The Eco-Friendly Therapist:

An Interpretative Literature Review of Obstacles and

Solutions to Practicing Ecotherapy

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Attestation of Authorship

“I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.”

Signed:

Date: 4th of July 2014

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Abstract

This dissertation uses the science and creativity of hermeneutic (interpretive) research to explore ecotherapy, a therapeutic modality that aims to heal the human-nature relationship through facilitating the healing of humans and the natural world. Ecotherapy includes, and goes beyond, the interpersonal concerns of clients, by locating them in the world and recognising our reciprocal relationship with the environment. Ecotherapy utilises the restorative qualities that nature offers by stepping outside the therapy room, or through bringing elements of nature indoors.

This dissertation provides a history and overview of ecotherapy practice, along with a summary of ecotherapy modalities. Five key obstacles to practicing ecotherapy and any solutions are explored in depth. These five obstacles are: (1) lack of time and money; (2) boundary, confidentiality, and legal concerns; (3) poor location; (4) that ecotherapy was considered to be irrelevant to treatment goals; and (5) a lack of awareness or confidence in implementing ecotherapy. Also included are ecotherapy practice examples along with theoretical explanations.

Introduction

Psychotherapy conventionally occurs indoors in a range of spaces, from austere hospital rooms with plain chairs, a simple table, and a view of buildings; to luxuriously appointed rooms with plants, comfortable armchairs, and views of nature. Where we choose to hold therapy sessions is important as spaces can be detrimental (Evans, 2003) or beneficial (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012) to our mental and physical health, as well as our behaviour. Based on their extensive review of the literature, Christopher Wolsko and Kathy Hoyt (2012) have presented a substantial list of health benefits derived from exposure to natural environments.

- Improved surgery recovery (Park & Mattson, 2009).

- Physiological stress reduction (Hartig, Evans, Jamner, Davis, & Gärling, 2003).

- Increased positive affect (Fuller, Irvine, Devine-Wright, Warren, & Gaston, 2007).

- Better self-reported health (Vries, Verheij, Groenewegen, & Spreeuwenberg, 2003).

- Lower disease morbidity (Maas et al., 2009).

- Lower mortality related to income deprivation (Mitchell & Popham, 2008).

- Reduced anxiety and depression (Antonioli & Reveley, 2005).

- Reduced stress (Gidlöf-Gunnarsson & Öhrström, 2007).

- Reduced aggression (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001).

As therapists we could offer these benefits to ourselves and our clients, by adapting our therapy space to increase our exposure to natural environments, by leaving the office or through bringing nature indoors.

Ecotherapy offers psychotherapists and counsellors (and other mental health professionals) an opportunity to combine the natural world and therapy, this creates an opening for clients and therapists to explore their relationship with nature, and for this

to be incorporated into treatment. A client's relationship with the natural world is often unexplored in mental health (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009a), as, depending on the theoretical orientation of the therapist, the intrapsychic and interpersonal, is generally considered to be the central focus of the therapy. However, use of the natural world in ecotherapy is wide-ranging, from week long wilderness excursions, walking in a park during a therapy session, to bringing nature indoors using plants or photos of nature.

One of the questions this dissertation seeks to answer is whether psychotherapists and counsellors without specialised training in ecotherapy can take advantage of the benefits of incorporating nature in therapy. The article which provided the spark for this dissertation topic was, "Employing the Restorative Capacity of Nature: Pathways to Practicing Ecotherapy Among Mental Health Professionals" by Wolsko and Hoyt (2012). They (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012) surveyed 231 mental health professionals (mental health counsellors, psychotherapists, counselling services, and psychologists) who worked throughout the United States. This voluntary survey was "to investigate the personal attitudes and demographic characteristics of those who practice ecotherapy, by incorporating the natural environment into their processes of assessment, diagnosis, and treatment" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 10). One area of their survey asked participants for personal examples of factors that may "inhibit you from the use of nature in your therapy practice" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 18). This question was quite broad, and although ecotherapy was not mentioned directly, it is evident from this article that the authors were focused specifically on ecotherapy practice. From these answers, that were coded and analysed, Wolsko and Hoyt (2012) found five categories of perceived obstacles to participants use or practice of ecotherapy, these were: (1) lack of time and money; (2) boundary, confidentiality, and legal concerns; (3) poor location; (4) ecotherapy was considered irrelevant to treatment goals; and (5) a lack of awareness or confidence in implementing ecotherapy.

The core of the dissertation provides a hermeneutic literature review of ecotherapy, focusing specifically on the aforementioned perceived obstacles to practicing ecotherapy and potential solutions to those obstacles. The five categories of obstacles to ecotherapy practice, based on the work of Wolsko and Hoyt (2012) will provide the framework for this aspect of the dissertation. It is anticipated that the literature review will deepen the understanding of each category, and potentially contribute to new categories emerging.

Firstly, I provide a brief overview of ecotherapy to introduce ecotherapy and the diverse forms it takes; this also includes a historical background to ecotherapy. Chapter 5 is based on the five key findings from Wolsko and Hoyt's (2012) survey. This chapter covers the five obstacles to ecotherapy practice in separate sections, and offers potential solutions to overcoming these obstacles. The different obstacles had varying amounts of literature available; hence, some categories were covered more comprehensively than others were. Chapter 6 covers several straightforward practice examples of ecotherapy, along with explanations for therapists to understand the purpose behind the interventions. This chapter is also to illustrate simple ecotherapy interventions that can be integrated into a therapist's current practice. Chapter 7, the discussion, summarises four key points that were covered. They are explained by discussing them in conjunction with an aspect of my personal process that occurred during this project, this is completed by a few personal, concluding remarks.

Research Aims

The objective of this dissertation is to clarify and explore the presented obstacles and solutions in order to provide recommendations on how ecotherapy can be practiced. It is hoped that this research will contribute to the field of ecotherapy by providing information that will help therapists to consider the ecological context in their practice,

including practical information on how to practice and integrate ecotherapy.

It has been important for me to write a dissertation that assists practitioners to take up ecotherapy without needing to overhaul their current practice. My aspiration is for practitioners to begin to work with environmental or ecological ideas with clients, and I hope this dissertation assists in bringing ecotherapy into the mainstream. For this reason, I developed inclusion/exclusion criteria in order to find the modalities of ecotherapy that I believed therapists could integrate into their current modality, such as psychodynamic psychotherapy. In other words, the modalities of ecotherapy that I included in this dissertation had to be similar enough to psychotherapy and counselling practices to be included.

Terminology

As my training has been in *psychotherapy* I, at times, refer specifically to this field. When I use the more generic term *therapy,* I am including both psychotherapy and counselling. However, it is my intention for this dissertation to be useful specifically for both psychotherapists and counsellors as these professions are quite similar to each other. Other professions (such as psychology and social work) have not been included as it is my understanding that they diverge significantly from psychotherapy and counselling. Nevertheless, I consider that a range of mental health professionals would be able to utilise some of the practices of ecotherapy described in this dissertation.

Ecopsychology is centrally about "bridg[ing] our culture's longstanding historical gulf between the psychological and the ecological" (Roszak, 1992, p. 14) by reminding us that we (humans) are living within an ecosystem. Ecopsychology is not a mainstream psychological paradigm; rather it is radical in its aim to explore ethically, practically, and psychologically how humans are a part of our current climate crisis

(Fisher, 2013; Roszak, 1992).

The term *ecotherapy* is applied ecopsychology – "ecopsychology provides a solid theoretical, cultural, and critical foundation for ecotherapeutic practice" (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009c, para. 1).

Nature tends to refer to the natural environment, ecological environment, the great outdoors, etc., that is not man-made (Oxford University Press, 2014). The scale varies, for example, a national park, a community park, or a large backyard with lots of plants.

