectations of personal efficacy:

defined as a person’s estimate that a given behaviour will lead to certain outcomes. An efficacy expectation is the conviction that one can successfully execute the behaviour required to produce the outcome (Bandura, 1977, p.193).

Bandura states that expectation of personal mastery influences the level of effort and persistence individuals will expend in the face of obstacles in demanding and difficult situations.

The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the more active the efforts. Those who persist in subjectively threatening activities that are in fact relatively safe will gain corrective experiences that reinforce their sense of efficacy, thereby eventually eliminating their defensive behaviour. Those who cease their coping efforts prematurely will retain their self-debilitating expectations and fears for a long time (Bandura, 1977, p.194).

Bandura also suggests a reciprocal relationship between self-efficacy and performance (mastery), that is, high efficacy expectations will influence performance and in turn performance outcomes (achievement) will influence self-efficacy in a positive direction. The level of self-efficacy that an individual holds is determined by three dimensions: magnitude, generality and strength. Efficacy expectations according to Bandura (1977) differ in magnitude (i.e., tasks are ordered in level of difficulty according to the degree of individual efficacy expectations, some individuals will only expect to succeed on simple activities, while others believe they can achieve difficult tasks); generality (i.e., some experiences have limited mastery expectancies that are transferrable to similar tasks, while others instil a more generalised sense of efficacy that extends beyond the specific situation); and strength (i.e., expectancies vary in strength between individuals from weak easily extinguished tendencies in the face of disconfirming experiences, whereas other individuals who possess strong mastery expectancies will persevere in their coping behaviour despite disconfirming experiences).

Bandura (1977) presents four sources of efficacy expectations: (1) Performance accomplishment: this source of efficacy is based on personal mastery and “success raises mastery expectancies; repeated failures lower them” (p.195); (2) Vicarious
experience: this source of efficacy is derived from observing others perform challenging activities successfully, “Seeing others perform threatening activities without adverse consequences can generate expectations in observers that they too will improve if they intensify and persist in their efforts” (p.197). (3) Verbal persuasion: this source involves verbal motivation from significant others which leads the individual to believe that “they can cope successfully with what overwhelmed them in the past” (p.198); (4) Emotional arousal: This source accounts for the emotional arousal evoked in stressful and demanding situations. These physiologically induced responses to stress provide a means by which individuals are able to gauge their level of anxiety and vulnerability to stress, “Because high arousal usually debilitates performance, individuals are more likely to expect success when they are not beset by aversive arousal than if they are tense and viscerally agitated” (p.189).

Harmon & Templin (1987) consider SET to be a fitting framework in conceptualising and evaluating adventure programmes, because “Bandura’s approach, which combines behavioural and cognitive components into a simple, general theory of behaviour change that seems to be nicely capable of explaining the experiential education process” (p.71). These authors base their confidence in SETs ‘best fit’ for analysing AA programmes on Bandura’s assertions that self-efficacy is based on personal mastery experiences, and that “when performance accomplishments are perceived to be of greatest magnitude they tend to be broadly generalised to other situations in which performance had formerly been self-debilitated by pre-occupations with personal inadequacies” (pp.73-74). Harman and Templin (1987) provide a Table (cf. p.75) illustrating the compatibility between the theoretical claims of SET and the practise of OB programming, concluding that “in effect, the Outward Bound course is designed to change an individual’s self-efficacy” (p.74).

2.3.4: Attribution Theory

Fritz Heider has been hailed as the originator of attribution theory. According to Malle (2008), Heider (1958) develop attribution theory as a scientific theory to understand how people conceptualise their own and other people’s behaviour;
which he viewed as a common-sense ‘naive psychology’ that individuals utilise to describe, explain and predict behaviour. According to Weiner (2008) the term ‘theory’ applied to attribution is a misleading term, in that, there is no overarching theory “rather, there are many attribution-based theories and attribution is better characterised as a field of study rather than a theory” (p.154). Kelley (1973) has defined attribution theory as a theory about how individuals make causal explanations about how they answer questions beginning with why?

One such attribution-based theory relevant to the current study is Weiner’s (1985a) notion of attribution theory based on cognition following success and failure. The constant pursuit of ‘Why?’ according to Weiner involves the desire for ‘mastery,’ the motivation to understand and interpret the environment; together with the desire to know why an event occurred. Weiner’s conceptualisation of attribution theory concerns causal attributions in achievement settings that involve the emotional consequences of attribution thinking following success and failure. This approach has introduced attribution theory to motivation and education, which attempts to explain that within achievement settings individuals have a desire to account for the causes of success and failure (Weiner, 2008).

Weiner (1985a; 1979) states that within the achievement domain salient causes of success and failure are relatively few, they include: ability, effort, task difficulty and luck with ability and effort being the most dominant. Thus, success attributed to optimal effort and/or high ability; and failure attributed to indolence and/or lack of ability, can affect future expectations of success and failure, “that is, outcomes frequently depend upon what we can do and how hard we try at doing it” (Weiner, 1979, p.5). There are two conditions under which attribution ascriptions are most likely to occur, first, in situations where an outcome is either elicited by an unexpected event and second, in situations of non-attainment of a desired goal (Weiner, 1985b).

According to Weiner (1985a) there is a connection between attribution thinking and goal expectancy.

If conditions (the presence or absence of causes) are expected to remain the same, then the outcome(s) experienced in the past will be expected to recur. A success under these circumstances would produce relatively large increments in the anticipation of future
success, and a failure would strengthen the belief that there will be subsequent failures. On the other hand, if the causal conditions are perceived as likely to change, then the present outcome may not be expected to repeat itself and there is likely to be uncertainty about subsequent outcomes or a belief that something different will result. (Weiner, 1985a, pp.556-7).

Goal expectations alone are not sufficient to explain the determinants of behaviour, and that motivation also involves ‘goal incentives’, because “motivation is believed to be determined by what we can get (incentives) as well as by the likelihood of getting it (expectancy)” (Weiner, 1985a, p.559).

Weiner identifies two emotional reactions that are dependent on whether attribution thinking is applied, which in turn generates a different set of emotions. Weiner refers to these as ‘outcome dependent-attribution independent’ and ‘attribution-dependent’. With regard to ‘outcome dependent-attribution independent’, the emotional response is simply concerned with whether a desired goal is attained/unattained, whereas an ‘attribution-dependent’ outcome, (Figure 2.2), involves an affective reaction based on a causal ascription which, as indicated, results in two different emotional reactions based on the perceived attribution (Weiner, 1985a).

Weiner (1985a) proposes a multidimensional approach to the structure of perceived causality involving three dimensions of locus, causality and controllability to changes in expectancy. In Weiner’s view, attribution thinking is (in addition to locus and controllability) determined along a dimension of stability ranging from stable to unstable causes that account for shifts in expectancy. The locus dimension is concerned with aspects that are either internal (i.e., ability and

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**Figure 2.2: Diagrammatic Representation of Outcome Dependent-Attribution Independent and Attribution-Dependent Emotional Reactions**

Weiner identifies two emotional reactions that are dependent on whether attribution thinking is applied, which in turn generates a different set of emotions. Weiner refers to these as ‘outcome dependent-attribution independent’ and ‘attribution-dependent’. With regard to ‘outcome dependent-attribution independent’, the emotional response is simply concerned with whether a desired goal is attained/unattained, whereas an ‘attribution-dependent’ outcome, (Figure 2.2), involves an affective reaction based on a causal ascription which, as indicated, results in two different emotional reactions based on the perceived attribution (Weiner, 1985a).
effort) or external to the individual (i.e., significant others and task difficulty).

Weiner and colleagues (1972) contend that locus influences the affective reactions to an event with internal attributions resulting in heightened emotional responses: “We think that attributions of achievement outcomes to internal causes also result in greater affect (pride and shame) than attributions to environmental factors” (p.240). The stability dimension can be viewed as a continuum ranging from stable to unstable causes; ability is regarded as a relatively stable factor whereas mood is unstable and prone to fluctuate (Weiner, 1979). Weiner (1985a) believes that attribution stability of a cause, rather than its locus, determines changes in expectancy of success following success or failure. In other words, “failure ascribed to low ability or a hard task (stable factors) should produce greater decrements in the subsequent expectancy of success than attributions of failure to a lack of effort or bad luck (variable factor)” (Weiner et al., 1972, p.240). The point that Weiner is making, is that attributions made to unstable elements suggest that future expectations may differ from past outcomes, whereas stable attributions made to failure such as low ability are likely to be replicated for similar tasks in the future. Thus, it appears that expectancy change is determined by stability (Weiner et al., 1972). Controllability refers to factors that are internal to the individual but are either under the individual’s control or beyond their control. For example, effort is under volitional control, it can be increased or reduced, whereas ability cannot be wilfully changed (Weiner, 1985a).

These dimensions, particularly the locus and stability dimension have implications for psychological functioning following success or failure. Stated by Weiner (1979) “the locus dimension of causality has implications for self-esteem, one of the emotional consequences of achievement performance” (p.8). Weiner (1985a) considers that causal dimensions play a major function in the emotional process, and in relation to self-emotions it is the locus dimension that is preeminent, - “For example, success and failure perceived as due to internal causes such as personality, ability, or effort respectively raises or lowers self-esteem or self-worth, whereas external attributes for positive or negative outcomes do not influence feelings about the self” (p.560).
In his review, Zuckerman (1979) provides a comprehensive account of causal attribution research findings under various research topics. In terms of attributions relating to performance outcomes in achievement tasks there is clear evidence suggesting that individuals are more likely to make internal attributions for success than for failure. Studies also demonstrated self-serving effects that can only be interpreted in motivational terms consistent with a tendency to protect or enhance self-esteem. For example, Hewstone (1989) has defined self-serving biases as “the fact that people are more likely to attribute their success to internal causes such as ability, whereas they tend to attribute failure to external causes such as task difficulty” (p.57). Zuckerman concludes that the evidence suggests that in achievement settings individuals are unlikely to engage in strategies to protect self-esteem, particularly high self-esteem individuals who have a greater need to make protective attributions following failure. Hewstone (1983) suggests that causal attributions have three functions, one of which is the self-esteem function - “that positive self-esteem is essential to emotional well-being, and this function is exemplified in people’s need to protect, validate or enhance their feelings of personal worth and effectiveness” (p.17).

2.3.5: Competence-Effectance

In his model of competence-effectance, White (1959), expresses a major contention concerning a discontentment with motivational theories based on instinctive drives to explain human motivation. As an alternative, he presents a theory of competence-effectance which attempts to explain persistent behaviour that considers competence the primary motivational drive, the principal concept of which is the need to master the environment. Mastery is achieved by competent performance, defined as “an organism's capacity to interact effectively with its environment” (p.297). Mastery has a particular relevance to the current study, specifically White's notion of competence over the environment, which he implies to be a ‘master’ motivational tendency towards personal development, similar to Goldstein’s concept of self-actualisation.
White argues that environmental factors appear to incite motivational behaviour that is directed at learning and proposes three ‘new drives’: the exploratory tendency, activity and manipulation (problem-solving). Engagement in these activities in the pursuit of environmental mastery, according to White, involves a degree of direction, selectivity and persistence and

in the ultimate service of competence must therefore be conceived to be motivated in their own right. It is proposed to designate this motivation by the term effectance, and to characterise the experience produced as a feeling of efficacy (White, 1959, p.329).

White suggests that humans have a propensity towards mastery and are motivated to overcome environmental influences that “seem to be sought and welcome, in which raised tensions and even mild excitement seem to be cherished, and in which novelty and variety seem to be enjoyed for their own sake” (p.328).

2.3.6: General Expectancies for Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement

The effects of reinforcement, reward or success are critical considerations in motivation and achievement behaviour. These considerations are approached in Rotter’s (1966) generalised expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement which is a theory of contingency expectancies based on an individual’s belief that various outcomes are within their locus of control or outside their control. As stated by Rotter:

when a reinforcement is perceived by the subject as following some action of his own but not being entirely contingent upon his action... it is typically perceived as the result of luck, chance, fate, as under the control of powerful other, or as unpredictable because of the great complexity of the forces surrounding him. When the event is interpreted in this way by an individual, we have labelled this a belief in ‘external control’. If the person perceives that the event is contingent upon his own behaviour or his own relatively permanent characteristics, we have termed this a belief in ‘internal control’ (p.1).

Rotter’s conceptualisation centres around notion of whether the individual believes that reinforcement, that is, anything that increases the likelihood that an outcome will or will not occur, are contingent on beliefs that the locus of control is internal versus external to the individual. Rotter suggests that the determining factor
governing outcome expectancies is “the degree to which the individual perceives that the reward follows from, or is contingent upon, his own behaviour or attributes versus the degree to which he feels the reward is controlled by forces outside of himself and may occur independently of his own actions” (p.1).

In Rotter’s view, consistent individual differences exist between the degree to which individuals are disposed to attribute success to personal control/internal locus or external forces such as luck or chance. If individuals perceive that success can be reliably attained and attributed to internal locus such as ability and effort, it is likely that this will predict future behaviour. Therefore, internal-external control has a significant effect on the strength of behaviour in achievement settings, as stated by Rotter.

The notion that individuals who lie towards the internal end of the internal-external control continuum would display greater achievement strivings compared to individuals who perceive little influence and control over their environment has been generally supported by Rotter (1966). Improved internal locus of control has a number of functional adaptations and is of some interest to the current study based on evidence that AA programmes have demonstrated shifts towards internal locus (cf. Section 3.4: Marsh et al., 1986a; Hattie et al., 1997; Priest, 1992). These benefits have been outlined by Rotter who states that a

series of studies provides strong support for the hypothesis that the individual who has a strong belief that he can control his own destiny is likely to (a) be more alert to those aspects of the environment which provide useful information for his future behaviour; (b) take steps to improve his environmental condition; (c) place greater value on skill or achievement reinforcements and be generally more concerned with his ability, particularly his failures; and (d) be resistive to subtle attempts to influence him (Rotter, 1966, p.25).

2.4: Benefits of Outward Bound and Adventure Education

A range of benefits have been identified in studies involving ‘normal’ populations and a variety of activity types. Beker (1960), observed increased feelings of competence among children who attended a five-day school camping expedition compared to a control group. Hazelworth and Wilson (1990) found that among
teenagers attending a camping, canoeing and sailing course, self-concept improved, as did the self-concept of university students attending an adventure-based activities course (Finkenberg et al., 1994). Studying a climbing course, Goldenberg and colleagues (2000), found that trust and communication skills developed among participants that ultimately led to more effective teamwork, which linked to higher order benefits. These included good interpersonal relationships, encouraging others and brainstorming ideas which resulted in improved task accomplishment. Mitton (1992) reported that female participants in an outdoor recreation programme experienced an increase in self-esteem and gained a sense of empowerment. Hunter (1987) found that adolescent males participating in a short-term adventure programme experienced an increase in self-confidence, developed appropriate communication skills, helped others in the group and demonstrated a willingness to express opinions and needs.

With specific reference to OB, an early study undertaken in the UK was conducted by Fletcher (1970) to measure the influence of these programmes on both students and their sponsors, who represented a range of organisations from industry, commerce, LEAs and emergency services. Fletcher conducted a survey, supported by interviews, on a random sample of 3,000 students from the Ullswater, Aberdovey and Moray Schools, and their sponsors, attending the standard twenty-six day course. Findings show that 98% of sponsors believed the course was successful in character building, developing maturity, social interaction and leadership qualities. In terms of character development 70% of sponsors reported improved self-confidence, 73% greater maturity and 53% improved responsibility. Also, 93% of sponsors believed that the course would have a long-lasting influence. Students reported the course had important aspects that made an impact, these included increased physical fitness, opportunity to face hazards and difficulties, social interaction and learning tolerance, developing outdoor skills and working as a team member. In terms of character development, students reported increased self-confidence, initiative, improved social skills, maturity and empathy. Interestingly, students believed that the influence of the course would be persistent, 28% calculated this persistence in years whereas 67% believed it would last forever.
Studies conducted on OB programmes from Canada, US and Australia, have shown to bestow a number of positive benefits on participants. Clifford and Clifford (1967) examined the effects of the twenty-eight day course, at the Colorado OB School, on thirty-six male participants, using a series of self-report measures in a pre-test/post-test design. Findings show a significant and dramatic change in self-concept had occurred and those having lower initial self-concept accounted for much of the change, due to positive changes in reducing discrepancies between actual and ideal-self representations.

Studying the 28 day course at the Canadian OB Mountain School, Hopkins (1982), using self-report measures in a pre-test/post-test design, among 27 male participants, found significant increases in self-esteem. Marsh and colleagues (1986a), conducted self-report measures on thirteen facets of self-concept among 361 male participants involved in the standard twenty-six day course at two Australian OB Schools. Results indicated a movement towards more internal locus of control following the course. With regard to self-concept, positive shifts were observed in all facets, but were higher in those that were more relevant to the objectives of the programme, such as problem-solving and physical ability. These authors conclude that their “study supports the OB programme as an effective intervention for changing multiple dimensions of self-concept and, perhaps, locus of control” (p.202). In a follow-up study, (Marsh et. al., 1986b) eighteen months after their first investigation, involving 229 of the original 361 participants, findings replicated the results from the previous study, albeit at somewhat lower levels but still statistically significant. These researchers indicate that changes to self-concept were maintained eighteen months after the completion of the programme, demonstrating “that self-concept can be changed through effective intervention and that these effects can be maintained” (p.491).

University students attending an OB school have shown a significant increase in self-efficacy, not only between pre-test/post-test scores, but also between controls (Paxton & Mc Avoy, 2000). According to Sachs and Miller (1992), OB programmes offer physically and emotionally challenging experiences that provide participants with opportunities to engage successfully in activities that they may otherwise perceive as being beyond their level of ability. Self-efficacy theory
provides a theoretical framework that accounts for behaviour change through participation in OB experiential programmes. Successfully completing the adventure activity is considered by Sachs and Miller to modify self-efficacy, this act “represent what Bandura (1977) believes to be the most powerful means of facilitating positive changes in an individual’s self-efficacy [i.e., performance accomplishments]” (p.90).

Further studies using pre-test/post-test design and self-report measures investigating special populations or focusing on specific traits, such as anxiety, are reported below.

In a study focusing on mood change, Fry and Heubeck (1998), found that among the general population attending the standard twenty-six day course, specific activities within the programme, such as the solo exercise and expedition, evoked changes in affectivity. Throughout the duration of the course, dramatic reductions in negative affect were observed for neurotic personality types. These reductions were almost at comparable levels to more stable individuals, suggesting “that relatively more neurotic participants, who start the course with higher trait levels of negative effect, benefit more from the OB standard course as they experience a greater reduction in negative affect” (p.657). Overall, participants experienced a reduction in negative effect, suggesting that “Outward Bound standard courses serve as a quasi-therapeutic intervention which reduces negative mood states” (p.657).

Adventure training has been used as an intervention to reduce fear and anxiety among participants attending an OB course (Ewert, 1987b). Compared with the control group, findings showed that those attending the course displayed significant reductions in trait anxiety immediately following the course, however, these results were not apparent at twelve month follow-up.

Fear is a key learning tool within the context of adventure education and a major feature of specific activities observed in the present study. Ewert (1987b) considers fear and anxiety to be synonymous, referring them to a set of emotional and/ or physiological responses evoked by the perception of danger. Subjecting individuals to unfamiliar fear-provoking situations is an extremely important
learning strategy in OB, what Priest and Gass (2005) refer to as adaptive dissonance, “these are situations in which clients choose to overcome the dissonance by adapting their behaviours to meet their intended objectives” (p.151). In turn, overcoming dissonance facilitates a sense of mastery and competence that provides the individual with an insight into their behaviour, which hopefully will transfer into their everyday lives.

The process, which Ewert (1987b) refers to as the ‘personal testing phenomenon’, is an opportunity to face and overcome fear and uncertainty through exposure to fear-provoking situations. Ewert equates the challenge presented by OB with clinical fear-reduction techniques that use the adventure activity as a means to desensitize the client’s response to a fear-provoking situation. In other words, the client is slowly brought closer to the fearful object or circumstance while an attempt is made to break the condition-response cycle by demonstrating coping and reducing strategies (Ewert, 1987b, p.109).

Ewert (1989) provides an account of how individuals overcome fear within the OB setting suggesting that instructors can apply three techniques of desensitisation, flooding and modelling. Desensitisation involves a graded drip effect exposure to fear, here, the individual attempts to modify their cognitive, emotional and physical responses, inducing coping strategies. Flooding involves a prolonged exposure to the fear-provoking situations, such as the solo exercise that assists in formulating coping strategies. Whereas, modelling is a consequence of the former two, here the individual applies the coping behaviours resulting from desensitisation and flooding exposures leading to new adaptive behaviours.

Situational fear experienced by participants in OB cover the range of sociological, psychological and physical, though the most intense were either social or physical-based in nature. However, Ewert (1988) noted that given opportunity for desensitisation and modelling, the level of fear experienced was reduced over the period of the OB course, suggesting that it was effective in reducing specific situation-based fear and that reductions were consistent over a period of one year.

The type of activities involved in OB programmes are of interest to researchers attempting to identify which aspects of courses provide specific and/or more effective outcomes (Goldenberg et al., 2000). This point has also been noted by
Kaplan and Talbot (1983), who consider that the structure of courses, in terms of the activities they offer, may provide a particular beneficial outcome that can be linked to a specific activity. In a study of Pacific Crest OB, Ewert and Heywood (1991) found that participants in white-water activities reported their group as being more cohesive, interdependent and more able to solve problems compared to their counterparts engaged in land-based activities.

OB has been used specifically as an intervention for delinquent youth, either exclusively, or integrating them into programmes with non-delinquent populations. Kelly and Baer (1969) assigned one delinquent youth to a group of non-delinquents, who attended a twenty-seven day OB programme. Results indicated that the delinquents underwent significant changes to their self-concept. They developed more favourable social attitudes and an ability to act within socially accepted ways; reported diminished ego-centric thoughts and acquired more accurate appraisals of objective reality; experienced reduced levels of distrust, hostility, and estrangement, particularly for authority figures; and acquired more socially accepted methods of dealing with conflict.

Once at-risk children return home from OB courses they are likely to revert back towards delinquent behaviour. In an investigation of the effects of the home environment, Pommier and Witt (1995) designed a study that would link OB with an intervention that supported delinquents on their return home. Following the twenty-eight day course pre-test/post-test self-report measures indicated that participants made significant positive improvements in self-concept, perceived family functioning and behaviour compared to control subjects, up to four weeks after the programme. At four months follow-up, significant differences between treatment and control subjects were not apparent.

An extensive meta-analysis of adventure education and OB, undertaken by Hattie and colleagues (1997) found adventure programmes having an effect on self-concept, personality and interpersonal relationships. In the self-concept domain, adventure programmes had a beneficial effect in confidence, self-efficacy, self-understanding and independence. Personality effects were high for assertiveness, emotional stability, achievement motivation, internal locus of control, maturity, reduced aggression and reduced neurosis. Across interpersonal dimensions,
adventure programmes showed a marked improvement in social competence, cooperation and interpersonal communication, demonstrating that the programmes affect social skills in desirable ways. The overall ES for adventure programmes was calculated at .34, which these authors consider to be comparable with outcomes from typical education interventions. However, the effects of adventure programmes on self-concept exceeded those typically observed in classroom-based programmes directed at self-concept, and the effect on self-esteem (ES .26) far exceeded those of other educational programmes (ES .19). These authors state that their findings of an overall effect size “of .34 for adventure programmes, and a follow-up of an additional .17, leading to a combined pre- follow-up effect of .51, are unique in the educational literature” (p.70).

The research literature reveals a plethora of adventure-based programmes with an extensive range of features. Many are adapted OB programmes (Wichmann, 1991; Castellano & Soderstrom, 1992; Sveen & Denholm, 1997) featuring a number of multi-activities, such as rock climbing/abseiling, solo, caving and canoeing *inter alia*. While others take a specific activity, requiring participants to simply meet the challenges of hiking and camping to facilitate the restorative therapeutic benefits of the wilderness (Kaplan, R., 1984; McDonald, et al., 2009; Hartig, et al., 1991); survival courses (Kaplan, R., 1974); static wilderness camps (Sachs & Miller, 1992; Behar & Stephens, 1978); wilderness expeditions (Gillett et al., 1991; Luckner, 1989; Stimpson & Pedersen, 1970); and ropes courses (Goldenberg et al., 2000; Haras et al., 2006; Conley et al., 2007).

Adventure programmes also vary in duration, from a year (Cook, 2008) to one day (Kelley et al., 1997), or even 1½ hours per week (Faulkner, 2002). There are a range of therapeutic adventure-based interventions catering for a variety of special populations with alcohol and drug problems (Faulkner, 2002); impaired hearing (Luckner, 1989); mental illness (Kelley et al., 1997); emotionally disturbed, behavioural problems, delinquency and anti-social behaviour (Larson, 2007; Romi & Kohan, 2004); special educational needs (Farnham & Mutrie, 1997); and adjudicated youth (Clagett, 1989; Castellano & Soderstrom, 1992; Wright, 1983).

No two AA programmes are the same. They reflect the personal characteristics, ethics and experience of the instructors, together with the ethos of programme
Outdoor adventure programmes are diverse and each has its particular characteristic and primary outcome objectives. Gillis and colleagues (2008) draw a distinction between programmes, based on their intended objectives. Programmes classified as recreational adventure programmes focus on changing individuals’ feelings; educational programmes focus on changing thinking as well as feelings; developmental programmes focus on changing social behaviours, thinking and feelings; whereas adventure therapy programmes focus on social behaviours, thinking and feelings, but also attempt to inhibit the individual’s dysfunctional behaviours and at the same time improve functional behaviour.

Irrespective of the type and nature of the adventure programme, changing feelings seems to be a universal aim, particularly with regard to feelings directed towards the self. For example, Priest (1992), investigating university students involved in a high ropes course, found that locus of control shifted more intrinsically as they gained experience. Also, among university students on a high ropes course, Finkenberg and colleagues (1994) found high self-concept among participants following the course, compared to students attending a general health course. Among younger populations, Hazelworth and Wilson (1990) found significant positive change in self-concept in 12 - 15 year old children undertaking a series of outdoor activities, and Gillett and colleagues (1991) identified significant increases in self-concept among 16 - 18 year old pupils involved in a strenuous six day hiking expedition in the Canadian Rockies, compared with controls.

Through involvement in adventure activities, delinquent youth and adolescents with emotional and behavioural difficulties have exhibited improved self-concept. Wright (1983) observed significant improvements in self-esteem, self-efficacy, and shifts towards internal locus of control among delinquent youth attending a twenty-six day adapted OB course, compared with controls. Investigating another adapted OB programme, Sveen and Denholm (1997) found significant gains in self-esteem and self-actualisation in at-risk youth, compared to controls.

Developing a positive self-concept among asocial adolescents has been perceived as a prerequisite in the alleviation of behavioural problems (Larson, 2007). Investigating a five day adventure camp for children aged 9 - 18 years with behavioural problems, Larson found a significant improvement in self-concept only
among younger participants (9 -11years), compared to their controls. Larson concluded that short courses are effective for younger participants, but longer courses may yield better results for older youth with behavioural problems.

In a study investigating the value of outdoor education, supporting the National Curriculum in science and maths at Key Stage 3 and 4 for year 9 (13-14 years) and 10 (14-15 years) pupils with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, Fox and Avramidis (2003) found little support for academic gains. Nonetheless, the outdoor education programme was successful in promoting positive behaviour and improved self-esteem was regarded as a factor accounting for this improvement. On a typical one week residential outdoor education programme, involving multi-activities for children with special educational needs and emotional behavioural difficulties, Farnham and Mutrie (1997) found that these pupils increased self-confidence. They also observed reductions in tension and anxiety, improvement in group cohesion, and a decrease in loud and aggressive behaviour.

Walsh and Russell (2010) investigated a twenty-one day wilderness activity programme, specifically to address issues relating to anti-social behaviour among young offenders, and reported a significant increase in self-efficacy between the treatment group and controls. However, improvement in self-efficacy did not show to have an impact on future recidivism. With regard to recidivism rates among adjudicated youth, these are highly important and form the raison d'être of many programmes. A number of studies have indicated that AA do have an impact on recidivism (Clagett, 1989; Castellano & Soderstrom, 1992; Gillis et al., 2008; Wilson & Lipsey, 2000).

Adult special populations have also gained from involvement in adventure programmes. Herbert (1998) found that adults suffering from a range of mental illnesses reported higher levels of self-esteem and shifts towards internal locus of control following eight days of adventure activities, compared to controls. Shorter courses for those with mental health issues indicate similar benefits, as demonstrated by Kelley and colleagues (1997), who found that a weekly one day outing, involving various outdoor activities, resulted in marked improvements in self-efficacy and self-esteem, from baseline to endpoint measurements. Individuals with hearing impairment, who generally have lower self-concept scores
than their normal hearing peers, showed significant improvement in self-concept following a ten day cross-country ski expedition (Luckner, 1989).

Gibson (1979), writing over thirty years ago about the therapeutic value of adventure-based programmes, states that the goal of these programmes is to change behaviour, enhance self-concept and improve relationships with others. Gibson concludes “that wilderness programmes can and do result in positive changes in the self-concept, personalities, individuals’ behaviours and social functioning of participants” (p.30). However, how these gains are accomplished is not clear. Gibson suggests that possible factors include the wilderness setting, which offers a high degree of predictability and little ambiguity that evokes coping skills, rather than defensive behaviour. Also, mastering stressful experiences allows individuals to recognise their achievements beyond self-perceived limits, which, perhaps for the first time, the individual sees themselves as useful, competent and someone with potential.

Since Gibson’s review, a clear appreciation of the beneficial outcomes from participation in outdoor adventure has emerged. However, according to Mc Kenzie (2003) “how or why these outcomes are achieved has been a less popular topic of inquiry, especially that of an empirical nature” (p.9). Sibthorp (2003) has also identified a void of knowledge, encouraging research to move beyond the evidence that supports adventure-based programmes as having the potential to enact change in participants; towards research that takes a closer examination of the processes involved in adventure programmes that foster developmental outcomes. A further aspect of concern involves the apparent overabundance of quasi-experimental design utilising pre-test/ post-test methods using self-report measures (e.g., Conley et al., 2007; Herbert, 1998; Kelley et al., 1997; Larson, 2007; Walsh & Russell, 2010). Accepting that “understanding is far from thorough” Mc Kenzie acknowledges that outdoor adventure programmes have not been explored through empirical research due to a lack of “inductive qualitative research on this topic” (p.10).
2.5: Summary

AA courses appear to deliver a number of outcomes, such as improved physical fitness, teamwork, self-concept and self-esteem that reflects the Government’s ‘basket’ of desired outcomes to build social and human capital, for tackling a range of social problems on the worst ‘sink’ housing estates in the UK, and lawlessness as displayed in the 2011 riots. It appears that AA programmes are effective when compared to other forms of educational provision indicating equitable results with, or exceeding, other interventions with longer duration courses yielding the best results.
Chapter 3:  
Experiential Learning and the Unique Characteristics of  
Adventure Education

3.1: Introduction

This chapter outlines definitional issues relating to experiential education and attempts to establish the characteristics of experiential learning, tracing its origins from the great classical thinkers to its contemporary applications, in various forms and settings. It also attempts to describe and explain the unique value of experiential learning in the context of adventure education. This uniqueness involves the use and justification for provoking fear and apprehension among participants, in ‘real-lived’ settings, that are considered to be effective in terms of personal development.

3.2: Defining Experiential Learning

AA involve, almost exclusively, experiential learning events that test participants in both physical and psychological domains and are considered to be a contemporary educational approach. Most adults would recognise that experiential learning is a modern educational approach that refers to learning by doing. Experiential learning involves being self-directed in various endeavours, in real or simulated situations, as opposed to ‘traditional’ learning approaches that are experienced in formal institutions of learning such as schools and universities. This belief, however, would be misguided. Experiential education is not a new educational phenomenon, but is thousands of years older than traditional education currently practised in our major educational institutions. According to Weathersby and Henault (1976), experiential learning, in the form of dialogic method that emphasises observation and personal discovery by trial and error, as a process of gaining knowledge, was first embraced by Plato, Socrates and Aristotle. It was not until the establishment of the medieval monastic orders that the lecture-discussion format referred to as ‘traditional education’ took shape and came to dominate contemporary education.
The terms experiential learning and experiential education have been used interchangeably, making meaningful discussions difficult. Itin (1999) makes this point forcefully by comparing definitions for each, which in effect amount to the same. He remarks that “Chickering (1976, p.63) states that experiential learning occurs when changes in judgement, feeling, knowledge or skills result for a particular person living through an event or events” (p.91). This is somewhat different compared with the Association of Experiential Education (1994) who states that “experiential education is a process through which a learner constructs knowledge, skill and value from direct experience” (p.91). Itin draws attention to the fact that these two designations of ‘experiential learning’ and ‘experiential education’ cannot be the same, because they refer to two distinct constructs. Learning is an individual experience, whereas education is a process between an educator and a learner. Experiential learning is perhaps best defined by Priest and Gass (2005) who define experiential learning as “learning by doing with reflection” (p.16).

3.3: The Value of Experiential Learning

When asked to reflect on how and what we have learnt over a lifetime, some of us may consider the lessons learnt in formal, traditional classroom-based education at school and university as having perhaps only limited value compared to the lessons learnt through the wealth of experience gained in many different experiential contexts. In the past, a number of authors (Keeton, 1976; Barton, 1976; Greene & Thompson, 1990) have been critical of formal education, particularly higher education, for not providing the depth of learning required for the world of work. These authors emphasise the limited experiences higher education provides, by way of its traditional approach, which is almost entirely concerned with intellectual development, at the expense of experiential learning, which fails to acknowledge the physical, emotional and interpersonal development essential for effective human functioning (Greene & Thompson, 1990). By ignoring these developmental needs and requirements, higher education fails to prepare graduates with a whole set of qualities such as responsibility, punctuality, together with the ability to investigate, analyse and solve problems - important skills and
attitudes associated with effective and productive employees (Barton, 1976). The traditional approach to learning is not just limited in its focus, but according to Wurdinger (1994) formal classroom-based learning may not be as effective as experiential learning. This is because the process fails to reach the critical last step of learning – application. Wurdinger, quoting Little (1981), suggests that it is this failure that employers express in their “criticism of college graduates that students know a lot but cannot do anything, obviously a case of incomplete learning” (p.25).

Despite the amount of time that most of us spend learning from experience, this aspect of learning is generally neglected because learning is dominated by formal traditional approaches (Boud et al., 1993). Although the classroom is an arena of experience, it is limited in the kinds of experience it can offer (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993). The dominance of formal learning, indicated by Boud and colleagues, is the result of the influence that professional educators have, as they are driven by their assumption that there is a body of knowledge that must be taught and learnt. This knowledge must be delivered through a culture of academic activity which insists that personal experiences are inappropriate and contaminate objectivity, however, according to these authors “learning involves much more than interaction with an extant body of knowledge” (p.1).

Theoretically learning is achieved through two distinct patterns referred to as ‘information assimilation’ and ‘experiential learning’. According to Coleman (1976), these two learning processes take place in two contrasting settings. For information assimilation “much of the learning that takes place in class proceeds through instruction, in which information or knowledge is transmitted from an instructor to the learner, while much of the learning that takes place outside class [experiential learning] proceeds through acting (or in some cases, seeing another person act), and then experiencing or observing the consequences of action” (p.50). Information assimilation learning occurs through a series of steps: receiving information and committing it to memory; then understanding general principles; the learner is then able to infer an application for the information; finally the learner is able to apply this knowledge - only now learning is said to have occurred. Here, the concern is that learning is dependent on extrinsic
motivation and is only achieved at the end of the process it therefore lacks incentive until this point. Whereas experiential learning is a reversal of this process: the action is executed providing cause and effect information; the effects are understood by learning the consequences of the action (i.e., how to achieve specific goals); finally a general principle of the action is understood and extrapolated, facilitating an ability to project learning beyond the particular instance - here learning is intrinsically motivated and occurs at the beginning of the process. Coleman points out that both these process have their virtues and faults and neither has a monopoly on learning. He also suggests that “learning can be made considerably more effective by the appropriate mix of experiential and information assimilation modes of learning” (p.58). Making adequate provision for experiential learning modalities is particularly relevant for less academically able individuals who, for a variety of reasons, fail to make the grade when taught through formal traditional approaches (Tumin, 1976).

According to Itin (1999), “the nature of experiential learning is fairly well understood and agreed upon” (p.91), it involves experiencing an action; reflecting on the experience of the action; obtaining information about the experience drawn from reflection; and application of the information from the experience used in new experiences or actions. Boud and colleagues (1993) state that experiential-based learning is diverse and pervasive. Its nature according to Carver (1996) is holistic because it addresses the learner in their entirety as a thinking, feeling, physical, emotional, spiritual and social being involving “any combination of senses (i.e., touch, hearing, sight, taste), emotions (e.g., pleasure, excitement, anxiety, fear, hurt, empathy, attachment), physical conditions (e.g., temperature, strength, energy level), and cognition (e.g., constructing knowledge, establishing beliefs, solving problems)” (p.9).

3.4: Various and Confusing Categories of Outdoor Pedagogy

A problem that has been identified in the field of outdoor experiential education concerns the variety of terms used in this area, which are generally ignored or ill defined by some authors (Knapp, 2008).
Rickinson and colleagues (2004) regard the concept of ‘outdoor learning’ as a broad and complex one, which touches on a wide range of educational activities in many different settings. Relevant examples include outdoor adventurous education, field studies, nature studies, outdoor play, heritage education, environmental education and agricultural education. …it seems that outdoor learning can be seen as a concept and practice with a range of different foci, outcomes and locations (Rickinson et al., 2004, p.15).

The foci of outdoor learning may include: learning about nature and society, such as various types of field studies/excursions; learning about others, as in small group fieldwork; or learning about self and acquiring new skills, as in outdoor adventurous activities. Outcomes of outdoor learning can include: knowledge and understanding of geographical/geological/biological processes; agricultural techniques; environmental issues and concerns; skills such as climbing, navigation, communication and numerical skills; behaviours such as interpersonal or personal coping strategies; personal development such as self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The locations and settings at which outdoor learning can occur include: wilderness areas; artificial adventure facilities; school grounds; urban spaces; rural or city farms; parks and gardens; canals and rivers; field study centres and nature reserves (Rickinson et al., 2004).

As a result of this complexity, there is a need to identify and define a number of educational activities that come under the umbrella term of outdoor learning. These include: environmental education, outdoor training, outdoor education and adventure education. Also within the scope of the present study, it is helpful at this point to set out the unusual characteristics inherent in adventure education and training.

Environmental education has been described by Priest and Gass (2005) as a branch of education that occurs in the outdoors, which is principally concerned with the study of ecosystems and the impact of human activity on the natural environment. Environmental education “seeks to make young people aware of their environment and to develop knowledge and understanding of it” (DfEE, 1995, p.2).

Outdoor training is a form of experiential learning delivered through various types of outdoor activities. Outdoor management development (OMD) is probably the
best known, which deals with the practicalities of management education that addresses the ‘softer’ skills of enterprise, developing managerial competence in handling interpersonal matters and getting the best from people (Krouwell & Goodwill, 1994). Whereas Tuson (1994), regards outdoor training as a broad term that covers a range of outdoor activities in the training and development field, that has been influenced by military training/officer selection and the original OB programme, with its focus on team development and leadership.

Outdoor education involves an approach to learning that makes use of the outdoor environment as a teaching and learning laboratory (Darst & Armstrong, 1991). It is a general term that encompasses any educational activity in the open air either in a man-made or natural setting, ranging from outdoor studies such as geography, geology, archaeology, where direct observation, through involvement in fieldwork, facilitates learning in traditional school subjects such as geography, history and the sciences, to adventurous pursuits such as mountaineering, sailing, and canoeing (Gair, 1997). Rickinson and colleagues (2004) point to evidence suggesting that “fieldwork, properly conceived, adequately planned, well taught and effectively followed up, offers learners opportunities to develop knowledge and skills in ways that add value to their everyday experiences in the classroom” (p.5).

Adventure education, defined by Priest and Gass (2005), is a branch of outdoor education that utilises adventure activities, which act as compelling and challenging tasks, that involve a range of personal and group skills, abilities, and attitudes that are primarily concerned with interpersonal and intrapersonal development. Personal development is achieved through “responding to seemingly insurmountable tasks [where] participants often learn to overcome self-imposed perceptions of their capabilities to succeed” (p.18). The product of adventure education, summed up by Priest (1990a), is personal growth and development, rather than the mastering of ‘hard’ technical skills associated with the activities per se.
3.5: Combating Disaffection through Adventure Activities

Behaviour and attitude change resulting from participation in organised physical activity, forms the underpinning foundation of the Government’s agenda for the delivery of benefits perceived to combat social exclusion. Benefits have been described as a ‘basket’ of measures that are hoped to strengthen both social and human capital, within the worst socially deprived areas in the UK.

To address social deprivation, OB is involved in providing intervention programmes for at-risk populations, designed to enhance a number of personal aspects required to equip individuals to develop themselves and the communities in which they live. These developmental outcomes include trust, compassion for others and personal growth, to foster personal worth and responsibility for one’s own actions (Ewert, 1989). Laurence and Stuart (1990), identify a number of items targeted in the design of AA programmes that are directed at reducing or preventing socially deviant behaviour among at-risk populations.

These items include:

- lack of moral judgement,
- academic failure at school,
- lowered self-esteem,
- structurally generated alienation (powerlessness),
- lack of attachment to family,
- inadequate socialisation in the family, and
- lack of prestige and status ... (Laurence & Stuart, 1990, p.380)

Holroyd and Armour (2003) have reviewed the role sport and physical activity can play in combating problems faced by disaffected, disengaged and disadvantaged youth. According to these authors, disaffection is a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, influenced by a multitude of interrelated factors manifested in numerous ways: disengagement, antisocial behaviour and involvement in crime. Not only is disaffection an acute problem for many communities, but also for many schools in the UK, characterised by increasing levels of disruptive behaviour, truancy, exclusion and declining academic standards. Holroyd and Armour have stated that, “a number of researchers have pointed out, although there is a popular belief that sport builds character [and engenders pro-social behaviours], the evidence to support this is somewhat inconclusive” (p.2). These authors state
that there are a number of problems faced by researchers. There are difficulties defining disaffection, together with the many causal aspects associated with disaffection and disengagement such as low self-esteem, poverty, broken families, drug use, unemployment and involvement in crime. Despite this, there is considerable commitment on the part of the Government to address the issues relating to social exclusion and disaffection through physical activity (Holroyd & Armour, 2003).

Involvement in acts of antisocial behaviour and other problems appear to occur because many adolescents often find themselves ill-equipped to deal with the pressures of life. Poor judgement, low motivation, low self-esteem, failure to accept responsibility and inability to satisfy needs appropriately can be manifested in experimentation with drugs, arguments with other family members, dropping out of school and involvement in criminal activity. AA and sport programmes have been utilised to address these problems, by providing a challenging environment and supportive atmosphere, where behaviour and attitudes are believed to change through empowering participants to develop more appropriate social behaviours and self-perceptions. A number of studies have indicated that AA, together with various sports programmes, present an opportunity for at-risk populations to acquire and adopt pro-social behaviour (Ewert, 1989; Gibson, 1979; Hunter, 1987; Kelly, 1993; Kennedy, 1987; Mc Avoy et al., 1989; Teaffe & Kablach, 1986; Teschner & Wolter, 1984). These studies have highlighted a number of positive changes that include improvement to self-concept, self-esteem, trust, group cooperation, skill development and health.

AA offer excellent opportunities to develop a robust self-concept and enhance self-esteem. According to Mc Auly (1994), self-esteem is acknowledged as having the most potential to benefit from physical activity. In a review of sixteen studies, Sonstroem (1984) identified an increase in global self-esteem among 75% of these studies, indicating an association between physical activity and increased self-esteem, which was particularly strong in subjects whose initial level of self-esteem was low.

AA programmes encompass a number of developmental components that include personal growth, trust, actual and perceived risk taking and problem solving.
Personal growth appears to be the principal component targeted by AA programmes. They are used intentionally in an attempt to broaden and deepen participants’ experiences of feelings of personal worth and to assume responsibility for their actions (Datillo, 2000). Through participation in leisure activities, an individual comes to understand the self (Fain, 1991) and the social world in which they live (Leming, 1991). Brightbill (1960) states that leisure activities offer opportunities to make choices between right and wrong and according to Calloway (1995) leisure activities allow individuals to explore appropriate ways of thinking and dealing with life.

Despite many studies indicating a number of positive outcomes emerging from AA, establishing clear support for the Government’s investment in AA interventions for at-risk populations appears to be difficult.

3.6: Learning Through the Unique Medium of Adventure Education

Adventure education involves active participation in a range of physically and emotionally challenging activities, epitomised by OB, that appears to result in a number of beneficial outcomes. A framework for explaining the procedures and methods involved in adventure education is provided by Walsh and Golins’ Model (1976) of the OB process (Figure 3.1), that shows how participants learn in the adventure environment. The Walsh and Golins’ Model is succinctly outlined by Sibthorp (2003) as a process that:

- includes a motivated learner or programme participant being placed into a prescribed social and physical environment where he or she masters specific problem solving tasks. The course instructor acts as a guide to ensure that the tasks are both authentic and manageable and provides the necessary feedback to aid mastery, which in turn, leads to participant development (e.g., an increase in self-esteem) (Sibthorp, 2003, p.81).
Exploring the process by which OB programme outcomes are achieved, Mc Kenzie (2003) conducted a study to identify which activities (e.g., climbing) contributed to which positive outcomes (e.g., increased self-concept) and which activities negatively affected course outcomes. Data was collected from ninety-two students on Canadian Outward Bound using questionnaires, interviews and researcher observation. Listed in order of impact/preference, findings indicate that achieving success, challenge, learning new skills, responsibility for self, having fun, emerged as positive outcomes and these were influenced by the following activities: backpacking, mountaineering, the solo, rock climbing, having leadership responsibilities, setting up camps and cooking, 10 km run, group discussions, games and initiative activities, service project and an expedition. Activities that resulted in the greatest increase in self-confidence, self-reliance, self-esteem and self-concept were those that facilitated individual success and challenge. Mc Kenzie states that the findings support the Walsh and Golins Model in a number of areas. First, outcomes were enhanced by both physical and mental challenge, the unfamiliar environment assisted development of self-awareness and self-concept and the provision of clearly constructed tasks encouraged mastery. Second, findings suggest that instructors play a vital role in respect of expectations and feedback, and their personalities can increase students’ self-concept, motivation.
and interpersonal skills. Third, an important feature in developing these outcomes are situational factors such as working as a group, opportunity for social interaction, relying on others and them on you and the opportunity to experiment with new behaviours. Failing to achieve success and lack of physical challenge were the principal negative factors.

A number of authors (Ewert, 1989; Mortlock, 2004; Meier, 1987) believe that adventure education offers a unique learning experience that involves challenge, perceived danger and risk. Successfully mastering challenging situations is a key element of adventure education that gives rise to feelings of enjoyment and a number of personal developmental outcomes. This is supported by Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990), who consider that facing the challenge of the unknown is generally a pleasurable experience for most people. Outdoor adventure involves participation in activities that are exhilarating and physically challenging, which offer excitement and personal involvement that is somewhat lacking in traditional education (Ewert, 1989). For Hopkins and Putnam (1993), it is the word ‘adventure’ that defines this educational approach - it involves doing something new, uncertainty of outcome, moving beyond daily experience in discovering the unknown or meeting challenges of the unexpected. Ewert (1989) defines adventure education as having a number of inherent components: interaction with the natural environment, which requires an element of risk associated with danger and the possibility of being injured or even killed. Exposure to an environment of apparent, rather than real danger is a unique factor; “this deliberate inclusion of risk in a recreational or educational framework helps distinguish outdoor adventure pursuits from more traditional outdoor recreation and/or outdoor education activities” (p.3).

