

Wild Minds:  
Adventure Therapy, Ecopsychology, and the Rewilding of Humanity

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Dedication

For Bean.

### Acknowledgments

Thank you, Jim. You said: “Let’s get this done before the snow flies.” A couple of Winters later it happened.

Thank you, BBT, for the limbic resonance.

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### Abstract

This dissertation sits at the intersection of ecopsychology and adventure therapy. It explores humankind's relationship with nature and wilderness, as well as the co-evolution of ecopsychology and adventure therapy within the field of psychology. The primary aim of this dissertation is to lay the groundwork for rewilding humanity with the specific focus of providing practitioners with a compelling case for intentionally integrating ecopsychology with their adventure therapy practice. This theoretical paper concludes with a suggested expansion of ethics and competencies for adventure therapists.

*Keywords:* adventure therapy, ecopsychology, nature, rewilding

## Preface

I have a deep and abiding love for my home, the great state of Maine. I know its mountains, its coastline, its woods and waterways. I have been imprinted by these landscapes since early adolescence where I grew up free ranging across this unique and rich topography. The investigation that follows began then, with my 13-year-old semi-feral self.

Fast-forward a decade or so and I am exploring outwards along the Appalachian Trail and expanding my internal world through the metabolism of the writings of John Muir, Aldous Leopold, and Mary Oliver. My love of the outdoors merged and resonated with a newfound passion for community service and helping others. I found my way to Unity College where I studied Adventure Education Leadership and Adventure Therapy.

Another decade on and I find myself thinking and writing a dissertation that parallels my journey of discovery and growth. The title of this investigation, *Wild Minds: Adventure Therapy, Ecopsychology, and the Rewilding of Humanity*, mirrors my own path from early adolescence to today. I have born witness to the power of adventure therapy to help others change and grow, have experienced a number of the ecopsychological phenomena detailed in these pages, and have developed a healthy appreciation for the role these two areas have to play in informing and directly taking on some of the pressing challenges facing humanity today. It can be weighty at times.

Fortunately, I have always been a curious and playful person. My training in clinical psychology has only served to exacerbate this tendency to explore and integrate. What follows is the trailing of a thread through these different realms, a line of connection and consideration that is both personal and professional.

## Wild Minds: Adventure Therapy, Ecopsychology, and the Rewilding of Humanity

*“What a long way the ancestral memory has to go, seeking,  
like a pale sleuth-hound among obscure dusks and forgotten nocturnal silences,  
for the lost trails of the soul.”*

*Fionna Macleod*

### Overview

Nature has been singing its siren song to humanity since the beginning of time. In Gilgamesh, the oldest written story on earth, Enkidu the Brave “roamed all over the wilderness...far from the cities of men, ate grass with gazelles...drank clear water from the waterholes, kneeling beside the antelope and deer” (Mitchell, 2004, p. 74). Two thousand years later, mystics and prophets, ready to give birth to the world’s religions, wandered the deserts, forests, and oceans seeking solace and wisdom in wild places (Smith, 1991). In the 1800s, Thoreau too heard the siren’s call and recorded in *Walden* that he “went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach” (Thoreau, 1999, p. 27). In modern day, although not the primordial wilds of Gilgamesh’s time, nature still has seemingly endless lessons to impart. The call remains compelling and informs this project.

While on an instinctive level, this call resonates with humankind, there are profound and sometimes unsettling questions about humanity’s role as a species and its relationship with nature in a time of great environmental crisis. What is wilderness? What exactly is it that calls? Why does it matter? Is there a relationship between nature and humanity? What is the relationship between nature and humanity? What does wilderness mean in the context of a world increasingly shaped by humankind? In search of answers, recent pioneers like John Muir, Rachel Carson, Edward Abbey, and Gary Snyder captured the imaginations of a country while

simultaneously illuminating the profound intricacies of the natural world. Their writings have inspired generations of environmentalists, conservationists, artists, and researchers.

This legacy of naturalistic thought and research has helped to focus my thinking and exploration around a few key areas: (a) humankind has evolved to seek out nature and in modern times has undergone a process of self-domestication, necessitating immersive, sensory-oriented experiences in nature; (b) ecopsychology functions as an overarching philosophy that facilitates the understanding of human nature, humanity's place within the biosphere, and its need for connection and reciprocity with the natural world; and (c) adventure therapy explicitly cultivates intrapersonal and interpersonal insight through the use of challenging activities involving real and perceived risk in a variety of natural settings thus placing adventure therapists in a unique position to help deepen this conversation of discovery and transition.

There is a need to add a "relational" dimension to adventure therapy. This includes both a relationship to oneself and other people, and a fleshing out of a relationship to the natural world and non-human others. This means expanding adventure therapy beyond adventure and common adventure narratives. Alette Willis (2011), storyteller and researcher, in her article "Re-storying Wilderness and Adventure Therapies: healing places and selves in an era of environmental crisis" noted that:

All practitioners need to ask themselves whether the stories they are drawing on and working with open up useful possibilities for selves and societies in an era of environmental crisis or merely propagate and reify ways of thinking and living that will contribute to further declines in the health of our shared ecosystems. (p. 93)

This poses a challenge to psychology in general and adventure therapists in particular. There is a need to fundamentally change how humans are relating to the natural world; and, as

explored further in subsequent pages, adventure therapists have a particular role to play in this cultural shift. However, “One of the limitations of wilderness and adventure therapies in relation to instilling environmental values lies in some of the stories that are often unwittingly invoked” (Willis, 2011, p. 93). This project incorporates ecopsychology into adventure therapy practice in order to amend this framework and offer alternate stories that may better serve our clients and the environment.

### **Joining Ecopsychology and Adventure Therapy**

Two relatively recent concepts offer the backbone for this investigation: adventure therapy and ecopsychology. The literature drawing together ecopsychology and adventure therapy is as compelling as it is sparse and scattered. Almut Beringer (2004) posits that there is a need for adventure programs to adopt an ecological paradigm:

In short, natural settings have long provided the medium and opportunity for adventure learning and therapy. Yet theoretical frame-works and explanatory models of why and how adventure programming works rarely give sufficient credit to how simply "being in nature" can contribute to personal development, healing, and therapeutic success. (p. 54, quotations in original)

Accounting for the impact of natural environments and their role in helping people to grow and develop within an adventure therapy context is something that is just starting to be examined within the field. As such, it offers adventure therapy scholars and practitioners an opportunity to assume a leadership role in developing supportive research and literature. As Beringer (2004) notes, “adventure therapy, in particular, might be well placed to set directions, practicing as it does, in the larger ecological context, the outdoors” (p. 60). Being immersed in a variety of outdoor natural settings provides adventure therapists with a unique viewpoint that is

essential when seen from an evolutionary, sociological, psychological and ecological perspective.

Ecopsychology and adventure therapy share similar challenges and developmental histories and have been selected for this project largely due to their mutually beneficial and complementary natures. Ecopsychology offers the framework in which to view the methodology of adventure therapy and both theoretical orientations privilege a phenomenological and experiential understanding of the world. While adventure therapists are likely to understand this on an intuitive level, this investigation offers an expansion of adventure therapist competencies and ethics to enhance and flesh out this connection. These concepts are expanded in subsequent chapters and specifically in Chapter 4, which offers a more detailed exploration and integration.

### **An Authentic Perspective**

Exploring these areas is a necessarily integrative process and draws on diverse disciplines including environmental ethics, psychology, sociology, human ecology, experiential education, philosophy, geology, geography and naturalist writings. While making use of a variety of fields, the three main areas of investigation include (a) humankind's relationship with what David Abram (1996) describes as the *more-than-human world*, (b) the field of ecopsychology, and (c) the field of adventure therapy. Relevant literature is considered and conceptualized as an intensive exploration of these three areas. The organization of this exploration flows from wider topics to more specific areas. Thus, this investigation starts with the broad exploration of nature and the concept of *rewilding*, progresses to the philosophy and theory of ecopsychology, and then makes its way further down the river towards adventure therapy. In order to engage this material, I have adopted a framework that includes traditional definitions of scholarship without being entirely bound by them.

This project assumes an “indigenous perspective” as laid out in *The Authentic Dissertation: Alternative ways of knowing, research, and representation* by Don Trent Jacobs.

As Jacobs (2008) notes in speaking about dissertations and traditional scholarship:

Doctoral programs represent the highest level of such education, and dissertation work is the pinnacle event in them. Many educators, however, are not satisfied that this culminating product is really doing all that much to solve the challenges facing us in the twenty-first century. (p. 1)

In thinking about this project I wanted to avoid this pitfall and instead offer something that did address these challenges. Along the way, I noticed myself adhering to a number of tenets of an authentic dissertation put forth by Jacobs (2008):

- Focus more on important questions than on research methodologies per se;
- Seek to make the world a better place;
- Tend to be interdisciplinary;
- Do not fall for the myth of objectivity;
- Align with sustainability priorities;
- Are not overly anthropocentric in nature;
- Remember to look for life’s beauty and joy. (pp. 1-2, bullet points in original)

I believe that this approach frames the content of this dissertation and is essential to its success; that “Indigenous principles about the sacredness of space and place; the purpose of research to benefit the community; and the spiritual awareness that everything is connected; and that knowledge must incorporate the mysterious” (Jacobs, 2008, p. 5).

**Literary Thoughts**

In contrast to a standard literature review that groups all previous writing and exploration at the beginning, this theoretical exploration has sorted all relevant literature into their respective chapters. Thus, each chapter opens with its own literature review and then progresses deeper into content and theory. This approach provides a firm footing that serves as a point of departure for the subsequent explorations in each chapter. Additionally, each chapter concludes with two thoughts for contemplation and two suggested activities for application. These thoughts and activities are directed towards emerging adventure therapists and are intended to deepen the reflection around each chapter and its most salient themes. The chapters are organized as follows:

Chapter 1: The More-Than-Human World introduces and explores the concepts of geologic scale, exponential growth, human reciprocity with nature, and rewilding.

Chapter 2: House and Soul shifts to exploring the field of psychology and its understanding of nature and the wilderness experience, starting with the work of Sigmund Freud, William James, and Carl Jung. Building onto this foundation, the chapter continues with an introduction and exploration of ecopsychology.

Chapter 3: Where the Wild Things Are offers a brief history of adventure therapy as a methodology of psychology.

Chapter 4: Confluence merges ecopsychology with adventure therapy and includes implications for adventure therapy practitioners (and psychology in general), as well as suggested professional competencies and an expanded adventure therapy ethic.

Chapter 5: Fareforward offers some closing thoughts on adventure therapy within an ecopsychological frame.



## Chapter 1: The More-Than-Human World

*“When we see land as a community to which we belong,  
we may begin to use it with love and respect.”  
Aldo Leopold*

This chapter focuses on exploring humanity’s connection to the more-than-human-world (Abram, 1996), and opens with a few analogies that offer perspective on the immensity of time and how difficult it can be to conceptualize and work with. This concept is crucial as it provides a useful frame in which to view human behavior and its limitations as a species. Similarly, exploring exponential growth, also known as *doubling time*, lends a solid viewpoint to understanding trends in human population and resource consumption. This in turn provides the context to examine humanity as currently existing that includes, of course, its attending psychological phenomena. A section on human ecology explores some of the varied ways that societies live and have lived throughout time. The chapter closes with a look at mental health in the current geologic age and digs into the idea of rewilding as a means towards informing the improvement of overall physical and mental health. To begin this exploration into adventure therapy, ecopsychology, and the wilderness experience, it is first useful to explore the question of scale.

### A Question of Scale

From a geological perspective, human history in its entirety represents a very minute amount of the world’s existence. So minute in fact that if the earth’s entire history was compressed into the span of a single NBA regulation basketball game (48 minutes in length), humans would not even emerge until the last tenth of a second of the final quarter (Khan, 2012). Humanity doesn’t even make an appearance until that desperate last second game winning shot is practically in the basket!

Sticking with sports analogies for a moment, picture a soccer field in your mind. The length of the pitch represents all 4.5 billion years of the earth's history and contains everything from its formation to the present day. The last millimeter before the goal line encapsulates the entirety of human history (Palmer & Zen, 2014). If we pull out our magnifying glass we see that:

...most of what we commonly study as human history has all happened since the beginning of the agricultural revolution – about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of our original millimeter of the soccer field, or roughly the thickness of a blade of grass on the goal-line! (Palmer & Zen, 2014).

This may have been what an awestruck Whitman (2013) hinted at in his classic work, *Leaves of Grass*: “I accept Time absolutely. It alone is without flaw, It alone rounds and completes all, That mystic baffling wonder.” (p. 47)

One last example to help wrap your brain around this elusive concept of time and scale comes from David Brower, an indefatigable mountaineer and environmentalist:

Consider the six days of Genesis as a figure of speech for what has in fact been 4 billion years. On this scale, one day equals something like 666 million years, and thus, all day Monday and until Tuesday noon, creation was busy getting the world going. Life began Tuesday noon, and the beautiful organic wholeness of it developed over the next four days. At 4 pm Saturday, the big reptiles came on. Five hours later, when the redwoods appeared, there were no more big reptiles. At three minutes before midnight on the last day, man appeared. At one-fourth of a second before midnight Christ arrived. At one-fortieth of a second before midnight, the Industrial Revolution began. (Brower, 1993)

These quotes are offered to illustrate the amazingly immense scale that is the context in which human history is unfolding. This is what is known in geology as *deep time*. Deep time as

a concept stems from the work of James Hutton, often regarded as the father of the field of geology (Dean, 1997). Hutton, a bit of a renaissance man, while mucking about on his farm and a myriad of other projects in the Scottish countryside back in the late 1700s developed a variety of theories that are now considered fundamental to the field of geology (Dean, 1997). He observed fish fossils embedded on dry land and realized that there was a rather large discrepancy between what the paradigm of the day offered as an interpretation of time and what he was observing in the numerous layers of stone (Dean, 1997). While this doesn't seem that stunning from a modern perspective, it was a real corker to intellectual circles of the time and challenged people to think in a new way about the earth and its history. His thoughts about incremental change occurring over long periods of time laid the groundwork that later helped Darwin develop his theory of evolution (Wessels, 2006).

In modern day, Hutton's discovery of deep time continues to pose a conundrum for psychology: it is not readily intuited by social obligate primates, namely humans, with an average lifespan around 70 years and a sustained attention span of about 40 minutes (Berk, 2014). The difficulty with this is twofold. First, it is hard to grasp the overall concept to begin with, especially if one has not been exposed to a geology class or happened upon the concept during a game of trivia. Second, its implications are varied and involve interdisciplinary knowledge and critical thinking to address. One of these implications is the profound effect that humanity has had on the planet within such a relatively short time frame.

Harkening back to the last example of deep time from Brower (1993), where he compared time to the six days of Genesis, he concluded that: "We are surrounded with people who think that what we have been doing for that one-fortieth of a second can go on indefinitely. They are considered normal, but they are stark raving mad." To explore this madness further, we

must first grapple with another obtuse concept, this time from a mathematical and ecological perspective: exponential functions.

### **The Problem With Exponential Growth**

As suggested in the preceding section, humans have a hard time thinking about the big picture. They can also be surprised by how quickly things can change. Time is both difficult to understand in terms of history, and when looking ahead and trying to estimate how long something might take (like a dissertation...). In considering how large something might grow if provided favorable conditions, there are attending consequences that may unfold with each. To illustrate, a couple of stories - the first involving some grains of wheat and a chess board and the second involving reindeer living large on an island, offer good illustrations of this concept.

