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Exploring the Potential for Wilderness Therapy as an Intervention Method with At-Risk Youth in South Africa

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A Dissertation Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of Masters in Social Work Research

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Compulsory Declaration

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

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Abstract

This study explored the potential for Wilderness Therapy, a recognized intervention involving outdoor living, adventure activities and individualized therapeutic components, as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. Although there are several youth-targeting programmes in South Africa that incorporate outdoor living and adventure activities, it is unclear how these programmes are integrating evidence-based Wilderness Therapy. This study investigated current wilderness programmes being used to intervene with South African youth and the therapeutic components these programmes incorporate. The study considered understandings of Wilderness Therapy held by those working in South African wilderness programmes and examined the context-specific opportunities and obstacles they experienced.

This qualitative study utilized one-on-one remote interviews using Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp call and telephonic communication. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling was used to select 18 research respondents who worked within South African wilderness-based programmes targeting at-risk youth. The respondents had to have been involved in at least two of these programmes and spent multiple nights with the youth, in an outdoor setting. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Tesch's (1990) method of qualitative data analysis was then used to analyse the data.

The findings of this study revealed that wilderness programmes in South Africa utilize similar activities, environments, approaches and methods to those used in the internationally recognised method of Wilderness Therapy. The therapeutic aspects considered essential within Wilderness Therapy were not found to be incorporated in South African programmes, however they did include indigenous South African teaching methods such as storytelling, peer feedback and inter-generational mentoring within a group setting. The findings of this study revealed that those working within South African wilderness programmes had little awareness of similar methods proven successful in other countries, such as Wilderness Therapy, and that they felt that wilderness-based programmes were not well understood or appreciated by key role players. Limited reliable financial support, logistical challenges, a lack of evidence-based research and high numbers of youth needing intervention, were revealed to be significant challenges for those working in South African wilderness programmes. The study revealed that collaborations between organizations, schools and government were a particular strength of South African wilderness programmes, according to those that work within them.

The main recommendations, that arose from the study, for staff implementing youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa are to grow their knowledge of South African teaching methods and Wilderness Therapy to enrich their programmes. Management of wilderness programmes are recommended to increase NGO collaborations, use social media to improve public awareness and incorporate an educational and employment focus within their programmes. Increased collaboration between existing programmes is recommended to establish standardized staff training and practices. It is suggested that Social Workers provide family and reintegration services to youth attending wilderness programmes as well as increase their involvement within these programmes. The Department of Social Development is recommended to provide financial support and facilitating NGO collaborations for wilderness programmes. It is recommended that future researchers conduct a variety of different type of research on South African wilderness programmes.

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Multiple people and places have made this Research Masters journey possible. Most of this dissertation was written during the world-wide Covid-19 pandemic. While this brought multiple challenges, personal separations and uncertainties, I was lucky to have periods of joy and productivity.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Wilderness Therapy has proven to be an effective method of intervention with at-risk youth around the world, building self-esteem, decreasing negative behaviours and increasing compassion for others. Despite these benefits, the Wilderness Therapy method, in its entirety, has not been employed in South Africa. In a country where youth face significant challenges, it is curious why a method, proven effective for this age group, has not been fully embraced by Social Workers and other relevant Social Service Professionals (SSPs). Various programmes in South Africa do, however, use similar methods to intervene with youth. Little research has been done into these programmes or the methods they use. This qualitative study explores the potential for Wilderness Therapy to intervene with South African at-risk youth a demographic facing numerous context-specific economic and social challenges.

This chapter introduces the study which explored the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. The chapter will begin by providing a statement of the problem that this study aimed to address. The unique context of this problem within South Africa, will then be discussed. Thirdly, it will unpack the rationale and significance of the study, highlighting its value for wilderness-based youth programmes and the Social Work profession. The research topic, main research questions and research objectives will then be stated followed by the clarification of concepts. Ethical considerations of the study will then be presented. Finally, the structure of the research report will be provided.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Youth in South Africa face the greatest impact of poverty, with 62% of people in this age category falling beneath the upper bound poverty line (De Lennoy, Storme, Madiriza & Smith, 2018). Poverty affects youth's ability to become educated, skilled and employed, as well as increasing their vulnerability to negative social behaviours (De Lennoy et al, 2018). School dropouts, HIV infection, teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, gangsterism, crime and violence are alarmingly common amongst youth in this country, threatening their safety and that of their communities (Goldenberg, 2013). As a result, youth in South Africa have been flagged as being in dire need of effective interventions, in the National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). This policy highlights the priority state of youth-targeting interventions

and encourages programmes that focus on youth empowerment through increased education, skills development and employment (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). The scope of skills held by Social Workers, places these professionals in a key position to intervene with youth through strength-based individual, group and community work (Tucker & Norton, 2012). Existing youth interventions in this country have been specifically criticized for lacking sustainability, not adequately embracing South African strengths and not reaching the amount of youth needing assistance (Republic of South Africa, 2015). It is essential that Social Workers and other relevant SSPs employ numerous effective interventions to facilitate positive change in this age group. Given the proven efficacy of Wilderness Therapy in other countries, making use of this method, while being conscious of context-specific challenges, and incorporating strengths within this country, could be effective at intervening with youth in South Africa.

The use of outdoor activities and nature-living to help youth overcome personal challenges, build their self-esteem and grow their compassion for others has been recognised globally since the mid 1900's (Russell, 2001). As this concept gained popularity, the idea was solidified into a specific evidence-based intervention method known as Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001). This intervention method includes living in a wilderness environment and participating in adventure and survival activities for anything from two days to two months, while also incorporating individualized therapeutic interventions, provided to the young person and their families by Social Workers or counselling professionals (Russell, 2001). The consolidation of this approach occurred within the social context of First-World countries in North America, Europe and Australia (Russell, 2001). In these First-World contexts, Wilderness Therapy proved to be effective at facilitating personal growth amongst youth by decreasing negative behaviours, developing coping mechanisms, growing a positive sense of self, increasing self-belief and developing compassion for others (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019; Bastemur, 2019).

South Africa has a rich cultural history that cherishes wilderness areas as spaces of healing, intrinsic reflection and life-altering metaphors. The removal of oneself from what is commonly referred to as 'civilization' and the placement within wide-open natural spaces in order to have a personal growth experience is far from a new concept in South Africa. Wilderness spaces have traditionally been used to facilitate cultural rituals that provide personal growth to youth (Babane, 2019). South African organizations such as the National Peace Accord Trust, EducoAfrica, Outward Bound Trust of South Africa and the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Reintegration of Offenders have all used outdoor living and adventure activities with the intention of facilitating the personal development of at-risk youth (Steyn, 2005). The

outdoor programmes run by these organizations include hiking excursions, rock climbing, camping, canoeing trips and other outdoor activities (Steyn, 2005). Although these programmes use outdoor components, it is unclear whether Wilderness Therapy is being utilized in South Africa, as it was designed. Despite its proven efficacy in other countries, contextual challenges faced by youth, and the professionals, such as social workers, that aim to intervene with them, may make implementing traditional Wilderness Therapy in South Africa more difficult, less appropriate, or even impossible.

There is no current literature pertaining to how wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa may differ from that run in First-World countries. Little research is available that speaks to how South African organisations are incorporating elements of Wilderness Therapy to enrich work with at-risk youth, what role Social Workers may, or may not, play in wilderness-based programmes or to what extent their outdoor programmes integrate the therapeutic aspects that are essential to the efficacy of Wilderness Therapy. It is vital to consider that a country like South Africa, with a rich heritage of wilderness work, might already be incorporating unique indigenous aspects into youth work in wilderness settings. However, basing intervention on evidence-based models is vital and so, to understand the place of this intervention within South Africa, this study aims to explore the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa

1.3 Problem Context

South African Social Workers and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) who are targeting at-risk youth, must negotiate several challenges. Despite a governmental emphasis on youth, NGOs targeting this age group face continuous difficulties accessing reliable and consistent funding (Harding, 2014). Funding is particularly scarce for administrative and personnel expenses (Harding, 2014), leaving many youth-targeting NGOs with problems relating to high workloads, poor staff support, under-skilled personnel and insufficient supervision (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Programmes that reach a high number of youths on a small budget are favoured by funders as well as programmes that include an education or employment focus (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Furthermore, the urgent and extensive need for youth-targeting interventions in this country has resulted in many programmes being implemented that lack efficacy-proving research (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). This is the context within which the wilderness-based youth programmes currently being run in South Africa operate.

The majority of this study took place during the initial outbreak of Covid-19 in South Africa. At the time of this study, the South African government put in place several regulations to reduce the spread of the virus, lessen the strain on medical facilities and protect vulnerable citizens (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). These regulations greatly restricted people's movement during the first few months of the pandemic outbreak in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). Academic institutions similarly put restrictions in place at this time to prevent the spread of Covid-19. These regulations meant that no social research requiring personal contact was permitted (University of Cape Town, 2020). As the data collection of this study occurred during this period of regulations, the original data collection plan was affected. The adaptation of this original plan will be clearly explained later in this research report.

1.4 Rationale and Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will increase understanding of the existing wilderness programmes being implemented in South Africa and how they integrate aspects of the Wilderness Therapy method within this country's unique context. This study's findings will act to guide how Wilderness Therapy can best be incorporated into South African youth-targeting wilderness programmes while being conscious of context-specific challenges and strengths within the country. It will also shed light on the understandings of the Wilderness Therapy method amongst staff who work within similar programmes in South Africa, highlighting the degree to which programmes in this country are embracing methods proven successful in other countries. With very little literature available on youth-targeting programmes in South Africa that incorporate outdoor living and adventure activities, the findings of this study will address this gap in literature. This will help to establish a base of understanding of wilderness-based programmes in South Africa which is essential if these programmes are to gain support from key role players, support that is essential for these types of programmes to continue, increase and improve.

Social Workers and other SSPs aiming to intervene with youth could benefit from a greater understanding of the Wilderness Therapy method. There is currently no literature that suggests there is an accurate understanding or awareness of Wilderness Therapy as a recognized therapeutic method amongst SSPs in South Africa. An increased understanding of the Wilderness Therapy model might mean an increased use of Wilderness Therapy as a method of intervention. Social Work, in particular, is rooted in innovative, engaging and strength-based practice (Tucker & Norton, 2012), making this profession suitable for Wilderness Therapy, a

method shaped by these ideologies. The results of this study uncovered the current understandings of Wilderness Therapy amongst South African SSPs and revealed what may be limiting their awareness, and therefore, their use of this effective method. These findings can act to guide how the awareness and understanding of Wilderness Therapy amongst SSPs can be increased to enrich interventions with youth in South Africa. This will not only increase the likelihood of Social Workers referring youth to existing programmes, it also might increase the Social Workers' desire to collaborate with wilderness-based programmes to provide additional therapeutic support to youth attending the programmes.

Hansen (2002) highlighted the lack of literature pertaining to the challenges faced by NGOs in South Africa that utilize outdoor living and adventure activities to intervene with youth. This study will fill this gap in literature by providing a greater understanding of the difficulties experienced by South African NGOs using wilderness-based programmes to intervene with at-risk youth. Understanding the unique challenges faced by NGOs within the South African context is valuable as these challenges are likely to be vastly different to those faced by similar organizations in the First-World countries where Wilderness Therapy has been proven successful. Understanding these differences will help to determine whether the implementation of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa is possible as well as highlight how this approach may be adapted to suit context-specific needs and make use of cultural strengths within South Africa.

This research aims to address these gaps in literature to create a clear understanding of what, if anything, is limiting the development of the Wilderness Therapy approach in South Africa. Furthermore, the research aims to uncover the potential for this method as an intervention with at-risk youth within the specific economic and social context of South Africa. Exploring the existing knowledge, interest, and resources available to this approach will help to guide the development of wilderness-based youth interventions in South Africa that are effective, evidence-based and contextually relevant, in order to facilitate positive change in this age category.

1.5 Research Topic

Exploring the Potential for Wilderness Therapy as an Intervention Method with At-Risk Youth in South Africa.

1.6 Main Research Questions

1.6.1 What is the nature of programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy which target at-risk youth in South Africa?

1.6.2 To what extent do these programmes incorporate a therapeutic component?

1.6.3 How is Wilderness Therapy understood by key role players involved with at-risk youth interventions in South Africa?

1.6.4 What are the context specific opportunities and obstacles for the development of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa?

1.7 Research Objectives

1.7.1 To establish the nature of programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy which target at-risk youth in South Africa.

1.7.2 To ascertain the extent to which these wilderness programmes incorporate a therapeutic component.

1.7.3 To determine how Wilderness Therapy is understood by key role players involved with at-risk youth in South Africa.

1.7.4 To understand the context-specific opportunities and obstacles for the development of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa.

1.8 Clarification of Concepts

Wilderness Therapy

Wilderness Therapy refers to an intervention method which combines therapeutic aspects with practical components such as survival tasks and adventure activities that take place while living in an outdoor setting for several days (Russell, 2001). An important difference between this models and other wilderness programmes, is the inclusion of a therapeutic aspect. The therapeutic aspect includes individual assessments and treatment plans, group therapy and family interventions provided by a licenced professional (Russell, 2001).

Wilderness Programmes

Wilderness programmes will be used to describe the collection of interventions which use similar activities to Wilderness Therapy such as living in an outdoor environment and partaking in survival and adventure activities. Although wilderness programmes have the same personal growth, leadership skills and experiential education intent as Wilderness Therapy, they do not incorporate professional therapeutic components such as individual assessments, treatment plans and family interventions (Russell, 2001).

Intervention Method

When referring to an intervention method, this study will use the Department of Social Development South Africa's (2013) definition. An intervention method is defined as a systematic action taken to identify and change risks, behaviours and symptoms that have negative impacts on a person's quality of life (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2013).

Youth

In this study, the term 'youth', will refer to youth between the ages of 15 and 35 as recognised by the National Youth Policy 2020-2030 of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2020a).

At-Risk Youth

The term at-risk youth will be used to refer to youth who experience all or some of the factors that have been identified by De Lannoy, Storme, Mudiriza & Smith (2018) as indicators of risk. These factors include poverty, poor nutrition, violence, substance abuse, parental absence and gang activity (De Lannoy et al, 2018).

Licenced Professional

In this study, licenced professional will refer to a qualified Social Worker, Psychologist, Psychiatrist or counsellor who is legally registered to practice through the relevant licencing board in their country.

Social Service Professional (SSP)

According to the Social Service Professions Act no. 110 of 1978, as amended in 2014, those that can register with the South African Council for Social Service Professionals (SACSSP) are Social Workers, Social Auxiliary Workers, Student Social Workers, Student Social

Auxiliary Workers, Child and Youth Care Workers, Auxiliary Child and Youth Care Workers, Student Child and Youth Care Workers and Student Auxiliary Child and Youth Care Workers (Republic of South Africa, 2014). In this study, social service professionals (SSPs) will refer to Social Workers and Child and Youth Care Workers at professional and auxiliary level who are registered with the SACSSP but will not include students of either cadre.

Role Players

The Department of Social Development South Africa (2013) identified role players as those with influence over a particular field, that include but are not limited to; those working in relevant programmes, those providing financial support as well as beneficiaries of the provided service. Role players in this study refers to all those with some form of impact on wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa, including those working directly with at-risk youth, government departments, funders, NGOs, training institutions and research institutions.

1.9 Ethical Considerations

This study carefully followed the ethical considerations for qualitative research. Ensuring that research is conducted ethically, protects the safety and comfort of both the respondents[1], and the researcher (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011).

1.9.1 No Harm to Respondents

Research respondents should be protected from any form of physical harm that may occur as a result of their participation in the research (De Vos et al, 2011). It was originally thought that there would be no potential for physical harm of respondents due to the nature of the study. However, as the researcher approached the data collection phase, the Covid-19 pandemic broke out in South Africa. The Covid-19 outbreak posed a potential physical danger for the respondents and the researcher, through possible virus transmission, if interviews were to be held face-to-face. Due to this risk, research requiring physical interactions was not permitted by the academic institution (University of Cape Town, 2020) or under the government

[1] As wilderness programmes commonly refer to youth attending their programmes as 'participants', this research report uses the word 'respondent' to refer to those interviewed for this study to avoid confusion.

regulations (Republic of South Africa, 2020b) during the time of data collection. As a result, all the interviews for this study were done remotely, through Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp call or telephonic communication, to eliminate the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

Respondents in social research should be protected from emotional harm and not experience emotional distress as a result of their involvement in a study (De Vos et al, 2011). As this study primarily explored the personal experiences and views of the wilderness programmes within which respondents worked, the researcher needed to be aware of the risk of emotional harm. Sharing personal material can cause respondents to feel uncomfortable or distressed (De Vos et al, 2011). To minimize any negative emotions as a result of their participation in the study, respondents were debriefed after their interview and questions were asked in a sensitive manner. Although no respondents in this study indicated distress during their debrief, referrals to professional counselling would have been made in the case that a respondent held any negative feelings after their participation in the study.

1.9.2 Informed Consent

It is essential that each research respondent is provided with the relevant information of the study to give consent (De Vos et al, 2011). Providing this information allows research respondents to make an informed decision to take part in the study (De Vos et al, 2011). The participating organizations and the respondents in this study were provided with all the information necessary to give their informed consent for their involvement in the study. This information was provided to the participating organizations in the form of an invitation letter (Appendix A), and to the respondents in an information letter (Appendix B).

It was made clear to respondents that their participation in this study was completely voluntary. Respondents should be made aware that their participation is voluntary and that they understand that they are able to withdraw their participation at any point of the research process (De Vos et al, 2011). This was communicated to the participating organizations and the research respondents through the invitation letter and information letter respectively. The voluntary nature of respondents' participation in the study was reiterated through the consent form (Appendix C) to ensure they had a clear understanding of their involvement and their ability to withdraw if desired.

Research respondents were required to complete a consent form (Appendix C) prior to their involvement in the study. Respondents were asked to contact the researcher prior to their scheduled interviews if they had any questions about the consent form. Allowing respondents

to ask any questions acts to ensure the consent form has been correctly understood (Punch, 2005). Respondents in this study had no questions about the consent form. Respondents sent their completed forms to the researcher before their interview. This consent form was verbally reiterated at the beginning of the interview and another opportunity for questions was provided. Verbally going through consent forms with research respondents further acts to ensure that it has been correctly understood (Punch, 2005).

Due to the Covid-19 outbreak, some challenges were experienced as all respondents were working from home at the time of data collection. Governmental regulations at the time placed South Africa in Level five, followed by Level four restrictions, that only permitted essential workers to leave their place of residence to physically attend work (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). With research respondents working from home, they had limited access to printers, scanners and other office equipment. To overcome this challenge, electronic signatures and typed names were accepted on the consent form, sent from the respondents' email addresses.

1.9.3 No Deception of Respondents

De Vos et al (2011) warns against the deception of respondents in social research. However, a degree of deception may be included if the aim of the study would be compromised if respondents were given all the information about the research (De Vos et al, 2011). There was, however, no need for deception in this study. Revealing the full information about the study, did not compromise the desired outcomes of the study. As mentioned, the details of the research were provided to participating organizations through an invitation letter and to the research respondents in an information letter.

1.9.4 No Violation of Privacy, Confidentiality or Anonymity

1.9.4.1 Privacy

Ensuring that the interview venue is private, with no disruptions or people near the respondents and the researcher, is vital for the respondents to feel comfortable and share rich data in the interview (Punch, 2005). Privacy can be more challenging when doing interviews remotely (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). Additional procedures to ensure the privacy of the interviews were included in this study, with particular attention to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic. As all non-essential workers were restricted to their homes at the time of data collection (Republic of South Africa, 2020b), respondents needed to secure a private space within their personal houses for the remote interviews. Clear communication with respondents

with regards to the importance of a private space, as well as the possibility to pause or reschedule interviews was incorporated into the information letter and consent form. This allowed respondents to select the best possible time for their interview, as well as allow for changes to be made if the privacy of the interview became compromised for any reason.

1.9.4.2 Confidentiality

It is important in ethical research to maintain the confidentiality of respondents by ensuring that their identities remain unknown to those reading the research report (De Vos et al, 2011). The researcher in this study ensured that the confidentiality of each research respondent was maintained. Respondents were provided with a consent form stating that their identities, and the identities of the organizations they worked for, would not be made known to any outside party or in the presentation of the research report. Similarly, the consent form explained that no identifying particulars would be released in the presentations of the results or conclusions of the study. Identifying particulars can make it possible for the reader to determine the identities of those involved in the study through deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). To ensure organizational and respondent confidentiality, only the researcher had access to any names and identifying particulars. Direct identifiers such as names, and addresses can be changed to a pseudonym in the presentation of the research to hide identities (Bos, 2020). If the respondents in this study mentioned any names or identifying particulars during the interviews, these were changed in the presentation of the results. Respondents signed the consent form to confirm that they understood this confidentiality agreement.

Concealing identifying particulars in the research report required additional attention due to the small size of the population being studied. A small population increased the risk of readers determining the identities of those involved in the research through deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). There are currently very few organizations in South Africa that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy into programmes targeting at-risk youth. Furthermore, the existing organizations typically have a small staff component. This meant that the respondents in this study were at increased risk of being identifiable through indirect identifiers. It is important to protect the confidentiality of respondents by ensuring that traits of respondents that are revealed in the research report, do not make it possible for the reader to indirectly identify the respondents (Bos, 2020). In this study, knowledge of respondents' roles in their organization's wilderness programme would have made it possible to determine their identity. As a result, this information was changed in the presentation of the results of the study where

respondents' roles in their wilderness programmes were renamed into generalized groupings such as 'facilitator' and 'management'.

Due to the researcher's involvement in the field of wilderness-based youth programmes, respondents in this study needed to be further assured that the data they shared in the study would not be used outside of the research. The researcher was employed by Outward Bound South Africa and was significantly involved in this organization's wilderness programmes that target at-risk youth in South Africa, at the time of this study. This meant that she knew many of the respondents and the organizations they worked for. It was important that respondents were made aware of her role in the field, if they were not already aware, and that they were assured that any information discussed in their interviews would only be used for the purposes of this study. The respondents were overtly informed that nothing that they shared during their involvement in the study would be used in any capacity outside of the confidential presentations of the results of this study. This assured the respondents' confidentiality, both in the study, as well as in their place of work and field of employment.

1.9.4.3 Anonymity

Although the researcher was aware of the identities of respondents, any specific details that would reveal their identities, or that of the organizations they work for, were changed in the presentation of the data. Not disclosing personal information about respondents acts to conceal their identities within the research report (De Vos et al, 2011). Both the direct and indirect identifiers that were revealed in the 18 interviews were changed to protect the anonymity of respondents. Direct identifiers include names, phone numbers and addresses of the respondents and indirect identifiers refer to occupations, role in the workplace and other information that can be used by the reader to identify the respondents (Bos, 2020). Direct identifiers of respondents were not included in this research report and indirect identifiers were generalized to protect respondents' anonymity. The anonymity of respondents can, likewise, be at risk through deductive disclosure. Through this type of disclosure, respondents can be identified through sharing information and stories that can be used by the reader to identify them (Kaiser, 2009). To prevent this deductive disclosure, the raw data collected in this study will not be made publicly available.

Additional procedures were followed to ensure respondents in the study remained anonymous to the Executive Directors[2] of the organizations they worked for. These Executive Directors recommended several possible employees who fit the characteristics of a suitable respondent. From this list of employees, the researcher selected some and asked them to take part in the study. This meant that the Executive Directors did not know exactly who was asked to be a respondent in the study. Following this procedure protected respondents' anonymity from their organizations' director, preventing potential respondents feeling obligated to participate or hesitant to share valuable data.

1.9.5 Competence of Researcher

Researchers are ethically responsible for ensuring they are competent in the utilized research design and data collection method (De Vos et al, 2011). Prior to this study, the researcher had completed courses in Social Work and Sociology research at the University of Cape Town, equipping her with the skills and knowledge necessary to conduct this study. Additionally, her training as a Social Worker equipped her with interviewing and rapport building skills needed during the interviewing process. She also received on-going supervision and guidance throughout the research process from her university supervisor who is an experienced qualitative researcher.

1.9.6 Release of Findings

The findings of research must be made publicly available and be presented accurately, objectively and clearly (De Vos et al, 2011). This research will be submitted in completion of the researcher' Social Work Research Master's degree through the Social Development Department at the University of Cape Town. It will, therefore, be made available on OpenUCT, the scholarly output platform of the University of Cape Town. As the population of this study was small, there was an increased risk of respondents' identities being discovered through deductive disclosure. Deductive disclosure is when traits of a respondent revealed in the

[2] Organizations involved in this study used various terms for the head person at their organization. These various terms have been changed to one general term, 'Executive Director', to protect the anonymity of the organizations and the people who work within it.

research report, make it possible for the reader to determine the identity of the respondent (Kaiser, 2009). Quotes from respondents will be used in the analysis of the findings of this study but the interview transcripts in their entirety will not be made available on any public forum.

1.9.7 Debriefing of Respondents

After the completion of each interview, the respondents were debriefed to minimize the chances of them experiencing ongoing emotional distress as a result of their participation in the study. Debriefing involves neutralizing feelings that may have come up during the data collection process, as well as allowing for any unanswered questions to be addressed (De Vos et al, 2011). Emotional stress can occur during interviews if personal topics are discussed (De Vos et al, 2011), as was the case during interviews in this study. Neutralizing the emotions of respondents was done through allowing respondents to give feedback on their experiences of the interviews, asking them to share feelings the interviews may have brought up. Providing respondents with the opportunity to release any emotions they may have had during the interview reduced the chance of the respondent experiencing on-going distress as a result of their involvement in the study (De Vos et al, 2011). The respondents were given the contact information of the researcher in case they had any remaining questions or concerns regarding their involvement in the study. No respondents expressed experiencing negative emotions because of their involvement in this study. A referral to professional counselling would have been provided to respondents if it was needed.

1.10 Structure of Research Report

This research report comprises of five chapters that present the study that was conducted on the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. These chapters that will be laid out as follows.

Chapter One: Introduction. This chapter provides an initial foundation of the background, motivation and intentions of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review. This considers the available international and South African literature on the topic of study. It also presents pertinent theoretical frameworks and policies.

Chapter Three: Methodology. This chapter thoroughly describes how the research was conducted, providing details on the methods used and procedures followed.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Findings. This presents a thorough analysis of the data to reveal the results of the study. These results have been grouped in themes that pertain to the research objectives.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Future Recommendations. This final chapter summarizes the research report and provides recommendations for the Social Work field, the Department of Social Development current youth-targeting wilderness programmes, fundraisers and future researchers in South Africa.

1.11 Conclusion

Chapter One has introduced the study on the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. Initially, a statement of the problem that this research aimed to address was provided. Secondly, the unique context in which this study took place was discussed. Thirdly, the rationale and significance of this study were highlighted, revealing the particular importance of this research within South Africa. The research topic, main research questions and research objectives were then stated to provide a clear picture of what the study aimed to achieve. The terms used within this research report were then clarified. The chapter then discussed the ethical considerations that were incorporated into the research process. Finally, a clear structure of this report was provided. With a distinct picture of the conducted study, the following chapter will provide a thorough review on current literature pertinent to the field of study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive look at the available literature relevant to the topic of study, in order to provide a base of understanding and gain insight into research that has already been conducted. It will begin with a review of the literature, following this the significant theoretical perspectives will be presented, and lastly, the policies and legislation pertinent to this study will be unpacked.

2.2 Review of the Literature

This section of the literature review will consider the literature available on wilderness-based programmes, which aim to intervene with at-risk youth. It will begin by explaining the unique challenges faced by South African youth, followed by an in-depth look at the current climate negotiated by NGOs who aim to intervene with this age group. It will then discuss the development of the Wilderness Therapy method into a specific, recognized and evidence-based intervention method in North America, Europe and Australia. Following this, the various components of Wilderness Therapy will be individually unpacked. The literature review will then present South Africa's long-standing views of the natural world for healing, followed by the country's current use of wilderness spaces.

2.2.1 Youth in South Africa

With people aged 15 to 35 comprising of 34.7% of South Africa's population, the youth hold great influence within the country (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). Unfortunately, youth are significantly affected by widespread poverty and inequality related challenges (Jamieson, 2013). The difficulties youth face when navigating these challenges often increase their risk of becoming involved in negative behaviours that threaten their safety and the safety of their communities (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). This section will discuss the economic and social realities faced by young South Africans and the aspects increasing youth's risk.

2.2.1.1. The Economic and Social Realities faced by South African Youth

South African youth are affected by a multitude of economic and social challenges, persisting in the country. With a shocking 62% of South African youth living below the upper bound poverty line, many adolescents in this country face daily survival struggles (De Lannoy et al,

2018). Along with many other negative effects, poverty significantly hinders youth from becoming educated, skilled and employed (De Lannoy et al, 2018). Without these, youth struggle to move out of poverty and become contributing members of society (Jamieson, 2013). Additionally, South Africa has alarmingly high levels of unemployment (StatsSA, 2018). In this country, youth are the population group that are most affected by joblessness, with 52.4% of South African youth being unemployed (De Lannoy et al, 2018) and many having to rely on inconsistent or temporary job opportunities (Perey, 2016). While youth unemployment is a growing global phenomenon, it is magnified in South Africa as this country has a particularly high population of youth as well as extensive unemployment within the population (Lam, Leibbrandt & Mlatsheni, 2008).

High levels of poverty and unemployment have been consistently linked with the prevalence of HIV/AIDS, substance abuse, violence, crime, gangs and teenage pregnancies (StatsSA, 2018; Jamieson, 2013). These crippling challenges disproportionately affect black and coloured South African youth, despite that it has been more than 25 years since the country demolished Apartheid (Ngcaweni, 2017). Living areas across the country remain significantly racially divided, with black and coloured people largely residing in remote areas that were designated to these racial groups under Apartheid laws (Francis & Webster, 2019). Economic, infrastructure and resource inequality remain substantial, with previously white-allocated areas having far greater access than areas previously allocated to people of colour (Von Fintel, 2018). Low income living areas, where people previously classified as 'non-white' commonly reside, lack necessary resources and have substantially fewer, good-quality, schooling options and work opportunities (Von Fintel, 2018). The poor infrastructure and lack of basic services in living areas of black and coloured youth, limits these youth's opportunities and traps many in cycles of poverty (Goldenberg, 2013).

2.2.1.2. Aspects Increasing Youth's Risk

The youth's family units are affected in numerous ways by persistent social challenges common within low economic areas. Poor job opportunities and resources in low-income areas have caused many families to be separated physically (Bank, 2020). Desperate for employment, many parents and guardians migrate to urban areas or travel to jobs where they live on-site (Bank, 2020). Although, previously, this was predominantly a male phenomenon, a growing number of women are also migrating for labour purposes (Goldberg, 2013). As a result, many families are split up and youth have physically absent parents and poor supervision in their

homes (Goldenberg, 2013). Adding to the physical segregation of families found in low economic areas, is the high prevalence of children living with single parents (StatsSA, 2018). With women having children at young ages, without live-in partners, few youths grow up residing with their fathers (StatsSA, 2018). The absence of positive male role models negatively affects youth, especially adolescent boys, as they move into adulthood with little male guidance (Patel & Mavungu, 2016). Furthermore, high levels of HIV/AIDS related deaths, leave many youths without one or both of their parents (StatsSA, 2018). Many parents and guardians who are physically present, struggle to provide stability and emotional support to their children due to the effect of social ills like substance abuse, gangsterism, violence and crime, common within low-income areas in South Africa (StatsSA, 2018). These social ills affect the physical and emotional safety of all family members (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). The lack of physical and emotional accessibility of parents has a significant negative impact on the development of youth (Republic of South Africa, 2020a).