The term *environment* refers to someone's surroundings, particularly the physical conditions (Oxford University Press, 2014). Depending on the context this word is used in, it could refer to the space where therapy occurs, the local environment of a neighbourhood, or our planet earth.

Green space is an area in an urban environment which is reserved for nature, such as parks, woods, cemeteries, green belts, gardens, community gardens, bodies of water, and other natural areas (United States Environmental Protection Agency, 2014).

The *human-nature relationship* refers to the relationships between humans and nature. This represents both to the subjective experience of an individual's relationship to nature, as well as the more tangible, physical relationship (Apàthy, 2010). There is a tension in this term, as often the discourse on humans' relationships with nature sets us outside of nature. The human-nature relationship acknowledges both that humans are physically inextricable from nature (Fisher, 2013) and that this might not be our subjective experience.

Chapter 2: Methodology

The methodology of this dissertation draws upon the creativity and science of interpretation, which is at the core of hermeneutic research (Grondin, 1997). Hermeneutics derives from the Greek word hermēneutikós, translated as interpreting, or making clear (Dictionary.com, n.d.). Hermeneutics was originally a methodology applied to the interpretation of theological and legal documents during the 17th century (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). Hermeneutics evolved during this time around the notion that the reader of the text, who is located in a different time and place to the author, will develop a unique understanding of a text, which differs from the author's original intent either partially or completely. This perspective acknowledges that ideas are situated in history, linguistics, and culture, and to understand an idea comprehensively, we need to develop a contextual understanding of the time and conditions that were present when the idea formed. Even if we manage this, the idea will have changed, as we, the interpreter, are located in a different time and space. How we see the world today is based on how we have tended to see the world in the past, which has been influenced by our ethnicity, wealth, education, religion, and so forth. Becoming aware of this can help us to appreciate that how we experience *and interpret* experiences (or phenomena) is inseparable from our past and present (Smythe & Spence, 2012).

German Philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) expanded hermeneutics into the field of philosophy and existentialism with his seminal work *Sein und Zeit* published in the mid-1920s (Bjorn & Kristin, 2013). The core of this shift was towards a question of "who is this being?" and Heidegger believed that our understanding is naturally interpretive and subjective (Ramberg & Gjesdal, 2013). For example, we automatically open a door without needing to develop a conceptual understanding of the reality of the door, our lives are phenomenologically available to us (Bjorn & Kristin, 2013; Grondin, 1997).

Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900-2002) was Heidegger's assistant and a pivotal figure in hermeneutic philosophy, he is most known for *Truth and Method* published in 1960 (Malpas, 2013). Gadamer diverged from Heidegger and defined three aspects to historicity and interpretation, that of experience; of objects; and of the understanding subject (i.e., the reader), in other words, the subjectivity of the reader and the intersubjective experience of engaging in a text (Bilen, 2001). Gadamer believed he was describing what occurs when we attempt to interpret anything, which was a response to the prevalent belief (in the 1960s) that an experience could be objectively understood (Bilen, 2001). Instead of developing a system of understanding, Gadamer (2004) was interested in illuminating the conditions wherein understanding occurs.

In the context of research, hermeneutic interpretation describes the dynamic relationship between researcher and literature; a unique and playful dialogue in which the subjectivity and prejudices of the researcher are recognised and valued (Smythe & Spence, 2012). The intention of interpretive research is to provoke thinking – questioning, pondering, mulling over – rather than attempting to present a meticulous review of a body of literature (Smythe & Spence, 2012). The re-viewed text is a partner, or a stimulus to thinking; some texts will spark inspiration and stimulate new ideas in the researcher, others may simply pass by with minimal influence. The hermeneutical circle was the term Heidegger developed to refer to the process of interpretation, "[h]ermeneutic analysis is like a dance in which the interpretations of the observer and the observed are repeatedly interwoven until a sophisticated understanding is developed" (Ezzy, 2013, p. 25). When we read a text, we are projecting onto it what we think it will say and mean, and we develop understandings from partial readings of the text from what we already know, otherwise we could not even understand the language (Immy, 2005; Moran, 2002; Packer & Addison, 1989). This process continues, with the reader projecting his or her own understanding and interpretation

onto the text continuously, whilst new understandings and ideas emerge (Ezzy, 2013).

As long as the reader holds in mind that they want to develop new understandings, they

will be creating the space and awareness needed for them to emerge (Ezzy, 2013). It is

important that the therapist attempts to be aware of their projections and responses

during this process – much like a therapist aims for during a therapy session (Chessick,

1990; McLeod, 2011).

Instead of trying to remove or limit our subjectivity and prejudices in research,

writing, or any endeavour, Gadamer's ideas encourage us to acknowledge and accept

our pre-judgments as they stimulate our thinking on an issue (Malpas, 2013). Once we

know what our viewpoint is, we are able to modify or discard it in order to align it with

the current context. Gadamer (2008) argued that all of our interpretations are primarily

pre-judgemental, centred on our own current needs and concerns, and, therefore,

hermeneutics involves a dialogue between our understanding of the issue and our self-

understanding. This is a restatement of Heidegger's hermeneutical circle whereby self

and object understandings co-arise, and amidst this process we can develop ideas

through awareness and curiosity. This is an ongoing process of change as "all

understanding involves a process of mediation and dialogue between what is familiar

and what is alien in which neither remains unaffected" (Malpas, 2013, sec. 3.2).

This perspective, to some degree, aligns with the practice of psychotherapy

(Frank, 1987), wherein both client and therapist are in relationship within the

complexity of all aspects of each other (such as, gender, culture, language, and religion)

and of their respective pasts, presents, and (perceived) futures. This forms how a person

feels, thinks, and behaves (among other aspects) in a moment of time. The therapeutic

relationship occurs in this blending between and within client and therapist, which, by

its nature, is constantly evolving (Chessick, 1990). There is no singular, correct way to

respond to a client in a moment, rather there is a vast array of responses a therapist

could offer which may facilitate healing, transformation, and self-understanding. This same response, however, could be equally be damaging if it was applied by another therapist; a point that illustrates the dynamic, subjective, and contextual nature of therapy. This unique interplay between client and therapist is the hermeneutic dialogue of each person's self-and-other understanding, as well as their own interpretations of the present moment. This is important as it illustrates the similarities between the interpretative methodology and an interpretive, relational therapy, where the subjective experience is an acknowledged and essential aspect of both endeavours.

These similarities originally drew me to utilising a hermeneutic methodology, and upon further research, I believe that it also aligns with how people are who they are. All that came before this present moment, and our unknown (mostly unconscious) views, expectations, and experience of the future, shapes how we are experience this moment (Stern, 2004). Awareness of how all of space and time affects us now is helpful in order for us to feel less confined, and freer to change our beliefs and patterns. This alive, uncontrollable process of life – and of therapy – has in my understanding an affinity with hermeneutic methodology: that is, there are known and unknown conditions that create us, who we are, how we experience moments, and how others experience us. To accept that this is our reality is beneficial, as awareness and acceptance tend to be intrinsically transformative or, at least, are the precursors for creating an opportunity for change.

Chapter 3: Method

Selecting the Literature

Through spending time hiking and being in nature as a child and an adult, I have developed a passion for the outdoors. Currently I am concerned about how climate change is affecting our planet and I recognise that gaining a psychological understanding of this situation could help, by assisting others and myself to become aware and insightful into our unsustainable behaviours. Upon completing my clinical training in psychodynamic psychotherapy, I was ready to begin learning more about how therapy can help us to care for our planet more, and how to put this into practice personally and with clients. I realised that this dissertation would be a great opportunity to begin this process.