Carl Sagan (1997) in *Billions and Billions*, offers the story of the Grand Vizier who invented chess in ancient Persia. As a reward for creating this amazing game, the King offered him anything his heart desired, however, the Grand Vizier:

...wished only for a modest reward. Gesturing to the eight columns and eight rows of squares on the board he had invented, he asked that he be given a single grain of wheat on the first square, twice that on the second square, twice *that* on the third, and so on, until each square had its complement of wheat. No, the King remonstrated, this is too modest a reward for so important an invention...secretly marveling at the humility and restraint of his counselor, the King consented. When, however the Master of the Royal Granary began to count out the grains, the King faced an unpleasant surprise. The number of grains starts out small enough: 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, 512, 1024...but by the time the 64<sup>th</sup> square is approached, the number of grains becomes colossal, staggering. In fact, the number is nearly 18.5 quintil-lion. (p. 8, italics original)

As the story concludes, this bankrupts the King and the Grand Vizier becomes ruler of all the land. What started out as a single grain of wheat exploded into a staggering quantity of riches. But how could such a seemingly small thing become so large? The answer: exponential growth—and the quirky effect known as *doubling time*.

As the number slowly increases, the rate at which it grows starts to snowball faster and faster. If one were to view this in graph form, the line would start out relatively flat, slowly incline, then a bit more, and then it reaches a tipping point where it climbs vertically up and off the page. The tricky part with this sort of equation is that people are pretty good at understanding the front end of the problem, the part that grows slowly, but seem to be very surprised by the rapid rate of change that occurs in the second half. While this is a fun story for chess, math and wheat enthusiasts, what does this mean in real life? Why does doubling time matter? This is where the second story comes in.

While the chess story had a relatively positive outcome (at least for the Grand Vizier!), not all examples of doubling time are so rosy in nature. In his book, *The Myth of Progress*, ecology professor Tom Wessels (2006) explores the story of the reindeer of St. Matthew Island north of the Aleutian archipelago in Alaska. The epic battle for the Aleutians in WWII is beyond the scope of this paper, but what is of interest is that the United States set up a base of operations on St. Matthew where “as a means to supply fresh meat to the operators of the station, the Coast Guard introduced twenty-nine reindeer to the island in August 1944. With the surrender of the Japanese the following year, the St. Matthew station was closed; the reindeer herd was forgotten” (Wessels, 2006, p. 23). They were then left to fend for themselves. Twenty-nine reindeer may not seem like much, but when a biologist returned a bit over a decade later, he “inventoried the

entire 130-square mile island and counted 1,350 healthy animals—a forty-seven fold increase” (Wessels, 2006, p. 23).

With no predation and an abundance of space and food, the reindeer were living large, the picture of health. By 1963, the population totaled 6,000 animals, but things had started to change on the island (Wessels, 2006, p.23). “This time the reindeer were noticeably malnourished, having lost an average of 40 percent of their body weight...their forage in reindeer lichen was dramatically degraded” (Wessels, 2006, p.23). Three years later, the population had nose-dived to “forty-two remaining animals – all females with the exception of one deformed male. By this point the herd was no longer able to reproduce, and the entire reindeer population became extinct sometime in the 1980s” (Wessels, 2006, p. 23). This story of exponential population growth is an excellent example of the concepts of *carrying capacity* and *the limits to growth* (Wessels, 2006). Wessels goes on to explain them thus:

Every population of organisms in every ecosystem on this planet has a carrying capacity.

If they exceed it, their system will be degraded, creating negative feedback that will eventually cause a decline in the organism’s population size. In this way, carrying capacity sets the limits to growth for all populations. (p. 24)

These examples offer a glimpse of what seemingly small changes over time can render and how doubling time can push a species to its limits in swift and surprising ways. This next section details an example of population growth and resource consumption that hits a little closer to home.

### **Gone Forth and Multiplied**

There has been a surge in human population in the last 100 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 1900 (United Nations, 2001) to the current estimate of around 7.1 billion human beings living

on this planet (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). Projecting into the future, some estimates have the population reaching around 10.4 billion by 2100 (Steiner, 2002). This has lead many to observe how the “twentieth century has been an unprecedented century of population growth, economic development and environmental change” (United Nations, 2001, p.1). It doesn’t take a genius to realize that exponentially increasing consumption (humanity) in a finite system (Earth) will present some challenges.

Being a genius may help make it a little more accessible, however. Vaclav Smil, author of *Harvesting the Biosphere* (2012), and Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada (Smil, 2013) has done a bit of thinking about this topic. In addition to writing some 30 other books on a wide variety of topics (Smil, 2013), Smil has explored the mathematical consequences of this ‘unprecedented century’ and he has turned up some interesting figures. For example, he notes that about 12% of the Earth is currently under cultivation to feed humanity (Smil, 2012). 12%! Humanity is slowly converting the earth into people, literally fashioning the world in its own image.

Accompanying the increase in population, the distribution of humanity has also shifted substantially over this same time period, with half of the world’s population now living in cities (Steiner, 2002). It is not surprising that worldwide urban populations have doubled since the early 2000s (Steiner, 2002), with cities now accounting for roughly five million square kilometers of the Earth’s surface (Smil, 2012). With the transition to urban settings, humanity has fundamentally altered how it lives on Earth over just the last handful of generations.

As argued elsewhere, there are limits to this growth (Meadows, 1972; Wessels, 2006); humanity just hasn’t reached them yet, and/or may be utilizing technology to extend them. Humanity’s ecological footprint as a species has also increased exponentially during this

relatively short span of time (Marten, 2001) - closely mirroring its growth in population. If we throw in the rise and ubiquity of technology, the expansion of the internet, rapid growth of the global economy, in addition to the exponential growth of human population and resource consumption noted above, it is no wonder why the few short decades from the 1950s to present day has been referred to as *The Great Acceleration* (Steffen & Elliott, 2004). This rapid increase has resulted in evolutionary whiplash and has led to a whole host of new difficulties. Indeed, it seems as though this great acceleration has prompted a new definition of modern times altogether.

### **A New Epoch**

The growth of humanity, urbanization and industrialization, its population explosion and resource consumption, indeed most of the Great Acceleration, has occurred in the most recent portion of the latest geologic epoch known as the *Holocene* (Woodhead, 1999; Marten, 2001). “Holo-” for entirely or wholly (The American Heritage Dictionary [AHD], 1992, p. 309). and “-cene” for recent (AHD, 1992, p. 863), capturing the “entirely recent” period of geologic history. The Holocene covers everything that has occurred over the last twelve thousand or so years (AHD, 1992), the blink of an eye geologically speaking. Yet within this relatively short time frame, something has occurred to suggest that we have transitioned out of the Holocene into something else entirely.

“In 2002, Paul Crutzen, the Nobel Prize-winning chemist, suggested that we had left the Holocene and had entered a new Epoch—the Anthropocene—because of the global environmental effects of increased human population and economic development” (Zalasiewicz, et al., 2008, p.1). The Anthropocene, “Anthropo-” a prefix for human being (AHD, 1992, p. 78), think anthropology, and “cene” for new, represents an epoch in time where the defining



geological happenings are fundamentally human related (Zalasiewicz et al., 2008). This would mark the first time that humanity had registered enough to warrant a nod of recognition from the field of geology, at least as far as naming epochs goes. That should be startling enough news for students in geology classes across the world to wake up and take note.

While this is a matter that is currently contested in geological and environmental spheres, the very fact that the conversation is occurring raises a number of questions. What does it mean when humanity starts to define geologic periods after itself? If human kind is the most noticeable aspect of this geologic period, what does this portend for other species? What has changed for humanity over its relatively short history that has led to this moment? This section explores these questions by investigating the significant cultural, environmental, and health implications that accompany life in the Anthropocene. This section also aims to situate and frame the subsequent exploration of ecopsychology and adventure therapy within a larger context. Gaining a little background in human ecology can shed some light on how people interact with their environment and how this might be changing in the Anthropocene.

### **The Context of Human Ecology**

According to the American Heritage Dictionary (1992), the word *ecology* stems from the Greek words *oikos*, house, and *logia*, study (p. 583). Ecology literally means *study of the house* and as a field of scientific inquiry concerns itself with the interactions between living beings and their environment. By extension, human ecology is focused on how people interact with the world around them (Marten, 2004). More specifically, human ecology is “The study of the detrimental effects of modern civilization on the environment, with a view toward prevention or reversal through conservation” (AHD, 1992, p. 583). It can be argued that human ecology focuses its attention on discerning the complex patterns of interaction that exist at the center of

the Anthropocene. As a field of study it offers a useful lens through which to view humanity's relationship with the earth over time. Humanity's journey from previous geologic ages to this one offers some insight into our connection with nature and the wilderness and how this has changed over time.

**Self-domestication.** As Bill McKibben (1995) observed, "We have grown so big that we literally overshadow the earth. Nature as something separate from man has vanished" (p.11). While domesticating animals and the world around it, humanity has also domesticated itself. In this process, humanity has lost some wildness. To be domesticated means to "feel comfortable at home...to adopt or make fit for domestic use or life...to introduce and accustom to another region; naturalize...to bring down to the level of the ordinary person" (AHD, 1992, p. 550). So self-domestication consists of naturalizing yourself to a new environment, in the case of humanity, to a predominantly urban habitat. This transition led to a corresponding increase in population through shorter birth intervals and an increased amount of food which could be transformed into people (Diamond, 2002; Marten, 2001; Quinn, 1992).

According to Jared Diamond (1992; 2002), with the transition from a primarily hunter-gatherer lifestyle to that of one involving domestication and agriculture, humanity fundamentally changed itself and its relation to the natural world. This change was not without consequence, as the shift contributed to increasing epidemics of infectious diseases and a rise in a variety of health issues as:

Some genotypes that used to serve us well as hunter-gatherers now serve us poorly as first-world citizens who forage only in supermarkets—especially metabolically thrifty genotypes that now predispose to type II diabetes, salt-conserving genotypes that

predispose to hypertension, and other genotypes predisposing to cardiovascular disease and lipid disorders. (Diamond, 2002, p. 706)

It seems as though evolution is still working on catching up to our rapidly shifting diet and lifestyles. For Diamond, “these epidemics pose the same dilemma as do efforts to domesticate more wild plant and animal species: how can we ensure that agriculture spreads only happiness, and not suffering as well?” (Diamond, 2002, p. 706). This process of self-domestication has had a profound impact both on our physical health and abilities, and our mental health.

**Urbanization and mental health.** The trend towards urbanization began with the rise of agriculture and the consolidation of food production and storage (Quinn, 1992). This increased further with the advent of industrialization and labor specialization and has continued to rise in modern times (Smil, 2012). According to Kalpana Srivastava (2009) in a paper appropriately titled “Urbanization and Mental Health”:

Urbanization brings with it a unique set of advantages and disadvantages. This demographic transition is accompanied by economic growth and industrialization, and by profound changes in social organization and in the pattern of family life. Urbanization affects mental health through the influence of increased stressors and factors such as overcrowded and polluted environment, high levels of violence, and reduced social support... (p. 75)

This is a marked departure from how humanity lived for much of its evolutionary history in extended kinship networks of mutually supportive and reciprocal relations (Shepard & Shepard, 1998). Srivastava (2009) continues:

Impact of urbanization is associated with an increase in mental disorders...The range of disorders and deviances associated with urbanization is enormous. Some of the disorders are severe mental disorders, depression, substance abuse, alcoholism, crime, family disintegration, and alienation. (p. 75)

Humanity's long history of working together in small groups, in a natural setting, towards common goals of survival has been altered, resulting in challenges both physical and mental (Shepard & Shepard, 1998). This discrepancy between lifestyles and attending suffering is ripe territory for exploration. Exploring nature and wilderness offers a useful counterpoint to the effects of urbanization.

### **Nature and Wilderness**

This section seeks to introduce a definition of both *wilderness* and *nature* and explore each in turn. While wilderness may be a fiction resulting from dichotomous thinking (city/wilderness) endemic in western culture (Kidner, 1994; Fisher, 2013), it is worth exploring as there are a number of alluring narratives that inform and draw many outdoor professionals.

**Defining nature.** Creating a definition for an amorphous construct such as nature is a problematic task at best. The term itself means many things to many people and professions and has been grappled with probably since there were two people around to talk about it. Marcus Aurelius, the famous stoic philosopher, in *Meditations* (1952) suggested expanding human perception and adopting a wide and integrative lens when considering nature:

Constantly regard the universe as one living being, having one substance and one soul; and observe how all things have reference to one perception, the perception of this one living being; and how all things act with one movement; and how all things are the

cooperating causes of all things which exist; observe too the continuous spinning of the thread and the contexture of the web. (p. 266)

Adopting a similarly wide view of nature, Rachel and Stephen Kaplan in *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective* (1989) note:

Nature includes parks and open spaces, meadows and abandoned fields, street trees and backyard gardens. We are referring to places near and far, common and unusual, managed and unkempt, big, small, and in-between, where plants grow by human design or even despite it. We are referring to areas that would often be described as green, but they are also natural when the green is replaced by white or brown or red and yellow. (p. 2)

Expanding on the difficulty with pinning a definition on nature, Kaplan and Kaplan (1989) observe, “It is clear that whereas the concept of nature is very much part of the human experience the language for discussing it is neither rich nor precise” (p. 3). While our language may hold us back from a satisfactory, all encompassing definition, the terms nature and natural environment “refer to things and places we have all experienced” (p. 3). Similar to wilderness and wildness, nature must be intuited and felt, experienced directly to be understood.

**Wilderness and wildness.** 2014 marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Wilderness Act passed by congress and signed by President Johnson into law in the fall of 1964 (United States, 1964). The Wilderness Act supplies the following legal definition of *wilderness*:

A wilderness, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is hereby recognized as an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. (United States, 1964)

This is an admirably succinct and modern definition of what wilderness is that also begins to capture the degree to which humans have impacted the environment and by extension wilderness. Primordial wilderness, of a place “untrammeled by man,” is elusive, perhaps extinct, in the modern world. This is what Bill McKibben, writer and environmental activist, spoke of in *End of Nature* (1989) when he observed that, “Wilderness – in its truest sense, of places totally separated from human influence – is extinguished” (p. 15). In his essay, “Wilderness Lost, Wilderness Regained,” Robert Kimber, canoeist, writer, and all around awesome Mainer, expands on this perspective:

So when we speak of wilderness now, those of us who advocate for it have no illusions. We are not talking about wilderness in the sense of all there was before there was any. That is the wilderness we have irrevocably lost. What we are talking about now is the wilderness we can regain by intent and design, wilderness as a management category. (Austin, Bennett, & Kimber, 2003, p. 11)

McKibben (1989) continues with the idea of wilderness as management, noting, “I’m done mourning. Innocence gone, we need to work wisely to build societies that allow natural recovery, let the rest of creation begin, however tentatively, to flourish once more” (p. 15). Thus, we understand wilderness to be a construct that is intentionally rebuilt by humanity. This irony was not lost on Kimber:

But surely, you will object, “cultivating wilderness” has to be a contradiction in terms, a prime example of oxymoron if ever there was one. Wilderness is at one end of the scale; cultivation is at the other. What is wild is not cultivated; what is cultivated is not wild; and never the twain shall meet. That is, I’m convinced, an outdated notion. Or rather, it is a notion that was never correct in the first place. Thoreau’s dictum “In Wildness is the

preservation of the World” is all too familiar. Much less familiar and quoted less often but – it seems to me vastly more important in our present context – is Wendell Berry’s corollary to that dictum: “In human culture is the preservation of wildness.” (2003, pp. 11-12, quotations original)

Both Kimber and McKibben recognize that humanity may not know wilderness in the sense of walking through pristine old growth forests or untrammelled desert landscapes, but that, if assisted, nature could begin to recuperate sufficiently to allow deeper connections; that through intentional management, humanity could regain, if not true wilderness, a sense of wildness. Cultivation of wilderness and of wildness then, is an obligation of humanity.