Considering the challenging environmental factors facing South African youth, it is not surprising that anti-social and risky behaviour is common within this population group (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). School dropouts, HIV infection, teenage pregnancy and substance abuse are concerningly common amongst South African youth (StatsSA, 2018). In this country, school dropout rates are extremely high in youth aged 14 to 18, and as little as 52% of 25-year-olds have completed Grade 12 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). With low levels of education and skills, youth are ill-equipped to enter the already competitive job-market, leaving a large portion of youth unemployed, with little hope of finding work (Booyens & Crause, 2010). Additionally, youth are most at risk of HIV infection and unexpected pregnancies due to their increased risky sexual behaviour (De Wet, Muloiwa & Odimegwu, 2018). Alcohol usage and binge drinking is also concerningly high amongst young South Africans (Morojele & Ramsoomar, 2016). These risky behaviours are linked with greater concerns, such as violence, crime and gangsterism, that negatively affect the youth and their communities (Morojele & Ramsoomar, 2016).

Violence, crime and gangsterism are troublingly high amongst South African youth (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). Shockingly, violence between young males has become the main cause of unnatural deaths within this population group (Republic of South Africa, 2014). Between 2004 and 2014, drug related crimes almost tripled (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2013). In 2006, 42% of detained prisoners were under the age of 25, many of whom were involved with gangs (Department of Correctional Services, 2006).

Gang related activity remains high amongst black and coloured South African youth living in low-income areas (Maringira & Masiya, 2018) This risky youth behaviour threatens their safety, as well as that of their communities (Booyens & Crause, 2010).

As a result of the multitude of concerns within this age group, youth have been flagged as a major public health concern needing drastic intervention (Republic of South Africa, 2014). There is a growing awareness that the economic and social climate in South Africa is hampering the positive development of youth. Youth themselves have the potential to pose a significant threat to their communities. To address these concerns, the governmental and NGO sectors have placed a great deal of attention on this population group (Republic of South Africa, 2015). The following section will consider the work currently being done to intervene with this at-risk youth in South Africa.

2.2.2 Current Interventions with At-Risk Youth in South Africa

With youth being identified as needing priority attention in South Africa, interventions for this age group have increased in both the governmental and NGO sectors (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). The National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a) and the National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011) have placed youth in the spotlight, mapping out ways that the challenges within this population group can be overcome. This section of the literature review will explore aspects influencing youth interventions, current interventions being implemented and areas needing further attention if large scale change is to be achieved amongst South African youth.

2.2.2.1 Factors Influencing Youth Interventions

Despite being flagged as a priority, youth interventions in South Africa continue to face multiple difficulties because of poor funding (Moboya & McKay, 2019). After the Apartheid regime was abolished, there was an increase in the number of South African NGOs as well as a decrease in international funding, which acted to dilute available funds within the NGO sector (Harding, 2014). Throughout the country's more than 25 years of Democracy, NGOs have played a dominant role in the implementation of youth interventions (Moboya & McKay, 2019). Unfortunately, NGOs must continuously seek financial support from several sources if they are to continue offering services (Moboya & McKay, 2019). NGOs have been found to spend significant time and resources on fundraising each year (Moboya & McKay, 2019). NGOs predominantly access funding from government, international donors and through their own income generation initiatives, with only a few obtaining funding from local individuals or

corporates (Mutongwizo, 2009). While the demand for services continues to rise, available funding for NGOs has not increased proportionately (Harding, 2014). The funding available from national and international sources is commonly unpredictable as it is greatly affected by the economic climate (Harding, 2014). The Covid-19 pandemic has dramatically affected the global economic climate; reducing public spending and reallocating funding to address the specific needs of the pandemic (Kavousi, Goudarzi, Izadi & Gardner, 2020). The effects of this pandemic will likely continue to impact the South African NGO sector for some time.

A further challenge is experienced regarding the funding of South African NGOs, as funders commonly earmark money for direct services, with little funding being available for essential administrative and personnel costs (Harding, 2014). Accessing funding for human resources, as well as logistics and transportation was a significant challenge for NGOs in Cape Town in Mutongwizo's (2009) study. This was indicated as a substantial hinderance when trying to intervene with youth from remotely located, low-income areas (Mutongwizo, 2009). Furthermore, as NGOs struggle to meet great needs on insufficient budgets, staff support is commonly inadequate in youth interventions, with many staff being overworked, under-skilled and unsupervised (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Despite these challenges the NGO sector remains a significant role player in South Africa, contributing to the economy, creating jobs and addressing a multitude of social needs (Moboya & McKay, 2019).

2.2.2.2 Current Youth Interventions Being Implemented

Although there has been a move to a more strength-based, developmental approach, many youth interventions remain deficiency-focused. Interventions commonly address youth issues as they arise, rather than being centred on youth empowerment or the prevention of recuring concerns (Department of South Development South Africa, 2016). In-patient therapeutic care remains the predominant means of treatment for substance abuse, mental health disorders and criminal offenders (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2016). Additionally, several feeding schemes and other programmes addressing immediate physical needs are being used (Krugat & Nabela, 2009). Various types of counselling and family orientated interventions are also being implemented to address youth-related challenges as they arise (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2013). The relatively small numbers of youth these deficiency-focused interventions reach, means that these programmes alone are not enabling sufficient change within this troubled age group in South Africa (Seedat, Van Niekerk, Jewkes, Suffla & Ratele, 2009). Furthermore, while these traditional methods of social service

interventions show positive changes among youth, many do not incorporate the valuable youth involvement suggested by The National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a).

There has been a positive increase in preventative youth programmes being implemented by South African NGOs. Multiple after-school academic and skills development programmes are in place that aim to prevent anti-social behaviour in youth (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2016). Many programmes have incorporated alternative methods to engage this population group, including the use of sport, recreational activities, and various art forms (Steyn, 2005). Preventative programmes typically attract funders seeking to reach large numbers on a small budget (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). School-based youth programmes have been successful at accessing large numbers of youth, while saving costs by making use of already existing infrastructure, resources and personnel (Gevers & Flisher, 2012). The growing use of alternative interventions is encouraging, as new methods can reach a greater number of youth needing assistance.

Unfortunately, to address urgent challenges, many youth services are prematurely implemented without being well established or evidence-based (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). Due to poor financial resources, few youth programmes in South Africa have been sufficiently researched to ensure their efficacy (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). The outcomes of these programmes can lack sustainability as the interventions often do not tackle larger community issues or include an adequate therapeutic component (Ward, Dawes & Martzopoulos, 2012). While educational, vocational and activity-based interventions are particularly popular, the benefits are found to be minimal when not combined with the development of social skills (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). The growth of prevention-focused programmes is hopeful, however, increased research is needed to ensure that programmes are significantly decreasing social ills amongst South African youth.

Youth interventions that incorporate effective reintegration programmes have been found to be generally lacking in South Africa (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Sadly, positive outcomes achieved through available youth interventions in this country, commonly lack sustainability (Seedat et al, 2009). This lack of sustainability is found to be particularly prevalent in youth programmes implemented outside of the participants' home environment, that do not include an extensive post-programme reintegration process, as youth struggle to maintain their personal changes in their unchanged, challenging home environments (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012).

There has been a slow, and insufficient, increase in programmes that adequately reintegrate youth back into their families and communities post-programme (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2016). Enabling youth to consider and overcome the environmental challenges they face within their families and communities, has been found to be a key component of effective youth interventions, assisting in facilitating positive behavioural changes (Van der Merwe & Dawes, 2012). Unfortunately, this component, and its sustainable benefits, is still lacking in many South African youth interventions.

2.2.2.3 Wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa

Youth programmes that make use of wilderness spaces and physical activities in South Africa have grown in popularity. The use of adventure activities and outdoor living to encourage personal development of youth gained interest in South Africa in the 1990's (Hansen, 2002). NGOs have incorporated sports and other activities to engage youth in interventions (NICRO Enterprise, 2016; SAYDO, 2014). Wilderness-based youth programmes run by Outward Bound South Africa and EducoAfrica have been found to be working with youth from various social and cultural backgrounds to help them overcome adversity, develop a positive sense of self, learn leadership skills and grow their ability to work in a team (Hansen, 2002). These programmes utilized adventure activities, outdoor living, reflective activities and group counselling (Hansen, 2002). Research into the effectiveness of wilderness-based programmes run by Outward Bound South Africa showed an improvement in the participants' mental health, especially a sense of social wellbeing (Boyers, 2015). Unfortunately, there is no further research available on the other above-mentioned organizations, who are making use of programmes in a wilderness setting to intervene with youth.

In Hansen's (2002) research into South African wilderness-based youth programmes, he highlights the significant and necessary role that Social Workers should play in these types of programmes, assisting with participants' challenges, supporting staff and creating professional documentation. It seems that the analysed outdoor programmes in South Africa, did not, however, incorporate meaningful involvement of Social Workers, at the time of his study (Hansen, 2002). It is unclear why these programmes have not embraced the involvement of Social Workers or what context-specific constraints they may have faced. It is apparent that further research is necessary to explore how wilderness-based youth programmes may best be implemented considered the specific challenges and strengths of the South African context.

2.2.3 The Development of the Wilderness Therapy Method

Wilderness Therapy, a therapeutic intervention that uses wilderness living and outdoor activities, has undergone a long journey of development to become a well-recognised and evidence-based intervention method (Russell, 2001). Much of this progress occurred in First-World countries who have pooled their methods and research to solidify what later became referred to as Wilderness Therapy (Hill, 2007). This section will present the available literature pertaining to the development of Wilderness Therapy as an effective intervention method with at-risk youth. It will consider the history of Wilderness Therapy, how it is used as a method of intervention with youth, its proven effectiveness and how this efficacy has been assessed.

2.2.3.1 History of Wilderness Therapy

Key to the establishment of the Wilderness Therapy method was the research and literature of Keith Russell (2001; 2000), an advocate for wilderness-based youth work in the United States of America. Russell (2001; 2000) analysed the work of several academics in the field to document the history of wilderness programmes that aimed to facilitate the personal growth of youth, in the United States of America, Europe and Australia (Russell, 2001; Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). Through consideration of the available literature at the time, Russel compiled guidelines for what would later become known as Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001; Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). Russell's (2001; 2000) works have been widely recognized as grounding to Wilderness Therapy in these First-World countries.

Wilderness programmes began to be used for the purposes of youth development in the early 1940's. While not Wilderness Therapy, as defined earlier in this research report, wilderness programmes with the intention of facilitating youth personal development, were the building blocks of this method (Russell, 2001). German-born, Kurt Hahn opened Outward Bound, a school designed to build character and maturity in young soldiers to prepare them for the tough realities of war through using nature-based experiences (Bastemur, 2019). This sparked a growth of interest around the world into using the outdoors for personal growth and experiential education (Hagan, 2003; Russell, 2001). During the early 1990's, numerous organizations in Europe and North America began using outdoor programmes with the intention of facilitating youth personal development (Fernee, Mesel, Andersen & Gabrielsen, 2019). In these formative years, various names were given to these programmes, such as 'challenge courses', 'adventure therapy' and 'wilderness experience programmes', however, they all contained similar components (Russell, 2001). These types of programmes included living outdoors in a natural

environment and participating in adventure activities such as hiking, rock climbing and canoeing (Russell, 2001). Initially, these wilderness programmes were done for the purposes of youth intervention but did not necessarily include a professional therapeutic component (Russell, 2001). Seeking to deepen their therapeutic impact, some wilderness programmes in North America, Europe and Australia began to incorporate clinical assessments and individualized therapeutic interventions provided by relevant professionals (Russell, 2001). Wilderness programmes that incorporated these therapeutic aspects began to be referred to as Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001). While wilderness programmes in general struggled to gain recognition from professional bodies and potential funders, due to the broad spectrum of interventions, Wilderness Therapy aimed to provide a clear, evidence-based implementation structure (Russell, 2001).

To overcome misconceptions and gain external recognition for the method, key role players moved to standardize and solidify Wilderness Therapy as a therapeutic method in the United States of America (Hill, 2007). Initially, wilderness programmes were criticized by professional bodies, potential funders and families for being punitive and incorporating a 'boot-camp' mentality (Butler, 2008). Additionally, these programmes were seen as expensive, unfamiliar and lacking theoretical grounding (Butler, 2008). To overcome misconceptions, an organization, the Outdoor Behavioural Healthcare Industry Counsel, in North America, was formed to identify standards of effective and ethical practice (Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). This standardization was essential to establish Wilderness Therapy as an effective intervention method, that can be trusted by professional bodies, governmental agencies, insurance companies, potential funders and families to facilitate positive behavioural change (Russell, 2001). It was specified that for programmes to be considered Wilderness Therapy, they needed to follow clear guidelines for practice, staff qualification, locations and activities. These guidelines allowed for increased research into this method, which helped to breakdown misconceptions, prove efficacy and gain external recognition (Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). Through the development of an evidence-base, Wilderness Therapy became established as a recognized intervention method in several First-World countries (Hill, 2007). While Wilderness Therapy became established and recognised in North America, Europe and Australia (Hill, 2007), similar wilderness programmes were being used in other countries, however, these programmes had less global recognition (Bastemur, 2019).

2.2.3.2 Wilderness Therapy as a Method of Intervention with Youth

After a controversial start, the characteristics and necessary components of Wilderness Therapy were established to encourage successful implementation and ethical execution of the intervention method. While North America specifically prioritized the term 'Wilderness Therapy' some programmes in other regions use alternative terms, such as 'Adventure Therapy', 'Nature Therapy' and 'Wilderness Youth Interventions' to refer to programmes that include the same essential components (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). For lack of one internationally recognised term, Wilderness Therapy, in this research report, will be used to collectively discuss all programmes which share the components and ethical standards as outlined within the Wilderness Therapy method.

For an intervention to be considered Wilderness Therapy, it must meet some basic guidelines. Firstly, Wilderness Therapy must be conducted in small groups, in an outdoor environment, removed from participants' homes (Russel, 2001). Commonly, groups are homogeneous, consisting of those of a similar age and facing similar challenges that the programme hopes to address (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). Like that of typical Social Work group work (Yalom, 1995), groups within Wilderness Therapy commonly consist of six to 14 members (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019; Hagan, 2003). This group size is considered ideal within Social Work group work as it encourages meaningful intergroup relationships to form while reducing the potential for the division of separate social groups (Yalom, 1995). Secondly, Wilderness Therapy programmes should have a degree of exposure to the natural world through living outdoors, conducting survival tasks and participating in outdoor activities (Russell, 2001). Wilderness Therapy interventions may vary in length and can be as short as two consecutive days. However, programmes typically last substantially longer and often incorporate additional residual care and follow up support (Bastemur, 2019; Hill, 2007). Programmes based in the United States of America typically last around eight weeks, ranging from 14 days to a year (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019; Bettmann, Russell & Parry, 2013) while programmes in other regions commonly last between six days and two months (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). Thirdly, for a programme to be considered Wilderness Therapy, it must include individual, group and family therapeutic components under the guidance of a registered professional (Russell, 2001). Essentially, Wilderness Therapy is creating a completely new physical and social environment, through which participants learn by navigating unique experiences and practicing new behaviours (Bastemur, 2019; Russell, 2001).

2.2.3.3 The Efficacy of Wilderness Therapy

Multiple research studies have shown the efficacy of Wilderness Therapy programmes in various countries around the world. Hoag, Massey, Roberts and Logan (2013) found that wilderness programmes in the United States of America decreased antisocial delinquent behaviour and grew a sense of empowerment in youth. Through participation in wilderness programmes, adolescents have been found to gain a stronger understanding of their personal strengths and a more optimistic view on their perceived problems (Autry, 2001). A similar youth intervention in Turkey, known as Adventure Therapy, was found to increase self-awareness, responsibility, coping skills and self-esteem (Bastemur, 2019). Wilderness Therapy interventions in North America were found to have significant positive impacts by decreasing negative behaviours, improving coping mechanisms, increasing self-esteem, developing better social skills and growing compassion for others (Clark, Marmol, Cooley & Gathercoal, 2004).

Numerous studies in North America indicated that Wilderness Therapy participants experienced an improvement in their family relationships and school performance (Russell, 2000; Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). When researching United States of America-based programmes Clark et al (2004), Russell, Hendee and Pillips-Miller's (2000) and Hoag, Massey, Roberts and Logan (2013) found that participants developed emotionally through growing self-esteem, learning mature defence mechanisms, improving psychosocial stress management and decreasing maladaptive behaviours. The development of appropriate and adaptive social skills such as the ability to form positive relationships, resolve conflict and take responsibility were found in both Russell (2000) and Clark et al's (2004) research. Similar outcomes were found in European Wilderness Therapy programmes through Gabrielsen, Eskedal, Mesel, Aasen, Hirte, Kerlefsen, Palucha and Fernee's (2019) research, with the greatest participant benefits being seen months after the programmes. This collection of research reveals the multitude of benefits obtained through Wilderness Therapy programmes.

One key element found to affect the efficacy of Wilderness Therapy programmes is participants' motivation to attend. Wilderness-based youth programmes are found to yield greater positive outcomes if the youth are willing to participate. Studies in North America, Europe and Asia were found to be more effective if participation is voluntary (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019; Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019) or the programme is perceived as enjoyable (Nicholls & Gray, 2007). Contrary to the afore-mentioned research, Bettman, Russell and Parry (2013) found that participants' initial willingness to participate had little effect on the

programme outcomes, instead revealing that developing motivation within the programmes was significant. Motivation is seen as a key element to the success of Wilderness Therapy even though there is disagreement about whether motivation needs to be present from arrival or can be developed later. Motivation has also been found to be easier to generate in outdoor-based programmes (Hill, 2007). In a comparative study on the efficacy of different interventions with at-risk youth in the United States of America, Hill (2007) noted that traditional interventions often struggle to engage youth. Interest around outdoor living and adventure activities was found to increase therapeutic engagement of youth (Hill, 2007).

2.2.3.4 Assessing the Efficacy of Wilderness Therapy

As a relatively new approach, there has not been one standard means of assessing the efficacy of Wilderness Therapy programmes around the world. This has made comparing between programmes, locations and research studies somewhat challenging and allowed for a degree of scepticism among important role players (Vissell, 2004). Despite this, the conducted research has produced a great deal of evidence for Wilderness Therapy. It is, however, vital to acknowledge that the current available literature speaks only to programmes operating in First-World countries where youth face a different social reality to that experienced in South Africa.

Research into Wilderness Therapy programmes around the world has commonly made use of participants' self-reported outcomes both qualitatively and quantitatively (Hagan, 2003). Although self-reported outcomes have been criticized for lacking validity due to the subjective nature of the reporting, this type of research tool has yielded meaningful results, revealing the efficacy of such programmes (Teye & Peaslee, 2015). To gain a clear indication of change, various pre- and post-programme self-evaluation tools have been used effectively to research several wilderness programmes (Gabrielsen et al, 2019, Vissell, 2004). Some research included self-evaluations a while after a programme, to assess long-term outcomes (Gabrielsen et al, 2019), while others expressed difficulties collecting post-programme feedback (Hoag et al, 2013). Weilbach, Meyer and Monyeki's (2010) research on the efficacy of Wilderness Therapy, made use of comparative studies to compare self-evaluations of those who attended a wilderness-based programme and those who did not.

Staff, teachers and parent observations have also been used to research the outcomes of Wilderness Therapy programmes (Vissell, 2004). Although these types of observations have predominantly been used as qualitative data (Gabrielsen et al, 2019), some researchers have used the feedback of significant adults to conduct qualitative research into the efficacy of

youth-targeting Wilderness Therapy (Vissell, 2004). Although qualitative research has been criticized for not being universally transferable, the grounded theory has been used to improve the comparability of the data collected across various wilderness programmes (Vissell, 2004). Despite the lack of consistency around research methods, the increased number of studies conducted on Wilderness Therapy is growing the recognition for this method with relevant role players (Russell, 2001).

2.2.4 Components of Wilderness Therapy

Wilderness Therapy has several specific components that are found to be key to this method's efficacy. These components are fundamental to all Wilderness Therapy programmes and have been specifically linked to positive outcomes. Wilderness Therapy's unique environment, the activities used, the therapeutic component and the training and support for facilitating staff will be presented in detail below.

2.2.4.1 The Unique Environment of Wilderness Therapy

The outdoor environment of Wilderness Therapy is an essential component of this method. The therapeutic capability of nature has been recognized in fields like psychology and Social Work, causing new methods to emerge (Revell & McLeod, 2017). While some methods, like eco-therapy and walk-and-talk therapy, are predominantly conducted individually in urban-based outdoor spaces (Revell & McLeod, 2017), Wilderness Therapy is conducted in groups and requires a more substantial immersion in nature (Russell, 2001). Wilderness Therapy should take place away from the comforts of the programme participants' homes and families (Russell, 2001). Leaving home for a period of time acts as a rite of passage, marking a significant change in youths' lives (Dunn, 2019). An important part of these programmes is that they take place in a new environment that is unfamiliar to the participant and offers a feeling of vulnerability towards the natural environment (Brison, 2010; Russell, 2001).

There are discrepancies around the degree of remoteness required for a Wilderness Therapy location. While some experts feel urban-based outdoor areas are sufficient, others recommend that Wilderness Therapy takes place at a location that is far removed from modern life and its amenities; where participants are fully immersed in the natural world for the duration of the programme (Bastemur, 2019; Russell, 2001). Either way, programme participants should feel a degree of exposure to the wilderness through outdoor living (Bastemur, 2019; Russell, 2001). Most commonly, outdoor living refers to sleeping in tents that participants carry with them in backpacks but can also include semi-formal structures like large army tents or huts (Russell,

2001). The accommodation ultimately should be equipped with only the minimal equipment necessary, and participants should have a perception of vulnerability to wild animals, weather changes and hours of daylight (Russell, 2001). Although this might sound dangerous, the threat should only be perceived, and participants' safety should be prioritized (Russell, 2001). Wilderness Therapy is specifically designed to encourage experiences of bonding, the creation of new social norms and group work in the new and unfamiliar environment (Bastemur, 2019).

The success of various wilderness programmes has been found to be partially attributed to this basic outdoor living environment (Bastemur, 2019; Hill, 2007; Clark et al, 2004). Interventions that temporarily remove participants from their normal living environment, and the challenges within it, are found to be more effective when working with at-risk youth (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019) Additionally, the wilderness atmosphere itself is perceived as a non-formal environment to young participants, which decreases their resistance to engage with the process (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019; Revell & McLeod, 2017). Furthermore, being alone and practicing self-reflection in nature has been found to facilitate positive programme outcomes (Fernee et al, 2019; Heifetz, 2018). It was further found that natural consequences available in the outdoors help participants grow a better understanding of the significance of their actions (Hill, 2007). For example, if the participant does not pack their belonging into their tent correctly before going to sleep, these items may become wet overnight. This is a natural consequence of the young person's behaviour that directly affects their comfort. It is clear that the 'wilderness' is an essential component of the Wilderness Therapy method.

2.2.4.2 The Activities used in Wilderness Therapy

Wilderness Therapy incorporates both survival activities, such as cooking, tent pitching and collecting water; and adventure activities, such as hiking, canoeing and rock climbing (Russell, 2001). Similar activities are included in the South African wilderness-based youth programmes studied by Hansen (2002). Living in close contact and being reliant on others during interventions, has proved to be a strong causal factor for the positive outcomes of Wilderness Therapy, as youth must depend on each other for their practical safety and comfort (Hill, 2007; Clark et al, 2004). These activities, done as part of an inter-reliant group, provide multiple opportunities for growth among participants (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019; Bastemur, 2019). Survival tasks also encourage the growth of self-sufficiency and responsibility (Hill, 2007).

Participants in Wilderness Therapy will also partake in adventure and fear-based activities such as hiking, rafting, canoeing, rock climbing and abseiling (Hansen, 2002; Russell, 2001). These

activities are used because they are viewed as exciting to youth, engaging them in the process, as well as allowing participants to deal with challenging emotions and develop a confidence in their ability to handle these feelings (Bastemur, 2019; Revell & McLeod, 2017). The process of learning new things, gaining specific skills and completing fear-based or physical challenges is found to be key in growing positive self-esteem (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019; Bastemur, 2019). Programmes that are experienced as more physically tiring have been linked to more positive outcomes than those perceived as physically easy (Fernee et al, 2019).

All survival and adventure activities conducted as part of Wilderness Therapy should be done with the intention of personal growth (Russell, 2001). Essential to the method is the debriefing of all activities, both the daily survival tasks and the adventure activities (Bastermur, 2019; Russell, 2001). It is through the debriefing of the physical or fear-based activities, that youth can make sense of their experiences, deal with the emotions that may have arisen and consider how they might transfer what they have learned into their normal lives (Stuhr & Sutherland, 2013). Social interactions arising from survival or outdoor activities are also key to Wilderness Therapy and need to be debriefed to facilitate meaningful learning (Clark et al, 2004; Russell, 2001). These interactions are debriefed to encourage participants to negotiate conflicts, learn how their behaviours affect others and grow compassionate behaviours (Clark et al, 2004).

2.2.4.3 The Therapeutic Component of Wilderness Therapy

The incorporation of clear therapeutic components is necessary for programmes to be considered Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001). Programmes that include the involvement of a clear therapeutic approach implemented by a mental health professional have been found to yield more significant psychological and behavioural changes (Bettmann, Gillis, Speelman, Parry & Case, 2016). Wilderness Therapy must provide individual assessments, specifically designed therapeutic interventions, group counselling, work with families and adequate follow-up care (Russell, 2001). These aspects must be implemented by registered professionals who oversee the entire programme (Russell, 2001). When thorough selection procedures and assessments on the individuals attending the programme and their families are conducted by a professional, wilderness activities are more appropriately selected and framed (Bastemur, 2019; Bettmann et al, 2016). Professionals should work with each participant individually through conducting an initial assessment to select those specifically suited for the method and establishing a unique treatment plan for each participant (Russell, 2001). These staff members are also responsible for providing individual and group counselling throughout Wilderness

Therapy programmes, making use of professional counselling skills (Russell, 2001). Positive changes are commonly attributed to regular group and individual counselling facilitated by supportive professionals (Bettmann et al, 2016). Professionals working within Wilderness Therapy programmes must also prepare the home environment for change and assist the participants to reintegrate into their homes post-programme (Russell, 2001). Without these professional therapeutic components, programme outcomes are found to lack sustainability (Bettmann et al, 2016).

The counselling skills used within Wilderness Therapy are congruent with those essential within Social Work, such as active listening, linking members, blocking disruptions and summarizing (Yalom, 1995). The professional use of these skills enables meaningful group and individual growth (Yalom, 1995). Elements of traditional Social Work group work, as suggested by Yalom (1995), are also utilized in Wilderness Therapy group counselling sessions, such as personal sharing, peer support and feelings of universality (Russell, 2001). The Social Work profession has historically integrated innovative ways to engage youth, such as experiential learning and teamwork activities (Tucker & Norton, 2012). The Wilderness Therapy method similarly uses innovative ways to engage youth (Fernee, Gabrielsen, Andersen & Mesel, 2017). With an understanding of the peer-group focus of the stage of development, Social Workers have typically used interpersonal learning with youth (Fernee et al, 2017; Tucker & Norton, 2012). Developing a professional relationship with young clients is a vital Social Work skill and these professionals use a multitude of creative ways to build these relationships (Tucker & Norton, 2012). The therapeutic relationship formed between youth and professionals during Wilderness Therapy has been found to be strengthened when the professional has daily contact with the young person and endures similar living conditions (Fernee et al, 2017). A unique benefit of Wilderness Therapy is that young participants more easily bond with staff due to close daily interactions (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2017). Through seeing staff members enduring the outdoor living environment alongside them, youth perceive staff to be less threatening and more relatable (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2017). The effective development of this therapeutic relationship has been found to contribute to positive outcomes (Bettmann et al, 2016). The therapeutic requirements of Wilderness Therapy are consistent with the skills and methods of the Social Work profession, making this a suitable profession to be involved in the implementation of this method.

2.2.4.4 Training and Support of Wilderness Therapy Staff

The training of counselling professionals involved in Wilderness Therapy is essential, as they work in a unique environment requiring different skills to ensure professionalism. Daily interaction with youth during outdoor living and adventure activities, as well as providing counselling in a wilderness environment, requires unique skills (Houston, Knabb, Welsh, Houskamp, & Brokaw, 2010). Unfortunately, these professionals commonly do not receive relevant training during their professional degree programmes (Houston et al, 2010). Tucker and Norton's (2012) study revealed that most Social Workers working in wilderness programmes had little or no formal training on the activities they were using. Becker (2009) highlighted a potential limitation of therapeutic wilderness work if the approach is not correctly implemented. He notes that daily interaction between youth and counselling professionals may cause a lack of clarity in the relationship and limit feelings of confidentiality (Becker, 2009). He emphasises the importance of training in wilderness-based counselling to minimise this possible limitation (Becker, 2009). Bastemur (2019) states that on-the-job experience and training is sufficient to equip professionals for Wilderness Therapy. There remains little standardization on the training required for professionals working in Wilderness Therapy.

While counselling professionals commonly pay regular visits to participants in the wilderness setting, additional staff, often referred to as wilderness facilitators, remain with youth throughout programmes and play a significant role in the success of Wilderness Therapy (Bettmann et al, 2016). Due to their close contact and availability, wilderness facilitators play a mentorship role and contribute to the development of social skills through role modelling (Bettmann et al, 2016; Norton, 2009). The wilderness environment and consistent time spent with youth, places a great deal of stress on wilderness facilitators (Jenkinson, 2010). These facilitators require regular supervision, support and training if they are to maintain a high standard of work (Marchand, 2008). Wilderness Therapy programmes, where wilderness facilitators are provided with meaningful guidance and support from professionals, have been linked with positive programme outcomes (Jenkinson, 2010). Professional support, as well as ongoing training, acts to improve the quality of service provided to the youth (Saltzburg, Green & Drew, 2010). Group support and guidance sessions are found to be particularly helpful as they allow staff to learn from one another, develop team morale and improve their skills effectively and time-efficiently (Jenkinson, 2010). Wilderness facilitators, who are sufficiently supported and guided, are a vital element contributing to positive behavioural changes in young programme participants (Marchand, 2008).

There has been increased attention drawn to the specific training requirements of facilitators working in a wilderness setting. Facilitating staff require specialized skills, qualifications and ethical guidelines to successfully run the activities and outdoor living in wilderness programmes (Fernee et al, 2017; Houston et al, 2010). It is vital that staff implementing adventure activities and wilderness living are equipped to assess the ability of clients, as well as the difficulty of activities, to ensure the safety of youth (Tucker & Norton, 2012). Initially, there was little standardization and external accreditation for the training necessary for wilderness facilitators (Houston et al, 2010). This contributed to the early struggles this method had gaining support from families, funders and professional bodies, concerned about the overall safety of the programme participants (Houston et al, 2010). The Wilderness Education Association, an organization working towards developing the field of outdoor educators, compiled minimum standard guidelines for staff working within wilderness-based youth programmes in the United States of America (Hobbs, McMahan & Stawski, 2018). With these guidelines in place, came standards for quality and safety that significantly helped to improve recognition and trust for Wilderness Therapy programmes among key role players (Hobbs, McMahan & Stawski, 2018). Similarly, in Australia inconsistency found in training led to the development of accreditations for outdoor activity facilitation (Dickson & Herbert, 2005).