Colin Mortlock, a well-respected authority within outdoor education, has been somewhat critical of outdoor education not meeting the developmental needs and abilities of young people. He advocates for a return to Kurt Hahn’s original concept of adventure education, based on the individual testing themselves against a physically demanding and challenging environment. Mortlock (2004) has expressed discontent with outdoor education as prescribed and practised in the
UK. He considers that many working in outdoor education are opposing the concept of adventure by promoting an anti-adventure position. Mortlock has stated that some outdoor educationalists have promoted a position where “the idea of adventure, fear, physical hardship and discomfort were considered to be inappropriate and were largely unacceptable as a major aspect of education through the outdoors” (p.13). Mortlock considers weakening the elements of challenge and adventure to be misguided. He suggests that removing the taste of adventure, and infilling with fieldwork based programmes, runs counter to the critical issues of personal development and states “by combining outdoor activities with environmental and field studies, educational and academic respectability were achieved [but] equally, and very conveniently, fundamental questions concerning adventure, self-reliance, and self-development by young people, were largely ignored” (p.13).

Meier (1987) has also noted that much of the adventure has been taken out by the threat of legal action, to the extent that much of the risk, excitement and fun has been eliminated, and that many “programmes are often labelled as being too soft, too dull and too ordinary” (p.23). Sir Christian Bonington has expressed similar sentiments in a statement made at Buckingham Palace broadcast on Thursday, 8th December 2011, on ITV News at Ten, suggesting that health and safety has suffocated the spirit of adventure in the UK.

Also labelled as misguided education thinking, within some school physical education provision, and under attack from Mortlock, is the notion of anti-competitiveness and the avoidance of placing children in positions where losing may be a possibility. Engagement in outdoor adventure sometimes means that success and achievement are not always met. However, according to Quinn (1990), engagement in adventure activity that fails is more important than choosing not to seek out adventure. For Quinn, the outcome of avoiding adventure, for fear of loss or failure, will result in torpidity and stagnation, individuals must actively seek adventure otherwise their world becomes small and narrow, for “without actively seeking, without attempting to, and going beyond what one already knows one can accomplish, there is no growth” (p.147).
Recently, Brown and Fraser (2009) have made a critique against the justification for the inclusion of risk advocated by many outdoor educationalists, such as Mortlock. They state that by invoking levels of anxiety and perceived risk, in order to facilitate change, is ethically suspect. Brown and Fraser refer to a growing body of literature which questions some of the underlying philosophical and pedagogical assumptions relating to the utility of risk within adventure programming, and the ability that individuals’ have in recovering from negative situations, such as failure to successfully complete an abseil. These authors make no reference to agency, as supported by the principle of ‘challenge by choice’, a critically important aspect in adventure education. Although it is important to question and justify pedagogical practice, however, based on observations in the field during the course of the present study, there appears to be little support for Brown and Fraser’s view.

Brown and Fraser’s position appears to be at odds with field observations made during the course of the present study. In essence, ‘challenge by choice’ together with creative dissonance are essential features that underpin the adventure education process and as such, these points will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

Dattilo and Murphy (1987) suggest that individuals differ in their perceptions to the degree of challenge and level of threat presented by various adventure activities; matched against the perceptions individuals have in their ability and skill to meet these challenges. Perceptions may also vary “not only between individuals but within them; what seems risky to an individual at one time may not seem risky to the same individual at another time” (p.50). Moments of challenge and threat are critical developmental episodes where the individual is induced to venture beyond their ‘comfort zone’ and self-imposed limitations, which are critical developmental episodes in the outdoor adventure experience. These instances are referred to by Nadler (1993) as “the edge between breakthrough and retreat” (p.58). These are occasions where individuals can deny themselves success or overcome the dissonance the adventure challenge presents.

Encountering failure is an inevitable feature of life, according to Wright (1989), and individuals need to understand how to cope with failure within adventure
challenges. He suggests that the key point in handling failure experiences involves the individual learning how to interpret failure. At instances of failure the individual needs to make a realistic appraisal that examines the factors responsible for the failure, whether they are attributed to internal or external factors. Wright regards a realistic self-appraisal as an essential developmental requirement, suggesting that reflection through the review process plays a central role and thus, “interpreting both success and not-quite-so-successful attempts at resolving problems will aid the participants” (p.88).

Mortlock believes that depriving young people of adventure is to impoverish their capabilities, determination and courage. Adventure is associated with physical, mental and emotional challenges that will demand effort and the best of one’s capabilities. For Mortlock, challenge is a state of mind where individuals will accept unpleasant feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort, which are counterbalanced by feelings of exhilaration, joy and the realisation that effort is likely to overcome the challenge, or acceptance, with dignity, that one has tried their best and will make further attempts on another occasion. Mortlock indicates that challenge affects attitudes, in that “it is far too easy to accept what appear to be our limitations - if the will is strong enough then those limitations can often be overcome” (p.40). It is these emotions, evoked by challenge that Mortlock equates with “a ‘peak experience’, feelings almost indescribable and beyond those common to normal and routine living” (p.19). Mortlock believes that ‘peak experiences’, resulting from overcoming almost seemingly impossible challenges, form a blueprint for success and achievement in future life challenges. ‘Peak experiences’, according to Ewert (1989) is a concept that provides a conceptual foundation, through which adventure experiences are characterised by the individual’s striving for self-actualisation. Goldstein (1939) was the first theorist to use the term self-actualisation, which later became the central underpinning concept of the humanistic theories of Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Hoyle and colleagues (1999) provide a concise description of self-actualisation - “Maslow’s basic premise was that people possess an inherent need for self-fulfilment - a drive to become what one has the potential to become” (Hoyle et al., 1999, p.131-2).
Maslow (1968) regards self-actualising people to be those who have achieved a high level of self-fulfilment, who according to Maslow are rare individuals. Although self-actualising individuals are scarce, Maslow believes the average person occasionally has the opportunity of becoming self-actualising during ‘peak experiences’. Peak experiences can occur as nature experiences, moments of intellectual insight and certain forms of athletic fulfilment; “any person in any of the peak experiences takes on temporarily many of the characteristics which I found in self-actualising individuals” (p.97). He states that these experiences are intrinsically valuable to the point that they make life worthwhile, these moments are suspended in both time and space, inherently good, complete and perfect.

The ‘peak experience’ is characterised by a special flavour of wonder and awe, involving a momentary loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition; where the individual acts or becomes more integrated, spontaneous, courageous, powerful; experiencing emotions of pure gratification, expression, elation, joy and fulfilment. With particular reference to the possibility of ‘peak experiences’ being experienced within adventure activities, their effects are very relevant to this discussion.

Maslow mentions that individuals in ‘peak experiences’ feel fully functioning, self-determined, agentic, empowered, free of fears, self-doubt, feeling more worthy, self-accepting and experiencing self-love and self-respect. Maslow defines ‘peak experiences’ as episodes in which the powers of the individual coalesce in a particularly efficient and intensely pleasurable way, that have beneficial after effects for the individual:

1. Peak-experiences may and do have some therapeutic effects …
2. They can change the person’s view of himself in a healthy direction.
3. They can change his view of other people and his relations to them in many ways…..
   (Maslow, 1968, p.101)

The opportunity to face apparent, rather than real danger, is a key factor in outdoor adventure according to Mortlock (2004). He believes that young people face many unnatural and insidious dangers living in a modern society and need to be equipped to meet these dangers, such as mental illness, neuroticism, alcoholism, drug abuse, as well as the chronic consequences of a slothful existence that can be counteracted by self-reliance developed through participation in
adventure activities that “will stand them in good stead in the serious problems they are likely to face in adult life” (p.26).

Fundamentally, adventure education creates an environment that is perceived as dangerous and risky, where individuals can experience dissonance, competence and mastery.

Hunt (1990) evokes Plato’s ‘Republic’, to establish a foundational basis for a philosophy of adventure education, which justifies the use of danger and risk in the education of young people, as a legitimate educational tool. According to Hunt, Plato’s position on danger is clear, “from Plato the argument is put forth that not, all danger should not be avoided; the use of danger is justified by making better people” (p.123). Within adventure education experiencing risk is inherently linked to competence. Priest (1990b) provides an adventure experience model (Figure 3.2) that explains the relationship between risk/competence and challenge.

![Figure 3.2: The Adventure Experience Paradigm (Priest, 1990, p.158)](image)

The model shows a ‘Y’ axis representing risk (the potential to lose something of value) and the ‘X’ axis representing competence (a synergy of skill, knowledge, attitude, behaviour, confidence and experience). In the model, challenge is the interplay of risk and competence, generated by uncertainty, which comes from the risk inherent in the activity. When personal competence is applied against the risk, in an attempt to resolve uncertainty - it is here, in the ‘peak adventure zone’, where the participant experiences optimal learning.
According to Hopkins and Putnam (1993), Priest captures the individual’s reaction to adventure, stating that the key idea of the dynamic nature of the experience captures the tension between risk and competence. The model describes situations where risk increases and/or competence decreases, to achieve progressive levels of adventure intensity – termed exploration and experimentation, adventure, peak adventure and misadventure.

These four conditions are acceptable learning opportunities for any adventurer. Learning basic skills, applying them to a challenging task, testing one’s limits on the razor’s edge, and having to deal with the consequences of error are the mainstay of education from and through adventure (Priest, 1990b, p.157).

Individuals can learn from misadventure, a situation from which they can recover. In these occurrences skill level is inadequate and achievement thwarted. The condition of devastation and disaster is dangerous and must be avoided. According to Priest, individuals tend to select risks that balance their competence in order to achieve optimal arousal or a peak adventure experience.

Fears, real or imagined, are a fundamental part of the adventure experience. Fear, according to Ewert (1989), is the source of dissonance that fosters anxiety and doubt and when overcome “holds the promise of pride, satisfaction, and a renewed or expanded sense of self-efficacy” (p.44). Ewert mentions that there are two principal purposes served by fear within adventure education, it teaches individuals about themselves, facilitating an insight into their self-concept and learning to overcome fear itself, which is achieved through three techniques: desensitisation, flooding, and modelling.

Creating a state of dissonance is an important learning mechanism within adventure education. Priest and Gass (2005) refer to ‘adaptive dissonance’ that explains a state in which the individual experiences fear and anxiety when confronted by novel physical or social challenges. In these situations, individuals are motivated to alleviate conflict and thus seek to normalise stressful situations to more harmonious ones. Individuals do this by attempting to master the experience. In their attempts to master these situations, they focus on the danger or difficulty and in so doing they pick up cues from the immediate environment such as vicarious experience, seeing others perform successfully (i.e., master the stress) and verbal persuasion from peers and instructors. A paradox emerges
between the opposing views of their own negative thoughts and the positive
experiences provided by the social environment; a point is reached when the
individual “chooses to overcome the dissonance by adapting their behaviours to
meet their intended objectives, adapting both instils a sense of mastery or
competence as well as giving clients insights into their behaviours” (p.151). This
process, which Hopkins and Putnam (1993) describe as ‘creative dissonance’,
produces new learnt behaviour that defines the individual’s perception of
themselves. It takes the form of personal growth through developing competence
and confidence that, in turn, “encourages the learner to tackle more demanding
experiential tasks which similarly results in personal growth” (p.103-4).

Personal growth highlights the principal beneficial outcomes of adventure
education. Klint (1990) outlines a range of benefits associated with adventure
education, in a number of domains. These include: physical (increased strength,
aerobic power and muscular endurance); cognitive (environmental knowledge,
safety skills and technical skills specific to outdoor activities); and self-concept (a
sense of achievement, stress control and some affective components related to
participation). Ewert (1989) provides a more comprehensive list of benefits
provided by adventure education, that he believes are difficult to obtain in
everyday life. They include: psychological outcomes such as self-concept, self-
confidence, self-efficacy, self-actualisation and wellbeing; sociological benefits
such as compassion, cooperation, empathy and communication skills; educational
benefits such as improved academic abilities, environmental knowledge and
problem-solving skills.

Outdoor adventure programmes possess the capacity to facilitate the full range of
learning that other experiential learning programmes may fail to fulfil. In addition
to the unique characteristics of adventure education so far mentioned, other
distinctive characteristics surrounding adventure education include: reality,
metaphor, reflection and transfer.

Reality is a key feature of adventure education, the underpinning proposition is
that learning occurs as a result of having to deal with real situations and real
consequences (Burnett & James, 1994), as opposed to classroom situations where
the consequences of one’s actions are less real and significant (Badger, et al.,
In comparison to other forms of experiential learning, Krouwel and Goodwill (1994) believe that the most important asset of outdoor adventure learning is its lack of artificiality, problems are real, issues are dynamic, the constraints lived and felt, and the consequences are real - it is the real world and “if there is one thing that makes outdoor programmes unique, it is the way people live with the consequences of their actions” (p.12).

Hopkins and Putnam (1993) refer to adventure education as ‘confrontation-based experience’ due to its immediacy as a problem solving situation that participants have to face and solve. In the view of these authors, there is no room for evasion, participants have to ‘face it and do it’. Confrontation-based experiences put participants on the spot, as Flor (1991) points out, these situations are designed and administered by experiential educators to bring participants to the edge of their ‘comfort zone’. These are situations where the essential programme factors such as uncertainty and risk taking, challenge and reflection, novelty, dissonance, together with the use of metaphors and debriefs, that in turn evoke emotional responses, are the trademark characteristics of adventure education. Adventure activities are, in essence, vehicles by which participants are taken into the realm of fear, danger and dissonance by being exposed to activities such as the uncertainty of jumping off a ten metre rock ledge into a fast flowing river or having to deal with heights and the perceived risk of falling.

Metaphors are continually used and expressed by instructors within adventure education settings, which Usher (1994) describes as part of the discourse of experiential learning. Metaphors are reflective agents that are linked to the transfer of experience. For Beard and Wilson (2002) a metaphor is a figure of speech that transfers meaning. It is a tool of reflection that enables a particular experience to facilitate new insights, by assisting the learner to ‘see’ or ‘connect’ themselves to the real world. According to these authors, the outdoor activity itself serves as a metaphor, strengthening the potential connection between the adventure setting and other situations. For example,

metaphors can be used as concept-forming... High ropes challenges can represent the challenges of real life. Cliffs can represent the challenge of a giant project... a way of shifting perception and creating meaning... They can be powerful cathartic tools, simplifying and reducing complexity on the one hand, but also
Transfer is a critical issue within adventure education programmes, as Gass (1990) explains, it is a concept that has been misunderstood, the confusion of which concerns the interplay of two factors. The initial learning environment (i.e., outdoor activity) as being very different from the environment to which learning needs to be transferred, *vis-à-vis*, the application of a variety of methods available to promote transfer. What Hopkins and Putnam (1993) describe as an ability to move beyond their immediate context, adventure education programmes must be adequately designed and managed to accommodate transfer of learning to other situations.

Coleman (1976) has stated that the weakest aspect in the sequence of experiential learning is “in generalising from particular experiences to a general principle application in other circumstances” (p.58). He indicates, however, that this weakness can be addressed by the debriefing phase. This suggests that reflective practice is an essentially important aspect of transference. In other words, “experience has to be reflected upon so as to make sense of it, by making connections to other experiences” (Beard & Wilson, 2002, p.127). Using an OMD example to illustrate this point, Beard and Wilson acknowledge that adventure activities such as a group of corporate executives building and sailing a raft has low transference to their work environment and occupational tasks (they do not work outdoors neither do they build or sail rafts). However, there is high transference in terms of the process and dynamics involved in building and sailing a raft - teamwork, organisation, effective use of resources, interpersonal and communication skills.

### 3.7: Summary

A number of authors (Keeton, 1976; Barton, 1976; Greene & Thompson, 1990) have been critical of formal education’s approach to traditional learning that appears to be a less effective learning process than experiential learning, in some contexts. Denying the benefits of experiential learning in favour of traditional education makes learning less effective compared to when both are blended.
Experiential learning, undertaken in the adventure setting, is a holistic approach that involves physical, cognitive, emotional and interpersonal development. It is regarded as a unique learning experience that uses novel tasks with heightened levels of uncertainty. The Walsh and Golins’ Model explains the method involved where the individual experiences a physical and socially dynamic environment and address difficult challenging activities designed to create dissonance. Mastering dissonance and displaying competence results in a range of developmental outcomes. Mastery and competence are major elements in these learning scenarios where the individual is required to overcome a variety of obstacles, not least fear and anxiety, that push them beyond their ‘comfort zone’.

Fear-provoking dissonance is a fundamental and unique facet of adventure education and training. Being placed in challenging and emotionally charged situations some participants experience intense feelings described as ‘peak experiences’. These are episodes of intense enjoyment generated through successfully mastering the challenge, particularly if at first it was perceived to be beyond their expectations. Experiencing mastery and competence provides the individual with an insight into their new found abilities, which in turn change attitudes and behaviour.

The underpinning concept of this approach to learning is that behaviour may be transferred to other situations. Transfer of learning is also believed to be promoted by the reality of the adventure activity, together with active use of metaphors.
Chapter 4:  
Adventure Education and its Contribution to Self-Esteem Enhancement

4.1: Introduction

Campbell (1984) argues that “the self-esteem motive can explain virtually every facet of human behaviour” (p.xiii) stating that the first law of human behaviour is the need individuals have to seek, maintain or enhance their self-esteem proclaiming “that the self-esteem motive is the key to understanding - and controlling - human behaviour” (p.xiii). The intention of this Chapter is first, to comment upon the evaluative facets of the self-concept focusing on the importance self-esteem, in terms of its potential to motivate and direct behaviour and second, to discuss the likely processes by which self-esteem is enhanced through participation in adventure activities.

The central aim of outdoor adventure programming is to enhance self-esteem according to Gibbs and Bunyan (1997). This aim has been a predominant feature over the past three decades, which indicates that most research conducted on the benefits of adventure-based activities has been in the self-concept and self-esteem domains (Bocarro & Richards, 1998). The central underpinning argument for the value of adventure education presented by Gibbs and Bunyan, is the belief that by maximising situations that generate success and by minimising situations that result in failure, together with exposure to the “element of risk that is involved and the perceived danger, may offer an explanation as to why adventure education may affect self-esteem” (p.3).

Raising self-esteem through participation in physical activity, according to Coalter (2008), is seen by the Government as an intermediate impact that is perceived to bestow beneficial intermediate outcomes, such as reducing anti-social behaviour *inter alia*, however, this is somewhat difficult to evidence.

The vast majority of research featuring the benefits of AA has been conducted using self-report measures such as the RSES (Conley et al., 2007; Larson, 2007; Walsh & Russell, 2010). The overreliance on self-report measures has been
identified as an area of concern by Baumeister and colleagues (2003), who question the integrity of these scales. According to these authors, continual reviews of the literature have revealed distortions in research findings when self-reports are compared to objective measurements.

Despite these research problems, self-esteem still appears to feature in the Government’s national strategy for neighbourhood renewal and its policy of tackling social exclusion (PAT, 2000). These presumed benefits are reflected in Government thinking, for example, in Game Plan (DCMS, 2002) the Government states that participation in sport acts as a preventive remedy for criminal activity. First, as an antidote against boredom by offering a more socially acceptable source of excitement and second, as a means of raising self-esteem which may prevent the likelihood of committing crime by experiencing enhanced self-esteem.

4.2: The Politicisation of Self-esteem

The dictionary definition of self-esteem (Stratton & Hayes, 1996) is a “personal evaluation which an individual makes of her or himself; their sense of their own worth or capabilities” (p.175). According to Kernis (2006) there is no single or simple definition of self-esteem, but rather a complexity of multiple definitions which this chapter aims to outline. Leary and Downes (1995) regard self-esteem as a personality variable that describes the way individuals feel about themselves which is relatively stable over time and situations, referred to as global/trait self-esteem; but also as state self-esteem, a less enduring quality that is domain specific and “refers to the quality of a person’s self-feelings in a particular situation at a particular time” (p.125).

Self-esteem is a complex (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) and contradictory (Berenson & Downey, 2006) construct. There are many conceptual issues arising from its complexity, and several definitions of self-esteem, each highlighting differing views on cognitive, emotional, motivational and behavioural aspects “defining self-esteem involves entering what Smelser (1989) terms a ‘definitional maze’” (Mruk 2006c, p.10). There are various types of self-esteem: stable and unstable (Greenier, et al., 1995), fragile and secure (Kernis & Paradise, 2002), defensive
and genuine (Kernis, 2000), contingent and true (Deci & Ryan, 1995), implicit and explicit (Epstein & Morling, 1995) and paradoxical (Tafarodi, 1998). It has been described in conceptually conflicting terms. Some researchers such as DuBois and Flay (2004) view self-esteem as having important adaptive benefits for the individual, whereas other researchers such as Crocker and Park (2004) regard the pursuit of self-esteem as a maladaptive endeavour that compromises the individual in terms of relatedness, learning, autonomy, together with having a negative effect on mental and physical health.

Self-esteem is very much in the public domain featured in many books, magazines and newspaper articles, such as the ‘Sunday Times’ article featured in Appendix E, highlighting its ubiquitous nature. Most individuals feel that self-esteem is important (Baumeister et al., 2003) and as such almost everyone appears to have a strong and pervasive concern with self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Individuals appear in some way concerned with self-esteem, in essence it plays a principal role in our emotions and behaviour. It is also regarded as a highly desirable commodity and “conversely, the absence of a healthy sense of self-appreciation seems to be one of the basic warning signs of a dysfunctional personality” (Bednar & Peterson, 1995, p.1).

In the US, self-esteem has been politicised by the California State Government who inaugurated, in 1986, the California Task Force, as a vehicle to promote it as a panacea to protect society from a host of anti-social problems (Swann et al. 2007). These include “engaging in destructive and self-destructive behaviour, child abuse, alcohol abuse, abuse of other drugs (legal and illegal), violence, crime” (California Task Force, 1990, p.5). Low self-esteem has been cast as the root cause of a host of personal and social ills, with claims that raising it would act as a “social vaccine” (Emler, 2001). Although this task force is an American phenomenon without parallel in the UK, it is well documented (e.g., Baumeister et al., 2003; Baumeister et al., 2005; Emler, 2001; Mruk, 2006c; Campbell & Foster, 2006; Tice & Gailliot, 2006), and as such is of some interest in view of the UK Government’s belief that improvements to the individual’s self-esteem is a necessary prerequisite for wider benefits for the individual and society.
Many of the claims purported by the California Task Force, even by their own admissions, have been disappointingly low (Koch, 2003). Two comprehensive reviews (Emler, 2001; Baumeister et al., 2003) have undermined claims concerning the relationship between self-esteem and a range of social and personal problems. In their review, Baumeister and colleagues suggest that high self-esteem is more problematic than low self-esteem. These authors point out that some categories of high self-esteem (such as defensive high self-esteem or narcissism) are associated with aggression, anti-social behaviour, racial prejudice, and that high self-esteem predicts involvement in bullying or being the supporter of a bully. High self-esteem individuals (HSEs), are more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol and display fewer inhibitions making them more likely to engage in risky behaviour.

Other researchers take a different view, for instance, Swann and colleagues (2007) argue that self-esteem has a number of beneficial outcomes to both the individual and society. Donnellan and colleagues (2005) have suggested that several traditions, within the social sciences, have put forward links between low self-esteem and various problem behaviours. For example, “Rosenberg (1965) suggests that low self-esteem weakens ties to society; according to social-bonding theory, weaker ties to society decrease conformity to social norms and increase delinquency” (p.328). These authors found that low self-esteem was significantly related to delinquency.

In direct contrast to Baumeister and colleagues’ 2003 review, Trzesniewski and colleagues (2006) found that adolescents with low self-esteem developed more mental and physical health problems as adults and these individuals were more likely to have high rates of criminal convictions as adults, less academic opportunities and longer periods of unemployment, compared to HSEs. Involvement in criminal activity has been reported to be associated with a broad range of social, family and individual factors, one of which was low self-esteem (Fergusson & Horwood, 2002). Self-esteem holds a level of importance as a topic associated with psychological health, according to Rosenberg and colleagues (1995), who have stated that repeated research findings have linked self-esteem with psychological wellbeing. In terms of mental health, possessing high self-
Esteem appears to confer psychological health benefits. This has been supported by epidemiological studies that have indicated suicide ideation being associated with low self-esteem (Mc Gee et al., 2001) and Tennen and Herzberger (1987) and have suggested that depression and self-esteem appear to be significantly correlated.

4.3: The Effects of Esteem and Efficacy on Behaviour

Self-esteem is important to us at a personal level, each of us no doubt have numerous examples that we can recall when it has impacted on us, or occasions when we have observed the effects and consequences of self-esteem on the emotions and behaviour of other individuals. As humans, we are also self-reflective beings who intuitively recognise the importance of self-esteem. In certain circumstances individuals engage in self-protective mechanisms by which they avoid psychological trauma to their self-esteem, thus the development and preservation of self-esteem can be viewed as a potent motivational force.

Self-esteem has an important influence in terms of directing behaviour, as Baumeister (1993) asserts and it is positively correlated with self-reported confidence. This is an important consideration because, if improvements in self-esteem have a ‘spin off’ effect on self-confidence, then individuals may be more amenable to taking on new challenges which are likely to make a positive impact on self-development.

Self-esteem has a rare quality, in that it is activated in both negative and positive situations which make it particularly relevant to a diverse range of behaviours (Mruk, 2006c). Individuals do not exclusively evaluate themselves in cognitive terms alone, along a dimension of good to bad, but in addition self-esteem evokes affective responses that accompany cognitive evaluations (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Emotions elicited by certain actions appear to direct behaviour Pyszczynski and colleagues (2004a; 2004b) suggest that a need for and the protection of self-esteem plays an important part in directing behaviour. In this respect, self-esteem has a regulating effect on behaviour (Brown & Mankowski, 1993) and as such, the self-esteem motive accounts for a range of behaviours and
many psychological problems have their origins in unfulfilled self-esteem needs (Leary & Baumeister, 2000).

Self-confidence and self-esteem appear to be the foremost outcomes of AA programmes (Fox & Avramidis, 2003; Hattie et al., 1997; Kelly et al., 1997; Sveen & Denholm, 1997). Within these achievement-dominated settings, being competent and able to master the activity confers upon the successful acute feelings of efficacy and esteem, which appears to manifest itself as self-confidence. In the perceptions of some, these constructs seem to merge into the same entity “and many people equate self-confidence with self-esteem” (Brown & Marshall, 2006, p.5). This is understandable, as self-esteem has been conceptualised by some writers as a multidimensional construct, (Franks & Marolla, 1976; Caste & Burke, 2002; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983) acknowledged as having dual components of efficacy classified as self-competence (feelings of being competent, efficacious, and agentic) and esteem and self-liking (describing being loved, likable and socially worthy) (Tafarodi and Swann, 1995). Citing Bandura (1990) as having argued that self-efficacy is separate from self-esteem, Tafarodi and Swann (2001) have suggested that this is clearly the case for task specific self-esteem, but stating that generalised self-efficacy closely parallels the self-competence dimension of self-esteem, “we have described self-competence and self-liking as co-equal dimensions of global self-esteem” (Tafarodi & Swann, 2001, p. 56). Other authors have made this point, such as Stets and Burk (2003) who suggest two dimensions of self-esteem, one as having been identified as efficacy-based self-esteem (seeing oneself as competent and capable) and the other as worth-based self-esteem (feeling that one is accepted and valued).

It is clear that conceptualising self-esteem as having both elements of esteem and efficacy can be traced back from the 1970s to the present. Recently, Mruk (2006c) appears to re-define this notion by suggesting that self-esteem should be considered in three ways: as worthiness, as competence and as a combination of both. However, he argues that by combining competence and worthiness into a two-dimensional conceptualisation of self-esteem offers a comprehensive view, which allows a better understanding of the construct. In Mruk’s view “it is the
idea that competence and worthiness work together to create self-esteem that makes the definition different, dynamic and powerful” (p.24).

Bandura’s (1977) concept of self-efficacy presents an explanation of the cognitive processes involved in behaviour regulation, in terms of the motivational aspects of behaviour activation and persistence. In essence, self-efficacy is the belief an individual has concerning their expectation and conviction of successfully executing a particular behaviour to achieve a desired objective - described as an outcome-expectancy. Bandura has outlined four motivational sources of self-efficacy: performance accomplishment (previous mastery experience), vicarious experience (observing other’s performance), verbal persuasion and emotional arousal. According to Bandura, efficacy expectations underpin motivation, in that they determine how much effort is expended and how persistent individuals are in goal-achievement, particularly in the face of adversity. Self-efficacy is an important motivational concept that has been extensively studied in education (Elias & Mac Donald, 2007; Lane, et al., 2004), sport and exercise contexts (Feltz, 1992; Mc Auley, 1992a, 1992b).

Describing self-esteem in terms of having an efficacy-based component would suggest that when individuals experience success they regard themselves as competent, capable and show confidence in their abilities (Stets & Burk, 2003). It would therefore be expected that adventure activities are effective in developing these aspects of the self-concept. After all, adventure activities stand as competence-based situations that require the individual to master specific tasks and it is the display of competence in mastering the environment that forms the origins of self-esteem (Franks & Marolla, 1976).

Outdoor adventure activity and sport in general are inherently competence-based activities, which occur in personally challenging achievement-motivation contexts. For many individuals, these can be highly focused cognitive and highly charged emotional situations. Individuals are motivated to participate in physical activities for a number of reasons. For example, Kenyon (1968) has outlined several reasons why individuals engage themselves in physical activity: Social experience, threats to health, vertigo (risk, danger and thrill), aesthetic, cathartic and ascetic (engagement in long, strenuous and sometimes painful
endurance activity for stoical reasons). These motivations are the catalysts of behaviour and have a bearing upon psychological outcomes, being motivated to participate in physical activities because of social reasons may result in feelings of relatedness and a concomitant elevation in self-esteem (Ekeland et al., 2005). Health benefits accruing from participation in physical activity are profound in terms of both physical health (Morris, et al., 1990, 1980; Blair et al., 1992, 1989; Wannamethee & Sharper, 1992, Pate, et al., 1995) and psychological health (DiLorenzo et al., 1999; Hassmén et al., 2000; Phelps, 1987), which are well documented in the sport science and medical literature. Psychological benefits of exercise relevant to this study include: improved self-concept (Hughes, 1984) and improved self-esteem (Ekeland, et al., 2005). Fun, excitement, interest, pleasure and satisfaction, for many, are the emotional by-products of participation in physical activity that ultimately affect self-esteem. However, other considerations are worthy to note, such as the need to master the environment through competence (situational challenges), the desire to embrace learning opportunities (meeting the need for self-actualisation) and the need to experience a sense of autonomy (Shields & Bredemeier, 1995).

4.4: Success and Failure and its Effects on Self-Esteem

Individual responses to success and failure are critical to personal functioning and a key aspect of any learning or development programme. It is a common sense assumption that self-esteem and achievement go hand-in-hand, more achievement translates into more self-esteem and vice versa (Griffiths, 1993). All individuals, regardless of their level of self-esteem, prefer success rather than failure. However, the level of self-esteem is based on the cumulative experience the individual has in terms of level of success, vis-à-vis their level of failure (McFarlin & Blascovich, 1981).

Success achieved at tasks, such as those presented by adventure activities, is likely to have an effect on the self-concept, but also may have an influence on behaviour. The ability to master tasks, such as abseiling or sailing, demonstrate competence, which according to Tafarodi and Swann (1995) form the foundation of
self-efficacy, allowing the individual to experience themselves as a causal agent that results in positive feelings about the self. Success and failure change self-esteem, success increases efficacy expectations, whereas failure decreases it (Lane et al., 2004).

Not everyone responds to success and failure in the same way and these differences are likely to show characteristic variations in behaviour. Research has indicated that there is a relationship between an individual’s level of self-esteem and a characteristic response to success and failure. Moreland and Sweeney (1984) found that students, regardless of their level of self-esteem, showed a strong preference for positive rather than negative performance evaluations and high self-esteem individuals (HSEs) expected to succeed more than low self-esteem individuals (LSEs). In a similar study, Campbell and Fairey (1985) showed that HSEs expected to perform better than LSEs and failure had a greater detrimental effect on low self-esteem subjects compared to high self-esteem subjects. These researchers also observed that high self-esteem subjects perceived their performance more positively than did low self-esteem subjects, despite there being no difference between their performances.

Negative feedback appears to have different performance and motivational consequences for HSEs and LSEs. Brockner and colleagues (1987), exploring the impact of self-esteem following feedback to students based on examination performance, showed that LSEs performed more poorly compared to their high self-esteem counterparts, following negative feedback. However, on receipt of positive feedback both HSEs and LSEs performed equally well. These results indicated that LSEs, compared to HSEs, exhibit a decline in motivation when confronted by negative feedback.

LSEs respond more favourably to failure than success compared to HSEs who appear to have more inflated belief in their abilities (McFarlin & Blascovich, 1981). This may be explained by LSEs experiencing success as threatening because they lack self-confidence in their ability, whereas HSEs do not suffer such self-doubts (Baumeister & Tice, 1985). LSEs place a greater negative value on failure compared to HSEs and consequently, for them, failure is more costly, suggesting that LSEs have a propensity to overgeneralise. In other words, they have a
tendency for negative outcomes to make salient other feelings of personal inadequacy (Brown & Dutton, 1995).

4.5: Self-Esteem Rhetoric Superseding its Substance

A major issue facing proponents and providers of adventure education and training courses is to convince prospective funding bodies to support their programmes. The Outward Bound Trust (OBT), as a major provider of AA programmes, publishes a range of marketing and promotional material in an attempt to establish the value of their interventions, vis-à-vis participation and beneficial outcomes. One such publication concerns an ‘Aimhigher’ adventure challenge programme (Appendix F) for able children suffering from multiple deprivation, designed to raise self-esteem and self-confidence as an intervention programme for higher education.

The OBT publish a yearly ‘Social Impact Report’, cataloguing a number of case studies, promoting the beneficial impacts of their programmes. One such case study (Appendix G) describes one child’s experiences of how the OB course has improved their self-esteem and self-confidence, enough to be able to address a bullying issue at school. A further case study (Appendix H) involving OB, in collaboration with HSBC Bank, working with disadvantaged school children who attended a seven day course followed by a three week course, reported a positive impact on their academic achievement, behaviour and attendance, in addition to improved self-esteem and self-confidence (OBT, 2009).

Two further case studies, one featuring ‘The Prince’s Trust’ (Appendix I) and the other involving a youth project (Appendix J) identify building self-esteem as a key outcome of OB courses, particularly for at-risk individuals.

Training organisations such as OB, as highlighted in these examples, purport that their programmes raise self-esteem. These claims are also typically expressed by individuals working in a range of AA, either delivering programmes designed to improve aspects of self-concept, or developing ‘hard skills’ such as climbing, navigation and fitness who have observed marked improvements in aspects of self-concept notably self-esteem and self-efficacy. These observations can be
regarded as intangible, they are a glimpse of or an attempt to capture a phenomenon that is ‘smoke-like’, evanescent and elusive.

Here lies the problem, advocates of AA programmes have a somewhat insecure understanding of what the outcomes of their programmes are, because of an inability to empirically measure and test their effects. In essence, the ability of AA programmes to deliver substantive outcomes, in terms of delivering improvements in self-esteem, is built on unsubstantiated foundations. These foundations are weak, principally because of the nature of self-esteem itself. Self-esteem, although one of the most widely studied constructs in the behavioural sciences, is the least understood (Leary & MacDonald, 2003). Self-esteem is a multi-factorial construct, used in different ways, by various theorists and researchers (Pyszczynski, 2006; Crocker, 2006, Mruk, 2006a). It is an ill-defined (Davies & Brember, 1995) complex construct (Kernis & Goldman, 2006) with a number of operational definitions (Cast & Burk, 2002).

Not only is self-esteem a complex multi-dimensional construct that is difficult to define, but also an elusive and difficult one to measure. There are validity issues, relating to an overreliance on fallible self-report measures in terms of respondent-bias (Beaumeister et al., 2005; 2003), together with a high correlation with depression (Emler, 2001).

It is under these constraints, that the need to demonstrate empirically the effectiveness of AA in raising self-esteem operates. Individuals, who work and research in this area, are aware that these programmes raise self-esteem and make a difference transforming people’s lives, but frustratingly, find it extremely difficult to demonstrate. In this sense, these interventions are based on weak empirical foundations. Some may argue, that in reality, all we can do is accept that self-esteem is such a difficult concept to address empirically and utilise in practice.

In these circumstances it is difficult to avoid taking a sceptical position, that would argue, whatever positive benefits that may emerge, because they cannot be verified empirically by way of objective methods, simply have little value and worth. Perhaps all we can do is accept this state of affairs as a problem that has
no solution and that empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of AA programmes is unlikely to materialise.

Conversely, there is also an argument not to disregard evidence acquired from interpretive subjective methods. To do so would consign AA intervention programmes based on a unique experiential learning approach capable of transforming people’s lives, into a state of irrelevance, simply because outcomes cannot be scientifically verified. Other outcomes, associated with positive shifts in self-esteem such as improved teamwork/relatedness and enjoyment, which are perhaps easier to measure, have emerged from the data collected by observation and interviews. These may add to our understanding of how the AA programme affects self-esteem.

4.6: Summary

Most AA programmes aim to improve self-concept, which is also supported by the literature (e.g., Hattie et al., 1997; Larson, 2007; Marsh et al., 1986a) and promoted by providers in their promotional information. The most important aspect of the self-concept, in the view of the UK Government, appears to be self-esteem. This is believed to confer a number of benefits that are perceived to address issues relating to social exclusion and anti-social behaviour *inter alia*.

Self-esteem is considered by a number of authorities to be a multi-faceted construct that includes both self-liking and self-confidence, comprising two distinct elements: an efficacy-based and a worth-based aspect of self-esteem. Possessing high self-esteem appears to be an important component of healthy psychological functioning and wellbeing and it also has an influence in terms of directing behaviour. The efficacy-based component is inclined to regulate behaviour, in terms of persistence and activation. Activation of behaviour tends to occur when individuals feel confident in their abilities. When they experience success in achieving their desired objectives, they are inclined to feel more competent, capable and in turn this is likely to perpetuate confidence and elevate self-esteem.
Experiencing success and mastery over their environment is a critical aspect that has a positive effect on self-esteem. AA are competence-based activities, many of which are both physically and psychologically demanding. These challenges elicit perceptions of danger, risk, uncertainty and novelty that elevate emotional states such as fear and anxiety. Fear and anxiety are formidable barriers that have to be overcome before success is experienced.

While many adventure activities can be technically and physically demanding beyond the scope of most individuals they can, nevertheless, be designed to bring challenges within the ability range of everyone, including individuals with special needs. Challenges must be presented at an appropriate level to ensure that all individuals can experience competence and mastery; however, a sufficient level of challenge should be provided to ensure success is only achievable through effort.
5.1: Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to navigate the research journey, charting the rationale for naturalistic, qualitative inquiry together with the research strategies relating to data collection, management and analysis, together with a general description of the intervention programmes under investigation. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) indicate that research design should be influenced by focusing on the nature of the research question: the purpose of the study, strategies employed to gain the information required to address the research question and how the researcher intends to approach the two critical issues of representation and legitimation. These authors suggest that the personal characteristics of the qualitative researcher also influences the research design, in that, all are philosophers who are guided by highly abstract principles.

These principles combine beliefs about ontology (What kind of being is the human being? What is the nature of reality?), epistemology (What is the relationship between the inquirer and the known?), and methodology (How do we know the world, or gain knowledge of it?). These beliefs shape how the qualitative researcher sees the world and acts in it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.22).

Quantitative research demands that the researcher take up an impersonal position of detachment from subjects, for fear of contaminating data. Conversely, ethnographic research presents a situation whereby the researcher ‘gets up close and personal’, forming somewhat intimate relationships with individuals to whom the research project is directed. Reflexivity and writing style are principal features of the pragmatic ‘hands-on’ approach ethnography offers. Rather than write in an impersonal, objective and distant style (as in the case of quantitative research); due to the centrality of the researcher within ethnographic research, I have begun and continue to write from a personal perspective. I nonetheless feel awkward and somewhat of a heretic writing in the first person (“I” or “me”) rather than in impersonal third person prose. Being reflexive and drawing attention to a lack of familiarity and initial clumsiness may be interpreted as an admission of weakness and ineptness rather than an honest appraisal of a novice ethnographer.
In this chapter, I intend to establish ethnographic research as a suitable proposition for the study of the perceived benefits from participation in AA. I will address the many issues relating to the concepts of axiology, epistemology, ontology and methodology relating to a constructivist paradigm, which I have chosen to employ, to underpin this study. What Denzin and Lincoln (2005) describe as a ‘net’, that also “may be termed a paradigm, or an interpretive framework, a basic set of beliefs” (p.22) which directs the research process. From this position, I will develop the more specific themes within the research design. This will then place me, as researcher, in the empirical world. It is through this process that I address the problem concerning the crisis of representation and legitimation.

Finally, I will comment upon the process and methods for collecting and analysing qualitative data. I also take heed of Charmaz and Mitchell’s (2001) advice that methods are only a means to an end and that “a keen eye, receptive mind, discerning ear and steady hand bring us close to the studied phenomena and are more important than developing methodological tools” (p.161). I outline and adopt, as my ‘methodological tools’, two standard ethnographic instruments for the collection of data, notably fieldwork observation and interview, in its various forms (open-ended, semi-structured and ad hoc conversation). I will explain how primary data from field observation is first written into field notes and then other formats of text, such as a field journal and personal memorandum, for analytical purposes, compiled by myself for myself as a functional feature of researcher reflexivity. Writing these texts initiates the analytical process, feeding into grounded theory by discovering emergent concepts that make sense of ‘what is going on’. In terms of the process of organising and managing data into themes and categories, my preference is for manual coding and indexing.
5.2: Ontological and Epistemological Issues Relating to Plausibility (Validity) and Dependability (Reliability)

Under this heading, I intend to analyse the bases of reality and knowledge within a constructivist paradigm and outline the construction of validity and reliability criteria for ethnography.

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005) all research is interpretive; in other words, research is guided by the researcher’s beliefs and feelings about the world. With regard to the four major interpretive paradigms of qualitative research identified by these authors, I adopt the constructivist-interpretive model.

The constructivist paradigm assumes a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent co-create understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures. Findings are usually presented in terms of the criteria of grounded theory... (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.24).

I take a phenomenological and subjective stance as opposed to an objective, deductive, positivistic paradigm that purports the ability to define absolutes from tangible measurements. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), phenomenology is defined as a complex system of ideas associated with the work of several scholars, one of whom is Schutz. Holstein and Gubrium (2005) state that Schutz is a social phenomenologist who “focuses on ways that the life world - the world every individual takes for granted - is experienced by its members” (p.485). Schutz considers that this subjective view of the world offers a guarantee of social reality, rather than some constructed fictional reality created by a scientific observer. Schutz argues that it is from this perspective that the scientific observer should view how the social world is made meaningful to those who experience it (Holstein & Gubrium, 2005). Briefly, phenomenology is a philosophical position, it emphasises a view of the world through the eyes of the individual, rather than an observer’s interpretation or analysis of the world (Gross, 2005). In essence, according to Schutz, phenomenology refers to human experience of a social reality.

A constructivist paradigm, rooted in symbolic interactionism, is a model that explains how individuals construct meaning and understanding of their worlds and experiences. In terms of this study, constructing meaning in the outdoor activity environment, I am concerned with a distinctive view of reality that the individual
holds that attempts to comprehend the social world, through the meanings and actions interpreted within a natural setting that involves a high degree of social interaction.

Constructivists have relativist ontology and a subjectivist epistemology (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). A relativist ontology, according to Smith and Deemer (2000), is one that rejects the absolutist claims by foundationalists to a ‘real’ reality that is ‘out there’ - citing Putnam (1981) these authors make clear that there is ‘no God’s eye point of view’ of reality, only the various points of view of individuals making claims to reality, “all we can have are ‘the various points of view of actual persons reflecting various interests and purposes that their descriptions and theories subserve’ (Putnam, 1981, p.50)” (p.880). According to Lincoln and Guba (2000), relativists adopt anti-foundational arguments that refuse to accept any permanent unvarying standards by which reality (truth) can be universally known. Contrary to foundationalist criteria for judging reality, such as rigorous application of testing protocols and methodology free from human contamination, relativists consider that reality can be validated by accepting community narratives. After all, anti-foundational arguments surrounding the validity of truth (reality) claims which “emphasise the social constructionist reality, fluid as opposed to fixed identities of the self and the partiality of all truths” (p.178). In terms of accepting community narratives

constructivists take their primary field of interest to be precisely that subjective and inter-subjective social knowledge and the active construction and co-creation of such knowledge by human agents that is produced by human consciousness (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.176).

The process by which reality can be ‘universally known’, what is ‘valid knowledge’, emanates from the members of a stake holding community (Lincoln, 1995). A non-absolutist position of reality is

derived from community consensus regarding what is “real,” what is useful, and what has meaning.... We believe that a goodly portion of social phenomena consist of the meaning-making activities of groups and individuals.... The meaning-making activities themselves are of central interest to constructivists, simply because it is the meaning-making/sense-making/attributional activities that shape action... (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p.167)
However, a commitment to ontological realism (in other words, there is a real world out there but independent of our knowledge of it) and at the same time acceptance of a constructivist epistemology (we can never know if we have depicted this real world as it really is) has presented a problem confronting the issue of relativism. There are no absolute truths, truth is relative to our own way of thinking and our cultural biases may prevent us from objectively observing the world. Critical realism may be viewed as a means of overcoming the problem of relativism.

Critical realists oppose logical positivist, relativist, and antifoundational epistemologies. Critical realists agree with positivists that there is a world of events out there that is observable and independent of human consciousness. They hold that knowledge about this world is socially constructed. (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.13)

Smith & Deemer (2000) express caution with regard to a total acceptance of relativism that would descend into a position where ‘all accounts are equal’ or where ‘anything goes’. Hammersley (1993) presents an alternative, thus avoiding this acceptance of relativism. He describes ethnography as being realist, suggesting that there is a reality independent of the researcher whose nature can be known, and that the aim of research is to produce accounts that correspond to that reality. After all, ethnography purports to get closer to social reality compared to other research paradigms. With this commitment to realism there is a conflicting commitment to a constructivist view of multiple realities, resulting in a relativism that is in conflict with ethnography’s commitment to realism. Hammersley states that this problematic contradiction can be resolved by adopting a more subtle form of realism. Hammersley (1993) presents the concept of subtle realism as an attempt to develop criteria for neorealist perspectives. Within this concept, the validity of knowledge (although there can never be absolute certainty concerning the validity of any knowledge claim) is based on an assessment criteria of plausibility and credibility. Plausibility refers to judgement based on whether a description is likely to be true given existing knowledge of it. Some claims are so plausible that they can be taken at face value, while other claims may require further evidence. Whereas credibility refers to concerns whether findings make sense, reliant upon the manner in which they are expressed to the reader.
In his bid to establish criteria for judging qualitative research, Hammersley (1993) accepts that plausibility and credibility are social judgements and, as such, are entangled within the hermeneutic circle (Smith & Deemer, 2000). The inquirer must grasp the complexity of intentions, beliefs and desires of the text, institutional context, practice, form of life, language game and so on (Schwandt, 2000). The hermeneutic circle draws upon an interpretive epistemology of understanding (*Verstehen*). *Verstehen* is a term that explains the complex process by which all of us in our everyday life interpret the meaning of our actions and those of others with whom we interact (Bernstein, 1976). This interpretive stance acknowledges that human action is inherently meaningful and, as such, the inquirer must address the notion of meaning by reconstructing the self-understanding of actors. In other words, coming to terms with documenting the process by which social reality is constructed. This interpretive practice engages with the individual’s conception of reality which

is centred both in how people methodically construct their experiences and their worlds and in the configurations of meaning and institutional life that informs and shapes their reality constituting activity (Gubrium & Holstein, 2000, p.488).

This hermeneutic act of interpretation is achieved by the embedded researcher making sense of what is being observed and grappling with discourse, *verbatim* texts putting together a story that communicates understanding of the empirical world of participants (Kincheloe & M’Laren, 2000). Schwandt (2000) suggests that there are several means by which understanding human action can be grasped: by ‘getting inside the actors head’ or ‘looking over their shoulder’, by indexicality and reflexivity and by language games (Schwandt, 2000).