Laurence Cookson (2011), in his article “A Definition of Wildness,” sought to draw a distinction between wilderness and naturalness, noting, “while everything is natural, the quality of wildness can vary or become dysfunctional” (p. 187). Cookson observed that:

Wildness is defined as a quality of interactive processing between an organism and its surroundings in which the realities of base natures are met, allowing the construction of durable systems. Wildness is a process that has become an otherness to humans but nevertheless remains a source of insight and inspiration. (p. 187)

Cookson (2011) notes that wildness is an interactive state between humans and nature, not necessarily a discreet location in and of itself. While environments can be remote or inaccessible, it is humanity’s experience of them that makes them truly wild. Nick Hayes (2013) poetically relates this in his story “The Possession of Lachlan Lubanach.”

Lachlan is a great chief who surveys his domain from the heights of his castle. He has complete mastery over his domain and is a renowned hunter, “But one beast had eluded his keep” (Hayes, 2013, p. 46), a rare hart, and “Lachlan wanted its bones” for his “ossified

menagerie” (Hayes, 2013, p. 46). One day he spies the creature and grabs his ax, his armor, and his steed and launches off in hot pursuit. As the hunt wears on, Lachlan, becoming encumbered and fatigued, gradually discards his helmet, his horse, his armor, and finally his ax, everything in order to catch the hart:

And crawling on all fours up the mountain, breathing in the wind which buffeted his form, Lachlan grew closer to the Hart. And then it is dusk, and Lachlan is high enough to see the line of darkness sweep across the land, like his great hall doors swinging shut. From the East, his ears take a message from the wind: the hounds have been released. The castle is lost beneath a mist, inside and out of his head; after a day’s absence, as darkness descends, the castle is hunting him down. And with the howls of the hounds at his heels, Lachlan grows closer to the Hart. For his mind is all moisture now, a rain cloud of reaction, charged through the chase: he is permeated; he is possessed. The hounds again, closer. Lachlan thinks of the bones, the stillness in the keep. The dogs appear. The lightning flashes. The white hart bolts, Lachlan with it. (pp. 49-50)

As Hayes (2013) suggests, humanity’s journey to rediscover its wildness mirrors that of Lachlan’s. This process is daunting and cumbersome at first, but offers deep connections to nature and ourselves (our Hart/heart) if we are able to overcome self-imposed fetters and venture forth.

### **Discontent in the Anthropocene**

Paul Shepard (1982) begins his seminal text, *Nature and Madness*, with the question: “why do men persist in destroying their habitat?” (p. 1). From this question he ventures forth into a wide number of fields in search of answers, with particular attention provided to traditions related to human development.



**The perils of arrested development.** Speaking of our culture, Shepard (1982) notes that we “have largely abandoned the ceremonies of adolescent initiation that affirm the metaphoric, mysterious, and poetic quality of nature, reducing them to esthetics and amenities” (p.11). Shepard is not the first to note that humanity left something very important behind when it transitioned to the civilized world we know today (Freud, 1962; Jung & Cambell, 1974); however he became a leading voice for implicating this loss with our current environmental crisis. Shepard (1982) states clearly that disrupted development coupled with alienation from the green world leads to “ontogenetic crippling” (p. 15), a disjointed or regressive pattern of human development that has disastrous results for humanity.

Shepard (1982) further conjectured that human kind ultimately reaps what it has sown in the form of “traits that no society wants, but gets because they are coupled in some way with the childish will to destroy and other useful regressions” (p. 15). Shepard’s work expanded on that of Freud and Jung (their contributions considered in the next chapter, *House and Soul*), and set the stage for further explorations into the costs of modern culture and living without meaningful connection to nature.

### **Conservation Biology**

Conservation biology sprang into being in the late 70s and early 80s as a vehicle for addressing systemic challenges contributing to species loss and ecological degradation and is often associated with the pioneering work of biologist Michael Soule (Pullin, 2002).

Conservation efforts had been occurring for some time and were largely viewed as failing, or extremely limited in their ability to combat these challenges (Soule, 1998). As Wendell Berry (1984) observed, a great irony related to the conservation movement was that:

Obviously, the more artificial a human environment becomes, the more the word “natural” becomes a term of value. It can be argued, indeed, that the conservation movement, as we know it today, is largely a product of the industrial revolution. The people who want clean air, clear streams, and wild forests, prairies, and deserts are the people who no longer have them. (p. 7, quotations in original)

As the environment becomes increasingly degraded, people crave more connection with nature and conservation biology evolved as a way to effect real and lasting change.

Conservation biology views itself as “crisis oriented,” with an eye toward “the long term viability of whole systems” (Soule, 1985, p. 727), that aims to “modify significantly the *rate* at which biotic diversity is destroyed” (Soule, 1985, p. 733, italics in original). Starting in the late 80s and early 90s, Soule and Reed Noss developed a radical new approach to conservation called *rewilding* (Kolbert, 2012).

**Rewilding.** Rewilding refers to the concept in conservation biology of reintroducing species to environments where they used to be prior to being driven off by humans, for example, reintroducing wolves to Montana (Monbiot, 2013). Rewilding expands the tenets put forward by Soule (1985) that “evolution is good...biotic diversity has intrinsic value” (p. 731) and, among other things, seeks to reintroduce the “three C’s: Cores, Corridors, and Carnivores” (Soule, 1998, p. 5). The three C’s refer to the need for large tracts of land under conservation protection (cores), avenues that connect these cores together to allow for species to migrate and sustain their populations (corridors), and for megafauna (carnivores) to be reintroduced into areas they previously inhabited but have since been extirpated (Soule, 1998). Soule advocates for rewilding on both a scientific basis, and on ethical and aesthetic grounds:

First, there is the ethical issue of human responsibility. In many regions the deliberate government policy has been to exterminate large carnivores. Unfortunately, this practice continues...Second, by insuring the viability of large predators, we restore the subjective, emotional essence of “the wild” or wilderness. Wilderness is hardly “wild” where top carnivores, such as cougars, jaguars, wolves, wolverines, grizzlies, or black bears have been extirpated. Without these components, nature seems somehow incomplete, truncated, overly tame. Human opportunities to attain humility are reduced. (p. 7, quotations in original)

This sentiment is echoed by George Monbiot (2013), author of *Feral: Searching for Enchantment on the Frontiers of Rewilding*, in an interview with Orion Magazine entitled “The Great Rewilding”:

I think rewilding, or certainly the version of it that I’ve been suggesting, has appealed to people both because it gives hope, in that we can reverse some of the horrible destructive processes of which we’re all aware, but also it introduces into our lives this element of wonder and delight which is too often missing. (Sahn, 2014, p. 19)

It is this “sense of wonder” that captures the promise of rewilding. Sahn (2014) crafted an excellent subtitle to her article: “Restoring nature also restores the wildness inside each of us” (p. 18), which leads us to our next section.

**Rewilding humanity.** Rewilding seeks to address the idea, noted above, that as a species we have incrementally domesticated ourselves, slowly distancing from contact with the natural world over time so that it becomes “alien” and “other” to us. George Monbiot proposes that:

Of all the species that need rewilding, I think human beings come at the top of the list. I would love to see a more intense and emotional engagement of human beings with the

living world. The process of rewilding the ecosystem gives us an opportunity to make our lives richer and rawer than they tend to be in our very crowded and overcivilized and buttoned-down societies. (Sahn, 2014, p. 18)

The idea of *rewilding humanity* echoes the work of David Abram and his book, *The Spell of the Sensuous* (1996). In addition to the more-than-human world concept noted earlier, Abram speaks at length about having a physical connection to the world around us and the need to mediate this experience through our varied senses (sight, smell, touch, etc.). In modern culture, there is less emphasis placed on using these senses, leading to a muted sensual world. This alienation that Abram and Monbiot speak of is something that appears to be a larger cultural issue and has significant consequences for future generations (Louv, 2008). In their chapter, “The Rewilding of the Human Species,” Peter Kahn and Patricia Hasbach (2013) note that:

As a species, we came of age on the savannas of East Africa and lived a life more wild than we do today. Much of that wildness exists still within the architecture of our bodies and minds, and needs to be rediscovered, re-engaged, developed, and lived – we need to be rewilded – for us as a species to flourish. (p. 207)

In order to continue as a species without completely destroying the environment, and consequently itself, humanity needs to find ways to become “rewilded.” Adventure therapists often operate in environments and ways that allow them to engage in this meaningful work. For adventure therapists, rewilding humanity indicates the process by which therapists aid their participants in reestablishing this aspect of themselves—of awakening their senses through immersive experiences in the natural world. This is not advocating for a return to wearing furs and living in caves, but rather that humanity is meant to viscerally experience nature in order to have a reciprocal relationship with the more-than-human world (Abram, 1996; Kellert & Wilson,

1993, Louv, 2008). This process is essential to fostering connections between clients and nature, encouraging health, and shifting the culture to a more ecologically sustainable mode of living.

As noted, humanity has slowly domesticated itself over time. As a species, humanity has become civilized. There is a word for when an animal slips the bonds of domesticity and returns to the natural world: *feral*. This rewilding work can be conceived of as assisting people to go feral, to reconnect with nature and rediscover their wildness, a process that psychology and adventure therapy has a role in supporting.

### **In Closing**

This chapter has located this investigation within the context of humanity's current environmental crisis in order to explore the psychological roots of the disconnect that has contributed to humanity arriving at this place in time, to explore some of the mental health consequences of life in the Anthropocene, and to offer a picture of one way to begin to mitigate these challenges through the process of rewilding in order to foster a deep and reciprocal connection with nature. The next chapter, *House and Soul*, expands on and explores the psychological roots of rewilding humanity.

## Thoughts on the More-Than-Human-World

### Contemplations

“Most people are *on* the world, not in it – have no conscious sympathy or relationship to anything about them – undiffused, separate, and rigidly alone like marbles of polished stone, touching but separate.”

John Muir

“If you lie out flat on the stones—it seems odd to try, I know— you will feel—here, that’s it – the warmth of the sunlight emanating from the stones. Turn your head to the side, ear to rock, and you will hear the earth revolving on its axis and an adjustment of stones in the riverbed. The heartbeats of salmon roe. One day I heard the footsteps of someone miles away, following someone else.”

Barry Lopez

### Actions

- Find an outdoor space where you can engage your senses intentionally—crush up a pine needle and inhale deeply, push your hands down into the earth, listen to the call of birds, feel the wind and water move over your body. Observe and attend.
- Identify ten edible plants located around your home or work. Discover their names, what parts can be used and how, and a little of their character. It may help to keep a small notebook to sketch and write about your discoveries.

## Chapter 2: House and Soul

*“Do you think that somewhere we are not Nature,  
that we are different from Nature?  
No, we are in Nature and think exactly like Nature.”  
C.G. Jung*

### The Study of the Soul

Etymologically, psychology as a term has its roots in *psyche*, “soul” (AHD, 1992, p. 1461), and *logia*, “study of” (AHD, 1992, p. 1058). Psychology literally means *the study of the soul*, a definition that will be expanded on in this investigation. What follows is a brief overview of some of the giants of the field of psychology as relates to their thoughts on nature, wilderness, civilization and humanity. Following this, attention is provided to the current field of psychology. This section then proceeds to examine environmental, social, and conservation psychology before proceeding into the territory of ecopsychology.

**Freud and civilization.** There is a wealth of information, from his own voluminous writings to countless biographies and edited collections, available related to Sigmund Freud. For the purposes of this paper, I have chosen to limit my focus of Freud to one of his more famous pieces of work, *Civilizations and Its Discontents*. It is here that Freud (1962) articulates a modern view of nature and civilization, a theme he often returned to, that the drive of man’s instinct against the mores of civilization often leads to a state of suffering. While *Civilization and Its Discontents* is viewed as “a fertile and original meditation on the irreparable conflict between man and his institutional surroundings” (Freud & Gay, 1989, p. 722), it does touch on nature and the desire for control, both internal and external. As noted by John Barry (2007) in his examination, *Environment and Social Theory*:

Thus Freud presented us with a picture of modern society (“modernity”) in which the latter is premised on the double repression of ‘internal’ nature (transforming ‘rude human

nature' into civilized, ordered codes of conduct and manners) and the domination of external nature. One necessarily entailed the other. In calling for a united humanity to combat and control nature, Freud was simply suggesting a public, collective form of what modern industrial civilization demanded at the individual, psychological level, an antagonistic and aggressive disposition and attitude towards both internal and external nature. (p. 82, quotations and parentheses in original)

As nature has the power to bring suffering to humanity, it was up to humanity to gain dominion over nature and consequently itself. The suppression of instinct and struggle against nature is central to Freud's formulation about the discontents in modern society (Fisher, 2013). This is significant as Freud implicated the culture of Western civilization in its own discontent and suffering while characterizing the natural world as something to be subjugated and controlled. On the other side of the Atlantic, a slightly different view was taking shape.

**William James and a certain blindness.** William James is often viewed as the founder of psychology in the United States for helping to establish the field of American psychology with his seminal text *Principles of Psychology* in 1890 (Hutchins, 1952). James had a number of personal struggles throughout his life, often grappling with feelings of depression, spiritual crisis, and inadequacy (Hutchins, 1952), especially prior to finding his calling as a psychologist and philosopher. Throughout his life, James returned to nature for inspiration and rejuvenation, and was especially fond of the Adirondacks and hiking (Bjork, 1997; Hutchins, 1952). His well known work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, was formulated on and inspired by a number of these outdoor ramblings of which James noted, "It seemed as if the Gods of all the nature-mythologies were holding an indescribable meeting in my breast with the moral Gods of the inner life" (Hutchins, 1952, p. vi). James drew on his love of nature and fondness for



transcendentalist literature frequently in his professional writings, often advocating for a widening of human perspective related to our understanding and appreciation of the natural world.

In his essay, “On a Certain Blindness in Human Beings,” James (2009) noted that the solution to the various difficulties and imbalances of modern life was to “descend to a more profound and primitive level” where:

Living in the open air and on the ground, the lop-sided beam of the balance slowly rises to the level line; and the over-sensibilities and insensibilities even themselves out. The good of all the artificial schemes and fevers fades and pales; and that of seeing, smelling, tasting, sleeping, and daring and doing with one's body, grows and grows. The savages and children of nature, to whom we deem ourselves so much superior, certainly are alive where we are often dead, along these lines; and, could they write as glibly as we do, they would read us impressive lectures on our impatience for improvement and on our blindness to the fundamental static goods of life. (p. 14)

The blindness that James (2009) spoke of related to “the feelings of creatures and people different from ourselves” (p. 14), but could be remedied by setting aside our overly civilized selves, immersing in the natural world and the engaging the senses. This is a marked departure from Freud. Rather than struggle against nature, James suggested that one look to reengage with nature and value the mystical world and what it has to offer. James viewed this as a healthful return to a natural state and essential for proper mental functioning, a view that is shared and expanded on by Carl Jung.

**Jung and nature.** Carl Jung spent a considerable amount of time exploring the idea of nature and wilderness and what it means for humanity. In his work on mythology and archetype,

Jung often returned to examples from the natural world and sought to comprehend their meaning in dreams and altered states. Yet Jung also held a very pragmatic view of nature, often encouraging his clients to garden or go for walks (Sabini, 2008). Jung viewed these activities as essential to cultivating health, proclaiming, “Natural life is the nourishing soil of the soul” (Sabini, 2008, p.121). For Jung, “The purpose of doing these things, however, is not to repair Nature, but rather to let Nature affect us” (Sabini, 2008, p.19). In so doing, Jung had a good century or so head start on environmental psychology research that would later follow on the restorative effects of nature.