Standardizing staff training has, however, proven to be challenging, due to the vast variety of outdoor contexts and activities used, and job-specific training or experience provided by the employing organisation is still accepted as sufficient in some countries (Bastemur, 2019; Hobbs, McMahan & Stawski, 2018). Additionally, specialized training is expensive, requiring equipment, personnel and suitable locations. Focusing only on the activities and environment utilized by the employing organization was found to be cost effective (Dickson & Herbert, 2005). Increased clarity on the training required for facilitating staff working within therapeutic wilderness programmes is needed, to improve the trust in this method held by key role players.

2.2.5 Wilderness Healing in the South African Context

A South African appreciation for time spent outdoors and the available metaphors it offers, far pre-dates the Western World's Wilderness Therapy approach. Nature has played a significant role in personal and community growth throughout the country's history. This section will unpack literature around the historical roots of wilderness for healing in South Africa, followed by the current use of wilderness in this country.

2.2.5.1 Historical Roots of the use of Wilderness for Healing in South Africa

Wilderness-based rituals have been an integral part of many indigenous South African cultures (Ngcobo, 2020; Babane, 2019; Phokane, 2018). An examination of Zulu poetry reveals that nature metaphors have historically been rooted in Zulu culture (Gcumisa, 2009). This is significant as those who identify themselves as Zulu are in the majority in South Africa (StatsSA, 2018). Wilderness-based rituals within some South Africa cultures, form rites of passages marking young males' transition into adulthood (Phokane, 2018). Integrating aspects of outdoor living, nature metaphors and community ceremonies, these rites of passage guide young boys into their new social role as men in their communities (Ngcobo, 2020; Phokane, 2018). Although less common, similar rituals do exist for girls in South African cultures (Maluleke, 2017). The acknowledgement by their communities and teachings by older generations develop a strong sense of identity and community responsibility (Babane, 2019). These ancient cultural rites of passages reveal a historical significance of wilderness spaces for personal and community development within South African cultures.

Indigenous African knowledge transference is interwoven into many cultural rituals in South Africa (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). African cultures place more value on oral communication as a form of knowledge transfer than in the Western World (Ngcobo, 2020; Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). This style of teaching makes use of intergenerational knowledge transference, where older members of the community pass on knowledge to the younger generations through stories, proverbs and sayings (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Learning through observing, trial and error, and being provided with guiding feedback from elders, is also an important part of this teaching approach (Ngcobo, 2020). Guidance from older community members who have faced similar challenges in their youth has been found to be linked with significant relationships, engaging positive role modelling and mentorships (Raposa, Rhodes & Herrera, 2016). These effective teaching methods, seen through cultural rituals and practices, are a uniquely African way of imparting knowledge, morals and a sense of identity within youth.

Literature has revealed an awareness of the value of integrating traditional South Africa customs into Social Work practice (Shokane & Masoga, 2018; Mungai, 2015). Making use of individual and community strengths to enable sustainable change has been a long-standing technique within the Social Work profession (Shokane & Masoga, 2018). Despite this ideal, Social Work in South Africa remains largely based on Western theories and practice, failing to engage with strengths in the country's cultural groups (Shokane & Masoga, 2018). Indigenous

South African cultures have begun to be recognized for the values they bring to Social Work (Mangai, 2015). These cultures traditionally integrate a sense of collectiveness, reciprocity and the inter-related nature of all people and animals (Mangai, 2015). Furthermore, the uniquely South African concept of Ubuntu has received some attention amongst Social Workers, as it prioritized forgiveness, kindness, mutual trust and interconnectedness (Bennett, 2011). Through an Ubuntu mindset, negative youth behaviours are understood as a larger community issue requiring shared responsibility and collaborative efforts to restore harmony (Sloth, Nielsen & Gallinetti, 2011). As South African Social Work slowly begins to incorporate these concepts, the field more effectively empowers the cultural groups they are aiming to intervene with, as well as shaping practice around valuable notions that encourage wide-spread community healing (Shokane & Masoga, 2018; Mangai, 2015).

The World Wilderness Congress, a global movement recognizing the immense potential of nature for personal healing, was initiated by a South African, Magqubu Ntombela in 1977 (Martin & Partha Sarathy, 2001). Magqubu Ntombela was a wilderness guide in Zululand known for his love and knowledge of the wilderness (Martin & Partha Sarathy, 2001). Together with Johannesburg-born Dr Ian Player, Ntombela brought together political, business, scientific and cultural leaders from around the world to discuss the value of wilderness, and the importance of its preservation, in the first World Wilderness Congress (Martin & Partha Sarathy, 2001). This first congress was held in South Africa and was themed on indigenous wilderness history and protection (Martin & Partha Sarathy, 2001). Subsequently, the congress has been held in all six major continents and values natural spaces to encourage healthy individuals and communities, combining nature-integrating practices of South African cultures (Martin & Muir, 2004). Due to its founding roots in South Africa, the World Wilderness Congress considers this country central to global wilderness awareness (Martin & Muir, 2004).

2.2.5.2 The Current Use of Wilderness in South Africa

Despite its various historical connections to nature, South Africa faces several challenges incorporating cultural wilderness practices into its modernizing lifestyle. Cultural rituals are becoming diluted and less frequent as communities experience physical distancing and isolation due to poor employment opportunities in rural areas (Goldenberg, 2013). This is a common struggle faced by those emigrating away from cultural and familial ties (Bank, 2020). Additionally, access to outdoor recreational spaces is significantly unequal, with high-income urban areas having far more natural ‘green’ spaces than low-income areas (Venter, Shackleton,

Van Staden, Selomane & Masterson, 2020). This difference has been found to have worsened since the end of Apartheid, as rapid urbanization and poor-quality low-cost housing caused mass overcrowding in low-income urban areas (Lategan & Cilliers, 2014). In Milliken's (2015) study of Cape Town's nature reserves, it was found that these outdoor spaces were accessed predominantly by people who identified as white, 50% of visitors, followed by those identifying as coloured, 39% of visitors, with only 11% of visitors identifying as black (Milliken, 2015). This is a poor representation considering South Africa's demographics (StatsSA, 2018). With most people accessing reserves with private vehicles, those who rely on public transport have difficulties traveling to the area (Milliken, 2015). Furthermore, a lack of awareness of the accessibility was found to be a significant reason why certain cultural groups did not frequent the reserves (Milliken, 2015). Sadly, another deterrent that was found to affect all potential visitors was the growing fear of crime within the nature reserves (Milliken, 2015). These various challenges mean that city dwellers from low-incomes areas have less access to the enjoyment and community bonding of outdoor environments (Lategan & Cilliers, 2014).

People making use of wilderness spaces in South Africa are encouraged to abide by the seven globally recognized 'Leave No Trace' principles (Hiking South Africa, 2017). These principles guide the use of these spaces to prevent negative impact on the land and ensure environmental preservation (Centre of Outdoor Ethics, 2020). Users of wilderness areas are encouraged to follow these seven principles; plan and prepare ahead, travel and camp on durable surfaces, dispose of waste correctly, leave what they find, minimize campfire impact, respect wildlife and be considerate of others (Centre of Outdoor Ethics, 2020). The first principle, 'plan and prepare ahead', has particular influence on wilderness programmes' group sizes. Groups larger than 20 people are discouraged within this principle, due to the potential negative impact of trail erosion, meal preparation, tent setup and toileting (Centre of Outdoor Ethics, 2020).

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This research is grounded in two theoretical perspectives that are key to both therapeutic wilderness programmes and the research itself, namely Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1971) and Positive Youth Development (Hamilton, 1999). Wilderness Therapy programmes around the world integrate these perspectives into their interventions. Additionally, they have significance within the South African youth context and wilderness-based programmes addressing this demographic group. Social Learning Theory and Positive Youth Development will be discussed below with regards to their relevance to this research.

2.3.1 Social Learning Theory

Bandura's (1971) Social Learning Theory explains how behaviours are learned through direct social experiences. This perspective explains that behaviours, beliefs and attitudes are observed and adopted by children as they develop (Bandura, 1971). This learning continues throughout life as people enter different social environments and encounter different behaviours (Bandura, 1971). Social Learning involves modelling behaviours on the observed behaviours of others (Bandura, 1971). Positive and negative reinforcement of the behaviours acts to shape which behaviours are continued and which are avoided (Bandura, 1971). Behaviours are encouraged or discouraged through practical and social feedback (Bandura, 1971). Additionally, observing another person receiving feedback, that an individual either desires, or wishes to avoid, shapes the behaviours they choose to duplicate (Bandura, 1971). This encourages certain behaviours and deterred others, as the person hopes to obtain or evade particular feedback (Bandura, 1971). Social Learning is, therefore, a powerful tool that can provide meaningful behavioural change.

Bandura (1971) emphasises the importance of *attention, retention, motor reproduction* and *motivation* in the process of Social Learning as depicted below in Figure 2. *Attention* refers to the concentrated observation of another person's, or group of people's, behaviours. These behaviours then need to be remembered. Bandura (1971) refers to this remembering process as *retention*. The next step of Social Learning is *motor reproduction* when the individual practices and replicates the behaviours they have observed (Bandura, 1971). The final step in Bandura's (1971) Social Learning is when the individual received positive feedback that encourages the individual to continue the behaviour they are replicating. This is called *motivation* and it is necessary to ensure long-term behaviour change (Bandura, 1971).

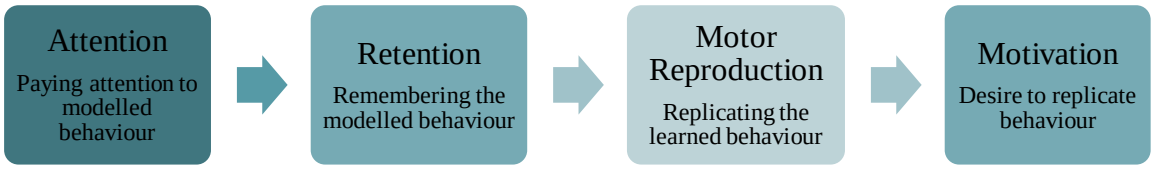

Figure 1: Bandura's (1971) Social Learning Theory

Being conscious of these four steps to Social Learning, allows those working in youth interventions to understand how meaningful behavioural change might be facilitated. It is important to understand how Social Learning is integrated into Wilderness Therapy and other wilderness programmes to create opportunities for growth in young participants (Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). An integral part of the Wilderness Therapy method is how participants work closely with others, on a daily basis, in order to assure their own safety and

comfort (Fernee et al, 2017). This provides them with many situations that draw awareness to how their behaviour, and the behaviour of others, may affect them and the group as a whole (Fernee et al, 2017). Central to therapeutic wilderness programmes is providing multiple opportunities for practical and social feedback, encouraging them to learn from their mistakes, as well as those made by others (Clark et al, 2004). Furthermore, close contact and daily observation of the wilderness facilitator is key within these programmes as this strengthens the therapeutic rapport and encourages a more influential, role-model relationship from which youth can learn positive coping mechanisms, communication skills and conflict resolution (Fernee et al, 2017). These multiple opportunities for Social Learning are fundamental within the Wilderness Therapy method.

As Social Learning through peer interactions, positive feedback, role-modelling and mentoring is an important aspect of the Wilderness Therapy method, this theoretical perspective was used in the exploration of similar programmes in South Africa. It was presumed that parallel types of Social Learning may exist in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa, as are used in Wilderness Therapy. The potential for Social Learning in the wilderness programmes investigated in this study was kept in mind throughout the research process. Integrating this framework helped to expose how peer interactions, social and physical feedback, practicing social skills and staff role-modelling are used in South African wilderness programmes.

2.3.2 Positive Youth Development

Moving away from focusing on youth deficiency, Hamilton (1999) proposed the Positive Youth Development (PYD) theory that is grounded in the strength-based approach and aimed at empowering youth. PYD sees youth as assets to their communities, rather than being viewed primarily as problematic or in need of assistance (Hamilton, 1999). Looking beyond youth social ills, this perspective focuses on developing youth's capacity, strengths and available resources (Hamilton, 1999). Through PYD theory, youth coming from disadvantaged, or potentially high-risk backgrounds, are viewed as holding a great deal of positive potential (Hamilton, 1999). While some view PYD as prevention-focused, it goes further than seeing youth as in need of help, but also views youth as part of the solution to challenges affecting their age category and the communities they live in (Hamilton, 1999). PYD places a large emphasis on environment, acknowledging that youth are both greatly influenced by, and influencers of, their surroundings (Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2006). The PYD theory understands that youth require resources, assets and supportive relationships to be empowered

and become positively contributing members of society (Hamilton, 1999). Therefore, a large component of PYD is equipping communities to provide suitable environments for youth to thrive (Benson et al, 2007). Additionally, the provision of educational, leisure, employment and community growth opportunities are fundamental to the PYD perspective (Benson et al, 2007).

Lerner (2005) designed five Cs as a clear framework for the implementation and outcome observation of programmes grounded in Hamilton's (1999) PYD. As illustrated below in Figure 3; Caring, Character, Competence, Confidence and Connection are the five central components of this perspective (Lerner, 2005). Each of the five components interlink and are essential for PYD to take place (Lerner, 2005). *Caring* refers to youth gaining a sense of sympathy and empathy towards those around them (Lerner, 2005). *Character* is gaining morality through understanding right and wrong and displaying respect for societal and cultural rules (Lerner, 2005). *Competence* is revealed as a positive view of one's own ability to undertake social, academic, cognitive and vocational activities (Lerner, 2005). *Confidence* refers to a greater value of oneself outside of practical tasks (Lerner, 2005). *Connection* is seen through positive relationships between significant people and institutions in the lives of youth (Lerner, 2005). These five Cs are a helpful guide to assess programmes and determine to what degree they are successfully integrating a PYD approach.

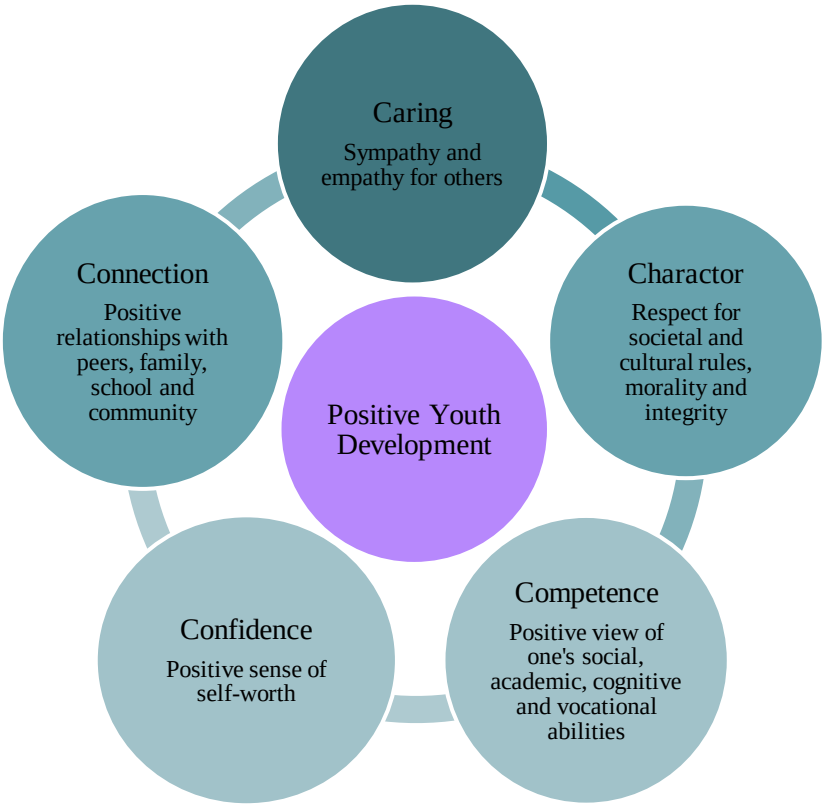

Figure 2: Lerner's (2005) Five C's of Positive Youth Development

PYD has been considered as a key theoretical perspective underpinning Wilderness Therapy (Julian, 2012). The goals, implementations and outcomes of Wilderness Therapy correlate with Hamilton's (1999) PYD and the five C's to the approach's implementation and observation, as mapped out by Lerner (2005). While the Wilderness Therapy method has been criticized for lacking theory and standardization, PYD is more widely recognized (Julian, 2012). This theoretical framework acts to ground the work done through Wilderness Therapy and assist in the growth and recognition of this method (Julian, 2012).

As this research considers how Wilderness Therapy might be successfully implemented within the South African context it is vital to keep PYD in mind throughout the research process. As PYD is fundamental to Wilderness Therapy (Julian, 2012), is it plausible that this perspective is likewise integrated into the wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa that this study is investigating. The five Cs of PYD have been considered within this research to uncover to what degree PYD is being including in current South African youth interventions that contain components of Wilderness Therapy. This research considered if the development of caring, character, competence, confidence and connection were incorporated into South African wilderness-based youth programmes.

2.4 Pertinent Policy and Legislation

Several South African policies and legislations emphasize the importance of protecting and empowering youth. These governmental documents outline ways in which the potential of this age group should be mobilized, how challenges should be addressed and where resources should be directed. The immense potential of youth to create positive change in South Africa is highlighted throughout these documents. The Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005), the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015), the Framework for Social Welfare Services (Republic of South Africa, 2013) and the National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011) are significant to youth interventions in South Africa. These documents, and their significance to this research, will be presented below.

2.4.1 The Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005)

The Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005) maps out the care, contact and protection of children in South Africa. It provides a clear explanation of the structure in place to ensure and monitor the wellbeing of citizens under the age of 18, as well as providing guidelines for how this should be done (Republic of South Africa, 2005). Building communities and

preserving families are priorities in this act (Republic of South Africa, 2005). The Act promotes the rights of children, keeping their best interests central (Republic of South Africa, 2005). All work with people under the age of 18 must comply with the Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005). The act identifies suitable living conditions for children that are conducive to their health and development (Republic of South Africa, 2005). It goes further to map out how child-targeting programmes should be implemented, prioritizing an approach that empowers the strengths within each child's family and community (Republic of South Africa, 2005).

As wilderness programmes explored in this research include youth under 18, these programmes should adhere to the standards mapped out in the Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005). The wilderness-based youth programmes involved in this study are conducted over several days, away from the young person's home. It is, therefore, important that they follow the guidelines for safe and ethical living conditions that are specified in part IV of the Children's Act (Republic of South Africa, 2005). Programmes including youth in this age group should also follow the norms and standard of practice outlined in this part of the act that prioritize family involvement, child involvement and the empowerment of community and cultural strengths. This act was kept in mind through the research process to reveal to what degree youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa are implemented in keeping with this legal document.

2.4.2 National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015)

The National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) provides clear guidelines on how youth issues in South Africa should be addressed. Anchored in the constitution, this policy supports a democratic, non-sexist, non-racial, active citizenship (Republic of South Africa, 2015). The policy realistically considers the current and historical challenges affecting youth, noting the prevalence of unemployment, violence, crime, substance abuse, HIV infection, risky behaviour, teenage pregnancy, family disruption and poor nutrition (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Taking a strength-based approach, the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) emphasises the potential and capacity of youth to be significant agents of positive change. Through valuing the worth and dignity of youth, this policy outlines services that are accessible, holistic, integrated, responsive, non-discriminatory and sustainable (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Education, skills development and employment are flagged as important in addressing youth challenges, with leadership, health and moral value programmes considered second priority (Republic of South Africa, 2015).

The National Youth Policy 2020-2030 draft (Republic of South Africa, 2020a) has recently been compiled to offer guidance for interventions with youth during this period. This document highlights the political, social and economic issues that continue to face South African youth (Republic of South Africa, 2020a), much like those presented in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015). In addition, it explains that struggles for this age category are likely to have worsened as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). In particular, the policy notes that poor education, unemployment, ill health and gender-based violence has increased for youth in South Africa due to Covid-19 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). The National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a) provides a map to address growing youth challenges in this country. Much like the previous National Youth Policy, this policy prioritizes youth involvement, empowerment, education, skills development and employment (Republic of South Africa, 2020a). This study will consider to what degree wilderness youth programmes in South Africa are acting within the guidelines of the National Youth Policy 2020-2030 (Republic of South Africa, 2020a).

2.4.3 The Framework for Welfare Services (Republic of South Africa, 2013)

The Framework for Welfare Services (Republic of South Africa, 2013) maps out how social services should best be provided in South Africa to reach the most vulnerable groups. The use of a developmental approach in the provision of welfare services is highlighted in this document, outlining core values of professional collaboration, empowerment and participation (Republic of South Africa, 2013). This framework provides guidelines to Social Workers and other SSPs on how to work together to facilitate both social and economic growth in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2013). Youth are identified as a particularly vulnerable group in this country, requiring a multitude of services (Republic of South Africa, 2013). Prevention and promotional interventions that target population groups that are particularly at-risk of experiencing social and economic difficulties are highlighted as vital in the provision of social services (Republic of South Africa, 2013). As this study explores how Social Workers and other SSPs may be contributing to wilderness-based programmes that aim to intervene with youth in South Africa to prevent negative experiences and promote positive outcomes, it is valuable to keep the Framework of Welfare Services (Republic of South Africa, 2013) in mind. Furthermore, this document is pertinent to this research as the programmes considered in this study make use of collaborations to address the needs of youth, as it a social services focus identified in this document (Republic of South Africa, 2013).

2.4.4 The National Developmental Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011)

The National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011) was compiled to outline an economic and social growth path that the country hopes to achieve by 2030. The plan particularly flags youth as instrumental in the effective development of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2011). Much like in the policies discussed above, the National Development Plan places large emphasis on education, skills development and employment opportunities for youth in order to mobilize youth to act as an asset to the country's economy (Republic of South Africa, 2011). Improving youth accessibility to these opportunities was further highlighted, as disparities in resource allocation remain significant, with youth of colour facing greater challenges in accessing resources and services than their white counterparts (Republic of South Africa, 2011). The youth-empowerment focus of the National Development Plan sheds light on government priorities and indicates where resources and funds are likely to be allocated (Republic of South Africa, 2011). Due to the priorities highlighted in this policy, it is important to keep it in mind when studying programmes aimed at youth. As this research investigates youth-targeting interventions and the specific challenges and strengths faced by South African wilderness programmes, an understanding of the context in which they operate is essential.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter presented a thorough review of the literature pertinent to the research topic. Although Wilderness Therapy itself does not seem to be well known or implemented in South Africa, the potential for a South African version of this method was highlighted through considering this country's context. The specific challenges facing youth and the NGO's that aim to intervene with this age category were unpacked. The development and proven efficacy of Wilderness Therapy, as implemented in First-World countries, was comprehensively discussed. South Africa's historical relationship to wilderness spaces and utilization of the outdoors for personal healing was discussed. Finally, it outlined the theoretical models, policies and legislation relevant to the research, placing great emphasis on the need to provide programmes and suitable environments that empower youth to be significant change agents. This literature review has laid the groundwork for the study that hopes to add valuable knowledge to the field of wilderness-based youth interventions in South Africa.

Chapter Three: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter three presents the methodology that was used in this study. Initially, this chapter will present the research design that was utilized in this study. Secondly, it will unpack the research population and the sampling process. The chapter will then outline how the data in this study was collected, highlighting the data collection technique, collection tool and data recording. Subsequently, the chapter will describe the data analysis and verification procedures. Finally, the limitations of the study and the reflexivity of the researcher will be discussed.

3.2 Research Design

This study made use of an exploratory qualitative research design. This research design aids in-depth explorations of human phenomenon, through acquiring personal opinions, experiences and knowledge of key people within the specific research context (Punch, 2005). This study sought to gain a full understanding of the challenges and possible potential for Wilderness Therapy, as a means of intervening with at-risk youth in the unique context of South Africa. An in-depth exploration of the topic was, therefore, necessary. A thorough understanding of the challenges and potentials for therapeutic wilderness programmes in South Africa was obtained through exploring the opinions, experiences and knowledge of those working in at-risk youth programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy. The exploratory nature of the qualitative method means that findings are not limited to pre-set variables but rather incorporated multiple perspectives to reveal results inductively (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This was necessary to expose nuances that are unique to wilderness programmes for the purpose of intervening with at-risk youth, and to the South African context. The flexible and inquisitive approach gained meaningful findings that were needed to create a holistic understanding of the current realities faced by youth interventions incorporating components of Wilderness Therapy. The exploratory qualitative method was, therefore, best suited to effectively address the central topic and main questions of this study.

3.3 Population and Sampling

A study population is defined as a group of individuals with common characteristics that are of specific interest to the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The research population for this

study was made up of people working in programmes targeting at-risk youth in South Africa, that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy. The size of this population was unknown as there is no known list of organizations implementing these types of programmes and very little literature available on the topic. The researcher initially intended to have 20 research respondents, however due to the population size being smaller than initially expected, only 18 respondents were involved. This section will provide a thorough description of the sampling technique, characteristics and procedures that were used in this study.

3.3.1 Sampling Technique

Non-probability sampling was used to obtain 18 respondents for this study. Non-probability sampling is commonly used in qualitative research as it allows the researcher to specifically target respondents that are most appropriate for the study (De Vos et al, 2011). This study made use of this sampling method to gain access to respondents who were best suited to provide relevant data on wilderness-based youth programmes in South Arica. Non-probability sampling is also an effective sampling method when there is a limited number of people available that meet the sample criteria (De Vos et al, 2011; Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As there were very few youth programmes in South Africa that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy, at the time of this study, non-probability sampling was appropriate. The researcher initially intended to make use of the non-probability sampling approach, purposive sampling, however, this method alone did not yield sufficient respondents. An additional non-probability method, snowball sampling, was included to gain further respondents appropriate for the study.

The purposive method allows the researcher, with their knowledge of the field, to select participants based on specific characteristics that are relevant to the objectives of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Purposive sampling is also best suited to collect data that reveals the opinions, experiences and understandings of people in a limited field (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As youth programmes incorporating components of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa is a limited field, purposive sampling was appropriate. Furthermore, purposive sampling is time and resource efficient as only relevant respondents are selected (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher's pre-existing knowledge of organizations running wilderness programmes in South Africa was used to target appropriate respondents. This allowed for the efficient selection of 12 respondents holding valuable knowledge, experiences and insights on the studied topic. These 12 respondents were not sufficient, given the 20 respondents this study hoped to include. To gain additional respondents, snowball sampling was also included.

Snowball sampling utilizes the knowledge and connections of known respondents, to source other suitable respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). After their interview, the 12 initial respondents in this study, were asked to recommend other organizations who may have staff that would be suitable respondents. The recommendations, provided by respondents, aided in gaining six additional respondents in the study. Making use of the snowball sampling method allows for a greater sample despite a small population (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This sampling method was suited to this study, as it investigated programmes that are highly specialized and scarce in South Africa. Although the target number of 20 respondents was not reached, using snowball sampling alongside purposive sampling, enabled the researcher to access a total of 18 respondents, that worked in six different wilderness programmes in South African.

3.3.2 Sampling Characteristics

The sample criteria map out the specific characteristics desired when obtaining appropriate research respondents (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). In this study, respondents needed to meet certain inclusionary criteria.

Firstly, the respondents need to work for an organization that conducts wilderness programmes with at-risk youth in South Africa. The interventions in the programmes they worked for did not need to be outdoor based in their entirety, but an aspect of the intervention needed to be run in a wilderness setting and integrate the outdoor living and adventure activities that are characteristic of Wilderness Therapy. The wilderness programmes they worked for did not necessarily need to incorporate the professional therapeutic components essential to Wilderness Therapy. The wilderness programmes could form one component of a larger youth intervention provided by the organisation itself or by a partnering organization.

Secondly, respondents needed to spend more than half of their employed work time directly or indirectly involved with a wilderness programme which meets the above criteria. Respondents needed to have been involved in at least two of these wilderness programmes and to have spent multiple nights with youth in an outdoor setting. This basic degree of experience was required for respondents, as this ensured they had a robust knowledge of the wilderness programme they were involved in.

Finally, no specific academic qualifications were required for research respondents as it was presumed that people working within such programmes held valuable knowledge and experience that was relevant to the research without necessarily having formal academic qualifications. No gender, race or age specifications were made in the sampling criteria.

A total of 18 suitable respondents were selected for this study using the above-mentioned criteria. Respondents were from six different organizations that ran wilderness-based youth programmes, with a maximum of four respondents selected from each organization to ensure the results were not skewed towards the experiences of one organization. The respondents' ages ranged from 26 to 73 years old. There were eight respondents who identified as black, seven as white and three as coloured. Of the 18 respondents, 12 identified as male and six identified as female. Respondents' highest indicated academic qualifications varied from Grade 12 to post-graduate level qualifications. Respondents' experience working in wilderness programmes ranged from one to 18 years. Respondents held positions of management, administrator, facilitator and support in their wilderness programmes. The variety of roles held by respondents helped gain comprehensive understandings of the explored programmes.

3.3.3 Sampling Procedure

Procedures to access the research respondents were followed to ensure ethical and effective research practice (Punch, 2005). With the researcher's knowledge, as an expert in the field, numerous suitable organizations were initially identified, and the Executive Directors of these organizations were contacted via email to request their organization's involvement. This email requested the organizations' involvement in the study through an invitation letter (Appendix A) that outlined the research, its four main objectives and its possible benefits. Furthermore, the invitation letter provided information regarding the researcher, the criteria for desired respondents and the confidentiality that was to be maintained throughout the study. Any questions that the Executive Director had about the study and their organization's involvement were answered and written consent for the organizations' participation was obtained via email.

After organizational consent was obtained, the Executive Directors recommended numerous relevant staff members, guided by the provided sample criteria. The researcher then used these recommendations to identify respondents, sending emails to these staff members, requesting their participation in the study. Only some of the staff recommended by Executive Directors were contacted. This was done to protect the anonymity of the respondents as well as to limit the number of respondents selected per organization, to ensure the data was not skewed towards to experiences of one organization. The email sent to potential respondents contained information on the study in an attached information letter (Appendix B). As this initial purposive sampling did not yield sufficient respondents, snowball sampling was used later to contact additional organisations. Once these additional organizations were identified by

respondents, the researcher followed the same procedures, outlined above, to gain consent from the Executive Directors and respondents working in suitable organizations. Between two and four willing respondents from each organization were selected to take part in the study.

The researcher ensured that the potential respondents were fully informed about the study and their participation in it. It was made clear to the respondents that that they could decline to participate in the study at any point. The potential respondents were provided with an information letter (Appendix B) and a consent form (Appendix C) via email. The information letter explained the research and how it could benefit wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa, as well as what their involvement in the study would entail. This letter assured the respondents that their safety and confidentiality would be maintained throughout their involvement in the study. The consent form briefly outlined the study and the respondents' involvement in it and provided a space for respondents to sign, indicating that they consented to their participating. Once signed consent forms were obtained from respondents via email and any questions were answered, a time and date for the remote interview was agreed upon.

3.4 Data Collection Method

The data collection for this study was done through remote one-on-one interviews utilizing a semi-structured interview guide, that was audio recorded. This section will unpack the data collection technique used, the development of the tool used to collect the qualitative data and the recording of it.

3.4.1 Data Collection Technique

The study used one-on-one interviews to collect descriptive data on wilderness programmes in South Africa that target at-risk youth. One-on-one interviews can be used to collect in-depth information on the views, experiences and understandings of people on a specific phenomenon (Punch, 2005). In this study, the interviews collected in-depth data about wilderness-based youth programmes from people who worked within them. The individual one-on-one nature of interviews creates a comfortable, open environment where respondents feel they can provide honest, comprehensive responses (Punch, 2005). Probing, guiding and re-directing respondents are common techniques in qualitative research (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). These techniques were used in this study's interviews to obtain detailed responses to the research questions. Each interview was conducted in English and lasted between 45 minutes and 75 minutes. Data was collected through 18 one-on-one remote interviews.