Reflexivity is the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher and operates as a contemplative nexus to several facets of the human as instrument (Lincoln & Guda, 2000). For example, linkage involves the personal biography of the researcher (that constitutes their knowledge of the world), their ethical position (that guides action and formulates relationships with respondents) and connects them through the hermeneutic circle to the formulation of interpretation.
The natural setting is unique and idiosyncratic and no two researchers are the same in terms of taking “a singular mixture of presuppositions, personal penchants and past histories into the field, and these factors cannot help but colour interpretations made there” (Karp & Kendall, 2001, p.32). It is therefore unavoidable for the ethnographer not to take into the research process their personal values, interests and feelings. Acceptance of this inevitability confers on the ethnographer an awareness of personal feelings and biases that must be taken into account “in such a way that findings can be unaffected by social processes and personal characteristics” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.16). These authors suggest that the regular compilation of analytical notes and memos, as part of the analysis, can also be utilised as an internal dialogue in the process of reflexive monitoring - an act of recognising, challenging and documenting personal feelings and biases. In the act of writing ethnography there are reflexive devices, such as the construction of a second voice, for the researcher to “display publicly their history, values and assumptions” (King, 1996, p.176). Fine and colleagues (2000) issues a caveat - writing our reflexivities into the text creates a problem of balance, flooding the text with the experiences of the researcher holds the danger of potentially silencing participants.

5.3: Justifying the Research Design

According to Chambers (2000) the term ethnography has become synonymous with qualitative research, although not exclusively. Van Maanen (1988) informs us that there are multifarious forms of ethnography that include: confessional, realist, impressionistic, critical, formal, literary, analytic, grounded theory. In practical terms, to provide a definition of ethnography and how it is intended to be used in this investigation is succinctly put by Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) who provide a clear description of ethnography that encapsulates the thrust of this study:

In its most characteristic form it involves the ethnographer participating, overtly or covertly, in people's lives for an extended period of time watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions - in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995. p.1).
Rationalising the decision of undertaking an ethnographic study, within the context of AA, is governed by its appropriateness compared with other research paradigms. In this regard, ethnography is located in the ‘real world’, having the ability, through its methodology, to acquire meaningful and dependable data in perhaps a more efficient and effective manner, as opposed to other approaches.

A major concern undertaking a quantitative approach involves a lack of confidence with standard measurements. For example, in self-concept research the Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale (1965) is the most frequently used measure of self-esteem (Leary & Baumeister, 2000). Although being a favoured instrument, there are serious misgivings regarding the RSES in terms of its validity:

Instruments intended to measure self-esteem should not produce the same results as instruments intended to measure other qualities. Up to a point, self-esteem measures have little difficulty in satisfying this test. ... The difficulty arises with respect to qualities that appear on the surface to be similar to self-esteem. One of the most conspicuous examples is depression. Measures respectively of self-esteem and depression consistently produce similar results (Emler, 2001, p.10).

There are also concerns regarding the integrity of self-report measures (Baumeister et. al., 2003). Using self-esteem again, as an example, measuring this construct with self-report measures is problematic because of the difficulty accounting for respondent bias. According to these authors self-esteem is measured almost exclusively and unavoidably by self-reports and “people score high in self-esteem because they respond to a questionnaire by endorsing favourable statements about themselves” (p.7).

These concerns are perhaps sound arguments for taking an ethnographic approach to a study that will in some way touch upon aspects of the self-concept, in preference over traditional experimental and survey research methods. After all “one of the most valuable features of ethnography: its commitment to seeking to understand the perspectives of others, rather than judging them as true or false” (Hammersley 1993, p.45).

The final consideration taken in the decision to choose a research methodology is the overarching question that should draw the focus in terms of best fit for the inquiry. In other words, what is the most effective approach to determine
whether or not, for example, that the self-concept of participants is affected by the programme under study and, if so, what factors account for this. By undertaking an ethnographic investigation, the researcher is committed to a phenomenological approach, reliant upon an interpretive perspective that attempts to make sense of the ‘point of view’ of individuals in the natural setting, by making their words about lived experience directly accessible to the reader.

5.4: Strategies and Directions to Naturalistic Inquiry

Lincoln & Guba (1985) outline fourteen operational characteristics that serve as navigational points, which underpin qualitative research. I intend to focus on some of these, to establish the research design in operational matters that will form the foundations on which this study is constructed and the techniques used in data collection and analysis.

5.4.1: The Natural Setting

It is my intention to collect data to establish an appreciation of the processes at play that may account for the outcomes emerging from participation in AA. An ethnographic study by definition is located in the ‘field’. It is in the ‘natural setting’ that I intend to deploy appropriate instruments for data collection including field observation and non-directed open-ended interviews. This involves drawing upon the authority of the subjects, from which responses will reflect a variety of experiences, beliefs, feelings and thoughts on how they feel about themselves. A phenomenological approach will allow me to focus upon events, interactions and occurrences encountered by the individuals in their everyday lives. In other words, to observe and report on the phenomenal world of my subjects, a reality that appears to them as a result of their own experiences and understanding of that life world. From these data, I can make an interpretation of the experiences from the individual’s perspective, attempting to establish the processes by which, for example, self-concept may have been influenced through participation in the programmes under study.
5.4.2: The Human Instrument

As a research instrument, my primary mode of data collection is observer based field notes and non-directed interviews, aided by spontaneous informal conversations and analytical notes.

I have adopted a comparatively detached critical stance as observer-participant in order to maintain a fairly marginal position, allowing access to participants, but at the same time ensuring that I avoid over involvement with subjects. This statement appears to contradict an earlier claim of being ‘somewhat intimate’ with participants and therefore requires further clarification. Acting as the research tool the ethnographer is required to become involved as both a participant and observer of the world of their subjects. The level of engagement and detachment involves a judgement of balance between participant and observer, the degree of which is based on the individual ethnographer’s evaluation of their experience and capabilities to be both involved, but at the same to maintain an analytical detachment. This consideration is particularly sensible for the novice ethnographer where a marginally detached position offers a ‘breathing space’ to record and reflect upon the events unfolding. Rock (2005) has attempted to address the issue of balancing and blending the two “roles of participant - learning the experiential world from within - and observer - analysing it from without” (p.32). Rock, quoting Powdermaker (1966), equates the duality of roles between participant and observer as that of ‘stranger and friend’. He states that the process

hinges on participant observation: ‘participant’ because it is only by attempting to enter the symbolic life world of others that one can ascertain the subjective logic on which it is built and feel, hear and see a little of social life as one’s subjects do, but ‘observer’ because one’s purposes are always ultimately distinct and objectifying. As an observer one tries to stand back and analyse (Rock, 2005, p.32).

During observation periods I have endeavoured to be as unobtrusive as possible, blending into the background. The process of writing notes during actual involvement (albeit only partial involvement) has on most occasions proved difficult. More often than not I have relied upon bullet points, key words and
hastily jotted down short extracts of dialogue. From these brief notes and with, on occasions, the aid of photographs, I have attempted to reconstruct, as accurately as possible, detailed accounts of events. This being my first encounter with ethnographic work, the experience at first has been overwhelming. The scene one is confronted with is full of continuous and unrelenting action. Within this fast moving drama it has proven to be difficult sometimes to discern what is relevant and what is not. There is also the fear of missing vital information, from being distracted by less relevant occurrences. After a few incursions into the ‘field’, I became more relaxed and focused, but also aware that

one can never record everything; social scenes are truly inexhaustible in this sense. Some selection has to be made... (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995, pp.179-80).

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995) make the point that interviewing is an effective means of getting at data that may be otherwise difficult to obtain, if not impossible to access. There is also an element of synergy between participant observation and interviews, as the data from both sources can be helpful in illuminating the other, “what people say in interviews can lead us to see things differently in observation” (p.132).

The interview style that I employ is non-directed, beginning with broad open-ended questions such as, “Tell me about the programme you are on?” This open-ended, almost conversational, approach gives ample opportunity for subjects to express their unique experiences in their own terms. However, at the same time, there is a need to concentrate on the research question:

ethnographic interviews are closer in character to conversations than are survey interviews .... They are never simple conversations because the ethnographer has a research agenda and must retain some control over the proceedings (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.152).

There is no doubt that a conversational style allows the interview to flow in a more natural way. Although interviews are open-ended, I do not intend to restrict myself in this regard. Flexibility is necessary, on occasions, during the same interview. Flexibility provides an opportunity to ‘think on one’s feet’, eliciting interview flexibility, by putting forward apposite and pertinent, probing questions, in response to what has been stated by the respondent, facilitating a deeper
insight into the research topic (Patton, 1990). Directed questions are more appropriate during a second or third interview with the same respondent, where I shall use them to probe specific themes:

Interviewing in ethnography is by no means always non-directive. Often one may wish to test hypothesis arising from the developing analysis and here quite directive and specific questions can be required (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.154).

Interviews will be transcribed into verbatim transcripts and will feature as a main form of data collection. This data collection technique lends itself to a high degree of flexibility. The purpose and suitability of this data gathering procedure is to penetrate, as deeply as possible, aspects relating to the experiences of participants. Through the process of analysing verbatim transcripts, I will access personal perspectives. Each subject will provide personal information by telling a unique story. Personal knowledge and experience will vary greatly between subjects, however, I anticipate common threads will emerge.

5.4.3: Utilisation of Tacit Knowledge

I will legitimately bring to the study my own knowledge and experiences of training in the outdoors, from my past experience of the military and corporate management training. This acknowledges the powerful training and educational environment that the outdoors offers. Rather than deny this experiential knowledge, I will seek to express it. “Equally important is the utilisation of experiential data, which consists not only of analyst’s technical knowledge and experience derived from research, but also their personal experiences” (Strauss, 1987 p.11). I intend to reflect critically upon this biography during each phase of the research process. However, the reader should be aware of this and will be better placed to judge biases and better equipped to interpret findings.

I am fully aware of my personal biography in terms of life experiences, training and operating in extreme environments throughout the world, experiencing uncertainty and danger but also experiencing achievement, satisfaction and recognising these in others as they overcome personal and team challenges, comradeship and a sense of unity working towards specific goals. Not only have I
experienced the effects of the physicality of outdoor training but have also been part of training teams where I have witnessed the effects of outdoor training on others, observing individuals develop skill, knowledge, physical endurance, but also to notice the subsequent effects on their self-concept in terms of efficacy and esteem.

Whilst working for a security company I was tasked, along with a colleague, to design and deliver a series of OMD training programmes in leadership for two groups of employees at managerial and executive levels within a leading UK company. This group was comprised mainly of individuals who had little previous experience of outdoor experiential training and in this sense these individuals were placed well outside their comfort zone. The effects of this training were remarkable in terms of achieving its training objectives in such a short period of time.

On a further occasion I was involved in the pilot of the Army Preparation Course (APC); an initiative developed by the Army to resolve the problems involved in young recruits joining and dropping out of basic training at considerable cost to the tax payer. The programme relied upon physical training and adventure education delivered by myself and personnel from the Armed Forces Careers Office (army) and the Army Youth Training Team. The youth engaged in this programme had been selected at interview by AFCO staff on the basis that they lacked self-confidence and maturity to enter the Army and begin basic training. During the three months’ training programme these individuals developed remarkably in their ability to work as part of a team. They achieved high levels of physical fitness and improved self-confidence. Information coming from the Infantry Training Centre, Catterick reported that among APC recruits the attrition rate was negligible. The APC intervention was regarded by the Army as a particularly effective programme.

As a participant and witness to the power of experiential learning through personal and group challenges, I recognise that I have a favourable disposition towards adventure training activities and consequently must ensure that this positive stance is kept in check. I therefore intend to reflect critically upon this biography during each phase of the research process. However, the reader should be aware
of this and will be better placed to judge biases and better equipped to interpret findings.

5.4.4: Inductive Data Analysis

Non-directed interview and field observations will be both inductive and explanatory. Inductive in the sense that it involves a reasoning process by which data is accumulated, examined, explanations presented and theories developed in response to the data. The process begins with description, progressing towards an explanation, of the features emanating from personal accounts, of how the individual has been affected by their participation in the programme that utilises AA as a medium for personal development. Qualitative data from both observations and interview transcripts are overwhelming objects, as a consequence of their copious volume attributable to their flexible collecting method. Nonetheless, a structured approach to data management and analysis is required to achieve respectability (usefulness) and trustworthiness.

Although there is no correct way of analysing qualitative data, it is essential that qualitative researchers provide a detailed description of the procedures, decision criteria and data manipulation that allows them to present the final results. (Cote et al., 1993 p.128)

The first stage in data organisation entails transcribing the raw data from audio cassette into written *verbatim* text. It is then necessary to apply a reduction process, in order to reduce the amount of data and obtain a unified picture of the phenomena under study. This is achieved by inductive analysis: reading the transcripts several times to become familiar with the text. This will also help define the basic units of analysis, which involves identifying quotes from the transcripts that represent the participant’s views of the AA experience. Each quotation is a statement, made by the subject, that is self-definable and self-delimiting in the expression of a single, recognisable aspect of the subject’s experience. Themes and categories will emerge from quotations. This process begins with clustering the quotes around underlying uniformities that are common threads, which become emergent themes. Clustering involves comparing and contrasting each quote with all other quotes and emergent themes, to unite with similar meaning and to separate quotes with different meanings. This inductive
process builds upon itself. The same comparing and contrasting procedures identify new higher level themes. The analysis continues building upwards until it is not possible to locate further underlying uniformities, to create a higher theme level. Each higher level theme becomes more analytical and interpretative. I intend to approach this in a four stage process, establishing a data index according to categories based on questions, as described by Tesch (1990) and Patton (1980).

1. Tagging text segments and organising into categories (coding).
2. Cutting and pasting common text segments arranging them together in one place (category) representing one “pool of meaning.”
3. Data reduction-emergence of sub themes.
4. Applying a propositional statement.

Employing inductive analysis will facilitate certain characteristics to emerge from the data (Appendices L–O). With specific reference to this study, inferences that emerge from the data will describe how the individual may be affected through involvement in outdoor adventure. I will adopt Charmaz’s (2001) interpretive-constructionist version of grounded theory, as a means of rigorous interpretation and understanding of the meanings of the participant’s experiences of their life worlds. This approach, offers an emerging and systematic inductive account for the collection and analysis of data into theoretical frameworks that explain the empirical data collected. Through this process, I intend to become ever more situated in the data, identifying categories which develop into concepts that fuel a cycle of further in-depth data collection, funnelling data into an ever more focused understanding.

The strategies within this constructivist approach to grounded theory include:

(a) simultaneous collection and analysis of data; (b) a two-step data coding process; (c) comparative methods; (d) memo writing aimed at the construction of conceptual analysis; (e) sampling to refine the researcher’s emerging theoretical ideas; and (f) integration of the theoretical framework (Charmaz, 2000, pp.510-511).

Charmaz, in her text, clearly and succinctly provides an easy to follow exposition, detailing the process involved in each of the six above. I intend to approach line-by-line open coding and the organisation/reorganisation of segmented text by means of physical coding into categories. I intend to make multiple copies of texts, segmenting them into coded themes and placing them under the various categories to which I consider them relevant. It is the act of the manual
organisation of data that breeds familiarity ‘getting closer to the text’, which I believe will facilitate a more effective means of ‘working’ the data. As indicated above, my preference is for the manual manipulation of the data, “conceptually speaking, the task of coding for micro computing applications is no different from manual techniques for identifying and retrieving chunks of data” (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995, p.198).

5.5: Ethical Considerations

We are reminded that in a qualitative research design, the researcher is required “to become the research instrument” (Janesick, 2000, p.386). In terms of ethnography, this means that the researcher is involved in making observations and conducting one-on-one interviews and, as such, we become interveners in the world of our participants and this intervention carries ethical and moral responsibilities.

Adherence to an ethical code acts as a guideline for this intervention, ensuring moral and ethical propriety by implementing “informed consent, non-deception, the avoidance of psychological harm, privacy and confidentiality and a commitment to collecting and presenting reliable and empirical material” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p.33)

I have provided an informed consent form (Appendix K) for each participant which will offer them a degree of protection and control. In-depth, one-to-one interviews are highly personal situations that ‘have a life of their own’. As a consequence of the sensitive and unpredictable nature of interviews respondents must be aware that they are not obliged to answer any question they feel to be inappropriate and are able to terminate the interview, if they so wish. Participants are also informed of anonymity and confidentiality. Participants have been assigned pseudonyms and the research location has been protected. Apart from the ethical issues of confidentiality and anonymity, protecting the individual’s identity from “risk of exposure and embarrassment, loss of standing, employment and self-esteem” (Stake, 2000, p.459) is also a practical consideration. It is reasonable to assume that if a respondent believes that their
anonymity will be guarded and maintained, then their responses are more likely to be candid and informative, than would otherwise be the case. However, I have experienced one dilemma regarding protection of identity. During observational fieldwork, I take pictures for the purpose of assisting me in more accurate writing of field notes. Taking photographs is quite a common occurrence, instructors and programme staff were constantly doing so for portfolio building evidence. I have included some photographs in this text (with the permission of those involved) in order to emphasise the procedures that I have used during fieldwork and also to provide the reader with an indication as to the nature of some activities undertaken by participants. I deemed it appropriate to include these photographs, as the wearing of equipment obscured the individual’s identity.

Informed consent forms were distributed through YOT team leader and by the Pathways to Employment co-ordinator to parents/guardians of participants. I was informed by the YOT management that I could not make a direct request to the parents of YOT participants, but rather these individuals would be approached by the YOT team leader. With regard to the Pathways programme I was given the option of writing directly to parents/guardian or alternatively, Simon (staff member) would approach parents/guardians on my behalf. After a discussion with Simon, it was agreed that it would be more effective for Simon to make a personal approach to gain consent. Following distribution of informed consent by programme staff, duly completed forms were returned prior to arranging interviews with respondents. The YOT team leader requested that the informed consent form (Appendix K) be amended to a simplified version specific for YOT parents/guardians (Appendix K).

Prior to my involvement in both YOT and Pathways programmes, I was requested to undertake a criminal records bureau (CRB) check before permission to proceed with the research project would be given; a CRB check was duly undertaken and a certificate was presented. This was photocopied and permission to undertake the research was granted.

With regards to the JobMatch programme, I was requested by the outdoor education team leader to address the participants during the initial administrative session held on the morning of the first day. During this I explained my presence
and made a request for their support and assistance in the research by granting permission for me to conduct interviews with them. If they were willing, they were requested to complete the informed consent form placed, with a number of other forms, in the document wallet given to them by the outdoor education training team. I suggested that if anyone had concerns or questions regarding any aspects of consent then they could approach me during the next break. There were no approaches for further information and informed consent forms, from all participants on both climbing programmes, were duly completed and returned.

The only verbal data presented in this investigation has been obtained from participants who have given their consent. On one occasion, reference has been made to the behaviour and attitude of one individual whose consent was not given. However, as this inclusion does not refer to dialogue but rather to a specific occasion in which this individual was involved, along with others whose consent had been granted, has remained included within the text of this study. Making a moral judgement, I believe the ethical grounds for including this data is sound taking into consideration its usefulness weighed against the possibility of doing harm and ensuring the individual’s identity is guarded.

In terms of honesty and disclosure, I have made the reason for my presence open and clear. I have introduced myself to participants as a researcher and observer of their outdoor activities. This will also include taking part and talking to them and later, with their permission, conducting interviews to ‘find out’ what they think about their outdoor activity experience. In this respect, observations have been overt, avoiding the obvious ethical issues associated with covert surveillance. In the early stages of fieldwork, some participants did question why I was writing notes and asked if I was some kind of inspector. All responses to this type of question have been met with honest answers. I consider an honest approach on my part will reciprocate honesty and frankness on the part of participants. I wholeheartedly agree with Heyl’s (2001) guidance for conducting ethnographic research, that is to establish “respectful, on-going relationships with interviewees, including enough rapport for there to be a genuine exchange of views and enough time and openness in the interviews to explore purposefully, with the researcher, the meaning they place on events in their worlds” (p.369).
5.6: Programme Profiles

This study features three social inclusion programmes located in one of the most socially and economically deprived unitary authorities in the United Kingdom, where a large proportion of the population is disadvantaged, based on a multiple deprivation index covering seven domains: income, unemployment, health, education, housing, access, child poverty (National Assembly for Wales 2001). It is low income and high unemployment that perpetuate a number of associated problems that include: poor health, low education attainment and higher levels of criminal activity. Deviant behaviour manifests itself in a number of antisocial activities that include: substance abuse, violence, emotional disturbance, vandalism and other forms of delinquency.

5.6.1: Programme One: Pathways to Employment Project.

The community in which the Pathways to Employment Project is located is being supported by a number of community regeneration initiatives, administered and managed by a development ‘Trust’ that is principally concerned with combating social exclusion. The ‘Trust’ is responsible for the allocation of funds from the European Social Fund, Welsh Government, Communities First, The Coalfields Regeneration Trust, Local Authority and the National Lottery. The ‘Trust’ is community centred, it is made up of representatives from the community empowered to oversee the strategic management of the ‘Trust’, along with professional officers and support employees, many of whom are local residents delivering its programmes and projects. There are in excess of twenty programmes and projects operated by the development Trust, ranging from youth clubs to over fifties clubs, offering a wide range of activities; a range of initiatives which offer a variety of activities some of which include: cooking courses, smoking cessation, healthy lifestyles, job club and education programmes, offering an opportunity to gain a range of formal qualifications.
Projects and programmes are delivered at a number of localities within the community area, such as an information centre, youth centre, family centre, community centre and an education/training centre, together with several secondary schools and a number of junior schools offering their specialist facilities such as dance studio, theatre, sports hall, swimming pool, IT suites and libraries. The establishment of ‘community focused’ schools demonstrates a commitment, by the local authority, to provide facilities to deliver and develop health, education and cultural programmes to the wider community.

The Adult Community Learning Service provides education and training outside traditional education services, which implements the lifelong learning strategy for the local authority. The principal motivation underpinning education and training programmes appears to be focused on improving community health and enhancing the individual’s prospects for employment, to inspire active citizenship, thus contributing to social justice by combating social exclusion and hopefully producing better informed and more active citizens.

The Pathways to Employment Project (not its true name) is one of several situated in and operated from the Community Education & Training Centre. The project’s raison d’être is to help sixteen to eighteen year old individuals, who have left school with little or no qualifications, gain the skills necessary to further their employment prospects. The project aims to assist these individuals in this process by providing the opportunity to obtain a BTEC Entry Level qualification in Arts and Crafts, together with identifying deficiencies in basic skills, but also to raise their aspirations and self-confidence. In essence, this programme is designed to build bridges from disaffection, through personal development, to employment and to prevent these young people from entering the benefit trap. There is a well-defined progression, with some individuals progressing to placement (unpaid work experience where the individual receives financial support from the programme); training and education; Prince of Wales Trust; and employment. The programme is very successful in achieving positive outcomes with approximately 75% of programme participants moving into one of the aforementioned outcomes. From 2005 - 2008 significant funding in excess of £1 million was secured from the European Social Fund, now until 2010 funding has been secured from Convergence
Funding (Welsh Government). The project is assisted and supported by a number of agencies and partners, these include the Youth Offending Team, Youth Inclusion Programme, Social Services and Special Education Needs Unit set up to accommodate expelled students from local authority schools.

The project initially developed a range of activities for young people to participate in and provided an incentive of £50.00 a week training allowance for their attendance. The activities were based around confidence building and motivation. Confidence building and motivation remain a priority in terms of personal development, but now an educational element is included as an entry route into formal education and training.

The staffing structure of the programme is illustrated in Figure 5.1 below. The day-to-day planning and administration of the project is the responsibility of the project co-ordinator, but it is the three support workers and the tutors, in arts and crafts and outdoor education, who bring a range of experience and expertise to the project. The project provides the opportunity to experience a wide range of outdoor education activities from daily involvement in: canoeing, climbing, hill walking, sailing, mountain biking, abseiling, gorge walking, caving and high ropes confidence course, to residential courses, on an ocean going sailing barque and at outdoor education centres (Outward Bound). The Community Education & Training Centre has a full-time outdoor education staff, comprising of an outdoor education co-ordinator and outdoor education instructor. In addition to this staffing, the project has access to a number of freelance outdoor education instructors and specialists. Over the years that I have been studying this project, there has been a dramatic shift in emphasis. At the beginning of my involvement, outdoor education activities were arranged in a casual manner with fun as its principal objective. The emphasis now is very much placed on learning through the outdoors that incorporates a more purposeful approach to all outdoor activity.
Participants in this programme were pleasant individuals who got along well with each other behaving in a cooperative manner. Behaviour was generally good, although verbal communication was accompanied by some choice expletives, particularly in excitable circumstances. Inappropriate language was immediately challenged by staff members with comments such as “language please”, which was more often than not followed by an apology. I was informed by the programme co-ordinator that many of their individual issues had their origins in a lack of success at school that resulted in poor educational performance, lack of self-confidence and little life direction. Some had been involved with drugs and confrontation with authority figures, particularly at school. From my own observations, the most obvious personal attribute was a lack of self-confidence.

During the period of observing participation in AA from the summers of 2006 and 2007 there were sixteen individuals attending the programme, five females and eleven males ranging from sixteen to eighteen years of age. The duration spent on the programme varied between three to eighteen months depending on individual needs and outcomes. Some would leave after three months to enter employment or education, whereas others that needed more support remained for longer periods. Interview data was collected on 10 participants, 2 females and 8 males.
5.6.1.1: Ethics

Approval for conducting interviews was approached through the programme co-ordinator, although I did make an appeal for their cooperation. Informed consent forms were duly signed with parental/guardian approval, this was arranged by the programme staff prior to conducting formal interviews.

5.6.2: Programme Two: Youth Offending Team.

The Youth Justice System has undergone a major change post publication of the report, ‘Misspent Youth’, in 1996. This report, published by the Audit Commission, found that the existing system for dealing with youth crime was both inefficient and expensive. Following the report, a radical overhaul of the Youth Justice System was undertaken in 1999, with the establishment of the Youth Justice Board (a non-departmental public body composed of the police, youth courts, youth custodial institutions and youth offending teams) set up to monitor the operation of the Youth Justice System.

The Youth Justice System has two principal objectives: First, to prevent young people offending and second, to prevent re-offending. The Youth Offending Team (YOT) is tasked by the Youth Justice Board to fulfil both these objectives. The YOT was created as part of this overhaul of the youth justice system. It is a multi-agency team, established at a local level to co-ordinate the provision of the Youth Justice System. There are 155 YOTS throughout England and Wales (total of 18 in Wales), one for every upper tier local authority.

When arrested by the police a young offender enters the Youth Justice System. If the offence is minor a pre-court intervention process will follow if the young person admits responsibility for the offence. If they have no previous convictions they will be issued with a reprimand by the police and for a second offence they can be issued with a final warning only if the offence is minor. If the individual continues to persist in criminal behaviour, ultimately this will lead to charges and appearance at a youth court. The process is progressive, for example, 1st offence
The Youth Justice System provides a range of alternative actions over the former police cautioning system, these are illustrated in Figure 5.2. The YOT programme observed in this study consists of individuals who have either been arrested for minor offences or antisocial behaviour and who have been referred to the YOT by the police, rather than be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service, to be put before the Court. For behaving anti-socially and committing minor offences, young offenders who admit guilt can be dealt with by the police and local authority outside the court system. For some, this is a chastening experience and is effective in preventing further misdemeanours.

The following actions are available to the police and local authority to deal with offending youth as an alternative to being sucked into the Youth Justice System: Reprimand, Final Warning and Acceptable Behaviour Contract. A reprimand is a formal verbal warning given by the police, which more often than not results in being referred to the YOT to take part in a voluntary programme, in order to address the offending behaviour. A final warning is more serious, this involves a formal verbal warning issued by the police, but in this instance the offender is assessed by the YOT to determine the causes of the offending behaviour and to undergo an intervention programme to address the offending behaviour. The local authority and YOT issue Acceptable Behaviour Contracts to individuals who have been identified as behaving anti-socially. The offender and their parents/guardian agree to undertake a contract to address the anti-social behaviour. The individuals involved in the YOT programme are on reprimand and final warning.
Young offenders referred to the YOT are given a comprehensive assessment known as ASSET, as a first step towards addressing the offending behaviour. ASSET is a national assessment which involves the compilation of a detailed profile of the young offender, providing information on the causes and risk factors associated with the individual’s offending behaviour and how best to address it. Within the YOT assessment process, young offenders are continually assessed to monitor progress, measure the effectiveness of intervention and predict the likelihood of re-offending. Based on information provided by ASSET, an intervention programme will follow dependent on the individual’s needs. Intervention varies, some comprise a single session on the consequences of offending, while others extend over an undetermined period covering a range of topics such as drug and alcohol awareness, sexual health, offending behaviour courses, anger management and interpersonal skills training.

A general description of information from YOT staff of the individuals involved in the YOT programme under study are that they comprise of a disparate group; many of them share a variety of problems that are at the heart of their anti-social behaviour. These factors include: family problems such as single parent family, parent or parents dependent on alcohol and/or controlled substances, parents with mental health problems, family members (and peers) who are known to the police, low educational attainment, disruptive behaviour at school, high absenteeism from school and poverty.
As illustrated in Figure 5.3, the YOT is a multi-agency partnership comprising practitioners from police, social services, probation, education and health. It was established to co-ordinate effectively between criminal justice and local authority children’s services. YOTs are accountable to their partner agencies for addressing the behaviour of young offenders by assessing the risks, needs and circumstances of individuals within the Youth Justice System, delivering a variety of intervention programmes that include a range of outdoor adventure training (Appendix D) to combat re-offending.

A number of YOT personnel are engaged in outdoor activities, these include youth justice staff, police liaison officer, social worker, ASBO officer, volunteers and support staff. All outdoor/adventure activities are under the management and control of specialist outdoor education instructors, who are sometimes employed by centres of the organised activity.

The participants involved in the YOT programme were a mixed group in terms of their behaviour and attitudes. Some individuals were similar to those engaged in the pathways programme who were generally well behaved, appreciative, but lacked self-confidence; whereas others were extremely irritating, petulant, badly behaved and one or two were particularly unpleasant. I have included the following field note extract to demonstrate the unacceptable behaviour and attitude occasionally displayed -

\[\text{Figure 5.3: Staffing Structure and Multi-Agency Representation on the Youth Offending Team}\]
Suddenly, a fracas broke out between a boy (Damian) whom I had not seen before and a girl who had been involved in most of the activity days I had observed up to this time. Although there was no physical contact between these individuals only shouting, name calling and a lot of physical gestures nonetheless it was quite an unpleasant exhibition. Douglas and Clive reacted very quickly to interject. Douglas addressed the boy and Clive and Sharon (a female support worker) escorted the girl away in a very protective manner, she was crying and very upset. ...

... I jogged up to Douglas, it was a good opportunity to ask a few questions about the scene that I had witnessed. Douglas mentioned that Damian had made some derogatory remark about the girl’s mother; he went on to inform me that Damian was a particularly unpleasant individual, in Douglas’ words, “full of himself, arrogant, self-centred, verbally aggressive but lacked physical courage... you might have noticed the way he’s dressed top of the range trainers and designer clothes, a big contrast to the others, the father is a major drugs dealer in the community there’s no shortage of money there”. I asked Douglas whether he thought Damian had low or high self-esteem. On hearing this a wry smile and a sigh broke out followed by, “There’s nothing wrong with his self-esteem, he thinks he’s bloody marvellous and the rest of us are irksome idiots”...

This type of unacceptable behaviour was not an isolated example during some activities, later during the same activity the behaviour became so problematic that the training team from a local outdoor education centre terminated the activity on health and safety grounds. There were a few occasions, usually involving larger numbers during activities such as the canoeing and raft building (n=16) and gorge walking (n=12) that behaviour was a major concern. During episodes of poor behaviour the offending culprit was usually escorted from the activity and took no further part with early transportation home. Some activities such as mountain biking involved relatively small numbers between 5 to 6 participants, there was a policy of segregation described by Douglas as a means of separating certain individuals with a history of reciprocal hostility or mutually disruptive behaviour. Put simply, some individuals could not be on the same activity together because of the likelihood of aggression, whilst others when together incited each other to cause disruption.
5.6.2.1: Ethics

Approval for conducting interviews was assisted by Douglas who arranged parents/guardians on my behalf. Douglas requested that I amend the informed consent illustrated in Appendix K to a simple version specifically for the YOT programme. These were duly returned by 9 male participants who responded positively to the request and formal interviews were conducted.

5.6.3: Programme Three: JobMatch

JobMatch is a Welsh and UK Government initiative backed by the Local Authority, under the directorate of the Department of Works and Pensions, to re-engage significant numbers of long-term unemployed, who account for one in three of people of working age living in the Heads of the Valleys region. This will be achieved by removing barriers to employment, by providing support with training and gaining new qualifications, linking people with suitable job opportunities and to also encourage self-employment. It is hoped that this initiative will stimulate regeneration, economic growth and environmental improvement by increasing the number of people into work. In other words, JobMatch is a strategic project which aims to assist unemployed individuals into employment, self-employment or into further and higher education, by addressing the issues relating to low economic inactivity, low income, low skills levels and low academic performance. JobMatch secured £38 million funding and was commissioned to assist 10,000 people from the region into work by 2010.

The establishment of JobMatch in the Heads of the Valleys region was initiated by an application to the European Social Fund and was subsequently approved by the Welsh European Funding Office in 2003, commencing in 2004. Initially the JobMatch project only operated in the Blaenau Gwent area from 2004 until 2007, at which point it was expanded over the entire Heads of the Valleys region. It was under the directorship of the Valley Employment Consortium with its partners: Local Authorities, Jobcentre Plus, Department for the Economy and Transport, Department for Enterprise, Innovation and Networks, Working Links and Careers Wales.
The Local Authority is the host organisation of the JobMatch project, one of several host organisations located within the region which falls under the direction of the Project Central Office. There are several divisions within JobMatch, as illustrated in Figure 5.4. The division of JobMatch under study in this investigation is the Employment Route Team, concerned with clients who have multiple barriers to employment.

![Figure 5.4: Structure of JobMatch Project](image)

The Employment Routes Team is responsible for those who need extra support and who have additional barriers to employment, identified at interview and assessment phases. Additional barriers are mapped against the Welsh Government’s (WG) criteria for multiple barriers to employment. These include: low academic achievement (basic skills deficit), ex-military personnel, criminal record, drug and/or alcohol dependency. The Employment Routes Team is responsible for improving the individual’s basic skills in numeracy and literacy, with the aim of preparing the individual to gain sustainable employment. During the client’s engagement with the Employment Routes Team, they are encouraged to apply for employment and at the same time receive support and guidance in such matters as the completion of application forms and interview skills.

Clients engaged in JobMatch receive the national minimum wage of £5.80 (≥ 22 years), or £4.83 (18-21 years) commencing at the foundation phase of the
programme, together with a £1,000.00 support and training allowance, in addition to the training received at the foundation phase.

Clients are able to progress through a number of employment routes, depending on individual needs. Employment routes are created by the JobMatch team, based on and responding to local demands for employment. For example, a number of new leisure facilities have recently been built within the local authority area and the leisure and tourism route under study was created in response to potential demand for employment in this sector. In 2009-10, JobMatch was offering two employment routes: one in construction and the other in administration and consumer services. Routes have varying lengths of duration, the maximum is twelve months but most fall within a six to nine month period, depending on client needs.

JobMatch has chosen an intensive five-day climbing and ropes course. However, this AA is simply used as a means of selection, rather than for any personal development outcomes. A selection process is initiated because the programme is oversubscribed and is viewed as a means of reducing twenty-five applicants to fifteen. In conversation with one of the host co-ordinators, she recognises the importance and utility of the climbing course as a means of team building and personal development, also recognising that her active involvement in the climbing course, along with her clients, had cemented a good working relationship with them for the duration of the programme. However, this is not the official view. The climbing course is administered and delivered by the Local Authority through the Outdoor Learning Co-ordinator and his team of outdoor education specialists and is conducted at an indoor climbing facility. In essence, the outdoor learning co-ordinator assists the Employment Routes Team (Figure 5.5) in the process of client selection.

![Figure 5.5: Staffing Structure of JobMatch](image-url)
Following the selection and review process the JobMatch programme commences in earnest with the foundation phase, this is where paid employment begins. During this phase, clients are involved in a number of courses and training that provide underpinning qualifications for employment in their chosen sector: health and safety, first aid and customer services. Clients’ progress to the intermediate phase involves work placement, with a host employer, where opportunities of acquiring sector specific NVQs are offered. During this phase the JobMatch host co-ordinator meets with clients once a month by visiting the work place to check progress, to address any problems and identify extra training needs. This is part of the function of the Employment Routes Team, to act in a human resource management capacity together with the Local Authority’s human resource department. Following the intermediate phase is the exit phase, here clients evaluate their experiences, an exit interview is conducted and an action plan for their future career development is formulated. All necessary paperwork is transferred to the Employment Liaison Team, which takes on client responsibility. The Employment Liaison Team offer a further twelve months mentoring and support.

JobMatch held two climbing and ropes courses one in September 2009 comprising 14 participants (12 male and 2 female) and the second held in July 2010 comprising 19 participants (17 male and 2 female), with an age range from 18 to 50 years. Participants were long term unemployed, described as having generally low academic skills and low in self-confidence. Climbing was a new experience for 28 of the participants, with two having previous experience whilst in the army and a third had been on a previous climbing course. Physical activity levels were generally low. Four individuals engaged in sport and exercise; there were two currently playing rugby for local teams, one playing evening league five-a-side soccer and the fourth participating in body building competitions.

No activity was conducted on the first day which was dedicated to administrative duties. I was introduced to the groups at this point by Robin (the lead instructor) as a researcher investigating the value of climbing on participants in the JobMatch programme and would very much appreciate their views on the forthcoming programme.
5.6.3.1: Ethics

On the first day I spoke briefly about the interviews which I was hoping to conduct on the last day of the programme and requested that if they would like to assist in the research they should complete the informed consent together with the questionnaire (Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale) that they would find amongst the documents in their folders. All participants duly consented and completed the RSES and returned them to their folders for collection.

On the first day the principal considerations of the adventure training team, realising that the majority of individuals were inexperienced and subsequently anxious about the programme, was very much concerned with putting participants at ease. Robin and Rory covered in detail what was involved and emphasised frequently that they would only participate at their level and would not be coerced into performing any activity they chose not to undertake.
Chapter 6: 
Pathways to Employment and YOT Programmes: 
Evaluation of Outcomes

6.1: Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine observational and interview data collected from the Pathways to Employment and YOT programmes for at-risk populations participating in these two programmes; adventure activities are used as part of their training provision. Each programme has its specific aims and objectives. The YOT’s principal aim is to prevent young people who are at-risk of offending from doing so and preventing those who have offended from re-offending. The Pathways programme is concerned with combating social exclusion and raising the individual’s employability prospects. In its attempt to do so, the Pathways Project uses AA for personal development ends such as improving aspects of the self-concept.

In essence, there are a number of reasons why adventure activities are included in these programmes ranging from: an incentive and inducement to secure initial participation and to maintain interest; as an opportunity to expand personal horizons; or as a distraction from anti-social behaviour.

The purpose of this study is to identify and analyse outcomes emerging from participation in AA. The principal aim of the analytical process is to focus on a search and explanation for the possible factors within the dynamics of adventure activities, which may account for emergent outcomes. This aim reflects and confirms the direction that some commentators (e.g., Ewert, 1987a; Gibson, 1979; Mc Kenzie, 2003) have suggested research should take. The utility of such an undertaking may add to an evaluation of the Government’s justification for its investment in these programmes, to deliver social and human capital to at-risk residents living in one of the most socially and economically deprived communities in the UK.

The aim of the Chapter is to evaluate the outcomes emerging from the data as participants experience and express their feelings and actions in the adventure
activity and the subsequent effects that mastery and the taste of success has on the individual's self-esteem, self-confidence, enjoyment and positive mood. The Chapter will bring into focus the social environment and its key component, notably the role of instructors and staff who support and create an environment where participants can strive to regulate their behaviour and reap the rewards of competence and mastery.

6.2: Participant Characteristics and Programme Aims

The individuals involved in these interventions are drawn from one of the most socially and economically deprived regions in South Wales. The YOT provide a programme for youth, ranging from fourteen to sixteen years of age, who are on the cusp of entering the judicial system, who have received a final warning, or who have been issued with an anti-social behaviour contract. From my discussions with YOT staff, it was stated that approximately 20% of these children have severe learning difficulties, with many others in referral or special outreach units and the few who do attend mainstream school do so on an irregular basis. Common themes emerging from interviews with staff are the children’s lack of communication skills, poor or non-existent social skills and underdeveloped cognitive skills.

The *raison d’être* of the programme is prevention. It is a diverse programme that in addition to adventure activities incorporates a range of other interventions such as workshops on anti-social behaviour, knife crime, drug awareness; educational visits; additional *ad hoc* mountain bike excursions; together with opportunities to work with parents and guardians in an attempt to affect the home environment (cf. Appendix D). Douglas, the team leader, was quite clear on the purpose of the programme:-

*Extract 6.1: YOT Team Leader*

As I’ve said it’s to stop those youngsters getting into the judicial system going to court, ah, to keep them law abiding citizens. The programme is purely diversionary. ...summer, is the time where these youngsters that we deal with, will get into trouble because they have got so much idle time on their hands...
Douglas sees little value in outdoor activities other than as a diversionary activity and as perhaps an opportunity to better develop communication between staff and participants. However, this view is not entirely shared by Stuart (Police Officer attached to YOT) and Marcus (Reparation Officer), two mountain bike enthusiasts, who arrange additional mountain biking excursions as part of the adventure activity programme. Stuart believes that the mountain biking presents an achievable challenge that school cannot provide for these youngsters. As a result of their low academic ability, he suggests that school has little to offer them whereas the mountain biking, because of its non-academic nature and perhaps its detachment from a formal education setting, offers an alternative for them to experience achievement and success.

Extract 6.2: Police Liaison Officer YOT Programme

...it’s challenging for the kids, it’s ah, achievable for the kids as well, you know you can make stuff achievable for them, cos that’s important to them to achieve something, to have success at the end of whatever it is that their doing... academically they are um, under achievers, they are in the lower levels of academic achievement so it is important for them to, it’s obvious everyone needs to succeed... especially for these kids it’s important that they are able to achieve because they can’t do it at school.

The mountain biking offers a rare opportunity for these children to experience success and achievement. Stuart also explains that their behaviour is very different when mountain biking compared to their behaviour displayed within the gang and street culture. Stuart states:-

Extract 6.3: Police Liaison Officer YOT Programme

I can see a stark difference between their behaviour in terms of mountain biking compared to when I see them on the streets when I’m involved in police operations... when they are on the course where we are handing out free lunches, we’re helping them out with their bikes, we are helping them out with their kit. It’s please and thank you and it is great to see, they are smiling, they are happy... they are boisterous kids, but they are staying within the rules, where in their everyday life they go outside the boundaries.

Stuart and Marcus believe that the small incremental change in positive behaviour observed while on mountain bike activities is off-set by the pervasive influence of their environment. Unfortunately, the positive steps are not being transferred to their everyday lives and that, in effect, little is gained in this respect. As Marcus
explains (6.4), involvement in adventure activities, although helping to moderate
their behaviour during the activity makes, little difference to their overall
behaviour for the majority. Marcus suggests a degree of success in behaviour
change. Although this change may be incrementally small it, nonetheless, does
make a difference to a small minority.

Extract 6.4: Reparations Officer YOT

...there are a couple of kids who I’ve taken on bikes, and they love it
and they have the utmost respect and they will listen to every word
you have to say. You get them in any other environment, it’s like you
never, you’ve never been out on a bike with them... at the end of the
day we take them out for four or five hours, but they go, but the
environment, they are going back, they are going back home to
another environment for the remaining nineteen hours of the day... it’s
purely a diversionary exercise, you know, getting out, showing them
the positive things they can do with their time, like I say, you
know, if we can have them say please and thank you... a very limited
amount will have a total transformation, you know, walk the right path
so to speak. You’ll have the majority that will be in the middle
ground, that will always be tempted, be on the fiddle... and you get the
ones that are just completely off the scale who you can never do
anything with.

In contrast to the YOT, the Pathways to Employment Project is an education and
training focused programme for individuals between the ages of sixteen to eighteen
who are not in training or education. As part of a programme designed to improve
basic educational skills and healthy attitudes towards work, there is considerable
opportunity to participate in adventure activities. The programme has access to a
full-time outdoor education team located in the Community Education & Training
Centre, at which the programme is based.

In general terms, participants engaged in this programme compared to the YOT
appear to be less boisterous, less sure of themselves and to some extent more
withdrawn. For many of these youngsters their past history of formal education
has not been a positive one, characterised by poor relationships with their teachers
and low academic attainment. School for them has had little relevance, reflected
by high absenteeism throughout the school years, with little achievement and
success. As Cheryl (project co-ordinator) explains:-
Extract 6.5: Pathways Project Co-ordinator

...one of the things we are continually battling with is their personal baggage... they can be a pain when they start because they think it’s going to be like school...

To raise self-confidence appears to be the principal aim for the provision of this adventure activity programme. In many conversations Robin, Rory and Rupert, the instructors delivering the Pathways (and JobMatch) AA programme, consistently stated that the key role of outdoor education is in personal development, particularly as a means of building self-confidence through setting challenges. The value of AA is explained in the following extract from my field notes -

Date of Observation: Thursday, 2nd August 2007
Programme: Pathways to Employment
Venue of Observation: Morlais Castle
Activity: Rock climbing

...Robin and Rory with help from a couple of boys were unloading the equipment from the mini-bus with Simon and I looking on waiting for our customary debrief with a cup of tea in Robin’s office... At this point I was introduced to Oskar (Director of Adult Education for the Authority) by Robin as someone who had been with them for a few years researching the value of outdoor education on at-risk groups... Oskar made a number of interesting points about AA – They are used as a hook, it’s something different, the vast majority would not have been involved in these types of activities before, they seem to enjoy them, they talk about this and the word gets around, they are a kind of advert, a marketing tool to promote our courses. I know the boys also use them as part of a ‘carrot & stick’ approach, the carrots are the activities like Robin and Rory’s climbing expedition to Snowdonia – if their attendance and behaviour is good then they are allowed to go, in this sense they help to keep them on track, using the ‘stick’ simply means their behaviour, attendance, and attitudes has not been up to standard and we refuse taking them. Many of the youngsters we have very rarely if at all venture beyond the local area, these activities get them out and they can experience other environments. Then there’s the personal development side, these activities are big confidence builders, we notice that they also help with cohesion within our programmes, helping to form good working relationships between staff and students, (with a bit of a laugh and slapping Robin on the back) well that’s what Robin keeps telling me...

The success of this programme would seem to be that it is not like school, the programme takes a different approach focusing on and building the individual’s confidence, as a pre-requisite to developing the individual’s skills. This sentiment is expressed by one participant:-
6.3: The Sweet Taste of Success

Data collected from field observation are somewhat more subjective than data collected from interviews, or asking specific questions to those involved in the activities at the time. Nonetheless, these observations related to the reactions and behaviour of individuals displaying physical signs and gestures of self-approval, for example, facial expressions smiles and grins, verbal exclamations “Wow!” “Magic!” “Unbelievable!”, and physical gestures, punching the air with their arms. Interview statements such as, “I was a little bit worried about the climbing, I’m not too happy with heights, once you did it like got up there it was cool” correspond to the visual displays of delight and indicate the positive feelings of accomplishment, particularly following an activity that the individual initially had reservations about performing.

As an observer, I can reflect on my own involvement in potentially hazardous and physically challenging activities, such as recounting my first parachute jumps. I can identify the affective elements interacting within the self, such as arousal; motivation; apprehension; cognitive process (rationalising perceived danger and risk); and a sense of accomplishment and/or relief on successful completion. Conversely, I have observed in the field occasions when fear, dread and stress manifest themselves in physical signs, such as worried facial expressions (wide eyes and dry mouths displayed by lip licking and lip biting) and nervousness (over cautious and timid body movements displayed by small steps and grasping hands - ‘white knuckles’), having an impact. Apprehension, fear and stress appear to either prevent a successful outcome or facilitate a heightened sense of achievement, bordering on the euphoric. These outcomes seem to be dependent upon the individual’s aptitude and will to overcome fear and stress elicited by the adventure challenge.
The AA is an achievement-oriented situation that the individual chooses to attempt and to master. Being successful at these activities appears to have a positive effect, as expressed in the following extracts:

Extract 6.7: Male participant Pathways to Employment Programme

...coming to Pathways was the first time I could do something, we done canoeing, river walking, walking up mountains, rock climbing we had a certificate for that, that was good...