A hermeneutic literature review is very different from a systematic literature review, as the search for literature is not tightly predetermined by a clear research question (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010). A hermeneutic literature review allows for an evolving, deepening question, continuously emerging from the research process. This allows for a range of literature to be reviewed, with deviations encouraged, whereas a systematic literature review aims to follow the research question strictly; this limits both the development of the research question as new ideas emerge , as well as restricting the allowable included literature (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2010).

In the beginning, I knew that I wanted this dissertation to be on ecotherapy, as this field seemed to incorporate our environment and planet into therapy, however, I did not have a specific question in mind. I decided that I wanted to contribute something that would help lessen the gap in the literature on how to practice ecotherapy. I already thought there was a gap here through discussing this with my partner, Michael Apàthy, who has experience in ecopsychology (see: Apàthy, 2010). To help discover my research question, I began reading books and articles that Michael had recommended. I

also went to the AUT library and searched for literature on ecotherapy and ecopsychology. From reading these books and articles, I realised that I wanted to learn more about the practice of ecotherapy so that I knew how to apply and integrate it into psychodynamic psychotherapy. I was aware that I knew very little about this field so I decided to work on creating a guide for people like myself, who knew nothing and wanted to know some practical details.

From the literature I already had, I read the abstracts of journal articles, the first few pages of chapters, and the reference lists to see what interested me and to get more references. I also decided I needed to develop keywords to get a wide range of literature on ecotherapy in order to find my research topic. From this process, I determined that the main keywords that tended to produce literature of relevance were "ecotherapy", "ecopsychotherapy", "ecopsychoanalysis", "ecopsychology", "nature-based therapy", "nature-guided therapy", and "applied ecopsychology". In order to make the search more efficient, at times I used an asterisk to include possible suffixes of a keyword. For instance "ecopsycho*" would find literature that used the terms ecopsychotherapy, ecopsychotherapist, ecopsychology, and ecopsychoanalysis. From searching databases relevant to psychotherapy (accessed through the AUT library database link) using these keywords I collated a large initial group of literature.

From this literature, I read the abstracts of articles, and scanned book chapter headings and introductions for items that captured my curiosity. A number of items did, however one in particular stood out to me. It was the article by Wolsko and Hoyt (2012) "Employing the Restorative Capacity of Nature: Pathways to Practicing Ecotherapy Among Mental Health Professionals". I found it particularly interesting and I wanted to investigate this area more. This article became the key to deciding this dissertation topic and I decided to use the findings as a focus to the start of my research, and as part of the structure of this dissertation.

As my topic was practically rather than theoretically oriented, I wanted to focus on reviewing literature that was closer to the applied end of the theoretical – applied/practice continuum. I then developed keywords that were more specific, which I used in various combinations. These were: "practice", "clinical", "nature", "environment", "wilderness", "therapy", "ecotherapy", "ecopsychotherapy", "ecopsychoanalysis", "counselling", "environmental psychology", "ecology", "client", "patient", "mental health", "ecology", "nature therapy", "green", "earth", "planet", "therapeutic", "obstacles", "frame", "confidentiality", "boundaries", "access", "ethics", "challenges", "limitations", "case study", "solution", and "benefit".
I searched the literature that I already had, and repeated a database search (in the aforementioned method). I also added a google scholar search in case I missed literature that was relevant or interesting. I also gathered literature from the references in the Wolsko and Hoyt article.

As I gathered the literature, I filed each relevant item into a folder marked "relevant articles to review". I determined relevancy through reading the introduction or abstract of each item to see if I felt it matched my topic. Once I had gathered all of the literature into the folder, I subjected them to further review, and did one of three things with it. I deleted it (due to it being irrelevant or repetitious), or moved it either to a folder marked "reviewed" (if I had made notes on it), or to a folder marked "reviewed, but not used" (for those articles that had interesting and relevant information which I might include at a later stage). Once the item was determined to be of strong relevance, I read it whilst taking notes from the literature and any interpretations. At this stage, I also noted down any relevant ideas that were referenced from a secondary source to look them up later. This was also the case if the literature provided a suggested reading list, organisations, or people of relevance. I searched for these references through the article linker through the AUT library website or through Google; once downloaded, I

repeated the aforementioned methods to determine their relevancy.

For structure, I decided that I would use the five keys findings that inhibit ecotherapy practice in Wolsko and Hoyt's article, to be five sections of research. I made headings that related to each finding (see Chapter 5 for details), so that as I was reading the literature I could put notes (including the reference) into each section. For example, if the literature referred to boundary concerns, notes were added under the heading "Boundary". When I came across literature that did not fit precisely into a category, yet I felt that it was interesting (as it demonstrated clear and feasible examples of how to apply ecotherapy), I made notes under a heading called "Practice Resources". I included this material as I felt it would be useful additional information for practitioners interested in practicing ecotherapy.

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Although a hermeneutic literature review does not necessarily require inclusion/exclusion criteria, for the purposes of constraining the amount of literature to a manageable size it was useful to develop some criteria. Additionally, without creating these criteria, I would have needed to undertake large amounts of additional study in order to understand the ideas and practice of unfamiliar fields of therapy.

I decided to include articles referring to psychotherapy and counselling, and to exclude psychology, social work, psychiatry, and clinical psychology. This choice was based on my sense that counselling is similar enough to psychotherapy, whereas I felt that the excluded fields were quite different. In addition, as ecotherapy is a burgeoning field, I realised that I needed to read literature beyond peer-reviewed articles as the number of peer-reviewed articles relevant to my topic was limited.

Due to the large number of theoretical orientations and modalities that make up ecotherapy, I also narrowed the topic for manageability in two ways. Firstly, I selected

modalities that aligned predominately with psychotherapy and counselling. This meant that there needed to be an element of talk therapy involved. Secondly, different modalities can hold opposing values; therefore, I excluded those that view nature as a resource to be consumed or conquered, or not as a partner in the therapeutic process. I also excluded modalities that primarily focused on self-improvement or confidence building as I felt that this was a limited treatment outcome, and also as it did not (appear to) consider the environment. If the modality listed below appeared in the title, keywords, chapter heading, or abstract, I did a quick look at the article to determine if it also included modalities that I determined to be relevant. If the literature solely referred to one of the modalities below, I excluded it from my research. These excluded modalities were, adventure therapy, referring to Outward Bound style programs; animal-assisted therapy; art therapy; ecotherapy that utilises predominately shamanic ideas and dreamwork; modalities of therapy that do not use any talk such as dance, yoga, and bodywork; and family, couples, adolescent, and child therapy.

Applying the Methodology

Through utilising the philosophy of hermeneutics, I approached this dissertation through two distinct, yet inseparable, processes. First, there is the viewing of a text, such as book or journal article, in the more conventional manner that is, attempting to develop an understanding of the author's ideas. The second process is the associative or interpretive aspect that involves allowing, and thus not attempting to control, any arising associations, diversions, or confusion to be fully observed. Doing this acknowledges the value that associations can offer; by facilitating openness and exploration within the research project, this allows the development new ideas and questions. Once this associative process dissipates and appears complete, I would return to viewing the text in the conventional manner (process one), beginning where I

noticed the association occurring and attending to my mind and body, and thus allowing the interpretive process to arise again. This cycle of observing my associations, returning to reading, and observing associations, and so forth, will be how the methodology is applied in this dissertation.