As the data collection period occurred during the initial peak of the Covid-19 pandemic, only remote interviews were used to protect the safety of the respondents and the researcher. Face-to-face interviews were prohibited by the researcher's university at the time of the data collection of this study (University of Cape Town, 2020). Furthermore, during this time, South Africa was in Covid-19 alert level four and five which stipulated that non-essential contact, of any kind, was not allowed (Republic of South Africa, 2020b). The researcher's original intention was to conduct interviews both remotely and face-to-face. This needed to be adapted, and all interviews were held remotely due to the Covid-19 restrictions.

Regulations prohibiting face-to-face interviews for social research meant that respondents would not have been able to participate in the research without the inclusion of remote interviews. The use of remote interviews has previously been found to enrich research as it allows the researcher access to respondents that they might otherwise not have been able to include due to logistical difficulties (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). This was likewise found in this study, as respondents were able to participate remotely, despite logistical difficulties of Covid-19 restrictions and of living in other provinces. Additionally, remote interviews are not found to reduce the rapport built between researcher and respondent if the respondents are thoroughly briefed and informed (Deakin & Wakefield, 2013). The respondents in this study received adequate briefing and information about the study through the information letter and consent form provided prior to their interview. This helped the researcher build sufficient rapport with respondents before and during their interviews, yielding meaningful data.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic occurring at the time of this research, many organizations incorporated home-based work for their employees. Those that had reliable internet in their homes, had their interview via the online programmes, Zoom or Skype. Although, it was hoped that all interviews would be held over these platforms, respondents had varying access to internet during this time. Four out of the 18 respondents were unable to access reliable internet for their interview. To overcome this challenge, additional communication methods were also used. WhatsApp call and telephonic calls were included to contact those with limited home-based internet. Telephone calls were made from the researcher's phone to cover the cost of telephonic calls to avoid deterring respondents from participating. During some interviews, the internet or telephonic connection was briefly lost. This meant that some interviews were temporarily paused until the respondents were able to reconnect. These pauses in the interviews were brief and interviews continued after connection was resumed. These communication methods were used successfully to collect data from 18 respondents.

3.4.2 Data Collection Tool

The interviews in this study were led by a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix D) that was specifically designed to shape the interviews around the main research objectives through the lens of the study's theoretical frameworks. Semi-structured interview guides are commonly used in qualitative interviews to gather meaningful and relevant data (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Making use of this type of guide provides structure to the interview to address the main research questions, while allowing for flexibility and probing to encourage conversational and thorough responses (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The ordering of the questions in this study's interview guide was done with the intention of moving towards more in-depth questions as the interview progressed. Beginning with less invasive questions, before moving on to more personal or detailed questions, allows the respondent to became comfortable in the interview setting and for the researcher to build rapport with the respondent, yielding more detailed responses (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This study's semi-structured interview guide was specifically designed to gain relevant and thorough data.

Prior to conducting the interviews with respondents, two pilot interviews were conducted to refine the semi-structured interview guide. The data collected during these pilot interviews were not included in the results of this study. Interview piloting is an essential step that helps to improve the timing, quality and flow of research interviews (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Conducting pilot interviews can reveal potential problems with the semi-structured interview guide, that can then be corrected before the data collection interviews begin (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Through the two pilot interviews conducted in this study, various gaps in the questions were identified, and some questions in the interview guide were identified as repetitive. Using this information, the interview guide was re-organized, and some questions removed to address the gaps and improve the logical flow. This adapted semi-structured interview guide was then successfully used to collect data from the 18 respondents in this study.

3.4.3 Data Recording

The interviews conducted for this study were audio recorded using a reliable recording device. When conducting qualitative interviews, it is important to audio record the interviews to ensure that the data is correctly reported upon (Al-Yateem, 2012). The remote interviews in this study were recorded using a recording device that was placed next to the computer or phone that the researcher was using to conduct the interview. It is important to remember that audio recording the interviews can cause the respondent to feel uncomfortable in the interview (Al-Yateem,

2012). Discomfort can be reduced by assuring respondents that the interview recording will not be shared publicly and that their name and identifying particulars will not be revealed in the research report or to any third party (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The use of the recording device, and the reasoning behind this, was clearly communicated with each respondent at the beginning of their interview. This had also been stated in the information letter (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) provided to them prior to their interview. After the interviews were completed, the audio recordings were transcribed, omitting any identifying particulars of the respondents. The researcher personally compiled and stored the transcriptions in password secured folders on her computer, external hard drive and Google drive. The audio recordings were only accessible to the researcher and were used solely for the purposes of this study.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research involves thoroughly engaging with the data to establish order and determine the results of the study (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). As qualitative data can often be disordered and unsystematic, clear steps must be taken to establish meaning from the interview transcripts (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). This study used Tesch's (1990) eight steps of qualitative data analysis to determine themes, categories and subcategories within the qualitative data collected through the 18 interviews. The qualitative data analysis computer programme, NVivo, was also used to facilitate the analysis process. NVivo is a digital programme that assists the data coding process, enabling the researcher to interpret the data effectively and efficiently (Bergin, 2011). This study integrated the use of the NVivo programme into Tesch's (1990) qualitative data analysis steps to comprehensively analyse the data. How Tesch's (1990) eight steps were followed in this study will be presented below.

- The first step in data analysis is reading through all the interview transcripts to gain a sense of the data as a whole (Tesch, 1990). In this study, the researcher conducted all the interviews herself and began the data analysis process soon after data collection. This meant that she already had a good overall idea of the data when she started the analysis process. However, to gain further insight into the data as a whole, all the interview transcripts were read through at the beginning of the analysis process.
- The second step is to select one transcript and methodically read through it with the research objectives in mind (Tesch, 1990). This is done to begin identifying relevant themes, categories and subcategories in the data (Tesch, 1990). The researcher selected

an interview transcript that had thorough and interesting data. Notes were made on information relevant to the research objectives as the transcript was perused in detail.

- Tesch's (1990) third step is clustering data together that pertains to similar topics using the interview transcript selected in step two. The researcher identified several topics emerging from the data. The researcher made use of the computer programme, NVivo, to digitally cluster together similar topics. The NVivo programme allows the researcher to create nodes for each topic and efficiently sort relevant sections of data into each node (Bergin, 2011). As topics emerged in the data, the researcher created nodes in the NVivo programme for each topic.
- Tesch's (1990) fourth step involves methodically revisiting all the transcripts with the identified topics in mind. Data found in the transcripts that is relevant to each identified topic should be clustered together (Tesch, 1990). This process can be cumbersome and time consuming (Tesch, 1990). To cluster topics more efficiently, this process was done using the NVivo programme. The researcher in this study went through each interview transcript individually, sorting relevant data and digitally clustering it under the topics, using the NVivo programme.
- Tesch's (1990) fifth step to qualitative data analysis involves identifying and appropriately naming the themes, categories and subcategories that emerged. This is done through considering the weight of each topic, finding similarities amongst them and grouping them accordingly (Tesch, 1990). It was important that the main research questions of this study were considered during this process, as this ensures the relevance of findings (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). In this study, the researcher used NVivo to assess the weight of topics through moving data into clear and logical themes, categories and subcategories. Users of NVivo are able to see how many respondents provided responses on each topic (Bergin, 2011). This enabled the researcher to quickly ascertain which topic had significant weight and which did not. With this knowledge, the logical flow and groupings of identified topics was considered to ensure the findings represented the data share by all or most of the respondents. NVivo allows you to easily move data between nodes (Bergin, 2011). The researcher used this feature to reorganize the data into logical categories and subcategories. After all the data had been sorted, the researcher re-considered the names of each theme, category and subcategory to ensure the wording was descriptive and distinct.

- The sixth step in Tesch's (1990) analysis process is abbreviating and alphabetizing the categories and subcategories. This is commonly done to make it easier and quicker to gather data on each category and subcategory (Tesch, 1990). As has been stated above, the clustering of data was done using the NVivo programme. This eliminated the need to use abbreviation and alphabetical indicators. The researcher is able to title each node in the NVivo programme with a full descriptive name (Bergin, 2011). The full name of categories and subcategories was, therefore, used to group together relevant data.
- In the seventh step of qualitative data analysis, Tesch (1990) stated that the data from all the interview transcripts should be assembled into the identified categories and subcategories. Due to the researcher's effective use of the NVivo programme, this step was done simultaneously with step five as outlined above.
- In the final step of Tesch's (1990) qualitative data analysis procedures, the weight of each category and subcategory must be considered. If a category or subcategory does not have sufficient weight, it may need to be combined or re-organized with other categories and subcategories (Tesch, 1990). In this study, the researcher revisited this step several times to ensure that each category and subcategory had significant weight and accurately represented the responses provided by respondents. During this process, some categories and subcategories were found to have significant weight and were divided further to present a thorough analysis of the data. The ordering of themes, categories and subcategories was also considered during this stage to ensure the presentation of the findings was logical and not repetitive.

3.6 Data Verification

Guba and Lincoln (1989) outline four components that need to be considered to verify qualitative data. Data verification is necessary to ensure confidence in the study's findings and confirm that they are trustworthy (De Vos et al, 2011). This also aids in the assurance that the research has achieved what it set out to and was not influenced by the biases of the researcher (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The researcher consulted regularly with her research supervisor for review, debriefing and guidance. This acts to ensure the research process is being implemented correctly to produce verifiable results (Shenton, 2004). Four aspects needed to be considered to ensure the verification of this study; namely credibility, transferability, dependency and confirmability, as will be discussed below.

3.6.1 Credibility

Data credibility refers to whether the results provide an accurate representation of the views, opinions and experiences shared by the respondents (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Audio recording and verbatim transcribing of the interviews acts to ensure that respondents are accurately quoted, and the data is correctly reported upon (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). The interviews in this study were recorded and transcribed verbatim, ensuring respondents were accurately quoted and the results of the study were a true representative of the data. It is important that researchers are conscious of their own potential for bias (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The researcher was aware of her biases and pre-conceived ideas and consciously made sure not to allow these to influence the interviews or data analysis. Consciously considering biases and pre-conceived ideas is necessary to ensure credibility (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Throughout the research, the researcher received input and guidance from her research supervisor. Monitoring and guidance from another researcher further ensured that the study was conducted thoroughly, without bias, to yield findings that accurately represented the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

3.6.2 Transferability

The transferability of a study refers to the ability of research results to be duplicated in another, similar context with different respondents (Shenton, 2004). The qualitative nature of the research design used in this study, means that the results cannot be widely generalized (Babbie & Mouton, 2010). Providing thick descriptions of the collected data can, however, thoroughly describe phenomenon that allows readers to determine if findings are transferable to different contexts, time or people (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This study used thick descriptions of the data collected in the interviews to thoroughly represent the researched topic. Thick description of the view, opinions and experiences of people working in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa, can be relied upon to represent those of others working in similar programmes.

3.6.3 Dependability

Another important consideration when verifying qualitative data is ensuring the dependability of the research (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is done by clearly documenting the research process so that readers can determine its dependability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This means that readers can follow how the study was done and judge if it would yield the same results if repeated (Shenton, 2004). All steps in the research process and data analysis of this study have

been clearly articulated. Furthermore, direct quotes from respondents were included in the presentation of the results, allowing readers to see how conclusions were drawn from the data.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Finally, confirmability needs to be considered for data verification (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Confirmability refers to the findings of the study being correctly derived from the data (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). This is achieved through ensuring the credibility, transferability and dependability of the study (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). To do this, the researcher must demonstrate how and why the specific conclusions were drawn (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The presentation of this study clearly explains the process that was taken to reach the conclusions. Furthermore, the research was observed and monitored by the research supervisor.

3.7 Limitations of the Study

There were a few limitations experienced in the research process that were carefully managed to limit their impacts on the study.

In trying to access the 20 respondents that the study initially aimed to include, only 18 respondents could be secured due to the small population size. At the time of the study there were very few wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa and, therefore, fewer people working within these programmes than initially expected. Including 18 respondents still allowed for the collection of in-depth and rich data, providing thorough insight into wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa.

Through the research process, numerous challenges were experiences connecting the Social Work profession and programmes integrating Wilderness Therapy. Despite the skills of Social Workers being consistent with those required for the implementation of effective Wilderness Therapy (Tucker & Norton, 2012), little research into this intervention method speak specifically of Social Work involvement. Wilderness Therapy must include individual, group and family counselling provided by a licenced professional (Russell, 2001), however current literature does not specify that this should be implemented by Social Workers. Furthermore, South African wilderness-based programmes, such as those where respondents in this study worked, did not all include Social Workers involvement. This made it challenging to gain data that specifically pertained to Social Work within these programmes. In addition, while some respondents in this study may have been Social Workers, this information was withheld to

protect their identity, as the small size of the population meant there was a high chance of deductive disclosure (Kaiser, 2009). Specific insights held by Social Workers could, therefore, not be directly linked to this profession, acting to limit the results of the study.

The initial outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic occurred during the data collection stage of this study. Although the quality of the data collected did not seem to be impacted by the Covid-19 lockdown, communication with the organizations and respondents involved in this study was somewhat difficult due to the temporary working from home arrangements of the respondents at the time. South Africa was on Level five and then later Level four Covid-19 restrictions which prohibited non-essential workers from going to their physical place of work (Republic of South Africa, 2020b) during the time of data collection. For some potential respondents, working from home posed challenges with privacy and Wi-Fi access. To address the privacy challenges experienced by respondents, an increased amount of flexibility around the time of their interview was provided. This allowed the respondents the ability to select a day and time when they could secure a private setting in which they could be interviewed. Furthermore, at the beginning of their interview, respondents were reminded that they could pause or reschedule at any time if their privacy became compromised during their interview. Challenges around Wi-Fi accessibility meant that email communication and online interviews with respondents were, on occasion, delayed, interrupted or not possible. To overcome this challenge, the researcher included non-data telephonic communication to interact with and conduct interviews with some respondents. The researcher accepted the cost of this telephonic communication to avoid deterring respondents from taking part in the study. Challenges were also experienced by those using internet-based communication because of dropping connectivity. When connectivity was briefly lost, the researcher re-established communication and continued the interview with no detrimental effect to the data collected.

The researcher conducted some interviews with people she knew prior to the study. These were people she worked or collaborated with on wilderness-based youth programmes through her employment at Outward Bound Trust South Africa. At times these respondents did not fully clarify their responses within their interviews, assuming the researcher would understand the topic being discussed. For example, a respondent may have said “you know how it is with these children”. When this type of response was given, additional probing and clarification questions were used to gain full responses that did not depend on the prior knowledge of the researcher to be understood. Despite having a previous relationship with the researcher, the interviews went without difficulty and yielded beneficial responses.

3.8 Reflexivity

At the time of the study, the researcher worked as a Social Worker employed by the Outward Bound Trust South Africa, an organization providing wilderness-based programmes to at-risk youth. Prior to this study, the researcher had a deep understanding of the potential of wilderness programmes, in relation to the programme she worked in. She had an understanding of financial and staffing difficulties facing the wilderness programme she worked in as well as opinions on what elements of the programme were particularly impactful. She held views that the wilderness programme she was involved in, and other similar programmes, were effective at facilitating positive outcomes for youth. A researcher's active involvement in the field being studied, while being an advantage, can create bias in data collection and analysis (Punch, 2005). The researcher needed to be conscious of the biases she held due to her own experience in the field to specifically avoid this influencing the data collection, data analysis and the presentation of finding. The researcher made sure to reflect upon the research process and consciously act to avoid bias. She also consulted her supervisor regularly for review, debrief and guidance. Following these procedures reduced the possible impacts of bias, and ensured the findings fairly represented the data shared by respondents.

3.9. Conclusion

This chapter described the methodology used in this study that explored the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. It explained the rationale behind the use of an exploratory qualitative research design. Subsequently, it presented the procedures followed and specifications identified of the population and sample. The chapter then outlined the process of data collection through remote interviews with 18 respondents who worked in South African youth interventions that incorporate a wilderness component. The process of data analysis through following Tesch's (1990) steps and making use of the NVivo programme were then discussed. The credibility, transferability dependency and confirmability aspects of the study were presented to verify the data. Finally, the limitations of the study and the reflexivity of the researcher were noted. With the research methodology clearly stated, the following chapter will comprehensively present the findings of the study.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter will present the findings gathered from qualitative interviews with 18 respondents working within at-risk youth interventions that incorporate a wilderness element in South Africa. It will provide an integrated discussion of the findings through considering previous literature and the context of the study. Initially the demographic characteristics of the respondents will be presented. Following this, the framework of analysis which arose from the data analysis will be provided. Subsequently, the research findings will be comprehensively discussed in the themes, categories and subcategories outlined in the framework.

4.2 Demographic Profile

Respondent	Age	Race	Gender	Highest Qualification[3]	Years in Field	Role in Wilderness Programme[4]
1	42	White	Male	Grade 12	18	Management
2	62	White	Female	Grade 12	15	Administrator
3	34	Coloured	Male	Grade 12	16	Management & Facilitator
4	73	White	Male	Postgraduate	17	Management
5	59	White	Female	Postgraduate	1	Support
6	46	Black	Male	Undergraduate	10	Facilitator
7	36	Black	Male	Undergraduate	6	Management & Facilitator
8	26	Black	Female	Undergraduate	2	Facilitator
9	28	Coloured	Female	Postgraduate	2	Management & Facilitator
10	26	Coloured	Male	Undergraduate	2	Facilitator
11	28	Black	Male	Grade 12	4	Facilitator
12	34	Black	Male	Grade 12	11	Management & Facilitator
13	27	Black	Male	Grade 12	5	Management & Facilitator
14	28	Black	Female	Grade 12	3	Facilitator
15	48	White	Female	Postgraduate	15	Management & Facilitator
16	39	White	Male	Undergraduate	11	Management & Facilitator
17	30	Black	Male	Grade 12	3	Facilitator
18	29	White	Male	Grade 12	3	Facilitator

Figure 3: Demographic Profile of Research Respondents

[3] The specifics of respondents' qualifications have been excluded to reduce the possibility of deductive disclosure.
[4] Respondents' roles in wilderness programmes have been generalized into bigger overarching areas to hide their identity and protect their confidentiality.

Interviews were held with 18 respondents who work within programmes aiming to intervene with at-risk youth in South Africa that incorporate a wilderness aspect. Respondents covered a wide range of demographic information, academic qualifications, years in the field and roles within their organization's wilderness programme, as can be seen in the table above.

The 18 respondents range from 26 to 73 years of age. Eight respondents identified as black, seven as white and three as coloured. There were 12 respondents who identified their gender as male, while six identified themselves as female.

Nine of the 18 respondents indicated grade 12 as their highest academic qualification attained at the time of the study. The remaining nine respondents identified that they had a tertiary degree at the time of the study; five held undergraduate degrees and four held postgraduate degrees as their highest academic qualification. Respondents had a range of experience working within at-risk youth interventions that incorporate a wilderness component. This ranged from one to 18 years of experience within these types of programmes.

At the time of the study, the respondents held a variety of roles within their organization's wilderness programme that targeted at-risk youth. Seven respondents fulfilled the role of facilitator; working directly with the participants throughout their time spent in the wilderness. Seven respondents held dual roles as a facilitator as well as a management role within a programme. Two respondents worked only in a management role. The remaining two respondents held an administration and support role respectively within the wilderness programmes at their organizations.

4.3 Discussion of Findings

The research findings will be presented according to the framework of analysis table illustrated in figure 4. The themes, categories and subcategories within this framework arose through a thorough analysis of the data collected in this study. The findings within each category and subcategory will be discussed under the themes of wilderness programme design, therapeutic components, understandings of the Wilderness Therapy method and the future potential within South Africa. The presentation of the findings will include direct quotes from respondents as well as a discussion on the findings considering current available literature.

Themes	Categories	Subcategories
Wilderness Programme Design	Programme Layout	A Component of a Larger Intervention
		Programme Duration
		Group Size
	Programme Participants	Backgrounds of Participants
		Willingness to Participate
	Wilderness Facilitators	Importance of Wilderness Facilitators
		Relatability of Facilitators
		Internal Training
		Support and Guidance Provided to Facilitators
	Unique Environment of the Wilderness	Peaceful Wilderness Atmosphere
		New Engaging Location
		Creation of New Social Norms
	Activities	Adventure Activities
		Survival Activities
		Time in Solitude
	The Evaluation of Programme Outcomes	Personal Development Objective
		Self-Evaluation of Outcomes
		Observation of Initial Behavioural Changes
Therapeutic Components	Programme Approaches	Self-Led Approach
		Experiential Learning
	Group Sessions	Group Counselling
		Debriefing of Activities
	Additional Services	Individual Counselling on Request
		Practical Support Provided Post-Programme
Understandings of the Wilderness Therapy Method	Respondents' Understandings	Understanding of Wilderness Therapy
		Outdoor Programmes with a Personal Growth Intent
		Personal Experiences to Gain External Understanding
	Views of Key Role Players	Wilderness Programmes Not Being Widely Understood
		Not Accessible to Everyone
The Future Potential within South Africa	Challenges	Implications of School and Work
		Parental Involvement
		Lack of Available Funding
	Strengths	Suitable Outdoor Spaces
		NGO Collaboration

Figure 4: Framework of Analysis

4.3.1 Wilderness Programme Design

The research findings show similarities in the wilderness programme design of the wilderness programmes that the 18 respondents were involved with at the time of the study. Parallels were found amongst most respondents, with regards to the programme layout, programme participants, wilderness facilitators, unique environment of the wilderness, activities and the evaluation of programme outcomes. The similarities found amongst respondents pertaining to these categories will be discussed in detail below.

4.3.1.1 Programme Layout

Programme layout emerged as a category from the data under the theme wilderness programme design. Within this category, similarities were found amongst respondents with regards to the wilderness programmes they were involved in being *a component of a larger intervention*, the *programme duration* and the *group size*. An analysis of these programme layout commonalities will now be individually presented.

4.3.1.1.1 A Component of a Larger Intervention

All respondents in this study explained that their wilderness programmes formed part of a larger at-risk youth intervention. Some of these larger interventions were run by the same organisation that implemented the wilderness aspect, while others made use of partnerships with different NGOs or governmental social services. In the case where partnerships were used, other NGOs or governmental social services implemented the larger interventions, with the wilderness component being facilitated by the respondents' organization.

> *[The youth intervention is] a three-month programme which is done holistically, so working with the whole person. It is facilitated over twelve weeks… They would start off with the first three weeks which is called the orientation phase, where a lot of the life skills and learnings happen and, also, where they are prepared for the important second phase, which is the outdoor phase. (Respondent 3, male, 34)*

> *We have our yearlong programmes and then we've got shorter programmes that are 6 months and 3 months… The wilderness camps, we have them once in a programme. (Respondent 9, female, 28)*

> *[The wilderness programme] deals more with, um, organizations that are deep in the townships… homes that with like kids, youth, HIV and Aids, afterschool programmes, like they are deep into the communities… We partner with them… And then after 5 days in the wilderness… [the participants] job shadow. (Respondent 12, male, 34)*

Making use of wilderness programmes as components of larger youth interventions, as the respondents expressed were being done by their organisations, is an efficient way to implement these types of programmes within the South African context. This is because multiple governmental policies have placed significant priority on education and employment opportunities for youth in South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 2015; Republic of South Africa, 2011). The National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) specifically states that youth leadership, health and moral value programmes should be considered second priority, following that of education and employment. With the wilderness programmes discussed by research respondents falling into this second priority, they may

struggle to gain funding and government support if not combined with youth interventions that include an education or employment focus. It is to be expected that gaining funding is a concern for the youth programmes discussed in this study as Moboya and McKay (2019) notes that South African NGOs typically face significant struggles because of insufficient and unreliable funding. Partnership programmes, such as those indicated to be used by respondents' organizations, have been encouraged by Gevers and Flisher (2012) as an effective way to overcome funding challenges by sharing expensive resources and personnel. Running wilderness programmes as part of a larger intervention, as discussed by respondents, therefore, acts to attract funders and support and uses resources and personnel efficiently.

Wilderness programmes being implemented in combination with other components in a larger intervention, much like that described by respondents, has been linked to greater programme outcomes. This is seen in Van der Merwe and Dawes's (2012) study that found that stand-alone wilderness programmes in South Africa are ineffective at reducing youth violence if they are not combined with additional skills development. As wilderness programmes discussed by respondents are combined with larger interventions, they can expect to yield greater positive outcomes than if they were conducted in isolation. The effectiveness of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study is likely increased by conducting the programmes in combination with larger interventions.

4.3.1.1.2 Programme Duration

All the respondents in this study indicated that the duration of their wilderness programmes ranged between two and 14 days. This duration refers specifically to the time youth spend in the wilderness, not the time spent participating in the larger interventions which, according to respondents, varied. The respondents in this study indicated that participants in their wilderness programme would spend the duration of these programmes away from home, living in the wilderness and participating in outdoor activities.

> *They would go to the [wilderness] camp and it's for 6 days… We've got quite a lot of physical and, ah, very emotional activities. (Respondent 7, male, 26)*

> *Our shortest [wilderness] programmes would normally run for 3 days, 3 to 4 days and then our longest programme would run for 9 days. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

> *The normal programme we have is... it's 9 days in the wilderness. And then we have a… course that is 7 days and then we would have 5 days also and sometimes a weekend. (Respondent 12, male, 34)*

The two to 14-day duration of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents is relatively short when compared to evidence-based Wilderness Therapy programmes used in other countries. Russell (2001) specifies that Wilderness Therapy can be as short as two days, however, he indicates that North America-based programmes are commonly eight weeks in duration. More similar to that shared by respondents in this study, Wilderness Therapy programmes in Europe typically last between 6 days and two months (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). While South African wilderness programmes may be slightly shorter in duration than programmes using similar methods in other countries, it is unclear in which ways the length of programmes impacts its implementation and efficacy.

The duration of the South African wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, may be influenced by context specific challenges experienced by NGOs in this country. Wilderness Programmes are costly (Butler, 2008) which likely affects the duration that is feasible in South Africa. The shorter programme duration revealed in this study is likely utilized due to the significant financial constraints that Moboya and McKay (2019) found that limit NGOs in South Africa. NGO's working with at-risk youth in this country face large-scale need with little and inconsistent funding (Moboya & McKay, 2019). It is probable that the duration of wilderness programmes discussed by respondents is relatively short in order to address this large-scale need while staying within financial limitations.

As wilderness programmes temporarily take youth away from their home environments, longer durations may not be logistically suitable in South African considering the current legislative education and employment focus for youth. The shorter durations of wilderness programmes implemented by respondents' organization may be consciously used to reduce the time youth are away from education or employment responsibilities. As youth education and employment are a primary governmental focus, (Republic of South Africa, 2015; Republic of South Africa, 2011) it is unlikely that programmes would receive adequate support if they were perceived as limiting this objective. Running wilderness programmes between two and 14 days, as was shared by respondents, might allow the organisations to provide effective programmes while also being conscious of the specific legislative and funding focuses for youth in South Africa.

4.3.1.1.3 Group Size

All respondents explained that the wilderness programmes they were involved in separated youth into small groups of between ten and 25. The most common numbers of participants

being 16 or less. The reasons for this choice of group size differed amongst respondents. Their reasons included aspects of social dynamics and preservation of the natural environment.

> *[The programme participants] travel usually in groups of about 14 or 16, sometimes a bit more, and we make sure that they are with people that they actually, almost, maybe feel a little uncomfortable with to start off with. So, they have got to make quite a big effort to get to know each other… We do a lot of encouraging, a lot of supporting, a lot of, um, deep conversations and they have deep conversations with each other and form a very special bond with the people they do that week with. (Respondent 5, female, 59)*

> *We split groups because now in the wilderness there's a certain amount of numbers that we can, we can camp in, like, if we are more than 15 there's going to be a greater impact on the land. (Respondent 12, male, 34)*

The common group size of ten to 16, reported by respondents, was similar to wilderness programmes around the world that incorporate evidence-based practices. According to Harper, Mott and Obee (2019) Wilderness Therapy programmes in the United States of America are commonly run with groups ranging from six to eight youths. This is a slightly smaller group number than that used in the programmes discussed by respondents. Bastemur's (2019) research indicated that similar programmes in Europe are typically run with six to 14 participants, a group size more like that shared by respondents.

As the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents use similar group sizes to comparable programmes proven successful in other countries, they can be expected to benefit from similar outcomes. Harper, Mott and Obee (2019) explained that the group sizes, in the programmes he studied, encouraged the development of supportive peer relationships and allowed for easy individual progress monitoring. These social dynamic benefits are similarly experienced in wilderness programmes in Europe (Bastemur, 2019). The wilderness programmes discussed by respondents can therefore be expected to experience similar social dynamic benefits. As youth in South Africa have been flagged as being in desperate need of effective interventions (Republic of South Africa, 2015; Republic of South Africa, 2013), including as many youths as possible in interventions, without limiting the programme's efficacy, is particularly valuable. Wilderness programmes in South Africa seem to be meeting this need through using larger group sizes while still being conducive to positive social dynamics.

The preservation of the natural environment mentioned by some respondents, as a reason for the choice of group sizes, is in line with standard procedures in national parks and outdoor spaces. The seven globally recognized Leave No Trace principles, provide guidelines on how

to safely use wilderness areas to preserve natural environments (Hiking South Africa, 2017). The common group sizes of ten to 16 people, indicated by respondents, is in keeping with one of these principles outlined by Hiking South Africa (2017) that specifies that people should travel in groups of 20 or less to reduce their impact on the land. The groups sizes indicated by respondents are on the higher end of that recommended by the Leave No Trace principles (Centre of Outdoor Ethics, 2020). This may indicate that the wilderness programmes explored in this study are trying to reach as many youths as possible without impeding on environmental guideline. This addresses the extensive need for effective youth interventions in South Africa, as highlighted in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015).

4.3.1.2 Programme Participants

Within the wilderness programme design theme, a second category, programme participants, became evident. Parallels emerged from the answers provided by respondents with regards to the participants attending their organizations' wilderness programmes. When discussing the programme participants more closely with the respondents, similarities were found with regards to the *background of participants* as well as their *willingness to participate* in the wilderness programmes. An in-depth discussion of these parallels will be presented below.

4.3.1.2.1 Background of Participants

Most respondents indicated that the youths in their wilderness programmes lived in low-income areas. Most indicated that they purposefully select participants from low-income urban areas, with some respondents also indicating the inclusion of those from low-income rural areas. All respondents reported that participants faced challenges in their living environments synonymous with risk factors common in low-income areas. The indicated risk factors included a lack of parental involvement or support, substance misuse, gang violence, abuse and crime.

> *[The participants in our programme] come generally from very disadvantaged backgrounds; poverty, abuse, single parent families, no parents, care homes, things like that. So, very broad spectrum but we try to bring in the most challenged children… Some of them have been involved in a criminal family, um, and are trying to sort of get away from that, and a lot of gang members, a lot of people who have been terrorized by gangs. (Respondent 5, female, 59)*

> *[The participants] come from very poor backgrounds… On the farms they come from, you know, most of them either [have] a step-dad, or they don't have a dad, it's a very small percentage of them growing up with that within the house… Some of them not even having any parents or they have parents but they are kind of like, um, addicted to alcohol they're never there, yes, physically they're in the house, but not emotion, they don't give them the emotional support. (Respondent 11, male, 28)*

The wilderness programmes discussed by the respondents, are specifically working with youth from low-income backgrounds. Targeting this population group is essential as youth in South Africa face the greatest effects of poverty, with 35% living below the ultra-poverty line (Jamieson, 2013) and more than 50% struggling with unemployment (Perey, 2016). The respondents' programmes seem to be targeting the most vulnerable within this population group as most of the respondents indicated that their participants experience additional risk factors common in low-income areas. Programme participants were identified as being exposed to the effects of poor parental involvement, substance abuse, gangsterism, violence and crime. These environmental challenges are typical within impoverished areas, and concerningly common among South African youth (StatsSA, 2018). Addressing these poverty-related issues has been flagged as essential for this age group (Jamieson, 2013). It is, therefore, encouraging that wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa are addressing this societal need, through specifically targeting youth from low-income areas who are most vulnerable.