The ultimate aim of these activities was to kindle a fire so that “the instincts come back to life” (Sabini, 2008, p. 19). By being outside immersed in activity, allowing nature to work on us, we begin to commune with something deep inside (as well as outside) ourselves. If we do not have access to these types of opportunities, we lose something fundamental to the human experience. Speaking of the “atrophy of instinct,” Jung noted:

Civilized man...is in danger of losing all contact with the world of instinct—a danger that is still further increased by his living an urban existence in what seems to be a purely manmade environment. This loss of instinct is largely responsible for the pathological condition of contemporary culture. (Sabini, 2008, p.15)

In order to remedy this splitting of urban/rural, nature/civilization, Jung hypothesized that humanity needed to explore these dichotomies. “What is needed is to call a halt to the fatal dissociation that exists between our so-called higher and lower being; we must unite the conscious aspect with the primitive” (Sabini, 2008, p. 18). Jung advocated for embracing and understanding the “primitive” within humanity and reconciling it with our modern selves. Defining what he meant by primitive, Jung offered:

I use the term 'primitive' in the sense of 'primordial' and I do not imply any kind of value judgment. Also, when I speak of a 'vestige' of primitive state, I do not necessarily mean that this state will sooner or later come to an end. On the contrary, I see no reason why it should not endure as long as humanity lasts. (Sabini, 2008, p.90, quotations in original)

For Jung, humanity's archaic self is very much alive in its modern self and must be recognized and honored. Failure to do so will only result in needless suffering. This line of thinking helped set the stage for subsequent work by later psychologists who seek to understand how this unfolds in modern times.

### **Psychology Today**

Psychology today functions as a large tent in which there are numerous areas of specialty and expertise. The American Psychological Association (APA) alone has 54 different divisions. If you would like to pass an entertaining and informative few hours, it is worth perusing [www.apadivisions.org](http://www.apadivisions.org), the proliferation and diversity is quite stunning. Lacking divisions of their own, due to being relatively small members of this community, both adventure therapy and ecopsychology have experienced marginalization within the larger field of psychology. Both fields have been viewed with skepticism, have been derided and devalued, met with blank stares, or just polite incomprehension. This warrants some consideration. To some degree, it is fair to say that the larger psychology community does not value reciprocity with the more-than-human world, at least in terms of priority or prestige. While it literally encompasses it, nature is not in their backyard. In this way, AT and ecopsychology inhabit the edges and are considered fringe efforts. These margins suggest a need for critical thinking about psychology as a field and its purpose in serving humanity.

**Subpsychology.** *Sub* as a prefix means “imperfectly, secondary, subordinate, secondary in rank, falling short of, less than completely” (AHD, 1992, p. 1787). Subpsychology for the purpose of this investigation then refers to the idea that what psychology currently concerns itself with falls short of addressing a number of the significant environmental problems noted above. It is used here to refer to the professional field of American psychology as a whole and its less than complete addressing of the natural world in general and environmental crises in particular.

For a field of study that is interested in studying the soul, subpsychology has some soul searching to do of its own. Perhaps this is why subpsychology has taken a turn over the last half century, with the “study of the soul” now being reconceived as the “science of human behavior” (Kidner, 1994). This shift in focus has occurred at the same time of a larger shift within the field related to the medicalization of psychology, its quest for scientific legitimacy, and the subtle influence of third party payers. Yet, the field seems reluctant to even consider the role that human behavior plays in environmental destruction (Kidner, 1994, p. 359).

**Subpsychology and the environment.** At best, the field of psychology is genuinely concerned with helping others grapple with challenges in their lives and has not spent much time concerning itself with the context within which those troubles occur. At worst, it is complicit in perpetuating environmental degradation by enabling people to feel better about their consumptive and ecologically unsustainable lifestyles and behavior (Kidner, 1994). Likely it lands somewhere in between, with individual psychologists sincerely working to alleviate suffering combined with a collective lack of scrutiny about the overall impacts related to present human behavior in modern industrial culture.

Subpsychology is generally disinterested in challenging the status quo as it would deeply threaten its own financial security and status within the scientific community, a status that it has

worked very hard to attain. This is also due to a worldview that is problematic in and of itself, as David Kidner( 1994) notes in his classic article “Why Psychology is Mute about the Environmental Crisis” there are three contributing factors:

...first, that psychology, by focusing its gaze on the decontextualized individual, perpetuates and legitimates a world view in which the individual is seen as separate from the environment; second, that by locating within the Cartesian paradigm of human rationality as the only basis of understanding, psychology reproduces an anthropocentric ideology that denudes nonhuman aspects of the natural world of essence and inherent value; and third, that by assuming a largely cognitive model of the person, psychology colludes in the denial of those aspects of Being that are capable of perceiving and protesting against the violence of environmental destruction. (p. 362)

Kidner (1994) notes that there is a significant cultural aspect that has influenced this worldview. It does seem at times that as a whole, subpsychology is more concerned about board certifications, APA style, and evidence based practices than it is about other less important things such as the air we breathe, the water that sustains us, or the continuing urbanization of humanity and the variety of stressors that accompany it. As Kidner emphasized, “Mainstream psychology, by adopting the same ideology as the industrial-scientific complex, has rendered itself unable to contribute effectively to the environmental debate” (p. 376). Beringer (2004) also observes this trend, “Psychology, on the whole, has been fairly complacent in healing the world, and in recognizing the link between individual and societal, or world, pathology” (p.60). She continues, with a nod to what might be missing from adventure therapy:

In sum, the disciplinary paradigm of psychology has relegated the study of nature to the natural sciences; has negated the context and force of human-nature in human

development and behavior; has, if at all, considered nature as the backdrop for human endeavors; and has not considered the environmental crisis as an issue of concern for research and theory. Thus, adventure therapists may overlook nature as a context/setting and force in therapy, and may limit the curative relationship to the client-therapist-challenge activities triad.” (pp. 60-61)

However, there are a few branches, “divisions” as they are called, that are making some inroads from an environmental perspective.

**Environmental psychology.** Often describing itself as holistic, interdisciplinary, problem oriented, and systems oriented, there is a large body of work in the field of environmental psychology exploring the interactions between humans and the variety of environments that they inhabit (Steg et al., 2013). Despite a name that sounds primarily focused on the ecological problems facing humanity, environmental psychology has faced criticism for its anthropocentric approach (Kidner, 1994) that is “dominated by the behavioral and cognitive traditions” (Fisher, 2013, p. 33). Much of environmental psychology is often focused on the built environment (Fisher, 2013) and offers relatively “narrow findings [that] preserves the human/nature split” (Fisher, 2013, p. 32). Despite these narrow findings, the field of environmental psychology has seemed to take a turn in recent decades.

This positive shift includes the call to cultivate a body of literature that can contribute to a green or ecological psychology (Steg, van den Berg, & de Groot, 2013). Whether or not this will address the shortcomings pointed out by Kidner (1994) remains to be seen. As Kidner (1994) noted, “close study reveals that this approach remains resolutely anthropocentric, the term *ecological* merely indicating that a broader than usual range of factors is being considered in relation to human health” (p. 368-369, italics in original). Currently, environmental psychology

functions not for the preservation of environmental systems for intrinsic reasons of their own, but for the betterment of humankind. This can be useful information to have and can aid psychologists in helping to improve conditions for their clients, but it is a limited lens in which to view environmental problems.

**Conservation psychology.** Carol Saunders (2003) played a central role in the launching of conservation psychology in the early 2000s with her article “The Emerging Field of Conservation Psychology.” In advocating for this new field, Saunders offered that conservation psychology:

...is proposed to create stronger connections between the natural and social sciences, between research and practice, and between psychology and the other social sciences. The purpose of such a network is to conduct psychological research that is directly oriented toward the goal of environmental sustainability. (p. 137, italics removed)

Conservation psychology followed closely on the heels of conservation biology and evolved to draw together disparate fields towards the common goal of “environmental sustainability,” Saunders (2003) defined conservation psychology as:

...the scientific study of the reciprocal relationships between humans and the rest of nature, with a particular focus on how to encourage conservation of the natural world. Conservation psychology is an applied field that uses psychological principles, theories, or methods to understand and solve issues related to human aspects of conservation. It has a strong mission focus in that it is motivated by the need to encourage people to care about and take care of the natural world. In addition to being a field of study, conservation psychology is also the actual network of researchers and practitioners who

work together to understand and promote a sustainable and harmonious relationship between people and the natural environment. (p. 138, italics removed)

This represents a logical next step from the shortcomings of environmental psychology, with Saunders envisioning environmental psychology as a subdomain of conservation psychology (Saunders, 2003). Conservation psychology embeds itself within a human ecology framework, acknowledging the intrinsic worth of natural systems in addition to the human world. As a field, it arrives at a time of great need and has been formally recognized by the American Psychological Association and the scientific community at large. Conservation psychology and ecopsychology are closely related in their passion for understanding reciprocal relationships with the more-than-human-world, yet distinct in how they approach and envision the field of psychology as a whole.

### **Ecopsychology: A Primer**

Ecopsychology gained steam in 1960s with the rise of the counterculture and environmental movements (Kahn & Hasbach, 2012), and it evolved out of the work of Theodore Roszak (1992) and his book *The Voice of the Earth*. Ecopsychology is viewed as the merging of ecology and psychology principles with the aim of highlighting, exploring, and bolstering the connection between humans and nature (Kahn & Hasbach, 2012). Roszak sought to expand psychology beyond intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics to understanding the self in relation to the earth as a whole (Roszak, 1992; Roszak, Gomes & Kanner, 1995). In a nod to psychoanalytic theory and Jung, Roszak developed the idea of the *ecological unconscious* and posited, along with Shepard (1982), that significant mental health issues arise when an individual (and society) is disconnected from the natural world.



In an interview with the New York Times (Smith, 2010), Patricia Hasbach described the evolution of ecopsychology thus:

“If you look at the beginnings of clinical psychology...the focus was on intrapsychic forces” —the mind-bound interplay of ego, id and superego. “Then the field broadened to take into account interpersonal forces such as relationships and interactions between people. Then it took a huge leap to look at whole families and systems of people. Then it broadened even further to take into account social systems” and the importance of social identities like race, gender and class. “Ecopsychology wants to broaden the field again to look at ecological systems,” she said. “It wants to take the entire planet into account.” (Smith, 2010, quotations original)

This mirrors what Roszak (1992) said in *The Voice of the Earth*, the book that many credit with launching the field of ecopsychology:

The goal of ecopsychology is to awaken the inherent sense of environmental reciprocity that lies within the ecological unconscious. Other therapies seek to heal the alienation between person and person, person and family, and person and society. Ecopsychology seeks to heal the more fundamental alienation of person and environment. (p. 320)

Fisher (2013), in his text *Radical Ecopsychology*, posits that “ecopsychology is a transformation of psychology rather than just an unproblematic application of conventional psychological strategies to environmental problems” (p. 201, quotations removed), where “ecopsychology is equal parts psychology and radical ecology, integrated into an approach never seen before: a psychology for an ecological society” (p. 205). Fisher continues:

This does not mean that mainstream psychology or mainstream environmentalism have no relevance for ecopsychology; it is only that they do not go deep enough or adopt a

truly ecological mode of thought and practice. Ecopsychology is not about “environmental” problems but rather understanding how psyche and nature internally relate, how they are interior and exterior of the same phenomenon. (p. 205, quotations in original)

Widening the scope of psychology, ecopsychology literature builds on and incorporates research findings from a variety of professional disciplines. This includes environmental psychology, conservation psychology, ecology, evolutionary psychology, and human ecology to name a few. A number of constructs from these diverse fields stand out as particularly relevant for consideration by the field of adventure therapy.

**Topophilia hypothesis.** Put forward by Scott Donald Sampson (2012), the *topophilia hypothesis* “posits that humans possess an innate bias to bond with local place, including both living and nonliving components” (p. 26). This has been particularly observed in children, who seem wired to absorb information about the natural world and actively set about observing, smelling, tasting, and feeling all that is about them (Louv, 2008). In their aptly titled *Geography of Childhood*, Gary Nabhan and Stephen Trimble (1994) note that the “wonder years, the magical human interval of general receptivity” (p. 72) is firmly rooted in place. Discovery of self occurs within the context of the natural world you *grow up in*, that our experiences of place have a profound effect on us. David Sobel (2008) expanded on this theme by stating that in the quest to connect youth to nature, “one transcendent experience in nature is worth a thousand nature facts (p. 13, italics removed). There is depth and resonance in getting your hands dirty and crafting a personal and visceral understanding of the world around you.

Sampson’s work around the topophilia hypothesis is a direct extension of E.O. Wilson’s *biophilia hypothesis* (Kellert & Wilson, 1993), which states that humanity has evolved to

gravitate towards living things in the natural world, that there is a built in love for life and nature. This fascination emerges whenever we engage the natural world, and manifests in a particular way when we go on extended wilderness trips.

**The wilderness effect.** Originally conceptualized by Robert Greenway (1995), *the wilderness effect* articulates the “release of repression, release of inevitable controls that exist in any culture” (p. 128) that accompanies immersion in wild places. Greenway envisioned the wilderness effect as tapping into humanity’s ecological unconscious and resulting in a sort of catharsis. Observing himself and his participants over the course of outdoor adventures, Greenway notes changes in dream patterns, differences in experiences between men and women, and talks about the “psychological wilderness boundary” (p. 132), the point at which participants switch from processing in a culture-dominated way to a nature-dominated way.

**Psychological wilderness boundary.** Greenway (1995) coined the term *psychological wilderness boundary* to describe the human experience of meeting “wilderness on its own terms” (p. 133), something that not many modern, urbanized people have the opportunity to do. Crossing the psychological wilderness boundary occurs “when consciousness opens fully to wilderness and immerses itself in natural processes” (p. 133). This is distinct from just going outside, or exploring novel external environments, but rather represents the internalization of these experiences, a going out to go in.

Greenway (1995) notes that this shift occurs relatively quickly on an a trip, with participants reporting changes in dream content “from “busy” or “urban” scenarios at the outset to dreams about the group or some aspect of the wilderness. It seems on average to take three or four days for people’s dreams to catch up with them! As I have said, not completely in jest, this

pattern suggests that our culture is only four days deep” (p. 129). The point between culture and nature represents a distinct transition.

Rene Daumal (1960) observed that this has a lasting influence on those that have made the journey:

You cannot stay on the summit forever; you have to come down again. So why bother in the first place? Just this: What is above knows what is below, but what is below does not know what is above. One climbs, one sees. One descends, one sees no longer, but one has seen. There is an art of conducting oneself in the lower regions by the memory of what one saw higher up. When one can no longer see, one can at least still know. (p. 105)

Daumal recognized that crossing the psychological wilderness boundary becomes a life altering experience. Returning to civilization poses a unique challenge, one where the “key issue becomes how to maintain, or integrate, wilderness-learned modes of knowing when living again within our culture” (Greenway, 1995, p. 133). Developing a language to capture these experiences may help with this transition and provide a way to carry these learnings forward.

**Nature language.** *Nature language* as conceptualized by Kahn, Ruckert, and Hasbach (2012), suggests that many of the experiences between humanity and the more-than-human world fit “interaction patterns” (p. 55) of deep feeling. As a species increasingly living in urban settings, we may be lacking the words or concepts to adequately language these experiences. Yet these patterns are all around us when we engage with the natural world and include experiences like “being under the night sky, being immersed in water, hunting, gardening, traveling a winding and contoured path, foraging, moving along the edges of nature” (italics removed, p. 55). There are profound sensorial aspects of these experiences that are not understood until they are experienced firsthand.