Extract 6.8: Female participant Pathways to Employment Programme

I was so nervous, but the voice in the background – Simon saying to keep going, when I made it to the top made me feel brilliant all my arms were aching like, just made me feel brilliant just getting up there, I didn’t think I could get up there, do you know what I mean, but I did it, got up there.

Extract 6.9: Male participant Pathways to Employment

I thought jumping off that big rock into the river was a bit mad, but Simon went first, did it first like, then I went, everyone just followed you then like, so brilliant.

Many of us understand the importance of success to our general wellbeing without giving it too much thought, it is somewhat taken for granted, a result of our abilities, aptitudes and efforts. We experience success on an individual basis in its many forms: physical, psychological, intellectual and creative achievements over the course of our lives. Examples include passing ‘O’ and ‘A’ level examinations, passing interview/selection process into professional employment, representing club and country at sport or feats of extraordinary physical endurance.

For the vast majority of the individuals engaged in these intervention programmes, achievement and success are rare experiences. For many, their problems begin in the early years of schooling, along with other factors such as poor parenting and dysfunctional family life. Experiencing success at school, particularly in the early years, is extremely important because successes are positive events upon which an increasingly more complex psychological superstructure can be built. Conversely, exposure to failure experiences reinforce feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy (Hamachek, 1972).

Tasting success may be for many of these individuals a new experience as expressed in the extracts above, success can be a somewhat unexpected and
overwhelming experience leading to more intense feelings, explained in Emily Dickinson’s poem “Success is Counted Sweetest.” This poem emphasises the point that for individuals who experience little success, when they do, it is felt more strongly.

Success is counted sweetest
By those who ne’er succeed.
To comprehend a nectar
Requires sorest need.
(Dickinson, 1994, p.3)

6.4: Enhancing Self-Esteem through Challenge and Achievement

Improved self-confidence and self-esteem have emerged from inductive content analysis (Appendices L and M) and supported by observational data, as two key components of the self-concept that appear to be influenced by the adventure activity. The following extracts indicate the affect that the AA programme has on developing the participant’s confidence, although Extract 6.10 suggests that it is not entirely due to the activity itself, but as indicated, staff and instructors also have an influence in the process:

Extract 6.10: Male participant Pathways to Employment Programme

…it was confidence, you know like you don’t realise they were doing it, they would just do little things for you but it would build your confidence a lot like and I say now I wouldn’t be doing this now if I hadn’t come here, I would never have talked to you if I hadn’t have come and met these people, like…

Extract 6.11: Male participant Pathways to Employment Programme

The course has been good like, I’m stronger in it, makes me more confident to do things.

Success in these situations appears to improve self-esteem being proud of their achievements:

Extract 6.12: Female participant Pathways to Employment Programme

…it was just exciting getting up there, Simon was taking photos of us all, it was great, it’s good, I was excited I was just really good. It was a good feeling, I suppose everyone felt proud in their own way, accomplishing that cos it wasn’t easy, you know, it’s a big hill isn’t it.

Extract 6.13: Male participant Pathways to Employment Programme
Never did any of these things before, like down at Bedlinog climbing centre we didn’t think we would climb it but we did do it like, fair play and it was good like, it was, fair play, once you got up there, it made you feel good.

It is reasonable to state that we instinctively understand the importance confidence plays in achieving our goals and fulfilling our aspirations, for example, presenting oneself at a job interview. Self-confidence provides the belief that we can achieve our goals, even when things do not go according to plan. It provides the fuel for greater persistence, and because we are confident in our abilities we are more adaptive and flexible, allowing us to be more creative and adventurous. We also perceive how our self-confidence reflects on people with whom we work when we experience them putting their trust in our abilities and judgements. Having confidence bestows certain advantages, particularly for children living in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. At-risk children who possess self-confidence are more resilient to peer pressure, which may prevent them indulging in behaviours such as drug abuse and gang membership (Vera, 2000).

During my involvement in the field, I experienced many occasions when participants were exposed to unfamiliar, extremely challenging and emotion provoking situations, none more so than the ‘confidence ropes course’ at the International Climbing Centre, Bedlinog. The photographs below (Photographs 6.1 & 6.2) will provide the reader with an appreciation of this activity and its ability to provide perceptions of risk and danger. The following are extracts from my field notes -

Date of Observation: Thursday, 26th July 2007.
Programme: Pathways to Employment
Venue of Observation: International Climbing Centre.
Activity: High Ropes Course.

Jolene (support worker) turned to me and said, “I didn’t think I had the confidence to do that…. I didn’t really want to do that…. I was very nervous about stepping out onto the first rung, it was very wobbly…. I just kept on going.”

Simon was revisiting a previous occasion at this station, by explaining to Jolene and I that one of the female participants was shaking so much that he expected her to fall and the consequences that would have involved (pulling her back up from the safety line and then getting her back down safely)…. “We went around the other way that day, this was the first….. she was so nervous…. then as we continued you could see the confidence grow”.
...there were a few worried expressions, one girl was constantly complaining to Jolene about her fear of heights... most of them moved along with short steps and grasping hand movements and made sure as Rupert had instructed that both safety tails were attached to the safety lines, their hands grasped tightly to the lines. Although being a totally safe environment it lends itself to perceptions of high risk and danger emphasised by the height from the ground, not having been on a transamium for many years, I must admit even I had one or two second thoughts. The level of insecurity was heightened by the nature of the stations (activities) that included a jungle bridge, horizontal ladder with over extended rungs, a log walk that required considerable concentration and balance, a tight rope, various configurations of cargo netting to scramble through, and a zip wire... Considering the amount of concern at the beginning there were only one or two mishaps and a few of the girls declined the zip wire. What was noticeable after some time was the reduction in anxiety, the group became more at ease and one or two started to show off suggesting that they were feeling more secure and adapting to this environment. ...Simon did mention that Rupert had started off with the more difficult stations first – was this significant?

There are many examples in my observational notes that refer to the expression of achievement, delight, pride, satisfaction and relief on the accomplishment of a specific challenge, such as climbing to the top of a thirty metre vertical rock face or, on one occasion, sailing at Pontsticill reservoir, described in the following field note extract -
Date of Observation: Thursday, 20th July 2006
Programme: Pathways to Employment
Venue of Observation: Pontsticill Reservoir, BBNP
Activity: Sailing

...it took a while to assemble the equipment and get the boats ready for launch, it took even longer getting the girls into the single-man dinghies, this might have been a little too ambitious as none of them had sailed before, probably not even been afloat... After a variety of persuasive tactics ranging from gentle pleading to threats they eventually got into the boats, you could see terror writ large across their faces and for some of them they were surprisingly quiet... Little after ten minutes they were ~800m away in the centre of the reservoir, obviously managing well enough...

They each in turn came alongside the slipway in orderly fashion to disembark, the expressions of delight, satisfaction and enjoyment together with “did you see me stories” of their sailing experience bordered on the euphoric...

Success at a task such as sailing a single-man dinghy is a concrete achievement. The individual cannot fail to be aware that this action is the result of their individual efforts and under their direct control rather than through luck or some other external factor. This sense of autonomy appears to be generated as a result of performing competently in the adventure setting, which also appears to have an effect on confidence/self-efficacy and self-esteem. According to Deci and Ryan (1995), “to develop true self-esteem people need to feel that their successes are truly their own - they must feel autonomous rather than controlled” (p.43).

In essence, the key aspect is the outdoor adventure activity’s capacity to present a situation where the individual is faced with uncertainty and trepidation, facilitated by a number of inherent characteristics of these competence-based activities. Inherent characteristics such as risk, danger, unfamiliarity and unpredictability provide a challenging and stimulating experience, where the individual is directed towards an elevated level of self-regulation demonstrated by control over this stress laden and emotionally charged environment. It is through dissonance resolution, presented by these confrontation-based settings anchored in the ‘real world’ with ‘real consequences’, which appear to retard or prohibit avoidance behaviour, where the individual eventually experiences competence and mastery. It is through regulation of dissonance that the individual experiences competence and mastery and in so doing experiences higher levels of self-efficacy which Bandura and colleagues (1999) believes to be the foundation of human agency, in
other words, a belief that the individual has the ability to exert greater control over their environment, represented by the adventure activity.

There are many occasions in my observational notes where participants are faced by risk, uncertainty, perceived danger, apprehension and fear and after achieving success have shown expressions of delight, pride and satisfaction, on successfully mastering the challenge presented. None more so than the sailing at Pontsticill reservoir, the reservoir is very large and deep and there was certainly a little fear present. Photographs 6.3 and 6.4 will give the reader a sense of the challenge faced by these novices sailing on such a large, deep and exposed expanse of water. After considerable persuasion, eventually they all got into the boats and ‘off to go’. After about an hour sailing and considerable advancement in technical ability (tacking and jibbing) they returned to shore buzzing with excitement and obviously enjoying the experience. The exhilarated mood lasted some time and dominated the conversation on the return journey to the centre in the mini-bus. The relationship between success and the emotions displayed by the participants and exaltations in their conversation were striking. The relationship between outcome and emotion has been explained by Stephan & Gollwitzer (1981) as a three stage process in emotional reactions:-

It seems likely that on the basis of prior conditioning, achievement outcomes elicit a general positive and negative affective response. Thus stage 1 consists of the relationship between outcome feedback and its immediate affective consequences, i.e. a positive or negative affective state. In stage 2 this affective state sets in motion attributional processes that function to maintain or enhance self-esteem. Stage 3 builds on both of the preceding stages. (Stephan & Gollwitzer, 1981, p. 445)

The overwhelming majority of participants in the intervention programmes under study, according to Douglas (YOT Team Leader) and Cheryl (Pathways to Employment Co-ordinator), are individuals who have performed poorly at academic work in school where they are constantly criticised by teachers; some are from dysfunctional families, where they receive little support from their parents and experience little success. As Leary and Downs (1995) state, a history of parental rejection has been shown to be a major contributor to low self-esteem and negative affectivity. Following self-evaluation, they regard themselves as hopeless and a sense of helplessness develops, contributing towards low self-esteem. They
become involved in an outdoor adventure programme that offers them order, direction and support, where they can leave their past histories behind them, presenting them with an opportunity to step outside their ‘comfort zone’. This is illustrated in the sailing scenario, achieving something that they might not have believed they could have achieved and feeling good about achieving it. The taste of success and the support that they receive from programme instructors and staff, makes a positive impact. In these achievement-related settings perhaps the participants rationalise the experience. The individual may say to themselves - “I never thought I could ever sail a dinghy by myself on such a large deep reservoir” (this generates feelings of satisfaction and pleasure); “This is an impressive accomplishment” (this generates a sense of ability and competence); “Perhaps I’m not as useless as I think” (this raises self-esteem). It may well be that the outdoor adventure experience acts as an attributional retraining opportunity similar to that described by Weiner and colleagues (1979).

Photographs 6.3 and 6.4: Sailing at Pontsticill Reservoir.

In achievement-related contexts such as AA, individuals experience various cognitive-emotional scenarios (Weiner et al., 1979; Weiner, 1979). Proposed here and in accordance with Weiner, is that in the adventure education setting, individuals who have in the past experienced little success alter their attributional thinking based on their achievement, in the manner described above. However, one positive sailing experience is unlikely to be effective and therefore if change is likely, it is through the accumulative effect of many positive experiences throughout the programme and beyond.
According to Hill and Buss (2006) dramatic changes, such as those evoked by success, are said to update the self-concept and influence behaviour based on new formulated self-knowledge. New information about the self, based on success, can result in an increase in the perceptions the individual holds regarding their abilities and attributes. In turn, these changes in perceived ability cause affective shifts, resulting in an increase of self-esteem. These authors hypothesise that this mechanism serves as a motivational function, in that the affective component, that is self-esteem, determines which behavioural option the individual adopts given the state of their new found self-concept. Applying Hill and Buss' hypothesis to these findings, it may be reasonable to suggest that improved self-confidence and a sense of achievement may result in behaviour that would be more likely to engage in taking on new challenges and that this accounts for some of the reported improvements in self-esteem.

Success in the achievement-oriented adventure setting appears to be the key influence in a re-appraisal of self-knowledge, which elicits changes to perceptions of esteem and efficacy. Crocker and Park (2003) remind us that James (1890) argued “self-esteem rises and falls as a function of achievements and setbacks” (p.292). In the context of AA, Beker (1960) found that children engaged on a camping expedition experienced an increase in feelings of competence, together with significant positive changes to their self-concept, compared with controls. Similar findings were observed by Wright (1983) who found that delinquent youth involved in an adaptive OB programme showed improvements in personal efficacy and increased self-esteem, compared with controls. Koocher (1971), in a study of seven to fifteen year old boys (n = 65) on a YMCA summer camp, found that increased competence at swimming resulted in improved self-esteem, compared to those who failed to master the activity and controls.

AA are excellent at generating emotional responses in those that are engaged in them. They are situations that create fear, instances where the participant has to consider the potential risks and threats to life and limb versus the negative consequences involved with refusal to engage such as loss of dignity and prestige which has the potential to incur damage to self-worth. The following field note extract provides an example of such a challenge -
...the path terminated in a ledge overlooking a sheer drop into the river below. With no obvious way forward Rupert said “Who’s first?” at which point things went quiet followed by a number of “You must be joking” statements. Simon then began to berate the boys with words to the effect they were a bunch of sissies then ran and leapt off the ledge landing with an almighty splash surfaced then almost instantaneously followed by two boys in quick succession who made shouts of delight on emerging from the deep. The remainder of the group were not so spontaneous, showing signs of nervousness and worry about this prospect despite witnessing the success of the three jumpers who had survived the ordeal... eventually after much persuasion from Rupert and I think because Jolene (support staff) had also jumped they all jumped off the ledge...

The jump, described above and shown in Photograph 6.5 and Extract 6.9, to give the reader an insight into the nature of this challenge, evoked the same response among the majority of participants. Although a safe activity, nonetheless the jump into the river is counter to common sense and survival training: Never jump from height into murky water for fear of its depth, underwater obstructions and obstacles. To do so is either an act of recklessness or desperation. In this instance, it is a demonstration of trust and an opportunity to deal with fear. Despite observing a few individuals performing successfully and ‘getting away with it’, for some there are always nagging doubts, even if someone else survived ‘they were lucky’. In this respect, in their mind’s eye danger still exists. This activity is truly a ‘jump into the unknown’ an opportunity to overcome and control fear, an example of the unique quality adventure training has to provoke intense emotions.

The jump from the ledge was perhaps the most patent example of hesitant behaviour shown when participants were faced with danger, uncertainty and the possibility of suffering physical harm. There are probably many unidentified contributing factors that may account for everyone in the group overcoming this challenge, such as the fear of ridicule and dented ‘male pride’. This group was comprised entirely of boys with the exception of a female support worker who, although being hesitant and exhibiting the signs of apprehension, made the jump;
perhaps her success may have put an additional pressure on the boys. In these achievement-related situations (Extract 6.9), vicariously observing others jump and coming to no harm may have ‘tipped the balance’ in the decision to jump. The sources of confidence to successfully perform these novel acts will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Photograph 6.5: River Jump (height of 8 - 10 meters).

6.5: The Influence of Staff in the Adventure Process

Programme staff responsible for the more pastoral aspects of these intervention programmes appear to be important sources of support and enjoyment for participants, providing a much needed safe and supportive environment where they can develop and overcome negative aspects of their past experiences, as described in the following extracts:-

Extract 6.14: Male participant YOT

I’ve enjoyed loads of stuff so I’ve been with Douglas [YOT team leader] indoors and outdoors trips, fair play, he’s a good man like… just happy to be with him.
...the staff’s brilliant, excellent, encouraging you everything, if it wasn’t for the encouragement I couldn’t have done it to be honest. In general it’s just brilliant, the atmosphere when I went climbing and other things its brilliant like, Simon, he’s been the best since I’ve been here got to give him it, without them I wouldn’t be where I was now, got to give them that. [Q: where do you think you would have ended up?] Prison probably, I wouldn’t lie prison, I’ve , I was a right little, I wouldn’t swear but I was a little rascal when I was little, Simon will tell you I hated school I used to bunk and this programme started off I came in here and Simon pushed me all the way then. [Q: Tell me about school?] It was just like, I didn’t like it like, the work was like too hard, well it weren’t too hard it was just I could never concentrate, could never concentrate, you know what I mean. Always having someone acting the fool in the classroom or something, yeah then my father died then and I didn’t go back to school then, and Simon, I got offered to come here then. [Q: What’s the difference between here and school?] Oh miles better. They explain better things to you like do you know what I mean like, help you with, do you know what I mean, like say you are stuck with something they will make you understand it...

Sebastian’s testimony provides an insight into the profound impact that genuinely caring and committed staff members make in the lives of those engaged in these types of interventions. Perhaps for the first time individuals like Sebastian have experienced this kind of support.

Christian (2011) has suggested that when disaffected individuals are engaged in adventure activities they experience a safer and more supportive environment than they generally experience in their daily lives. In this supportive environment individuals become connected to each other forming strong social bonds as suggested by Tippet (1993) who states that, “connectedness between group members and leaders grows out of the members’ experience of the leaders as caring adults who are truly interested in them” (p.87), as highlighted by Sebastian.

Early in my excursions into the field, I became aware of the variety of character types used by instructors and staff to control and manage activities. Interaction occurs on a number of levels. First, there is the serious safety conscious, disciplinarian character, ready to correct unacceptable behaviour, a role that I would have imagined a difficult or potentially ineffective and problematic one considering the background of some individuals and the potential for disruptive behaviour. There were occasions when behaviour, particularly among the YOT participants, became unacceptable. However, as a rule individuals were well behaved and reasonably appreciative for the opportunity to be involved in the
activities. The second character type was one that I can describe as a ‘big brother/big sister’ approach, where a somewhat persuasive, reasoning and caring approach was used. A third character type was that of entertainer, there were some very amusing moments staff had a very acute sense of humour and wit, which made the experience more enjoyable.

The outdoor instructors portrayed principally two characters: disciplinarian and ‘big brother’, and ‘friendly’ subtle motivator. A good example of the disciplinarian is provided below, from the YOT programme, during a high ropes course:

Date of Observation: Thursday, 26th July 2007.
Programme: YOT
Venue of Observation: International Climbing Centre, Bedlinog.
Activity: High Ropes Course.

...Rupert, “We’re going to climb up onto the top of the climbing wall and from there we’ll find the ‘High Ropes Course’, ...During his explanation one of the boys is fooling about and distracting another boy. Rupert stops talking, stares intensely at the boy (there is a long pause, the boy stops fooling about) Rupert says, “It’s simple... I’m not taking you up there if you cannot concentrate and listen to instructions”. ...We arrive at one of the climbing walls where we will make our ascent onto the high ropes course. Here Rupert mentions safety procedures. The most important one being that while aloft you must clip on with both safety lines at all time to the steel safety cables. (Attached to the climbing harness in addition to the belay rope were two safety lines with automatically locking karabiners). ...Eventually the entire group was aloft on the first platform. Rupert asked everyone to listen-in, “Remember what I said below, you must always be attached with both safety lines to the steel cables, however, moving from one cable to another unclip one (emphasising one) safety line and clip on, then unclip the second safety line and clip to the safety cables, use one hand only, this will make sure you are always clipped to at least one of the cables – NEVER BE IN A POSITION WHERE BOTH SAFETY LINES ARE NOT SECURE.” This point heavily emphasised, he continued, “This is most important, if you fall from this height, you won’t survive it! I can’t see what you are doing all the time up here, your safety is in your own hands.” Before Rupert had finished his safety explanation one of the participants (Craig) unclipped and clipped onto the first station – the rope bridge. Rupert directed his attention at Craig, “I haven’t told you to do anything yet. Why have you done that?” ...Although in no uncertain terms Rupert outlined what would happen (being sent down to the ground) if Craig or anyone else transgressed safety rules...
This example explains one feature concerning the involvement in outdoor activities - the safety factor and subsequently the reason for instructors taking a somewhat authoritarian position. What is interesting, in this example, is how much more disciplined the YOT participants are compared to other situations when they are more petulant and less reasonable, such as travelling to and from activities. I am sure that the two boys cautioned by Rupert might not have taken it in the same way from a school teacher.

On most occasions the ‘big brother’ approach is employed, for example, on one cycling trip with the YOT along the Taff Trail when we arrived at Pontypridd:

Date of Observation: Thursday, 2nd July 2007.
Programme: YOT
Venue of Observation: International Climbing Centre, Bedlinog.
Activity: Mountain Biking (Taff Trail – Pontypridd).

After a little while Douglas asked them what they wanted to do, “you’ve got two options.... you can ride around the park for a while .... or we can go back now”. After a brief deliberation the consensus was to go back. Before setting out Douglas mentioned to them that they must not get too far ahead, they must wait and not go haring off. Off we went, the journey was interrupted by a few stops, and then Judith and I fell a little behind. As we caught up, I noticed the group had stopped, as I got closer I could see that something had happened and Douglas was telling some of them off for going into the grounds of a school that was opposite to where we had stopped. I could hear Douglas say, “I told you not to go in there ....why can’t you do what you’re told .... if you can’t do what your told I’m not going to take you out again” (there was a little time for reflection, they looked a little disappointed in themselves or feared Douglas’ threat) Douglas, in a calmer voice said, “you’ve done so well today, ....come on let’s do it properly”. It appears to me that the boys take the telling off well (however I have been informed that many of them have been referred to the YOT because of trouble at school due to confrontations with teachers). On a personal level I consider Douglas to be an excellent mentor, patient, considerate and obviously putting their interests first. (The only times he ‘lets rip’ is over safety issues). I have come to the conclusion that these boys have a lot of respect for him.

The character of entertainer, adopted by some staff in both programmes, was very important to the dynamics of the activity. Although it must be stated that staff did not purposefully act in that way but rather as a spontaneous manifestation of their personality. Nonetheless, the humour and wit displayed had two impacts, on
a few occasions it diffused a potentially confrontational situation, but more often it just raised spirits. Unfortunately, I found humour impossible to capture in text, the following example with the YOT may provide some flavour:-

Date of Observation: Tuesday, 14th August 2007.
Programme: YOT
Venue of Observation: International Climbing Centre, Bedlinog.
Activity: Climbing and Caving.

The smallest boy in the group (Denis) asked Clive to help him put his helmet on. Clive replied, “it’s easier for you to do but”. The boy was insistent. Clive then began manipulating the two little wheels inside the helmet attached to the chord strapping that tighten and loosen the chord that secures the helmet around the head. The boy remarked to Clive “you’ve loosened the helmet”. Clive replied, “That’s what I said, it’s easier for you to do it.” A comic situation was developing that drew attention from the others. Eventually the wheels were tightened to their complete range, however, the helmet was still loose on Denis’ head, Clive remarked with a laugh and a hand wobbling the helmet on Denis’ head, “you’ve got a head like a peanut.”

Clive was the first to arrive with a group of about eight boys at the centre, after a while he sat the group on a grass bank some way from the centre. I had arrived a little before and wandered over to say hello. Clive, “we’ve got a few more that you didn’t see last week.” Before we had a chance to enter into conversation, the boys distracted Clive’s attention (they were engaged in some boyish horseplay). Clive, “act your age and not your shoe size.” After the boys settled I asked Clive if he knew what the activities were on the menu today. Clive in reply, haven’t got a clue, I was hoping you would know.” Douglas arrives in another minibus and immediately came over to Clive and said, “I thought I had gone deaf on the way down.” Clive, “quiet were they?”

In this instance and in others, humour no doubt added to the enjoyment of the activity. It is reasonable to state that individuals who possess a good sense humour tend to be appreciated and liked by others, probably because they make people laugh, relieve tension and make difficult situations more bearable.

6.6: Fun and Enjoyment

Indicated in the previous section, fun and enjoyment have emerged strongly from both programmes as highlighted in the following extracts:-
Extract 6.15: Male participant YOT programme

…mountain biking and if you comes off you just laughs, then keeps going it’s not a problem really, it’s just uphill and downhill, off low jumps and all that… keeps you happy.. it’s brilliant.

Extract 6.16: Male participant Pathways to Employment Programme

Gorge walking, climbing, um canoeing, all different things like that, really enjoyable, all of them, more or less, good fun, it’s a good laugh, cos you do something different all the time.

Extract 6.17: Female participant Pathways to Employment Programme

Doing Pen-Y-Fan walking with everyone was the best to be honest, the whole group was there Deb [support worker] started that day and she came and just done it, and it was good fun like, we all got to know each other better, got to know Deb and we’ve been friends since.

In the view of the UK Government, enjoyment is a critical ingredient of learning who acknowledge in its Green Paper “Every Child Matters” (2003) the importance enjoyment plays in education. A number of research studies concerning enjoyment and learning, conducted in traditional educational settings, reveal some interesting findings which may be relevant to adventure education. James (2001) found that humour is an effective teacher trait, making classes interesting, facilitating a supportive learning climate, assisting learning and retention, at the same time increasing attention and enjoyment. Blundson and colleagues (2003) indicate that the more enjoyable an educational experience, the more students perceived it as increasing their learning and that an experiential learning approach was reported as being more effective than traditional modes, that facilitated transfer of skills and knowledge to other subject areas. Of relevance to the findings of this study, a sense of mastery and achievement are good predictors of enjoyment, particularly if achievement surpasses expectations (Remedios, 2000). Lumby (2011) found that the most reported source of enjoyment was positive relationships and a sense of belonging, together with experiencing more control and a sense of mastery and achievement. Occasionally, a state of flow was mentioned by respondents, a term that describes absorption in an activity that is intrinsically enjoyable, which involves “a particular balance and experience of pleasure that is relevant to learning” (p.249).
6.7: Summary

A number of outcomes appear to have emerged from the analysis of both these programmes. Shared outcomes include improvements to self-confidence, esteem, positive mood and feelings of relatedness. The factors that seem to account for these outcomes include the ability of the adventure challenge to present a threat and the influence that staff and instructors have within the experiential learning process.

The adventure programme often provides an opportunity to overcome anxious and stressful situations laden with perceptions of risk and danger. It is suggested here that the resulting success and mastery over these challenges elicits a re-appraisal of the self-concept based on achievement which accounts for improvement in self-confidence and self-esteem. Overcoming the challenge described by one participant as a “mad” moment, is also portrayed as a pleasurable, “brilliant” experience, this together with the sense of achievement acquired by persevering with a physically demanding challenge, such as getting to the summit of Pen-y-Fan, was also described as “fun” and enjoyable.

Importantly the AA offers an opportunity for success and achievement. They are concrete tasks where the participant cannot fail to recognise that success is based on their efforts. It appears that the AA act as an attributional retraining opportunity, whereby the participant reflects on their achievement, from these experiences the individual formulates ‘new’ self-knowledge and they see themselves as being more efficacious, able to regulate their behaviour more effectively and in consequence experience heightened feelings of esteem.

Staff and instructors appear to be influential in the process. They add to the enjoyment experienced by participants, but importantly, they create a supportive and encouraging environment that is conducive to feelings of connectedness and relatedness.

In the next section, the analysis of the JobMatch programme will further attempt to explore these emergent themes and hopefully provide a more detailed
explanation and appreciation of the processes that account for improvements to the self-concept and behaviour change.
Chapter 7:
The JobMatch Programme: Evaluation of Outcomes

7.1: Introduction

Data collected in response to interview questions and field observations from the YOT and Pathways programmes appears to suggest that AA have an impact on the self-concept of participants. From this analysis, self-esteem has emerged from the Pathways to Employment programme that appears to result from achievement and success. This outcome is of particular significance in support of the Government’s rationale for its investment in physical activity. The Government believes that improved self-esteem will confer a number of benefits that are considered important in addressing issues relating to social inclusion, reduction in anti-social behaviour and aiding its health agenda for children. This effect seems to have its origins in both specific inherent characteristics of the activity such as its ability to present novel and achievable challenges that are generally perceived to be dangerous, which generate feeling of apprehension and fear, and a supportive social environment created by instructors and staff.

The inherent characteristics of the activity and the social environment appear to operate in a synergistic relationship. The relationship between activity and instructors is intertwined and difficult to separate out in terms of determining which one plays a significant or specific role: Whether features generated by the instructors and staff, such as humour and a friendly supportive environment that facilitates participants to work closely and effectively with each other; or features of the adventure activity, such as challenge and its consequences in terms of the adrenalin evoking effect and resultant euphoric response of a peak experience that account for the enjoyment reported by the overwhelming majority of participants. This said both appear essential for the outcomes emerging from this study.

The aim of the current study is twofold. Firstly, to identify outcomes emerging from participation in AA consistent with the Government’s agenda for investment in human and social capital; and secondly, to move beyond description and posit an explanation of the process by which outcomes evolve within the dynamics of outdoor adventure activity. 
To venture beyond description and offer explanations concerning possible process by which adventure activities account for the outcomes has been suggested by a number of authors. Klint (1990) suggests research should “move away from identifying products associated with adventure experiences and toward understanding the processes” (p.164). Understanding the processes is a sound proposition, for without making such efforts to understand the factors that influence the outcomes, which have been observed within the outdoor adventure experience is to remain, according to Ewart (1989), in a state that lacks empirical meaning. This sentiment is summed up by Wichmann (1991) who, quoting Kimball (1979), states that the literature presents strong evidence that outdoor adventure programmes are effective, nonetheless they compare “to electricity; we know it works but we are not sure why” (p.43).

The aim of this Chapter is to conduct an analysis of the outcomes and processes emerging from a high-impact adventure activity programme, based on an examination of observational and interview data. Data collected during the climbing and ropes course correspond to and supports data emerging from the previous two programmes, notably enhanced self-esteem, improved self-confidence/self-efficacy, enjoyment and the consequential role instructors and staff play by providing a pleasurable and supportive learning environment.

Data analysis in addition to identifying emerging outcomes will also provide an insight into the process by which competence and mastery affect self-esteem and self-confidence that is considered to be facilitated by a ‘peak experience’, an opportunity to connect and be related to others, together with the opportunity to act agentically within challenging achievement-related situations. The analysis will focus on the significance of dissonance as a fundamental component within the adventure education process, as participants attempt to overcome perceptions of insurmountable challenges perceived to be fraught with danger and risk, but which hold the promise of altering personal value systems and behaviour.

This chapter presents an examination of observational and interview data collected from the JobMatch climbing course, expanding upon the evidence emerging from the previous two programmes. The chapter begins with a focused
attempt to examine the potential AA courses have in improving self-esteem, by conducting two simple field experiments.

7.2: Field Experiments

Two simple quasi-experiments were conducted in September 2009 and July 2010 using participants in the JobMatch climbing course. These field experiments used the rock climbing course as the independent (treatment) variable and self-esteem as the dependent variable, in a two phase experimental design, consisting of a pre-treatment baseline measurement (conducted on the morning of the first day), followed by an endpoint measurement (conducted on the afternoon of the fifth day). Self-esteem was measured using the RSES (1965), as described by Blascovitch and Tomaka (1991), scores for which are recorded in Table 7.1. In both field experiments a repeated measures design (dependent t-test) was employed, the first on \( n = 14 \) (12 male and 2 female participants aged 19 - 50, mean age of 30 years), results indicate a significant improvement in self-esteem over the duration of the five day climbing programme \( t = 5.09, p < .05 \).

Replicating the first experiment, the second experiment was conducted on \( n = 19 \) (17 male and 2 female participants aged 18 - 46, mean age of 31 years) this also demonstrated a significant improvement in self-esteem, \( t = 6.7, p < .05 \).

Findings indicate that the climbing course had an acute and positive effect on self-esteem. However, these results should be viewed with extreme caution, because of methodological weaknesses: lack of randomised sampling, the absence of a control group, small sample size, and the serious shortcoming associated with self-report measures. These results appear to be consistent with the majority of previous survey-based research which simply asks participants to report on their self-esteem. It tells us little, only that an acute improvement in state self-esteem was observed, suggesting that there was a high probability of this being related to the climbing course.
These simple experiments, if nothing else, draw a line under survey-based research in adventure education and training. The field experiment demonstrates that by using self-report measures, using these types of methodologies, statistically significant results can be produced, such as the results observed here. They do show that self-esteem can be improved by utilising these blunt and crude tools and designs, but there still remain unanswered questions. They do not inform us about the processes that brought this effect about, how long the effect may last, or if this improvement in self-esteem resulted from other intervening variables.

### 7.3: Participant Characteristics and Programme Aims

Individuals involved in the JobMatch programme are similar in many characteristics to the Pathways to Employment Project, except older, ranging from eighteen to fifty. They generally have low academic skills, low self-confidence and some display an air of despondency, probably as a consequence of being long-term unemployed. However, not all have low academic skills or a history of poorly paid
unskilled work. One has had a successful career in the army and another has been employed as a human resource manager in a local company.

The JobMatch programme used an OB style climbing and ropes course as a selection process. The two courses were intensive over five consecutive days and contrast with the YOT and Pathways Project who used day excursions, interspersed throughout the week with other activities. Similar to the Pathways Project, the course was under the leadership of the outdoor education team attached to the Community Education & Training Centre.

Two contrasting perspectives relating to the purpose of the climbing courses became evident: one held by the commissioning JobMatch staff, who saw its utility only as a means of selection, showing little interest, understanding, or concern for any educational or personal development benefits; the other view held by the instructors who, as outdoor educationists, appreciated its full potential as a vehicle for personal development.

7.4: The Effects of Mastery on the Self-Concept

Corresponding to outcomes identified in the Pathways and YOT programmes, improved self-confidence and self-esteem have emerged from inductive content analysis (Appendices N-O) and supported by observational data, as two key components of the self-concept that appear to be influenced by the adventure activity.

JobMatch participants displayed the same universal verbal and facial expressions and body reactions to success as observed in the other two programmes which correspond to statements made by participants during interviews. Remarks such as, “you know, you get feelings of really high emotional feelings that you’ve done something that you didn’t think you could do”, are compatible with the emotional expressions of success witnessed in the field.

Adventure activities are achievement-oriented challenges that are often hazardous, requiring careful attention, while at the same time subjecting the participant to a high degree of both physiological and psychological arousal in
these ‘real lived’ experiences, which evoke heightened emotions. These challenging situations provide immediate and unequivocal feedback on the degree of competency the performer is able to achieve in order to execute these tasks successfully. In these instances, achievement is a clearly defined demonstration of the performer’s competency and mastery.

Competence defined as a behaviour that permits the individual to project a range of abilities to perform a specific task effectively; and mastery defined as the ability to control a process by which an individual accomplishes an optimal or maximal level of proficiency, should be viewed as central and fundamental outcomes. Here, competence and mastery are displayed by actions that overcome fear, promote working effectively with others and achieving success, by overcoming both physical and mental barriers.

Data collected over the course of this study suggests that achievement and success, displayed by acts of competence and mastery, are essential components, acting as catalysts within these competence-based adventure settings that appear to have a positive effect on confidence/self-efficacy and self-esteem. AA stand as challenging situations that require the individual to display competence and mastery, therefore, it is not surprising that there are many references made to personal achievement. The following are a selection of extracts referring to achievement highlighting the significance the individual places on their success in these achievement-related activities:-

Extract 7.1: Male participant
...you get satisfaction out of it like some sort of thing, cos you have achieved something you know. I mean it’s like achievement...

Extract 7.2: Male participant
...brilliant, brilliant, you know it’s an achievement, it’s a, to overcome like a fear...

Acts of competency and mastery were frequently recorded in the data, sometimes contrary to expectations as explained in the following comment: “...I pushed myself over the limits on some things which I thought I would never do...” In these instances of being competent and feeling efficacious, participants report that the experience has had an effect on how this makes them feel about themselves:
“...it makes you feel happy, happy, glad that I’ve actually done it instead of opting out in the first place which I was considering but no really happy and proud of myself…” This individual makes reference to a usual preference of opting-out, however, on this occasion, behaviour flows contrary to an avoidance tendency that appears to have an effect on esteem. Not only do participants feel that their esteem has been affected but also their self-confidence “…I can look up and say, well I’ve achieved that so why can’t I achieve whatever else so you know it’s made me a little more confident…” This comment concerning achievement having an effect on confidence, leading to a belief that this can translate to other situations, was well documented in the data. These activities appear to foster the notion that if the individual can demonstrate competence and mastery over these challenges it can make them “…more confident you know, if you can do that then you can put your mind to anything really…”

According to Wright (1987) the mastery experience is the preeminent component of an OB programme, the result of which is the feeling of self-empowerment. He believes that demonstrations of competence, the ability to master activities such as climbing, are important sources of self-empowerment; defined as the belief an individual holds “that the outcome of certain events is under one’s personal control and that the individual believes he or she is capable of performing the behaviour necessary to bring about the desired outcome” (p.81-82). Wright’s notion of self-empowerment relies upon an internal locus of control and self-efficacy as the two theoretical concepts that define it. Kimball and Bacon (1993), in agreement with this view, consider the AA to be fundamentally important in the development of self-efficacy/empowerment, suggesting that they allow the individual to discover previously untapped inner resources. These authors believe that the successful resolution of anxiety and mastery over challenging situations, particularly those initially considered beyond the individual’s capabilities, offer “a frontal assault on learned helplessness, dependency and feelings of low self-worth” (p.20).

Achievement is a tangible demonstration to the individual that they are capable beings who possess an ability to accomplish a task successfully, despite their own self-limitations and often when anxiety is retarding and restricting their action.
Achievement and success are the products of the individual’s competence, often new found competence. Being able to perform competently in the adventure setting appears to have an effect on confidence and self-esteem. In the extracts below, individuals talk about overcoming the fear generated by the activity but, after they performed competently and experiencing success, this made them proud.

Extract 7.3: Female participant JobMatch Programme

...overcoming my fear of that abseiling wall because I was shaking going down, I was shaking by there but I done it and I climbed that ladder, that was a fear as well, I can’t believe I done that, proud of myself for that...

Extract 7.4: Male participant JobMatch Programme

...just completing things, doing things that you might not think you were capable of, like getting to the top if you were scared of heights or didn’t have a lot of self-confidence and then you’ll feel better, that you’ve completed something...

From these two extracts it appears that participants, in order to address the exacting demands placed on them, require a high level of motivation to overcome these arduous challenges. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991) provides a theoretical framework which explains the individual’s drive or need to exert competence and mastery in these stressful situations.

Self-determination theory (SDT) is concerned with the role intrinsic motivation plays in determining the individual’s behaviour by focusing on the degree to which behaviour is self-determining. In essence, SDT illustrates the interplay between extrinsic motivation featuring external factors such as grades, evaluations and the perceived opinions of others, that have also appeared in the data: “...the fear of failure sometimes, you know, for me, just you want to do it and if you don’t you’ll feel like a laughing stock...”, compared to other data making reference to intrinsic motivation such as - “...I think the success of overcoming some of the difficult stuff comes from within...” SDT is a theory of human motivation that is concerned with the individual’s inherent proclivity towards growth and self-actualisation based on three universal and innate psychological needs: competence, autonomy and relatedness. SDT posits that individuals are active organisms who are predisposed to engage in challenging events such as adventure activities, in order to
experience competence by endeavouring to exert control and mastery over the challenges facing them. These challenges also determine the individual’s behaviour, in terms of how much effort and persistence is expended in order to achieve personal goals.

Although acts of competence are essential for motivated behaviour (Deci & Ryan, 1991), experiencing competence by itself is not enough. Feeling competent must be accompanied by perceived autonomy for individuals to be intrinsically motivated and “being competent is simply not sufficient for human agency or true self-esteem” (Deci & Ryan, 1995, p.37). In this respect agency appears to be a key factor in self-development within SDT, as will be elaborated upon later in this chapter. Deci and Ryan (1995) make a distinction between two opposing conceptions of self-esteem, one termed contingent self-esteem that is associated with being controlled and pressured by a non-integrated external source and true self-esteem which emanates from the self and is associated with the individual acting agentically. SDT proposes a continuum of varying degrees of external regulation leading to intrinsic motivation (cf. Figure 2.1), referred to as the controlled ↔ self-determined continuum. According to Deci and Ryan, the type of motivated behaviour depends upon the point at which the behaviour falls along this continuum. These authors also suggest that by conceptualising motivated behaviour as falling along this continuum, the theory can explain why individuals have contingent versus true self-esteem.

Previously discussed (cf. Chapter 4) self-esteem has been described as a complex construct portrayed as varying between two poles, similar to that described above: stable/unstable, fragile/secure, defensive/genuine. In the current study these two self-esteem poles have been observed, first the type exhibited by Damian referred to in Chapter 5, who it is suggested, displayed a malevolent form of self-esteem (i.e., unstable, fragile and defensive); compared to the descriptions in the current chapter that appear to be grounded in a sense of self-worth based on effort and achievement. The essential point is that true self-esteem “develops as one acts volitionally (i.e., autonomously), experiences an inner sense of efficacy (i.e., competence) and is loved (i.e., feels related to) for who one is rather than for matching some external standard” (Deci & Ryan, 1995, p.33).
Respondents are unlikely to use technical language to describe everyday events and as such I would like to amalgamate the term self-confidence with the term self-efficacy. After all, sport psychologists have used the terms self-efficacy and self-confidence interchangeably (Gill, 2000), stating that self-efficacy is a task specific form of self-confidence. In other words “Self-efficacy, the perception of one’s ability to perform a task successfully, is really a situation-specific form of self-confidence” (Weinberg & Gould, 2007, p.331). Although efficacy is specific and confidence is a more general indication of an individual’s belief that they can perform successfully, it may be reasonable to assume that in their discourse participants are, perhaps, unlikely to make this distinction.

Confidence/self-efficacy has emerged strongly in these achievement-related and competence-based activity settings. The following are a selection of extracts highlighting a general awareness among participants, who were not the most confident of individuals, who describe the effects of the adventure activity programme on their self-confidence:

Extract 7.5: Male participant

...it builds your confidence, anyone’s confidence doing it I would imagine and mine as well...

Extract 7.6: Male participant

...just things you think you can do, if you push yourself you can do it, just confidence building that’s it really, more than anything because I do lack confidence...

Confidence/self-efficacy appears to differentiate into several sub-themes under the influence of the inherent characteristics of the adventure activity and the social environment the activity fosters. In essence, self-confidence is developed through social interaction and working with others, overcoming fear, overcoming challenges and a realisation that confidence can be transferred to other situations.

The social context in which the activity is located has been reported by some participants to be a confidence-building medium “…built my confidence a lot you know working with people…” During my time in the field trying to build up a relationship with many of the participants was not a straightforward exercise, engaging with them in conversation was not easy, they were reluctant, there was
a sense they were uncomfortable, unsure, ill at ease and somewhat timid. Yet, as the adventure programme unfolded these characteristics began to recede. The lack of confidence these individuals have in a social context and the manner in which the adventure activity moderated this, is best described in the following extracts:

**Extract 7.7: Male participant**

...mucking in with people, a load of people, made me more confident of myself everything you know, it’s been great, but like before I didn’t have much confidence in myself with a load of people around me...

**Extract 7.8: Male participant**

...I’m not really that confident talking to strangers but um, as the day progressed I got to know them a bit better and I started becoming more confident in myself...

**Extract 7.9: Male participant**

Well I feel more confident around people, I feel like, well, when I was young I was pretty shy around people now I’m thinking that’s gone like so I’m really, really happy about that because usually I’m a shy person, I won’t speak to people who speak to me, I’ll say one or two words and that’s about it like, I mean, I’m really confident now like, it’s great like, I mean I speak to people now...

AA are dynamic situations where everyone has the opportunity to be subjected to extrinsic motivation principally offered by the peer group, in a group supporting spirit. The following extract explains how one individual has overcome apprehension during the climbing course, this insight highlights a situation that was very typical of many occasions where individuals received that little bit of encouragement from their fellow participants and instructors:

**Extract 7.10: Male participant**

...well, people motivating me, in the background, um, other people motivating you like, you had Robin and Rory when they were telling you, you know, that you’re going to be safe, they did it before, like, in front of you, demonstrate in front of you that nothing is going to happen and they even jump off the ledge to show you how strong the rope is, really tight and stuff like that, it like gives you the confidence.

Lacking confidence in social intercourse, for some, is no doubt part of their personal make-up, but for others it maybe a symptom of their personal circumstance, such as unemployment, that takes them away from social
interaction, as explained by one JobMatch participant and perhaps the adventure programme offers a much needed escape from isolation and its problems:

Extract 7.11: Female Participant

...it has given me a bit more of a boost because like I said ah I felt ah, as I (.) when I lost my job, and then being stuck in the house I could feel a little bit of depression, the rut started to come whereas I would take the children to the bus stop and come home and stay in all day, just doing the house cleaning...

Without the adventure activity there would not be a social environment and in this sense the activity is preeminent, but also in its capacity to present a ‘real lived' experience perceived as dangerous, one that can evoke emotions such as apprehension and fear, followed by displays of competence and mastery, leading to a sense of achievement, agency and esteem. Most participants find the activity frightening, but at the same time appreciate that overcoming this emotion through displays of competence has contributed to their confidence:

Extract 7.12: Male participant

Well, I can’t explain it, it was like, like on the zip wire for me that was a dangerous um activity but when you landed, it made me feel like good, more confident made me more confident, certain things you are afraid of...

Extract 7.13: Male participant

The abseiling to be honest with you, you have to lean back and have confidence in the, in your eh, feeding the ropes through, you have to have confidence...

Extract 7.14: Male participant

...I think I’ve got more confidence in myself like, like my self-esteem um, some of the things I thought I would never do like I’ve conquered and it was good like...

A surprising outcome concerns the hint of transferability to other situations. Participants suggest that the confidence and achievement gained can transfer to other challenges such as getting a job:

Extract 7.15: Male participant

...I can look up and say, well I’ve achieved that so why can’t I achieve whatever else so you know it’s made me a little bit more confident.
Robin, Rory and Rupert did not make any accommodation for transfer within their training plans. This somewhat let down the ethos of experiential learning, considering that participants understand that their achievement and gain in confidence may have wider implications for future events. From my experience working in outdoor management training, the application or transfer of skills learnt in the outdoor training setting to the workplace was of critical commercial importance - if clients see little evidence of transfer then they would be unlikely to invest in this type of training. Transfer of experiential learning is facilitated through the reflective phase of the training plan (review), where participants are expected to reflect on their experiences and make connections between this and future workplace applications. In the review, metaphors are often used to help make connections, for example, a simple use of metaphor would be to present the challenge of a rock climb as a major work project.

Self-esteem has been the most commonly researched construct studied in the field of outdoor adventure education and has emerged as a principal outcome from the data of this study. Self-esteem has been referred to directly on a few occasions by participants, for example,

Extract 7.18: Male participant

...I have been out of work for ten months and you have like lows all the time probably and uh having been on the climbing ... so your self-esteem then goes from being really, really low to a high...

Direct and categoric references, such as these, to self-esteem are somewhat of a concern, in that the term is so widely used in everyday speech and is frequently mentioned in the media, that its usage may have lost its specific meaning and people may be using the term to describe something other than self-esteem, such as feeling happy rather than ‘how they feel about themselves’. This said, the vast
majority of comments interpreted as referring to self-esteem were made in the following terms -

“...it made you feel much better in yourself...” (Male participant)
“...it’s made me feel better about myself...” (Male participant)
“...I’ve felt excellent in myself...” (Male participant)
“...It makes me proud...” (Male participant)

Exhibiting a high degree of competence in an activity such as climbing and being successful at it appears to underpin self-esteem. In the following extracts participants, in their remarks, consistently refer to their achievement underscoring feelings of pride and self-worth:-

Extract 7.19: Male participant
...on the rock climbing, it was a challenge, it was a big challenge, climbing up that 70 foot wall, but I overcome the challenge (.) [Q: how did it make you feel?] Proud of myself, very proud myself, it was really good...

Extract 7.20: Male participant
...it makes you feel good about yourself, good achievement, you feel happy about it, go home at the end of the day and think, Oh, I done that it was all right...

Extract 7.21: Male participant
...it’s made me feel better about myself cos watching myself you know climb up the wall everything like that.