The environmental challenges mentioned by the respondents, have been found to contribute to youth being at greater risk for negative behaviours. Booyens and Crause's (2010) study linked poverty-related environmental challenges to an increased risk of youth criminal offending, incarceration, substance addiction, gang involvement, sexual ill-health and teenage pregnancy. Participants in the wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents, are at greater risk of becoming involved in these negative behaviours as these programmes reportedly targeting youth from low-income areas. As these wilderness programmes are specifically intervening with youth facing the environmental challenges associated with poverty, they likely decrease youth's risk for becoming involved in criminal offending, substance misuse, gang involvement and risky sexual activity. It is positive that the most vulnerable youth are being targeted by the programmes discussed by respondents to reduce these negative behaviours.

4.3.1.2.2 Willingness to Participate

Most of the respondents indicated that their programme participants voluntarily attended the wilderness programmes and showed some degree of motivation towards attending the wilderness programme. Participation in the wilderness programmes was indicated by most respondents to be voluntary regardless of whether the young person was selected for the programme through a personal application or through a referral from an outside organization or from the young person's school.

The individual would apply, they can either do it online or they can just fill in the forms and fax it through or email it to us and then from there, our students get screened just in terms of the basic criteria… They would come for an interview process, they would come, on the same day they would do a physical test, they would do a medical screening as well. (Respondent 3, male, 34)

We'll do, um, a presentation with the school and then we'll tell them about the programme and anyone that is interested, um, we ask them to write motivation letters about why they think they should be in the programme, ah, what they think they can learn from the programme and then based on that, we go through the letters and then we select our participants. (Respondent 9, female, 28)

We don't force them to come on a camp, I often say, "if you want to come, you will come, it's for your best interest". They voluntarily attend the programme because you cannot force a teenager these days. (Respondent 10, male, 26)

Respondents' wilderness programme's use of voluntary participation is likely done to encourage positive outcomes. The use of voluntary participation has been found to yield greater outcomes as it ensures a degree of motivation towards programme attendance, increase engagement with the process and reduces youths' resistance (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019). The wilderness programmes discussed by respondents likely experience similar benefits as a result of using voluntary participants because it allows them to grow a sense of ownership in their young participants by requiring some degree of willingness to take part in the programme. It is probable that using voluntary participation increases positive outcomes, and the sustainability of outcomes, in the discussed wilderness programmes.

Contrary to some Wilderness Therapy programmes in the United States of America, the selection of participants for the respondents' wilderness programmes, was reported to be heavily based on voluntary participation. Bettmann, Russell and Parry's (2013) research into numerous United States of America-based Wilderness Therapy programmes, found that growing the participants' motivations within the programme itself, was more important for encouraging positive outcomes, than the participants initial willingness to attend. However, these programmes, being studied by Bettmann, Russell and Parry (2013), were intensive eight-week Wilderness Therapy interventions. Growing motivation could be considered a somewhat easier task within more intensive programmes, with longer durations than those discussed by the respondents in this study. With the South African wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents, being substantially shorter in duration, developing motivation within the programmes themselves, may be more challenging. Initial motivation to attend might, therefore, be a more important factor for shorter wilderness programmes, such as those discussed by the respondents in this study.

4.3.1.3 Wilderness Facilitators

The third of the categories to surface under the theme of wilderness programme design, through the analysis of data, was wilderness facilitators. The term 'wilderness facilitator' is used to refer to staff who work directly with the youth during the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents. These staff remain with youth throughout their time on the wilderness programme. Similarities were found among respondents with regards to the felt *importance of wilderness facilitators*, the perceived *relatability of facilitators* to attending youth, their *internal training* and the regular *support and guidance provided to facilitators*. These similarities will each be discussed in detail below.

4.3.1.3.1 Importance of Wilderness Facilitators

All the respondents in this study believed that the wilderness facilitators forming trusting relationships with the programmes participants is essential to the success of their wilderness programmes. Respondents shared that wilderness facilitators contributed to positive programme outcomes in a variety of ways, including providing guidance, teaching new skills, mentorship and role modelling behaviours.

> *I think the instructors, um, more often than not become, almost, the best-friend, the confidant, the role model of the participants… They teach them things, they guide them along, part of it is, I think, they share some of their experiences… They certainly act as role models to these children. (Respondent 2, Female, 62)*

> *Being with a young person who doesn't understand other things that you understand as a pastoral person, giving them knowledge and looking at them, not knowing what they are doing and then starting to have you… You see their growth and their understanding of the other things that they're learning. (Respondent 14, Female, 28)*

> *I think without like, a personal connection with participants as mentors, you won't have like an effective programme. It is very important for like a mentor to have, um, for participants to be able to personally connect to you. (Respondent 17, Male, 30)*

The importance of wilderness facilitators forming trusting relationships with youth in wilderness programmes, as reported by respondents, is in line with what has been found in research pertaining to Wilderness Therapy programmes in other countries. Research by Harper, Mott and Obee (2019) and Bettmann et al (2016) identified the significance of the facilitator-participant relationship, considering it a vital component of Wilderness Therapy. The development of the facilitator-participant relationship has been found to allow for positive role modelling and the development of social skills amongst participants in wilderness programmes in North America (Betmann et al, 2016; Norton, 2009). The proven benefits of the facilitator-

participant relationship mirrors what most respondents in this study felt were the benefits of this relationship within the programmes they were involved in. The respondents placing importance on the facilitator-participant relationship shows an understanding of the benefits this relationship brings to their wilderness programmes.

4.3.1.3.2 Relatability of Facilitators

Most of the respondents referred to the importance of the perceived relatability of wilderness facilitators by youth attending their programmes. Although most of the respondents believed the relatability of wilderness facilitators was important, they shared different ways in which this could be instilled. Most respondents attributed relatability to the participants' ability to feel they could personally identify with the facilitators through similar demographic backgrounds, if the facilitator had previously been a participant themselves or simply by observing the facilitator enduring the programme challenges alongside the youth.

> *When you are with a group for two weeks long, you can't help but to engage and find out more about them, and them also finding out more about you… Because you go through similar experiences; whether that is walking through waste deep kind of water or going from a sunset to a sunrise or walking in terrible rainy condition… We find that the students appreciate the fact that they were also there getting wet, we were also there when times got a bit tough and sometimes, you know, just also letting a bit of emotions through so they can see that you are not as bullet proof as what it would seem, you are also human. (Respondent 3, Male, 34)*

> *[Our wilderness facilitators] are all [previous participants], they have been through the programme so they have the ability to really empathize but also to sort of tell the guys when to toughen up and to tell them they can do it, they can climb this mountain because if I can do it, so can you. (Respondent 5, female, 59)*

> *I'm actually coming from like a very poor background like, like the same background [participants] do… That actually makes them being able to actually like, um, relate to me. This is the kind of person that I can actually relate to because he has faced the challenges that I am currently facing. (Respondent 17, male, 30)*

Respondents in this study placed a significant emphasis on the importance of wilderness facilitators being perceived as relatable to young participants. Relatability was considered, by respondents, to be key in the development of participant-facilitator relationships. This mirrors the finding of Bastermur's (2019) and Clark et al's (2004) research that specifically flagged the felt relatability of facilitators by programme participants, as vital to obtaining positive outcomes in wilderness programmes. In Bastermur's (2019) research, the perceived relatability of facilitators was found to enable powerful role-modelling that encouraged significant growth and development of youth. Wilderness programmes discussed in this study likely enable similar

role-modelling to occur through placing value on the relatability of facilitators. As a result, the outcomes of these programmes may be improved by using facilitators who are perceived, by young participants, as relatable.

A unique finding of this study was the believed importance of wilderness facilitators coming from similar demographic backgrounds. The use of facilitators who come from similar backgrounds to that of programme participants, was noted by the respondents as helpful to establish a sense of relatability and, therefore, improving outcomes. As the participants in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents reportedly come from low-incomes areas, these youths can be expected to face challenges that Ngcaweni (2017) notes are unique to those living in low-income areas. Youth experiencing these challenges might feel they can only be understood by someone they perceive to have the same background. Raposa, Rhodes and Herrera's (2016) study revealed that facilitators who have faced similar challenges provide more effective mentorship, guidance and support to youth. It is, therefore, probable that respondents' use of demographically similar facilitators in their wilderness programmes enrich programme outcomes. Wilderness rites of passage common in South Africa use older generations to guide others in the same cultural group into an adult role (Phokane, 2018). The use of wilderness facilitators from similar backgrounds to that of participating youth, may mirror these types of cultural rites of passage. Integrating traditional methods of youth guidance has been recognized as valuable in the Social Work profession as noted by Mungai (2015) and Bennett (2011). Using facilitators from similar backgrounds to participants indicates that the programmes discussed in this study are incorporating African methods that have been recognized by Mungai (2015) as effective when working with youth in a Social Work setting.

Utilizing facilitators considered relatable because they had previously been through the programme themselves as beneficiaries was also noted, by respondents, to have multiple benefits to their wilderness programme outcomes. Respondents stated that participants quickly relate to facilitators who have previously been through the programme themselves, aiding in the development of valuable participant-facilitator relationships. This is in line with Raposa, Rhodes & Herrera's (2016) research that found that staff working with youth were able to build more significant relationships if they themselves had had similar experiences to the youth. Additionally, involving previous participants in the planning and implementation of the wilderness programmes, was believed by respondents, to improve the relevance of the programmes. These previous participants were felt to add value, as they had insider knowledge of the participants' needs and experiences. Receiving guidance from youth who were

previously in the programme is in line with the emphasis placed on youth involvement in the National Youth Policy (National Youth Agency, 2015). This policy prioritized the involvement of youth in the designing and implementation of programmes that address this age group as this ensures programme relevance (National Youth Agency, 2015). Youth who have recently been through the programme have valuable insight into youth and how they might experience the programmes. In this way, facilitators who were previous beneficiaries of the programmes play a valuable role is shaping the programmes to the targeted participants. The relatability of these facilitators positively affects the programme, both through the relationships they can easily build with participants, as well as their influence on programme relevance.

Respondents also consider the daily engagement between participants and facilitators, in the outdoor setting, to be key in developing a sense of relatability. The noted importance of participants observing facilitators withstanding the daily struggles and tasks of the wilderness space, is in line with other research. Bastermur's (2019) and Clark et al's (2004) research revealed that facilitators and participants living amidst each other in an unpredictable, and often uncomfortable, natural environment, caused the facilitators to be viewed by the youth as approachable and trustworthy. This has been found to be a key characteristic of Wilderness Therapy, essential to the method's success (Bastemur, 2019). As the programmes discussed by respondents in this study are run in a similar environment, wilderness facilitators can, likewise, be expected to be viewed as approachable and trustworthy. This sense of relatability likely increases positive outcomes by developing meaningful participant-facilitator relationships.

4.3.1.3.3 Internal Training

Most respondents indicated that internal training was provided to wilderness facilitators by their organizations. They reported that this training was conducted on a needs basis, aimed at providing training for the specific activities and programmes they are implementing. Most respondents revealed that their internal training included aspects of activity safety and skills related to working with at-risk youth. Training was reportedly provided in various formats, including taking part in the activities themselves, observing experienced staff running the programme and receiving performance feedback from senior staff members.

> *They go through a three-month practical training school. So, they will be taught how to do all the technical skills like abseiling, rock climbing, hiking, group management, all that kind of stuff. Part of that will also be to be trained in the soft skills like facilitation of the programme and all the activities… Then they will have one month of basically being observed and having a practical run under the supervision of a trained [facilitator]. (Respondent 1, male, 42)*

All the [wilderness facilitators] at [my organization] are trained by [my organization] at [our centre]. Very strict standard. They do hard skills, as in learning about the activities. They do soft skills, as in the, um, understanding of the programme, the talking to the participants, the understanding of the participants… They spend a long-time practicing; they work as support staff first. When they are deemed sufficiently qualified, they will be allowed to work by themselves with participants. (Respondent 2, female, 62)

A lot of the training is safety and security, that's a big part… To have First Aid, um, to understand the elements, to understand how to read weather, um, how to look at the weather and estimate what would happen... How to look at participants… making sure that you are able to read body language. (Respondent 8, female, 26)

Internal training, as reported by respondents, was shaped around the needs of their organizations' specific programme, and the activities within it. This seems a logical approach as the skills required would be specific to each programme because wilderness programmes are being run in a variety of locations and making use of a wide range of activities. These findings echo those of Hobbs, McMahan and Stewski (2018) who noted that wilderness facilitators in the United States of America often required internal training specific to the programme they would work in, regardless of the fact that they often held multiple externally recognized qualifications. The additional training was required because external qualifications did not necessarily provide the skills and knowledge needed to operate in the specific areas and climates where programmes are run (Hobbs, McMahan & Stewski, 2018). As outdoor training is typically expensive; requiring a great deal of time, personnel and equipment, as was noted by Dickson and Herbert (2005), the provision of internal training, that focuses specifically on skills necessary for the programme, may be used as it is more cost effective. Positively, most respondents in this study indicated that their organizations make use of internal training to effectively and efficiently prepare their facilitators to work in their wilderness programmes.

The respondents' reported that their organizations used personal experiences, observations of experienced staff members and performance feedback to equip wilderness facilitators. These teaching methods mirror those used in traditional methods of knowledge transference by cultural groups common in South Africa (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Teaching through first-hand experiences and observing others is traditionally used in South African cultures to teach younger generations (Ezeanya-Esiobu, 2019). Receiving guidance from older generations has been found to be linked with positive engagement in learning and effective mentorships (Raposa, Rhodes & Herrera, 2016). According to respondents in this study the training of wilderness facilitators at their organizations incorporated traditional methods such as experiences and observations. Respondents in this study revealed that personal experiences,

observations and feedback are used in the training of wilderness facilitators. This shows that traditional teaching methods are being adopted. However, Dickson and Herbert (2005), noted that it was most beneficial to include both observation learning and theoretical training with objectively measured unit standards when training wilderness facilitators. Although some respondents indicated that their organizations use both observation learning and theoretical training to equip wilderness facilitators, this was not the majority. Most organizations discussed by respondents, only utilized observational learning to train their facilitators. The effectiveness of the internal training provided to wilderness facilitators in the discussed organizations would likely be increased if they also incorporating theoretical training.

With facilitators being noted as vital to the success of wilderness programmes, it is concerning that there is little consistency when it comes to the training of staff across the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents. Houston et al (2010) emphasised the need for standardization in the training of wilderness facilitators to ensure an ethical and high-quality standard of work is being maintained. With respondents indicating that there was little consistency of the training provided to wilderness facilitators in their programmes, it might be challenging to ensure ethical and quality practice. Furthermore, most respondents did not mention the need for wilderness facilitators to hold externally recognized qualifications. Important role players like funders, SSPs and participants' families and communities, have been found to be less likely to trust and invest in wilderness programmes when the quality of staff was not externally assured (Hobbs, McMahan & Stewski, 2018; Houston et al, 2010). The lack of externally recognized consistency around the training of wilderness facilitators, as reported by respondents in this study, could be limiting the trust and support for these programmes from funders, SSPs and participants families.

4.3.1.3.4 Support and Guidance Provided to Facilitators

Most respondents indicated that post-programme debriefing sessions were run with wilderness facilitators to provide support and guidance to them. Most of the respondents indicated that these debriefing sessions were held after each wilderness programme. The debriefing sessions were, reportedly, provided in a group setting and were run by more senior staff members. According to the respondents, these senior staff members had varying qualifications and job titles within their organisations. Respondents reported that the aim of debriefing sessions was to resolve negative emotions experienced on the programme as well as provide a space to monitor and evaluate the programme.

After the programme, they have a sit down debrief, again, with the Social Worker as to how the course worked, what happened, um, and any, any problems they had that they need to talk about… if there was any violent activities or things that happened, how they handled them, how they feel about it. (Respondent 2, female, 62)

After the course we also meet, we meet as, um, the facilitators who led the course, we talk about how the course was, how that person, how I as a facilitator felt. Is there, is there anyone who had anything that you felt that, "hey, you need to speak about" … We try by all means not to take the stories but, of course, we are humans, you know. (Respondent 12, male, 34)

We also speak and reflect a lot, so, we have our weekly meeting, so, ya, if there has been anything that's come up, um, with the [participants] if there are any kind of concerns or what not, then we bring it up in that meeting and we chat about it, um, and as a team we, we, we try to come up with a solution (Respondent 16, male, 39)

It is encouraging that most respondents in this study indicated that facilitators receive regular support. Facilitators in a wilderness setting face several stressors related to working in the outdoors, as well as working with at-risk youth, that can negatively affect facilitators' sense of wellbeing, consequently influencing their work performance (Saltzburg, Green & Drew, 2010; Marchand, 2008). As facilitators in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents work in similar outdoor environments with youth considered at-risk, these facilitators can be expected to experience parallel stressors. The provision of support to facilitators, such as that discussed by respondents, was found by Jenkinson (2010) to reduce stress and improve the quality of services provided to at-risk youth. In Jenkinson's (2010) study on the performance of Social Workers working with at-risk youth, he found that the provision of staff support, significantly reduced programme-related stress and increased staff morale. These benefits are likely experienced by facilitators in the wilderness programme discussed by respondents, as they reportedly receive similar support. Respondents indicated that the debriefing sessions are held in a group with staff members who were working on the wilderness programme. Group supervision had been found by Jenkins (2010) to provide opportunities for staff to learn from each other, facilitate team bonding and improve skills while also being time effective. The debriefing sessions discussed by respondents, efficiently provide the necessary support to wilderness facilitators in the respondents' organizations.

Debriefing sessions are also reported by respondents, to be done with the intention of providing meaningful guidance to facilitators. Providing guidance in staff supervision is widely understood to improve skill, knowledge and performance of staff working with youth (Saltzburg, Green & Drew, 2010). Wilderness Therapy programmes traditionally make use of group debriefing sessions to provide guidance to facilitators (Russell, 2001) in the same way

that was reported to be used in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents. Wilderness Therapy, however, requires staff debriefing sessions be provided by a licenced professional, as they require specialized knowledge to guide facilitators on how to proceed with the programme, based on their professional assessment of the needs of attending youth (Russell, 2001). The guidance provided to the facilitators, discussed by respondents, may act similarly, however the qualifications of those providing the guidance varies. The guidance is not always provided by a Social Service Professional (SSP) who is qualified to make assessments of the participants' therapeutic needs and progress. If youth participating in the programme have not been professionally assessed by an SSP, the guidance that senior staff are able to provide to facilitators may be less relevant. It is likely that post-programme debriefing sessions, explained by respondents to be run by more senior staff, has a role in improving staff performance on wilderness programmes. It is, however, unclear if the impact of these guiding sessions varies depending on the competency of the staff running the session.

4.3.1.4 Unique Environment of the Wilderness

The fourth category that became evident in the wilderness programme design theme, was the unique environment of the wilderness. All the respondents in this study, felt that the unique physical and social environment, in which the wilderness programmes occur, was crucial to programme processes and outcomes. When discussing the unique environment that they felt contributed to the success of their programmes, parallels were found amongst what the respondents shared. These parallels included the *peaceful wilderness atmosphere*, the *new engaging location,* and the *creation of new social norms* in this environment. These parallels will be discussed in more detail below.

4.3.1.4.1 Peaceful Wilderness Atmosphere

All respondents referred to the importance of the peaceful atmosphere that is experienced in the wilderness environment of their programmes. All respondents considered the peaceful atmosphere to be fundamental to the healing and growth of youth in their programmes. Most respondents specifically highlighted the value of the quiet, non-threatening atmosphere in the outdoors.

> *Just standing bare foot in the ground in the wilderness and just listening to all the animals and closing their eyes, that is something else… It's just being in a space where there's quiet, where there's no sound but you and your echo… With wilderness there is really no, there's really no boundary, like, "now you should be here", it's just going with the flow and, and, and taking your time. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

Wilderness creates a space for participants, you know, to be taught a lot of things without us even saying a word. So, for us, going into the wilderness is allowing nature to be the one that allows the participant to do the work. (Respondent 11, male, 28)

There's power in it, there's power in speaking to the tree, there's power in speaking to the mountain, because they listen, actually they listen without any judgement, they listen with just being there, they're present. Um, so, in that stage you can be wherever you want to be, you can be free, as, as, as how you want to be… There's a lightness that comes from mountains… you can cry if you want to, there's no judgement on, as a guy you can't cry and all of that. (Respondent 12, male, 34)

It is not surprising that all respondents attributed the peaceful wilderness atmosphere to the effectiveness of their programmes, as the healing potential of outdoor spaces is widely recognized. The outdoor setting is what makes wilderness programmes unique, and the natural space itself is widely accredited to the efficacy of these type of programmes around the world (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). Furthermore, studies by Dunn (2019) and Martin and Parth Sarathy (2001) have showed that time spent in nature can improve mental health. Physically being in the wilderness setting has been found to create an atmosphere that encourages intrinsic contemplation and personal growth (Dunn, 2019). It is probable that participants in wilderness programmes discussed by respondents likewise experience these opportunities for growth as programmes are held in a wilderness environment. Furthermore, mental health benefits occurring as a result of Wilderness Therapy are commonly credited to outdoor spaces that have little noise and few distractions (Dunn, 2019). Respondents in this study, similarly, attribute positive programme outcomes to the quiet atmosphere of being in the wilderness. Through providing this type of atmosphere, the outdoor environment where the programmes are held is likely contributing to the personal development of participants.

The non-threatening atmosphere created by the wilderness, can be considered particularly beneficial to South African youth attending the programmes discussed by respondents. Similarly, to research into Wilderness Therapy (Fernee, 2019) and outdoor counselling, (Revell & McLeod, 2017) the respondents in this study revealed that the non-threatening atmospheres of their wilderness programmes were instrumental in facilitating positive outcomes for their participants. Revell and McLeod's (2017) found that an informal outdoor setting is experienced as less intimidating by youth; enabling them to open up and engage more easily with the process. Programmes that are perceived as non-threatening may be particularly effective when working with South African youth as youth in this country are particularly wary, due to poverty-related challenges that threaten their well-being on a daily basis. Poor parental involvement, substance abuse, gangsterism, violence and crime, cause youth to lose trust in

adults and their environment to meet their physical and emotional needs (Booyens & Crause, 2010). As a result, South African youth, such as those attending the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, can have a defensive and cautious approach to help from others. The non-threatening atmosphere, created by the wilderness space, likely acts to encourage engagement from a population group typically hesitant of therapeutic interventions.

4.3.1.4.2 New Engaging Locations

Most respondents emphasised that the locations where wilderness programmes are run, are effective because they are engaging and different from participants' daily lives. Removing youth from their communities to participate in a programme, in an entirely different setting, was considered by most respondents to be instrumental in obtaining personal development outcomes. Most respondents felt that the location of their wilderness programmes helped participants to focus on the programme, either because the location was experienced as new, exciting and interesting or because it temporarily removed youth from home-based challenges.

> *The first day it's, the moment they get there, it's grounding, it's, um, where they have to sever from their childhood, they sever from what's happening at home, they sever from their communities. We take them into the wilderness, we take them into places that are isolated, that are away from, you know, ah, the concrete jungle, as they call it. Take them out of their communities because that's what is necessary for them to, to better themselves. You can't think you can be in one place and try to change, because it's really, really hard. (Respondent 10, male, 26)*

> *[The wilderness programme] gets young people out of the, like, community and the social ills that are happening… They're quite interested in hikes… They're liking the experience of going there… [They have] never been outside of [the township], they only stay in that space and the only thing that they see for them, is seeing the violence that's happening, you know, seeing all these accidents that are happening. But then as soon as they are out in a different space, you know, it draws a different, um, interest. (Respondent 13, male, 27)*

Engaging youth through an outdoor location, is characteristic of wilderness programmes around the world. A location that is new and unfamiliar to participants has been identified as important to the success of wilderness programmes (Brison, 2010), much like it was identified by respondents in this study. Respondents noting the value of participants viewing wilderness locations as new and exciting is in line with Hill's (2007) research that reveals that youth interventions run in an outdoor setting are met with greater interest and commitment when compared with more traditional interventions. Additionally, participants enjoying outdoor programmes, and feeling happy in the space, have been associated with improved outcomes (Nicholls & Gray, 2007). Much like programmes in other countries, the South African

wilderness programmes discussed by respondents engage youth by using new locations that are experienced as exciting by youth.

The location of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, may yield additional benefits within the South African context. Participants staying away from their homes, and isolating away from people outside of the programme, is typical of wilderness programmes world-wide (Bastemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019; Russell, 2001). However, available literature on global wilderness programmes, does not place emphasis on the temporary removal of participants from their communities and the challenges within it, as was particularly highlighted by respondents. It is understandable that respondents would consider it useful to remove youth from the multitude of challenges common in the low-income areas from which the youth come. The risk of youth becoming involved in negative behaviours has been found to be increased when youth have significant unstructured leisure time in low-income areas (Goldenberg, 2013). Temporarily taking youth out of this environment to engage in pro-social activities, such as are included in the programmes discussed by respondents, can be acting to reduce the risk of youth becoming involved in negative behaviours. Additionally, simply going to a new and different location is a novel experience for youth coming from low-income areas in South Africa. Youth from low-income areas may not otherwise have been able to visit different areas as Steyn (2012) noted that wilderness spaces are not easily accessible from low-income areas as these areas are historically remote with limited transportation. The location of the discussed wilderness programmes, being a novel experience, likely enriches experiences for youth, allowing them to engage with the programme and achieve greater positive outcomes.

4.3.1.4.3 Creation of New Social Norms

Most respondents emphasised that the creation of new social norms in the outdoor setting, contributed to the positive outcomes of the wilderness programme they were involved in. The remote location and natural environment of the discussed programmes were felt, by most respondents, to create a different social environment, requiring new social norms. Most respondents indicated that, upon arriving at the programme, the participants themselves, discussed and agreed upon how they will interact with one another during the programme.

> *When they get [to the programme], all children are equal because nobody is better than anybody else in the wilderness… They are all totally out of their comfort zone, they are all in the same environment… It doesn't matter where you come from, in the bush you are all the same. And for many of them, the bush is quite frightening, and they have to learn a lot of new values and rules and a whole new environment. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

If we are in a new environment, you are able to think differently and by you thinking differently, then you've got a paradigm shift, then you look at yourself differently and you start doing things differently… [We] would start setting out the ground rules for the week in terms of how we are going to work together. And it's not like, "this is what you need to do this week", it is like, "how are we going to work together", they kind of like, create their own agreements for the week. (Respondent 7, male, 36)

In the beginning of the programme, as they arrive, what we do is, what we call, expectations and guidelines... What are their expectations coming onto the programme?… What are the guidelines, as a group, are we going to use, um, to make sure that our time on the course is well spent? So, it comes from them, you know, the guidelines… Taking people out of their norms and putting them in somewhere where they have to create new norms and come back to the city and see how they could adjust those norms in their normal lives. (Respondent 8, female, 26)

Available literature supports the belief shared by respondents in this study, that the creation of new social norms in the outdoor environment contributes to the success of wilderness programmes. Most respondents indicated the importance of participants forming their own agreements of how they would interact socially while on the programme. Establishing this type of social contract is, similarly valued by Clark et al (2004) as a key element of the Wilderness Therapy method. A social contract can be used to teach social skills by referring participants back to the contract so that they can consider their behaviours on the programme and the effect these behaviours have on others (Clark et al, 2004). The wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents in this study, use the establishment of a social contract to similarly teach social skills to the youth attending their programmes.

The neutral space created in the wilderness may be considered particularly significant for youth coming from low-income areas in South Africa. These areas are typically riddled with racial, political and gang-related tension (National Youth Agency, 2020a). The outdoor environment can allow participants from different social groups to engage with each other, outside of the above-mentioned tensions that are rife within South African communities. As wilderness programmes in North America have been found by Harper, Mott and Obee (2019) to encourage positive peer relations and trust, the engagement of various youth together in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study could facilitate the development of positive relationships across communities. These relationships could begin to build understanding and tolerance across groups that hold racial, political and gang-related tension. The South African wilderness programmes discussed in this study are capitalizing on the benefits available in the new social reality created by wilderness environments.

4.3.1.5 Activities

Another category that emerged under the theme of wilderness programme design, was activities. The respondents in this study described numerous activities that were included in the wilderness programmes run by their organizations. Most respondents identified three main types of activities that were specifically used to achieve different aspects of the desired personal development outcome. These three types of activities were *adventure activities*, *survival activities* and *time in solitude*, as will be thoroughly discussed below.

4.3.1.5.1 Adventure Activities

Most of the respondents indicated that the wilderness programmes, run through their organizations, included one or more adventure activities. Most respondents stated that the programmes they work in, include hiking and outdoor teamwork games, while some also included rock climbing, abseiling, high ropes and water activities. Most respondents felt these activities added to the personal development of youth through providing opportunities to develop social skills, bond with others or build self-confidence.

> *[The programme participants] do abseiling, rock climbing, top roping. [They] do, um, canoeing, kayaking, sailing and we also have in-centre activities like high ropes and, also, low ropes and then we also make use of expedition areas… [That] will always bring out things like motivation and, you know, support… even if it is just that person in the back of the boat telling the person in the front, "come on you're almost there, we're almost there", you know, that motivation part, that interaction with each other. (Respondent 1, male, 42)*

> *We do rock climbing, we do abseiling, um, of course, hiking… We do a lot of, um, initiatives… they maybe don't know the area and for them to sit and take somebody from point A to point B… for them it's like, "wow, I can do this, you know, and if I can do it"… [You] will also do it, you know, in your community or in your life. (Respondent 12, male, 34)*

The employed adventure activities, discussed by respondents, are congruent to those included in wilderness-based youth programmes world-wide. Most of the respondents highlighted that their programmes included hiking, while some also included additional adventure activities. Similarly, in Russell's (2001) grounding literature on Wilderness Therapy, it was identified that all wilderness programmes should incorporate a form of adventure, such as hiking, while programmes may also include additional adventure activities, such as rock climbing, abseiling and water activities. These types of activities are found to engage youth and encourage increased positive outcomes (Bestemur, 2019; Fernee et al, 2019). These positive outcomes proven to occur as a result of adventure activities, mirror the benefits of these activities that

were felt by respondents in this study. The inclusion of these activities in the respondents' wilderness programmes likely acts to engage attending youth and enables positive outcomes.

Respondents in this study indicated that adventure activities are implemented with the intention of facilitating personal development. This is in line with literature pertaining to similar activities used within Wilderness Therapy. Adventure activities, conducted as part of Wilderness Therapy, are traditionally conducted with a personal development intent (Russell, 2001), as is the case in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study. The respondents explained that the adventure activities encouraged personal development through improving social skills, bonding with others or building self-confidence. Similar wilderness programmes in other countries have achieved these outcomes through adventure activities as noted by Revell and McLeod (2017), who found that these activities provide multiple opportunities to learn and improve social skills. Much like that expressed by respondents, Revell and McLeod, (2017) found that physical activities increase co-operation and bonding with others. Furthermore, like that shared by respondents, Bastemur (2019) found that adventure activities build self-confidence in youth attending wilderness programmes. Respondents stating that adventurous activities are being used in their wilderness programmes, shows they have an understanding of how these activities facilitate positive outcomes for youth.