This interpretive process is anticipated to serve as a means of finding underlying ideas within the text, as well as generating new ideas that will enrich the research process, this dissertation, and hopefully contribute to the field of ecotherapy (D. Harper & Thompson, 2011; McLeod, 2011). Another hope is that this flexibility will loosen any preconceived notions (known and unknown) of what this research project will look like. The discipline of regularly returning to the text (and if needed to the research objective or question), will ensure that I do not become too lost in associations, feelings, and ideas. It also acknowledges the importance of following an overarching structure as this dissertation has criteria that it needs to achieve, both in terms of time (to completion) and academic standards (marked according to specific learning outcomes).

Chapter 4: Introduction to Ecotherapy

A History of Taking Therapy Outside

Early psychotherapy was not as exclusively held indoors as it is today; according to Martin Jordan and Hayley Marshall (2010), Freud held his earlier sessions walking the streets of Vienna. Additionally, Freud is thought to have enjoyed spending his free time hiking in nature, and he even held some sessions, with a few of his patients, walking along wilderness trails (Gay, 1998). Unfortunately, any literature that may offer insight to Freud's behaviour or thinking about these outdoor sessions is either difficult to find or absent. In general, Freud (1961) viewed nature as disconnected from the human psyche, and seemed to view it as dangerous, despite apparently enjoying the outdoors, "[t]he principle task of civilisation, its actual raison d'être, is to defend us against nature" (p. 15).

Jung also held therapy sessions in the woods, and in particular he enjoyed being near running water; apparently Jung felt more at ease in the woods than in urban environments (Roszak, 1998). Illustrating his love of the woods, Jung's (1968, 1989) theories embraced nature and had similarities to ecopsychology, such as his belief that a source of human psychological disturbance is due to our isolation with nature. Jung (1968) theorised that as nature has no boundaries it cannot be located outside of the body; as Sabini (2002) put it: "my self is not confined to my body. It extends into all the things I have made and all the things around me" (p. 155). Jung (1989) also described personal experiences of profound vastness, as if he were living in a tree and the ocean, and, did not link them back to womb or mother/infant experiences, which might occur in more Freudian influenced psychotherapy.

Robert Greenway became interested in psychoecology in the 1950s, and he went on to teach the subject at Sonoma State University in 1968. Twenty years later, one of Greenway's students, Elan Shapiro, began an extracurricular psychoecology discussion

group (Scull, 2008). The reputation of these meetings, which included prominent ecopsychology figures such as Mary Gomes and Alan Kannar, attracted Social Historian Theodore Roszak's attention, and from this beginning he authored *The Voice of the Earth* (1992), wherein he developed the theory of ecopsychology (Schroll, 2004). Roszak's work drew on his earlier writings (see: 1972, 1978) and work by Ecologist Paul Shepard (1982) (Scull, 2008). Roszak (1998) had the view that psychology needed to understand the human psyche in conjunction with the natural environment, a split that he traced back to the founder of psychotherapy, Sigmund Freud.

Before Roszak's time, some theorists radically critiqued and modified Freud's theories by gradually expanding the scope of therapy beyond the strictly intrapsychic. "Alfred Adler, Otto Rank, Carl Jung, neo-Freudians such as Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, the ego analysts and object relations therapists" (Clinebell, 1996, p. 129) as well as Harold Searles (1960). This expansion outwards, beyond the intrapsychic, brought interpersonal dynamics into therapy, which helped to pave the way for ecopsychology. This brief history offers an entry place for therapists to think about nature, especially for those who prefer to follow in the footsteps of historical figures of therapy (Santostefano, 2008).

What is Ecotherapy?

Ecotherapy (or applied ecopsychology) is based on ecopsychology theory. Broadly speaking it is a psychology that incorporates ecology, which aims to be holistic in theory and practice. Ecopsychologist Mary-Jayne Rust (2009) described it as "listening with the earth in mind" (p. 39). The perceived needs of the earth and the individual human are respected equally in ecotherapy, as it is grounded in the belief that both are (or, in essence, everything is) interdependent and interconnected (S. Conn, 1998). This means that from an ecotherapy perspective, the health of human beings is

viewed in the context of the health of the planet; as Swimme and Berry (1994) put it: "[w]e cannot have well humans on a sick planet" (p. 257). Howard Clinebell (1996), one of the original writers on ecotherapy, talks about the interdependence of body alienation and nature alienation; if we are struggling to take care of our own human body, then we are likely to find it difficult to care for the larger body of our earth.

As humans, we are struggling to maintain our own physical, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Currently the human race is more obese, anxious, depressed, and isolated than ever before (Flegal, Carroll, Kuczmarski, & Johnson, 1998; Leahy, 2010; Ludwig & Nestle, 2008; Nestle & Jacobson, 2000; Twenge & Campbell, 2010). It is hard to take care of ourselves individually and our families in the face of the modern challenges and expectations that we encounter in our everyday lives. Without some degree of stability and health, it is difficult to consider and work on the needs of others, such as the need to take care of our planet, and all beings upon it. This need is hard to address if we have not gained equilibrium with our more base human needs, such as safety and stability. However, at times it seems as though fulfilling our needs are endless. Rather than solely focusing on meeting our own needs, interdependence tells us that through taking care of those around us, we help to take care of ourselves (Loori, 2002).

All modalities of ecotherapy aim to heal this human-nature relationship, for the individual and the collective, through facilitating people to reconnect with nature and their own bodies (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009b; Buzzell, 2009b). Rust (2012) has refined this idea of reconnecting, preferring to conceptualise it as realising (or deepening) our intimate relationship with nature, maintaining that as we are never outside of, or unconnected to nature, we cannot "reconnect" with it. Although I agree with this point, for many of us, realising our interconnectedness with nature, or anything, can be difficult to experience. In my experience, there are many ways to

access the experience of connection or oneness; it may be through developing the belief of interconnectedness and then beginning to feel this slowly or suddenly, or through having the experience without understanding the meaning. As I have only experienced this feeling in the wilderness or through spiritual practices, I wonder how easy this is to develop during indoor therapy.

This idea of reconnection points to a key ecopsychology theory that seeks to remind humans that we are animals who are part of the natural world, rather than separate from it (Jones, 2010; Totton, 2011). This concept is applied in ecotherapy, by expanding therapy beyond the conventional focus on the intrapsychic and the interpersonal, and it steps (literally at times) out into the world, incorporating and recognising the environment as a third partner in the therapy (Nicholsen, 2009). This notion diverges from some modalities of therapy (and in my experience, the majority) that do not recognise nature or our environment as a part of the therapy, thereby promoting the treatment of the client in a vacuum (Berger & McLeod, 2006) rather than addressing (what is inadequately described as) both the internal and external worlds (Hillman & Ventura, 1993). For example, in ecotherapy, space is created for the client to express despair over climate change through the therapist acknowledging and responding to this as a valid topic. In other modalities of therapy, this issue might instead be linked back into the intrapsychic or interpersonal, perhaps by the therapist wondering (and possibly offering an interpretation) if the client is projecting their destructive impulses out onto the other; a response that pathologises personal pain (S. Conn, 1995).

Often, ecotherapy takes place outside as this is a palpable way to bring nature into therapy; however, it is also possible to practice ecotherapy inside. Therapists such as William Cahalan (1995) and Sara Harris (2009) bring nature indoors through incorporating sounds, smells, and sights of nature into the therapy room.

Ecopsychologist and Body Psychotherapist Nick Totton (2011) states that "wild therapy", which is similar to ecotherapy, does not need to occur in any particular environment: "it is an *attitude of mind,* rather than a bag of tricks, and this attitude may express itself in a great variety of ways, including sitting in a room and talking" (p. 183).