**In Closing**

Ecopsychology is the merging of ecology and psychology that seeks to amend the oversights of subpsychology. In an ideal world, this would simply be called “psychology” (Fisher, 2013). This chapter, *House and Soul*, situates ecopsychology within the historical context of the field of psychology, as well as draws some distinctions between ecopsychology, environmental psychology, and conservation psychology. Of particular interest to adventure therapists are the concepts of the topophilia hypothesis, biophilia hypothesis, the wilderness effect, the psychological wilderness boundary, and nature language.

## Thoughts of House and Soul

### Contemplations

“Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature—daily to be shown matter, to come in contact with it—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the actual world! the common sense! *Contact! Contact! Who are we? where are we?*”

Henry David Thoreau

“Dignity and beauty and meaning are given to our lives when we see far enough and wide enough, when we see the forces that minister to us, and the natural order of which we form a part.”

John Burroughs

### Actions

- Expand your nature language. Observe those times when you are immersed in nature and come across a moment that does not have an adequate descriptor. *Knee deep in stream bringing trout to hand. Breathing at the edge of a field during a heavy snowstorm. Lying at the base of a tree looking at the clouds through the branches.* You will feel it and know its presence. Etch it in your memory, record it, and then share it with others.
- Talk to your community (neighbors, peers, and friends) and ask them about their connection to their home, town, region. What places are meaningful and give sustenance? Explore your roots and flesh out what it means to you to be grounded in your sense of place.

### Chapter 3. Where the Wild Things Are

*“Everybody needs beauty as well as bread,  
places to play in and pray in,  
where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.”  
John Muir*

#### Adventure Therapy: A Brief History

Adventure therapy as a field is both old and new. While it has existed “in some form, for over a hundred and twenty years” (White, 2011, p. iv), it is also a nascent discipline that has only recently begun to organize itself in a professional capacity (Gass, 1993; White, 2011). It is assumed that the reader is likely familiar with the field of adventure therapy, so the following history of adventure therapy serves more as a Cliff Notes version for the odd lay reader rather than an exhaustive examination aimed at adventure therapy researchers and professionals. Readers are strongly encouraged to explore Dr. Will White’s excellent history of the field “Stories from the Elders: Chronicles and Narratives of the Early Years of Wilderness Therapy.”

**Defining adventure therapy.** Don Lynch (2005) offered a useful frame to adventure therapy when he posited it as a methodology of psychology, akin to play therapy or ecotherapy. A good working definition of adventure therapy has been put forward by Gass, Gillis, and Russell (2012) as “the prescriptive use of adventure experiences provided by mental health professionals, often conducted in natural settings that kinesthetically engage clients on cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels” (p. 1). This definition of AT has evolved from a hodgepodge of events in recent history.

While aspects of adventure therapy can be found in the establishment of college outdoors clubs in the late 1800s, the founding of the Boy Scouts in 1910, and the emergence of the camping movement and American Camping Association in 1932 (Miles, 1999; White, 2011), the

events of World War II and subsequent development of Outward Bound is often cited as a pivotal moment in adventure therapy history (White, 2011).

**Outward Bound.** The story of Outward Bound is closely associated with that of its co-founder, Kurt Hahn (Carter, 2007). Hahn teamed up with Laurence Holt who was interested in creating a program that preemptively trained British youth in the necessary leadership and teamwork skills to survive being torpedoed by German U-boats (Carter, 2007). This model of “training for all, through the sea or the mountains, rather than for” (Carter, 2007, p.11) was so successful that it eventually expanded, with schools opening in the United States beginning in 1962 with the Colorado Outward Bound School.

As White (2011) observed: “Outward Bound USA significance on the evolution of wilderness therapy cannot be overstated as it created a movement that exposed many people, and the nation through its numerous locations, to the idea of personal growth through challenging adventure” (p. 52). The 1970s saw a rise of interest in wilderness therapy, vision quests and drum circles that coincided with the introduction of Outward Bound to the United States, which contributed to the development of adventure therapy as its own field of study (Miles, 1999). In 1974, the Association for Experiential Education came into existence. It remains to this day an organizing body and repository of experiential and adventure programming (White, 2011).

Adventure programs exist in a variety of universities and colleges across the country in addition to well-established programs such as Outward Bound, National Outdoor Leadership School (NOLS), and Project Adventure (PA). There are also numerous nonprofit and private companies offering adventure and wilderness therapy services within the United States (White, 2011). Broadly speaking, these programs seek to “use the components of adventure: real or perceived risk, uncertainty of outcome, and personal decision-making” (Lynch, 2005) to enhance



participants abilities and strengths in a variety of ways. The participants in these programs range from corporate executives, veterans, educators, and adolescents. Research with these various programs and populations is scattered, but growing.

Adventure therapy specific literature exists about the effects of adventure therapy programs on participants' personal growth and perceptions of the wilderness (Easley, 1990; Hanna, 1988, 1991), and about how adventure therapy informs participants' environmental ethics (Mazze, 2006). Additionally, there is research that examines a large number of wilderness experience programs and the various facets involved in their operation (Friese, 1998; Hannah, 1993; Neil & Dias, 2001) as well as social justice in an adventure setting (Warren, 2005). Not surprisingly, it seems as though adventure therapists would rather be out in the woods learning and teaching rather than back in an office writing research papers about said experiences. In addition to the relatively recent emergence of the field, this conundrum has created a bit of a shortfall in relevant literature, with many professional adventure therapists (Gass, 1993; Gass et al., 2012; Richards, 2003) issuing calls for further research to bolster much of the anecdotal evidence about the effectiveness of adventure therapy as a modality. To date, the less than complete nature of this research has led to the dismissal by mainstream psychology and education practitioners of the promise of adventure therapy practices as a vehicle for understanding oneself and ones place in the world.

Many complicating factors exist in the world of adventure therapy programs that has contributed to this marginalization. In the wake of managed care, the push for evidence based practices and an increasingly medicalized conception of human change processes, AT programs have struggled to quantify what is essentially an experiential and highly qualitative field (Gass et al., 2012). Like programs everywhere, AT organizations must also demonstrate the effectiveness

of their interventions, ensure that they are delivering a quality product to their participants, and make certain that their leaders are appropriately certified and trained (Richards, 2003). With the weight of accreditation, funding, and the day-to-day maintenance of a program coupled with the logistical demands of multiple staff members being in the field at any given moment, it is no wonder that adventure therapists have not produced a significant body of literature to account for all the facets of their profession (perhaps if adventure therapy could be marketed in pill form it would warrant further investigation, random control studies, and, most importantly, funding to pursue these ends).

Additionally, staff turnover and burnout are common struggles that burden adventure therapy organizations and consume precious resources. Low pay, long hours, and stress are contributing factors that have plagued the field for decades (Gass, 1993; Itin, 2001; Thompson, 1984). Despite these limitations, professionals in the field of adventure therapy continue to seek effective ways of evaluating their interventions and their potential offerings to their participants (Gass et al., 2012; Richards, 2003). While impoverished when compared to other areas of psychological research, adventure therapy continues to gain adherents and establish a foundation of research on which to build theory and practice.

**Professional organization.** The Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group (TAPG) and the Outdoor Behavioral Health Industry Council (OBHIC), two professional organizations that have been active in promoting research and setting standards for the field, have recently pushed this work forward (White, 2011). From their website (obhic.com) they describe themselves thus:

The Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Industry Council was founded in 1997 when representatives from a handful of wilderness treatment programs joined to collaborate and to share best practices. The founding programs realized the advantage of uniting to

promote program standards and excellence and thus the OBH Council was founded.

Today, the organization and its member programs have been instrumental in raising the bar for wilderness treatment, facilitating research on the efficacy of wilderness treatment for adolescents, and in promoting the industry.

OBHIC represents a significant step forward in the field, with a number of researchers and practitioners getting together to establish a common direction and purpose. One such effort is the establishment of the Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare Research Cooperative (OBHRC), a joint venture comprised of OBHIC members with the goal of developing “a comprehensive research program addressing specific questions gleaned from the literature and to address research issues asked by specific programs” (Gass et al., 2012, p. 45). OBHIC’s description is very similar to the statement of purpose put forth by TAPG on their website ([tapg.aee.org](http://tapg.aee.org)):

Therapeutic Adventure is the professional group for those AEE members who work within the fields of health, mental health, corrections, education, and other human service fields. Our primary purpose is to facilitate networking for professionals within our various fields and share information, techniques, and concerns regarding the therapeutic use of adventure. We define therapeutic as moving toward healthy change with intentional interventions. We represent the interests of our membership to the Board and larger professional communities through workshops, conference and pre-conference activities, and best practices development.

OBHIC and TAPG continue to further the field and establish a solid body of research that will help bolster and compliment the anecdotal wisdom in the field.

**Promising findings.** According to Norton et al. (2014), “Research on wilderness programs has shown it to be effective in improving overall functioning of adolescent clients, as

well as specifically reducing symptoms of distress related to interpersonal and mental health challenges” (p. 48). In addition to being effective, adventure therapy is also an exceedingly safe methodology to engage in (Gass & Javorski, 2013). While the field has struggled to gain definition of theory as well as consistency of practice, “Overall, empirical evidence has demonstrated the effectiveness of wilderness therapy” (Rutko & Gillespie, 2013, p. 222). Gasset al. (2012) note the following key elements:

- The positive influence of nature in the therapeutic healing process
- The use of eustress or positive use of stress
- The active and direct use of client participation and responsibility in their therapeutic process
- The involvement in adventure experiences meaningful for the particular client, particularly in terms of natural consequences
- The focus on positive changes in the client’s present and future functional behavior
- The strong ethic of care and support embraced throughout the therapeutic experience, particularly given the use of unfamiliar experiences in therapy (p. 3, bullet points in original)

There is evidence that although many adventure therapy programs work with “resistant” clients, this does not necessarily hinder its effectiveness, with many participants making marked progress through the stages of change (Russell, 2008). “These findings suggest that resistance to treatment at intake does not reduce the effectiveness of the wilderness therapy program, and that motivation to change may not be a necessary condition for positive therapeutic outcomes in AT” (Norton et al., 2014, p. 49). In this way, adventure therapy may be able to meet certain populations where they are at and work with them in ways unimaginable in other modalities.

This section has been included as a brief review of some of the more recent work being done in the field; readers are encouraged to explore OBHIC and TAPG for further relevant research.

**Who the wild things are.** As it stands in the field, the term *adventure therapist* denotes a wide range of practitioners and is hotly contested in some corners (Norton et al., 2014). Currently, adventure therapist is used interchangeably to denote licensed mental health professionals as well as unlicensed direct care staff. This has led to a host of problems for the field, both in terms of legitimacy as well as programmatic concerns. Formalization of training and development of adventure therapy staff is seen as a critical issue (Norton et al., 2014), especially in the face of a long history of reliance by some programs on relatively untrained staff (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2008). Adventure therapy has slowly seen a shift away from anyone being able to hang a shingle as an adventure therapist towards a greater degree of professionalization; with formalized regulation, licensing, and accrediting bodies beginning to appropriately assert themselves (Gass et al., 2012; Norton et al., 2014).

Many programs now employ a model that involves doctoral or masters level clinicians with backgrounds in psychology or social work functioning at a supervisory level to a number of direct care staff. Some of these licensed professionals spend time on wilderness trips, providing mental health care in backcountry settings, although this is not overly common at this time (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2008). Direct care staff, especially in wilderness-based programs, often function independently from immediate supervision, which is obviously problematic, and has led to serious critiques of program efficacy (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2008). The criteria for adventure therapists are tricky to pin down as they include proficiencies across both clinical and technical (backpacking, rock climbing, wilderness first aid) domains (Gass et al., 2012). This has made finding qualified professionals relatively hard, and given the field's

limitations with low pay and burnout, difficult to retain. Despite these limitations, individuals working in the adventure therapy field tend to be “energetic, creative, and innovative. They are also extremely devoted to the treatment of those with whom they work. In some ways, wilderness therapy is still a diamond in the rough, waiting to be mined and refined” (Davis-Berman & Berman, 2008, p. 162). Part of what makes this diamond so unique is its ties to nature and our five senses.

**Where the wild things are.** Ecopsychology and adventure therapy have strong philosophical roots in phenomenology (Abram, 1996; Fisher, 2013). In speaking about the natural world, there is no better way to engage than through the five senses, grounding a lot of adventure therapy and ecopsychological investigations firmly in phenomenology. The natural world and humanity’s sensual experience of it are crucial to adventure experiences; humans must go to wild places and cultivate an understanding of their wild selves.

This wildness is not an experience that can be separated into its distinct parts via reductionist approaches; it will not be quantified in a lab. As Abram (1996) notes, phenomenology undermines the dominant modes of understanding typically thought of as *science*:

The scientist does not randomly choose a specific discipline or specialty, but is drawn to a particular field by a complex of subjective experiences and encounters, many of which unfold far from the laboratory and its rarified atmosphere. Further, the scientist never completely succeeds in making himself into a pure spectator of the world, for he cannot cease to live in the world as a human among other humans, or as a creature among other creatures, and his scientific concepts and theories necessarily borrow aspects of the character and texture from his untheorized, spontaneously lived experience. (p. 33)

Quantifying nature and all its benefits will never be achieved, in part because it cannot be understood since “the very world our sciences strive to fathom—is not a sheer “object,” not a fixed and finished “datum” from which all subjects and subjective qualities could be pared away” (Abram, 1996, p. 39, quotations in original). It can only be experienced, observed, and described. Abram (1996) notes, “Unlike the mathematics-based sciences, phenomenology would seek not to explain the world, but to describe as closely as possible the way the world makes itself evident to awareness, the way things first arise in our direct, sensorial experience” (p. 35). For Abram (2010), as humanity has gravitated to scientific explanations of the world and has removed itself from relating to the natural world, something has been lost:

We cut our lives off from the necessary nourishment of contact and interchange with other shapes of life, from antlered and loop-tailed and amber-eyed beings whose resplendent weirdness loosens our imaginations, from the droning of bees and the gurgling night chorus of the frogs and the morning mist rising like a crowd of ghosts off the weedlot...For too long we’ve closed ourselves to the participatory life of our senses, inured ourselves to the felt intelligence of our muscled flesh and its manifold solidarities. (p. 7)

Abram (1996; 2010) posits that it is in seeking out a relationship with the more-than-human world that humanity begins to understand itself. Abram (1996) states that he gravitates towards Husserl and the idea of *intersubjectivity*, which offers a way:

...to recognize at least two regions of the experiential or phenomenal field: one of phenomena that unfold entirely for me...and another region of phenomena that are, evidently, responded to and experienced by other embodied subjects as well as myself...these are not merely subjective; they are *intersubjective*

phenomena—phenomena experienced by a multiplicity of sensing subjects. (p. 38, italics in original)

Intersubjectivity offers a tantalizing lens through which to view the work of adventure therapy, especially as it unfolds in natural environments. Clients are reaping the benefits of working with other clients, clinicians and staff to understand their own subjective experience while also engaging with a large variety of non-human others, offering a rich, layered system of interdependence and feedback. Rather than a destination of understanding, this process is essentially experiential and necessarily subjective. This experience of intersubjectivity *is* wildness itself; with everyone involved in this process gaining knowledge of self, knowledge of other, and knowledge of the self from the other. For this reason, it is imperative that humanity gain access to the natural world in order to gain access to itself.

Hahn (1960) was keenly aware of the role the natural world played in supporting the healthful development of his students. He viewed society as beset by a number of destructive and damaging worldviews, what he referred to as “social diseases of the young” (p. 7), chief among which were:

...the decline in fitness due to modern methods of locomotion, the decline in initiative, due to the widespread disease of spectatoritis, the decline in care and skill, due to the weekend tradition of craftsmanship, the decline in self-discipline, due to the ever-present availability of tranquilizers and stimulants, the decline of compassion, which William Temple called “spiritual death.” (p. 7)

For Hahn, the whole reason to create Outward Bound was to shore up these declines by fostering personal resilience in his students. “Hahn’s lament was that post-industrial lives were becoming devoid of the inoculative, resilience-enhancing challenges which had been an



everyday part of pre-industrial lives” (Niell & Dias, 2001, p. 2). Hahn felt that there was something lost by living in high comfort, low challenge environments. Youth in modern society suffer from a resilience deficit in the face of challenge.