4.3.1.5.2 Survival Activities

Most respondents indicated that the wilderness programmes they are involved in included survival activities. Although not all respondents used the term 'survival skills', most explained using activities which involve the participants completing tasks necessary for their own survival and comfort in the outdoor environments. These activities included preparing meals, setting up tents and managing their exposure to natural elements. Most respondents believed that completing these activities encouraged positive outcomes in their wilderness programmes by developing participants' trust in others, co-operation and sense of responsibility.

> *They get to the campsite; they will have to set up the camp, to organize to cook supper, clean up supper afterwards… They all have to learn to work together, to be together and to help each other enough to survive… They have to look after each other, you know, one can't survive without the others. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

> *When we go out into the wilderness, we go into small cooking groups and they would cook their own food… You would sleep on the best bed, which is the ground or, if you choose, a rock... They can sleep under the stars and if the weather is bad… then we use tents, two people in one tent… You cook and if you, if your pot spills, your pot spills, you won't eat or you'll eat food with sand. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

> *It's about 4 degrees outside, so, it's nice, it's nice and cold if you're standing at [the campsite], there's ice on the tents, ok, so, they are not very happy but they're up, out of their sleeping bags… We have breakfast, make breakfast… and then from that they de-pitch their tents… so they cook all their own food throughout the week which is very interesting sometimes. (Respondent 18, male, 29)*

The inclusion of survival activities in wilderness programmes as discussed by the respondents, is in line with wilderness programmes globally. Survival activities are found to be a key component within the Wilderness Therapy method, aiding in the success of these programmes (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019). Previous literature places emphasis on the importance of the perceived vulnerability and self-sufficiency that is achieved through survival activities such as preparing their own meals, setting up their own shelters and being exposed to natural elements (Clark et al, 2004). These specific survival activities mirror those mentioned to be included in the programmes discussed by respondents.

The resulting outcomes of survival activities, expressed by respondents, is consistent with existing literature. Survival activities in wilderness programmes in the United States of America have been found to create an environment where participants must rely on one another for their practical safety and comfort, enabling them to grow trust in others (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019). This is in line with that shared by respondents in this study, who indicated a belief that survival skills helped participants to grow trust in others. Additionally, respondents shared that survival activities help to develop cooperation amongst the youth. This mirrors Harper, Mott and Obee's (2019) research that found survival activities to increase cooperation, as youth work together on tasks perceived essential to their survival. Much like that explained by respondents, survival activities in a wilderness setting have also been found by Hill (2007) to encourage participants to learn responsibility, as failing to complete these activities can have real consequences. The inclusion of these activities, therefore, contributes positively to the outcomes of the wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents in this study.

4.3.1.5.3 Time in Solitude

Most respondents stated that their wilderness programmes included participants spending time alone in nature. Most felt this to be an essential part of their programmes, allowing participants to reflect on the programme and their lives. Although most of the respondents mentioned the inclusion of time in solitude, the duration of this time varied from youth spending a few hours alone in nature to remaining alone overnight in a wilderness setting.

During that week, they have, what we talk about as their solo experience… They spend 24 hours from 07:00 in the morning until 07:00 the next morning out alone. So, in other words they can't see anybody else or communicate with anybody else. All they take with them is water, a blanket, a sleeping bag, should I say, um, a tarp in case it rains and they are allowed to take some writing materials so if they want to write or they want to pray, they sometimes take their Bibles with them or the Koran. (Respondent 5, female, 59)

The core is the solo, you know, where one is, um, sort of left in nature to, um, answer certain questions and learn certain things about oneself, you know, being alone submerged in fully wilderness with no one around, no social, um, aspect of it… the hard work is done by yourself, you know, sit out there, um, in your solo, you deal with thoughts, you deal with questions, you cry if you have to, you pray if you must, you speak, you scream… It will awake certain parts of you, you know, bravery, the courage, the, the ability to sit in fear… everything that they accumulated the past few years or, or within their life time, everything that has hold, held them back, every situation, every circumstance that has been, um, lay dormant in their memory, um, and they can't seem to sever from that they have with them on their journey to their solo. (Respondent 10, male, 26)

We'll have solo time, so often before breakfast with particular questions, they all have their own diary, we have a lot of solo time activities where they're just getting time to think for themselves and reflect, um, often guided in terms of questions. (Respondent 15, female, 48)

Consistent with that expressed by most respondents in this study, Hagan (2003) and Russell (2000) found that the inclusion of time in solitude is an essential component of Wilderness Therapy as it began to be implemented around the world. Wilderness Therapy programmes make use of varying lengths of time spent alone in nature to encourage intrinsic reflection (Russell, 2001), similar to that indicated by respondents. The inclusion of time spent in solitude in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents likely enriches programme outcomes as Nicholls and Grey's (2007) research specifically identified time spent sitting alone in the outdoors as key to the success of wilderness programmes. Youth attending the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study likely experience the benefits of time in solitude that were identified by Heifetz (2018), namely; deep contemplation, meaningful learning, sustainable behavioural changes, healing from past trauma and improvement in mental health. These types of benefits may be considered necessary when working with South African at-risk youth. Youth in this country are found to face multiple traumas due to poverty related challenges (StatsSA, 2018). It is, therefore, sound practice that respondents place significant emphasis on the inclusion of time in solitude in their programmes, with the intent of encouraging intrinsic reflection.

4.3.1.6 The Evaluation of Programme Outcomes

The sixth category falling into the wilderness programme design theme, is the evaluation of programme outcomes. All respondents felt that their wilderness programmes had multiple positive outcomes and they had similar methods of evaluating these outcomes. The three main similarities found in what was shared were respondents' programmes' *personal development objective*, utilized *self-evaluation of outcomes* and using *observation of initial behavioural changes* to note programme outcomes. These similarities will be thoroughly discussed below.

4.3.1.6.1 Personal Development Objective

Most respondents revealed that the personal development of their participants was the primary objective of their wilderness programmes. Although most respondents agreed that personal development was the main aim of their programme, how they saw it being achieved was different. Respondents reported a range of ways in which they saw personal development being achieved including programme participants overcoming previous trauma, building their self-worth and confidence, and making behavioural changes.

> *Give our youth reason to believe that they are worthy of better than they got and hopefully try and lift themselves up from where they are, finish their education, obtain a decent education, go on to achieve something other than wafting around the township getting involved in drugs and crime. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

> *To develop a story of yourself 'who are you' and you need to have an experience or a set of experiences that requires that you can build a story of yourself apart from the story that you have had up until that point… If they're going to get an outcome that's valuable to the young person, they have to deal with the young person's trauma in a very positive way. (Respondent 4, male, 73)*

> *The aim is to let them know that anything is possible… For them to also boost their confidence in a sense that they've been hiking almost 24km with a big backpack; they have food, they have clothes on and hiking steep mountains, you know, not everybody can stand that. (Respondent 14, female, 28)*

Much like that mentioned by respondents, personal development has been identified in Russell's (2001) grounding literature on Wilderness Therapy as a common objective for wilderness programmes around the world. The objective of enabling individual growth of each programme participant, has been found to be achieved through these types of programmes (Hoag et al, 2013). The outcomes of Wilderness Therapy programmes in North America, such as decreased negative behaviours, the development of beneficial coping mechanisms, growing compassion for others, cultivating a positive understanding of self and providing a sense of empowerment to youth (Clark et al, 2004; Autry, 2001) reflect the desired personal

development outcome indicated by respondents. Moreover, Boyers' (2015) study of a South African-based wilderness programme found that attending youth had improved mental health as a result of the programme. The personal development objective indicated by most respondents is, therefore, appropriate to the type of programmes being implemented.

One of the ways that respondents described personal development being achieved through their wilderness programmes was through enabling participants to overcome previous traumas. Addressing trauma is likely of significant importance within the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, as the attending youth reportedly come from low-income areas. Youth from these areas are at an increased risk of experiencing previous poverty-related traumas, such as resource deprivation, unemployment, poor parental involvement, substance abuse, gangsterism, violence and crime (Booyens & Crause, 2010). Respondents reported the use of activities that enable youth to overcome their previous trauma in their wilderness programmes. These added activities were found by van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) to be essential to the success of youth interventions, yielding greater positive outcomes than programmes that did not address trauma. It is, therefore, probable that research respondents' wilderness programmes aiming to address young participants' trauma, is adding to the effectiveness of their programmes.

Building a sense of self-worth and confidence in youth was also mentioned by respondents, as indicators of personal development. Mirroring that shared by respondents, Hoag et al (2013) identified growing self-worth and confidence as common indicators of wilderness programme outcomes. Developing self-esteem and feelings of empowerment may be considered of even greater important in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents due to the nature of their participants. These participants commonly come from low-income areas that have been identified by StatsSA (2018) to be most affected by unemployment and poor-quality schooling. Wilderness programmes aiming to develop youth's sense of self-worth and confidence, as mentioned by respondents, could be acting to empower youth to work towards personal goals, avoid negative behaviours and make positive changes in their communities. This empowerment approach is in line with the National Youth Policy 2020-2030 Draft (Republic of South Africa, 2020a) that provided clear guidelines for effective intervention with youth in South Africa.

Youth behavioural changes was also stated by respondents to be an indicator of participants achieving the personal development objective. Behavioural change is, likewise, a common measure of success of global wilderness programmes and has been used to objectively measure

programme outcomes (Bastemur, 2019; Hoag et al, 2013). The efficacy of Wilderness Therapy has been evaluated by considering the development of social skills and compassion (Clark et al, 2004) and the improvement of family relationships and school performance (Russell, Hendee & Phillips-Miller, 2000). The South African wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, similarly, use these types of behavioural changes as indicators of participant personal development. Considering behavioural changes to measure if the programme has reached the personal development objective, is in line with how similar programmes around the world assess outcomes.

4.3.1.6.2 Self-Evaluation of Outcomes

Most respondents discussed the use of participant self-evaluations, as one of the ways their organizations measure the outcomes of their wilderness programmes. Most respondents indicated that the participants' self-evaluations, were done immediately, or soon after the completion of wilderness programmes. Respondents reported that self-evaluations were, most commonly, gathered through narratives, either expressed verbally in a group discussion, through written forms completed by individual participants or a combination of both.

> *We've got a debrief with participants, um, and it's more of a qualitative, um, feedback, I would say. So, they, they have discussions with the group and then they also fill in, um, forms and we ask questions about the different processes, how they experienced it… A lot of people can speak about the internal change… there's nothing really quantifiable or measurable. (Respondent 9, female, 28)*

> *We have post course, ah, evaluations, um, that are self… I mean the students themselves fill out. We work with the circle of courage which is the same model that the Child and Youth Care Centres work with and, so, that is also a beautiful way of checking a young person's development. (Respondent 15, female, 48)*

The respondents reported that they had concerns about the varying levels of accuracy that could result from relying on self-evaluations as the primary means to measure programme outcomes. They shared this, even though most of them had reported their programmes relied heavily on self-reporting to measure the outcomes of their programmes. These concerns, held by respondents, are valid, as Teye and Peaslee's (2015) research reveals that self-reported programme outcomes can lack validity, as at-risk youth sometimes report falsely in an attempt to more positively represent themselves or to provide information they feel is desired by others. Making use only of this method, may not be providing accurate outcome measurements of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents.

It is additionally problematic that respondents indicated that self-evaluations were only done at the end of programmes. Once-off self-evaluations do not offer a means to compare changes that may have occurred as a result of the programme. Conducting self-evaluations before and after a programme, yields more meaningful data, as it provides a baseline on which to measure participants' progress (Gabrielsen et al, 2019). As the self-evaluations that are reportedly conducted after the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents are once-off, they do not provide a baseline, making it difficult to clearly indicate participant change as a result of the programme. This may be hindering financial support available to the wilderness programmes discussed in this study as Gabrielsen et al (2019) found that funders often required evidence of the impact programmes have on youth if they are to support them. Only making use of one post-programme self-assessment, limits the validity of the reported outcomes and, therefore, reduces the possibility of attracting funders.

Inconsistencies were found amongst respondents, with regards to how self-evaluated outcomes were reported, making the evaluating of outcomes across organizations challenging. Some respondents indicated that their participants provided their self-evaluated outcomes audibly in groups, some identified the use of written documentation and others stated the use of both. In North America, similar challenges with the lack of standardization of wilderness programme outcomes evaluations were experienced, leading to difficulties gaining recognition from key role players (Russell, 2001). Creating standardized methods to measure outcomes helped prove the efficacy of programmes in the United States of America and gain essential recognition from professional bodies, potential funders and governmental departments (Russell, 2001). Taking this into consideration, for South African wilderness programmes to gain recognition, it is imperative that similar standardization of measuring programme outcomes is developed.

4.3.1.6.3 Observation of Initial Behavioural Changes

Most respondents talked about doing some form of outcome evaluation during or soon after the programme. According to most respondents in this study, outcomes were evaluated through observations of the youths' initial behavioural changes. Most respondents explained that these observations were made by wilderness facilitators or other key adults having regular interactions with participants. Most respondents indicated that observed behavioural changes were noted as narrative accounts. However, inconsistencies were found between respondents with regards to how the observed behavioural changes were documented and the degree of detail recorded.

We see them in town, they come and like run to you, they, you know, they're just talking different, and some of them had a low self-esteem, self-confidence and within the sessions they start speaking and they start expressing. We also have like teachers testifying of the change. You'd have calls from parents, you'll have parents saying, "listen here, my child, I don't understand this child, what happened?" you know. So, it's word of mouth we're watching them within our sessions, having teachers watching them within class at the school. (Respondent 11, male, 28)

The outcomes of the programme are recorded by individual assessments that the [facilitators], that us as [facilitators] use and write about each individual student. It's a report on how well they worked on day 1 to day 7, what they changed, how they changed. (Respondent 18, male, 29)

Respondents noted that the behavioural changes of participants in their wilderness programme were conducted during or soon after the programmes' completion. Only noting behavioural changes during or soon after programmes may not capture all the behavioural change outcomes of the programmes. Gabrielsen et al (2019) found that the long-term impacts of wilderness programmes in the United States of America were the most significant. Noting the immediate behavioural changes of participants, instead of the longitudinal impact, may not capture the full impact of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents. Considering the behavioural changes of participants, a year after they attended a wilderness programme may indicate more significant change in the youth's behaviour, as it did in Gabrielsen et al's (2019) research.

The inconsistent means of recording behavioural changes in programme participants across the organizations where respondents work, likely does not contribute towards gaining recognition and support for wilderness programmes from potential funders, SSPs and the South African public. Respondents described the various ways that initial changes in participants were observed, discussed and, sometimes, recorded. This inconsistent means of recording behavioural changes was a challenge that was similarly experienced by wilderness programmes around the world. Russell (2001) explains that inconsistency in reporting significantly hindered support and recognition for wilderness programmes from key role players. Wilderness Therapy programmes in the United States of America, Europe and Australia were able to overcome this challenge by conducting multiple qualitative and quantitative studies exploring behavioural changes post-intervention (Russell, 2001). It is plausible that South African wilderness programmes, like those discussed by respondents, would similarly need to develop a robust evidence base if they are to receive recognition from key role players. Appropriate measuring tools already exist (Vissell, 2004) and could assist in the growth of an evidence base for wilderness programmes in South Africa if they are able to be utilized universally.

4.3.2 Therapeutic Components

The therapeutic components of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, is a significant theme that emerged through the analysis of the data. The respondents discussed numerous therapeutic components of the wilderness programmes they work in, that they felt contributed to positive programme outcomes. These therapeutic components were reported to be conducted and overseen by staff with varying qualifications and training. Similarities were found in what respondents felt was therapeutic about their programmes, with regards to their programme approaches, group sessions and additional services.

4.3.2.1 Programme Approaches

The first category to emerge within the therapeutic components theme, was programme approaches. The findings showed two key programme approaches, which were identified by respondents as fundamental to the wilderness programmes that they worked in. Respondents stated that their programmes integrated both a *self-led approach* and an *experiential learning* approach. Each of these will be discussed in detail below.

4.3.2.1.1 Self-Led Approach

All respondents emphasised that the wilderness programmes they were involved in, worked with the youth in a manner that embodied a self-led approach; encouraging youth to take the lead in working towards their personal development outcomes. All respondents felt that an approach that encouraged participants to take the lead, was fundamental to their programmes and that empowering youth to take ownership of their own experience resulted in powerful personal growth.

> *I think what is unique [about the programme] is recognizing that greatness exists in every human being… People are always wanting to look up to somebody to do something for them and our programme is different… This kind of DIY is, is foreign and self-leadership as well… They would be responsible, would be taking innovation, learning from what we are doing. (Respondent 6, male, 46)*

> *We do a goal setting, "what is the goal? What is it that you would like to achieve by the end of the week?"… One would say, "I want to actually work on my confidence"… So, we take that and then we, we try and unpack it a bit more, you know, "this is your plan, you want to work on your confidence, what is it that you are going to do this week to make sure that you achieve that? How would you know, through the week, that you are actually changing? And then what difference would this make if you now have confidence?" (Respondent 7, male, 36)*

> *You do have, um, outcomes or objectives that you have put in place, but sometimes they not, they don't go that way, you know. So, um, anything that comes, you're open to because your job as a facilitator is not to, to direct a person in a certain way but to listen attentively, not just with your ears but also with your heart… The answer lies within, with them… The person needs to get what they need to get out of the time, not what you think that they needs to get. (Respondent 12, male, 34)*

The approach indicated to be used in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, is similar to the approach used within Wilderness Therapy programmes in other countries. The official Wilderness Therapy method makes use of Positive Youth Development, a comparable approach that focuses on youth potential rather than problems (Julian, 2012). Much like the self-led approach said to be used in the wilderness programmes discussed in this study, the Positive Youth Development approach, as explained by Hamilton (1999) is strength-based and encourages youth to actively engage with and work towards the programme outcomes. In Wilderness Therapy, the Positive Youth Development approach is a key therapeutic contributor to meaningful and sustainable programme outcomes (Julian, 2012). The use of a similar approach, as mentioned by the respondents in this study, likely contributes similarly to meaningful and sustainable outcomes of the discussed South African wilderness programmes.

The use of a self-led approach within the wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents, is in line with the National Youth Policy 2015-2020's (Republic of South Africa, 2015) guidelines for intervening with youth in South Africa. Much like the self-led approach used in the programmes discussed by respondents, the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) places a large emphasis on the worth and dignity of youth and the importance of their inclusion in addressing their own challenges. Integrating this approach into the discussed South African wilderness programmes, is in line with that recommended by the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015), and may help to gain support and funding from key role players if understood in this way and articulated properly. With the daily disempowering realities of poverty, lack of employment opportunities and political uncertainty, youth in South Africa can feel hopeless and helpless about their future (Booyens & Crause, 2010). Self-led programmes, such as those discussed by respondents, address this hopelessness and helplessness by helping to empower youth to lead and take ownership of their own growth in the programme. The self-led approach strengthens the outcomes of the wilderness programmes, discussed in this study, and encourages support from potential funders, professional bodies and governmental departments.

4.3.2.1.2 Experiential Learning

Most respondents identified activities used within their wilderness programmes, which fall within the ethos of an experiential learning approach. Most respondents highlighted that the wilderness environment provided opportunities for youth to learn through their own physical and social experiences. Learning through experiences was felt by most respondents in this study, to assist in the development of participants' confidence, their ability to work with peers and their trust in others.

> *You get the opportunity to experience it for yourself by doing and not someone sitting in a classroom and telling you how you should be feeling, you experience it for yourself… As frustrating as it is for them, there is definitely, a moment for each one of them to say "yoh, look, I've never done this before, look at what I am doing". (Respondent 1, male, 42)*

> *[Facilitators] are not schoolteacher-type, um, facilitators, where a teacher tells you what to do, what to learn, how to do it. These people are more guides, guiding the participants along and helping them to learn from their experiences… The children learn for themselves, by themselves, about themselves and others… They have to test their own abilities and also learn a considerable amount of teamwork and communication skill. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

It is not surprising that experiential learning is considered by respondents to be an important element of their organizations' wilderness programmes, as this approach is explained by Bastemur (2019) and Hagan (2003) to be fundamental to wilderness programmes around the world. Respondents in this study reported the use of adventure and outdoor living activities to facilitate experiential learning. These activities mirror those used in Wilderness Therapy (Bastemur, 2019; Russell, 2001). Much like in the programmes discussed by respondents, the Wilderness Therapy programmes reported on by Bastemur (2019) and Russell (2001) use adventure and outdoor living activities to create real life experiences to develop positive life skills and moral behaviour. Respondents attributing positive programmes outcomes, such as improved confidence, teamwork and trust, to experiential learning is in line with Harper, Mott & Obee's (2019) study that reveals similar outcomes from Wilderness Therapy as a result of experiential learning. Respondents indicated that using experiential learning in their wilderness programmes reveals an understanding of the efficacy of this approach in youth work.

In addition, the social experiences available in the wilderness, as discussed by respondents in this study, have proven to provide powerful learnings in comparable programmes in other countries. Like that expressed by respondents, Russell, Hendee and Phillips-Miller's (2000) research particularly highlighted the significant learning that can be achieved through the social

experiences youth encounter in wilderness programmes. A wilderness environment, like that used in the programmes discussed by respondents, has been found by Hill (2007) to provide situations that draw awareness to the impact of one's behaviour on others, allowing youth to practice teamwork, leadership, conflict management and trusting others. As was described by respondents in this study, the many social experiences in these types of programmes, and the time available to reflect upon them, allow youth to learn positive social skills through first-hand experiences, reflection and practice, a powerful learning process Bandura (1971) terms Social Learning. Making use of experiential learning is likely influential in facilitating participant's personal development, as is indicated to be well understood by respondents.

4.3.2.2 Group Sessions

The second significant category to emerge in the data, within the therapeutic components theme, is group sessions. All respondents indicated that working with the youth in group sessions was the primary therapeutic activity within their wilderness programmes. Meaningful time spent in group discussions was felt by respondents to be essential to the growth and development of the youth on their wilderness programmes. The time spent in groups was explained to be for the purposes of *group counselling* and to facilitate experiential learning through *debriefing of activities*. These two purposes for group sessions will be discussed individually below.

4.3.2.2.1 Group Counselling

Most respondents discussed the inclusion of group sessions in their wilderness programmes, that were run with the purpose of providing group counselling to attending youth. These group sessions were said, by most respondents, to be run by wilderness facilitators or senior staff members with a variety of qualifications and training. Most respondents indicated that these sessions involved deep personal sharing and peer support. They indicated that these sessions helped enable participants to bond with one another, express empathy or heal from past traumas.

> *These kids would get back into circle and they would share these very experiences and what they would find is that they shared a lot of experience with each other, and it created a bond between them… They need to be able to explain what is going on inside them as well as what is going on outside them. So, they can share in the group their experience of sleeping outside, of being scared and all that. But they need to say how they have felt, what is happening inside and how they feel about their lives in that situation… Western therapy is one-on-one. [This] is connective therapy. It is working with groups. It is much more powerful. (Respondent 4, male, 73)*

> *We bring them back into telling their story, you know, we create the space under which they can talk and express themselves… on the [wilderness programme] they cried together, they heard each other's deepest, um, deepest secrets, deepest things that they went through, you know, it brings the group very, very closer to each other and it leaves them knowing exactly what they are for, what this means for them, actually what to expect from themselves and what is expected from them. (Respondent 11, male, 28)*

> *Being with the group of peers and be witnessed in a safe space to share, um, stories of truer mind, of pain and not being judged for it but feeling safe and knowing that you are not alone with it because there is a guarantee that whatever you share at least one other person in the circle of 12 will share a similar story and there is enormous power in that. (Respondent 15, female, 48)*

The group counselling sessions discussed by respondents included features of effective group therapy, commonly used in Social Work. Respondents mentioned the inclusion of traditional group work features, that are outlined by Yalom (1995) to be key to Social Work group work, including sharing experiences, acknowledging victories, and offering advice to peers in a group setting. These are meaningful experiences in Social Work group work that have proven to enable feelings of worth, universality, empathy and empowerment (Yalom, 1995). These benefits are likely to be similarly experienced by youth attending the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, as the group sessions utilize similar components to that used in traditional Social Work group work.

In addition, the group counselling session discussed by respondents included aspects that mirror that of indigenous African teaching methods. Much like that shared by respondents when discussing the wilderness programmes they are involved in, traditional African methods of teaching that Ngcobo (2020) and Ezeanya-Esiobu (2019) explain incorporate storytelling, guidance from elders and peer feedback to develop interpersonal skills and moral behaviour. Traditional African methods have been noted as particularly valuable within the Social Work profession, adding value to youth and family interventions (Shokane & Masoga, 2018). The wilderness programmes presented by the respondents, integrating these aspects in their group counselling sessions, more than likely result in similar personal growth to that Ngcobo (2020) accredits to these traditional teaching methods.

The group counselling sessions mentioned by the respondents are not facilitated by therapeutically trained professionals as is suggested to be fundamental in Wilderness Therapy. In the Wilderness Therapy method, it is considered vital that group counselling be run by a licenced professional, so much so, that programmes without this professional involvement cannot be considered Wilderness Therapy (Hill, 2007; Russell, 2001). As group sessions in the

wilderness programmes discussed by respondents are reportedly run by staff with various qualifications and training, some of these programmes would not meet the criteria to be considered Wilderness Therapy. With varying credentials, the capabilities of staff to effectively conduct group counselling is unclear. Staff members who are not professionals trained in therapeutic group work facilitation, such as Social Workers, may lack the necessary skills crucial to group work that Yalom (1995) identified, such as active listening, linking members, blocking disruptions and summarizing. Without these professional skills, group sessions may lack depth and have less significant therapeutic benefits as was the findings of Bettmann et al's (2016) research. It is, therefore, possible that South African wilderness programmes, such as those discussed by respondents in this study, could improve the efficacy of their group counselling sessions if they were to be consistently conducted by licenced professionals.

4.3.2.2.2 Debriefing of Activities

All respondents in the study, stated that group sessions are run to debrief the activities of the wilderness programme they are involved in. Most respondents explained these sessions to be a vital part of the experiential learning process, that help the youth understand their experiences and consider how they might implement what they have learnt in their normal lives. The personal development benefits of the adventure, survival and time in solitude activities were believed, by most respondents, to be more powerful when these activities are unpacked through group debriefing sessions.

> *Towards the end of the day they will have a debrief session as to what the day has bought, what they have learned from it, how they have reacted to it, how they have reacted to each other during the course, why they were fighting, if they were fighting, who led well, who didn't lead well and various other topics that the instructors pick up along the way… I think the debrief thing is the biggest key to our programme because they don't just, as I said, climb the mountain because it is there, they climb the mountain and then they discuss why they climbed the mountain and what they learnt along the way and how they will implement what they have learnt when they get back home. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

> *Sitting down every night to have what we call debrief where we reflect on the day and also giving feedback to the leaders and finding out what their experience has been… Whenever we do have specific activities, there will be debriefing to find out what the experience was like, what went on and how do they process it, very importantly, what came up for them and what can be used going forward. (Respondent 3, male, 34)*

The debriefing sessions, said to be included in the respondents' programmes, are a typical component of similar wilderness-based youth programmes that integrate experiential learning.

Mirroring that expressed by respondents in this study, wilderness programmes in Europe (Bastemur, 2019) and the United States of America (Julian, 2012) rely on activity debriefing to encourage meaningful learning from the experiences the youth have in the outdoor environment. This process of debriefing is key to fully capitalizing on the lessons available in adventure activities and outdoor living (Bastemur, 2019; Julian, 2012). In line with this, respondents in this study highlighted the importance of group debriefing sessions, to make the lessons available in the wilderness programmes more powerful. It is encouraging that activity debriefing is included in the South African wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, as Stuhr and Sutherland (2013) found that this type of debriefing allowed youth to make sense of their experiences, how they made them feel and how they might relate them to challenges in their normal lives. Furthermore, Clark et al (2004) linked activity debriefing to meaningful learning of positive social skills through practicing conflict management, providing constructive peer feedback and discussing the effect of individual's behaviour on others. These components mirror those of Bandura's (1971) Social Learning. The importance that respondents placed on the debriefing of activities, shows an understanding of the value of debriefing to facilitate significant and transferable Social Learning within their wilderness programmes.

4.3.2.3 Additional Services

Additional services was the third category to emerge in the therapeutic components theme. All respondents indicated that additional therapeutic services were available to the participants of their wilderness programmes. The additional services, reported to be provided to programme participants, consisted of *individual counselling on request* and *practical support provided post-programme*. An individual discussion of these additional services will now be provided.

4.3.2.3.1 Individual Counselling on Request

Most respondents stated that the participants in the wilderness programmes they worked in, could access individual counselling if requested. Most respondents said that individual counselling was not a compulsory component of their wilderness programmes, instead it was only provided to the youth attending the programme if it was requested. Respondents explained that youth themselves could request individual counselling, or staff could request this service for a particular participant if the staff member felt it was necessary. Most respondents indicated that when a request for this service was made, participants were referred to Social Workers or therapists either in their organization or with a partnering organization.

They would fill in a sort of form… there would be a space where they could immediately request counselling… that would already guide our Social Workers just in terms of who are the students that we really need to focus on… We can always call on other partners and organizations and say, "look, we've got this unique case that needs your specific expertise". We have been very fortunate and blessed enough to have been able to call on people to help facilitate, you know, the need of the individual or individuals. (Respondent 3, male, 34)

Not from within our programme, because we have been having issues that are coming up slowly. Every time when there's an issue that comes up, you know, whether a child is cheeky at home or something that's happening within their home… What we usually tend to say to participants and the parents, there's that option for them to go, to go to that organization and then we can give them our, as in we can refer them to that. (Respondent 13, male, 27)

The ad hoc nature of the individual counselling that respondents report is provided to their programme participants is unlike the compulsory counselling that is included in Wilderness Therapy. In the original definition of Wilderness Therapy as per Russell (2001), compulsory counselling is provided to each participant as part of an individualized treatment plan, that is implemented before, during and after the wilderness component. It is concerning that the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents do not include individual counselling to all participants, as this counselling is considered by Russell (2001) to be fundamental to the success of Wilderness Therapy, and programmes without this element have been found by Bettmann et al (2016) to yield fewer positive outcomes. The wilderness programmes discussed by respondents, may be diluting the benefits of their programmes through providing individual counselling only to some participants, rather than including it as a compulsory aspect.

Referring youth to Social Workers and therapists that were not involved in the wilderness programmes could be limiting the professional rapport between the young person and the professional providing the individual counselling. Referring participants to professionals who were not involved in the wilderness programme, means that youth need to build a therapeutic relationship with a new, unknown person after the programme. This is concerning as building therapeutic relationships has been flagged by Clark et al (2004) as difficult with this age group. This is a challenge that wilderness programmes have specifically aimed to overcome as identified by Bastemur (2019). Therapeutic relationships developed during wilderness programmes benefit from the non-threatening atmosphere of the outdoor environment, and the feelings of relatability that youth have towards staff members who are observed enduring the challenges of the wilderness alongside them (Bastemur, 2019; Revell & McLeod, 2017). The wilderness programmes discussed by respondents likely enable similar facilitator-participant

relationships as they are run in a similar outdoor setting. Unlike that reported by respondents, Bastemur (2019) and Revell and McLeod (2017) explain that individual counselling during Wilderness Therapy programmes is provided by staff in the programme who have already developed therapeutic relationships with participants. In the programmes discussed by respondents in this study, the meaningful facilitator-participant relationships that were developed in the programmes are not used to provide individual counselling as the counselling is conducted by unfamiliar professionals, who have not been involved in the programmes.