In the extracts below, individuals talk about overcoming the fear of the activity but after they performed competently at it, experiencing success, this made them proud. Also indicated is the manner in which confidence operates, as the spark or motivational nudge, the belief even though they perceive the task as being difficult they still can do it.

Extract 7.22: Female participant
...overcoming my fear of that abseiling wall because I was shaking going down, I was shaking by there, but I done it and I climbed that ladder, that was a fear as well, I can’t believe I done that, proud of myself for that...

Extract 7.23: Male participant
...just having a bit of your own self-confidence to start with, knowing you can like believe in yourself, I would imagine yeah and doing it and you obviously feel better when you’ve done it.
Extract 7.24: Male participant

...just completing things, doing things that you might not think you were capable of, like getting to the top if you were scared of heights or didn’t have a lot of self-confidence and then you’ll feel better, that you’ve completed something...

These competence-based scenarios provide the individual with an opportunity to master both physical and psychological challenges, by overcoming strong emotions of apprehension and fear. This act of competence over the environment has been described by White (1959) as competence-effectance referred to as the ability to interact effectively with and to master the environment, the benefits of which is a sense of achievement and esteem gained by performing competently in difficult situations.

A number of authors have suggested that self-esteem is founded on intra-psychic feelings of self-efficacy, competence and agency (Franks & Marolla, 1976; Caste & Burke, 2002; Gecas & Schwalbe, 1983). Tafarodi and Swann (1995) believe that self-competence is founded on self-efficacy and involves the individual experiencing themselves as a causal agent, which results in either positive or negative feelings about the self. To these authors, self-competence is a source of efficacy and the more competent and successful individuals become, the more effective they feel. Thus, self-competence appears to be of direct value, the more successful the individual is the stronger efficacy beliefs become and consequently these feelings translate as positive feelings of self-worth (Hill & Buss, 2006). Success and failure change self-esteem, in that success increases efficacy expectations and failure decreases it (Lane et al., 2004); in other words, according to Tafarodi and colleagues (2003) “self-competence is the hedonic imprint that efficacy beliefs have on the self-concept” (p.30).

Participants do not express directly that performing specific tasks and successfully accomplishing goals has made them feel competent, but instead they refer to achievement more often as being beyond their expectations. In effect, competence and achievement are synonymous terms. Achievement is a measure of ability, whereas competence is the condition of being able, both based on an individual’s capacity to be capable and successful. What is of interest within the adventure activity setting is reference to the effect that these activities have of
taking participants outside their ‘comfort zone’, described in the two following extracts:–

Extract 7.25: Male participant

…it felt brilliant, it was, I did, never thought I was going to do it but it was good, when I reached the top, an achievement like

Extract 7.26: Male participant

…before you wouldn’t get me in to do anything like that but that’s one of the top ten best things I’ve done, it’s a great achievement, I’m proud of myself...

These situations provide an opportunity for some individuals to be confronted by a challenge that falls outside any previous experience and, once achieved, evokes a response that seems to directly affect the self-concept. In other words, success in overcoming the adventure challenge appears to improve feelings of self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Experiencing competence and achievement also appear to affect attitudes and possibly future behaviour. In the two extracts below, participants indicate a realisation of competence by controlling their fear. In this sense, they become aware of their self-regulatory powers by addressing or ‘facing-up-to’ these situations and this may in turn affect their behaviour. In the case of respondent 7.27, this individual feels that overcoming a fear of heights has translated to a belief that he can address and achieve other things. Extract 7.28 provides an example of the irrationality of fear, once reasoning is applied to these situations it can initiate an adaptive response by reducing fear, which may possibly lead to the individual feeling less fearful and anxious.

Extract 7.27: Male participant

…well the thing is, I was afraid of heights I went over abseiling and like Robin said if you conquer that you can conquer anything and the thing is if you give it everything it pushes you forward you know, I know now, if you want something you can get it

Extract 7.28: Male participant

…at first I was nervous, I’m terrified of heights, I was shaking, my heart was racing I felt sick, I just, I couldn’t control myself but then as we was doing the yoga [as part of an innovative warm-up] with Robin and we were doing all the breathing techniques and all that I, the second and third day, I flew through it like a duck to water I, it was absolutely brilliant, I’m not even that terrified of heights anymore...
The following extract provides an example of how one participant came to realise a new found sense of agency, by tackling the challenges presented by the adventure activity:

Extract 7.29: Male participant

...you know I can make my own decisions now, like before I was like I always asked someone if it was the right decision to make but now I’m confident to make my own decisions because like if, like same as like, I didn’t have to go up on that ledge, I made that decision myself so it helped me build up a confidence to get onto certain heights and stuff like that and I could face my fears to help me but you know I just wish I’d done the zip line but I just couldn’t get off it...

During the adventure activities undertaken in all three programmes, there was no compulsion placed on participants to take part. The individual in this sense was autonomous; they decided whether or not to jump off a sixty foot tower onto a zip wire. In these situations individuals appear to be goal-directed, self-motivated, able to regulate their own behaviour. Ensuring free will to take action is a fundamental tenet of outdoor education and training. This principle of ‘challenge by choice’ was initially championed by Rohnke (1984) in his seminal publication “Silver Bullets”, where the emphasis in AA is very much placed on the free will of participants - “Participation in this and all activities must result from the student’s own decision and not because of the instructor’s impelling personality and certainly not from any cute coercion tricks” (p.82).

Autonomy is a central underpinning motivational need within SDT to accommodate personal growth and development. It is through the satisfaction of this need that an integrated sense of self develops. Integrating experiences into an individual’s sense of self has been described by Deci and Ryan (1995) as the process by which individuals actively seek out optimal challenges that are determined by free will, which the individual attempts to master and thus integrate into the self-concept. These experiences are said to have implications for psychological health, reduced ego involvement, improved mastery strivings and self-esteem. According to these authors autonomous actions are self-determined, emanating from the individual’s authentic self and “as one behaves autonomously, acting with an internal perceived locus of causality, the behaviour promotes further development of the self and a stronger sense of true self-worth” (p.35).
In essence, the concept of ‘challenge by choice’ empowers participants to actively engage in perceived risk by informing them that they alone determine the degree to which they commit themselves to any challenge. This concept is more than simply a matter of avoiding coercion to engage in the activity, nor should it be viewed as a ‘get out of gaol free card’ or as a licence for excuse making, but rather a means of providing participants with an opportunity to challenge themselves, or not, in a manner according to their own wishes.

Being able to exert self-control and control over the environment has implications for responsible citizenship. According to Bandura (1999), “a sense of personal efficacy is the foundation of human agency” (p.258) and the most central or pervasive aspect of personal agency is the individual’s belief in their capacity to exercise control over daily events (Bandura, 1989). In accordance with this Bandura, Baumeister and Vohs (2003) believe that agency governs behaviour, although these authors use the term ‘executive function’ to describe “the aspect of the self that is ultimately responsible for the actions of the individual” (p. 199). These authors recognise that self-regulation is broadly perceived as the self executing a range of self-controlling activities that include, for example, resisting temptation, persisting in tasks and applying cognitive processes in working towards and attaining specific targets and goals. Self-regulation is implicated in many types of adaptive and maladaptive behaviour and according to Baumeister and Heatherton (1996) self-regulation failure is the likely cause of a number of social and personal problems: crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, educational underachievement, inter alia. This aspect of personal control is critical to the Government’s aim of encouraging the individual to be a more responsible and law abiding citizen. Any process that improves self-efficacy in the form of coping efficacy that may heighten self-regulation and prevent or deter the individual from anti-social behaviour has some utility in this respect. Self-regulation has been referred to as a master function that integrates many of the self’s activities and processes (Baumeister, 2002) and has been identified as a hallmark of successful human functioning (Brown & Mc Connell, 2009).

Active citizenship involves a variety of competencies associated with self-regulation, in terms of avoiding temptation to engage in anti-social and criminal
behaviours, and efficacy beliefs that one is capable of mastering specific goals or challenges presented by the environment. The significant role played by competence and efficacy has been expressed by White (1959) in his notion of competence-effectance which attempts to explain this process. White considers competence to have a motivational aspect and refers to it as the ability to interact effectively with and to master the environment. White regards competence as an intrinsic need and instinct to master the environment that follows hedonic principles. The desire for pleasure is achieved by a successful performance over environmental challenges. Individuals have a need to overcome the unpleasantness of monotony and a tendency to vary behaviour rather than repeat its rigidity. This is accomplished by engaging in novel acts, in seeking out optimal stimulation and excitement, which according to White explains why individuals participate in high risk, dangerous and unpredictable activities. In order to understand the motivational nature of competence, White employs the term ‘effectance’ to account for the urge to activate the neuro-physiological responses associated with optimal stimulatory activity. However, there is no one consummatory climax of satisfaction, but instead a series of satisfying events leading towards a trend of behaviour, rather than a single achievable goal, which White refers to as a ‘feeling of efficacy’ that attempts to describe the affective conditions of effectance.

Participants have recognised that ultimately matters are in their ‘own hands’, as expressed by the two respondents below:

Extract 7.30: Male participant

It’s all you isn’t it, they can’t force you to do anything just it has to come from yourself...

Extract 7.31: Male participant

... I think the success of overcoming some of the difficult stuff comes within myself, a bit of encouragement now and again but it’s all inside yourself to be honest you just need someone to help you find it...

This realisation that how certain events unfold, such as “overcoming difficulties”, is up to them rather than a matter of being motivated by some external force; although extract 7.31 recognises that it does help getting encouragement and support.
Improvements in self-concept appear to have an effect on behaviour, such as acting in a more determined manner to engage in challenging situations. In the following extract Keith describes how the abseiling activity summoned up a realisation that he has the ability to overcome his fear and to approach challenges by being more determined by “giving it everything.” He also states that, in order to overcome his fear of heights, he had to be more trusting and it was this experience that developed his confidence. He believed that his improved confidence made him think more positively about things, which he believed in the future will help him overcome other barriers.

**Respondent: Keith**

Well the thing is, I was afraid of heights I went over abseiling and like Robin said if you conquer that you can conquer anything and the thing is if you give it everything it pushes you forward you know, if you want something you can get it. I’ve got to admit I didn’t want to go down 90 foot abseiling... the thing is if you are positive about things, you know, if you’ve got a barrier like I had a barrier of being frightened of heights, I overcome that barrier so if I’ve got a barrier now I know I can come over it...

It appears that the adventure activity programmes have activated, in a positive way, a number of cognitive and affective units such as efficacy, esteem and locus within the self-system, which in turn appear to have had an influential effect on behaviour. Interview and the field note extracts below appear to show instances of attitude and behaviour change. Performance-based activities are proving to be the most powerful in predicting psychological change according to Bandura (1977), who considers that change is “altered most readily by experience of mastery arising from effective performance” (p.191).

The following scenarios may explain the possible processes by which individuals, when confronted by challenging situations, acted in a positive and adaptive manner. Cognitive aspects such as improved self-confidence built on achievement and success may facilitate a change in the individual’s thinking, from doubt to an awareness of their ability to address and resolve problems. This new found confidence may result in acting in a more constructive way. Thus, acting more agentically may manifest itself in improved affective states, such as improved self-esteem, self-efficacy and internal locus of control. This in turn may lead to behaviour change, where the individual is more willing to engage in future
challenges based on improved confidence and greater agency and perhaps possibly motivated towards a need to feel better about the self.

Self-efficacy is founded on an authentic mastery experience. Authenticity, in respect of outdoor adventure activities, it has been suggested is a key asset, because activities are real and they carry real consequences. Although Bandura does suggest that competence, gained through authentic means, is not immune to faulty and inaccurate ascriptions of personal competence. However, the data obtained in the present study appear to indicate that participants attribute competence and mastery to internal sources, rather than external factors, as explained in the following extracts: “...doing it like, the success comes from yourself...” and “...I think the success of overcoming some of the difficult stuff comes within myself...” Although only a few of these comments were observed in the data, it is revealing that there were no references made to luck or any other external attributional source.

In achievement-related situations such as adventure activities, participants are thought to undertake an attributional search, looking for the causes of success or failure. Individuals, according to Bandura (1989), are neither wholly autonomous nor fully reactive agents to environmental influences but rather make causal contribution to their own actions. Causal attributions in achievement settings appear to have a profound effect on the individual’s self-concept, depending on whether the individual attributes failure or success to internal causes or external factors. Weiner and colleagues (1972) contend that locus influences the affective reactions to an event, with internal attributes resulting in heightened emotional responses, “we think that attributions of achievement outcomes in internal causes also result in greater affect (pride and shame) than attributions to environmental factors” (p.240).

The manner in which adventure activities are organised and administrated, as observed throughout my time in the field, where participants are given the opportunity to act agentically, may have significant implications for self-esteem. The locus dimension, according to Weiner (1985), is preeminent in terms of psychological functioning, following success and failure “for example, success and failure perceived as due to internal causes such as personality, ability, or effort
respectively raises or lowers self-esteem” (p.560). Research indicates that outdoor adventure activity programmes significantly improve evaluative and affective aspects of the self-concept (self-efficacy and self-esteem) but also contribute towards shifts in locus of control, from external to internal locus (Priest, 1992; Marsh et al., 1986a; Wright, 1983). Attributional ascriptions also have a bearing on self-efficacy, according to Weiner (1985) there is a connection between attributional thinking and goal expectancy. Bandura (1977) also recognised that success that is perceived to have resulted from skill, rather than from fortuitous events or special external aids, is more likely to enhance self-efficacy. This suggests that success attributed to stable internal factors would have implications for strengthening beliefs in future success.

Self-efficacy plays a critical role in effective human functioning and performance-based activities, such as AA, that effect change in efficacy beliefs. This change is desirable in terms of its utility towards fulfilling the Government’s strategy to raise aspirations; alter the individual’s attitudes towards themselves; improve educational opportunities; and encourage them to be more responsible law abiding citizens.

Bandura (1989) identifies a number of positive benefits of high self-efficacy that have a direct bearing and particular relevance to the Government’s aims. Individuals high in self-efficacy set higher goals for themselves; they are more motivated towards goal attainment because they exert more effort and persist longer in their efforts; they visualise success, which provides more positive guides to performance; they believe they can exert more control over environmental threats and are less likely to be affected by stress and depression. Individuals low in self-efficacy are more inclined to visualise failure being preoccupied with failure scenarios; in testing situations they give up prematurely and gravitate to less demanding challenges; they feel they have less control over threatening situations, believing they are unable to manage potential threats and thus experience high levels of stress and anxiety; they have a tendency to dwell on aspects of the environment that they perceive to be fraught with danger and harbour self-doubts to be able to deal with such threats; and they display avoidant behaviour. Individuals low in perceived efficacy and self-confidence also run the risk of having
unfulfilled life goals which, according to Bandura, has an impact on esteem and healthy psychological functioning. In that, individuals with “perceived self-inefficacy to fulfil desired goals that affect evaluation of one’s self-worth and to secure things that bring satisfaction to one’s life can give rise to bouts of depression” (p.1178).

The following field note and interview extracts supports the notion that the adventure activity provides a medium that promotes an opportunity for individuals to adopt more positive and adaptive behaviours and attitudes.

Date of Observation: 9th September 2009.
Programme: JobMatch
Venue of Observation: Indoor Climbing Centre, Llangorse.
Activity: Climbing & Rope Work.

Robin and Rory have progressed the activity from yesterday from basic climbing skills with the emphasis on belaying to using specific single coloured hand and foot holds - this makes it more difficult and at the same time develops aspects of technique covered yesterday such as the cognitive/planning elements involved in climbing – thinking ahead of where to place fingers and toes. The group respond well to this challenge, non-climbers are getting involved by issuing advice and encouragement to the climber as they attempt to take on this new demand by showing more deliberate and more controlled movements – climbing skill is improving. Everyone is working well even Charlie has managed to get over a meter up the wall. After about half an hour Robin stops the activity and gathers them around to explain and demonstrate the next progression – climbing up the wall and using pre-set Karabiners to clip on to, using Rory to belay him, Robin demonstrates how to successfully transverse an overhang. Robin is demonstrating and Rory is providing a running commentary with Robin chipping in on occasions highlighting aspects of technique. This is perhaps the most difficult aspect in climbing having the upper body strength and skill to support body weight on the hands only with at the most three points of contact while having the strength and flexibility to manoeuvre one hand into the next hold while the body is supported temporarily by one hand. After a second demonstration Robin drops off the wall and tells the group to have a go. The usual suspects are the first to attempt the overhang. Although almost everyone has a go some fall at the first hurdle while others fall almost at the last eventually Nigel is the first to successfully climb the overhang. What is apparent is the way the majority of the group rise to the challenge and the effort put in is impressive, most of them are determined and persevere eventually a good number of them succeed – they are truly captivated by the challenge of this task. It is encouraging to see the tell-tale signs of personal satisfaction and delight on the faces of those who have achieved the goal with others verbally
and physically slapping the successful ones on the back. The encouragement they give to each other is also noticeable – they are becoming a goal-directed group of individuals who have bonded extremely well.

In this extract, many of the participants were becoming quite achievement-oriented in their behaviour showing more determination and perseverance. The following interview extracts (7.32, 7.33, 7.34) supports changing attitudes and behaviour among participants.

Extract 7.32: Male participant

...all of it was dangerous really, cos you’re climbing up rocks and you could slip and, I know that the person who is belaying you at the bottom is, had you really tight but it’s just you think I’m going to fall into this rock by here or you’re going to fall off this wall, it’s just mental, it’s mental it is, it’s in your head it is, and if that keeps playing on with you you’re never going to do it so you just had to get on with it, so you had to overcome that fear and it made me feel really good it did. It made me feel like Oh I could do anything I can, you know, it’s not just, I’m not just, I play rugby it’s not just I can play rugby I can do other things as well you know it made me, this week’s made me realise I can do more things than just play rugby and stuff like that, it’s made me really, you know, good at other things not just good at one thing, like I honestly thought that I was only good at one thing when I can see that I am good at other things, if I put my mind to it I can do anything it made me realise this week.

This extract demonstrates a change of attitude, becoming more determined to take on new challenges. This individual seems to realise that to achieve specific goals he must overcome mental barriers that, perhaps in the past, have held him back. He now appears to appreciate that if he fails to overcome psychological obstacles then he will never be able to move forward. Successfully confronting and overcoming mental issues (fear), the experience has been uplifting. It has made him feel better about himself, but also has given him the belief (confidence) that he can be good at other things.

Extract 7.33: Male participant

...it does give this feeling of responsibility because you are responsible for keeping that person safe while they are doing these silly things like climbing walls um (laugh) and it does give you um a good feeling that you know that they look down and they see you there and they think that’s alright I can trust him, you know, and that’s what it’s about, it’s about building up trust.

This extract demonstrates an awareness of and a realisation that one has to act more responsibly in these situations because of the very real risks involved. This
may or may not transfer to a change of attitude, nonetheless it is a concrete situation where this individual realises that he has to behave in a very responsible manner because he has to ‘keep that person safe’.

Extract 7.34: Male participant

...I was scared going in to be honest, because of my fear of heights, I was petrified of heights, um but I can’t believe how quick and easy I overcome certain things, I know it was indoors and you get used to that environment, obviously outdoors it would be different, different heights, different things, different factors, but yes it was fantastic, absolutely brilliant it really, really lifted me in my confidence levels, with other people as well. You know how you, because you can look at, when I first seen all these people on the course, when I looked at some of them and you do tend to think or he’s probably a waster, or he’s a bit chopsey but got it totally wrong, totally wrong, everybody, you know I got on with every single one of them, fantastic. You know so it brings people together absolutely it gives people a definite different understanding of people’s thoughts, backgrounds, you know where they come from, and everybody, you can see that everybody is a human being at the end of the day...

This extract outlines two confidence building contexts, first the confidence acquired through the act of overcoming perceived danger and fear, and second the confidence to interact within the social environment. This individual indicates that he possessed a tendency to pre-judge others on their appearance, however, through the process of working closely with these individuals he admits he was wrong to pre-judge people and this experience has changed his attitude towards others.

The adventure activity allowed participants to experience all of Bandura’s (1977) sources of efficacy expectations. All four were highlighted in interview responses: Performance accomplishment (“...it was a big challenge climbing up that 70 foot wall, but I overcame the challenge...”); vicarious experience (“...when I was there and I was watching everybody it looked so easy and I thought...”); verbal persuasion (“...other people motivating you like, you had Robin and Rory when they were telling you, you know, that you’re going to be safe...”); emotional arousal (“...I was nervous, I’m terrified of heights, I was shaking, my heart was racing, I felt sick...”).

The central aspect of self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977) focuses on the individual’s belief in their capacity to exercise control over environmental events
and that these efficacy expectations are responsible for determining motivation, affect and behaviour (Bandura, 1989). In the current study participants have revealed motivational (“...I pushed myself over the limits...”), behavioural (“...I’ve actually done it instead of opting out...”), and emotional (“...you get feelings of really high emotional feelings that you’ve done something...”) in response to the demands of the adventure activity as they strive for mastery and success in these challenging situations.

Performance accomplishments, in terms of mastery over physical and psychological challenges, appear to be the most powerful and fundamentally important aspects that broaden the individual’s perceptions of personal agency. In the present study mastery, particularly against expectations was well documented in interview data.

Extract 7.35: Male participant
“...I didn’t think I could do it, I was really pleased I done that...”

Extract 7.36: Male participant
“...I didn’t think I was going to do it, and when I did it then I thought fair play like...”

Extract 7.37: Male participant
“...it felt brilliant, it was, I did, never thought I was going to do it but it was good when I reached the top, an achievement like...”

In accordance with Bandura (1977) performance accomplishment in terms of mastery and its reciprocal relationship with self-efficacy, the notion that efficacy expectations will motivate performance outcomes in a positive direction also seems to be supported in the data:-

Extract 7.38: Male participant
“...I wanted to achieve because before I left I had to get to the top of the overhang...”

Extract 7.39: Male participant
“...you keep pushing, even though, you know I burnt my legs and it hurt, you know I was aching for hours after I had to do it, because I didn’t want to feel that I couldn’t...”

Extract 7.40: Male participant
“...just things you think you can do, if you push yourself you can do it...”
Extract 7.39 appears to be an indication of the level of expectation of personal mastery, as suggested by Bandura, that will influence the level of effort and persistence individuals will expand in the face of adverse conditions such as fear or in this instance physical pain. Bandura asserts that the level of self-efficacy is determined by magnitude, generality and strength. Magnitude refers to individual differences in the degree to which people will expect to succeed at difficult as opposed to relatively easier tasks, in that some individuals will believe they are capable of mastering difficult and challenging tasks, whereas others consider themselves as being only capable of succeeding at simple ones. Strength of efficacy expectations concerns individual differences in the degree to which the person will persist in the face of disconfirming experiences. Both magnitude and strength have implications for failure with reference to specific activities observed in the current study and will be discussed in Section 7.5. With regard to generality which, according to Bandura, concerns the degree to which some mastery experiences are only believed to be transferrable to similar tasks, whereas others facilitate a generalised sense of self-efficacy that transfers to different tasks and situations. There are indications emerging from the data that suggests that the adventure activity develops a more generalised sense of self-efficacy/self-confidence that is transferrable to different situations:-

Extract 7.41: Male participant
“…well I’ve achieved that so why can’t I achieve whatever else…”

Extract 7.42: Male participant
“…just general confidence, obviously you’re going to think better about yourself so with that confidence you can go and do other things like…”

Extract 7.43: Male participant
“…more confident you know, if you can do that then you can put your mind to anything really…”

These observations are in agreement with Harmon and Templin (1987) who suggest that the personal mastery experience offered by the AA is an effective means of changing the individual’s self-efficacy based on personal accomplishments; and that when these “are perceived to be of great magnitude they tend to be broadly generalised to other situations in which performance had formerly been self-
debilitated by pre-occupation with personal inadequacies" (pp.73-74). Data emerging from the present investigation also appears to demonstrate that self-efficacy/self-confidence was affected in a positive direction as a result of personal accomplishment in difficult testing situations ("...that was a dangerous um activity but when you landed, it made me feel good, more confident..."); and that these types of programmes may facilitate a more generalised sense of self-efficacy that is able to translate to other situations.

7.5: Facing up to Dissonance

The word ‘unique’ is often overstated and used inaptly. However, in the context of adventure education this term describes activities that are unparalleled in the field of education and training. AA have been set apart from traditional education and other variants of experiential learning activities by some authors (e.g., Ewert, 1989; Krouwell & Goodwill, 1994) who regard them as unique learning experiences. These activities are unique because they are without equal within an education or training setting, by presenting situations that carry real risk, danger and uncertainty, which have real consequences. Reality is a critical feature of these demanding activities (Burnett & James, 1994). They represent a learning situation that is anchored in the ‘real world’, they are not simulations, there is no artificiality, the activity is lived and felt and the consequences of the participants actions are also real (Krouwell & Goodwill, 1994). They have been described as confrontation-based experiences, designed to take participants to the edge of their ‘comfort zone’ (Flor, 1991), where they are ‘put on the spot’ characterising an event that offers little room for evasion, that encourages and requires the individual to ‘face up to’ physically and mentally testing situations.

Several authors (Berry, 2011; Meier, 1987; Mortlock, 2004; Priest & Gass, 1997) have stated that if risk, danger and fear were eliminated from the adventure activity, the sense of achievement and success would be lost and with it the critical issue of personal development. If there were a unique, preeminent and fundamental overarching feature of adventure education it is its ability to create dissonance and place participants under constructive emotional stress.
Cole (1987) states that just about all participants attending OB courses had some kind of fear and for the most part these were resolved by “the working out of a particular fear through an accomplishment that led to the individual to confront it and overcome it” (p.291). This was certainly the case in the current investigation, even the two or three who had some previous experience of AA showed a certain level of stress and apprehension.

Stress plays a significant part in the AA process, it would therefore be helpful to expand this discussion into the nature and type of stress and how individuals manage to cope with it. The key to coping with stress in fearful adventure activities argued by Toft (1987) is the individual’s ability to recognise what type of stress they are experiencing. Coping with varying levels of stress is a part of everyday life where the human body is constantly attempting to maintain homeostasis.

The human body’s nervous and endocrine systems are responsible for maintaining homeostasis by constantly counteracting the different types of stress being placed upon it, ensuring that the internal environment maintains a uniformed chemistry, temperature and pressure. When faced by different types of stress the body responds in a stereotypical fashion involving identical physiological responses and adaptations that are required to meet increased demands of stress. Each demand is specific such as when exposed to intense cold the body initially responds by shivering; an involuntary muscular contraction to generate heat, in conjunction with the vasoconstriction of superficial arteries to preserve body core temperature.

Responses to stress are controlled by specific hormones that command and control effector tissue and organs, for example, antidiuretic hormone reduces the production of urine, glucagon increases blood sugar levels and adrenalin increases heart rate. Although each demand is specific, however, according to Selye (1974) when exposed to various stressors there is also a non-specific demand irrespective of the source of stress and that normal homeostatic mechanisms may be insufficient to maintain homeostatic normality.
Stress can be both beneficial and detrimental but cannot be avoided “unless one is dead”. Selye (1974) contends that stressors can be pleasant or noxious - he refers to damaging and unpleasant stress as distress. For example, “a passionate embrace - can produce considerable stress without causing harmful effects” (p.18) compared to being publically humiliated. Although these are different, yet they both elicit essentially the same biological stress response. Selye (1975) attempts to explain the relationship between non-specific stress and its physiological responses (i.e., increased blood pressure, respiratory rate, heart rate and so on) and the stressor (i.e., the environmental factor that causes the response) which can either elicit a beneficial or detrimental effect on the body. To make this distinction he conceptualises a new notion of stress which he terms “eustress, to explain the puzzling fact that, through selective conditioning agents, the actual manifestation of a single stereotyped response to the stress may assume very different aspects” (p.40). Distinguishing between ‘distress’ and ‘eustress’ Selye (1974) argues that distress is harmful to the human machine whereas exposure to intense episodes of eustress has a number of benefits that include “pleasant experiences of joy, fulfilment and self-expression” (p.22). When confronted by fearful AA, participants are subjected to eustress (positive stress) by the use of adaptive dissonance and stretching them beyond their self-imposed limitations. Nonetheless, it is argued that in these situations they experience the physiological responses of non-specific stress as a critical and unique element within the developmental process of adventure education (Gass, 1993; Priest & Gass, 1997; Toft, 1987).

AA are unique in creating situations where many participants experience genuine fear, but in reality these activities are extremely safe. Clearly, some AA such as free climbing, mountaineering at high altitude and diving are extremely dangerous and account for many fatalities worldwide, whereas abseiling, high ropes courses, assisted climbing (belaying) are relatively safe. Nonetheless participants are genuinely fearful of them, however, based on reasoning there is no grounds for such a response. The fearful irrational response is however a key component of the AA experience, its presence is essential, because without it there would be no opportunity to master the dissonance generated by the activity, to overcome one’s self-imposed limitations, to encounter a ‘peak experience’ and experience
heightened improvements in efficacy and esteem. In reality, an individual is more likely to be a fatality statistic as a pedestrian, than by participation in physical activity. For example, in 2007, 646 pedestrians were killed in road accidents in the UK (Office for National Statistics, 2010) whereas mortality in sports participation accounted for 176 deaths and of these, only 12 people were killed in mountaineering, climbing, canoeing, parachuting, sailing and windsurfing accidents (Turk et al., 2008). As a consequence of perceived danger, it can be argued that AA have a unique value in creating situations that generate fear and anxiety compared to more everyday and run-of-the-mill sporting activities such as cycling or gymnastics, which in fact account for 23 deaths, almost twice as many fatalities as AA (Turk et al., 2008). It is the outdoor activity itself that provides the medium in which competence is displayed, by overcoming fear, achieving success and experiencing self-esteem.

Some may argue that AA are no more unique than gymnastics or other everyday sports as a means of generating apprehension and fear. In terms of the ‘real’ dangers involved, I argue that this is both true and false. It is true that gymnastics and mountaineering are both dangerous activities accounting for a number of serious injuries and deaths, but it is also misleading to think that traditional sporting activities carry greater perceptions of misfortune compared to AA. The point made by Ewert (1989) and others is that AA are unique because they not only carry real risk and danger, but also carry higher perceptions of the likelihood of serious injury and death.

AA compared with high-risk Olympic sports like gymnastics are structurally different, in creating more vivid perceptions of danger and risk, leading to higher levels of apprehension, particularly for novices. The gymnast like all athletes, progresses to more complex demanding and dangerous movement replication skills in a controlled incremental training process based on their level of skill and fitness. This incremental process is facilitated by various types of safety and support equipment (e.g., soft sprung flooring, foam landing pits, various types and sizes of crash mats, supporting techniques and devices); designed to develop confidence in the gymnast as they strive towards mastering ever increasing complex movements that carry increased likelihood of injury. The function of
these items of equipment is to reduce the fear of injury in the event of a poor execution of skill. Finally, at the performance level, when the gymnast has achieved a high level of technical proficiency these supports are withdrawn. The use of confidence and skill building aids do not apply in AA settings, neither is there an incremental progression into activities such as abseiling. A further point is that many adventure activities involve simple physical movement skills that everyone can perform, such as jumping off a platform onto a zip wire or abseiling wall. They do not involve the gradual progression to more dangerous and complex movement skills as is the case of gymnastics and other Olympic sports, there is no measured progression in AA, exposure to danger and fear provoking activity is immediate.

A fundamental difference between the risks and dangers involved in traditional sports and AA is the natural environment. Making a rugby tackle, with the head in an incorrect position, or too much speed and forward rotation off the springboard performing a vault (i.e., lapse of skill) may result in serious injuries; these generally lie within the control of the athlete, whereas within the AA there are dangers that fall outside personal control. I am not suggesting that lapses in concentration and skill or poor judgement do not occur in adventure activities. It is the natural environment, irrespective of how experienced, skilled, fit or how much control the individual can exert, that provides real and uncontrollable danger. On a personal level having come close to disaster with altitude sickness, early-stage hypothermia and a faulty demand valve when diving, one clearly understands the dangers involved and the unforgiving nature of the natural environment. It is through an appreciation of the inherent and uniquely unpredictable nature of this environment, in terms of dramatic drops in temperature, the severity of the topography, the consequences of equipment malfunction, and the real possibility of drowning and falling from heights all provide a vivid realisation of danger, that I have certainly experienced in AA but not when playing rugby or being involved in gymnastics. There is also the effect that the media has in propagating a heightened awareness of risk and danger of AA portrayed in news bulletins featuring climbing/mountaineering fatalities, such as those last winter in the Highlands of Scotland and North Wales, and the recent tragedy involving the Territorial Army in July 2013 on the Brecon Beacons, all of
which provide periodic reminders of the dangers involved in operating in the natural environment.

Perceptions of danger and the fear that is evoked in high-impact activities such as climbing result in a state of emotional stress referred to as cognitive dissonance. Dissonance according to Festinger (1957) is a psychologically uncomfortable state that the individual is motivated to alleviate “as soon as dissonance occurs there will be pressure to reduce it” (p.5).

Fear-provoking activities, based on danger both real and imagined, give rise to a state of dissonance and it is this capacity that is purposefully promoted by instructors as a ‘personal testing phenomenon’ (Ewert, 1987; 1989). According to Hopkins and Putnam (1993), dissonance is the key element that alters personal value systems and behaviour. When confronted by situations they have insufficient experience of incongruity arises between past experiences and those the individual is currently facing and it is because of “incongruity or dissonance between them, that we adapt by expanding or changing our behaviour patterns” (p.81). The adventure activity is used to focus attention between past, present and future experiences, by placing the individual outside their ‘comfort zone’, what Hopkins and Putnam refer to as a state of perturbation. These authors state that in a normal learning situation, learning occurs incrementally in a series of perceptions and insights, not so in the adventure setting. Here participants are influenced by high levels of dissonance/perturbation, they suggest that now the individual’s frame of reference has changed fundamentally to accommodate new insights and capacities and that this transformation occurs radically rather than incrementally.

To appreciate the impact fear-evoked dissonance plays in the process of self-concept development and behaviour change, the focus should be directed at the boundary between the ‘comfort zone’ and the act of participating in the AA. The ‘comfort zone’ represents the familiar, safe, predictable and often emotionally inert common experiences encountered in everyday life; whereas the adventure activity represents novelty, danger, risk and uncertainty which are emotionally active. A constructive state of dissonance occurs at the comfort zone—adventure activity boundary generated by perceptions of danger that pose a potential threat to the individual’s safety and wellbeing (Darst & Armstrong, 1991).
In these emotionally charged confrontation-based situations, it is assumed that the magnitude of dissonance is high due to the level of fear evoked and the need to restore consonance (consistency) (Ewert, 1989). Dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) proposes that the individual is motivated to resolve dissonance by changing one or more of three elements: reduce its importance, change a cognitive element, or add a new cognitive element. Hopkins and Putnam (1993), relying on an argument put forward by McVicker Hunt (1960), suggests that in the adventure activity in order to reduce dissonance the individual adapts by expanding or changing behaviour. This is achieved by addressing the challenge. Now participants change their attitude, the challenge is now viewed as not having the same level of danger (i.e., reducing its importance); or conversely avoiding it. In the current study an example of approach, illustrating a reduction in dissonance by addressing the activity was observed when one participant faced the zip wire challenge “…what if them bolts are lose…” versus Robin’s words of reassurance “…you’re safe, nothing’s going to happen…” As suggested by Berry (2011), the participant is unwilling to accept both outcomes at the same time and therefore is motivated to resolve the dissonance, in this instance by attempting the zip wire.

Joshua Aronson and colleagues (2009) have argued that the self-system is a central element in the dissonance process and by changing the individual’s self-concept appears to be an effective means of reducing dissonance. Berry (2011) has applied this notion of dissonance to the adventure setting by arguing that dissonance created by the potential for injury or death and highlighted in the zip wire example above, is believed to create a situation in which the participants in adventure activities are obliged to develop new psychological strategies to overcome the demands placed on them. In effect, the adventure activity acts as a “catalyst for behaviour change because participants feel that they can begin to develop a fresh sense of identity” (p.32).

Priest’s (1990) adventure experience model (cf. Figure 3.2) explains that challenge is represented by the interplay between risk and competence generated by dissonance for optimal self-development to occur. For the self to grow a gap or dissonance between perceptions of competence and risk must be established (Bunyan, 2011); high-impact activities such as climbing are consistently used to
expand this gap, pushing participants past the limits of comfort into perturbation (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993). In the model, dissonance is created in the ‘peak adventure zone’ where the individual is required to resolve uncertainty, apprehension and fear. In this zone individuals are stretched up to and beyond their self-perceived limits, where according to Zook (1987), they respond by adopting coping strategies that “foster self-awareness and self-esteem” (p.11).

Placing participants in stressful situations, stretching them beyond their self-perceived limits by exposing them to dissonance appears to be the place at which adventure activities work most effectively creating a ‘peak’ or ‘flow’ experience. Nadler (1993) presents a description of the processes occurring at the comfort zone—activity boundary which explains how individuals succeed at coping with dissonance and achieve the challenge inherent in the adventure activity. According to Nadler some participants break through the ‘edge’ between the comfort zone and into the new territory of success, whereas others retreat back into more familiar comfortable patterns of behaviour; both of which in accordance with Festinger (1957) will reduce dissonance, but not lead to the same growth outcomes. Figure 7.1 describes the process of breaking out of the comfort zone into the unknown. This involves taking a risk and experiencing a moment of emotional intensity where the internal cognitive process of dissonance represented by “a psychological tension or pressure that each individual attempts to lessen” (p.62) is experienced. Nadler believes that individuals motivated to reduce tension and attempt to break through the dissonance will change their behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. He states that novel settings such as adventure activities are fundamental in transporting individuals to the edge of their circle of comfort by creating anxiety, dissonance and frustration. In Figure 7.2, Nadler identifies the resources that the participant relies on, such as trust and effort, that facilitate success. At the ‘edge’, he believes that normal familiar patterns of acting will be unsuccessful at resolving dissonance. The participants are therefore forced to search for new ways to ease their heightened emotional states which result in restructuring their cognitive maps. This “process is a critical initial step in bringing about appropriate therapeutic change” (p.63).
AA are dynamic, physically and psychologically demanding situations that are novel experiences, and for the vast majority of those individuals exposed to them create dissonance. Overcoming dissonance, created by both physical and psychological challenges, participants experience achievement and this demonstrates to themselves and others their competence as they master the AA environment and as they attempt to exert control over dissonance. The interview extracts below, featuring Megan and Freddy, together with the observational field note describing the river jump (discussed in Chapter 6), provide a glimpse into the impact these experiences have.

Megan explains her thoughts, feelings, emotions and aspirations that provide a glimpse into the impact the adventure activity has on her anxiety, competence and achievement which, in turn, affects her self-esteem and self-efficacy/confidence.

Respondent: Megan

...the abseiling it was ah you know, it was, it was to, when I was there and I was watching everybody it looked so easy and I thought God, you know Megan come on, but you know obviously I, I mean some of them didn’t have the same fear as I had, I had really, they probably did but I thought Oh Megan you know, but, and like after you come and talked to me I thought, yeah I’m going to do it, and I got to the top and I have never experienced fear like that where I felt sick, do you know what I mean, I’ve never experienced that, never, but like I said I done it and it was amazing, and when I got to the bottom it was the best feeling in the world, not that I’d repeat it again because I’m proud of what I’ve done but eh, maybe I would you know again, you know in time but I was on such a high from that, that I didn’t want to do it again just in case I couldn’t again. Um, but like knowing that you can do it, knowing that you know, if you really want to you can do it and
that’s, it’s a drive in you as a person int it, you know and I think that’s what’s, that’s what I found with me you know, cos I’ve never gone rock climbing it was all new to me, I can’t remember even as a child, I probably rock climbed you know, but it’s not something that’s second nature to me, but you know if it’s, if you want to do it you’ll do it won’t you. You know if you want it enough you’ll do it. Like I said to you earlier on about people on the dole it’s so confidence building you know, it’s team playing, it’s you know, it’s just, you know once you do this, I think yeah I am worth something, I can, you know it’s been a good week yeah, I can go and work, I can get back to work and I, you know cos I have been out of work for a bit now and I feel ready to get back....

This is an example of one individual’s experience of completing a task that, initially, was perceived beyond her ability and natural inclination to engage with. Her action demonstrates competence to both overcome acute and powerful feelings of fear as she successfully completes the abseil. I have chosen this extract, from many, because it speaks of the deep feeling of uncertainty, almost paralysing fear that the individual has to confront when faced with challenges of this nature and a total lack of self-belief in their ability to overcome them. In this instance, Megan’s rational thought processes take precedence, her fear is controlled and she does the abseil and experiences the euphoric emotions felt through her success, such as amazement in her accomplishment, pride, joy and elation, which has a positive impact on her self-esteem. Expressed here is also a realisation that this competence, strength, ability is attributed intrinsically to the self.

Megan was typical of most participants on both JobMatch programmes, although there were a few who had experienced adventure training, two of whom whilst in the army. However, these activities, for the majority, were novel experiences where individuals had to battle against their apprehension and fears, pre-set limitations and inclinations towards self-defeatism. Despite having to manage constantly with conflict, the majority were successful, in the same way as Megan.

The type of activity reflects the degree to which participants experience dissonance. Activities such as climbing and sailing evoked more intense emotions of fear and thus challenge, compared with hill walking and orienteering.

Vicarious experience appears to be a factor in explaining how some participants overcome dissonance, as previously explained by Megan, “I was watching
everybody it looked so easy and I thought God, you know Megan, come on, but you know obviously I, I mean some of them didn’t have the same fear as I had, I had really, they probably did but…” The following interview extract also emphasises the motivational importance of vicarious experience during adventure activities:

Extract 7.44: Male participant

And when you’ve watched other people as well, climb, and you see that they haven’t been able to do it the first time, and you watch them again the second time when they actually complete it you can see well, a little bit of practice and you can get it. Whereas, you know, when you think you can’t do it you just keep thinking you can’t do it, whereas when you see that you’ve seen that it can happen, it like helps you on.

In the previous chapter the jump into the river was presented as an example when participants were confronted by a dissonance-provoking activity. All group members eventually managed to cope with their apprehension and fear when confronted by what appeared to be a dangerous and foolhardy act. The act of jumping and also abseiling do not involve complex human movement skills and in this respect are within everyone’s physical capabilities. A comparable experience to the ledge jump into the river, on the climbing course, is the zip wire (Photograph 7.1). The following references to the zip wire are made in interviews, these provide an insight into the feelings and thoughts expressed by individuals when having to drop or jump from heights.

Photograph 7.1: The zip wire.
Extract 7.45: Male participant

[Q: When you overcame that nervousness and anxiety how did it make you feel?] A lot better in myself because at the top of the zip cord, for some reason, I don’t know why the zip cord, cos I was asking Robin before I went off the edge how much was I gonna drop like and he said I don’t know, I don’t know, you might go a bit you might not, but I done it, you do feel a lot better, you think I could do that next time without nervousness.

Extract 7.46: Male participant

[Q: Which activity do you think was the most dangerous?] Erm, again probably the abseiling even though I know Robin was looking after everything, he was on the ball like, and nothing was going to happen. (.) But it’s just going off the edge and then going off something gradual cos you’re in the air for a long time when you’re abseiling, and the zip fly you’re there, two seconds and you’re gone and landing on the other side.

Extract 7.47: Male participant

…Well, I can’t explain it, it was, like on the zip wire for me that was a dangerous um activity but when you landed on the other side, it was well, just relieved sort of thing.

Extract 7.48: Male participant

[Q: OK, what was the most dangerous one you did?] The zip line, egh it’s getting yourself off the ledge, it’s not like you just run and then go for it, you’re sitting on the ledge and you’ve just got to trust in your equipment and your leaders. Just go for it, obviously if you go for it you achieve the final goal.

Extract 7.49: Male participant

[Q: Which one did you fear the most?] Um, the death slide, where you have got to sit on the ledge, where Freddy struggled there. You know there’s a drop beneath you and you’re going to feel that drop that’s all, and you’re looking at the shackles, you’re looking at the bolts thinking well they’re bolted, but what if them bolts are loose you know. What if they do come out? That was the worse one for me, but everyone was looking at me so I thought right then, I’ve got to do it, so I done it.

Extract 7.50: Male participant

…also the zip slide coming off the edge and that kind of free falling like, but eh, that was quite challenging like I’ve got to be honest.

These extracts provide an insight into the nagging doubts and the trust participants need to have in both their instructors and equipment before they commit to dropping from a height that would result in serious injury or be fatal if anything were to malfunction.
Unfortunately, not everyone achieved every challenge as explained in the following extracts.

Extract 7.51: Male participant

[Q: What was the most challenging activity?] The most challenging for me was getting on the ledge to do the zip line even though I didn’t finish it, I couldn’t. That was a challenge to me although I got onto the ledge and I was chuffed. I got onto the ledge and I wanted to finish doing it, but I just couldn’t, I just couldn’t get myself off but I think in the future I will do it.

Extract 7.52: Male participant

…The one thing that I didn’t do though which disappointed me is the zip wire because after seeing people going on it, it’s just the initial drop first before it starts going, weren’t my cup of tea, that weren’t, not at all. That’s the one that scared me the most, and that’s why I didn’t do it (laughs). Everything else was alright.

Extract 7.53: Male participant (Freddy)

…it helped me build my confidence to get onto certain heights and stuff like that and I could face my fears to help me but you know I wished I’d done the zip line but I just couldn’t get off it, I will before long though.

It was the last day of the course, Robin and Rory eased back on the technical elements of climbing allowing participants a free choice of activity. A few who had been ‘bitten by the climbing bug’ chose to develop their climbing skills, under Rory’s guidance, whereas others chose the abseiling and zip wire options, with a little bit of encouragement from Robin. In this group was Freddy, who drew a certain amount of attention because of the time he spent procrastinating on the zip wire platform, mustering up the courage to go. First, Robin attached him to the wire through his harness, thereafter Freddy was glued to the spot displaying the same timid feeble movements Megan had. Eventually, after a lengthy span of time and considerable persuasion, Freddy was still routed to the same spot. Robin changed tactics and managed to get Freddy to sit down over the edge of the platform. This was a sound approach because, from a sitting position, the drop would not be so violent. There was a certain amount of slack in the wire, which meant there was a more violent vertical drop before horizontal movement along the wire. Despite Robin’s efforts, Freddy just could not get himself to take the plunge and eventually Robin stood him up, unbuckled him from the wire, before Freddy made his way back down from the platform. At the time, I thought this was
a negative outcome for Freddy to cope with, however, in his own words he felt that he had been successful in other things, such as climbing on the wall and overcoming his fear of heights, which appeared to compensate for the failure. Although failing to complete the zip wire, he still expresses a positive attitude looking to the future, stating that he will at some stage conquer this situation. The other two participants who did not achieve success in overcoming the challenge of the zip wire activity also focus on more positive outcomes, one stating that they were “chuffed” by even getting onto the ledge.

It has been mentioned previously (cf. Chapter 3) by Brown and Fraser (2009) that to invoke levels of anxiety and place individuals in situations where failure is likely, is ethically suspect. Contrary to the view of these authors, participants in the current investigation appear to find their own level of risk/challenge. Ample opportunity was given, on the rare occurrences where failure was observed, to re-visit the risk/challenge a second time, when success was achieved by the overwhelming majority. The three occasions of failure involved the zip wire which was explained during interviews as an inability to deal effectively with dissonance. However, despite failing, these individuals appeared optimistic, stating that one day they would succeed; they also reflected on their successes achieved at other activities within the programme of which they were proud. These reflections may be interpreted as a means of compensating for the disappointment experienced by failure. In this sense, failure and success during an adventure programme appears to run along a continuum where individuals seem to measure their success in percentage terms - “I was 95% successful on the task in the programme”.

Yet it appears that by placing individuals in these very situations, where failure is a possibility, noticeable benefits can occur such as positive attitude change, improvement in esteem and efficacy. It is questionable that failure has the negative effect suggested by Brown and Fraser. With reference to the field note extract, featuring climbing on 9th September 2009, very few participants achieved negotiating the overhang, although everyone had a go (for the reader unfamiliar with climbing, Figure 7.3 provides a visual description of this feature). In terms of failure, this was a notable occasion yet this failure went unrecorded during interviews. Although there were two references made by successful climbers,
stated in the following extracts: “The most challenging, eh, that would have been one of the climbs, the overhang climb for me personally” and “[Q: What was the most challenging activity?] It was the overhang, the big overhang, a couple of awkward moves like where you’ve got to put your body into some awkward positions”.