In thinking about Richard Louv’s (2008) work on nature deficit disorder, there is a suggested connection between the ideas of personal resilience and ecological resilience. Adventure therapists often engage in meaningful work at this intersection. Youth learn about the environment around them and they learn about themselves through challenging settings that allow them to test their limits.

### **In Closing**

Adventure therapists spend a good amount of time engaged in this work. They are comfortable enough in the wild to guide others to difficult and sometimes perilous places, and bring them safely home again. A growing body of research supports adventure therapy as an effective methodology of psychology that is effective with a wide range of populations. For adventure therapists, immersions in natural and experiential settings are routine occurrences with frequent opportunities for connection with the more-than-human-world. Adventure therapists are repositories for wilderness wisdom who have a role in assisting others to deepen their own connection and experience of the natural world. It is plausible to consider the idea that personal resilience is essential to ecological resilience, that connecting with the natural world and discovering your more wild self also leads to an improvement in the environments in which we live and learn. While it is probably not that concrete, and is unlikely to be proven in any quantitative way, the idea of personal resilience leading to environmental resilience is a worthy aspiration for adventure therapists and provides a valued rationale and sense of purpose to the field.

## Thoughts of Wild Things

### Contemplations

“Life demands participation. What we need is not kid gloves, in approved wrappings, but kids’ eyes, sharp new eyes to pierce another layer of mystery.”

Robert Finch

“We are laid asleep  
In body, and become a living soul:  
While with an eye made quiet by the power  
Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,  
We see into the life of things.”

William Wordsworth

### Actions

- Seek opportunities to highlight the fundamental truths of group process that you encounter in adventure therapy settings—people working cooperatively towards common goals, conflict and communication, proximity and attunement, the power of accomplishment and laughter. Observe the formation of bands and tribes— here is the primal work laid bare.
- Consider expanding your professional identity beyond relevant certifications and degrees. Seek opportunities to broaden your experience through immersion in diverse ecosystems, sample several unfamiliar outdoor activities, and explore indigenous history relevant to your setting. Make fire by friction and spend days in nature by yourself. You (as well as your clients) will benefit from this deepened sense of self and place.

## **Chapter 4: Confluence**

“You can’t be neutral on a moving train.”  
Howard Zinn

### **Merging Waters**

A confluence occurs when two or more bodies of water meet and merge into one (AHD, 1992, p. 396). A confluence is the juncture of separate paths joining into one and continuing on again. This chapter explores the confluence of adventure therapy and ecopsychology as they flow into one another, how they mingle, and where they might be off to next. In approaching this confluence, I entertain a simple question: what is the aim of adventure therapy? A definition was provided in the preceding chapter, but no purpose. This is like describing a ship, without considering what it is for. Adventure therapy is more than a simple description, more than the sum of its parts. What follows are my thoughts on a purposeful adventure therapy. This begins with a couple of explorations that capture a bit of what it means to be an adventure therapist.

### **Adventure Therapists: Midwives to Reenchantment**

As a recent father twice over, the idea of labor and birth has been on my mind. I have a deep appreciation for the midwives who helped birth my family. I have marveled at their skill and have had ample opportunity to observe their ways. But what does it mean to be a midwife? Midwives specialize in promoting wellness and are particularly adept at assisting at births, at ushering in new life, at helping things to change. Throughout their work, they are excellent communicators, observers and confidants. They manage the unexpected. You labor in their presence, and are forever changed.

In my mind, this parallels the work of adventure therapists. In thinking about adventure therapists as midwives, I picture them assisting people into a new world. This world is close by, but involves effort and metamorphosis to attain. Adventure therapists reconnect people to

themselves, others, and the natural world through the various means highlighted in the previous chapter. This is in keeping with the field of psychology, but much more “radical.” Radical in the vein that Fisher (2013) uses to describe Radical Ecopsychology, radical as a means to get to the root, in the sense of a homecoming for the human species.

**Small groups in a spacious world.** Exploring how to amend humanity’s drift from nature and itself, Shepard (1982) suggests a few crucial areas to incorporate in the development of our youth, some of which sound strikingly like adventure therapy:

...the necessity of a rich nonhuman environment, play at being animals, the discipline of natural history, juvenile tasks with simple tools, the expressive arts of receiving food as a spiritual gift rather than as a product, the cultivation of metaphorical significance of natural phenomena of all kinds, clan membership and small-group life. (p. 129)

Perhaps in addition to the word radical, *primitive* is another way to describe the work of adventure therapy. Primitive in the sense of “being the first or earliest of the kind” (AHD, 1992, p. 1012). Humanity is predisposed to seek out these very elements, neurologically wired to be in a social setting immersed in nature, to embrace “life in a small human group in a spacious world” (Shepard, 1982, p. 129). In an increasingly urbanized and wired world, opportunities to live in this way are limited or remote. This is unfortunate as “We will not be in a position to rewild, or even preserve what is left of what we now think of as wild, until we can picture ourselves as wilder and more of a whole with other creatures” (Burnside, 2013). Adventure therapists help others explore their fascination of themselves, fellow human beings and nature. In this sense, adventure therapists serve as *midwives to reenchancement*, assisting in the transition to new environments, understandings, and selves.

Reenchantment involves reengaging with the natural world, a process of *remembering* what humanity has forgotten in its headlong rush towards urbanization. Adventure therapists serve as midwives to reenchantment in order to help bring participants to a sense of wholeness. Like all midwives, this labor is facilitated by us, but belongs to our clients. Adventure therapists merely help to frame the context and environment in which this labor takes place. Through recognizing clients' ownership of this journey and by situating this discovery within the natural world, adventure therapists assume a place of humble observance; stepping in only as necessary to guide, maintain safety, and ensure good process. Adventure therapists help to guide modern primitives in reconnecting with these primal truths about who they are in order to allow for a better understanding of their modern selves. In the "over-civilized" world that Muir spoke of, adventure therapists serve as guides and mentors to a simultaneously new and old wisdom that humanity is searching for. Around the world, there is another description for those who help guide others in this way: shaman.

**Adventure therapist as shaman.** As set forth by Philip Novak (1995) in his book, *The World's Wisdom*, the shaman and human culture go way back:

*In primal traditions we encounter the shaman. The word itself comes from saman, which, in the language of the Tungus people of Siberia, means "one who is excited, moved or raised" and, arguably, "one who knows." The shaman is a person who can by means of ecstatic states journey outside himself or herself to know other worlds and channel the knowledge gained there toward the benefit of his or her community. (p. 355, italics and quotations in original)*

This is not work that everyone is involved in, it is not a calling for everyone within the village, but it is a calling for some. For Abram (1996) "the shaman or sorcerer is the exemplary

voyager in the intermediate realm between the human and the more-than-human worlds, the primary strategist and negotiator in any dealings with the Others” (p. 7). This “intermediate realm” is precisely where adventure therapists find themselves inhabiting, necessitating their development as “strategist and negotiator” with the more-than-human world. This view requires a fundamental shift away from Western conceptualizations of disease and mental illness, as noted by Abram about shamanic practice in Bali:

The sorcerer derives her ability to cure ailments from her more continuous practice of “healing” or balancing the community’s relation to the surrounding land. Disease, in such cultures, is often conceptualized as a kind of systemic imbalance within the sick person, or more vividly as the intrusion of a demonic or malevolent presence into his body. (p. 7, quotations in original)

Abram encourages an inclusive and wide-view approach to addressing the problems that our clients grapple with. Stephanie Marohn (2003) offers another take in her book *The Natural Medicine Guide to Schizophrenia*, in a section on “The Shamanic View of Mental Illness,”

What those in the West view as mental illness, the Dagara people regard as “good news from the other world.” The person going through the crisis has been chosen as a medium for a message to the community that needs to be communicated from the spirit realm. (p. 177, quotations in original)

The very thought of the spiritual world reaching out to humanity through an individual person is enough to send most scientist running in the other direction, flapping their arms and shouting “objectivity!” at the tops of their lungs. But for Abram and Marohn, the lack of understanding about this layer of the human experience has led to a significant shortfall in how mental illness and disease is addressed in the West. As Marohn (2003) states:

Another way to say this, which may make more sense to the Western mind, is that we in the West are not trained in how to deal or even taught to acknowledge the existence of psychic phenomena, the spiritual world...without the proper context for and assistance in dealing with the breakthrough from another level of reality, for all practical purposes, the person is insane. (pp. 177-178)

From a narrative frame, the *person* has become the problem, rather than anything within the larger culture or environment (White, 2007). If the field persists in this line of thinking, adventure therapists, as well as other psychologists, are in danger of missing out on a crucial message: that perhaps the feelings of depression, anxiety, and “insanity” that we are striving to address in clients are in fact messages that are encouraging us very strongly to examine our own behavior and the imbalances in our relations to the more-than-human world and how we currently live as a species. As Abram (1996) states:

Only those persons who, by their everyday practice, are involved in monitoring and maintaining the relations *between* the human village and the animate landscape are able to appropriately diagnose, treat, and ultimately relieve personal ailments and illnesses arising within the village. (pp. 7-8, italics in original)

Adventure therapists have the opportunity to journey into the “between” and as such may be able to address human change processes in ways that other areas of psychology are ill equipped to handle. This may not speak to everyone, and if one is uncomfortable with the idea of adventure therapist as shaman, perhaps the role of mentor feels more accessible.

### **Nature Mentors as More Capable Peers**

In *Last Child in the Woods*, Louv (2008) introduces the concept of *nature deficit disorder*, that there is an “increasing divide between the young and the natural world” and that this carries “environmental, social, psychological and spiritual implications” (p. 2). Louv notes:

Our society is teaching young people to avoid direct experience in nature. That lesson is delivered in schools, families, even organizations devoted to the outdoors, and codified into the legal and regulatory structures of many of our communities. Our institutions, urban/suburban design, and cultural attitudes unconsciously associate nature with doom – while disassociating the outdoors from joy and solitude. Well meaning public school systems, media, and parents are effectively scaring children straight out of the woods and fields. (p. 2)

Provided that there is an increasing gulf between youth today and the natural world around them, there will be a need for them to engage in exploration that allows them to safely approach and explore nature in a way that is both comfortable yet challenging, universal yet individualized. Some of this work they will do on their own, through free play and forays into the natural world of their own devising. Yet, some of this work necessitates the guidance of what Lev Vygotsky described as “more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 88).

**Zone of proximal development.** For Vygotsky, the more capable other represents a mentor who is able to assist a learner in attaining knowledge that they would not be able to gain solely on their own (Tharp & Gallimore, 2002). This is what Vygotsky (1978) theorized as the *zone of proximal development* (p. 86). As Vygotsky put it, “The zone of proximal development defines those functions that have not yet matured but are in the process of maturation, functions that will mature tomorrow but are currently in an embryonic state” (p. 86). While an individual



can work independently and discover a great deal, the assistance of a more capable other allows for previously unattainable achievements, which the learner then metabolizes as their own.

Vygotsky continued, “learning awakens a variety of internal developmental processes that are able to operate only when the child is interacting with people in his environment and in cooperation with his peers” (p. 90). This construct is used primarily in educational spheres; however, the zone of proximal development can also be understood as a way to engage culturally (Tharp & Gallimore, 2002), in helping to shift or amend humanity’s connection to the more-than-human-world.

Adventure therapists serve as more capable peers to their clients, assisting them in discovering previously unattainable knowledge which they then internalize for their own “independent developmental achievement” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 90). This can apply as easily to therapeutic work as it does to environmental work or, in the case of adventure therapists, both simultaneously. Shepard (1982) hinted at the power of this sort of connection by observing the role that “the profound claims and liberation of ritual initiation and subsequent stages of adult mentorship” (p. 129) play in healthy developmental process. Adventure therapists must assume this role of *nature mentor* and more capable peer in order to assist their clients toward a greater sense of reciprocity with the natural world.

**Returning to the sacred grove.** What draws adventure therapists to go forth, immerse themselves in nature and return again? Willi Unsoeld (1974), mountaineer and outdoor educator, touched on this in a paper he presented to the Association for Experiential Education:

Why don’t you stay in the wilderness? Because that isn’t where it is at; it’s back in the city, back in downtown St. Louis, back in Los Angeles. The final test is whether your experience of the sacred in nature enables you to cope more effectively with the problems

of people. If it does not enable you to cope more effectively with the problems—and sometimes it doesn't, it sometimes sucks you right out into the wilderness and you stay there the rest of your Life—then when that happens, by my scale of value; it's failed. You go to nature for an experience of the sacred...to re-establish your contact with the core of things, where it's really at, in order to enable you to come back to the world of people and operate more effectively. Seek ye first the kingdom of nature, that the kingdom of man might be realized. (p. 20)

For Unsoeld, and likely for many adventure therapists as well, it is the exploration, integration, appreciation, and sharing of these worlds that motivates them. It is the journey forth *and* return that allows them to engage in the work of adventure therapy. What is useful for sustaining the practitioner is also the formula employed in helping the clients. Wendell Berry (1987), in his short essay "Getting Along with Nature" spoke of attending to the sacred in nature as crucial to its preservation and ours:

The survival of wilderness—of places that we do not change, where we allow the existence of creatures we perceive as dangerous -- is necessary. Our sanity probably *requires* it. These places function, whether we intend them to or not, as sacred groves—places we respect and leave alone, not because we understand well what goes on there, but because we do not. (p. 10, italics in original)

Berry notes that humans should know of these places, and yet not fully understand them. Their mystery is essential to humanity as a species. Berry (1987) contends that people are not meant to go forth into "pure nature" (p. 6) for extended periods of time, we are not meant to live there permanently, just as "it is equally true that a condition that is *purely* human is not good for people to live in" (p. 6, italics in original). Both places are needed, are complimentary in this

way. Without one, humanity suffers an excess of the other and becomes alienated from the world, both inner and outer. Over time, a variety of ethics have been developed to grapple with humanity's relationship to the more-than-human world.

## **Ethics**

Establishing an ethic is a process that has been evolving for much of human history.

Aldo Leopold (1989), renowned conservationist and author, outlines the ethical sequence:

An ethic, ecologically, is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence.

An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation from social and antisocial conduct. These are two definitions of one thing. The thing has its origin in the tendency of interdependent individuals or groups to evolve modes of cooperation. The ecologist calls these symbioses. (p. 202)

An ethic is both ecological and philosophical, especially in the case of the environment.

It is important to note that there is a historical component to the development of ethics that frames how that ethic is enacted. Leopold (1989) continues:

The first ethics dealt with the relation between individuals; the Mosaic Decalogue is an example. Later accretions dealt with the relation between the individual and society. The Golden Rule tries to integrate the individual to society; democracy to integrate social organization to the individual. (pp. 202-203)

This is a marked transition from being concerned with relations between individuals to being concerned with relations between individuals and society. Largely speaking, this is about as far as psychology and adventure therapy have gone in their consideration of ethics. There is a lot of concern about how clients are treated, how they treat others, and how they fare within the various systems of which they are a part (i.e., family, employment, political, etc.). Yet there is

another important layer to this ethical exploration that is missed if one were to stop there.