The non-compulsory and referral-based nature of the individual counselling available to participants, may be limited by context-specific constraints facing South African NGOs. It is plausible that South African NGOs may not include individual counselling to all participants due to the, often costly, personnel that this service requires. NGOs in this country face constant struggles with insufficient funding (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2013). Much like that discussed by respondents in this study, Harding (2014) found that funding for Social Workers and other SSPs was particularly hard to come by, limiting the number of these staff members that NGOs can hire. This financial limitation may be why the organizations, discussed by respondents, do not include individual counselling to all participants, and it is only provided if it is considered particularly necessary for an individual. Furthermore, South African organizations making use of referrals with other organizations for individual counselling is an efficient way to provide individual counselling on a small budget. Gevers and Flisher (2012) draw attention to the value of collaboration, to make use of personnel and resources that already exist in other organizations, schools or governmental facilities. Referring youth to individual counselling from another organization, may indicate that the organizations, discussed by respondents, are sharing the limited resources available to South African NGOs.

4.3.2.3.2 Practical Support Provided Post-Programme

All respondents in this study referred to some sort of practical support, such as assistance with job seeking, providing resources or sharing helpful connections, that is offered to participants after they attend a wilderness programme. This support was reportedly provided to youth by the respondent's organization or by a partnering organization. The regularity and quality of this practical support was explained, by respondents, to be unclear when it was being provided by a partnering organization. For most respondents, the practical support provided post-wilderness programme was not an obligatory part of the intervention. According to respondents, practical support was available for participants to access, if they wished.

After six months of completing their course, we have got, what we call, a refresher weekend. So, they would come back for two nights where we would do a variety of evaluations and find out, you know, how they are doing, how they are managing, what is the support they need. And, also beyond that, talk about other opportunities that has come to the attention of the organization… We can then assist them to explore opportunities, because the big thing for us is to get them into formal employment ASAP. (Respondent 3, male, 34)

There's an alumni thing we've been working on, so, when you've finished the programme there's a thing that we can assist if there're any bursaries they are needing. How, like, how can we assist because at the end of the day they are students and whether it is data or you want to use the internet, anything that we can get them. (Respondent 14, female, 28)

The benefits of practical support, that the respondents indicated was available to participants post-programme, may be limited because the support in not compulsory to all attending youth. While respondents indicate that post-programme practical support is optional, Wilderness Therapy programmes in the United States of America and Europe take a different approach. An integral part of Wilderness Therapy, and key to its' proven success, is the compulsory provision of practical support after the youth return home from the wilderness (Bastemur, 2019; Russell, 2001). Only providing vital support, as a non-compulsory option, may be weakening the sustainability of the outcomes achieved by the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study. Contrary to typical Wilderness Therapy, the programmes discussed by respondents form part of a larger youth intervention. It is possible that some degree of practical support is provided to participants in the larger intervention provided. Unfortunately, with some interventions being primarily run by partnering organizations, some respondents in this study were unaware of exactly what practical support was included in the whole youth intervention, how the support was provided and to what degree it supported the outcomes.

The unclear, and potentially limited, post-programme practical support discussed by respondents, is not unique to their wilderness programmes. Despite the National Youth Policy 2010-2015 (Republic of South Africa, 2010) emphasising the importance of providing accessible resources and opportunities to youth, effective practical support after an away-from-home programme, is found by Mutongwizo (2009) to be generally lacking in youth interventions in South Africa due to financial constraints. The lack of this post-programme support is found to negatively affect the sustainability of intervention outcomes (Ward, Dawes & Matzopoulos, 2012). As wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study are run outside of the participants home environment, they may face similar issues with outcome sustainability, if adequate support is not provided to the youth when they return home.

4.3.3 Understandings of the Wilderness Therapy Method

Understandings of the Wilderness Therapy method was the third theme that became evident in the data, collected in this study. Being aware of what respondents and other key role players understand of the Wilderness Therapy method provides insight into why this method is not being utilized in its entirety in South Africa. The findings revealed that the research respondents, and key role players in the field of wilderness programmes with at-risk youth in South Africa, held varying understandings of the Wilderness Therapy method. The understandings of this method, that were revealed through this study, will be discussed below with regards to the respondents' understandings and the views of key role players.

4.3.3.1 Respondents' Understandings

The first category to emerge within the theme, understandings of the Wilderness Therapy method, was respondents' understandings. This category presents the similarities found among the respondents with regards to their own understandings of Wilderness Therapy. Respondents provided various descriptions of what they felt Wilderness Therapy was, and what they thought needed to be included in programmes making use of this method. While all respondents were able to provide some form of explanation of Wilderness Therapy, many seemed to base their explanations on the programme they are currently involved in, or they described how they felt outdoor spaces were therapeutic, by unpacking the words 'wilderness' and 'therapy'. Similarities were found amongst research respondents with regards to the *understanding of Wilderness Therapy*, their understanding of Wilderness Therapy as *outdoor programmes with a personal growth intent* and their held belief that this type of work was *personal experiences to gain external understanding*. These similarities will be presented individually below.

4.3.3.1.1 Understanding of Wilderness Therapy

Most respondents indicated a lack of understanding of the actual term 'Wilderness Therapy'. Most respondents stated that Wilderness Therapy was a new term to them, however, the degree to which this term was new varied amongst respondents. Some respondents stated that they first became familiar with the term when they started working at their current place of employment, while others explained that they had not heard of it until their involvement in this study. When providing definitions of Wilderness Therapy, most respondents referred to what they felt was potentially therapeutic about the wilderness or they referred to the outcomes of the particular programme they currently work in.

I think if I go to any of the [facilitators] now, even the ones who are working on those programmes, and I can say, "tell me something, what is Wilderness Therapy?", I think most of them will answer that it is experiential education. You know, I think a lot of people don't understand the whole idea of Wilderness Therapy, what exactly that is… Even for me, it's a new concept… I think people will have a hard time to explain it. Although we do it, we do it every day. (Respondent 1, male, 42)

Even myself I am, I am a bit battling, it is not something that I have been exposed to before so hence it is a bit of a struggle… We do, the wilderness programme to us, I mean the name fits it well, but we do not call it that way. (Respondent 6, male, 46)

With a long history of utilizing the wilderness for personal development in South Africa and the very nature of their work, it is surprising that the term 'Wilderness Therapy' was reported by respondents to be something new to them. South Africa's founding involvement in the World Wilderness Conference, which places high value on using the wilderness as a therapeutic space (Martin & Partha Sarathy, 2001), shows that this country has a long-standing appreciation for the healing potential of the wilderness. Different authors have highlighted the value placed on outdoor spaces for social and spiritual development in both African poetry (Gcumisa, 2009) and rituals (Ngcobo, 2020; Babane, 2019). This further highlights the historical value placed on outdoor spaces in South Africa for potential healing. Wilderness programmes, like those discussed by respondents, emerged as a means to intervene with at-risk youth in South Africa in the early 1990's, as documented by Hansen (2002). This was around the same time as they began to be used globally according to the record of Russell (2001). While wilderness programmes in the United States of America and Europe solidified their interventions into the evidence-based therapeutic method (Russell, 2000), respondents' minimal awareness of Wilderness Therapy as a specific method, reveals that South African wilderness programmes did not mirror this move toward Wilderness Therapy.

South African organizations, such as those reported on by respondents in this study, may be inadvertently integrating some aspects of Wilderness Therapy in their wilderness programmes. Respondents may not know the term 'Wilderness Therapy', as their wilderness programmes could make use of different methods that integrate South African strengths, and consider the country's specific social, economic and cultural realities. A uniquely South African method has the potential to be highly effective, however, if the approach is not standardised, it will most likely face struggles gaining funding and professional recognition. When describing the development of Wilderness Therapy, Russell (2001) explained that wilderness programmes experienced funding and recognition difficulties prior to the formalization of a specific intervention method. An awareness of evidence-based interventions that have been successful

in other counties, such as Wilderness Therapy, can help to guide South African approaches to incorporate best practices, adapt components proven ineffective and avoid re-creating the wheel. Knowledge of evidence-based practices can also guide research into South African programmes to create a base of evidence for the methods used in this country. It is, therefore, concerning that respondents who work in wilderness programmes in South Africa, have little knowledge of the evidence-based approach, Wilderness Therapy. With a more comprehensive understanding of Wilderness Therapy, programmes in South Africa would be able to better integrate and adapt aspects of this approach to suit the South African context.

4.3.3.1.2 Outdoor Programmes with a Personal Growth Intent

Even though most respondents in this study expressed a lack of clarity around the term 'Wilderness Therapy', when asked to describe it to their best understanding, all respondents provided some forms of acknowledgement to Wilderness Therapy being an outdoor programme done with the intention of providing personal growth to youth. In respondents' descriptions of Wilderness Therapy, they mentioned various activities and components that they felt should be included in this method, however, there were inconsistencies around what was shared. All respondents did, however, feel that Wilderness Therapy programmes should take place in remote wilderness locations and incorporate nature. It was felt, by all respondents, that Wilderness Therapy should be done for the purposes of facilitating healing and positive change in programmes' participants.

> *I think Wilderness Therapy it's an intervention, alright, that incorporates, that incorporated the wild factor, meaning that incorporates nature, the outdoor nature in assisting, in assisting patients to deal with their challenges that they're facing… It needs to be outdoor and in nature… I think it needs to be focused. And it needs to have outcomes, right, outcomes based. (Respondent 6, male, 46)*

> *What I understand is that, um, using nature as a tool, you know, to guide our emotions… Wilderness Therapy for me, I mean I'm not an expert, but I think to be in the, when you are there for something more than just an experience, you know, something that has to do, something personal, something deep within yourself, um, something in the soul. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

> *Wilderness Therapy programmes is taking people into the nature to kind of deal with things they struggle with, to find stuff they've been looking for… to reconsider stuff and, you know, to start new things, to end old things. (Respondent 11, male, 28)*

Respondents' descriptions of Wilderness Therapy mirrored the definition for wilderness experience programmes in Russell's (2001) literature. Much like that described by respondents, Russell (2001) defines wilderness experience programmes as outdoor programmes with

personal growth intent. Although wilderness experience programmes are similar to Wilderness Therapy programmes, they do not include key therapeutic components implemented by licenced professionals (Russell, 2001). Respondents' provided definitions of Wilderness Therapy did not include these professional therapeutic components that Russell (2001) identifies as fundamental to the Wilderness Therapy method, including individualized pre-programme assessments and intervention plans, group counselling, family involvement and on-going reintegration support. This indicates a lack of understanding amongst respondents in this study, around what Wilderness Therapy, as a specific method, contains.

Although Wilderness Therapy has been successful in other countries, it is possible that the entirety of the method may not be ideal in the South African context. Insufficient funding, underqualified staff and inadequate supervision are common among South African NGOs as they strive towards addressing immense social issues (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2013). Challenges in the sector may limit the inclusion of certain elements of Wilderness Therapy that are heavily time and resource dependent. South African wilderness programmes, such as those discussed in this study, may utilize alternative means to facilitate positive and sustainable participant outcomes that are more suited to the needs, challenges and strength of this country. An improved understanding of the evidence-based Wilderness Therapy method, and what components have been successful elsewhere, could help to guide South African wilderness programmes, like those discussed by respondents, to improve and adapt methods to be effective in the country's unique context.

4.3.3.1.3 Personal Experiences to Gain External Understanding

Most respondents indicated a belief that therapeutic wilderness programmes, can only be understood through personal experience. It was felt by most respondents that their wilderness programmes could only be understand and, therefore, appreciated by those who have gone on a programme, either as participants or observers. These first-hand experiences were believed, by most respondents, to be the primary means of external people gaining an understanding of the wilderness programmes they worked in and the outcomes these programmes are able to achieve.

> *I think a first-hand experience is the only thing that could possibly teach people the value of this… even if it was a short intervention, a two- or three-day intervention. I think that it can be so life changing in ways you can't even imagine that it would convert people. (Respondent 5, female, 59)*

> *My experience is that if someone has been exposed to a programme, they see its value but if you haven't been exposed to it, it's this weird thing of "why would you go to the mountains?"... Ideally everyone would have the, have an experience like this and then they themselves can be the judge of whether or not it is valuable or necessary. (Respondent 15, female, 48)*

Respondents in this study expressed a unique view that wilderness programmes, and their outcomes, can only be understood through personal experience. In contrast to this view, Wilderness Therapy programmes in First-World countries have focused on evidence-based research to improve wide-spread understanding of the benefits of these programmes, as explained by Russell (2000). The respondents' focus on providing personal experiences as a primary form of gaining external understanding for their programmes, may be hindering their growth and external recognition. The lack of understanding of Wilderness Therapy that historically limited funding and professional support in the United States of America was overcome by research that proved efficacy (Clark et al, 2004). A similar approach may be necessary in South Africa to improve wide-spread understanding, appreciation, and support for wilderness programmes. Furthermore, utilizing first-hand experiences of significant role players to increase programme awareness, makes a minimal impact to improve wide-spread understanding of wilderness programmes as only a few people can be included. As wilderness programmes are noted as particularly costly (Butler, 2008), providing personal experiences to key role players reaches few at a high cost. Resources used for costly first-hand experiences, felt by respondents to be critical, could be better allocated to producing a widespread, credible understanding of wilderness programmes by growing an evidence base of programme efficacy.

4.3.3.2 Views of Key Role Players

Views of key role players is the second category to emerge in the understanding of the Wilderness Therapy method theme. Unlike the previous section, which focused on the respondents' personal understanding of Wilderness Therapy, this category considers respondents' insights of the views held by other important role players such as funders, SSPs and the public. As most respondents had a minimal understanding of Wilderness Therapy themselves, when discussing key role payers' understandings, respondents considered how these role players understood wilderness programmes with the intention of providing personal growth, rather than the specific Wilderness Therapy method. All respondents felt there was a lack of awareness amongst role players around wilderness programmes. Similarities were found amongst what was shared with regards to *Wilderness Programmes not being widely understood* and that they are *not accessible to everyone* as will be individually presented below.

4.3.3.2.1 Wilderness Programmes Not Being Widely Understood

All respondents in this study emphasised that they felt there was little understanding amongst funders, SSPs and the population in general about wilderness programmes with the intention of providing personal development in youth. It was felt by all respondents that the therapeutic potential of wilderness programmes was not well known, or appreciated, by key role players.

> *Our programme is unique and, um, the funders are not used to this kind of a programme… They want just something that they're familiar with. If you are coming up with Wilderness Therapy they are, "ooh my goodness, what is that?" So, it's, it's like still foreign to people. (Respondent 6, male, 46)*

> *I think that the public always thinks that, um, I would say it is probably because they always think that if you are going to the wilderness you're just going there for fun, you know, you [are] not seeking any, any purpose… They're not thinking in a space of that, when you go into nature you are going in there to, to find a purpose, so, you go to, you need a space for healing, you know, so, they don't see it in that way. (Respondent 13, male, 27)*

It is puzzling that respondents felt there was a lack of external understanding for therapeutic work, as Hansen (2002) reports that wilderness programmes for the purpose of youth personal growth, have been conducted in South Africa since as early as the 1990's. With almost 30 years of use in this country it is curious why these types of programmes, and their positive outcomes, have not become more well-known and appreciated. Other countries, who started using wilderness programmes for personal growth at a similar time, have managed to gain wide-spread recognition by standardising and building understanding to form what is now known as the evidence-based model of Wilderness Therapy (Russell, 2001). The difficulties of gaining financial and professional support that respondents explained were faced by their wilderness programmes, were similarly faced by the Wilderness Therapy method, as reported on by Russell (2001). According to Russell (2001) this lack of understanding was overcome, in the United States of America, Europe and Australia, by introducing standardized methods of practice and staff training, and conducting extensive research that proved the efficacy of their programmes. Similar standardization and research is likely necessary in South Africa, in order to address the wide-spread lack of understanding for this type of work expressed by respondents and to gain increased external support, that respondents in this study report to be currently lacking.

4.3.3.2.2 Not Accessible to Everyone

Most respondents felt that misconceptions were held by significant role players, with regards to who can, and should, access wilderness programmes. It was believed, by most respondents, that the general public thought that wilderness programmes target a certain type of person, and that it was not available to everyone. Although most respondents believed the public felt only a certain type of person could access wilderness programmes, there were variations amongst respondents with regards to the type of people the public felt these programmes were suited to. These variations included beliefs that wilderness programmes were specifically for youth who have done something wrong, such as committing crime or displayed behavioural concerns, as well as beliefs that wilderness programmes were specifically for white or privileged youth. Respondents that discussed their felt public beliefs around wilderness programmes being specifically for white or privileged people, went on further to explain that the outdoor spaces themselves, where the wilderness programmes are run, are not felt by the public to be available to all; that these spaces were believed to be intended for this specific population group.

> *[A misconception is] that [Wilderness Therapy] is only for kids that's naughty, that's been in conflict with the law or who has done something wrong and need some serious help. (Respondent 1, male, 42)*

> *Unfortunately, some see it only for those that is rich, for those that is privileged and also for those that is, almost kind of seen to be, I dare not use the word 'weird'. (Respondent 3, male, 34)*

> *[A misconception is] that it's for white people, especially for where I come from…. As a black South African, I think that is the misconception and it's so weird because we come from the Eastern Cape… we live in nature, we live in wilderness because our houses are in the wilderness, on the mountain… we see the river flow every day, we swim in the river, we drink from the river… [but] we don't look at the village in the Eastern Cape and [urban nature spaces] as the same thing. We look at [urban nature spaces] as the wilderness for white people. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

The public misconception, expressed by respondents, that therapeutic wilderness programmes are only suited for youth displaying criminal or delinquent behaviours, could be affecting youths' eagerness to participate in these programmes. Wilderness programmes around the world have historically been used to successfully intervene with a wide range of youth (Hill, 2007; Clark et al, 2004; Aurty, 2001), not limited to those displaying concerning behaviour. Public beliefs, according to the insights of respondents, that wilderness programmes are for youth that have done something wrong, may imply that the programme is a form of punishment for such behaviours. Programmes that are perceived as punishment, are found to be met with

increased resistance and little eagerness of participation (Harper, Mott & Obee, 2019). Furthermore, the perception that wilderness programmes are specifically for youth displaying delinquent behaviours, may deter youth from participating in such programmes as they do not wish to be viewed by their peers or communities as problematic. These type of negative views towards wilderness-based youth programmes, have been found by Nicholls & Gray (2007) to not only limit youth's eagerness to attend but also their willingness to engage in the processes of the programme. Even though wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, do not specifically target youth displaying problematic behaviour, this public belief could limit positive engagement from the youth attending these programmes.

Respondents' insights into public misconceptions that wilderness programmes, and the locations where they are held, are only accessible to white or privileged people, reveal persistent beliefs around area accessibility, that were regulated during the Apartheid regime. Despite public outdoor spaces being available to all races, those living in previously non-white, low-income areas still have a sense of being unwelcome in these spaces, as was seen through that shared by respondents in this study, as well as research conducted by Milliken (2015). This public belief is likely reinforced by structural challenges that continue to limit people from low-income areas' accessibility to outdoor spaces. Low-income areas have significantly fewer natural spaces within their communities (Venter et al, 2020). Youth attending the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents in this study, likely have little access to nearby outdoor spaces as participants in these programmes reportedly come from low-income areas. In addition, low-income living areas are typically remote with poor transport (Steyn, 2012), a major contributor that Milliken (2015) found limited attendance by previously disadvantaged groups at nature reserved in the Cape Town area. The public misconception, that was felt by respondents in this study, that the wilderness areas where their programmes are run are specifically for white or privileged people is likely grounded in the structural layouts of South African living areas that Steyn (2012) explains makes it more difficult for people living in low-income areas to access outdoor spaces because of their geographic location and poor transportation.

4.3.4 The Future Potential of Wilderness Therapy within South Africa

The last theme that emerged from the data collected in this study was the future potential of Wilderness Therapy within South Africa. This country presents a unique social, financial and cultural environment that affects the implementation and growth of wilderness-based youth

programmes. Context specific challenges and strengths influence the wilderness programmes that currently exist, such as those discussed by respondents in this study, as well as the potential for therapeutic wilderness programmes to develop in this country. Wilderness Therapy itself may, or may not, suit the specific context in South Africa, and adaptions may be necessary to most effectively address the tough circumstances faced by young South Africans. The challenges and strengths, reported by respondents, that are experienced by those working in wilderness programmes targeting at-risk youth in South Africa will be analysed below.

4.3.4.1 Challenges

The first category to be presented under the future potential of Wilderness Therapy within South Africa theme, is challenges. This category considers the main context-specific challenges that respondents felt limited the potential for Wilderness Therapy in South Africa. As respondents have a limited understanding of Wilderness Therapy as a specific intervention method, they discussed the challenges experienced by the wilderness programmes they are currently involved in. All respondents indicated facing significant challenges when implementing or trying to grow and improve their wilderness programmes. Most respondents felt that the greatest challenges facing the wilderness programmes they were involved in, were *time implications of school and work*, *parental involvement* and a *lack of available funding*, as will be presented separately below.

4.3.4.1.1 Time Implications of School and Work

Most respondents discussed facing challenges implementing their organization's wilderness programmes due to participants' school and work responsibilities. Most respondents indicated that these external responsibilities limited the length and attendance of the wilderness programmes they worked in.

> *We normally camp on the weekends with schooling participants and because they have school the following day, you know, we not taking anything from their academic life… it's important and we understand that and we are a part of that how they complete their schooling... With their examination time, the closer we get to their examination, um, the less they will see of us until their examinations are complete and then we will continue. (Respondent 10, male, 26)*

> *I think also one thing that becomes also a challenge within it is working with schools, um, where the school it's, um, it's the school exams, it's difficult to get hold of them, you know, we are always plan to finish our, our, our activities at least before their exam time… It becomes very difficult to get hold of them because they're always busy, they're studying, they need to go to the afternoon classes or something. (Respondent 13, male, 27)*

Programme participants' school and work responsibilities, as discussed by respondents, is a challenge that their organizations must tackle mindfully. Youth-targeting NGOs in South Africa are guided by the priorities mapped out in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) and the National Development Plan (Republic of South Africa, 2011) that place great value of youth education, skills development and employment. Although the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) encourages innovative interventions that address social issues, like the programmes discussed by respondents, the policy states that these interventions should not compromise school attendance or hinder employment, as these are considered first priority in addressing youth challenges. While United States of America and Europe-based programmes may be able to run wilderness-based youth programmes lasting eight weeks or more, (Bastemur, 2019; Bettmann, Russell & Parry, 2013) similar programmes in South Africa, such as those discussed by respondents, face a different reality with regards to the duration of time they are able to work with youth away from their education or employment responsibilities. Even if greater appreciation for the method can be gained, it is unlikely that the duration of wilderness programmes could be increased, given the impact this would have on school and work attendance. It is positive that respondents revealed an awareness of this unavoidable challenge, as they must seek innovative ways to implement these types of programmes within these context-specific limitations.

4.3.4.1.2 Parental Involvement

Most respondents in this study indicated that their wilderness programmes struggled to get parental or guardian involvement. Challenges gaining involvement from parents and guardians was explained by respondents to be due to various reasons including logistical difficulties as a result of work responsibilities and lack of motivation to be involved.

> *Well, we've been struggling with that actually, um, with the parents' involvement… We are working with the high risk, or the potentially risk, um, youths… they don't have much guidance by parents, much involvement of the parents in their, in their lives. So, it's always a real struggle, we have sessions for parents and some of them don't show… They're either working late or, or, um, they, um, have other prior arrangement but there's always an issue. (Respondent 10, male, 26)*

> *A lot of the parents are working, coming home late, so, tired and all of those things, so I would do a home visit but there's not much involvement of the parents at the moment. We struggle to get that because of the business, some are working the weekends, we struggle to see them, so, ya, it's something that we're still trying to improve on. (Respondent 11, male, 28)*

Despite the desire to introduce or increase valuable family involvement in their interventions, respondents highlighted the lack of parental or guardian availability as problematic. Single and absent parents are common in low-income areas in South Africa (Booyens & Crause, 2010), such as those of the participants attending the wilderness programmes, discussed by respondents. In these low-income areas, employment is often limited, and many parents and guardians must rely upon temporary, inconsistent and live-on-site jobs (Goldberg, 2013). Furthermore, poverty related social ills such as substance abuse, gangsterism, crime and violence, have a significant impact on parents' and adults' involvement in young participants' lives (Goldberg, 2013). These factors affect the availability of parents and guardians to be involved in the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents. Encouragingly, respondents in this study show an awareness of how these factors limit parents' and guardians' availability to attend their youth interventions. Much like the challenges experienced around participant availability due to prioritisation of school and employment, parental accessibility is a largely unavoidable hurdle when working with South African youth, that must be tackled strategically.

4.3.4.1.3 Lack of Available Funding

Most respondents indicated funding constraints as a significant obstacle when implementing and attempting to expand their wilderness programmes. All respondents indicated that their participants did not pay individually to attend the programmes, but rather that their wilderness programmes were financially supported by local or international private funders, government or a combination of these. Most respondents specifically identified challenges accessing funding to conduct research, hire additional staff, increase the number of programmes they are able to run and the inclusion of post-programme services.

> *[We need to] get those kind of research programmes much more solidly looked at but, you know, if you are going to get a finding and tracking process it is going to cost you R100 000! It's expensive to do that. (Respondent 4, male, 73)*

> *I think we need to include specialized services since we do work with young people who, who are troubles, who have gone through abuse, and I don't think that it's fair of the schools, to expect the schools to actually do the referral… But for us to include specialized services and Therapist or Psychologists or even Social Workers… [The reason we don't] is purely because of funding. (Respondent 6, male, 46)*

> *Funds is a big [limitation]… these types of programmes, they're not cheap, I mean, um, putting something like this together it is, it can be really expensive… There's always transport, ah, so, there's also equipment as well, um, and, you know, when you're working with young people, um, from, from communities, they may not have all the gear that they would need… your costs are high. (Respondent 16, male, 39)*

Respondents indicated that having non-paying participants places the financial responsibility entirely on the organization itself. In contrast to that shared by respondents, Russell (2001) explains that wilderness programmes in high income countries often target paying participants, where parents are responsible for accessing funds through insurance companies or their own resources. Not surprisingly, this is not the case for wilderness programmes aiming to reach at-risk youth in South Africa, as was stated by respondents. As the wilderness programmes considered in this study target youth from low-income areas, it would not be realistic to expect participants to be able to pay for their attendance of the programmes. These programmes are found to be expensive around the world, requiring considerable amounts of resources (Butler, 2008). With the weight of these costs falling entirely on the organizations implementing the programmes, it is not surprising that most respondents noted this as a significant challenge.

Similar to the experience shared by respondents, accessing funding for youth-targeting NGOs in South Africa is a constant struggle. Although youth have been flagged in multiple South African legislations as an age category requiring priority attention (Republic of South Africa, 2015; Republic of South Africa, 2013; Republic of South Africa, 2011), NGOs targeting youth continue to struggle with a lack of consistent and reliable funding (Department of Social Development South Africa, 2016). International and governmental funding is common amongst NGOs in South Africa (Harding, 2014), mirroring that noted by respondents as common sources of funding for their wilderness programmes. In line with that shared by respondents, Harding (2014) found that funders often seek visible outcomes and shy away from administrative and personnel costs. These hard to obtain funds are necessary for research, employing professional staff, like Social Workers, and providing post-programme support, aspects that respondents indicated was neglected due to funding constraints. Funding challenges faced by organizations implementing wilderness programmes in South Africa are typical of those experienced by NGOs in this country.

4.3.4.2 Strengths

A second category, strengths, in the theme future potential of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa, emerged in the findings. A couple of context-specific strengths were identified by respondents. Wilderness programmes, with the intention of personal development in South Africa, have unique strengths that contribute to their success. Respondents in this study identified the South African strengths within this field include the suitability of the *outdoor*

spaces in the country and the current *NGO collaboration* aiming to intervene with at-risk youth in South Africa. These strengths will be discussed in detail below.

4.3.4.2.1 Outdoor Spaces

Most respondents referred to the ample outdoor spaces available in South Africa as a strength towards the country's suitability for therapeutic wilderness programmes. Although most of the respondents identified outdoor spaces as a strength, they differed in why they felt this was beneficial to wilderness programmes in South Africa, with some respondents highlighting the relatively close proximity of suitable wilderness areas to targeted urban youth, and other respondents noting the benefit of outdoor spaces because they are vastly different from the low-income areas in South Africa that programme participants typically come from.

> *We have all the facilities everywhere, we have these wonderful open spaces, we have mountains, we have valleys, we have rivers, we have everything that is available for them. And it is not difficult to get them out of the towns, out of the townships and into something that is totally, totally, totally different. (Respondent 2, female, 62)*

> *We have so many areas that lend themselves so beautifully and I think, you know, sadly our townships and our informal settlements are so diametrically opposed to how our indigenous people did live and should be living. (Respondent 5, female, 59)*

> *You can go to all the big cities, even in [city], they have some sort of small mountain, like in every part of South Africa there is some sort of wilderness, whether it is rocky, whether it is the desert or there is some sort of wilderness element in every part of South Africa. (Respondent 8, female, 26)*

The finding of this study contrasted with current literature which indicates concerns around the inaccessibility and decreasing number of outdoor spaces in South Africa. A growing population and rapid urbanization are threatening outdoor spaces in close proximity to cities (Milliken, 2015; Lategan & Chilliers, 2014) and there is a growing concern around the safety of these areas as crime in urban outdoor spaces is rising (Milliken, 2015). None of these concerns were reported by respondents in this study at the time of this research. However, if this trend continues, it is possible that the proximal outdoor spaces currently deemed as suitable by respondents in this study, may begin to be seen as less appropriate for wilderness programmes with the intent of facilitating personal growth in youth.

The vast difference of outdoor spaces to low-income urban areas in South Africa likely adds value to the wilderness programmes discussed in this study. There are few outdoor spaces in low-income urban areas (Lategan & Chilliers, 2014), where participants in the respondents' wilderness programmes typically reside. Major parks and natural recreational spaces have been

found to be predominantly located in affluent, previously white allocated areas in South African cities (Lategan & Chilliers, 2014). Additionally, these areas are predominantly only accessible by private vehicles, acting to further exclude people from previously disadvantaged communities who would likely rely on public transport (Milliken, 2015). Because the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents specifically target youth who were previously disadvantaged, they may be acting to provide these youth with opportunities that are relatively uncommon within their communities. Taking youth into the natural spaces, where these wilderness programmes are run, may well add to the overall experience and outcomes of the programmes, as was felt by respondents in this study.

4.3.4.2.2 NGO Collaboration

All the respondents in this study indicated that the organizations they worked for used collaborations with other NGOs. Collaboration was said, by respondents, to be with other NGOs that work specifically in wilderness programmes, or with NGOs working with at-risk youth in another setting. The way in which these collaborations were explained to be used included utilizing other NGOs for the training of staff, providing the wider youth interventions of which their wilderness programme was a component, selection of participants or assisting in the wilderness programmes by providing specialized outdoor skills or local knowledge.

> *[We] work with other agencies and partner organizations and NGOs, so, Child and Youth Care Centres, HIV and AIDS after school programmes, um, mental health and [government] agencies… [We work] with their young people to catalyse whatever is already happening in those organizations. (Respondent 15, female, 48)*

> *Every year there is like, um, um, an orientation for [facilitators], um, under [another organization]. Um, so, we actually takes around about, um, 3 days, um, it is 3 days training, um, in a place for the weekend. So, so, they are actually also taking us on a hike as well, um, that is the kind of like training. (Respondent 17, male, 30)*

Collaborations are a valuable strength within the organizations discussed by respondents, that add to the success of current wilderness programmes and the potential for this type of work to progress in South Africa. NGO collaborations strengthen the outcomes of the wilderness programmes discussed by respondents as stand-alone wilderness programmes were found by Van der Merwe and Dawes (2012) to have limited success, unless combined with other intervention methods. Collaborating with other NGOs, in the ways discussed by respondents in this study, capitalizes on the strengths of all involved to provide youth with effective interventions. Furthermore, collaborations across organizations implementing the wilderness programmes themselves, can stimulate the standardization of methods, and the development of

evidence-based best practices. This is essential for gaining funding and external professional recognition as has been seen in other countries through the development of the Wilderness Therapy method (Russell, 2001). The multiple existing collaborations, that reportedly exist with NGOs, can act to drive growth in the field of at-risk youth programmes integrating a wilderness aspect in South Africa.