Figure 7.3: Diagram of Climber Negotiating an Overhang.

The lack of success at this activity encountered by the majority has passed without comment. Their lack of success was principally the result of physical conditioning and partly poor technique - they simply were not strong enough to support their body weight whilst relying on three points of contact to move position on the climbing wall and having to cope with the effects of gravity.

Failure appears not to be the traumatic event Brown and Fraser suggest. Wright (1987) in a similar vein to Mortlock (2004) believes that within any learning environment failure is inevitable, it must be dealt with and individuals need to interpret failure. Wright suggests that when failure occurs the individual must analyse the situation from a realistic perspective to determine the factors attributed to the failure: insufficient skill, lack of effort or some external cause such as the weather or bad luck. A realistic self-appraisal leaves no place for excuse making in learning situations and “providing only mastery experiences similar to the errorless learning model would seem to be less effective than a model which provides an interpretation for failure” (p.87).

Within the AA setting Cole (1987) suggests there is a different meaning to success and failure where experience and not capital is accumulated. Success in these activities is not a matter of striving towards ‘brownie points’ but rather “a sense of
satisfaction that one had responded positively to a particular challenge” (p.290). Rising to the challenge of an AA, according to Cole, the word failure loses its negative connotation because failure is encountered many times in these novel and unfamiliar situations. He believes that failure is a reality to embrace rather than a stigma to shun and that failure of others is viewed with empathy in the light of one’s own thwarted efforts. Cole recalls, “I fell seven times in one rock climb before I found a way to move my body over a piece of protruding cliff, it did not make me the lesser person for trying and not succeeding” (p.290).

Failure situations observed in the current study were sometimes skill related as described by Cole, but were also associated with instances when individuals failed to overcome ‘themselves’ rather than physical obstacles as described in the case of Freddy. On these few occasions trepidation and dread were too powerful to overcome and it appeared to affect male participants exclusively. Although there was a clear difference between the genders shown towards overcoming fear, any suggestion that women are less fearful and more courageous than men would be misleading. There appears to be no empirical evidence to suggest there is a clear gender difference between males and females in terms of which gender is more susceptible to fear (Gray, 1987). Although female rats on average are less fearful than male rats and according to Gray there “is some evidence that the same pattern hold in our own species, there is much stronger evidence that it does not” (p.112).

The outdoor adventure activity is a source of dissonance, and it is by subjecting participants to unfamiliar fear-provoking experiences that are perceived to be beyond their level of ability, that generates conflict, which the individual is motivated to alleviate (Ewert, 1989). Presented with conflict, the individual is induced to overcome dissonance and in so doing, facilitates and establishes competence and mastery over the challenge, which in turn provides the individual with an insight into their behaviour (Priest & Gas, 2005). Thus, by overcoming dissonance in the form of a seemingly insurmountable challenge, the individual may adopt new behaviours and attitudes such as courage, determination and perseverance. As Gibson (1979) suggests, the individual comes to recognise their
achievements that go beyond their self-perceived and self-imposed limitations; perhaps, for the first time, these individuals see themselves as competent.

Megan provides a good example of an individual who is exposed to a fear-provoking experience, who exhibits the tell-tale signs of uncertainty and trepidation when faced by a task she considered beyond her perceived self-efficacy range. Megan, after some time in contemplation and experiencing high levels of anxiety “never experiences fear like that where I felt sick”, performed the abseil displaying competence and mastery over almost paralysing fear and then reaping euphoric emotional rewards in amazement of her achievement such as pride, joy and elation “it was amazing, ...best feeling in the world... I’m proud of what I’ve done... I was on such a high”.

This success appears to initiate dramatic changes in Megan’s self-perceptions that appear to invoke feelings of esteem. Mruk (2006a; 2006c) regards self-esteem as a dynamic entity, which is contingent upon success and in this respect, according to Mruk, self-esteem is a motivational force that drives the individual to master the various challenges confronted in everyday life. This view is supported by Tevendale and Du Bois (2006) who state that “the interventions that have proved most successful at enhancing levels of self-esteem are oriented toward increasing participants’ actual day-to-day experiences of mastery” (p.175). Megan overcame the challenge presented to her by the abseil. Perhaps Megan’s action can be explained and interpreted by Mruk’s (2006a; 2006c) view of self-esteem characterised as a basic human need motivated by, and dependent upon, mastery and success. In other words, Megan’s decision to step off terra firma and onto the vertical wall was one driven by consequences to the self. These consequences refer to the imaginary results of the cognitive process involved in the internal conflict within Megan, the consequence of refusal (failure) to address the challenge and the consequence of overcoming the challenge - being successful.

Self-esteem, in Mruk’s view, is associated with the value or quality of the individual’s actions. Performing competently will result in positive feelings and poor performance or failure will result in negative feelings, this implies something about the degree to which the individual has exhibited mastery which in turn is linked to the individuals’ sense of self-worth. In Megan’s case, driven by the need
to feel good rather than bad about herself she stepped off onto the vertical wall not just in the physical act of abseiling towards the ground, but also towards mastery over her fear and lack of self-belief. The feedback Megan may have received from this successful action confirmed that she did it as a freely determined act. Autonomous action such as this, performed by Megan, is an important aspect of outdoor adventure activity and a critically important element in developing genuine/true self-esteem. As Deci and Ryan (1995) state, “to be self-determined and to develop true self-esteem, people need to feel that their successes are truly their own – they must feel autonomous rather than controlled” (p.43).

Being there with Megan, experiencing her body language and muted utterances, and an occasional “no, I can’t” in response to words of encouragement from Robin, seemed to provide an insight into the internal conflict within Megan. As an observer one perceives and imagines the possible cognitive processes being generated within Megan as she stands almost horizontal, riveted to the abseiling wall suspended sixty foot above a vertical drop. At instances, Megan almost overcame the ‘moment of inertia’ only to ‘freeze-up’ again. She appeared to cycle in and out of thoughts of “yes, I can do it” and “no, I can’t do it, because...” In these fleeting episodes, cycling in and out of self-doubt and self-confidence, perhaps she is experiencing a rationalisation of the consequences of success and failure. The mental processes stimulated by the seemingly insurmountable challenge of the abseil perhaps involves dissonance between a desire to perform the abseil and the conflict between this need and imagined ‘what if scenarios’? What if there is an equipment failure? What if the instructor makes a mistake? What if I am paralysed by fear half way down? How will I feel if I don’t do this? And so on.

Overcoming fear is a fascinating psychological phenomenon, which characterises a unique element within outdoor adventure education and training. Fear can be an illogical and sometimes debilitating force. To quote US President F.D. Roosevelt, in his 1933 inaugural speech to the American people, “we have nothing to fear but fear itself”. In other words fear can be unreasoning, unjustified, in essence irrational, but most importantly it can paralyse action. According to White (1959)
fear together with exploration are conflicting forms of behaviour and that exploration performs an anxiety reducing function. White states that this view can be defended by logic - “Fear shows itself in either freezing or avoidance, whereas exploration is clearly an instance of approach” (p.300). White argues that humans (animals also) strive to master their environments, which they achieve through an exploratory tendency and it is this mastery approach which fosters pleasure and enjoyment in one’s abilities. In this sense, White views competence as a motivational force or, put differently, a need to deal with the environment, which also has a bearing on self-esteem.

The motivational aspect of competence and mastery over the environment perhaps explains Megan’s behaviour. Despite experiencing “sickening fear”, Megan performed the abseil which can be interpreted as an instance in which she needed to exert her competence and mastery over the situation presented to her. The result of her successful action resulted in an acute feeling of achievement, in her own words “amazing”, “best feeling in the world” and “proud of what I’ve done”. The point can also be made that individuals approach potentially hazardous situations through various individual needs and motives. For example, some individuals are motivated to raise their level of stimulation and excitement, as Kenyon (1968) has stated, to experience vertigo - risk, danger and thrill while others perhaps do so because of self-actualising needs.

Megan’s abseil is one of many examples occurring within AA, which produce acute changes in a number of outcomes, such as those observed in this study, for example, overcoming anxiety, improved self-confidence and improved positive mood. It appears from the data generated in this study, AA programmes provide a powerful medium for a range of developmental outcomes. In essence, AA can be viewed as events that effect change, it is reasonable to draw comparisons between these activities and what Mruk (2006c) terms ‘self-esteem moments’.

According to Mruk (2006c) events that are important to the individual, that generate success or failure, constitute poignant self-esteem experiences. He defines these occasions as “situations in which one’s experiences of his or her own self-esteem become particularly active, thematic and alive, or simply lived” (p.21-22). Mruk explains that self-esteem moments are dual in nature; they are
situations that require both competence and worthiness in the present, referred to as the ‘surface conflict’, together with an awareness of unresolved conflict from the past, referred to as ‘source conflict’. Mruk believes that these conflicts involve solutions that are either optimal and adaptive, or dysfunctional, based on whether the solution is competent/incompetent or worthy/unworthy. In Megan’s situation, the optimal solution presented by the surface conflict of addressing the abseil is to confront and overcome fear, however, the underlying source conflict projects itself beyond the present, by evoking historically painful past experiences reflected by a lack of competence or worthiness that result in dysfunctional avoidant and inauthentic behaviour. Mruk states that at these junctures the individual finds themselves at a ‘crossroads of self-esteem’, at these instances the individual has a choice – to take action, that will lead to the possibility of a successful outcome and corresponding enhancement of self-esteem - a self-esteem moment; or avoid the action expressed through beliefs of incompetence and unworthiness. At the self-esteem crossroad, the individual “sees an uncertain, less trodden, pro-self-esteem path leading in one direction and a secure, well-known, safe, but ultimately anti-self-esteem road leading in another” (p.136).

What motivated Megan to take the pro-self-esteem path and her decision to engage in the abseil? In answer, Mruk believes that arriving at the pro-self-esteem choice is motivated by the strength and significance of a realisation by the individual of what is at stake – a sense of taking responsibility, a determined movement away from historical perceptions of incompetency and unworthiness towards self-actualisation and expectations of self-pleasure gained from a realisation of what one could achieve. Inherent in the self-esteem moment, achievement becomes a part of self-history that transforms self-esteem in a positive direction. In Megan’s case, her successful abseil became a declaration of her new found competence, which stands as testimony to guide future pro-self-esteem decisions. Mruk also recognises that other factors are at play, such as how much social support the individual receives during self-esteem moments.

One moment of mastery and success does not necessarily equate to a definitive moment of change, it appears that some individuals low in esteem and efficacy
beliefs remain affected by residual self-doubt, even in their moment of triumph. The persistence of self-doubt is highlighted in Megan’s testimony:—

... it was the best feeling in the world, not that I’d repeat it again because I’m proud of what I’ve done but eh, maybe I would you know again, you know in time but I was on such a high from that, that I didn’t want to do it again just in case I couldn’t again.

Although Megan proclaims to have experienced positive emotions and pride, in the same breath she casts doubt on her ability to repeat the abseil. This observation appears to fit well with what Baumeister and Tice (1985) describe as possible responses to success, by low self-esteem individuals who lack confidence in their abilities. These authors note that low self-esteem individuals, when they experience success, are unlikely to feel the need to repeat the success because they lack the self-belief that they can achieve it again and fear the possibility of failure.

Adventure activity programmes appear to be worthy interventions that promote a positive self-concept, particularly in elevating esteem. However, Megan’s testimony, with reference to “not wanting to do it again”, raises concerns regarding self-consistency issues of low self-esteem individuals. According to self-consistency theory, individuals strive to maintain consistent beliefs about themselves and, in this context, success experienced by an individual low in self-esteem is likely to be inconsistent with their self-beliefs. It would be helpful for instructors to be aware of this and on such occasions take a more proactive position in encouraging these individuals, like Megan, to further repeat their success rather than allowing them to disengage.

Megan’s evidence outlines the role played by adventure activities in exposing the individual to danger, threat, fear and uncertainty and the effective learning experience it offers. But do all adventure activities offer the same level of benefit? For the purpose of cost effectiveness of adventure programmes it is helpful to consider whether activities, that offer varying intensities of danger, provide the same degree of change to personal value systems and behaviour. This concern is touched upon in a study investigating the benefits of survival-based wilderness programmes; Kaplan (1974) stated that participants reported the abseiling elements were the most challenging, exhilarating and exciting, conveyed
feelings of fear and elation. During my studies in the field, I observed a number of activities that included: hill walking, orienteering, sailing, climbing, gorge walking, canoeing and mountain biking. It was apparent that the activities which carried greater impressions of risk and danger, notably climbing and ropes courses, elicited the more intense responses (i.e., timid body movements, lip biting, *inter alia*). These activities also elicit the most powerful reactions of satisfaction to the challenge, demonstrated by facial expressions such as wide smiles and grins, together with verbal exclamations and physical gestures, indications of a sense of accomplishment and pride. Therefore, in terms of cost effectiveness, activities that evoke the more intense affective responses also appear to have a greater impact on self-concept, trust and responsibility which perhaps, should justify greater investment.

In a study of an OB programme, Ewert (1988) identified twenty-three items relating to the self-reported fears of participants. Findings suggest that the programme was effective in reducing specific situational-based fears. In an earlier study, Ewert (1987b) investigated an OB programme that involved hiking and mountain climbing and found that the course reduced levels of trait anxiety among participants, albeit this effect declined over time. Ewert states that, within the context of the study, fear and anxiety were regarded as “synonymous and refer to a complex set of emotional and/or physiological responses caused by the perception of some danger or threat” (p.107). Results also suggest a negative relationship between anxiety and self-confidence. Ewert suggests that outdoor activity programmes, such as OB, are effective in enhancing self-confidence and at the same time reduce levels of trait anxiety, and that this concomitant effect between “increases in self-confidence and corresponding decreases in reported levels of anxiety are the systematic desensitisation, flooding and modelling aspects of the Outward Bound course” (p.115). The link between heightened levels of self-confidence by overcoming fear and anxiety and the subsequent enhancement of self-esteem, were addressed by Iso-Ahola and colleagues (1988) who investigated the relationship between participation in rock climbing and self-esteem. These authors suggest that perceived competence may be a critical mediator between activity participation and self-esteem. They found that successful climbing
experiences resulted in a high sense of self-competence, which had a significant effect on increasing self-esteem.

7.6: Architects of the Learning Environment

In accordance with the outcomes observed in the YOT and Pathways programmes, instructors and staff also emerge as key figures in the JobMatch programme. They influence the learning environment, playing a critical role in shaping a productive experiential learning process. With reference to the Walsh and Golins’ Model (cf. chapter 3) Sibthorp (2003) recognises how important instructors are within the model in their ability to establish a unique social environment, co-created by themselves and participants. Hattie and colleagues (1997) have highlighted the important role instructors have in providing challenging tasks, by setting specific goals such as abseiling down a 60 foot cliff and structuring the social support and encouragement necessary for participants to achieve these goals. However, they also recognise that few studies have attempted to ascertain the effects instructors have within adventure programmes; a point also noted by Cason and Gillis (1994) who acknowledge that relevant variables, such as leadership styles, are rarely taken into account. The instructors and staff leading the activities featured in this study (particularly the Pathways and JobMatch programmes) created an adventure experience that was characteristically humorous and enjoyable.

Leadership of the adventure activity is an important consideration in attempting to understand the process by which participants report changes to the way they feel, think and behave as they engage in both the challenge of the activity and the social environment that it creates. Leadership is a complex phenomenon incorporating a number of generic skills and characteristics that effective leaders exhibit. These include communication skills (ability to process and exchange information); organisational skills (ability to plan, delegate, control and execute); adaptability and flexibility (both in the use of appropriate leadership style and ability to react decisively to changing situations); vision (ability to make experience-based decisions). Effective leaders are also regarded as being charismatic, inspirational and empathetic.
There are leadership skills that are specific in educational contexts, particularly in outdoor adventure. These skills according to Priest and Gass (1997) include facilitation skills stated as the ability to foster productive group dynamics that develop appropriate interpersonal skills fostering trust and group cooperation; together with possessing a personal value system that allows individuals their autonomy. In addition to leadership characteristics, humour has emerged as a personal characteristic and enjoyment has emerged as a consequence of participation, both of which appear to be important outcomes and also relate directly to the manner in which instructors and staff conduct themselves.

Instructors featured prominently in interview data, participants frequently mentioned their easy going and amusing nature but also felt they were empathetic and inspirational:

Extract 7.54: Male participant

...good to work with you know, you can have a laugh and a joke with them happy go lucky kind of guys...

Extract 7.55: Male participant

...they were good like you know, funny like, yeah it was enjoyable like, they weren’t shouty like...

Extract 7.56: Male participant

Robin and Rory are first class, they are encouraging as well to everyone and they had a good laugh with them...

Extract 7.57: Female participants

...um it’s inspiring you know to see Rory as well you know...

Extract 7.58: Male participant

...if you can’t do something they don’t take it out on you then afterwards, like you know, they understand what you’re going through...

Instructors and staff set the scene as the following extract illustrate:

Extract 7.59: Female participant

...Robin and Rory they’ve been a good laugh, they’ve made you at ease, I loved the way Rory straight away made a joke about his hand, and I found that really confident in him and I liked what he done, you know there was just, he broke the ice, broke the barriers and that was that, they are brilliant like, amazing...
Field observations and interview data reveal that instructors and staff play a central role in the development of the rich mix of positive outcomes observed within the AA. The supportive social environment, which was created within the outdoor adventure programmes, provides an environment which appears to have a positive effect on the participants’ self-concept. Daniel expresses his views about the instructors and how he believed the climbing course had benefited him.

Respondent: Daniel

...they are great guys, they’re a laugh, you can be yourself around them, they, they can take a joke but if anything does go out of hand they step in and sort it out for you, but they’re the best tutors I’ve ever seen anywhere, I’ve been before but they weren’t much cop, I tell you what, it’s been brilliant, it’s built my confidence up and all that, ten times better, I know now that you don’t have to be shy around other people as long as you treat them as you would like to be treated that’s perfectly well and fine, um, I know my strengths and qualities now and I know if I put my head to something and just take a deep breath in, then I know I can do it...

Daniel’s testimony emphasises the positive regard he has for Robin and Rory for being “great guys” and the “best tutors I’ve ever seen anywhere”, able to create a comfortable reassuring environment where one “can be yourself”. In this extract, there is also a reference to how this environment has allowed Daniel to become more aware of his strengths, “I know my strengths and qualities now” and perhaps this new found self-awareness has made him realise that these qualities can assist him to achieve more. Staff and instructors are central characters in this study and therefore the reader needs to be aware of the distinction between the two. Staff fulfil a more pastoral role, whereas instructors serve a more technical and organisational function, delivering the outdoor activity. Although, on many occasions, these roles become interchangeable, when staff (qualifications permitting) take on technical and organisational functions and instructors act more like mentors.

Another striking feature observed during fieldwork involves the manner in which the instructors and staff conducted themselves in an extremely non-judgemental way. They were always appreciable, on many occasions amusing and empathetic to problems and difficulties encountered by participants, and providing encouragement and praise for effort, whether successful or not. Field observations provide an insight into the manner in which staff, instructors and
participants interact with each other, indicating that they all play a significant role in creating a supportive learning experience which appears to be conducive to personal development, built on mutual respect and activities that lend themselves to friendship-forming and bonding together in a common cause. However, it is the interview that exposes the depth and consequences of the feelings participants have towards staff and instructors, which the following extracts reveal in a profound way. Pauline expresses her views of Robin and Rory and how they have affected her confidence and “snapped me out of a defeatist attitude”, giving her the strength to turn a corner in her life:

Respondent: Pauline

...they are really into what they are doing, it means something to them, you know to be giving, that’s what comes to me, it means something to them to be giving a group of people like us who have gone a little bit wayward or our lives are a bit messed up, you know what I mean, it’s a, they are very genuine about the work that they are doing, well to me it comes across that they are not there for the money they actually, genuinely want to do something and help somebody better themselves, you know, and I like being around people like that. [Q: How does that make you feel?] Part of me feels like um, God it’s taken a long time to get all of this sorted and now it’s like I got quite a lot of regrets that this kind of thing had happened a bit sooner for me, you know, but um, it just, it made me feel very comfortable you know, very comfortable. [Q: How has this helped you in your everyday life?] Yeah, well it will help me get a job just basically for the confidence that it’s given me and um, it changed my, it’s sort of snapped me out of the like defeatist attitude like because I felt a bit defeatist...

This extract ‘throws light’ on some of the personal attributes, such as being genuine, caring and patient which instructors and staff convey to participants. These dispositions and their actions no doubt foster a strong sense of connectedness and relatedness among these individuals.

Some participants indicate feelings of anxiety and apprehension prior to their involvement in the JobMatch climbing programme, but soon found themselves at ease as a result of the manner in which instructors managed the activities, as expressed in the following interview extracts:

Extract 7.60: Male participant

[Q: Give me your thoughts on the programme that you have done this week.] It was well set up, well organised fair play, great instructors, very relaxed, very relaxed attitude. Um, I don’t think there was any pressure on anybody to do anything and a good environment. I wasn’t confident, I was scared going in to be honest, because of my fear of
heights, I was petrified of heights, um but I can’t believe how quickly and easy I overcome certain things…

Extract 7.61: Male participant

[Q: Give me your thoughts of the programme this week.] Well, I suppose my first thoughts were apprehension eh because I didn’t know anyone, but apprehension umr whether or not I could actually ah cos being a bit older than the others whether or not I could get up the rock face and that…

Extract 7.62: Male participant

[Q: How did you find the course?] I loved it, it was one of the best things I’ve done like and, I was a bit nervous at first cos I suffer with bad nerves like, and like I pulled a muscle in my chest and sprained my wrist the other week but I was determined to do it like, cos I never done it before and it was, it was brilliant…

These extracts, together with those highlighted in the previous section, demonstrate that some participants begin adventure training programmes with high levels of apprehension and uncertainty; and it is the instructors, through their “relaxed attitudes” and employing the concept of ‘challenge by choice’, that puts the participants at ease reducing these undesirable states by encouraging participants to think about setting self-imposed challenges. Instructors perform a key role in the AA process and as such make a major contribution to the outcomes observed in the current investigation. The instructors’ leadership style and personality are essential elements in creating a supportive social structure and effective learning environment that promotes growth through genuine and caring relationships. The role of the instructor according to Wichmann (1993) is to ensure that the social environment “promotes growth by creating helping relationships which are genuine and congruent and by providing unconditional regard” (p.349).

According to Cole (1987) it is the instructors that encourage participants to identify closely with each other and this in turn, leads quickly to the breakdown of barriers that usually separate individuals. Cole also recognises that in addition to the role that instructors have in formulating a sense of belonging and group cohesiveness, the nature of the activity is also essential. He states that by being involved in activities such as climbing, individuals realise how much their survival depends on others and how important each individual is to the others’ wellbeing.
Examples of bonding have been well documented in the current study: “...the camaraderie, I liked the way, I loved the way, um, we would egg each other on...”; “...I’ve made some good mates as well, erm, I enjoyed working with other people...”; “...I mean, one of the interesting things for me, coming out of the climbing was the social aspect...”. Tippet (1993) suggests that bonding between participants develops through the shared experience of the adventure activity and by becoming part of a group individuals immediately gain access to a positive identity, “no longer are her or his identifications all negative (i.e., druggie, school drop-out, juvenile delinquent)” (p.90). This view is reflected by Bunting (1987) who believes that shared experiences “should never be underestimated for its ability to facilitate a sense of unity and belonging” (p.30). She considers that shared experiences are the central aspect that fulfils the need for belonging, suggesting that, “the bonds that can develop between people in experiences of common challenge are invaluable, because of the sense of support they create” (p.31). Developing a sense of belonging in the supportive environment created in the programmes under investigation is particularly important for disaffected populations. Bowne (1993) has suggested that the need for belonging is an unresolved issue for the vast majority of disaffected individuals; and it is the adventure course that offers them a new environment in which this need can be met.

The main purpose of the adventure challenge programme is to evoke psychological and emotional responses in participants, according to Allison and colleagues (2011), such as learning how to interact with others, understanding themselves and others and reflecting on past experiences, behaviour and relationships. Triggering these psychological and emotional responses may provide an opportunity for contemplation, “when reflection brings to the fore difficult issues that may previously have been suppressed, such as confidence issues, dysfunctional relationships, existential challenges and a lack of life direction” (p.199). Some of these issues have emerged in Pauline’s interview extract; she indicates having regrets, suggesting that the course has allowed her to reflect on past experiences. It appears that these past experiences have been distressful episodes in her life; but feels that she has found a new, more comfortable perspective. Pauline provides a glimpse into how the instructors have contributed to this process by
being genuine and caring individuals, who have provided her with a supportive environment in which she can address these issues; and as such, point towards the important role instructors perform in the outcomes emerging from these programmes such as feelings of connectedness, relatedness and autonomy.

7.7: Teamwork, Trust and Responsibility: Products of the Adventure Experience

The adventure activity provides an opportunity to work closely with other people, both instructors and fellow participants, this enabled individuals to feel that success was partly due to teamwork, as expressed by the following two individuals:

Extract 7.63: Male participant

...you know, you get feelings of really high emotional feelings, that you’ve done something that you didn’t think you could do, a lot of that was because of the training that we were getting, um but the majority of it was the fact that we were doing it together...

Extract 7.64: Male participant

...I think my success came from the teamwork, and having the others backing me up and giving their support it helped me to, mainly help me get up there and help me achieve more.

Autry (2001) identifies teamwork as an important element for success, stating that “ropes courses emphasise social responsibility through co-operation” (p.299), which provide an atmosphere of empathy and concern for others.

Working closely with others allowed individuals to form friendship-bonds, as expressed in the following comment:

Extract 7.65: Male participant

...I’m normally the person to just keep myself to myself but being thrown in an environment with fifteen, sixteen other people, not knowing them, just making a friendship out of them, absolutely awesome...

The close working relationships established in the course of these activities, particularly climbing where participants have a cogent perception of danger and risk, promotes trusting relationships, which reinforce social bonds; trust is perhaps the ultimate in connectedness as expressed by the following three individuals:
Extract 7.66: Male participant

I’ve made some good mates as well, um, I enjoy working with people anyway especially in this sort of situation and when you trust someone to belay for you and vice versa they trust you, it makes you like stronger don’t it.

Extract 7.67: Male participant

...you get to know people better and you trust, you learn to trust people whereas you wouldn’t elsewhere like, you know you trust them with your life basically, if they drop you it’s a long way down yeah...

Trust only emerged from the climbing course and as such could be interpreted as a specific outcome related to an activity that is inherently dangerous and one that demands high levels of trust between participants. This is explained by Ewert (1987b) who suggests that ropes courses and rock climbing “can elicit fear in many individuals because of the anticipated relationship between falling and the predictable, but highly unpleasant results” (p.109). This appears to be borne out by the participants in this study, who indicate that trust is built upon an acute sense of responsibility, brought into focus by the potential dangers involved in the activity:

Extract 7.68: Male participant

...there was obviously a bit of danger cos if, something could have gone wrong, it was about trust really wasn’t it...

Extract 7.69: Male participant

It’s not just about yourself is it, it’s about each other as an individual you know and you can rely on someone else and know that they will look after you then...

Extract 7.70 appears to indicate that climbing goes beyond normal levels of teamwork, which could be described for team sports such as hockey and cricket.

Extract 7.70: Male participant

...with that responsibility you’ve got for belaying, you know, for being responsible for somebody’s safety you felt needed, stupid word, but you know, it shows that, or it showed that it’s not a normal everyday activity that your involved in...

The nature of climbing appears to create a realisation that one is needed or rather climbers need each other, by developing strong bonds of mutual safety. In this sense, a high degree of relatedness can develop in an activity that requires reciprocal responsibilities for safety.
Teamwork and relatedness appear to emerge from two distinct aspects. First, there is the social bonding and task directed teamwork involved between programme participants as they navigate their way through the adventure activity; and second, the affects that programme instructors and staff have on participants as they develop their working relationships. In addition to these two aspects, consideration needs to be given to the fear-provoking element of the AA in its potential to foster trust and responsibility.

The reality of the adventure activity and the realisation that these situations are hazardous appears to focus attention into a galvanised perspective of mutual trust and responsibility. Trust between participants emerged strongly in the current study as an outcome which may be explained as a consequence of this reality and realisation of the risks and danger involved in some activities, as explained in the following extract - “…there was obviously a bit of danger cos if, something could have gone wrong, it was all about trust…” Participants appear to realise that the threat of injury inherent in these activities presents a psychological hurdle, and to overcome this obstacle individuals coming from a position of vulnerability had to commit themselves to an act of faith. This is remarkable, particularly for individuals who expressed a tendency to be distrustful of others “…like I’ve got issues with trust, I can trust nobody, but you’ve got to trust whoever your partner is on the end of your rope…” This individual had no evidence that their partner is a reliable agent, capable and willing “to keep them safe”. The conviction that these individuals placed in the confidence and trust they had for each other also appears to stimulate obligations of responsibility.

Perhaps climbing carries a greater awareness of danger, and participants realise that they must act more responsibly because of the risks involved, as explained in the following extract - “…with that responsibility you’ve got for belaying, you know, for being responsible for somebody’s safety you felt needed… it’s like knowing that other people can trust you…” In climbing, participants are required to act as a belayer, this is a responsible role whose task it is to keep the climber safe from harm’s way. For the reader unfamiliar with climbing, belaying is a technique that offers protection to the climber in the event of losing contact with the rock face. The belayer performs the function of an anchor, offering a strong
fixed point, but at the same time spooling out the rope allowing the climber to climb freely. The system operates by passing the rope through a friction device known as a ‘bug’, attached to the belayer’s harness. The bug and hand position of the belayer acts as a brake, preventing gravity taking effect if the climber were to fall, averting serious injury.

Climbing appears to facilitate trust and provides an opportunity for individuals to take responsibility, is a key ingredient in forming trusting relationships as described in the following extracts - “...you get to know people better and you trust them, you learn to trust people whereas you wouldn’t elsewhere like, you know you trust them with your life basically...” Trusting relationships are the basis for establishing effective teamwork, for example, “…the teamwork is good, because the thing is if you’ve got to rely on somebody they rely on you, you rely on them, you mess up, you’re going to kill somebody...”

Responsibility, manifest by the awareness of danger and accepting that “it’s not just about yourself” but about others, indicates the underlying theme of working together, in reciprocal security, that characterises the teamwork aspect of adventure activities, particularly ropes courses and climbing, which according to Weider (1990) encourages participants to deal with issues in the ‘here-and-now’ that have very real consequences. Ewert (1989) believes that risk, danger and the potential for accidents develop and maintain bonds that form among participants, “bonding is considered a benefit in itself and is translated into increased levels of trust, commitment to others and compassion” (p.48). According to Goldenberg and colleagues (2000) teamwork and trust developed on ropes courses have been identified as being key benefits that are fundamentally related to each other and “this relationship suggests that developing trust is important in helping people work together as a team” (p.219). These authors believe that teamwork is linked to a number of other benefits, culminating in self-fulfilment, fun and enjoyment because the process of building relationships with others involves getting closer, more familiar, learning about other people and providing encouragement to teammates. These authors suggest that these outcomes are linked to task accomplishments which in turn are linked to feelings of personal satisfaction and self-fulfilment to being happy, having fun and enjoying life.
Supportive and effective teamwork are essential components in constructing an environment where trust can develop. From my involvement, particularly with the JobMatch programme, there was always a strong sense of warmth and genuine interpersonal involvement by participants towards each other. I consider this to be especially important for unemployed individuals, who have perhaps experienced a lack of control in their lives (thwarted autonomy), who have maybe indulged in self-criticism or been subjected to criticism from others regarding their unemployment status (incompetence) and may have experienced rejection by potential employers, family and generalised other (lack of connectedness).

Friendly relationships were seen as motivational and aided participants to achieve success “...I think my success came from the teamwork and having the others backing me up and giving their support it helped me to, mainly help me get up there and help me achieve more...” Social interaction, making friends and bonding into effective teams appears to be an important element in creating an environment in which participants felt good about themselves, both in terms of relatedness and success. Kernis and Goldman (2003) refer to components of the self-system, particularly self-esteem, being influenced by positive or negative feedback through interaction within the social environment. According to these authors, feedback and interaction facilitate change within the working self-concept. This perhaps explains how the participants in the current study felt about themselves and their capabilities, in a positive way that impacted on their efficacy and esteem.

Relatedness, to interact and be connected to others, is a key psychological need as discussed in SDT, albeit, according to Deci and Ryan (2000) a more distal one compared to competence and autonomy. However, it is still an important motivational need, whether conveyed through the caring and genuine involvement with instructors and staff or with fellow participants through a sense of reciprocity, where group members come to realise the dependency they have with each other in mutual support and safety, as emerging from the data generated in the current study. Other authors (Berry, 2011; Zook, 1987; Bunting, 1987) have also commented that challenging adventure activities create strong feelings of mutual dependency and a realisation that in order to succeed individuals need to
be able to depend on each other “should never be underestimated for its ability to facilitate a sense of unity and belonging” (Bunting, 1987, p.30).

Look no further than the recruitment advertisements for corporate executives, posted in the broadsheet press, by some of the UK’s largest commercial and industrial organisations for “an outstanding team manager” and “outstanding team player essential”. Within the corporate environment, effective teamwork is a critically important requirement, essential for company effectiveness in all its business activities, where competitiveness and profitability must function at optimal levels. Teams are essential in business and many corporations invest heavily in outdoor management training and development, to ensure that this aspect is functioning optimally. Not only is teamwork essential in sport and organisational effectiveness, from employment in multi-national corporations and the armed forces, but also for people working together to build their communities, such as the “Trust” outlined in the current study. These community regeneration initiatives require their members, many of whom are from the communities they serve, to have or acquire the skills to effectively work with and learn from each other. Trust is also important in this context, for teams to be effective they need to generate high levels of mutual support and trust. Much work in adventure education, according to Knapp (1990), is directed towards developing ‘soft skills’, attitudes and behaviours essential for building supportive communities. He describes ‘soft skills’ as human relationship competencies, which guide personal growth and achieve group unity. There is perhaps no greater human relationship competency than trust, to enable group cohesion and unity.

7.8: The Autotelic and Physiological Basis of Enjoyment, Fun and Peak Experiences

Commensurate with the YOT and Pathways programmes, fun and enjoyment has emerged as a notable outcome of the JobMatch programme. The three statements below reveal a high level of elation experienced by participants, the source of which can be attributed to both the activity and the instructors, for creating an environment that was humorous and supportive:-
Fun, enjoyment and humour are prominent elements within Karl Rohnke’s (1984; 1989) conceptualisation of leadership within adventure education. Rohnke, a leading figure in the development of adventure education and the driving force of Project Adventure, an initiative to bring OB into mainstream physical education classes, bases his selection of specific activities into the Project Adventure programme on the degree to which the activity generates fun and humour, while acknowledging the role these play as key ingredients that infuse enthusiasm and enjoyment among participants.

Enjoyment has shown itself to be inter-related to a number of outcomes, for example, participants report having enjoyed the social aspect of the programme and working with others:

Extract 7.74: Male participant
...teamwork um enjoyed myself working as part of a team...

Extract 7.75: Male participant
Thoroughly enjoyed it didn’t think it was going to be as good as what it was, met some tidy people...

Participants refer to enjoyment in other contexts, such as its social aspect that they believe has helped to develop confidence:

Extract 7.76: Male participant
...mixing with people you don’t know, it’s a good confidence builder, it’s something to enjoy...

For another participant, enjoyment has been linked to working with others that has fostered trust:
Extract 7.77: Male participant

...I enjoyed it, it was working with other people that I’d never met before a lot of new people I’ve made friends with yeah, I’ve enjoyed it, and putting my trust in them as well...

While another participant enjoyed the challenge and achievement involved in climbing:-

Extract 7.78: Male participant

...that’s what I enjoyed the most that’s right the challenge of trying to get to the top of the harder course...

Individuals experience enjoyment when challenged by the activity. Haras and colleagues (2006), investigating ropes courses, found that fun was connected to challenge and goal-achievement. The appeal of adventure activities, for many individuals, involves pitting one’s skills and abilities against the challenging situations that these activities present and, in this sense, they can be fun and enjoyable.

Enjoyment and fun are synonymous terms associated with pleasurable experiences and many adventure activities lead to exhilaration, excitement, fun and enjoyment because they involve vertigo, risk, danger, thrill, that in turn elicit very pleasurable physiological responses such as an ‘adrenalin rush’ or, sometimes, after high intensity endurance activity, an ‘endorphin hit’, described in the two following extracts:-

Extract 7.79: Male participant

...I would say at the bottom it made me feel great, it did, I had a wicked adrenalin rush...

Extract 7.80: Male participant

...if I let go of that I’m gone but then I took it off and I was like Wooha, like, you know I’m there like I’m there, I was back on I was so nervous with joy like cos I let go, I was down like Woo Woo my heart was racing, I just, it was crazy it was and my hands were burning I was like, it was just mad...

Some authors (Quinn, 1990; Hopkins & Putnam, 1993) regard these exhilarating and exciting moments created in the adventure activity as ‘peak experiences’, a phenomenon that many individual’s try to describe when using the word fun;
events that are not easily forgotten created through “the joy of accomplishing some feat previously thought impossible” (Hopkins & Putnam, 1993, p.63).

Fun is a key ingredient in effective learning, which engages the individual’s attention and efforts. Fun is the oxygen that breathes life into the learning environment, it can act as the driving force which allows individuals to push themselves beyond self-imposed limits. Fun has been identified as an important aspect within adventure education and has a specific influence on course outcomes (Mc Kenzie, 2003).

Enjoyment appears to originate from two aspects of the programme, notably working with others and the intrinsic challenge of the activity. With reference to the social aspect, working with others has emerged as a principal outcome that appears to build social confidence and trust.

Instructors and staff appear to set the scene for enjoyment and fun by the force of their humorous, empathetic and carefree personality. They were the agents who established a socially supportive environment that perhaps set the stage for achievement and success, building confidence and trust. Participants report on the enjoyment they experience from working with others - “...teamwork um enjoyed myself working as part of a team...” and the achievement accruing from successfully mastering the challenge of the activity “...that’s what I enjoyed the most that’s right the challenge of trying to get to the top of the harder courses...”

Outdoor activities can be regarded as a vehicle that transports individuals into the realm of heightened enjoyment, either in the act itself, or through retrospective cognition. Some authors (Ewert, 1989; Krouwell & Goodwin, 1994; Tuson, 1994) believe adventure activities do this by being distinct from everyday activities because of novelty, uncertainty, risk and danger. They are situations in which the individual must take control and in this respect, outcomes are intrinsically rewarding.

From personal experience, involvement in AA is sometimes not pleasant at the time they occur, some are physically demanding and evoke apprehension and fear. However, these moments can be the most memorable experiences, they are enjoyable because they are difficult, stretching individuals to their physical and
psychological limits and they are occasions when the individual’s level of fitness and skills need to be applied optimally to control what ultimately are dangerous situations. In essence, these experiences are exhilarating, which can be the source of deep seated enjoyment and personal satisfaction.

A number of authors have expressed similar sentiments to these. Commenting on ropes courses, Weider (1990) explains, at first glance, for many, the tasks that participants are expected to undertake seem impossible for them to achieve, but as the individual engages in them, the tasks become fun and enjoyable to complete. Adventure activities take place in the natural environment, a place for most participants that are full of wonderment, beauty and stillness, that represent a complete contrast and detachment from the hectic and stressful *modus vivendi* of their daily lives in the modern world. A place, according to Kaplan and Talbot (1983) that is highly valued as an enjoyable experience, despite the personal difficulties and discomforts encountered such as blisters, bruises, insect bites and the physicality of rough hiking and ‘living in the field’. Yet, in spite of these hardships, participants report at the same time the overwhelming sense of enjoyment and restorative feelings of refreshment and invigoration. They can be described as periods of struggle where individuals strive to overcome challenges, events that they “find to be the most enjoyable times of their lives” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p.6).

A number of authors (Ewert, 1989; Mortlock, 2004) have referred to Maslow’s (1968) concept of ‘peak experience’ that attempt to explain a process of personal growth associated with an episode of enjoyment. ‘Peak experiences’ are enjoyable occasions, although evoking feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort followed by exhilaration and enjoyment, that holds possibilities for the participants to experience self-actualisation and achieve self-fulfilment. In the ‘peak experience’ state, Maslow considers that the individual becomes fully functioning, self-determined, agentic, empowered, free from self-doubt, self-accepting and experiences self-worth.

An often quoted source, in the adventure education literature associated with enjoyment, is Csikszentmihalyi’s (1990) theory of optimal experience. This theory uses the term ‘autotelic experience’, which describes an event where the
individual experiences a state of ‘flow’. ‘Flow’ is described as a condition in which the individual experiences total concentration and submergence in the activity, where attention is so intensely focused, directed towards task-achievement, that it stretches the individual to their limits and they cease being self-aware. Csikszentmihalyi believes that in ‘flow’, the concept of self slips below the threshold of awareness, this temporary loss of preoccupation with the self presents an opportunity to expand the self-concept. Experiencing a loss of the sense of self in the flow state and having it emerge stronger, more confident afterwards, appears somewhat paradoxical on first inspection, weakening the self-concept as a precondition to reconstituting it, as a more complex and a more robust self-concept, “it almost seems that occasionally giving up self-consciousness is necessary for building a strong self-concept” (p.65).

Csikszentmihalyi is clear on how this process achieves this transformation, he states that in the flow condition the individual is optimally aroused by the challenge imposed by the activity, during which time there is a critical effect, believing that there is little opportunity to reflect on the implications towards the self as the individual becomes engulfed by the activity. The exposure to the activity is so deep and intense that self-consciousness is temporarily suspended. Following the activity, consciousness sparks back into life. At this point, the individual is able to reflect on the experience just undertaken and, consequently, the self that it now “reflects upon is not the same self that existed before the flow experience: it is now enriched by new skills and fresh achievements” (p.66).

Although there are no direct references in the data of participants experiencing a loss of awareness or suspension of time and space, there are one or two references when participants describe extraordinary feelings experienced during the activity when they appear to be optimally aroused such as - “…when I did it, just felt like king of the hill, I was on top I just, just brilliant like it’s I don’t know the buzz you know, like you know I suppose like a drug addict takes his drug something like that, like that you know, it felt brilliant…”

Csikszentmihalyi explains that the self-concept is changed within the ‘flow’ experience, he suggests that there is little time to reflect on the implications towards the self in these fast moving adventure activities, it is through reflection
post-event that change to the self-concept occurs. This is slightly different to the interpretation presented in Megan’s case. She is caught in a protracted period of contemplating her action to commit herself to the abseil, operating within the concept of ‘challenge by choice’. There is no compulsion on Megan to act, the action must come from intrinsic needs. The eventual moment to take action is driven by perceived consequences to the self and the need to display competence and mastery over the environment.

According to Csikszentmihalyi, the optimal ‘flow’ experience is a rule-bound and goal-directed system where feedback on performance is given. It must also possess a challenge and stimulate intense concentration, to a degree where there is no attention deficit. Some adventure activities share these characteristics – they are goal-directed challenges, they provide immediate feedback and they require high levels of concentration.

The flow experience, according to Csikszentmihalyi (1990), is the ultimate in enjoyment that not only occurs when the individual has achieved success or a desired need, but has “also gone beyond what he or she has been programmed to do and achieved something unexpected, perhaps something even unimagined before” (p.46). Many participants have commented that they achieved success beyond their expectations “…Thoroughly enjoyed it didn’t think it was going to be as good as it was…I pushed myself over the limits on some things which I thought I would never ever do…” The concept of flow, described by Csikszentmihalyi, is an inordinately enjoyable experience made so by the novelty of the accomplishment experienced by individuals who possess little or no prior experience of the activity they are engaged in. More often than not, for the novice, AA are not particularly pleasurable experiences at the time, but on reflection enjoyment is experienced through retrospection when the individual grasps the totality of the experience, it is at this moment Csikszentmihalyi believes that the self has grown and changed.

Enjoyment is important within an educational context as a motivational force, encouraging individuals to repeat the task in expectation of experiencing heightened enjoyment (flow) again. Now individuals are more likely to exert the effort to achieve the ‘flow’ state, as Csikszentmihalyi explains “the combination of all these elements cause a sense of deep enjoyment that is so rewarding people
feel that expending a great deal of energy is worthwhile simply to be able to feel it” (p.49). Of all the components of enjoyment listed, Csikszentmihalyi appears to focus his attention on control as a principal ingredient of enjoyment that is particularly pertinent to outdoor adventure. According to Csikszentmihalyi a sense of control, particularly in risky and dangerous activities, intensifies enjoyment to the level of a flow experience. However, individuals are particularly attracted to adventure activities in Csikszentmihalyi’s view, not because of a pathological thrill that comes from courting disaster but from “the positive emotion they enjoy is the perfectly healthy feeling of being able to control potentially dangerous forces” (p.60).

In support of fun as an educational catalyst in adventure activity settings, Bisson and Luckner (1998) state that fun plays the role of an intrinsic motivational force in that first, it provides the desire for repetition of the experience and second, learners are more likely to engage in activities that they have little or no previous experience of. In other words, fun and enjoyment allows participants to experiment without fear of making mistakes, looking silly or feeling awkward and emboldens individuals to undertake novel experiences and address new challenges. These authors believe that adventure activities are not necessarily valued by participants as recreational activities *per se*, but rather as catalysts for learning about the self. This point has also been made by Witman (1995) who found that participants in adventure programmes valued ‘process’ over ‘content’, suggesting that the ropes course was valued less than the opportunity to take risks, meet challenges and be supported by other participants.

According to Bisson and Luckner (1998), a number of educational benefits from adventure education are associated with fun and enjoyment that bestow positive effects on the learning process. First, having fun fully engages the individual in the experience that invokes momentary loss of social inhibitions. In this state the participant actually gets closer to who they really are in closer communion with a true inner self; second, when having fun, time and space appear frozen and the notion of social barriers are suspended. It is here that individuals experience their inner selves and are more susceptible to try new things, trust others and take emotional risks. These authors identify a number of consequences cascading from
these benefits: first, “fun can transform social insecurity into trust and camaraderie and a restrictive self-image into freedom of expression” (p.110); second, suspending social reality and lifting social barriers “learners will be better disposed to face their own personality and evaluate their relationships with others” (p.110); third, fun functions in a stress reducing capacity transforming distress into eustress and “when we combine fun and challenge the learning process is maximised” (p.110).

Some individuals are drawn to adventure activities as thrill seeking opportunities motivated by fun and enjoyment, although this is unlikely to apply to the participants in the current study. They were not regularly involved in adventure activities during their leisure time, indicative of an attraction to thrill, but nonetheless they report feelings of vertigo and having a “wicked adrenalin rush”, described in terms of enjoyment. Enjoyment gained from thrill and excitement has been suggested, by some writers, to be a necessary part of human evolution and survival and it is perhaps this part of human make-up that for some individuals connects with enjoyment.

A number of authors (Csikszentmihalyi & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Quinn, 1990; Rosenthal, 1987) believe there is an evolutionary-genetic predisposition that explains a human proclivity towards adventure, centred on a need for enjoyment, based on physiological responses to danger, risk and threat, that also contribute towards an explanation of the processes by which individuals desire to overcome a reluctance to, or desire to take risks, face danger and rise to challenges. Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) suggest that during human evolution our species was predisposed to enjoy activities essential for survival, such as the need to procreate, the need for nutrition and the need to take risks in an unpredictable and dangerous environment. In order to take risks, humans must enjoy certain amounts of novelty and danger and modern humans no doubt still possess this evolutionary legacy that is ‘hard wired’ into our being. Feelings of exhilaration, elation, euphoria experienced when we engage in activities such as climbing, skiing and riding motorcycles at high speed are enjoyable because of the physiological responses that are the very essence of our human make-up.
Physiological responses to stressful situations are well documented in the sport science and medical literature.