Ecotherapy Modalities

Ecotherapy manifests in a diverse range of modalities and due to this, I had to exclude some modalities for the purposes of this literature review. In this section, I have provided a general overview of many of the current practices in order to illustrate the diversity of this field. These modalities are: green exercise, green views, horticultural therapy, wilderness therapy, shamanic influenced ecotherapy, body therapy, expressive art ecotherapy, eco-dreamwork, animal-assisted therapy, outdoor ecotherapy, and group work for developing a sustainable lifestyle. As the field of ecotherapy develops, it is likely that some of these modalities will evolve or disappear.

One modality of ecotherapy is green exercise, this is any intensity of physical activity that includes direct exposure to nature (Pretty, Peacock, Sellens, & Griffin, 2005). It could be walking outside in a park, working out in a gym with a view or images of nature, participating in an active conservation or restoration project, or any form of outdoor recreation such as mountain biking or skiing (Pretty et al., 2007). Another modality utilises green views, which is an indoor healing or therapeutic space with a view of nature such as a lake, trees, or a garden, and there is evidence that people heal faster with a green view (Ulrich, 1984; Vries et al., 2003). Personally, I have experienced the benefits of green views whilst working on this dissertation. My workspace has large windows that overlook native trees and birds, the sky, and the sea is near with its refreshing ions and breeze. This has had a moderately calming and

restorative effect on me; being able to see the trees so close, and able to walk in nature (albeit briefly) when I need a break from the computer. This also helps me to feel connected into the world and less isolated as much of my day is away from other humans.

Horticultural therapy (or outdoor restoration) is the process of caring for, and tending to the outdoors, such as gardening, rubbish removal, and replanting activities. For instance, the *Natural Growth Project* in the United Kingdom works with torture survivors by providing allotment or communal gardens (depending on the degree of trauma) and weekly visits from a gardener and a psychotherapist (Linden & Grut, 2002).

Wilderness therapy is another modality of ecotherapy; this term covers a wide range of philosophies and activities, which makes it hard to define (Russell, 2001). In general it is being in the wilderness (defined as being away from centres of high population and artificial structures) for the purpose of therapeutic interventions (Russell, 2001). Activities can be primarily experiential, such as adventure-based therapy or outdoor rehabilitation programmes, where challenges within the participants or nature are overcome, thereby developing self-confidence; or primarily therapeutic, where nature is not treated as a resource to be conquered, and is considered to be inherently therapeutic. The particular definition I am drawn to (as it aligns with my experience and philosophy of wilderness or wildness) is that the wilderness needs to be encountered with therapeutic intentions, rather than mastery (Russell, 2001). For instance, the *Natural Change Foundation* (naturalchange.org.uk) was developed to inspire community leaders to live sustainably through solo experiences in nature. This project included overnight stays in the wilderness and a day spent alone in one spot, participants then had group processing time to share their experiences, which for many, where thought-provoking (Natural Change Foundation, 2014). The *School of Lost*

Borders (schooloflostborders.org) offers a variety of programmes, which can include vision quests, fasting, and solo excursions utilising indigenous traditions. This links with another ecotherapy modality that uses shamanic ritual practices, states of consciousness, and re-wilding the soul, such as connecting with your power animal (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009a).

Another modality of ecotherapy focuses primarily on movement (body therapy) such as dance, yoga, role-playing, and sensory awareness to deepen or develop a connection with their human body and the larger body of planet (Clinebell, 1996). There is also expressive art ecotherapy – using the creative process to connect with nature. The range of mediums used are extensive, some examples are poetry, craft work, drawing, or creating sounds or music (Degges-White & Davis, 2010). Eco-dreamwork is another ecotherapy modality, based on Jungian ideas, it utilises the unconscious by working with dreams to reveal and process our unconscious feelings and the meaning of dreams in relationship to the earth. Sometimes these dreams are viewed as the channelling of the collective unconscious via an individual's dreams and symptoms, and some people are considered to be the mediums of these voices (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009a; Prentice, 2003).

An ecotherapy modality called animal-assisted therapy brings humans into contact with other animals in an attempt to promote healing of a human being, and in some modalities, to be of benefit to the non-human as well (DeMayo, 2009). For healing of both human and animal to occur, it is important that all participants can choose whether they enter into a therapeutic encounter, and the intention is for all participants to benefit from the alliance (DeMayo, 2009). The animals involved are generally marine animals and mammals (such as dolphins), domestic animals and pets, and farm animals (King, 2007).

There is also an ecotherapy practice of taking talk therapy outdoors; this could

be in the therapist's private garden, a community garden, or a public space such as a park. This practice often incorporates elements of mindfulness practices. In the outdoor therapy space, both nature and the human being(s) are the therapists who are assisting the client towards healing; the primary therapist role can oscillate between nature or human depending on the needs of the client. Another modality of ecotherapy is helping people to align their lifestyle to their values. For example, Eco-Philosopher Joanna Macy's and Therapist Molly Brown's (1998) *Work that Reconnects* (influenced by deep ecology, systems theory, and spiritual traditions), aims to assist participants in the transition towards a sustainable human culture.

Chapter 5: Obstacles and Solutions to Practicing Ecotherapy

This chapter of the dissertation contains sections on each of the five most frequently mentioned factors that inhibited practitioners from practicing ecotherapy, as identified in Wolsko and Hoyt's (2012) study. These five categories were: (1) lack of time and money; (2) boundary, confidentiality, and legal concerns; (3) poor location; (4) that ecotherapy was considered to be irrelevant to treatment goals; and (5) a lack of awareness or confidence in implementing ecotherapy. In each section, I have outlined the perceived obstacle, reviewed relevant literature on the topic, and where possible, provided possible approaches to overcoming or diminishing the obstacle. I have also included my interpretations and responses to the literature in keeping with the hermeneutic methodology. The amount and quality of literature that I found varied significantly across these categories, and in some cases, such as the section on financial and time constraints, there was virtually no relevant literature available.

Lack of Time and Money

In Wolsko and Hoyt's (2012) survey, the most prevalent factor that inhibited ecotherapy practice, mentioned at a frequency of 56.4%, was regarding limits of time and money. "Clients could not afford to pay for the amount of time necessary" and "[b]ack to back appointments, needing to change clothes to accommodate outside sessions" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 19) were a few responses participants offered to explain their concern. To an extent, this concern parallels the challenges of access; if the therapist does not practice near a suitable greenspace, then they might have to spend valuable session time travelling to it. This also raises concerns of the financial and environment costs of driving a car, especially if public transport is not a viable option.

According to Sarah Conn (1995) who practices ecotherapy in the United States, insurance companies in general are limiting access to therapy, based on economic

reasons, as they prefer to offer funding to mainstream treatments such as medication or short-term behavioural interventions. This results in beneficial alternative therapies becoming less financially accessible, which reduces the client base to the wealthy or those eligible for public funded programmes. Although Conn described this dynamic in an American context, I imagine there are similarities in New Zealand. For instance, internationally, the first line of response to depression is anti-depressants (Moncrieff & Kirsch, 2005), and New Zealand is no exception, with 10% of the adult population currently being prescribed anti-depressant medication (Exeter, Robinson, & Wheeler, 2009). "[H]igh rates of antidepressant prescription in New Zealand may be more a result of a lack of availability of alternatives rather than the efficacy or tolerability of these drugs" (Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand, 2012, p. 11).