**The land ethic.** One could argue that many of the environmental challenges humanity faces are related to an underdeveloped set of ethics that has lead to an incomplete human ecology (Brennan & Lo, 2011; Fisher, 2013), resulting in environmental crises. Humanity has been functioning as master and commander of all it surveys:

There is as yet no ethic dealing with man's relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land...is still property. The land relation is strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations. (Leopold, 1989, p. 203)

This lack of obligations has reaped no end of sorrows. If one views the more-than-human world as a commodity, one will treat it as such. After all, it is only property or a resource. This is a problematic perspective as humanity is not a very good conqueror:

In human history, we have learned (I hope) that the conqueror role is eventually self-defeating. Why? Because it is implicit in such a role that the conqueror knows, *ex cathedra*, just what makes the community clock tick, and just what and who is valuable, and what and who is worthless, in community life. It always turns out the he knows neither, and this is why his conquests eventually defeat themselves. (Leopold, 1989, p. 204, italics in original)

Setting aside the conqueror role, Leopold (1989) offered the next logical evolution by suggesting, "The land ethic simply enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land" (p. 204). This has become a baseline environmental ethic, one that will sound very familiar from the ecopsychology literature cited previously. In offering this ethic, Leopold tried to lend a frame through which humanity could examine its choices and stewardship thus far. Leopold implored humanity to stop viewing the

natural world in terms of cost/benefit analysis or as “solely an economic problem” (p. 224), stating that a better lens through which to view the environment was to understand that: “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise” (pp. 224-225). Given this frame, it is not surprising that humanity has a lot of work to do related to its obligations to the more-than-human world.

This land ethic, also known as a biocentric or ecocentric ethic, also has limitations. As Carolyn Merchant (1996), author of *Earthcare*, notes:

The three dominant forms of environmental ethics all have conceptual and practical shortcomings. Egocentric ethics are criticized for privileging the few at the expense of the many (narcissistic, cut-throat individualism), homocentric ethics for privileging majorities at the expense of minorities (tyranny of the majority, environmental racism), and ecocentric ethics for privileging the whole at the expense of the individual (holistic facism). (p. 216, parentheses in original)

Overcoming these challenges necessitates a new approach to ethics that employs the best aspects of each without falling prey to their critical flaws.

**A partnership ethic.** Merchant (1996) suggests adopting a fourth model of ethics, one “that transcends many of these problems,”

A partnership ethic sees the human community *and* the biotic community in a mutual relationship with each other. It states that “the greatest good for the human and the nonhuman community is to be found in their mutual, living interdependence”...The term partnership avoids gendering nature as a mother or a goddess (sex-typing the planet), avoids endowing either males or females with a special relationship to nature or to each other (essentialism), and admits the anthropogenic, or human-generated (but not

anthropocentric, or human-centered) nature of environmental ethics and metaphor. (pp. 216-217, italics and quotations in original)

Merchant (1996) offers four precepts for cultivating this partnership ethic:

1. Equity between the human and nonhuman communities.
2. Moral consideration for humans and nonhuman nature.
3. Respect for cultural diversity and biodiversity.
4. Inclusion of women, minorities, and nonhuman nature in the code of ethical accountability. (p. 217, numbering in original)

The partnership ethic is in keeping with the “Indigenous perspective” (Jacobs, 2008) put forward earlier in this dissertation. Indeed, many of the points are directly interchangeable, almost verbatim, indicating a high level of congruence. I posit that it is also highly congruent with adventure therapy, leading me to suggest that it is up to adventure therapists to adopt Merchant’s partnership ethic as foundational to their practice. There are conflicting views on how to move forward, and the question of where to start is not an easy one, as noted by Donald VanDeVeer and Christine Pierce (1998), editors of *The Environmental Ethics & Policy Book*:

Determining how we ought to live our “private” lives is hard enough; designing a just and sustainable nation is harder. Designing a just, sustainable, and biodiverse way to live on planet Earth is no mean task; it is not obvious that we members of *Homo sapiens* are up to the challenge—as we bicker during the largest extinction spasm since the last ice age and during massive, human-induced, risky changes in those processes that have hitherto supported life on earth. (p. 1, quotations and italics in original)

It is beyond the scope of this investigation to get bogged down in the political, theoretical, philosophical and largely academic exploration of this question. What is of interest

is the exploration of ethics related to adventure therapy and ecopsychology and how these are enacted.

### **Towards Partnership: Adventure Therapy Ethics with Ecopsychology in Mind**

Beringer (2004) posed the question: “How might adventure programmers, in particular, and psychologists, in general, become aware of the fact that they may be caught in certain disciplinary paradigms that do not necessarily serve the best, or their intended purpose of healing and growth?” (p. 61). This question gets to the root of the problem facing adventure therapy and challenges the field to craft an ethic that it is willing to live by, which in turn lends a deeper purpose to the work that adventure therapists engage in. To begin this exploration, we will first consider the ethics in practice in the field.

Gass et al. (2012) include adventure therapy ethics in their excellent text *Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*, with the addition of “Ethical Guidelines for the Therapeutic Adventure Professional Group (TAPG) of the Association of Experiential Education (AEE)” in Appendix C (p. 349). These guidelines mirror a number of the guidelines set forth by the American Psychological Association (2010), and offer a helpful focus to explore ethical issues in adventure therapy. Included in this is the following section (Gass et al., 2012) that explicitly addresses the connection between the role of adventure therapists and the natural world:

#### *Concern for the Environment*

Professionals conduct adventure experiences in a manner that has minimal impact on the environment. Professionals do not conduct adventure experiences or permanent damage to the wilderness environments will occur as a result of programming. (p. 351, italics added)

This is the only ethic that includes the term “environment” within these guidelines, aside from the *Physical Needs of Clients* section (Gass et al., 2012, p. 354) that mentions the environment from a basic human safety standpoint. It is apparent that these guidelines are focused more on the role of adventure therapists as stewards of the land, in accordance with the principles of *Leave No Trace* (LNT, 2014), as opposed to also utilizing AT to foster a partnership with the more-than-human world.

However, there are a number of areas within these guidelines where such a partnership is implied, or could readily be incorporated more explicitly. The original version is offered first, followed by suggested revisions:

#### *Integrity*

Professionals seek to promote integrity in the practice of adventure therapy. In these experiences, they are honest, fair, and respectful of others...Professionals strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations and the effect of these on their work. (Gass et al., 2012, p. 350, italics added)

This section on integrity is largely anthropocentric in nature, and could be reinvisioned thus: Professionals seek to promote integrity in the practice of adventure therapy. In these experiences, they are honest, fair, and respectful of others, including nonhuman others...Professionals strive to be aware of their own belief systems, values, needs, and limitations and the effect of these on their work. Adventure therapists endeavor to adopt an anthropogenic frame that seeks to maintain their own professional integrity while also contributing to the integrity of the natural environments in which they practice.

#### *Social Responsibility*

Adventure therapists are aware of their professional possibilities to the community and



society where they work and live. (Gass et al., 2012, p. 356, italics added)

A quick online search of the TAPG website shows that the term “professional possibilities” is an inadvertent typo and is instead intended to read “professional responsibilities” (TAPG, 2014), yet the idea of *professional possibilities* is certainly more poetic and perhaps more fitting from a partnership ethic perspective. This section on social responsibility might be reenvisioned with this in mind: Adventure therapists are aware of their professional possibilities involving their clients within the context of the larger communities and society of which they are a part. Adventure therapists understand the principles set forth by Leave No Trace and strive to deepen their practice through the exploration and adoption of Beyond Leave No Trace (BLNT) principles.

**Leave No Trace.** Leave No Trace (LNT) is a set of copyrighted ethical principles created by the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics (2014), as follows:

1. Plan Ahead and Prepare
2. Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
3. Dispose of Waste Properly
4. Leave What You Find
5. Minimize Campfire Impacts
6. Respect Wildlife
7. Be Considerate of Other Visitors

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics offers training and certifications related to these principles. LNT principles are foundational to many outdoor programs and are often included in staff training, trip program orientations, and cited as ways that adventure professionals can engage ethically with the natural world. For many adventure professionals,

achieving an LNT certification marks the culmination of their environmental reflection and practice; this approach may be leading adventure professionals astray by allowing them to trade their own critical thinking for a certification. For this reason, LNT has been criticized as lacking, as a necessary, but not sufficient, ethical doctrine.

**Beyond Leave No Trace.** In their article “Beyond Leave No Trace,” Simon and Alagona (2009), observe, “as a practical environmental ethic, Leave No Trace disguises much about human relationships with non-human nature” (p. 18). For Simon and Alagona, LNT is problematic for two main reasons:

First, Leave No Trace encourages a presentist view of wilderness landscapes. The presentist perspective assumes that the current state of wilderness areas represents their natural, pristine condition. (p. 25)

The second major conceptual problem...is that it obscures the spatial connections between what takes place inside parks and wilderness areas and what occurs outside. (p. 27)

Thus, LNT operates in a self-imposed informational vacuum related to the environment. By falling prey to the “presentist” perspective, adventure therapists may be under the false belief that “by following a few simple rules of camping etiquette” (Simon & Alagona, 2009, p. 26) that they are living a full and representative environmental ethic. Adventure therapists need to consider the entirety of their environmental ethic, to widen their ethical purview (p. 27), in order to bridge their practice in wild places with their choices in other spheres in their lives. To help achieve this, Simon & Alagona offer the following seven principles of “Beyond Leave No Trace”:

1. Educate yourself and others about the places you visit
2. Purchase only the equipment and clothing you need
3. Take care of the equipment and clothing you have
4. Make conscientious food, equipment, and clothing consumption choices
5. Minimize waste production
6. Reduce energy consumption
7. Get involved by conserving and restoring the places you visit (p. 32, Figure 5)

These BLNT principles fit nicely within an ecopsychological frame, the partnership ethic, Indigenous perspective, and offer more depth and breadth than LNT. Rather than prescribing a set of activities, they encourage reflection and personal adoption, allowing for adaptation to a variety of environmental and human contexts. It is time to apply BLNT principles to adventure therapy ethics as well as adventure therapy professional competencies.

### **Competencies for Adventure Therapists**

In thinking about how to bring an expanded, and intentionally environmental, ethic to adventure therapy, it makes sense to survey available competencies that have been set forth for adventure therapists. Gass et al. (2012) have offered a comprehensive list of competencies for adventure therapists outlined in their text *Adventure Therapy: Theory, Research, and Practice*.

They group competencies into ten main categories:

1. Technical Competencies,
2. Facilitation/Processing Competencies,
3. Organizational/Administrative Competencies,
4. Content/Conceptual Knowledge Competencies,
5. Therapeutic Alliance Building Competencies,

6. Assessment Competencies,
7. Intervention Competencies,
8. Therapeutic Monitoring Competencies,
9. Documentation Competencies, and
10. Professionalism Competencies. (Gass et al., 2012, Appendix B).

This taxonomy of competencies is expanded by three additional categories that serve to offer descriptors of competency levels: Emerging Adventure Therapist, Competent Adventure Therapist, and Exemplary Adventure Therapist (Gass et al., 2012, Appendix B). Each of these three categories has descriptive statements specific to the overall competency being evaluated. For example, one statement for an Emerging Adventure Therapist under the Technical Competencies category is “Follows established written protocols and procedures” (Gass et al., 2012, p. 332). The organization and classification of these competencies are excellent, well written, clear and concise. They have benefited me in my thinking about my development as an adventure therapist, but I would add one specific area of competencies that I feel very much applies to adventure therapists.

**Competencies with ecopsychology in mind.** In surveying the competencies developed by Gass et al. (2012), I noticed that they cover technical skills, group process and management skills, clinical skills, clerical skills, and professionalism skills. What should be added is the inclusion of more detailed competencies related to an ecopsychological frame, one that incorporates a partnership ethic and the principles of Beyond Leave No Trace. In going through the competencies, I found the following statements that touched on this area (all statements and descriptions in quotations are from Gass et al., 2012):

- “Ensures participants always have access to appropriate equipment, nutrition, hygiene resources for particular environment” (Technical Competencies, Emerging Adventure Therapist, p. 332)
- Subsection under Technical Competencies: Environmental practices, lists seven LNT principles (p. 332)
- Perhaps implied under Organizational/Administrative Competencies, Item C. Ethical Standards (p. 336)
- Content/Conceptual Competencies, Item D “The independent and interdependent uses of wilderness, nature, urban, and challenge in adventure therapy with specific populations” (p. 338)
- Therapeutic Alliance Building Competencies, “The building of this positive form of therapeutic relationship incorporates the use of natural environment elements and adventure programming concepts” (p. 339).
- “Uses natural environment to strengthen therapeutic relationship” (Therapeutic Alliance Building Competencies, Exemplary Adventure Therapist, p. 339)
- “Conducts adventure therapy in natural and/or wilderness settings” (Intervention Competencies, Emerging Adventure Therapist, p. 342)
- “Aware of contraindication with some drugs and certain environmental factors in wilderness settings” (Intervention Competencies, Emerging Adventure Therapist, p. 342)
- “Understand how to use natural environment and wilderness settings to expand treatment effectiveness” (Intervention Competencies, Competent Adventure Therapist, p. 342)

- “Works with natural environment in a synergistic manner to enhance treatment”  
(Intervention Competencies, Exemplary Adventure Therapist, p. 342)
- Perhaps implied under Professional Competencies, Item B “Social Justice Issues” (p. 348) and Item D “Ethics, standards: adheres to professional ethics” (p. 348)

One common theme in looking at these statements and descriptions is that they address the use of the environment or nature as the setting or context in which adventure therapy is happening, sometimes explicitly and sometimes with an implied environmental ethic or orientation. They do not fully address the role that nature plays in the process of adventure therapy itself, the change it offers clients, or some suggestions on how these might be useful to emerging, competent and exemplary adventure therapists.

To expand on this theme, I offer the following “Ecopsychology Competencies” (here in list form (also organized into a chart in the appendix) for consideration:

- Considers development of client resiliency as mirroring group connections and the development and deepening of relationships to nature and non-human others.
- Is familiar with environmental and conservation psychology literature demonstrating positive connections between humans and natural environment.
- Holds functional understanding of dominant narratives/mythologies related to wilderness settings and how they may help/hinder client development.
- Able to guide clients in creation of ecological memoirs, identify working narratives, and assist in cultivation/continuation of positive self-narratives/mythologies.
- Able to engage client in exploration of parallels between improvement of self and improvement of place/environment.

- Explores larger social and cultural context in which clients' difficulties have unfolded and what connections these may have to environment.
- Observes and attends to reciprocal relationships between client and more-than-human-world, the intersubjective process.
- In working with natural consequences as teaching tool, observes that the natural world can be harsh and unforgiving. Cultivates recognition of overly romanticized perceptions of nature and wilderness, it is not all rainbows and beauty.
- Considers appropriate disclosure related to a natural consequence that clinician endured and learned from.
- Explores nature narratives and unpacks societal and individual expectations related to experience.
- Explains and explores therapeutic relationship as triad between client, therapist, and natural environment.
- Can describe basic concepts (such as more-than-human-world, biophilia, terraphilia, the wilderness experience, psychological wilderness boundary, etc.) and relate them to adventure therapy practice.
- Able to situate adventure therapy practice within context of "The Great Acceleration", can speak about need for reciprocity with more-than-human-world world in context of rapidly changing world.
- Able to articulate the difference between "wilderness" and "wildness" and the role that adventure therapists have in promoting and preserving each.

These are working models of what adventure therapists might wish to consider when approaching their practice. Each one is open to interpretation, expansion, inclusion or omission.

Through an investigation of these competencies, adventure therapists begin to grapple with the fundamental truths that have contributed to their effectiveness, but have been largely unexamined to date.