During stressful situations the hypothalamus initiates, through sympathetic neural control, the adrenal medulla to release adrenalin and noradrenalin into the blood. These hormone-neurotransmitters in turn stimulate responses in a range of effector tissue in the heart, lungs, arteries, skeletal muscle, that culminate in acute physiological responses: increased heart rate/increased cardiac output, arterial vasoconstriction, reducing blood flow to internal viscera, arterial vasodilation, increasing blood flow to skeletal muscle, bronchiolar dilation resulting in increased respiration (Fox et al., 1993; McArdle et al., 1991; Tortora & Derrickson, 2006). In essence, this ‘fight or flight’ response to danger and threat somewhat explains the physical characteristics observed by many participants in the field when exposed to the challenge of adventure activities.

A further physiological response to stress, physical exertion and trauma involves the release of a variety of neuropeptides (endorphins, enkephalins and dynorphins), collectively known as opioid peptides, that possess considerable analgesic properties 200 times greater than morphine. The extraordinary power of these neuropeptides on human physiology during physical activity can be demonstrated in an event at the 2012 London Olympic Games - US athlete Manteo Mitchell running in the first leg of the 4 x 400 meters final sustained a catastrophic injury fracturing the left fibula at the 200 meter mark, but remarkably completed the race. These neuropeptide molecules, released by neurones located in the PNS and CNS, are linked among other responses to feelings of pleasure or euphoria (Tortora & Derrickson, 2006), whereas McArdle and colleagues (1991) suggest that these neuropeptides act as mood-altering substances that have also been implicated in reducing anxiety.

With specific reference to AA, Rosenthal (1987) has suggested that the acute physiological responses initiated by adrenalin and noradrenalin, in preparing the body for ‘action’ as it faces the adventure challenge, elevates the body to heightened levels of discomfort and stress. However, after the challenge activity has been completed, when stress and discomfort have been terminated, it is now that the body experiences the effects of the neuropeptides, as feelings of elation,
physical invigoration and euphoria, as these analgesic substances take effect on the brain. According to Rosenthal, it is this heightened state of distress followed by relief which participants in adventure challenges express as enjoyment and fun.

It is these elevated states of eustress that may explain the sense of euphoria described by participants as episodes of fun and enjoyment - in other words, a ‘flow’ or ‘peak experience’ that appear to have an impact on the self-concept.
Chapter 8:
Discussion and Conclusions

8.1: Introduction

Rhetoric from training providers, such as OB, extol and testify to the benefits of AA intervention programmes notably in regard to improvements in self-concept, particularly self-esteem, also demonstrated in the quasi-experiments undertaken in the current study. In reality, these constructs are extremely difficult to measure reliably - this is a problem that continues to plague research in this field. However, it is recognised and well documented in the literature (e.g., Ewert, 1989; Hopkins & Putnam, 1993; Hattie et al., 1997) that AA programmes have a powerful impact upon the individual’s self-confidence, self-esteem and social relationships, although there has been a general criticism of the quality of research in this area. Many studies have highlighted a number of design weaknesses, such as the application of inadequate randomised control procedures, overreliance on self-report measures, small samples and a lack of follow-up studies. Accepting these inadequacies, what is less clear are the processes by which the outdoor adventure experience account for changes in the way participants feel, think and behave.

The purpose of the current study is to report on the outcomes and processes emerging from three intervention programmes for disaffected populations using adventure education to improve social and human capital. In addition to the overarching question, the following three subsidiary questions are also posited: What is the significance of dissonance within the adventure education approach? What is the impact of competence on the self-concept? What are the interpersonal implications, resulting from participation in adventure activities?

8.2: Findings

The current study has indicated that improvements have been made to self-confidence/self-efficacy, self-esteem, teamwork, heightened feelings of trust, willingness to take responsibility, enjoyment and positive mood. These findings
are in line with previous research into adventure activities over the past four decades: self-confidence (Fletcher, 1970; Farnham & Mutrie, 1997), self-efficacy (Hattie et al., 1997; Paxton & Mc Avoy, 2000; Walsh & Russell, 2010), self-esteem (Hopkins, 1982; Sveen & Denholm, 1997; Fox & Avramidis, 2003), trust (Kelly & Baer, 1969) and teamwork (Fletcher, 1970). A number of elements such as the concept of ‘challenge by choice’; the application of constructive dissonance; and the behaviour of instructors and staff appear to play a significant part in the AA process. The programmes under investigation that adopt high-impact adventure activities such as climbing appear to have an effect on behaviour change, this together with improvements to the self-concept are of particular interest in light of the Government’s expectations for such programmes.

In addition to the range of outcomes stated above, data analysis has also indicated that the ‘appropriateness’ of these interventions, in terms of an alternative to school, may have value for disaffected youth. They are considered to be, by those responsible for organising and administering them as well as those participating in them, that they are an effective alternative to mainstream education. Staff delivering the YOT programme believe school has little to offer some youth, whereas the AA, because of its non-academic nature, provides a level of achievement and success that they fail to experience at school. School for these youngsters has little relevance reflected in high absenteeism, poor relationships with teachers and low academic achievement. The mix of classroom-based learning and AA integrated into the Pathways project appears to be an effective means of educating and developing these youngsters. The difference reported in the data between this project and school is its ability to build self-confidence through the adventure experience.

Findings emerging from all three programmes illustrate two essential and principal factors that appear instrumental in facilitating the personal developmental outcomes observed. These include, first, the establishment of a supporting environment and, second, the inherent characteristics of the AA.

Instructors and staff, particularly the outdoor training team responsible for the Pathways and JobMatch programmes, have appeared to play an important role within the AA process. First, they are responsible for creating a supportive-
learning environment which appears to relate to their personal characteristics and attributes: non-judgemental, providing encouragement, empathetic, caring, genuine and humorous.

All participants involved in these interventions, even the few on the JobMatch climbing course who had previous experience were apprehensive and nervous at the commencement of the programme. A key feature emerging from the data concerns the important function instructors have in reassuring individuals and putting them at ease. The instructors did this superbly well, they displayed a very relaxed approach and humour played a part in relieving tension and bringing people closer together. Instructors and staff because of their relaxed, humorous, carefree approach appear to foster a sense of connectedness and relatedness among participants indicated by comments referring to them being “good to work with” and people who “you like being around”. Second, instructors and staff were highly professional, not placing undue pressure or coercion on participants; but rather allowed individuals to engage in the activities as freely willing agents and thus were instrumental in creating an autonomy-supporting environment.

**Achievement and Mastery**

The mastery experience appears to be a significantly important component within the AA process that accounts for improved self-esteem and self-efficacy observed in the current investigation. Achievement appears to play a crucial part in the process, particularly in situations that are perceived beyond the participant’s level of ability. Successfully overcoming fear and achieving a successful outcome appears to be a critical facet of the process and one which shows itself to emerge forcefully from the data.

The AA provides an opportunity for most individuals to be confronted by a challenge that falls outside any previous experience and which is difficult to avoid. They are occasions where the participant is required to display physical competence and psychological mastery, over both the physical task and strong emotions of apprehension, fear and inadequacy. Once success is achieved, these situations appear to have a positive effect on esteem and efficacy. There are, of course, individual variations in the degree to which the AA evokes levels of
dissonance. Nonetheless, they are challenging even to competent and experienced participants and in this sense, they present a ‘level playing field’. However, for those who experience high levels of trepidation, their journey is a little more problematic but also more profound, their success appears to be more intense and perhaps has a greater effect on their self-concept.

Achievement therefore appears to be a significant outcome emerging from these programmes. It appears not to be simply a matter of successfully performing a physical task such as reaching the summit of a mountain or climbing a rock face, or overcoming varying levels of dissonance; but success is also measured in terms of building personal relationships. Participants felt that their success was partly the result of teamwork and forming close working relationships. A number of positive benefits such as trust and responsibility originate from opportunities to bond, made more potent by the inherent danger associated with the activity.

Dissonance

Participants felt that dissonance pushed them to their limits and success often achieved contrary to expectations appeared to heighten feeling of esteem and efficacy. Not all participants were affected by dissonance to the same degree, for some it had a powerful emotional and physiological effect, whereas others experienced mild to moderate apprehension. As suggested by Gray (1987) “it is a common-place observation that some people are more easily and more intensely frightened than others” (p.35); and according to Rachman (1974) individual differences in the level of fear can be quantified using a ‘fear thermometer’ ranging from calm (0) to moderately fearful (5) to terrified (10). Rachman also suggests that women have been shown to express and exhibit higher degrees of fear compared to men, although he indicates that this gender difference is reflected in women’s greater readiness to admit to fear, whereas men are less likely to do so.

In the current investigation, females showed higher levels of fear compared with some male participants, but no more so than other males. However, in spite of higher levels of fear females appear to exhibit greater courage, the ability to perform even though they were extremely frightened by some activities. This was
at variance with some male participants who just could not overcome the fear generated by high-impact activities. Irrespective of physical capabilities and prior experience of AA, all participants exhibited varying degrees of fear from moderate to intense levels. Those who were least affected by dissonance appeared to be more focused on performance as the source of success “getting to the top of more difficult climbs” or “successfully traversing that difficult overhang”. For those more affected by fear, the activity in terms of its complexity appears to be of little significance, these tasks were a matter of performing a simple movement skill (i.e., jumping on to a zip wire or off a rock ledge into a river). Of most relevance was the psychological challenge of overcoming dissonance which appears to be a significant factor in the AA process and has made a fundamental impact on participants - “overcoming my fear of that zip wire made me feel proud of myself for doing that, it made me feel good and more confident”.

AA described as unique achievement-oriented challenges that evoke a high degree of both physiological and psychological arousal. In essence, they are vehicles by which participants are transported into the realm of uncertainty and risk to face apparent rather than real danger. The danger and fear provoking capacity precipitate a realisation that these activities are different, out of the ordinary because they are hazardous. They are unique, principally because they are unfamiliar, fear-provoking experiences, generating dissonance, which according to Festinger (1957) the individual is motivated to alleviate, and in the process of resolving dissonance, according to Hopkins and Putnam (1993) the individual is compelled to adopt new behaviour.

In accordance with dissonance theory (Festinger, 1957) individuals are motivated to reduce the discomfort by implementing one of two decisions: they can ‘face-up-to’ the dissonance, or reduce it by performing avoidance behaviour. Despite being stressful, the AA is also difficult for the individual to exercise avoidant behaviour. The AA is a concrete public event which puts the individual ‘on-the-spot’- they are not easy to shy away from. In this respect the AA allows, in a forceful manner, the individual to regulate their own behaviour giving rise to perceptions of agency. Acting agentically fosters perceptions that achievement and success are due to intrinsic sources, which in turn have positive implications for the self-concept.
The need to exert control over dissonance is also explained by White's (1959) notion of competence-effectance which describes the human propensity to master and interact with the environment in a proactive problem-solving capacity. The motivation to both display competence and exercise free will to successfully resolve dissonance is also theoretically supported by the two innate and universal needs of competence and autonomy underpinned in SDT.

Dissonance occurs in the ‘peak adventure zone’ described in the adventure experience model (Priest, 1990) where the participant’s competence verses the risk is slightly divergent; it is this variance which creates uncertainty and subsequent dissonance (Bunyan, 2011). The most critical and fundamental aspect of the AA process involves the participant being stretched beyond their self-perceived limits experiencing dissonance by being taken outside their ‘comfort zone’ to what Nadler (1993) describes as the ‘edge’ of ‘new possibilities’. It is here that dissonance takes its effect where only two possibilities exist, one of ‘breakthrough’ into success and achievement, the other retreating back to more familiar but less rewarding patterns of behaviour. From data obtained in the current investigation, it is proposed here that at the boundary between the comfort zone—high-impact AA, and in accordance with Mruk (2006c), individuals find themselves in the ‘self-esteem moments’, in these instances the participant overcomes past experiences, avoidant/inauthentic behaviour and failure, by reaching a ‘tipping-point’ of change, which is described by Mruk as the ‘crossroads of self-esteem’. Here the individual is confronted by a choice: a less familiar path towards achievement and self-esteem, or a more familiar path towards avoidant/incompetent behaviour, failure and unworthiness.

In answer to the first of the subsidiary questions dissonance appears to play a significant role in the AA process. High-impact AA such as climbing, sailing and aspects of gorge-walking, like jumping from a rock ledge into a river, transforms these activities into confrontation-based experiences. Conflict arises as a consequence of the fear-provoking effect that AA engender, which allows participants to perceive danger and threat whilst at the same time holding the desire to ‘throw caution to the wind’. In the high-impact activities observed in the course of the current investigation, dissonance appears to be a fundamentally
important element within the adventure education process because by taking participants to the ‘edge’ and beyond their self-perceived limits which challenges their lack of self-belief that ultimately offers the opportunity for personal growth. Dissonance presents a barrier that appears to set in motion cognitive processes which cause the individual to cycle in and out of thoughts of action (success) and thoughts of retreat (failure). These situations may bring to the fore possible self-representations (Markus & Wurf, 1987; Markus & Nurius, 1986) from an historical perspective, involving ‘past self’ representations manifest by retreat and failure that conflicts with the possibility of a stronger, determined, more robust and successful ‘future self’ who desires the need for competence, self-actualisation and a need to protect self-esteem.

Dissonance represents the psychological facet of the AA experience, it has been conceptualised as a psychological boundary between comfort, familiarity, torpidity; and the territory of success, peak experience and a new found sense of self-identity. Dissonance creates the boundary that separates retreat, failure, under achievement from that of ‘break through’ into personal growth. The presence of dissonance is essential, without it there would be less to master. Dissonance increases the intensity of the challenge, it increases the intensity of personal achievement; without it there would be no avenue to challenge one’s self-imposed limitations. It is not easy to overcome powerful and acute feelings of fear; attempting to resolve dissonance requires a high level of motivation, but once mastered this act of competence holds the promise of self-empowerment, self-belief and self-worth.

Dissonance presents a ‘personal testing’ element to the AA that appears to determine the individual’s behaviour to one of approach or avoidance. It appears to do this by offering to test the strength of the individual’s efficacy expectations, whether they will persist in the face of these disconfirming situations, based on a belief in their ability to exert control over a fearful environment. In its functional capacity, dissonance forces the individual to be proactive, motivated to reduce the stress of its discomfort and in doing so the individual is believed to regulate their behaviour becoming more persistent, determined and that these behaviours may be transferred to other situations.
To account for elevated levels of self-esteem emerging from these achievement-oriented situations, attribution theory (Weiner, 1979, 1985a) provides a theoretical basis that may explain the effect mastery and achievement have within the AA setting. According to Weiner’s conceptualisation of attributional theory, individuals make causal explanations following success and failure and in turn these are associated with two emotional reactions: happy (success) and sad (failure). However, for Weiner emotional reactions are not simply concerned with whether a desired goal is attained or not, but rather involves an effective response based on causal ascription depending upon whether success is attributed to an internal locus (e.g., ability and effort), or to an external cause (e.g., luck or some environmental factor). According to Weiner causal ascription made to an internal cause for success, such as achieving a 70 foot rock face climb, will result in elevated levels of self-esteem. Data appears to indicate that participants attributed their success to internal sources rather than external factors which may account for heightened levels of self-esteem.

White’s (1959) notion of competence-effectance and self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991; 1995) also support self-esteem improvement, adding a motivational aspect that explains why some participants were observed to expend considerable effort and persistence in psychologically and physically distressing situations in order to master the AA challenge, which according to White is a source of esteem. Data also appears to suggest that participants acted agentically and were intrinsically motivated believing their success emanated from internal sources “doing it like the success comes from yourself”. These examples of intrinsic motivation perhaps correspond to the inherent, innate and universal need described in SDT, to experience competence by exerting control and mastery over the AA environment. The autonomy-supporting environment created through the application of ‘challenge by choice’ is a key feature that determines the level at which the AA experience becomes integrated into the individual’s sense of self. According to SDT autonomy along with competence is a primary psychological need and that being autonomous is an essential aspect of human functioning (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The AA appears to represent an event that reflects what Deci and
Ryan (1995) refer to as an environment that allows an individual to develop an integrated sense of self and a source of true rather than contingent self-esteem.

It is proposed here that the AA acts as an attributional retraining opportunity. The activity is novel that allows the individual to leave their past histories behind them. It provides immediate and unequivocal feedback on success and achievement as a tangible demonstration to the performer of their competence. The success which they achieve, for many, is a rare event and one more often than not contrary to expectations, this new found sense of competence may set in motion attributional thinking which updates the self-concept resulting in a positive shift in self-esteem.

Failure at specific activities appears not to represent the devastating effect on individuals some commentators have alluded to. For the few who failed to achieve their desired goals, this appear to be compensated by focusing on the activities they did succeed at and of which they are proud of.

Self-confidence/self-efficacy has emerged strongly from the data where participants have reported becoming more confident in social interaction and in their ability to perform in challenging situations. In line with self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), mastery attempts to overcome the AA challenge observed in the data has appeared to be influential in raising the participant’s level of self-efficacy. According to SET performance accomplishment is the most powerful in determining the individual’s level of self-efficacy, although it should be noted that all four of Bandura’s sources of self-efficacy were observed in the data.

Improvements in self-efficacy have important implications raising expectations that individuals have in their ability to exert control over events in their lives. According to Bandura, self-efficacy expectations are the foundation of human agency which also influence the level of effort and persistence individuals are willing to invest to achieve their desired goals, particularly in the face of disconfirming experiences.

Increased self-efficacy is particularly relevant in terms of the Government’s investment in these types of interventions. Individuals’ who appear to exert more control over their environment through efficacy expectations and heightened self-
regulation, are more likely to resist from involvement in anti-social behaviour, who will be more able to work towards and attain goals with more effort and persistence, who are also more likely to be productive, responsible and law abiding citizens.

In answer to the second subsidiary question, concerning the impact of competence; being able to demonstrate this to one’s self and others appears to make a significant impact on the individual’s self-concept. Achievement gained through acts of competence has been shown to make a dramatic effect, which appears to be an important source of self-empowerment and subsequently appears to have a positive effect on self-esteem and self-efficacy. As suggested by White (1959) competence is a motivational force operationalized by the individual’s need to master their environment, the result of which is believed to lead to an increase in self-esteem. The need for competence to make an impression on self-esteem according to Deci & Ryan (1991; 1995) is not sufficient by itself. These authors believe that competence must be accompanied by the need for autonomy. Being able to act agentically is the key determinant of true self-esteem because individuals must feel that their achievements are truly their own, derived from intrinsically motivated needs. The most significant aspect of the AA process that permits the individual to experience autonomy is the application of the concept of ‘challenge by choice’ which was accommodated in all three programmes.

Self-efficacy founded on the individual experiencing themselves as a causal agent is also determined by how successful and competent the individual becomes, correspondingly, the more efficacious they feel (Tafarodi & Swann, 1995). Competence appears to play a key role improving levels of self-efficacy, which according to Bandura (1977) is founded on mastery experiences. Performance accomplishments in terms of displaying competence over both the physical and psychological challenges presented by the AA appear to be significant factors in developing the individual’s heightened levels of self-confidence and self-esteem observed in the current study.
Behaviour Change, Teamwork, Trust and Responsibility

According to Bandura (1977) performance-based activities are proving to be effective in predicting psychological change as individuals experience competence and mastery through effective performance. In the current investigation, achievement induced improvements to the self-concept appear to activate in a positive direction a number of cognitive and affective units such as improved self-esteem and self-efficacy which in turn appear to influence behaviour. Success and achievement not only affect how individuals feel and think about themselves, but they also appear to determine their behaviour, as a consequence of them realising that they are competent and efficacious beings. Data indicates that achievement appears to change from avoidant tendencies to approach behaviour, because the individual has now become confident in their abilities. This is supported by Wright (1987) who suggests that mastery outcomes achieved during adventure activities are important sources of self-empowerment. In agreement Beaumeister and Heatherton (1996) who believe that self-regulation is implicated in many types of behaviour observed in the current investigation, where participants appear to have become more aware of their self-regulatory powers by ‘facing-up-to’ stressful and demanding situations. This has been observed when individuals have become more determined in their behaviour by applying greater effort and persistence in achieving their objectives.

The perception of danger and the constructive creation of dissonance according to Hopkins and Putnam (1993) is a key factor that facilitates behaviour change. In essence, adventure activities are catalysts and hold the potential for participants to learn ‘new’ behaviours (Berry, 2011). In the current study the behaviour change noted above became evident when participants overcome dissonance and establish their competency and mastery. This view is supported by Nadler (1993) who believes that by overcoming dissonance participants change their behaviour and attitudes. Participants were observed to hold nagging doubts during the execution of various activities when they were required to put their trust in fellow climbers, instructors, equipment and themselves. Trust was particularly evident on the climbing and rope courses and can be interpreted as a specific outcome related to a situation where participants had cogent perceptions of danger and risk. The
inherent dangers involved in climbing appear to draw the individual’s attention to the reality that this activity is hazardous and perhaps this realisation encouraged mutual trust and responsibility for each other’s safety. Responsibility was manifest during belaying, where individuals had an unequivocal appreciation of their safety responsibilities towards their fellow climbers. Behaviour change in terms of individuals developing greater responsibility, acquiring higher levels of confidence to engage in more demanding behaviours, being self-empowered and becoming more able and willing to execute greater self-regulation has obvious benefits to the Government’s aim of promoting more responsible, productive and law abiding citizens.

With regard to the JobMatch climbing programme, participants working cooperatively together emerged strongly from the data. The AA brings people closer together allowing them to form friendship-bonds. The ability or need to form close working relationships appears to be related to the inherent characteristics of the activity. This was certainly the case for climbing, where participants form a clear understanding that their success and safety depends on other people. The activity also serves as a medium to satisfy the innate human requirement of being connected to other people. Being connected to other individuals is theoretically underpinned in SDT, which refers to the universal human need for relatedness in terms of caring for other individuals, but also genuinely reciprocating care. Participants alluded frequently to the enjoyment experienced through teamwork, but interestingly participants reported that they gained confidence in addition to developing trust and responsibility by working closely with other people. The need for relatedness among individuals who are engaged in dangerous activities is a natural but essential requirement and it appears that high-impact AA such as climbing are excellent opportunities for individuals to experience being connected with others and to satisfy this need.

Enjoyment

From observations in the field and interview data enjoyment was a major outcome of these programmes. Enjoyment, whether it was gained from interaction from involvement in the social environment, or the challenge and achievement of the activity, was a frequently reported outcome. Although the role of instructors and
enjoyment featured prominently, nonetheless these can equally feature in other variants of experiential learning or even in other school and workplace-based activities. Enjoyment has been highlighted as an important educational and learning pre-requisite but experiencing enjoyment, ‘peak experiences’ and the ‘flow state’ are not limited to AA experiences exclusively.

Two levels of enjoyment appear evident within the AA experience. There is enjoyment gained from social interaction and humour, but also a higher, more intense sense of enjoyment experienced, both by thrill, described as the exhilaration experienced by vertigo; and post event enjoyment, experienced by achieving something out of the ordinary and/or against expectations. These experiences have been described as ‘peak experiences’ and ‘flow states’. Peak experiences and flow states are unusual and difficult to experience in day-to-day activities and according to Maslow, beyond the experience of most individuals. They are reported frequently among surgeons performing complex life-saving operations and by combat troops involved in intense contact situations. The AA appears to have the ability to deliver an opportunity for anyone to potentially experience an intense moment of exhilaration described as a ‘peak experience’, which are perhaps restricted to extraordinary situations in the lives of individuals who are allowed to perform extraordinary acts, or engage in extraordinary events.

In answer to the third subsidiary question concerning the interpersonal implications for participants, a notable consequence was the enjoyment that they gained from being with other people and working together as a team. Developing interpersonal relationships and feeling related to other people emerged strongly from the data, some individuals on the JobMatch programme stated that being with others made them more confident, one person found that it lifted a depressive mood and isolation. From observations in the field it was apparent that the participants enjoyed each other’s company; there were some light hearted and amusing occasions; they simply appeared to feel comfortable with each other. For some individuals on the YOT programme the AA had brought them into contact with ‘authority’ figures, like the police liaison and reparations officers, in a ‘fun’ activity (i.e., mountain biking). This informal setting permitted these youths to experience social interaction with these members of the ‘establishment’ in a
different context that was more relaxed and friendly than perhaps on other occasions. In this context the youths were reported as being more grateful and polite and their behaviour was more moderate and courteous. Staff and instructors appear to be important sources of support, this is perhaps critical for disaffected youth and may be the only supportive environment they are likely to experience.

The activities also appear to be a significant means of developing close interpersonal relationships because their inherent qualities demand that individuals work together cooperatively, in a mutually caring and safe manner. They provide a structure for people to work closely together to solve a problem that requires a team effort. The AA also offers an opportunity to share a common exposure to risk and danger which appear to bring people closer together. The fear-provoking elements of the AA, climbing in particular, appears to have the potential of fostering trust, a critical ingredient in developing honest and reliable interpersonal relationships which hopefully contributes towards developing heightened perceptions of social responsibility.

Summary

In summary, AA programmes appear to have a positive effect on the participant’s self-concept and may also facilitate positive changes in behaviour and attitudes. However, the observations and arguments presented above, although supported by robust and well established theory nonetheless, for some sceptical authorities and scholars, will no doubt remain only speculative projections that continue to be unproven, unable to account for the manner in which AA interventions are capable of transforming the lives of those taking part in them. The findings of the present study dispute the notion that qualitative ethnographic research, rigorously conducted, is unworthy or unable to make an empirical evaluation. All said and done the findings of the current study, although subjective, are founded upon the views, beliefs and actions of those taking part; ‘in their own words’, based on their reflections, experiences, perceptions and feelings. In essence, AA programmes are unique experiential learning situations, unparalleled within the field of education and training that have an intrinsic value to transform and enrich the lives of those engaged in them.
8.3: Recommendations

Programme instructors and staff created a supportive social environment through their force of character and personality, the most important aspect of which was an empathetic, care-free and humorous approach, which created enjoyment and an autonomy-supporting environment. The quality of instruction and leadership shown, particularly by the outdoor training team from the Community Education & Training Centre involved in the Pathways and JobMatch programmes, was well managed, employing manageable tasks achievable through effort, tailored to individual needs. They were highly professional and effective adventure educators who provided an excellent experiential learning opportunity that made good use of well-established strategies such as ‘challenge by choice’. This was a key feature, which allowed participants to experience agency and provided an opportunity for them to exercise control and regulate their behaviour, which was attributed to their own efforts.

Although this is a critically important concept, in the delivery of experiential learning through adventure, there are other equally important concepts that, in the context of these programmes, were overlooked. It is recommended that instructors also employ, in the delivery framework, opportunities for participant reflection. Through reflective episodes, instructors can encourage participants to make connections between their achievements and attributional thinking and connections between their achievements and problematic scenarios in their daily lives. Providing opportunities to apply metaphors is a critical ingredient in the developmental process where the metaphor is designed to transfer skill, behaviour and knowledge to other unrelated areas and experiences.

AA are rich in metaphors, such as perceptions of insurmountable fearful obstacles, for example a rock face, abseiling wall, or stretch of white water that can be related to other seemingly insurmountable tasks or problems encountered in an individual’s daily life. This said it occurred nonetheless unwittingly, - one participant has hinted at a metaphor in their interview response: “to go and do new tasks, you know overcome fears and go out there, you know like if you go for an interview”.
The suggestion that reviewing sessions should be included in these programmes is an anathema for many outdoor educationists, whilst others regard actively reflecting on experience as an essential element within experiential learning process. According to Berry (2011) there is a long-running debate “Can the mountains speak for themselves?” concerning the benefits of self-directed reflection vis-à-vis providing a structured review session during and/or proceeding activity in line with Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model. As Berry (2011) points out individual differences need to be taken into account. It is reasonable to suggest that some individuals have a better defined self-reflective capacity compared to others who are less capable of introspection and require a structured approach to reviewing their learning experiences. Although Berry does suggest that therapeutic goals, such as addressing dysfunctional behaviour, are considered better served by providing structured reviewing that allows participants to revisit their experience, to extract more accurately and interpret more meaningfully the experience that they have undergone, which in turn appears to facilitates behaviour change.

In the current study, it was apparent that adventure activities which carried greater trepidation for participants, such as climbing and ropes courses, elicited more intense emotional responses. This in turn appears to have made a greater impact on the self-concept, teamwork, trust and responsible behaviour. Programme planners, perhaps in the interest of cost effectiveness, may need to take this into consideration.

The effects of AA programmes may have a better chance of being sustainable if commissioning organisations have a more holistic understanding of their benefits. Organisations like JobMatch who invest in AA programmes, albeit not for educational purposes, need to be aware of the possibilities AA programmes have in supporting their main training objectives. JobMatch operates a well-structured programme, offering a number of educational and mentoring opportunities. It could be argued that these opportunities could have a greater effect by embedding and reinforcing the outcomes achieved in the AA programme. A blueprint for this approach is offered by experiential outdoor education delivered in some schools. The concept of experiential education through the outdoors involves the
application of classroom initiated topics, taken into an outdoor project or activity, where children learn experientially and re-introduced into the classroom. This approach, blending traditional and experiential learning, is believed to be a more effective learning strategy compared to when each is employed independently. Organisations such as JobMatch may be more effective in terms of achieving their own objectives, as well as sustaining the effects of AA, improving the every-day lives of individuals by embedding the learning outcomes that have occurred within the AA process into their own programme.

8.4: Future Research Directions

It is argued here that AA are unique experiential learning opportunities, because they occur in the ‘real world’, carry ‘real consequences’ and utilise perceptions of danger to create apprehension, fear and dissonance. Findings suggest that constructed dissonance is a significant factor in this experiential approach that appears to influence the outcomes observed in the present investigation, most notably concerning the self-concept. Of interest within this process is the behaviour participant’s chose at a specific moment in the process, has been described as the ‘edge’ of comfort (Nadler, 1993). It has been proposed here that individuals when confronted by dissonance find themselves in a ‘self-esteem moment’ described by Mruk (2006) as the ‘crossroads of self-esteem’; here individuals reach a ‘tipping-point’ of change, where it is believed they can only make one of two choices, one of approach towards achievement and self-esteem, the other taking avoidant behaviour leading to failure and unfulfilled possibilities.

At these moments Mruk hypothesises that individuals are motivated to master challenges because of consequences for the self-concept. This is an interesting notion and one that can be applied to the adventure setting for further investigation. It is suggested here that an important line for future research should focus on asking the question - “What motivates the individual to perform under the influence of dissonance and display approach behaviour?” or conversely “What prevents performance by failing to overcome dissonance and display avoidance behaviour?” when faced by a seemingly insurmountable and fearful
adventure challenge. This line of inquiry could be addressed by investigating the attributional patterns and processes that are likely to result in approach or avoidance behaviour, when confronted by disconfirming experiences created by dissonance, generated within the AA experience. Under the general heading of policy research, a second line of inquiry should focus on the sustainability of AA programmes by investigating the most effective means by which the benefits acquired from participation are being transferred, maintained and developed as long-term strategy interventions to support individuals in their everyday lives.

8.5: Conclusion

The findings emerging from the current investigation are made in the context of an idiographic approach, involving an independent observer’s interpretation of what they have seen and experienced in the field, based on interview and observational data acquired from unique events, seen through the eyes of those taking part in them. These interpretations are subjective assessments that must be treated with caution.

Despite the shortcomings, the current study has shown that AA programmes have made a dramatic effect on self-concept and behaviour of those individuals involved in them. It is reasonable to assume, in the light of findings, AA programmes work well in isolation, making an impact at the time. The reality is, however, that these improvements are likely to be short-lived. The challenge therefore is to design and implement interventions that would support individuals in the medium to long-term in their daily lives, in order to maintain the positive impacts made during the AA intervention.

This said, it does not invalidate the worth of AA intervention programmes, but rather, the focus should be directed upon what occurs or could occur following the AA intervention. In essence, difficulties and problems arise, not so much as a consequence of the intervention, but as a lack of an effective progression to a medium to long-term community-centred intervention designed to continue on from the AA programme and thus cement the progress that individuals have been shown to make in their personal and social development, adding to both social and
personal capital. AA programmes should only be perceived as initial interventions, which need to be continued in other forms in the individuals’ everyday world. This point was made forcefully by Evelyn Findlater, who appeared in Appendix D (BBC Newsnight). The notion of the AA programme, as a short-term event, needs to be followed through with inclusive community programmes, such as the Community Food Learning Centre, that individuals can engage with and take ownership of, which are of benefit to them in their personal and social development and the wider community.
References


Appendix A

National Citizen Service

National Citizen Service is a flagship initiative supporting the Government’s vision for building the Big Society. NCS will act as a gateway to the Big Society for many young people, by supporting them to develop the skills and attitudes they need to get more engaged with their communities and become active and responsible citizens.

The programme will promote:

- A more cohesive society by mixing participants of different backgrounds.
- A more responsible society by supporting the transition into adulthood for young people.
- A more engaged society by enabling young people to work together to create social action projects in their local communities.

Programme

All young people participating in NCS pilot programmes will have a common experience, wherever they live, whatever their background and whichever organisation delivers the programme. We will be asking that bids include five distinct phases of activity:

- Phase 1: An introductory phase in which expectations will be set and relationships built between participants and staff.
- Phase 2: A set of tasks, completed in a residential setting away from home, which are personally challenging (typically in the form of an outdoor challenge experience), and focused on personal and social development (one week).
- Phase 3: A set of structured tasks involving visiting and helping the local community and developing skills, again the aim is that this would be completed in a residential setting away from home (one week).
- Phase 4: Participants to design a social action task in consultation with the local community (one week).
- Phase 5 onwards:
  - A period of 30 hours of social action on a part-time basis.
  - A fair/event to encourage participants to get involved in on going social action or volunteering activities in their area (with a view to creating an NCS alumni scheme).
  - A large celebration and graduation event for participants and their guests.
  - An alumni programme, including training sessions and reunion events, to build on the enthusiasm and relationships generated by NCS.
We hope to be able to offer outstanding NCS graduates the opportunity to take part in a programme of social action projects in developing countries.

It is anticipated that the programme will last for around 7-8 weeks. The initial three phases of activity should be consecutive, and made up of three weeks of full time activities (phases 2, 3 and 4) followed by a regular pattern of part time participation over a further 4 week period.

A minimum of ten days and nights should be spent on a residential basis away from participants' homes to give the participants the opportunity to develop life skills and resilience, such as managing a budget and cooking meals.

This is a unique opportunity for organisations to work in partnership with government to deliver the National Citizen Service pilot, and to influence the future design of NCS for delivery in 2012 and beyond.

Emotional rescue: developing a resilient approach to youth wellbeing

A new holistic strategy for young people is being developed by the UK Government which will – for the first time – include looking at and analysing emotional wellbeing. Peter Rogers, from the charity 4Children, explains the new approach.

Introduction
Pick up a paper, watch the news, surf online... and you can’t escape the health messages our society is receiving today. Recent news reports have all highlighted how unbalanced our diets are and how, combined with a lack of exercise, this is setting Britain’s young people on course for a lifetime of potentially long-term serious ill health problems.

Healthy choices?
According to the latest national survey of young people’s health behaviours [2010 ‘TellUs 4'], there is real cause for concern, with only 19 per cent of young people eating five portions of fruit or veg on an average day and 38 per cent eating two portions or fewer. And, even then we lag behind the European union with Spain and Greece allegedly recommending eight and nine portions per day and Japan a dizzying 17!1

Schools across the country are working hard in an attempt to tackle these bad habits and encourage young people to make healthy – or even healthier – lifestyle choices. But however effective we are in providing positive dietary and physical activity interventions, we mustn’t overlook another crucial area of young people’s wellbeing: their emotional and mental health.

Worryingly, in a 2009 EU Child Well-being Index, the UK came 24th out of 29 EU countries on a scale measuring children’s wellbeing, scoring particularly badly on health and subjective wellbeing (a measure of how children feel about their lives and health).2

Building self-esteem pays dividends in the future
As young people move from being dependent on their parents towards being more influenced by their peers, it is important that they are equipped with the skills and knowledge they need about the risks associated with certain lifestyle choices. Whether it’s drinking alcohol, taking drugs or exposing themselves to sexually-transmitted infections, improving young people’s self-esteem is a crucial part of the battle in ensuring that they feel confident enough to make the right choices.

The dangerous quest for “perfection”
So it’s hardly surprising that many young people find it difficult to cope with the various mental pressures they face growing up in today’s society. Jenna Young, a young person working with 4Children as a liaison between other young people and the team building a new myplace youth club in Knowsley, Merseyside, recognises this.

Jenna, now 21, believes that growing up in 2011 is even harder than it was when she was younger, mainly because of the increasing levels of peer pressure amongst young people.
She says part of the pressure stems from adults and children alike constantly being shown images of "perfect" faces, bodies and lifestyles.

"This makes people think they are not good enough and will never have the best," she explains, adding: "We should be promoting real people, real lives and real stories; encouraging young people to feel good about themselves and what they have. Promoting individuality and how being different is good because, in all fairness, that's normal."

"I remember being 14 or 15, and life for me and my friends wasn't as difficult as being 14 to 15 is now. There is the pressure to be having sexual relationships and to have the best of everything, from the right boots, the latest phones, what type of clothes you wear, where you hang around... everything."

Self-esteem survey

In response to this increasing recognition of the importance of young people's emotional wellbeing, an anonymous is working on a project in partnership with the Department for Health to gather data on young people's self-esteem and what makes them feel confident.

It is important that people and organisations working with young people make an effort to understand their motivations, because there is always a reason why young people act in a certain way and disengage. This may be due to underlying health issues, rather than simply being shy or feeling reluctant to take part.

The survey includes questions relating to young people's lifestyles, their family and friends, and whether they feel valued. They are also asked how happy they are being "themselves", whether they can admit to mistakes and whether they always show their true feelings.

New holistic health strategy

The data from this study will feed into the development of the Government's new strategy for young people. Under new reforms, a system called Public Health England is to be established. The system will see Local Authorities commission and provide funding for public health, devolved through a ring-fenced grant. Encouragingly, the Government has stressed the importance of a particular partnership between new public health bodies and children's services, calling it "critical" to improving health and wellbeing outcomes and tackling inequalities.

How best to deliver the support and health information that children and young people need was one of the issues addressed at a Government youth summit in March. The summit was a great opportunity to get all those who are important and influential in one place to help formulate the new youth strategy.

The strategy aims to ensure that there is a specific focus on young people's health and will inform commissioners of what young people want and need from the NHS. Part of this will involve making sure young people have a say in the commissioning of services and can influence the decision-making process within Public Health England. This principle of participation got off to a positive start as a quarter of the delegates at the summit were young people and every session was co-chaired by a young person.

"Make Space for Health"

One of the questions raised at the summit was how we can equip the wider non-health workforce to support young people in managing their health. It was encouraging to hear recognition that all adults have a role to play. It is also good news for our 'Make Space for Health' campaign, which has long championed the need for everyone to do their bit to support young people's health.

Back in 2007, the Make Space campaign asked 16,000 young people about their health choices and what schools and other groups could do to help them make more healthily. The survey found that young people would like more information on health delivered in informal settings from trusted advisers.

Having welcomed the new Public Health White Paper's emphasis on prevention rather than cure at its launch in December, the campaign is keen to ensure that young people's health needs are supported, in schools, as well as a range of less formal settings. It wants recognition of the vital role peer mentors, volunteers and youth workers, as well as traditional medical "experts" such as school nurses play in targeting these messages effectively.

The Make Space for Health activity resources (see Resources box below) were well received by youth workers, who praised their ease of use and were keen to include them in their sessions. The resources have been created in such a way that it makes it easier to draw out information from young people. Challenging self-esteem issues in the FEEL booklet also allows young people to discuss what makes them feel good or bad about themselves. We believe these resources have great potential to support school nurses in helping their pupils deal with these and other emotional issues.

References


RESOURCES FOR PROFESSIONALS

www.4children.org.uk

4Children works with Government, local authorities, children's service providers, and children and parents to ensure joined up support for all children and young people aged 0-19 in their local community.

Make Space for Health

www.makespace.org.uk

To help deliver a healthy lifestyle message to young people, Make Space for Health has developed free activity resources, aimed at those working with 11 to 16-year-olds. These resources can be downloaded by school nurses and other health professionals working with families and young children. The modules are based around three key themes:

- EAT focuses on nutritional health
- MOVE on sport and exercise
- FEEL on emotional wellbeing

Following successful pilot schemes in various areas around the country, these modules are now being widely distributed and used in youth settings nationwide.
Appendix D

July 2009 - YOT Prevention Activity Programme

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Appendix E


Esteem? It’s a brat thing

Indila Knight

A fellow hack, chatting on the phone recently, asked: “Did you see my piece on Roald Dahl?” “No, I confess, I hadn’t. I’ll fax it over right away,” I replied patiently. “My interest are unusual,” he went on. “I think I should write a novel, don’t you? Not a silly little novel like yours.” (Pun for hilarity at the very idea.) “Oh, a proper novel.” And so on.

Is there anything more unmotivational than high self-esteem? Because that’s what this was: not low self-esteem seeking comfort but the most galling self-regard, like padding itself as a need for reassurance. And, alas, the problem of high self-esteem runs through all society, not just hacks, from toddlers upwards.

Go to your local bookshop and when out of 10 self-help books will be about attaining higher self-esteem. These will only be purchased by people who have self-esteem to spare with low self-esteem don’t realize it: they just think of themselves as shy and aren’t self-effaced enough to turn to the bookshop, or the shrink, looking for help.

Switch on the television and you’re immediately told to believe you’re special some special, unique you’re “worth it” to go to a playgroup or nursery and all the parents there will be busy building up their children’s self-esteem — high self-esteem in children being the Holy Grail of modern parenting.

Actually, children with high self-estem are often vulnerable persons, from the child with its head permanently up in its ears — “Ask me, Miss, all me, me, me, me, me” — to the child that comes on a birthday party, asks for the first slice of cake, then starts opening everybody else’s presents, commenting freely on the contents of World of Cars. No Advance, I’m getting a quad bike for my birthday.”

Roald Dahl understood this brilliantly. All of his heroes and heroines, from Charlie Bucket to Matilda, are shy, and all of his villains are brash, noisy, and quick-witted. Look around you, though, and the Verucas Salts of this world are the ones winning through: this arrogant age the child that shouts the loudest is the one that’s heard.

So thank God for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, which published research last week showing that the belief that low self-esteem is what feuds children to commit crime, take drugs, and be noisy and so on is in fact a myth. The report says that it is actually confident children who are the problem and who pose a greater risk to the public. Professor Nicholas Emery, who compiled the report, said the findings showed that high self-esteem was not the “social vaccine” it had been held to be for so long. Now, obviously, one doesn’t want one’s child to be a queening, drooling grossly words, but they don’t need to be taught self-esteem in the way they are taught French or swimming. But they are, absurdly — as I’ve written before, today’s child can do no wrong.

I was recently amusingly told off by another parent for telling my young son not to be too thick about a piece of maths homework, the implication being that the remark would sting him for life. Actually, he was being amusingly thick, though he modestly stopped being thick once his thickness had been pointed out.

What I should have done, my remonstrator explained, looking deeply wounded on my son’s behalf, was to have pointed out that he was a very clever boy for getting his sums completely wrong. The result: he was made to work very, very hard. Now, obviously, one doesn’t want one’s child to be a quondam genius for understanding mathematics in the first place, and that perhaps he would like to try again.

But what value does advising praise have if it is a constant, and what kind of ego, aggrandized creature does such “confidence-building” turn a child into? We seem to have forgotten that a little shyness, a little reserve, a liking for quietly pondering are all charming qualities. How we laugh at the kind of parent that says “now” when bumped into. How pathetically, woefully, unnecessarily English, we stagger. How much better, in the words of those ghostly self-help books, to be a Woman Who Tolerates The Wrongs, or To Feel The Fear And Do It Anyway. (Actually, I do feel more and more that everything that used to be good about Englishness — a certain mild eccentricity, a belief in good manners, a mildness of tone, a gentle, assured tolerance of others — is merely away faster than an ice cube in a brook. And nobody seems to mind much.)

It seems too much to hope that the Rowntree Foundation’s research might cause social workers to think twice before sending offending youths off on lovely summer holidays to make them feel better about themselves. (The logic of this thinking is so glacially at fault that one can only gape in wonder — since, clearly, the higher the self-esteem, the smaller the capacity for remorse.)

And one can only hope that at some point parents will realize that sometimes allowing a child to feel bad about itself is a necessary kind of, not a crime.
The Outward Bound Trust is an ideal partner for our organisation, delivering courses that specifically target our programme aims – to improve attainment, develop decision making skills, build self-confidence and encourage students to be the best they can be. The benefits of the learner-centred approach are clear and long-lasting, leaving students with a positive attitude and a belief that they can have a go at all challenges.

Les Metcalf, Aimhigher Tendring Partnership

Fact box

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Organisation background

The Aimhigher programme works with students from areas of multiple deprivations who have the capability to go to University. These students often have low aspirations, lack confidence or suffer from low self-esteem – all of which can hinder their progression from school to higher education. Aimhigher supports students academically, gives them experiences of higher education, graduate employment and helps to raise self-confidence and self-esteem. The Outward Bound Trust is a key partner in this process.

The use of bursary assisted outdoor learning has been of significant benefit since this programme started in 2005. The students fit the criteria for bursaries, Aimhigher covers the balance of costs, and in 2009 the Essex Outward Bound Association covered transport costs. This level of assistance allowed 18 students from Y12 to participate in a Team & Leadership course, in addition to the main 5-day programme of Adventure & Challenge courses for Y10 students.
Reasons for selecting The Outward Bound Trust

The “can do” attitude that an Adventure & Challenge course produces in young people, combined with raised levels of confidence, self-esteem and aspirations, are clear evidence that this is the ideal programme for Aimhigher Y10 groups. The course encourages students to push themselves beyond their expectations, while learning about themselves, others and the environment.

The objectives of the Adventure & Challenge course all tie in with those of Aimhigher. The review process on completion of activities brings together the learning experiences, and gives students real confidence in their abilities to set, and then achieve, their own goals. Combining this with the overall development of communication skills, sense of personal responsibility and an awareness of an outstandingly beautiful natural environment (that most will not have had access to before) makes this a highly effective learning experience.

The Team & Leadership Development course builds on these objectives but with the added opportunity of every student experiencing group dynamics and taking on leadership roles. This starts on arrival at The Trust, when the mixed groups have to appoint a leader for the first activity - the infamous Jog & Dip – and continues throughout the week, including the overnight expedition. Instructors are ever present, keeping a watchful eye on the safety, the skills development and the overall progress of the group.

On their return to Essex the Aimhigher sixth formers are rightly proud of their achievements knowing that they now have the skills to work with others and indeed lead activities.

Key outcomes identified by Aimhigher Tending

Raised aspirations. The positive learning environment, the activities and the motivated instructional staff have a real impact in terms of raising student aspirations, and eventually increasing applications and acceptances to higher education.

Improved attainment. The process of setting targets and reviewing progress throughout the course gives students new confidence to set targets back at school, improving attainment at Key Stage 4 and beyond.

Enabling decision making. The learner-centred journey through Aimhigher ties in with the approach taken by The Outward Bound Trust, helping students to build awareness of their opportunities and to make informed decisions about their future.

Inspiration. The instructors – many of whom are graduates and have worked hard to achieve their personal goals – are excellent role models. They provide real support, inspiration and epitomise the “can do” attitude that becomes an infectious part of the entire process.

Insight into a student’s Outward Bound experience:

“This programme has convinced me to progress to University. I now realise that I can set my own targets and succeed in my ambitions. The 24 hour expedition was so hard to do, but I did it.”

Poppy (15), Adventure & Challenge course
Appendix G

The Outward Bound Trust | Social Impact Report 2011

Some stories behind the results

Throughout this report we have tried to provide an open and honest account of the real difference our courses make to young people.

The following stories show the many different ways a course can impact upon an individual. We’ve presented stories from past and present to illustrate the immediate and lasting effect of an Outward Bound course.

I feel I’m a changed person. I had some problems at school and I was badly bullied and threatened. At Aberdovey I was challenged to face my fears and get over them. I really enjoyed it, especially getting wet. I think my hardest challenge was climbing a mountain. It was very hard but when I finished it I felt really proud of myself. I believe that bullies aren’t really a problem anymore because I can have confidence in myself. The people who worked at The Outward Bound Trust were really supportive. Even when I was at my lowest, they were encouraging me and helping me achieve my goals. I never imagined I was capable of doing these things. I think what I have learned will help me in the future and it will stay with me forever.