Another opportunity to address therapists' concerns about lack of money could lie with the psychotherapy profession as a whole, in particular its low public profile and lack of cohesive image (Gaudiano, 2013; Orenstein, 2013; Schofield, 2008). In New Zealand and Australia, psychotherapists have room for improvement in communicating to the public, employers, insurance companies, and policy makers what psychotherapy is, how it works, and what the benefits are (Gaudiano, 2013; Orenstein, 2013; Schofield, 2008). Also, psychotherapy is declining in the US and UK, and possibly other countries, and according to American Clinical Psychologist, Brandon Gaudiano (2013), "psychotherapy needs to overhaul its image, more aggressively embracing, formalizing and promoting its empirically supported methods" (para 6). Increasing the awareness of the evidence of psychotherapy's effectiveness would surely be positive for the profession and practitioners, and would increase the number of clients specifically seeking psychotherapy (Gaudiano, 2013), as well as the rate of referrals from general practitioners (Schofield, 2008). Some progress was made when mandatory professional registration for psychotherapists in New Zealand began (in 2003) which increased the

number of job opportunities for psychotherapists at district health boards, although the

chances of getting a psychotherapy job are still average, "as the role still has limited

recognition and funding in the public sector" (CareersNZ, 2014, para. 2).

Just as psychotherapists may need to develop a cohesive imagine, communicate

efficacy backed up by evidence, and use clear and convincing language for potential

clients to promote their profession, ecotherapists may need do these same things, and

more besides (as it is even more fringe than psychotherapy). Essentially, ecotherapists

need to communicate and self-promote more effectively, in order to have any genuine

effect on our environment and psychological theory and practice. In addition, if these

changes did occur, ecotherapists could see an increase in their financial returns as this

may increase the number of clients seeking ecotherapy. This would make it more

financially viable to lower fees to ensure that ecotherapy is affordable for everybody.

Another example of ineffective self-promotion contributing to financial

constraints, is the impersonal web-presence of therapists in private practice, this is

probably due to wanting to be non-self-disclosing and to appear neutral. This reveals

very little to the potential client that would help them to make an informed decision

about whom to see, and to believe that therapy will actually help them. In my

experience, this makes it harder for people who may already be ambivalent about

therapy. For example, I did a brief online search (google.co.nz) for psychotherapists in

Auckland, I found a number of therapists websites used technical words that the public

would not understand. For instance, listing theories such as attachment theory or

psychodynamic psychotherapy; or not giving more details on how the therapist would

work with depression, anxiety, or trauma; and not providing information on how their

treatment would help the potential client. In addition, my colleagues and I have

discussed the intangible nature of our training, and the subtle (difficult to measure)

nature of therapy; I wonder if this makes it harder to value our work, and perhaps

charge more money.

Looking at this from another angle, people often become therapists out of a desire to make a positive difference in people's lives, and perhaps therapists with this motivation accept that psychotherapy is not (in my opinion) a particularly lucrative job. As an example, my mother was in the healing profession and found it hard to turn people away who could not pay for her treatment. Sometimes they would trade services, but often she saw people with not a lot of money, because they were in pain and she felt she could help. It did not matter (to her) that they could not pay her. Having seen the impact this had on my father at times, I want to make sure that I follow her compassionate example, whilst not disregarding the financial necessities of life. To extrapolate this point, the altruistic motivations of many therapists may lead to them not being financially comfortable due to undercharging for their services (although I personally think that therapists are morally obligated to provide some lost cost services). This financial insecurity could make therapists feel cautious about investing further time and money in the training and experimentation required to begin practicing ecotherapy.

To link this directly back into ecotherapy, perhaps therapists who want to protect and care for the environment are passionate, and to some degree, idealistic. This idealisation can turn nature into a pristine and pure place (Brooke & Cantor, 2000; Elworthy, 2007; Kaufmann, 2012), which brings with it a devaluation of the human world, as if we are impure. If this is the case, this could lead to a cutting off, or denial of human desires (and needs) as these have led to destruction of our environment. Furthermore, as we tend to deny the reality of death (Bregman, 1999; Howarth, 2007; Kastenbaum, 2000), we could too be denying that we need a healthy planet to sustain our lives; a denial of human environmental limits (Kassiola, 2003). This denial would include the cutting off of financial desires that could be seen as tainting the good work the ecotherapist is doing (or thinks they are doing) regarding healing our planet. For

instance, I have heard environmental leaders criticising people who are working in sustainability and want to make a profit. This dynamic of people needing to be passionate about our planet and not financially motivated, creates a polarity as well as separating nature from humans, as if we are not a part of it (Kovel, 2007). This might be a split or polarity within individuals, it also could reflect a split in the field between green-capitalism on the one hand, and anti-capitalist influenced therapists or clients on the other (Michael Apàthy, personal communication, June 26, 2014)

I did not find ecotherapy literature that directly addressed the concern about a lack of time; however, the following are some possible remedies.

- Extending total session time to include travel (which has contractual and financial implications) and if necessary, reducing the frequency of sessions (which changes the consistency of therapeutic relationship), or meeting less frequently but for a longer period (Jan Edl, personal communication, May 14, 2013).

- Clustering all outdoor sessions with clients together, i.e., all on the same day and asking if the client can meet the therapist there. This option might be more convenient for the therapist but not the client, or vice versa, depending on the location.

- Holding workshops or group sessions.

- If practical, a therapist could move to a location that is more suitable, or find an agency that offers better access to nature in terms of location and support.

- Holding sessions indoors and where necessary redesigning the space to reflect the ecotherapy practice, through decorations that reveal the therapists personality, and including elements from nature. This is normal practice whereby therapists create and change their rooms to reflect their practice modality, for instance, a child therapist creates a space appropriate for play with

toys, art materials, and colourful images.

- If employees in agencies voice their concerns about wanting to practice outdoors to management, in conjunction with providing educational material illustrating the benefits of ecotherapy, they could create change in their work environment enabling them to have the time and opportunity for outdoor therapy.

Boundary, Confidentiality, and Legal Concerns

Therapy changes when it moves outside, the frame and the relationship in particular alters, this is what 43.2% of the responses from participants mentioned as a concern about practicing ecotherapy (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012). This category covered boundaries, confidentiality, and legality. Some comments from the participants were "[l]oss of objectivity. I would become a part of their life rather than being an observer" and "[b]lurs boundaries between myself and my clients" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 19). Further concerns included the lack of control and containment offered outside, along with the perception that mental health policies impose strict limits on how therapy can be practiced. Due to the scope of each of the concerns within this category, they were covered individually in three separate sections.

Boundaries: power and the frame. The frame relates to the professional and ethical conduct of the psychotherapist and enhances the safety of the therapy for both client and therapist (Jordan & Marshall, 2010). There are two aspects of the frame: the environmental frame that provides a safe and creative space (physically, emotionally, and interpersonally), and the contractual frame that supports the development of the therapeutic alliance. Moving outside extends the environmental frame and it becomes more dynamic, "the boundaries between mutuality and the asymmetry of the relationship we feel become more magnified" (Jordan & Marshall, 2010, p. 357). The

frame becomes flexible, and the concern for some is that this negatively affects clients, the relationship, treatment, and a therapist's privacy. The relationship also expands to include nature (as living therapist), client, and human therapist, which transforms into a multi-directional relational style. This "two-person-plus psychology", which is expanded from the relational two-person psychology "acknowledges the social, cultural, and environmental context" (Tudor, 2011, p. 53). Another way of describing it is that ecotherapy attaches importance to what is between, and beyond the therapist and client (Jordan & Marshall, 2010). Depending on the client's needs, the ecotherapist can choose between being more active and directive; the human therapist holds the central position and nature is the container, or the human therapist is an unobtrusive witness and nature has the central relationship with the client (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Berger & Tiry, 2012). According to pioneering Nature Therapist Ronen Berger (2009a), having nature as a partner in the therapy process, provides more support to the ecotherapist (and in my opinion, helps to reduce burnout) as the client develops a relationship with nature as well as the human therapist.