The NGO collaborations, identified by respondents in this study, can have additional benefits by addressing financial struggles through sharing resources and professional personnel, like Social Workers. With the number of NGOs in South Africa dramatically increasing since 1994, resources have been diluted (Harding, 2014). As there is typically less funding allocated to administrative and personnel costs, sharing these resources has been flagged as being in the best interest of South African NGOs (Harding, 2014; Geverts & Flisher, 2012). It is, therefore, encouraging that the wilderness programmes considered in this study are making use of collaborations to innovatively share resources. Additionally, wilderness programmes that combine with interventions that incorporate a focus on education, skills or employment, such as those discussed by respondents, may attract increased funding and government support, as these components have been prioritized in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015). Positively, respondents in this study, reveal regular use of such collaborations, showing that their organizations are creatively negotiating the economic challenges within the South African NGO sector.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented a thorough analysis of the data obtained through one-on-one interviews with 18 people working within wilderness programmes, for the purposes of personal growth of at-risk youth in South Africa. The demographic background of the respondents was initially presented, followed by the framework of analysis that emerged through the analysis of the data. This framework was then followed to present the valuable opinions, insights and experiences of the respondents and provide a thorough discussion of these through considering current available literature.

Chapter Five: Conclusions and Future Recommendations

5.1 Introduction

The findings of this study provide valuable information about the potential of Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. The final chapter of this research report will present the main conclusion which could be drawn from the study, with reference to the four main research objectives. Attention will be drawn to the potential held within South Africa to run effective wilderness-based youth programmes that embrace successful elements of already existing methods, while being conscious of contextual challenges, and drawing on cultural strengths unique to the country. Considering the findings of this study, recommendations will be made to staff implementing youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa, the management of these programmes, Social Workers, the South African Department of Social Development and future researchers.

5.2 Main Conclusions

5.2.1 Objective 1: To establish the nature of programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy which target at-risk youth in South Africa

According to the findings of this study, a limited number of youth-targeting programmes in South Africa incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy. Through exploring the knowledge of those working in wilderness-based youth programmes, this study provides a detailed depiction of the type of programmes being implemented in South Africa at the time of this study that include components of the Wilderness Therapy method. Through an analysis of the data, it was found that South African wilderness programmes formed a component of larger interventions with at-risk youth. While these interventions, in their entirety, were found to vary dramatically, the type of wilderness components that were included, were similar across South African programmes. It was found through the experiences of respondents, that wilderness-based youth programmes were held in an outdoor location for two to 14 days and included various aspects of Wilderness Therapy. Like Wilderness Therapy programmes found in Europe, North America and Australia, youth attending South African wilderness programmes were found to take part in outdoor activities and nature living, in groups of between ten and 16 youth.

The findings of this study revealed that these wilderness-based youth programmes, specifically targeted youth who live in low-income areas. The study revealed that youth who attend South

African wilderness programmes faced poverty-related difficulties that are common within this country, such as a lack of parental guidance and support, substance misuse, gang violence, abuse and crime. The respondents' wilderness programmes were found to be conducted for the purposes of facilitating personal development of these youth through building their sense of self-worth and confidence, addressing previous traumas and enabling positive behavioural changes. The desired outcomes, strived for by the wilderness programmes explored through this study, mirror the benefits that have been proven to be achieved through Wilderness Therapy programmes run in other countries. It was found that youth in South Africa voluntarily take part in the wilderness programmes considered through this study. The voluntary participation of youth was believed by the respondents to increase youth buy-in and, in turn, improve positive outcomes.

Through exploring the experiences of respondents, it was found that a vital component of South African wilderness programmes is the outdoor environment in which they take place. Much like in Wilderness Therapy, the finding of this study shows that South African wilderness programmes use the natural environment of wilderness spaces to engage youth and facilitate positive outcomes. Being immersed in wilderness spaces was identified as a key component of the programmes explored though this study. It was uncovered that the wilderness setting is perceived by youth as exciting and less intimidating. Furthermore, the study revealed a belief held by those working within wilderness programmes that the temporary removal of youth from their communities, and its associated challenges, encouraged positive engagement. The findings revealed that the design of wilderness programmes required youth to create a new social reality for the duration of their time in nature, providing ample opportunities for them to practice new, more effective, social skills.

The study revealed that the activities included in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa are characteristic of the Wilderness Therapy model. This study found that these wilderness programmes commonly include hiking, while some also incorporate additional adventure activities like rock climbing, abseiling and canoeing. These activities are likewise used in Wilderness Therapy programmes around the world. Survival activities, typical of Wilderness Therapy, such as meal preparation, setting up tents and managing weather exposure, were also found to be included into the wilderness-based programmes currently run in South Africa. The findings revealed that those working in these wilderness programmes believed that adventure and survival activities improved youths' ability to work and engage positively with others. Another activity typical to Wilderness Therapy that was included in the

respondents' wilderness programmes was solitude time spent in nature. This was believed to enable youth to overcome trauma, contemplate their experiences and set obtainable goals.

This study found that participating youth forming trusting relationships with staff was believed to be vital to the successful outcomes of South African wilderness programmes. Staff being perceived by youth as relatable was found, in this study, to be particularly valuable to developing relationships between facilitating staff and the youth attending these programmes. According to the insights of the respondents, the perception of relatability is established through staff coming from similar backgrounds, having previous experience as participants and enduring wilderness-related struggles alongside the youth.

Staff working directly with youth in wilderness programmes that are currently being implemented in South Africa, were found to have varying qualifications, with internal programme-specific training and regular support from senior staff members being primarily used to equip them to facilitate these programmes. Although this training was perceived as beneficial to the staff, there seemed to be no standardisation of what was being trained across programmes.

5.2.2 Objective 2: To ascertain the extent to which these wilderness programmes incorporate a therapeutic component

This study uncovered that various components that are therapeutic in nature were incorporated into the wilderness programmes currently being run with South African youth. These programmes were found to be grounded in an ideology that resembled a self-led approach, which was employed to gain buy-in from youth, engage them in their own personal development and enable sustainable therapeutic outcomes. Experiential learning was found to be another effective approach used to facilitate therapeutic outcomes from wilderness programmes. This study revealed that experiential learning was used to allow youth to grow a positive sense of self and develop social skills through meaningful real-life experiences. These approaches were found to shape the therapeutic nature of wilderness programmes currently being implemented in South Africa.

Group sessions were revealed in this study to be a particularly significant therapeutic component in South African wilderness programmes. It was found that these programmes make use of group sessions to provide group counselling and debriefing of activities. Group counselling sessions were found to be conducted similarly to traditional Social Work group work. In addition, this study revealed that these group counselling sessions incorporated

teaching methods common in South African cultures, such as storytelling, peer feedback and inter-generational mentoring, to deepen therapeutic outcomes. The efficacy of these teaching methods was felt by those working in these wilderness programmes to be strengthened by their use of facilitators who have similar demographics to participants, adding to the inter-generational nature of these methods. Group sessions were also found to be utilized in South African wilderness programmes to debrief the various activities encountered in the outdoor setting. It was revealed that debriefing activities, as well as the social experiences occurring while participating in these activities, was considered vital to facilitate social learning and strengthen the therapeutic outcomes of programmes.

This study uncovered that individual counselling and post-programme support were provided to youth attending South African wilderness programmes if requested, but that these services were not compulsory programme components. Findings of this study revealed that, while individual counselling was available, it was only provided if deemed particularly necessary by the participant themselves or by programme staff. The ad hoc nature of this counselling was unlike the compulsory professional individual counselling that is considered an essential therapeutic component of the Wilderness Therapy method. Practical support, such as assistance with job seeking, providing resources and sharing helpful connections, was likewise found to be available only if requested and was not a compulsory part of the wilderness programmes. The optional nature of post-programme support is contrary to Wilderness Therapy programmes in North America, Europe and Australia that place significant value on compulsory reintegration support to facilitate sustainable therapeutic outcomes. Although those working in wilderness programmes desired to increase both individual counselling and post-programme support for youth attending their programmes, these services were limited by logistical and financial challenges facing South African NGOs.

5.2.3 Objective 3: To determine how Wilderness Therapy is understood by key role players involved with at-risk youth in South Africa

This study showed that the intervention method ‘Wilderness Therapy’ is not well understood amongst those working in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa. Staff in these programmes were found to have little understanding of the term ‘Wilderness Therapy’ prior to their current employment, with some only hearing the term for the first time during their participation in this study. When asked to explain the term Wilderness Therapy in their understanding, those working in South African wilderness programmes defined Wilderness

Therapy in differing ways as a method of facilitating personal growth through nature living and outdoor activities. Their definitions did not include the professional therapeutic component deemed essential to the Wilderness Therapy model, showing a lack of understanding around what this evidence-based method entails.

Furthermore, other key role players were found to have minimal knowledge and appreciation for programmes that include components of Wilderness Therapy. A view that role players such as potential funders, SSPs and the general population had little awareness and held several misconceptions about therapeutic wilderness work, was discovered through this study. Respondents felt that a lack of awareness and misconceptions about these programmes acted to limit the support the programmes were able to gain from role players. A misconception that these types of programmes were only for youth displaying "delinquent" behaviour was believed to be held by the public. In addition, a perceived public misconception that wilderness programmes are specifically for white and privileged people was revealed through this study. The historically remote locations of, and poor transportation from low-income areas, likely contributes to a belief that outdoor areas, where wilderness programmes are run, are more attainable to people living in higher income groups. Both misconceptions were believed by those working in wilderness programmes to limit youth's eagerness to take part in these programmes as well as the support available for the programmes from key role players.

Those working within youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa were found to hold a belief that these programmes could only be understood through personal experiences in the wilderness as a participant or an observer on a programme. Providing these personal experiences to role players including potential funders, SSPs and governmental departments was found to be used to increase widespread understanding and support for South African wilderness programmes.

5.2.4 Objective 4: To understand the context-specific opportunities and obstacles for the development of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa

This study revealed that youth-targeting programmes in South Africa that integrate aspects of Wilderness Therapy, face numerous logistical obstacles. School and work requirements of attending youth, was found to limit the duration of wilderness programmes. The study indicated that there was an understanding amongst those working in wilderness youth programmes that education and employment responsibilities took precedence over youths' involvement in the programme and that adaptions needed to be made to accommodate this priority. Furthermore,

including parents or guardians in South African wilderness programmes was also found to be challenging due to poverty-related issues such as unemployment, substance abuse, gangsterism, crime and violence. Despite an indicated awareness amongst those working in South African wilderness programme of these challenges, these were felt to be a continuous difficulty that limited positive programme outcomes and their sustainability.

Financial difficulties were also found to have a significant impact on South African youth-targeting programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy. Accessing reliable, consistent funding for wilderness-based youth programmes was revealed to be an ongoing challenge. It was found that funding to conduct research, hire additional staff and improve post-programme services was particularly hard to source. This study revealed that the financial challenges faced by wilderness programmes was believed to significantly impact the number of programmes that could be run, the additional services they were able to include and the personnel they were able to hire. A lack of funding was found to be a significant factor limiting the development of youth-targeting programmes in South Africa that include components of Wilderness Therapy.

An inconsistent means of measuring programme outcomes was revealed as an obstacle facing those working in South African wilderness programmes. Various self-evaluation tools and different ways of noting initial behavioural changes in youth were found to be used to assess the efficacy of the wilderness programmes explored in this study. This was found to make it difficult to compare results across wilderness programmes in South Africa and build an evidence-base for the methods used in these programmes. Without this evidence-base, the development of therapeutic wilderness programmes in South Africa was revealed, through this study, to be limited as they continue to struggle to gain support from potential funders and professional bodies.

Various context-specific opportunities that could aid in the development of South African programmes that incorporate aspects of Wilderness Therapy became evident through this study. It was found that those working in the studied wilderness programmes felt that the ample outdoor space available in South Africa made this country particularly suited to these types of programmes. It was also uncovered that those working in South African wilderness programmes believed that the vast difference between outdoor spaces and poverty-stricken residential areas in this country, was a particular strength for wilderness-based youth

programmes as attending youth were taken to a new location they might not otherwise have visited, due to poor transport in the areas they reside.

Effective collaborations between youth-targeting NGOs were found to be a particular strength of South African wilderness programmes. The study revealed that the NGOs targeting at-risk youth in South Africa collaborated effectively to support wilderness programmes in several ways. Those working in the South African wilderness programmes were found to use NGO collaborations to train staff, select participants, combine components for youth interventions as well as share valuable resources and personnel. This study revealed that NGO collaborations were believed to strengthen the outcomes of South African wilderness programme and increase support for these programmes from key role players. These collaborations were found to provide opportunities for wilderness-based youth work to develop in South Africa despite context-specific difficulties.

5.3 Recommendations

Considering the findings and conclusions of this study, various recommendations can be made to the different role players and stakeholders within the field of study. The recommendations that this study provides will be made to staff implementing youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa, the management of these programmes, Social Workers, the South African Department of Social Development as well as future researchers.

5.3.1 Recommendations for Staff Implementing Youth-Targeting Wilderness Programmes in South Africa

- It is suggested that staff implementing youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa continue to grow their understanding of indigenous teaching methods, common within South African cultures. Wilderness programmes currently run in South Africa are strengthening therapeutic outcomes through including teaching methods such as peer feedback, storytelling and intergenerational teaching. With a greater understanding of teaching methods that are traditionally used in South Africa, those implementing wilderness programmes could include these methods more effectively and to a greater degree. This will increase the value added to these types of programmes through embracing cultural strengths existing within South Africa.
- It is recommended that those working in youth-targeting wilderness programmes strive to increase their knowledge of similar programmes, such as Wilderness Therapy, that

have been proven effective in other countries. Wilderness Therapy, in its entirety, may not be suited to the South African context, due to financial and logistical challenges facing NGOs in this country. Despite contextual differences, a knowledge of other evidence-based interventions would guide staff working in South African wilderness programmes to increase the efficacy of their programmes.

5.3.2 Recommendations for the Management of Youth-Targeting Wilderness Programmes in South Africa

- It is recommended that collaborations with other NGOs should be fostered in order to share resources, personnel, services and youth accessibility. As funding for personnel and resources are particularly difficult to access, sharing these costs with other NGOs reduces the financial burden on NGOs facilitating wilderness programmes. Collaborations can strengthen the outcomes of wilderness programmes through providing individualized counselling, family support and continued support for youth post-programmes, valuable services that wilderness programmes struggle to provide due to ongoing financial difficulties.
- It is proposed that those responsible for fundraising for wilderness-based youth programmes place greater emphasis on improving public awareness of their programmes. Using social media platforms can be an effective way to provide information to a large number of people about wilderness programmes, and the positive outcomes they are able to achieve. Widespread awareness would improve understanding of these programmes, reduce negative misconceptions and, as a result, encourage increased support. Potential private and governmental funders would likely be more willing to support wilderness programmes if they understood the benefits they facilitate.
- It is suggested that those involved in designing South African wilderness programmes, seek to include an education or employment focus within the larger interventions that their programmes are a component of. Education and employment are flagged in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015) as priority agendas for youth in South Africa to facilitate wide-spread positive change within this age group. Ensuring that these priority agendas are included within the services offered to youth attending wilderness programmes, would be in keeping with this national imperative and act to strengthen programme outcomes.

- As an added benefit of ensuring that an education and employment focus are included as part of the larger intervention offered to youth, programs would likely attract increased funding. If wilderness programmes are in keeping with the education and employment objectives prioritized in the National Youth Policy 2015-2020 (Republic of South Africa, 2015), private and governmental funders are more likely to provide support. To attract funding, managers of South African wilderness programmes could incorporate these priority youth agendas as well as emphasize the benefits their programmes bring to youth education and employment in the marketing of their programmes.
- It is recommended that wilderness-based youth programmes across South Africa pool their knowledge and experience to establish clear guidelines and staff training to ensure best practice. Much like what was necessary to gain support for Wilderness Therapy in countries around the world, support for South African wilderness programmes would likely be increased if methods used were standardised across programmes and supported by an evidence base proving their efficacy. Similarly, the standardization of staff training would improve support through ensuring ethical and high-quality facilitation. Moving towards standardized practice and staff training could help wilderness programmes in South Africa establish and gain support for a context specific evidence-based method. Although this South African evidence-based method might be similar to Wilderness Therapy, it would acknowledge and utilize cultural strengths while being able to aptly navigate the challenges within the country.

5.3.3 Recommendations for Social Workers

- It is recommended that Social Workers in South Africa collaborate with already existing wilderness programmes to provide services to the families of attending youth and support for youth when they return home post-programme. Social Workers working in NGOs with necessary skills and resources to work with families, parents, adult mental health and substance abuse could provide valuable services to the families of those attending wilderness-based youth programme. Furthermore, Social Workers working with the attendees' communities could strengthen the work done in wilderness programmes through supporting youth as they reintegrate into their communities after the completion of a wilderness programme. Collaborating to provide these vital services will help ease the financial strain on wilderness programmes, through sharing resources

and personnel, while helping these community-based NGOs to work more wholistically and improve the services provided to youth.

- It is suggested that Social Workers increased their involvement in wilderness-based youth programmes as they have relevant knowledge and skills that would add value to these types of programmes. Social Workers have professional knowledge of both youth needs and programme development that would benefit the design of wilderness programmes. Additionally, counselling skills held by Social Workers could be used to facilitate group sessions in wilderness programmes to deepen the therapeutic nature of the work being done with youth.
- It is further suggested that Social Workers working in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa provide supervision to staff who work directly with the youth in the outdoors. Providing this supervision would allow Social Workers to transfer knowledge and upskill staff working in these programmes. In addition, staff would benefit from supervision from Social Workers to debrief their experiences on wilderness programmes, provide counselling and address potential countertransference. This is particularly necessary given that South African wilderness programmes make use of staff coming from similar low-income communities to that of participants and have likely faced similar poverty-related challenges.

5.3.4 Recommendations for the South African Department of Social Development

- It is suggested that the South African Department of Social Development (DSD) provide increased funding to youth-targeting wilderness programmes as a means to intervene with at-risk youth in South Africa. An increase of reliable and consistent funding would allow wilderness programmes to not only increase their output, but also improve the sustainability of programme outcomes for youth through providing additional therapeutic and supportive services, that can be costly. DSD providing financial support to wilderness programmes would strengthen effective youth interventions that strive to meet the substantial needs of youth in South Africa.
- It is recommended that DSD use their knowledge of current youth-targeting interventions to connect NGOs that could effectively collaborate with wilderness programmes. Collaborations between NGOs is vital to support the sustainability of wilderness programme outcomes as well as to reduce the financial burden on these programmes through sharing resources and personnel. DSD have extensive knowledge of NGOs implementing youth-targeting interventions around the country. It is

suggested that DSD use this knowledge to act as a link between appropriate youth-targeting NGOs, to strengthen work currently being done with youth in South Africa.

5.3.5 Recommendations for Future Researchers

- It is proposed that further research be conducted that explores the efficacy of wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa. Qualitative and quantitative research that show outcomes occurring as a result of wilderness-based programmes, will increase recognition and support for these types of programmes. Research proving programme efficacy was instrumental in Wilderness Therapy gaining support and professional recognition and South African wilderness programmes would likely similarly benefit from increased research into their programme outcomes. A larger evidence base proving the efficacy of wilderness programmes in South African would help to gain credibility for the uniquely South African approaches used in these programmes.
- It is suggested that programme evaluation research be conducted with existing youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa, to uncover what aspects of these programmes are particularly significant to positive outcomes. With an increased understanding of what programme components facilitate desired outcomes, South African wilderness programmes could capitalize on these components to improve programme efficacy and efficiency. This would allow programmes to bolster effective aspects of programmes and reduce parts that are proven to be of little significance to positive outcomes.
- It is recommended that researchers conduct studies on wilderness-based youth programmes to develop a monitoring and evaluation format that could be used to easily collect data both internally and from several different programmes in South Africa. With a standard monitoring and evaluation format, staff working in wilderness programmes could collect data without necessarily having academic training of conducting research. This would allow a greater amount of data to be easily collected and combined with data collected from other similar programmes to grow an evidence-base that can be used to gain greater support and recognition for South African wilderness work as a whole.
- It is suggested that further research be conducted into the views of key role players in wilderness-based youth programmes in South Africa, such as participants, parents or guardians and potential funders. An increased understanding of the views of these key

role players would add to the findings in this study that explored the views of those working in South African wilderness programmes. Exploring the views of other role players would help to gain a wider insight into the potential for youth-targeting wilderness programmes within the South African context. This type of research may provide deeper insight into public understanding, participant's experience and funders' opinions on youth programmes conducted in a wilderness setting.

5.4 Conclusion

This final chapter has presented a summary of the main conclusions of this study as they pertain to the research objectives as well as provided recommendations for various groups. Recommendations were presented to youth-targeting wilderness programmes in South Africa, management of these programmes, Social Workers, the South African Department of Social Development as well as to future researchers. This study has uncovered a greater understanding of the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. Through exploring the views of those working in wilderness-based youth programmes, this research suggests that a therapeutic intervention, similar to Wilderness Therapy, that incorporates South African strengths, while also being conscious of context-specific challenges, has the potential to effectively intervene with youth in this country.

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Appendix A: Invitation Letter

To whom it may concern

My name is Emily Masters and I am conducting research as part of my Masters Degree in Social Work at the University of Cape Town. The research will explore the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an effective intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa.

Through exploring the insights and opinions of those working in the field, this research will consider the constraints and potential of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa. The findings of this research will assist in the development of effective interventions with at-risk youth in South Africa and, in so doing, address multiple social challenges in this age group.

I am seeking participants for this research. Participants should be involved in a wilderness programme with at-risk youth in South Africa. The programme should include adventure/outdoor activities and nature living. Participants should have been involved in the implementation of at least two of these programmes. Their involvement should include direct contact with the participants and spending multiple nights with the participants away from home. If your organization/company is willing to partake in this research, I kindly ask you to recommend appropriate staff members that can be contacted to participate in the research. Each participant will be asked to take part in a one-on-one interview with the researcher, Emily Masters.

The University of Cape Town has banned all research that involved contact between people due to the outbreak of Covid-19. All interviews will be held remotely with the use of Zoom, Skype or, if necessary, telephonic call. This enables the research to continue during this pandemic without placing the participants or researcher at risk. Participants will need to ensure that they have a private space to do the interview where they will not be disturbed. This protects the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the organization/company they work for.

The findings of this research will be compiled into a research report and submitted to the University of Cape Town in completion of the researcher's Masters Degree in Social Work. No identifying information of the participants or organisations/companies will be revealed in the report. No information shared in the study will be revealed outside of the presentation of the research. Participating organizations/companies will be presented with a summary of the research that may assist the development of their programme and its outcomes.

Ethical clearance for this research has been obtained from the University of Cape Town. A copy of this ethical clearance as well as the research proposal can be provided to you on request.

Should you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Emily Masters

Contact number: [redacted]

Email address: [redacted]

Appendix B: Information Letter

To whom it may concern

My name is Emily Masters and I am conducting research as part of my Masters Degree in Social Work at the University of Cape Town.

I kindly seek your participation in a study that will explore the potential for Wilderness Therapy as an effective intervention method with at-risk youth in South Africa. Through exploring the insights and opinions of those working in the field, this research will consider the constraints and potential of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa. The findings of this research will assist in the development of effective interventions with at-risk youth in South Africa and, in so doing, address multiple social challenges in this age group.

If you consent to be part of the study, this will mean participating in a one-on-one interview with me, Emily Masters, as the researcher. The University of Cape Town has placed a restriction on all research that involved contact between people due to the outbreak of Covid-19. In order to protect your safety, during the still volatile period, the interview will be held remotely with the use of Zoom, Skype or, if necessary, telephonic call. To ensure privacy, I request that you ensure you have a private space in which the interview can be conducted so as not to be disturbed or overheard. The interview will last approximately one hour.

The findings of this research will be compiled into a research report and submitted to the University of Cape Town in completion of the researcher's Masters Degree in Social Work. No identifying information of the participants or organisations/companies will be revealed in the report. Although the audio of the interview will be recorded, only the researcher will have access to this. It will later be transcribed and all identifying information such as names and organisations/companies will be changed or omitted. Your participation is confidential and your identity will remain protected throughout the research. No information shared in the study will be revealed outside of the presentation of the research.

There are no known risks of participating in this kind of study. There are no consequences should you choose not to participate or refuse to answer a particular question. You may opt out of the research process at any point. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

As someone who works in the field, I assure you that any information gained in the research process will not affect any work relationships or regard for the organizations/companies who participate.

Should you have any queried, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Emily Masters

Contact number: [redacted]

Email address: [redacted]

Appendix C: Consent Form

Consent for participation in a remote interview over Zoom, Skype or telephonic call for the research conducted by Emily Masters from the University of Cape Town with the below topic.

Exploring the Potential for Wilderness Therapy as an Effective Intervention Method with At-Risk Youth in South Africa.

I have read and understood the information letter provided that indicates the purpose of the study, its main research objectives, the competence on the researcher and the possible benefits of the study. I have received a copy of this consent form and the information letter.

I understand that my participation in this research in entirely voluntary and I can discontinue my participation at any stage of the research. If I choose not to participate, withdraw my involvement in the research or choose not to answer specific questions, I will not be chastised or affected in any way.

I understand that I will be participating in a remote interview lasting approximately one hour. The audio of this interview will be recorded and subsequently transcribed. Only the researcher will have access to these transcriptions and any identifying details will be changed to ensure confidentiality.

I can ensure that I will be in a private space at the agreed upon time of the interview so that I will not be disturbed or overheard. If circumstances change at the time of the interview, I will alert the researcher and we can reschedule my interview. This is to protect my privacy as well as that of the organization/company that I work for.

To ensure confidentiality, I understand that the research will not identify me or the organization/company that I work for by revealing any names or identifying particulars in the presentation of the research.

I have received all the information I needed to make an informed decision to participate in this study and my questions about the study and my participation in it have been answered. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research.

Name of participant	Signature of participant	Date

Appendix D: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Understanding of Wilderness Therapy

What is your understanding of the concept 'Wilderness Therapy'?

In your understanding, what essential aspects are needed for a programme to be considered Wilderness Therapy?

What training, formal or informal, do you think are necessary for those implementing Wilderness Therapy?

What, if anything, do you think is the difference between Wilderness Therapy and wilderness experience programmes?

To what degree do you think Wilderness Therapy is understood by others who work with at-risk youth?

What do you think is the understanding of the participants' families and communities of Wilderness Therapy?

What do you think are common misconceptions held about Wilderness Therapy?

What, if anything, do you think is the difference in the outcomes obtained from Wilderness Therapy as opposed to traditional therapeutic interventions?

Basic Demographic Information

What is your current job title?

In which province do you work?

Which race do you identity with?

Which gender do you identify with?

How old are you?

What are your academic qualifications?

Work Experience

Can you explain how you became involved in working with at-risk youth?

How long have you been involved in programmes that incorporate a wilderness aspect?

What is your previous work experience with at-risk youth?

How long have you worked for your current organization?

What is your role in the programme/s that incorporate a wilderness aspect at your organization?

Wilderness Programme at Respondent's Organization

Can you explain the programme/s at your organization that includes a wilderness aspect?

What proportion of the work done by your organization is this wilderness programme?

What is the primary goal/aim of this wilderness programme?

To what degree have you been involved in these programmes and for how long?

What is the training, formal or informal, of those working directly with the participants on these programmes?

What are the roles and qualifications of other staff members involved in these programmes?

Participants of Wilderness Programmes

Can you explain the type of participants the wilderness programmes are targeting?

What are their ages?

What are their genders?

What are their races?

What are their socio-economic backgrounds?

What are the reasons participants are referred to or are participating in the programme?

Is their participation voluntary?

How many participants attend each programme?

Who refers the participants to the programme?

What is the participant selection process?

How are the participants briefed for the programme?

Practical Components of Wilderness Programmes

How often is your programme run?

What is the duration of a programme?

Can you describe an average day on a programme?

What specific activities are included in each programme?

What are the adventure activities?

What are the other daily activities?

What are the sleeping arrangements?

In what ways, if any, does each programme differ?

Therapeutic Components of Wilderness Programmes

What do you feel are the therapeutic aspects of the programmes?

What type of individual counselling, if any, do the participants receive?

What type of group counselling, if any, do the participants receive?

Who provides the above counselling?

How do you encourage positive social behaviour in the programmes?

How do you discourage negative social behaviour in the programmes?

How do you utilize rules to discourage negative behaviour?

How do you utilize structure to discourage negative behaviour?

What, if any, follow-up/on-going care is provided after the programme?

If included, to what extent do you feel the follow-up/on-going care effect the outcomes of the programme?

Relationships within Wilderness Programmes

In which ways do the participants interact with one another?

What, if anything, do you feel is the effect of these interactions on the programmes outcomes?

What, if any, is the involvement of the participants' families in the programme?

If included, to what extent do you feel the involvement of the participants' families effects the programme and its outcomes?

What, if any, is the involvement of the participants' communities in the programme?

If included, to what extent do you feel the involvement of the participants' communities effects the programme and its outcomes?

In which ways do the facilitators interact with the participants?

What, if anything, do you feel is the effect of these interactions on the programme outcomes?

Outcomes of Wilderness Programmes

What do you think are the most significant benefits of the programme?

What do you feel are the key ingredients to the success of the programme?

Which of these, if any, do you feel are unique to your programme?

What effect, if any, does the programme have on the participants' families and communities?

How are the outcomes of the programmes observed and recorded?

Who does the observation and recording?

How are the programmes monitored and evaluated?

Who does the monitoring and evaluating?

How are the facilitator briefed for the programme?

How are the facilitators debriefed after the programme?

Challenges Facing Wilderness Programmes

What activities, that are not currently included, would you like to add to the programme?

What prevents you from adding these activities to the programme?

What therapeutic aspects, that are not currently included, would you like to add to the programme?

What prevents you from adding these therapeutic aspects to the programme?

What are the biggest challenges in the preparation of the programme?

What are the biggest challenges faced on the programme?

Do you feel these challenges are unique to your programme?

If, not, what additional challenges might face other wilderness programmes?

How is your programme funded?

How do you access this funding?

Wilderness Therapy in South Africa

Other than the programme you are involved in, which other wilderness programmes do you know of that work with at-risk youth in South Africa?

What do you think the impacts on South Africa could be if more wilderness programmes were run with at-risk youth?

In which ways, if any, do you think the South African context a suited for Wilderness Therapy?

In which ways, if any, do you think the South African context hinders the use of Wilderness Therapy?

What do you think could be done to grow the use of Wilderness Therapy in South Africa?

Wilderness Therapy in the Social Services Professions

How do you think Wilderness Therapy is viewed by Social Service Professionals?

How do you think Wilderness Therapy is viewed by key role players such as Government and social services funders?

To your knowledge, what components of Wilderness Therapy are included in the academic training of Social Service Professionals?

What elements do you think could be included into academic training in order to better equip Social Service Professionals to implement Wilderness Therapy?