Ryan, Aberdovey, 2010

Appendix H

Supporting the development of disadvantaged young people in East London: HSBC and The Outward Bound Trust

This project invested in 750 pupils from 5 disadvantaged schools in East London, over 5 years, and came to an end in August 2008. The main aim of the project was to support the educational, social and personal development of the pupils. The project was 2-phased, involving a 7-day Outward Bound Adventure and Challenge course for all pupils, followed by a 3-week Outward Bound Classic course for a selection of pupils.

A project evaluation identified the outcomes of the programme and the impact on the students’ academic achievement, behaviour and attendance, as well as their perceived levels of self-esteem and confidence.

It highlighted how the majority of students displayed improvements in all of these areas for at least one year. It also showed how those who progressed onto the final part of the programme – the 3-week Classic Course – made the most significant and lasting progress. Moreover, the majority of these students took up either positions of responsibility in their schools, such as members of the School Council, or other rewarding activities, such as The Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. In fact, it recognised how the opportunities for utilising skills need to be available in order to maximise the benefits of the programme itself.

*Those individuals who have opportunities to transfer the skills learnt through the project to other areas of their lives go on to experience greater personal development than those who don’t.*

Adding value to the programme

HSBC employees were also trained to work alongside the Outward Bound instructors to mentor the students, supporting them throughout their experience and developing a strong relationship built on trust, compassion and understanding. The evaluation demonstrated how this brought significant additional value to the programme by:

- Enhancing the learning experiences of the young people
- Breaking down barriers in the wider community between older and younger generations
- Improving community cohesion

Several of our programmes take a similar approach, involving staff from sponsoring companies to work closely with pupils in a mentoring capacity. Last year we worked with DHL, RWE npower, Wakefield and District Housing and HSBC in a parallel Birmingham project to offer over 650 young people these valuable opportunities.

*Quick Facts*

**Programme structure:** 7-day courses followed by 3-week courses for selected students; involvement of HSBC staff mentors to add value to the programme

**Young people reached:** 750

**Aims:** to encourage and re-engage with pupils; to aid the educational, personal and social development of pupils; to aid community development

**Outcomes and impact:**

- Positive and enjoyable experiences
- Some re-engagement with school
- Decreased disaffected behaviour for some pupils
- Expansion of friendship groups
- Broader understanding of different cultures
- Students challenged stereotypes of own abilities
- Greater likelihood of taking up positions of authority and/or other activities within the school

**Evaluation methodology used:**

- Pupil profiles & analysis of "hard" school data
- In-depth individual pupil case studies
- Discussions & focus groups
- Lead evaluator – Loughborough University

*These were St. Paul’s Way Community School, St. Michael’s School, Stepney Green School, St. Ursula’s R C School and Royal Docks Community School.*

Getting started in the Outdoors with the John Muir Award – a case study
The Prince’s Trust

Coming to Outward Bound® is a building block in the lives of the young people we support. The positive experience that they and our staff gain is invaluable to our work. To witness young people take on a challenge, see it through to the end and achieve a sense of completion and pride is so worthwhile and inspiring. The Outward Bound Trust and the John Muir Award have brought a quality to our programmes that is both unique and priceless.

Marguerite Doherty, Get Started Programme Executive

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Organisation background

The Prince’s Trust is a national charity that offers support to young people aged 14-25 who are not in education, employment or training. The Trust offers a wide range of courses with the combined goals of getting young people to realise their potential and get their lives working again – through further training, work, volunteering or education.

The core client groups include young people in or leaving care, facing challenges in education or having been in trouble with the law, and lone parents. A common thread is that all of the young people are unemployed at the time and often not engaged in any constructive or positive activity.

Reasons for selecting this bespoke programme

The combination of Outward Bound’s knowledge and expertise in the development of young people and the John Muir Award’s focus on environmental awareness and building an understanding of the world around us made this course a clear choice. The bespoke programme gives young people an opportunity to develop new skills and to learn more about themselves as they try new activities and overcome new challenges, and explore some of the most beautiful places in Scotland.

The John Muir Award fits in well with the aims of developing respect for the environment and each other. It brings a valuable and achievable award within the reach of participants. For many this could be the first award they have ever worked towards and completed, giving a great sense of achievement and personal value.
The Outward Bound Trust's courses offered to young people through the Prince's Trust Scotland are optional, so a final important factor is that they are enjoyable – the instructors are enthusiastic, knowledgeable and show a real commitment to seeing young people challenge themselves and succeed. The obvious benefits of each course, and the positive feedback we receive, ensure that more young people are keen to sign up for future courses.

**Key outcomes identified by The Prince's Trust**

**Sustainable progression.** The aim of Get Started programmes is to provide an entry route to positive outcomes and allow the young people access to education, employment and training by giving young people the tools they need to continue to make real and lasting changes in their lives.

**Valued qualification.** The John Muir Award is a recognised and valuable qualification, showing an ability to focus on the environment and related issues as part of a structured learning programme. This may be the only award some of our young people have ever achieved, giving it an additional value beyond the qualification itself.

**Building self-esteem.** The circumstances that many of our clients come from can have a seriously detrimental effect on their self-esteem. The experiences and successes that form part of an Outward Bound course provide a significant boost to the individuals' sense of self-worth and self-belief.

**Shared goals.** The Prince's Trust and The Outward Bound Trust share the goals of helping young people to develop, grow and achieve their full potential. Outward Bound's expertise in using the outdoors to deliver powerful learning outcomes as they work towards these goals adds real value to the overall work carried out by The Prince's Trust.

**Positive environment.** The instructors and staff at The Outward Bound Trust show real enthusiasm, professionalism and flexibility in the way they deal with all of our clients, creating a positive environment in which to learn and develop.

**Participants' first hand experiences of wild places:**

"The John Muir Award really helped me focus on what I wanted to do, the more certificates and Awards I collect, the better my job prospects will be."

**John Wilson,** 18, Prince's Trust participant

"I loved being in the great outdoors and was amazed at the amount of work we completed in such a short space of time."

**Thomas McCormick,** 17, Prince's Trust participant

"Allowing opportunity for young people to 'get out there' and gain new skills and experience. It is an extra challenge and certificate available, and a real sense of achievement."

**Jacqui Kennedy,** Team Leader, The Prince's Trust

"Having the John Muir Trust recognise people's achievements through the John Muir Award gives legitimacy to young people engaging in outdoor activity. It is also a personal certificate recognising achievement, rather than a group certificate, which is important to a significant number of participants. With Outward Bound Metro, we offer participants the opportunity to see their immediate environment in a different way and, perhaps for the first time, think about taking responsibility for it."

**Steve MacKenzie,** Deputy Head of Centre, Outward Bound Metro

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Appendix J

Compass Programme with the John Muir Award – a case study
Callander Youth Project, Perthshire

We see a huge change in the majority of the youngsters participating. The sessions are a real challenge and often a rollercoaster of emotions are expressed, but ultimately the group learn to work together, and as individuals, become more confident, more able and more open in their view of the world around them.

Jennifer Gaines, Youth Support Worker

Fact box

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Callander Youth Project</th>
<th>Number of young people in organisation</th>
<th>Approx 100</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Callander, Perthshire</td>
<td>Age group</td>
<td>S4-6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Organisation background

The Compass Programme run by Callander Youth Project is a dedicated support service for pupils from McLaren High School. Students are referred to the project by year heads where they believe that some form of additional support is required – whether due to behavioural issues, learning issues, mental health, low self-esteem or other concerns. The majority of those referred are on Staged Intervention, as outlined in the Scottish Executive ASL Act.

The time young people spend in the Compass Programme is focussed on achieving the Duke of Edinburgh Award, including time at The Outward Bound Trust for personal development, and the completion of the expedition section of the Bronze Award.

Reasons for selecting this bespoke course

The initial aim of the Outward Bound courses was to help students in their preparation for the Duke of Edinburgh expedition. The programme created for this not only developed practical skills such as navigation and campcraft, but also the important but less tangible skills of teamwork, communication and the building up of self-confidence and trust in fellow team members.

The John Muir Award was added to the programme to create a broader experience, giving students a link between themselves and the wider world around them. The structure of the Award fitted in well with the course and allows students to work towards a valued additional recognition, alongside their Duke of Edinburgh Award.

The Outward Bound Trust
Adventures for life
Key outcomes identified by Callander Youth Project

Social development. The course puts students into contact with other participants from a wide range of backgrounds and social groups. Initially this can result in discomfort but that soon turns to a sense of understanding and co-operation.

Broader view. The focus provided by the John Muir Award gives every participant a clearer view of the impact they have on their environment, and develops their understanding of the world outside of their everyday life.

Confidence and self-esteem. The challenges faced by many of the students prior to referral can result in low self-esteem, but the programme of development at The Outward Bound Trust plays a significant role in rebuilding this, really boosting the confidence of each individual.

Building relationships and respect. Coming to The Outward Bound Trust builds mutual respect and understanding not only between students but also in the relationships between students and project workers, which greatly benefits everyone when the course is completed.

“Adventures and reflection are key parts of an Outward Bound programme, and the John Muir Award works well by breaking this down so that participants think about experiences in relation to themselves, others, and the environment.”

Dave Adams, Senior Instructor, Outward Bound Metro

For further information:

> Callander Youth Project - www.cyp.org.uk
> John Muir Award – www.johnmuiraward.org
> The Outward Bound Trust - www.theoutwardboundtrust.org.uk
INFORMED CONSENT

I am conducting research on the programme which you are participating in, this will involve filling in a sheet of paper asking your views on a number of statements together with interviews.

I am particularly interested in discussing your present as well as your past history to determine how you have felt about yourself during your time on the climbing programme. I would be most grateful if you would consent to providing information on more than one occasion. These occasions will include times during the programme and for formal interview immediately after the programme. Interviews will be audio taped, transcribed and parts will be presented in the research report. No names will be attached to the interviews, your answers to questions will be treated in the strictest of confidence and your anonymity will be guaranteed.

I .............................................. (please print name) agree to participate in this study which will require me to discuss my feelings and views about the climbing course.

Participant’s signature: ..........................................................

Date: ..........................................................

Researcher’s signature: ..........................................................

Date: ..........................................................
INFORMED CONSENT

Dear Parent/Guardian,

I would like your permission to ask your son/daughter some questions on several occasions about their participation in the YOT outdoor activity programme held over the school holidays.

The answers to the questions I would like to ask will be recorded. All information will be treated in the strictest confidence and the identity of your son/daughter will remain unknown.

Thanking you,

Martin Evans
(Researcher)

I give my permission for ____________________ to be interviewed about the YOT outdoor activity programme.

I understand that all information will remain confidential.

Signed (Parent/Guardian): ____________________

Print Name: ____________________

Date: ____________________
## Appendix L

### Inductive Content Analysis: Youth Offending Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Propositional Statement</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surfing been the best... OK, out of all those activities... because you have more fun in the sea and all that, and best of all you could go swimming.</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Outdoor activities within the YOT programme are regarded as very enjoyable experiences</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good fun and... like mountain biking... good coming down hills and not going up hills... was too... for me I wish I could ride down instead of riding up I liked it.</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the activities like... happy, loads of fun, like what I said about the boating, lots of fun like...</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking it's lots of fun</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Really, I enjoy it son. I really do think they would enjoy it... cos it's good fun for them...</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The mountain biking... today like... Yeah, it was all right like, up hills that's all, there was a few problems... a long way to go... my legs... really tired like... makes you feel good when you've done.</td>
<td>Physical Challenge and positive mood</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All the stuff like... cos it keeps you fit un healthy... mountain biking and if you comes off you just laughs, then keeps going it's not a problem really, it's just uphill and downhill, off low jumps and all that... keeps you happy... it's brilliant.</td>
<td>Enjoyment, Health, Physical Fitness</td>
<td>Enjoyment and the perceived benefits in terms of health and fitness appear to interrelated</td>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
</tr>
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<td>All the stuff like...  cos it keeps you fit un healthy... mountain biking and if you comes off you just laughs, then keeps going it's not a problem really, it's just uphill and downhill, off low jumps and all that... keeps you happy... it's brilliant.</td>
<td>Enjoyment, Health, Physical Fitness</td>
<td>Enjoyment and the perceived benefits in terms of health and fitness appear to interrelated</td>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The outdoors... it's um, good, a bit of fun, it's um very fit and stuff... good, um, makes me feel that I'm not like gonna be cramped up when I'm older or something, feels like I'm gonna be fit and stuff,</td>
<td>Enjoyment, Health, Physical Fitness</td>
<td>Enjoyment and the perceived benefits in terms of health and fitness appear to interrelated</td>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking, that all I liked... it's um, good, a bit of fun, it's um, um very fit and good.</td>
<td>Enjoyment, Physical Fitness</td>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain biking, loads of other stuff. I've enjoyed them really... the best for me as been surfing and mountain biking as I done mountain biking before with them see, it's good fun keeps you fit and everything like so nothing wrong with it.</td>
<td>Enjoyment Physical Fitness</td>
<td>Participation is recognised as an opportunity to be involved in healthy activity that keeps participants off the streets and out of trouble</td>
<td>Physical Fitness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>keeps them fit en healthy, off the streets or in trouble and all that, just like I used to do like on the streets, trouble so... like six years back like, I really loved it up until this stage, still do.</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
<td>Avoiding Trouble</td>
<td>Distraction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outdoor activities within the YOT programme are regarded as very enjoyable experiences</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
<th>Enjoyment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment and the perceived benefits in terms of health and fitness appear to interrelated</td>
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<td>Enjoyment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation is recognised as an opportunity to be involved in healthy activity that keeps participants off the streets and out of trouble</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
<td>Avoiding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I think I've changed... personality a lot like... respect, loads of stuff changed, trying to give up smoking, but I'm still on it like but, changed now I was doing drugs but not anymore, so it's really hard like.

Achievement

I had my RYA certificate, I was happy, so

Enjoyment

I've enjoyed loads of stuff so I've been with XX (YOT Officer) indoors and outdoors trips, fair play, he's a good man like... just happy to be with him, it's a load of fun.

Appreciation of Staff

Appreciation of being able to participate, and the opportunity to express gratitude towards the staff for the opportunity to be part of the programme,

Sense of pleasure from achieving and recognition of behaviour change through contact with and involvement in the programme
Appendix M

Inductive Content Analysis: Pathways to Employment Project

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Propositional Statement</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Well, mostly it was like since I come out of school cos I didn't have much education and I was in trouble a lot in school and they built my confidence up, as well as the outdoor stuff, they taught me maths and English. It was confidence, you know like you don't realise they were doing it, they would just do little things for you but it would build your confidence a bit like and I say now I would not be doing this now if I hadn't come here. I would never have talked to you if I hadn't have come and met these people like, so... It's changed me brilliantly, like I said about confidence earlier I would never have gone to those places and done the outdoor stuff. The course has been good like, I'm stronger in it, makes me more confident to do things. My maths and my English were not much good because I'm dyslexic and that but they would always put in the time to help you do it, they would make sure you got it.</td>
<td>Building confidence</td>
<td>Participants appear to exhibit little confidence in themselves the programme particularly the way staff have assisted them and the nature of the outdoor activities involved has improved confidence.</td>
<td>Improved Confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it was just exciting getting up there, Simon was taking photos of us all, it was great, it's good, I was excited I was just really good. It was a good feeling, I suppose everyone felt proud in their own way. accompanying that cos it wasn't easy, you know, it's a big hill isn't it. Some of the things make you feel good, and shaky and all that like, nervous but when you do it you feel like, happy like. Never did any of these things before, like down at Bedlinog climbing centre we didn't think we would climb it but we did do it like, fair play and it was good like, it was, fair play, once you got up there, it made you feel good.</td>
<td>Teamwork</td>
<td>Teamwork and helping each other appear to be developed through the trails and tribulations of outdoor activities.</td>
<td>Working with Others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I was a little bit worried about the climbing, I'm not too happy with heights, once you did it like got up there it was cool I thought jumping of that big rock into the river was a bit mad, but Simon went first, did it first like, then I went, everyone just followed you then like, so brilliant. I was so nervous, but the voices in the background - Simon saying to keep going, when I made it to the top made me feel brilliant all my arms were aching like, just made me feel brilliant just getting up there, I didn't think I could get up there, do you know what I mean, but I did it, got up there. Found it brilliant, keeps you fit, healthy, made you part of the team as well like, got new friends, I've found it really good to be honest.</td>
<td>Positive Feelings/ Achievement</td>
<td>Outdoor activities foster positive feelings of achievement through overcoming physical and psychological barriers.</td>
<td>Improved Self-Esteem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities foster positive feelings towards the self</td>
<td>Positive Feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outdoor activities foster positive feelings of achievement through overcoming physical and psychological barriers</td>
<td>Positive Feelings</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Positive Feelings</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Improved Self-Esteem</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Inductive Content Analysis: Pathways to Employment Project

Segment Sub-Theme Propositional Statement Main Theme

Well, mostly it was like since when I come out of school cos I didn't have much education and I was in trouble a lot in school and they built my confidence up, as well as the outdoor stuff, they taught me maths and English... It was confidence, you know like you don't realise they were doing it, they would just do little things for you but it would build your confidence a bit like and I say now I wouldn't be doing this now if I hadn't come here. I would never have talked to you if I hadn't have come and met these people like, so... It's changed me brilliantly, like I said about confidence earlier I would never have gone to those places and done the outdoor stuff. The course has been good like, I'm stronger in it, makes me more confident to do things. My maths and my English were not much good because I'm dyslexic and that but they would always put in the time to help you do it, they would make sure you got it. Interviewer: What about the outdoor activities? Well I'm pretty good with stuff like that, I'm an active person but if it was like someone who was there who can't do it, then we'd all pitch in and help them, nobody would struggle on their own, we'd all make sure, well talk to them and say you can do it and all that like. You've got to go through something like this to know what people can be like to be honest, the way they actually help you and that. It was just exciting getting up there, Simon was taking photos of us all, it was great, it's good, I was excited I was just really good. It was a good feeling, I suppose everyone felt proud in their own way. accompanying that cos it wasn't easy, you know, it's a big hill isn't it. Some of the things make you feel good, and shaky and all that like, nervous but when you do it you feel like, happy like. Never did any of these things before, like down at Bedlinog climbing centre we didn't think we would climb it but we did do it like, fair play and it was good like, it was, fair play, once you got up there, it made you feel good. I was a little bit worried about the climbing, I'm not too happy with heights, once you did it like got up there it was cool I thought jumping of that big rock into the river was a bit mad, but Simon went first, did it first like, then I went, everyone just followed you then like, so brilliant. I was so nervous, but the voices in the background Simon saying to keep going, when I made it to the top made me feel brilliant all my arms were aching like, just made me feel brilliant just getting up there, I didn't think I could get up there, do you know what I mean, but I did it, got up there. Found it brilliant, keeps you fit, healthy, made you part of the team as well like, got new friends, I've found it really good to be honest.
Gorge walking, climbing, um canoeing, all different things like that, really enjoyable, all of them, more or less, good fun, it's a good laugh, cos you do something different all the time.

Doing Pen-y-Fan walking with everyone was the best to be honest, the whole group was there, Deb started that day and she came and just done it, and it was good fun like, we all got to know each other better, got to know Deb and we've been good friends since.

When you like come here you hardly know anyone but when you've like part of the group then working together canoeing, gorge walking, climbing or something like you get to know them a bit better like so you become friends.

It was bad weather, well it was snowing up there, I didn't think Tracy was going to make it, she was moaning all the way, it was a six hour walk up and down that, all day, everyone was just great, it was a good laugh.

Like I said, I was a tearaway like and I always used to say, Oh it doesn't matter, I'll have support off my mother but you've got to get on your own two feet and these people helped me to do it, and now I would never change that for the world like. I'm going in the army, well I've passed all my first army tests now, I've got to go up for my running and that and I would never have done that without Simon and the others.

Coming to Pathways was the first time I could do something, we done canoeing, river walking, walking up mountains, rock climbing we had a certificate for that, that was good, also climbing up Pen-y-Fan view and all stuff like that.

The staff are really important, if Simon [staff member] weren't there and the others and they was like school teachers, I don't think anyone would come here, if they didn't show you the respect they had for you doing it nobody would come here. It's very important to have people like that.
# Appendix N

## Inductive Content Analysis: JobMatch 1 - 2009

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Propositional Statement</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...you know, you get feelings of really high emotional feelings, that you've done something that you didn't think you could do, a lot of that was because of the training that we were getting and the supervision that we were getting, um but the majority of it was the fact that we were doing it together...</td>
<td>Achievement derived positive feelings from unexpected success</td>
<td>Achievement at various climbing and ropes activities resulted in positive affect drawn from experiencing success beyond what the individual would normally expect from themselves.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoroughly enjoyed it didn't think it was going to be as good as what it was, met some tidy people um, I pushed myself over the limits on some things which I thought I would never ever do...</td>
<td>Opportunity to experience unexpected success</td>
<td>Climbing and ropes work present opportunities to engage in a challenging situation where the individual is motivated to overcome the challenge through a desire for personal achievement or to protect the self-concept.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...and it was the look on his face was enough for me, that was probably my high of the week, the look on that boy's face when he knew that he had done something that he thought that he would never do...</td>
<td>Recognising the effect of unexpected success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I wanted to achieve because before I left I had to get to the top of the overhang as well, so it's just wanting, it's personal achievement isn't it at the end of it.</td>
<td>Need to achieve and desire to overcome a difficult challenge</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...when I first like climbing the ropes I only wanted to get half way I was thinking to myself if I go down now and someone else does it I'll feel like I'm weaker or something like that and I didn't want to feel like that so you keep pushing, even though, you know I burnt my legs and it hurt...</td>
<td>Realisation of achieving more than first expected through self-motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...I hope I've achieved enough to get somewhere and like I say, today is a big turning point for me but I am definitely going to keep trying anyway, yeah it's given me, the you know, it's showed me there aren't limitations...</td>
<td>Experience has been a watershed that translates into a new journey and desire to maintain effort and not to be deflected by perceived personal limitations</td>
<td>The climbing and rope course has become a personal journey of discovery where some individuals recognise that attitudes and feelings about the self have been transformed and that this new found self-belief can project itself into other situations and adaptive behaviour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it's made me realise that I can achieve things that I didn't think I could achieve to begin with because at the bottom of the rope I was looking up and I thought ah, I'll be happy to get halfway but when I made it...</td>
<td>Realisation that I can achieve other unexpected achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...it's been amazing, it has, I've laughed from the minute I've got on the bus to the time I've stepped off the bus, it's just been hilarious, you probably can hear my laugh, from everybody else because I have just cracked up all the time, it's been amazing, it really has been a good time and I've learnt a lot about myself...</td>
<td>An uplifting experience from which self-knowledge has emerged</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Self-Exploration

- Achievement of unexpected success
- Opportunity to experience unexpected success
- Recognising the effect of unexpected success
- Need to achieve and desire to overcome a difficult challenge
- Realisation of achieving more than first expected through self-motivation
- Experience has been a watershed that translates into a new journey and desire to maintain effort and not to be deflected by perceived personal limitations
- Realisation that I can achieve other unexpected achievements
- An uplifting experience from which self-knowledge has emerged
The climbing and ropes course provided an opportunity for participants to engage in enjoyable social interaction that facilitated the development of trust and a more extroverted personality.

- **Enjoyment working with others and developing trust.**
- **Positive impact of social interaction even for introverted individuals.**
- **Pride in initiating social interaction.**
- **Positive social interaction enjoyment of working with others.**
- **Recognition of positive social interaction.**
- **Developing close social relationships.**
- **Enjoyment of social interaction.**
- **Recognition of social interaction and teamwork.**
- **Camaraderie as a source of motivation.**
- **Group motivation as a source of self-motivation and overcoming self-doubt leading to self-satisfaction.**
- **Overcoming the fear of failure.**

I've made some good mates as well, erm, I enjoy working with people anyway especially in these sorts of situations and when you trust someone to belay for you and vice versa they trust you, it makes you like stronger don't it.

- **I enjoyed it, it was working with other people that I'd never met before a lot of new people I've made friends with yeah, I've enjoyed it, and putting my trust in them as well.**
- **I'm normally the person to just keep myself to myself but being thrown in an environment with fifteen, sixteen other people, not knowing them, just making a friendship out of them, absolutely awesome.**
- **I've made sure that I've sat and talked to everybody and I'm quite proud of myself for that.**
- **The interacting together, the meeting different people, like Kev, his father used to live about four doors away from me, and it's just brilliant meeting different people and enjoying the team activity.**
- **I mean, one of the interesting things for me, coming out of the climbing, was the social aspect.**
- **It’s been a good bunch of lads to do it with, and girls too, to do it with and it’s been close knit fair play.**
- **I enjoyed it because you interact with others and you learn little things about other people, you know what I mean, things that you wouldn't well know about them.**
- **Meet new people and work together as a team yeah, yeah it has been good and they're all great.**
- **The camaraderie, I liked the way, I loved the way, um, we would egg each other on basically you know when you’re going up there your saying come on bach, come on bach.**
- **The fear of failure sometimes, you know, for me, just you want to do it and if you don’t you’ll feel like a laughing stock so you just get up there and do it like.**

Climbing presented a group activity where other participants assist motivating the self.

- **Climbing offered an opportunity to tap intrinsic motivation and overcome the debilitating effects of fear of failure.**

Recognition of the importance of the social interaction involved in the climbing course and the enjoyment derived from working in a close functional way with others.
The climbing and ropes course develops confidence to address challenges which the participants confirm positive feelings towards the self.

Confidence to approach other challenges result in elevated feelings about the self.

Achievement derived feelings of positive affect towards the self.

Developing confidence and self-esteem

Personal achievement and improved self-esteem

Self-esteem has declined through unemployment awareness through social comparison that others are similar

Improved self-esteem and self-confidence

Improved self-esteem and self-confidence through unexpected success

Self as the source of success and subsequent improvement to self-esteem.

Improved positive feelings and realisation of achieving more by focusing the mind

Improved self-esteem

Self-esteem has taken a bit of a knock because I had been out of work for various reasons for a couple years and started feeling it was only me, yeah, the course showed me that there were others, in the same or worse situations.

...I have been out of work for ten months and you have like lows all the time probably and uh having been on the climbing and exercising, taking out different tasks different routes from the, on the climbing exercise you try and make use of all the time, so your self-esteem then goes from being really, really low to a high positive then which I really enjoyed it I did really...

...it gives you like more confidence in yourself as well I do definitely, more self-esteem you know like as a whole like individual like as with before you think you might not be able to do that, and you think ah you know unless you have a go of it like, you've achieved something out of it then, you know it was good like...

...doing it like, the success comes from yourself, which boosts self-esteem...

...I think I've got more confidence in myself like, like my self-esteem um, some of the things I thought I would never do like I've conquered and it was good like...

...it made me feel really good it did, it made me feel like Oh, I could do anything I can you know, this week's made me realise I can do more things, if I put my mind to it I can do anything it made me realise this week..

...it's made me feel better about myself cos watching myself you know climb up the wall everything like that...

...I felt better, I was happy, in that, smiling happy with yourself that you've overcome it like, I enjoyed it like.

...I've felt excellent in myself to be honest I didn't think I'd have the strength to get up there but with a bit of encouragement just seemed to find the power...

Positive self feeling and enjoyment

Positive self feelings from overcoming challenge

Improved positive feelings and realisation of achieving more by focusing the mind

The climbing and ropes course presents opportunities to address challenges that propagate positive feelings towards the self.
Climbing and rope work present opportunities to confront the challenge of dealing with fear. The perceived fears involved in climbing and rope work present opportunities to experience the strong positive emotions gained from successfully confronting and dealing with fear.

The abseiling was the most worrying for me, after it felt brilliant, a sense of euphoria, yes, done that, inside you think yes I’ve done that. I don’t know why but with the abseiling it’s like you are in control of it and when I went down and Rory said “take your hands off”, I was, my hand was glued to the rope and I was like no I can’t, I can’t, if I let go of that I’m gone but then I took it off and I was like whoa, like, you know I’m there like I’m there, I was back on I was so nervous with joy like cos I let go, I was going down like then Whoa my heart was racing, I just, it was crazy it was and my hands were burning I was like, it was just mad.

To go and do new tasks you know overcome fears and go out there you know like if you go for interviews and things you know, you know it’s a kind of nerve racking to actually go and do it and then...

I got to the top and I have never experienced fear like that where I felt sick, do you know what I mean, I’ve never experienced that, never but like I said I done it and it was amazing, and when I got to the bottom it was the best feeling in the world, not that I’d repeat it again because I’m proud of what I’ve done but eh, maybe I would you know again, you know in time but I was on such a high from that, that I didn’t em want to do it again just in case I couldn’t again.

When I first got into the centre thinking Oh my God look at all these places and that, you know I’m never going to be able to do that, that was the most challenging but when I seen, when they talked us through the ropes and safety and everything I overcome that, but one of the climbs was hazardous for me then mentally.

It was a challenge, it was the first one I went on, you know the wall first of all and I think I’ve never done anything like this before, the first one was a challenge and then it was then like after that it was you know what I mean, I suppose every time you come to like a wall you think that once you’ve done it you could do it again and again, the fear factor gone out.

That’s what I enjoyed the most that’s right the challenge of trying to get to the top of the harder courses and stuff.

The actual climbing course I enjoyed it, it was something that I would never have done before and never thought about doing..
The climbing and ropes course appears to create an achievement-performance situation that presents an environment to experience positive mood and affect.

Improved positive feelings
Enhanced positive feelings and improved attitude
Improved positive feelings linked to social aspects
Achievement-derived feelings of positive mood
Achievement-derived feelings of elation
Achievement-satisfaction engendered positive mood
Achievement improved positive affect
Confidence and subsequent feelings of achievement derived elation
Positive feelings from achievement
Recognising intrinsic motivation
Recognition individual responsibility for outcomes
Recognition that the source of success is the self

Improved Positive Mood

The climbing and ropes course appears to have a major impact on positive mood.

Agency

Recognising and learning that individuals are ultimately responsible for their actions and achievements.
Climbing and rope work present opportunities for building confidence in one's ability. Climbing and rope work has provided an opportunity to build self-confidence which appears to affect feelings of pride, determination to address fear and no longer accepting personal limitations.

The teamwork inherent in climbing and rope work provides an opportunity to gain respect and facilitate success and confidence.

Improved Self-Confidence

Developed confidence particularly in social situations

Improved confidence in making decisions and help overcome fear and apprehension

Overcoming fear and feeling positive results in improved confidence

The experience has raised self-worth and confidence to reengage in work

Improving self-confidence by gaining accomplishments above expectations

Building confidence

Confidence in your own ability

Improved confidence

Improvement in self-confidence

Recognising the need for self-confidence

Personal satisfaction and respect derived from teamwork

Recognising personal success facilitated through teamwork

Recognition of confidence development by working with others

Working with Others

The experience has raised self-worth and confidence to reengage in work

Climbing and rope work present opportunities for building confidence in one's ability.

Improved confidence

The teamwork inherent in climbing and rope work provides an opportunity to gain respect and facilitate success and confidence.

Working with Others

The experience has raised self-worth and confidence to reengage in work

Climbing and rope work present opportunities for building confidence in one’s ability.
Robin and Rory are first class, they are encouraging as well to everyone and they had a good laugh with them.

Robin and Rory have been absolutely fantastic, absolutely brilliant you know, they’ve just been, I can’t praise them high enough I can’t you know and yourself, you know, you’ve done, you’ve given me a bit of a kick like.

Aye, they don’t bull shit you or nothing, they are just there, encouraging bring it out of you.

They’ve been so helpful, you know, they just, like I said there’s not enough praise really, they’ve just been so helpful, you know funny as well like, you know, I, and you know, you just could ask them for anything really, and they would help you, I just, they are the type of guys I would go out with a drink in the night.

..ah, Robin and Rory, funny, really, really funny, um well put it bluntly they are like big kids really, you’d think it would all be strict, do this do that do this, but with them it was just flowing like look this is how you do this.

They’re all great, Robin and Rory, great the support they’ve given us over this last week has been amazing.

They treat you exactly the same here, it’s about making one step isn’t it, they don’t judge, they’re fantastic they were.

The boys Robin and Rory have been excellent, I’d love to go out for a pint with them and yourself but I’m skint at the moment (laughs).

The first day I was there I was ahh, like that but then I really got into it then, I just can’t think of anyone better than Robin and Rory, I really praise them, you know 12 out of 10 like you know.

Yeah Robin and Rory and yourself as well, you know have been great but um it’s inspiring you know to see Rory as well you know.

[Robin has lost all fingers from his left hand in the 2nd Gulf War - he climbs with one hand and a thumb]

Robin and Rory they’ve been a good laugh, they’ve made you at ease, I loved the way Rory, straight away made a joke about his hand, and I found that really confident in him and I liked what he done, you know there was just, he broke the ice, broke the barriers and that was that, they are brilliant boys like, amazing.

The abseiling even though I knew Rory was looking after, he was on the ball like and nothing was going to happen, but it’s just going off the edge.

..if you can’t do something they don’t take it out on you then afterwards, like you know, they understand what you’re going through.

..tremendous benefit to me in as much as that they gave me confidence through what they were doing and the way they were helping me and that really is how I saw suddenly from being, feeling sorry for myself, yeah.
...you got to rely on them to make sure you’re safe as well as it’s trustworthy. It’s brought my trust up a lot.

...trust in other people and then obviously other people then trust in yourself.

...there was obviously a bit of danger cos if, something could have gone wrong. It was all about trust really wasn’t it.

...with that responsibility you’ve got for belaying, you know, for being responsible for somebody’s safety you felt needed, stupid word, but you know, it shows that, or if showed that it’s not a normal everyday activity that you’re involved in, put it like another way, it’s like knowing that other people can trust you.

...it’s not just about yourself is it, it’s about each other as an individual you know and you can rely on someone else and know that they will look after you then.

...it gives this feeling of responsibility because you are responsible for keeping that person safe while they are doing all these silly things like climbing walls um, and it does give you a good feeling that you know that they look down and they see you there and they think that’s right I can trust him...

...I’m scared of heights, but I wasn’t scared to do that cos I knew I’d be safe and I knew like Robin and Rory wouldn’t like, they’re capable, they’re trust (.) you know what I mean and your mates so you trust them like...

...you get to know people better and you trust, you learn to trust people whereas you wouldn’t elsewhere like, you know you trust them with your life basically, if they drop you it’s a long way down yeah...

...through the programme I’ve been doing rock climbing abseiling, I’ve been able trust people who I don’t really know but starting to know um to keep me safe really, just enjoying it...

...I’ve got to be honest like, the actual climbing you know and putting your trust into other people on the floor, and that like, it was quite challenging like I’ve got to be honest...

...Yeah, and you’ve got to have issues, like I’ve got issues with trust, I can trust nobody, but you’ve got to trust whoever your partner is on the end of your rope cos if you don’t it’s a long way down if you fall like, you know what I mean, and they are there watching for your safety, so you’ve got to trust them...

...there’s health benefits to it, there’s a lot it alleviates depression, stress, it takes your mind off things totally. I mean I’ve had a week up here where everything else in the world has been oblivious which is like stepping off a roundabout for a while you know, it’s been fantastic in that respect, that’s what I’ve got out of it.

...it has given me a bit more of a boost because like I said ah I felt as, as I (.) when I lost my job, and then being stuck in the house I could feel a little bit of depression...

...very positive you know, I’m going home absolutely knackered um not having done as much as anybody else physically but you know my, so I’m going home knackered but my mind is so alert and so different you know,

Developing trust
Developing mutual trust resulting in positive feelings
Developing trust
Developing responsibility and trust
Developing reciprocal trust
Developing trust and awareness of responsibility is an uplifting experience
Developing trust
Developing trust
Developing trust
Developing trust
Recognising the health benefits of alleviating depression and stress
Therapeutic effect a release from unemployment induced depression
Belief that physical challenge improves mental functioning

Climbing and rope work exhibit and emphasise specific responsibilities individuals have towards each other in very real and concrete terms which fosters the development of trust which appears to manifest itself in mutual trust individuals have for each other.

Participants in the climbing course have identified therapeutic outcomes: alleviation of depressed mood and reduction of stress.
The climbing course was perceived as an uplifting experience, one that presented a journey of personal discovery and self-development such as changes in attitude particularly towards other individuals, self-efficacy, and overcoming feelings of inferiority.

..I would play five-a-side football on Tuesday, and the reason I say this is that I play with like league players, ex-league players and they are really good like you know, the thing is, they are really good and whatever, and they are very critical, because I'm not an ex-league player but you know you go into that thinking to yourself that you can't climb, you can't do this and you can't do that and I can like, you know I was telling them when I went there on Tuesday, I was telling them about the climbing and things and they said they wouldn't do that and I was thinking well I done it, so I thought I got one up on you like regardless like, you know.

..it's great, you know its brilliant you know I'd recommend it to anyone to do this course you know as in training you know, doing the stuff like you know, doing the walls, doing the ladder, doing the you know things like that and I just, just loved it I did.

..the death slide, where you have got to sit on the edge, where Colin struggled with, that was the one just because you are sitting there, you know there's a drop beneath you and you are going to feel that drop that's all, and your looking at the shackles, you're looking at the bolts thinking well they're bolted but what if them bolts are loose you know, what if they come out? That was the worse one for me, but everyone was looking at me so I thought right then, I've got to do it, so I done it.

..when I first seen all these people on the course, when I looked at some of them and you do tend to think or he's probably a waster or he's a bit chopsey but got it totally wrong, totally wrong, everybody, you know I got on with every single one of them, fantastic.

..a lot of the things that I did get involved in like the belaying um and the assist on the belay and catching the guys coming down on the sky wire, which looked like horrendous, um it took me beyond what I thought I was capable of yeah, therefore I'm now more confident in what I could achieve..

..I was successful this week because I actually pushed myself into doing it and um with them lot as well backing me up that just spurred me on even more.

- Overcoming feelings of inferiority
- A satisfied participant please to recommend the experience
- Presenting opportunities for action and self-discovery, where the perceived pressure for inertia was unacceptable to the self
- Recognising the error in prejudging people and the implied benefits of working with others
- Developing self-efficacy
- Realisation that effort is required for success helped by motivation from others

Personal Development
Appendix O

Inductive Content Analysis: JobMatch 2 - 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Sub-Theme</th>
<th>Propositional Statement</th>
<th>Main Theme</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I'm not really that confident talking to strangers but um, as the day</td>
<td>Developing self-confidence through social</td>
<td>Climbing offers an opportunity for individuals to interact socially on equal terms, in</td>
<td>Developing self-confidence through social interaction</td>
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<td>progressed I got to know them a bit better and I started becoming</td>
<td>interaction</td>
<td>this respect like sport/physical activity it is a social leveller where people meet in</td>
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<td>more confident in myself...</td>
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<td>a common cause on an equal basis. It is this environment that appears to develop the</td>
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<td>individual's social self-confidence.</td>
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<td>It's built my confidence up and all that, ten times better...</td>
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<td>Well I feel more confident around people. I feel like, well, when I</td>
<td>Developing self-confidence through social</td>
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<td>was young I was pretty shy around people now I'm thinking that's gone</td>
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<td>like so I'm really, really happy about that because usually I'm a</td>
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<td>shy person, I won't speak to people who speak to me, I'll say one or</td>
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<td>two words and that's about it like, I mean, I'm really confident now</td>
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<td>like, it's great like, I mean I speak to people now in a tidy manner</td>
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<td>like, it great like...</td>
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<td>...I had problems going into a room full of people, and I, to get</td>
<td>Developing self-confidence through social</td>
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<td>to know people as well, so yeah, well confidence...</td>
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<td>...it's helped me with confidence because before I hardly would have</td>
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<td>talked to people I wouldn't have known, I would have just been quiet</td>
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<td>but I've got stuck in talking to people...</td>
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<td>...mixing with people you don't know, it's a good confidence builder,</td>
<td>Developing self-confidence through social</td>
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<td>it's something to enjoy, it's teaching you sort of an extra thing</td>
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<td>showing you something different in it, do you know what I mean? Which</td>
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<td>I thought it was really cool, when you've been in the house for a</td>
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<td>few years as well, you know what I mean and you've been depressed</td>
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<td>then it's nice, and it does give you confidence well it gave my</td>
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<td>confidence a big boost</td>
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...built my confidence a lot you know working with people...

...mucking in with people, a load of people, made me more confident of myself everything you know, it's been great, but like before I didn't have much confidence in myself with a load of people around me...

...I talk to people I don't know so I've bonded. I've got a bit more confident, helping others and they helping me...

...my confidence that's the main thing I think has built up in me and just not being frightened of anything really...

...it gives you a bit more confidence done it, of things you, well cos I was never one for heights...

...I can look up and say, well I've achieved that so why can't I achieve whatever else so you know it's made me a little bit more confident.

...more confident you know, if you can do that then you can put your mind to anything really can't you so, yeah, confident...

...once I went over the edge he [Robin] said, it hasn't snapped you're not dead, go on then, get down, you know, awesome like, you know, the confidence he gave you is unbelievable...

...it's [climbing] brought my confidence up and that, like it's easier for me to go into a place now and just lay it out and if they don't want me, they don't want me somebody else is going to want me it's like it's not impossible to get a job is it?...

...just things you think you can do, if you push yourself you can do it, just confidence building that's it really, more than anything because I do lack confidence...

Climbing offers purposeful activity where individuals are required to work together, it is this process of “mucking in” where individuals form strong social and friendship bonds with each other that appear to develop their self-confidence

Developing self-confidence through working with others

Developing self-confidence by overcoming fear

Developing self-confidence by overcoming challenges

Developing self-confidence through addressing challenges

Developing self-confidence through working with others

Developing self-confidence by overcoming fear

Developing self-confidence by overcoming challenges

Developing self-confidence through climbing and believing that confidence is transferrable

The challenging situations inherent in climbing allow the individual to step outside their “comfort zone” and thereby in their efforts to address the challenge they also overcome anxiety manifested in fear of height or fear of falling. It is this process whereby the individual addresses fear that formulates beliefs that they can “put their minds to anything” and that this growth in self-confidence is perhaps for some transferrable to other situations.

Developing self-confidence through addressing challenges

Improved Self-Confidence

Developing self-confidence through climbing and believing that confidence is transferrable

Developing self-confidence through working with others

Developing self-confidence by overcoming fear

Developing self-confidence by overcoming challenges
...when you get to the top, it's brilliant, excellent, it makes me proud.

...before you wouldn't get me in to do anything like that but that's one of the top ten best things I've done, it's a great achievement, I'm proud of myself...

...on the rock climbing, it was a challenge, it was a big challenge, climbing up that 70 foot wall, but I overcome the challenge [:] (Q: How did it make you feel?) Proud of myself, very proud, it was really good.

...it makes you feel happy, happy, glad that I've actually done it instead of opting out in the first place which I was considering but, no really happy and proud of myself.

...I didn't think I'd get up that, I got to the top but when it came to coming back down the boy who was next to me going up, he had to talk me back down because I wouldn't thing, but once I started then, I found it a lot easier he just said to me, you can do it, you done it yesterday and I done it sort of thing, it's like I'm getting better with it now, I'm quite proud of that like.

...it makes you feel good about yourself, good achievement, you feel happy about it, go home at the end of the day and think, Oh, I done that it was all right.

...I didn't think I could do it, I was really pleased when I done that because I didn't think I'd do that I thought I'd get stuck on the corner bit as it overhangs so I was pretty pleased with that, I was happy with that.

...I felt good with myself because I didn't think I was going to do it, and when I did it then I thought fair play like, good on me.

...it felt brilliant, it was, I did, never thought I was going to do it but it was good, when I reached the top, an achievement like.

In achieving specific climbing objectives participants report having feelings of pride. Realisation of their ability to overcome challenges and for some overcoming self-doubt elicit feelings of personal worth and self-respect.

Achievement overcoming the challenges presented by climbing and overcoming self-doubt success evoked positive mood it made participants "feel happy" and "really pleased" but they also report feelings directed towards the self such as "I felt good with myself" and "you feel good about yourself".

Improved Self-Esteem
...at first I was nervous, I'm terrified of heights, I was shaking, my heart was racing I felt sick, I just, I couldn't control myself but then as we was doing the yoga [as part of an innovative warm-up] with Robin and we were doing all the breathing techniques and all that I, the second and third day, I flew through it like a duck to water I, it was absolutely brilliant, I'm not even that terrified of heights anymore...

...it was one of the best things I've ever done like and, I was a bit nervous at first cos I suffer with bad nerves like...

...the thing is, if you are positive about things, you know, if you've got a barrier like I had a barrier of being frightened of heights, I overcome that barrier so if I've got a barrier now I know I can come over it, I'm not going to die, I'm not going to thing, I can get over it...

...when you're on top you're looking down over feeling, Oh I don't know, I don't know if I'm going to do this. I kept on asking um Rory, am I safe, am I safe going down, he said lean back and go down and I was like, Ah I've got to do this, I've got to do this so as I go down then I started shaking a bit and I though yes I've done it, I was quite happy that I'd done it

...overcoming my fear of that abseiling wall because I was shaking going down, I was shaking by there but I done it and I climbed that ladder, that was a fear as well, I can't believe I done that, proud of myself for that

...well at first I didn't feel safe but as soon as I got down I thought it aint as bad as it looks, you know, you can only go as fast as you want it to go and if anything goes wrong then your tutors got you up the top like, so you're fine, and I just kept on thinking well there's nothing to be scared about and that's got, you know, got my nerves calmed down a bit and I was happy...

...well the thing is, I was afraid of heights I went over abseiling and like Robin said if you conquer that you can conquer anything and the thing is if you give it everything it pushes you forward you know, I know now, if you want something you can get it

Controlling anxiety resulting in task achievement that ultimately overcomes fear

Controlling anxiety and realising this as an achievement

Overcoming fear as a barrier by having a positive attitude

Overcoming anxiety and experiencing elation

Overcoming anxiety and experiencing pride in doing so

Rationalisation of fear and to overcome it in task performance

Conquering fear and concentrating the mind on objectives

The perceived fear in climbing presents opportunities to confront and overcome fear. For some the realisation that barriers and challenges whatever their complexion can be overcome but in doing so addressing fear elicits positive feelings.
...I loved it, I had a hell of a time a really great time

...I tell you what if they said, Oh we are going again next week anyone who wants to join in, I'd pay the money and go myself again, I loved it.

...I just couldn't wait to go back the next day and that, and I've been telling all my friends and my family and that I loved it like, it was great

...would never have done it before you know this has given me a positive, unbelievable like, you know really buzz everything

...I found it not too bad at all, I quite enjoyed it, I enjoyed most, well every bit of it really, I enjoyed it

I thought it was a brilliant experience, to be honest with you I didn't think I'd enjoy it at the start but I really enjoyed it, thought it was good...

...we haven't wanted for nothing, so we've had all our food had everything explained to us, it's been brilliant really, it's the best week I've had in about a year to be honest, so I've really enjoyed myself

...doing something new was exciting a bit of enjoyment and a good, and all the boys and the girls were good, we was, you know nice people we had, there was nobody, nutters on there playing up or nothing was there...

I found it good, it was exciting as hell, I weren't expecting the rock climbing to be so, well that good...

...it's made me feel a bit happier because if I was in my house doing nothing and because this course has made me, just made me um, do stuff and plus it was a good activity to do so I felt happy...

...the teamwork is good, because the thing is if you've got to rely on somebody, they rely on you, you rely on them, you mess up, you're going to kill somebody simple as

...teamwork um enjoyed myself working as part of a team...

...for me it's talking to people, I can't talk to people very good but after this, talking to new people you know what I mean, it's co-operating with people you don't it has been helpful in that sense...

Participants report having had strong positive emotions. “I loved it” and experiencing enjoyment from social interaction, the challenge of the activity (and as stated above and below the influence of the instructors and the effects of working in a team).

Enjoyment derived from teamwork

An experience developing trust and teamwork

Teamwork is an inherent aspect of climbing which appears to be an enjoyable experience where trust and self-confidence can flourish.

Working with Others

Enjoyment derived from teamwork

Developing social self-confidence through working with others

Teamwork is an inherent aspect of climbing which appears to be an enjoyable experience where trust and self-confidence can flourish.

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