Depending on the background, inclination, and training of the therapist, the frame is either an aspect of the therapeutic environment (Casement, 2013) or it is what makes therapy therapeutic (Milton, 1993). In essence, the holding environment could be the therapist, the space, or a combination of both. If a therapist believes to some extent that the space is part of the holding environment, then they might tend to always practice in the same room with a client. In addition, changing the frame changes the boundaries between client and therapist. A boundary is a concept for space, to have a space that belongs to the therapist and a clear, separate space for the client and this space should not be traversed, according to Psychologist Gary Hermansson (1997). For some clients well-defined and almost rigid boundaries are essential to keep the client held. In other instances, a more fluid boundary is vital. Hermansson (1997) argued that

it is potentially abusive to hold rigid boundaries, which can appear to the client as aloofness or arrogance. Totton (2011) encourages therapists to hold the frame in a way that reflects the client's needs, to "dance outside the frame" (p. 135) with clients who hold overly rigid boundaries, and to act within a well-defined frame for clients who often break rules. Totton (2011) is also in favour of therapists practicing and role-modelling undefensiveness, practicing without goal or trying to change the client, letting go of trying to be a good therapist, and recognising the illusion of control, as clients symptoms commonly arise from the illusory belief of control.

Ecopsychologist Sarah Conn (1995) believes ecotherapists should soften their boundaries and reveal themselves (more than is common in psychotherapy) in order to create a more relational, ecological experience. This could be uncomfortable for therapists who are not used to, or disagree with, revealing too much of themselves to clients, preferring to keep a distance and be an observer or witness for the client. I believe that doing therapy outdoors reveals more of a therapist. This requires a higher level of comfort with feeling exposed (and being closer), and trust that it will be beneficial for the client. Totton (2011) offers, "there is no possibility of, nor would there be any point in, our standing outside and observing in expert fashion" (p. 188). To be the observer implies that one can be objective, that there is an external reality, and that we can put aside subjectivity (Totton, 2011). This is arguably unfeasible as nothing is external or separate from anything else; therefore, there is no "external" reality (Cox & Forshaw, 2012). We are all part of each other's relational field even if we live on the other side of the planet (Jordan & Marshall, 2010).

In any modality of therapy, boundaries need to be actively managed and attended to; this is a fluid and dynamic process requiring judgment from the therapist. This "living frame" insists on a present focus, and according to Jordan and Marshall (2010), is a good fit for relationally oriented therapists. Outside, therapy is altered as

the client is invited to co-construct the frame, radically reconceiving it (Totton, 2012).

This flattens power dynamics and therapy becomes more mutual, although not equal as

the client still is the focus (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Jordan & Marshall, 2010). "One

of the challenges in working outdoors then is how to hold the important, inherent,

asymmetry of the therapeutic relationship whilst promoting mutuality in a natural

environment that is more neutral" (Jordan & Marshall, 2010, p. 351), this mutuality has

the potential to be supportive and comforting for clients. However, with greater

mutuality the therapist is revealed as a real person in the world, rather than solely as a

therapist, increasing the potential for unhelpful boundary crossing. This highlights the

importance of supervision, and the need for the therapist to have good awareness of

these possibilities (Jordan & Marshall, 2010). This is topic is also covered in detail in

the section on outdoor therapy (see chapter 6).

Theory informs how we view and maintain boundaries, and in my opinion so do

senior and esteemed colleagues. What do they do? What is currently the "accepted"

frame? If they do work outside, it is more likely for other therapists, especially less

experienced therapists, to feel comfortable doing the same as we often work within the

confines of what we think others are doing. I have heard therapists whisper quietly to

colleagues about holding a walking session with their client for fear of other colleagues

judging them to have behaved unprofessionally, or acted out. Psychoanalyst Sebastiano

Santostefano (2008) has acknowledged this potential discomfort and fear of working in

different environments, and yet he maintains that a therapist needs to learn who and

what she or he is in different spaces, and whether they can, when appropriate, be more

therapeutically effective interacting in environments other than the office. On the other

hand, there is a risk that going outside is moving away from something in the therapy,

for instance it might feel stuck inside, and the outdoors might beckon in an attempt to

free up the work (see: Jordan and Marshall, 2010). Once outdoors, the therapy could

shift or stay stuck, reflecting the client's process in relationship with the therapist. If moving outside is the therapist enacting something, then this is not necessarily problematic as long as the therapist alone, with peers, or supervision, can reflect upon it.

Boundaries also affect the transference, Psychoanalyst Harold Searles (1960) thought that we need to consider humans transference to the non-human world, and to take into account the total environment in psychology. Transference as originally conceived, relates to people, the unconscious assignment of significant early childhood figures, their feelings, attitudes, and so forth, onto other people (Gabbard, 2005). Ecotherapy could significantly expand transference to incorporate other animals, places, trees, or rivers, developing new theories and practice models. Jordan (2009) explores our ambivalent attachment to nature and considers that our internal working models can be applied to our relationship with nature, "[i]f complicated dependency issues are set up in infancy with the primary caregiver, these cannot help but become manifest in our relationship to the planet and nature" (p. 28). For ecotherapy to be integrated with therapies that utilise ideas of transference, it would be helpful for ecopsychology to have a developed view on transference and how it changes in relation to outdoor therapy and our environment.

Ecotherapists injecting their environmental concerns into the therapeutic work could be, or could be viewed as, a boundary issue, for instance, the risk of the therapist violating boundaries (or being seen to do so) by bringing their own green agenda to the therapy. An example of this happened with a client of Mary Jayne Rust's (2008), after Rust shared her association on deforestation with her client, (who was linking her dream on the destruction of the rainforest to early abandonment and her eating problem), the client responded by commenting that Rust was inserting her "green agenda" into the therapy. This example illustrates the importance of ecotherapists being comfortable with, and thoughtful about, how they bring nature into the therapy. Perhaps it would be

helpful to discuss this explicitly with new clients, particularly if the client is not aware that their therapist practices ecotherapy.

Confidentiality. When working indoors, issues of confidentiality relate to how the therapist holds the clients material in confidence, and in general, being overheard is not a consideration. Although ecotherapy can take place in many different spaces including inside, working outside no doubt affects confidentiality uniquely. Jordan and Marshall (2010) discuss this topic at the beginning of therapy with a new client. If sessions take place outside in a public space, therapist and client can hypothesise and explore a range of possible scenarios, such as "what would you like to happen if a stranger comes nearby or walks past us?" to see what the client might prefer. These questions could be deepened "what about if you are feeling distressed at the time, do you imagine you would like the same thing or something different to happen?" In this situation, this asks more of clients than normal at the start of therapy, which may be overwhelming, or forgotten in the anxiety of a new therapeutic relationship. Therefore it is probably better suited for higher functioning clients (raising the question of how can a therapist know so quickly), or at least after the early stages of the development of the therapeutic alliance. This discussion empowers the client to be self-directive by expressing their imagined needs (Jordan & Marshall, 2010), they are also gaining self-awareness if this process is new to them, and in my experience, developing responsibility for my thoughts, feelings, and actions helps me to feel more positive, empowered, and capable. Another option is for the therapist to offer to guide the client in the beginning, until the client feels more able to know, and express, what they prefer. This may be the central work of the therapy, for the client to begin to feel in touch with their feelings, and perhaps to be able to share or assert him or herself with the therapist.

Throughout therapy, these issues will evolve, requiring ongoing contracting between therapist and client.

Some therapists, such as Rust (2009) chose to use a private garden to minimise concerns of confidentiality and boundaries. Another therapist prefers to have an outdoor space that has qualities of being inside, such as sitting underneath a willow tree, enclosed inside its hanging branches, with a sign nearby asking people to not come near (Jordan & Marshall, 2010). This willow tree provides a natural container for the therapy offering a degree of privacy, and could offer protection from the elements by being covered. In this example, the therapist has taken the lead, which is similar to traditional indoor therapy where the space is in the domain of the therapist. This compromise suits some therapists and clients by reducing potential anxiety about feeling exposed or uncontained in an unpredictable environment (Jordan & Marshall, 2010).