**Enacting a partnership ethic.** In honing their competencies to reflect their beliefs, adventure therapists can move closer to a partnership ethic that encompasses more than themselves and their clients. Beringer (2004), offers two ways to begin this work:

Transformative experiences, in which personal reality does not match with accepted theory, resulting in internal cognitive-emotional dissonance, are one avenue. Another avenue is interdisciplinary exchange. (p. 61)

Adventure therapists might achieve a transformative experience through the process of cultivating an ecological identity through the use of ecological memoirs. This can then serve as the springboard for pursuing the second avenue of interdisciplinary exchange.

**Cultivating ecological identity.** Mitch Thomashow (1995), in his book *Ecological Identity*, offers that cultivating an ecological identity involves exploring multiple areas:

...how people learn about ecology, how people perceive themselves in relationship to ecosystems, how an understanding of ecology changes the way people learn about themselves, and how an ecological worldview promotes personal change. (p. 5)

This work is important as, “It is the personal introspection that drives one’s commitment to environmentalism” (Thomashow, 1995, p. 5). Fostering this introspecting is at the heart of crafting an ecological memoir. Willis (2011) observes “Ecological memoirs offer alternative plotlines by which to re-story the selves of wilderness and adventure therapy leaders and participants” (p. 101). This assumes a strong narrative therapy orientation (White, 2007; Willis, 2011) one that seeks “the rewriting of selves in relationship to the-more-than-human



world...challenges dominant narratives about the separation of culture and nature, urban and wilderness, and self and earth other” (p. 101). Willis (2011) invites the reader to consider four questions in relation to their ecological memoir:

1. What captures my attention and imagination?
  2. To which areas of my life, identity, relationships and practices as a wilderness and adventure therapist do these captivating elements relate?
  3. Are there any experiences in my past that resonate with these elements?
  4. What new possibilities for being, relating and acting in my life and in my practice of wilderness and adventure therapy are opened up through engaging with these stories?
- (pp. 101-102)

Adventure therapists would benefit from crafting an ecological memoir of their own, to explore their relationship with the-more-than-human world. In their practice, they could then employ ecological memoirs as an exercise to assist their participants in crafting their own ecological identity. This would allow adventure practices to begin to examine the narratives that dominate the field and seek out new narratives that may be more adaptive. As Willis (2009) notes:

Instead of rehashing old stories of adventuresome men overcoming all the obstacles that nature puts in their way, new stories must be told, stories that challenge what adventure is and who heroes are, stories that open up possibilities for being and acting and that bring renewed meaning to people’s lives and to the more-than-human world. (p. 104)

Willis (2009) envisions new definitions of adventure that move towards a partnership ethic, that allow adventure therapists to discover meaning and purpose in their work beyond simply adhering to LNT principles and professional competencies.

**Adventurous Partnership: Adventure Therapy in the Service of Life**

Louv (2012), in his book *The Nature Principle*, notes, “in an age of rapid environmental, economic, and social transformation, the future will belong to the nature-smart—those individuals, families, businesses, and political leaders who develop a deeper understanding of nature, and who balance the virtual with the real” (p. 4). It will be those who have cultivated a sense of reciprocity with the natural world, who have ventured to wilderness and connected with their own wildness who will be best positioned to help solve the pressing problems brought about by what Louv (2008) describes as *nature-deficit disorder*. Louv (2012) continues:

Yet, despite what seem prohibitive odds, transformative change is possible. The loss that we feel, this truth that we already know, sets the stage for a new age of nature. In fact, because the environmental challenges we face today, we may be—we had better be—entering the most creative period in human history, a time defined by a goal that builds on and extends a century of environmentalism, which includes but goes beyond sustainability to the re-naturing of everyday life. (p. 5)

By embracing and expanding on their environmental ethic and viewing it as foundational to their practice through the incorporation of new competencies, adventure therapists can not only work on “re-naturing everyday life” for themselves, but also for every client that they work with. To borrow from the subtitle to Fisher’s (2013) book *Radical Ecopsychology, Psychology in the Service of Life*, this serves as the cornerstone to an “adventure therapy in the service of life”, lending the field a deeper and complimentary purpose, a purpose that seeks to benefit humanity and the entirety of creation of which humanity is a part.

**In Closing**

Adventure therapists serve as midwives to reenchantment, helping others to reengage with the natural world and their own inner wildness. Adventure therapists are nature mentors, serving as more competent peers who are able to not only guide their clients safely “there and back again,” but also able to parse some of the mysteries of the natural world, and more importantly, to help raise questions that foster looking at the world anew. Expansion of adventure therapy ethics and professional competencies would benefit by incorporating Beyond Leave No Trace Principles and moving further from utilizing nature as an add-on to treatment alone. Intentional integration of an ecopsychological perspective towards a partnership ethic into existing professional ethics and competencies benefits adventure therapists in their practice, clients in their development, and the natural world and the challenges besetting it.

## Thoughts of Confluence

### Contemplations

“And there at the camp we had around us the elemental world of water and light, and earth and air. We felt the presences of the wild creatures, the river, the trees, the stars. Though we had our troubles, we had them in a true perspective. The universe, as we could see any night, is unimaginably large, and mostly dark. We knew we needed to be together more than we needed to be apart.”

Wendell Berry

“Our growth depends not on how many experiences we devour, but on how many we digest.”

Ralph W. Sockman

### Actions

- Build on your understanding of the natural world, its processes, and complexities.  
Consider gaining further experience and knowledge through educational opportunities in ecology, biology, geology, and other natural sciences. Local community colleges, cooperative extensions, and area naturalist groups can augment your own direct experience of nature.
- Adventure therapists are good at preparing, experiencing, and debriefing any number of activities. Cultivate and expand your repertoire of experiential activities that focus on interaction with the natural world. Record them on index cards to reference in the field. Keep them in your back pocket and incorporate them into your practice.

## Chapter 5. Fareforward

*“The rare moment is not the moment when there is something worth looking at  
But the moment when we are capable of seeing.”*

Joseph Wood Krutch

But why bother to work with our clients to establish a relationship with nature and their more wild selves? Don't we just need to dig out the data, write up the article, get it peer reviewed, submit it to politicians and then change will unfold? Isn't it just feel good “soft” science that suggests we immerse ourselves in nature and cultivate an understanding of the more-than-human-world? Perhaps not.

Many in the scientific community may consider these aspects to be irrational and inconsequential. Yet, in the final analysis, it will be the human *perceptions* of global change and the risks associated with it that will determine societal responses. At the heart of these perceptions is the fundamental place of humanity in the natural world. (Steffen et al., 2004, p. 30, italics in original)

Inevitably, there will be a call for more research, of a “need” to gather more facts before action. Ocean acidification? Show me the data. Environmental degradation? Show me the data. Species loss? Show me the data. The refrain is persistent, even when the data is offered and recommendations made, action stalls. The fact is that facts aren't enough in and of themselves. The technical and scientific conversations seem immersed in what Randy Olson (2011) calls a permanent “nerd loop,” the cycle that researchers and policy makers are currently stuck in, keeping the conversation circling in unending and unhelpful ways. This approach poses a fundamental ethical question:

After all of the scientific syntheses and assessments are done, after all of the economic analyses of global change consequences are laid out in cost-benefit terms, after all of the debates between skeptics and believers have generated even more heat, one basic ethical question lies at the heart of the global change debate. How should the generations of humans now inhabiting Earth respond to the fact that their activities are creating risks, possibly very big risks, for the future of Earth's life support system? (Steffen et al., 2004, p. 30)

Quantitative data and the "hard sciences" are necessary, but will not be sufficient, to answer this question. As Willis (2011) notes, "The environmental crises we are currently facing are not simply crises of science and technology, they are rooted in the human condition and as such are also crises of meaning" (p. 91). We need a new narrative of humanity and nature, of what "progress" means. We need ways of living that will survive the Anthropocene and allow humanity to make the transition to the next geological age. Fortunately, while policy level decisions languish, this work can be done on the individual and group level, work that adventure therapists are poised to move forward with.

### **Turning Towards the Sustainocene**

In a presentation to Emeritus Faculty at Australian National University in March of 2012, Bryan Furnass explored the idea of transitioning from the Anthropocene to what he "provisionally termed the Sustainocene" (Furnass, 2012). While he acknowledges that use of the term is cumbersome and not quite appropriate from a geologic perspective, he notes that "So great are the changes required to avert disaster to people and other inhabitants of the planet that I propose to name the future era unofficially as the Sustainocene, in the forlorn hope that humans can reverse our destructive impact on our habitat." In this way, Furnass envisions the

Sustainocene as a period of continued human and ecological sustainability, an age that allows for humanity and nature to persist and thrive. This will require significant changes in human behavior to accomplish.

Furnass conceded, “The opportunities to transform the human trajectory towards the direction of a Sustainocene may seem unduly idealistic or utopian, involving as they do a change in mindset as much as in behavior,” but goes on to state “they must at least be attempted if we have any concern for the future of our grandchildren, who will otherwise justifiably and roundly condemn us for many of the disasters which beset humankind” (Fig. 40). In order to achieve this transition, Furnass advocates for the “Agents of the Sustainocene, The 4 E’s”: “enlightenment, ecology, education, and ethics” (Fig. 40, 2012). Ethics are noted as particularly challenging since they are “seldom near the top of the list for industrialized or developing nations, or amongst their citizens, having been almost universally replaced by the profit motive and economic growth as the main drivers of societal development” (Furnass, 2012, Fig. 40).

In looking to foster this “sea change in human thinking,” Furnass (2012) advocates the employment of the “ABC’s of Enlightenment: Awe, Beauty, and Caritas” as guiding principles for humanity (Fig. 41). *Caritas* is particularly emphasized, as the “Care and active responsibility for people and nature” (Fig. 41), something that Furnass noted was more active than the passive concept of compassion. This paradigm shift may be one of the most difficult undertakings facing humanity in the Anthropocene, but Furnass strikes a hopeful note:

The transition required to meet our challenges and opportunities is theoretically possible, given the social and political will, to create a new era, called the Sustainocene, which will require transformation from an anthropocentric to a biosensitive society, re-kindling recognition of our inter-dependence with the natural world. (Fig. 51)

This journey is not an unrealistic and hopeless quest for utopia, but involves real and measured steps to achieve.

**Finding topia.** As recorded by Alan Weisman (1998) in his book *Gaviotas, A Village to Reinvent the World*, about a community in Brazil that in many ways serves as the model for the Sustainocene:

“Gaviotas isn’t a utopia,” Lugari interrupted. “Utopia literally means ‘no place’. In Greek, the prefix ‘u’ signifies no. We call Gaviotas a *topia*, because it’s real. We’ve moved from fantasy to reality. From *utopia* to *topia*.” (p. 8, quotations and indentations in original)

Gaviotas was able to find success in part because its inhabitants immersed themselves in the local ecology and devised strategies to live in accordance with their environment. They did not seek utopia, but rather rolled up their sleeves and went about the incredibly difficult task of moving “from fantasy to reality”. They recognized the challenges and met them, echoing what Adlai Stevenson, US ambassador to the United Nations, famously declared:

We travel together, passengers on a little space ship, dependent upon its vulnerable reserves of air and soil, all committed for our safety to its security and peace, preserved from annihilation only by the care, the work, and I will say the love we give our fragile craft. We cannot maintain it half fortunate and half miserable, half confident, half despairing, half slave to the ancient enemies of mankind and half free in a liberation of resources undreamed-of until this day. No craft, no crew can travel safely with such vast contradictions. On their resolution depends the survival of us all. (Library of Congress, 2010, p. 95)



It is through bold action within a revisioned ecological frame that humanity will make the transition to the Sustainocene. This action requires a new way of inquiring, of knowing, a narrative that will help light the way.

### **A New Question, A New Narrative**

Returning to Fisher (2013), being radical means to get to the root of, to explore deeply. This is in part about embracing the margins, but it is also about finding a path for the rest of psychology to follow. The Marine Corps is famous for the saying: “Lead, follow, or get out of the way.” In contemplating the seriousness of the environmental challenges before humanity, adventure therapists and ecopsychologists may only have one option for their motto: “Lead.”

In order to assume this leadership role, we must consider adopting new narratives within our work as practitioners and scholars that empower us to look at these challenges in new ways. This leadership will be personal, anecdotal. Willis (2012) explores what it means to be a practitioner and scholar trying to grapple with significant environmental issues in her article “Constructing a story to live by: Ethics, emotions and academic practice in the context of climate change.” At its close, she poses this question:

Can we as academics and researchers and as fundamentally embodied and affective beings, relinquish heroic narratives of technical-rational control and express our deeper convictions of care and connection, opening ourselves up to new possibilities of being and acting in the more- than-human world? (p. 28)

For adventure therapists and ecopsychologists, I think the question is a particularly apt one and well worth entertaining on both a personal and professional level. It is hoped that this project will have lent some perspective as to why adventure therapists would wish to incorporate ecopsychology into their practice, ethics, and competencies. It is my belief that adventure

therapy finds a larger calling and purpose through engaging in this meaningful work, that it is essential for humanity to rewild itself in order to shift its relationship with the more-than-human world. Our very survival as a species may depend on it.

Taking a page from Willis' book, and being rather fond of Socrates, I will also posit a question—a small addition to or extension of Willis' question:

Through our stories of ourselves, our practice, and the places we inhabit together, are we prepared to share this journey with others?

## **Fareforward Thoughts**

### **Contemplations**

“Now I see the secret of the making of the best persons. It is to grow in the open air, and to eat and sleep with the earth.”

Walt Whitman

“Not farewell, but fareforward, voyagers.”

T.S. Eliot

### **Actions**

- There will be times of great excitement and discovery. This work will energize you. There will also be times of challenge and frustration. This work may cause you to gnash your teeth and rend your garments. Gather those who share your values and passion for the natural world. Hold them close. A mentor or friend can guide and sustain your efforts in time of need.
- Build a list of inspirational readings. Consider keeping a small notebook of quotes, names of authors and books, your own musings. When you feel discouraged, and mentors and friends are not at hand, reference this notebook. It will serve to foster a conversation with yourself. It will remind you of the importance of your efforts.

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## Appendix

### Ecopsychology Competencies

This competency refers to the ability of the adventure therapist to draw on their understanding of the intersection between adventure therapy, ecopsychology, and partnership ethics to assist clients in processing their experiences and deepening their connection with the natural world.

Emerging Adventure Therapist	Competent Adventure Therapist	Exemplary Adventure Therapist
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains and explores therapeutic relationship as triad between client, therapist, and natural environment</li> <li>Is familiar with environmental/conservation psychology literature demonstrating positive connections between humans and natural environment</li> <li>Considers development of client resiliency as mirroring group connections and the development and deepening of relationships to nature and non-human others</li> <li>In working with natural consequences as teaching tool, observes that the natural world can be harsh and unforgiving</li> <li>Can describe basic concepts (such as more-than-human-world, biophilia, terraphilia, the wilderness experience, etc.) and relate them to adventure therapy practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Holds functional understanding of dominant narratives/mythologies related to wilderness settings and how they may help/hinder client development.</li> <li>Able to guide clients in creation of ecological memoirs, identify working narratives, and assist in cultivation/continuation of positive self narratives/mythologies.</li> <li>Observes and attends to reciprocal relationships between client and more-than-human-world</li> <li>Considers appropriate disclosure related to a natural consequence that clinician endured and learned from</li> <li>Explores nature narratives and unpacks societal and individual expectations related to experience</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Able to engage client in exploration of parallels between improvement of self and improvement of place/environment</li> <li>Explores larger social and cultural context in which clients' difficulties have unfolded and what connections these may have to environment</li> <li>Able to situate adventure therapy practice within context of "The Great Acceleration", can speak about need for reciprocity with more-than-human-world in the context of risky changes</li> <li>Able to articulate the difference between "wilderness" and "wildness" and the role that adventure therapists have in promoting and preserving each</li> </ul>