Legal concerns: safety and ethics. The final part of this category is regarding legal concerns. As the law varies from country to country and requires specialist knowledge to decipher, it is not within the scope of this dissertation to review this topic in depth. In Aotearoa New Zealand, practitioners would need to read books such as *Counselling and the Law: A New Zealand Guide* (Ludbrook & Counsellors, 2012) to understand the legal components of therapy in context. Subsequently, instead of reviewing legal concerns, this section predominately covers safety and ethical concerns relevant to ecotherapy, as this is a subcategory of the legal field.

The ethical codes relevant to each practitioner's field determine the parameters (or rules) of practice, specifically the therapist's legal responsibility of safety towards clients. The New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists' (NZAP) *Code of Ethics* (NZAP, 2008) states,

[p]ractise safely. Psychotherapists shall take reasonable steps to ensure that clients, whether in individual, family, or group settings, suffer neither physical nor psychological harm during the conduct of psychotherapy, accepting that considerable distress may be an inevitable part of the process. (NZAP, 2008, sec. 1.14)

For ecotherapy practice, the above could edited to "accepting that considerable distress *and/or minor injury* may be an inevitable part of the process." This inclusion is an honest representation of the uncontrollable nature of therapy, particularly when holding session outside; that despite a therapist's best effort, a client might incur injury such as a sprained ankle. Although ecotherapists have a responsibility to hold adequate training in emergency response and care depending on where they practice (for guidelines see: Buzzell, 2012), the risks of working outside should not stifle where practice occurs by reducing access to the benefits of working in various greenspaces.

Ecopsychologist John Scull (2009) offers guidelines for nature therapy as: safety first, get appropriate training, learn about nature, leave home, work in a variety of natural areas, and let nature do the therapy. This order of learning, placing safety first seems overly cautious. How can therapists learn about safety when they do not yet know how to practice ecotherapy, or primarily, how to relate to, and be in, nature? I believe that being excessively cautious around safety can restrict ecotherapy practice, and therapy in general, as this limits the therapist's range of possible interventions. Safety is very important, yet it is possible to promote safety whilst also being flexible and creative in therapy in order to do what is beneficial for the client.

Another example of ethical concerns was raised by Berger (2008) in his article on developing an ethical code, wherein he raised some interesting questions that he felt were yet to be answered in ecopsychology theory, "[d]oes Nature Therapy inevitably involve the modeling (by the therapist) of respect for nature, or maybe even directly

teaching participants to respect nature?" (p. 58). Berger (2008) asks what it means to say that nature is a partner in the therapy process and if ecotherapists are obligated to educate clients about the environment, such as how to protect or heal nature. Berger's questions require a deepening of ecopsychology theory that, in my opinion, seems particularly valuable, and I hope that experienced ecotherapists will respond to these questions by designing an ethical code for ecotherapy.

One particular concern that survey participants (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012) raised, is whether their insurance covers them comprehensively whilst practicing therapy outside. Although this seems inappropriate in a New Zealand context, there are some parallels. New Zealand Psychotherapist John O'Connor (personal communication, October 7, 2012) mentioned that doing anything outside of the norm (not conservative) as a therapist in New Zealand, makes you more vulnerable to being negatively judged by your peers and other professionals. For instance, if a client makes a complaint about you, the people assessing the complaint might view you less favourably if you were practicing outside. American Psychologist, Ofer Zur (2001), who stated that "insurance companies, ethics committees, licensing boards, and attorneys have been advising therapists to 'practice defensively' and to employ 'risk management techniques'" (p. 96) echoes this view (Bennett, Bricklin, & VandeCreek, 1994; Koocher, 1998; Pope & Vasquez, 2011; Strasburger, 1992). This is one example that could result in a therapist (or an agency) thinking that it is too risky to be unconventional by holding therapy sessions outdoors. At this stage, this point appears to relate specifically to the US and Canada, whereas New Zealand is more straightforward, because it is rare that psychotherapists are paid by their client's insurance provider. However, the issue of their own indemnity insurance remains – though this is probably not a complex issue to resolve, and it is important to check about the implications of outdoor therapy on insurance and liability coverage (Corey, Corey, & Callanan, 2010).

Poor Location: Inadequate Access to Nature

In Wolsko and Hoyt's (2012) study, 33% of participants responses revealed that practicing in a poor location is considered to be an obstacle to practicing ecotherapy. Statements ranged from being unable to decorate therapy rooms or having small, windowless rooms that offer limited room for improvement. Lack of access to greenspace near the workplace with suitable levels of privacy and quiet was another limiting factor. Therapists working in higher density urban areas are likely to face this obstacle (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012), and for urban therapists interested in practicing ecotherapy, or integrating it into current practice, poor location seems to be a significant hurdle. Although consideration of the space where therapy occurs is essential, it is just as important how that space is acknowledged and spent time in, for instance there is the risk of simply moving outside, without changing the frame or the scope of practice from the indoor model of therapy (Totton, 2011).

Indoor therapy. For therapists wanting to integrate ecotherapy into their practice, with limited or no access to nature, it is essential to personalise the therapy room by decorating it to reflect the natural world and their interests, such as bringing in the natural world with smells, images, and sounds of nature such as fresh air, sunlight, greenery, flowers, framed poetry, and rocks. All these elements serve as reminders of nature for client and therapist, and it creates a space for the client to express their relationship with the earth (Harris, 2009). Cahalan (1995) would talk to clients upfront about how the natural world is part of the scope of therapy, and he has designed a room where the nature is apparent using some of the aforementioned techniques.

The benefits of paying attention to the therapy room by creating a space that reflects the natural world, and in general, creating a beautiful room, have been

demonstrated in studies by Abraham Maslow and Norbett Mintz (1956). In their study, participants who spent time in a beautiful room, defined as harmoniously decorated with sculptures, soft couches, a wooden desk and bookcase, paintings, soft indirect lighting, and two large windows, self-reported having more energy and overall well-being, compared to time spent in an average or ugly room. Mintz (1956) furthered this study and found that people want to spend longer in beautiful room and participants reported feelings of comfort, pleasure, importance, energy, and a desire to continue their activity. Whereas in the ugly room there were reports of fatigue, monotony, headaches, drowsiness, discontent, irritability, hostility, and a desire to avoid the space. The ugly room had grey walls, austere metal furniture, naked light bulbs, and two small windows with torn shades. Although the above example is extreme, I recall practicing in therapy rooms that felt industrial and sterile, and feeling uncomfortable in this space, and embarrassed to bring clients there. I felt that the room did not represent the importance, sensitivity, and respect that I had for clients who were willing to engage in therapy. Other research has focused more specifically on the natural world, such as the value of having a window overlooking greenspace. Researchers (Pretty et al., 2005) found that people in workplaces with views of nature have fewer illness, feel less frustrated, and express greater enthusiasm for their work. Given the high rate of burnout the mental health profession has (Wessells et al., 2013), working in pleasant spaces could clearly offer some immense benefits for therapists and clients.

Creating an indoor environment that is healthy with clean and fresh air (air purifiers, de/humidifiers, or purifying plants); natural and healthy lighting, especially not fluorescent, which is unhealthy (Stigliani, 1995); with windows or images of nature; and a room that is suitably spacious (Clinebell, 1996), could be too expensive for agencies or individual therapists. In addition, some therapists might rightly believe that expressing a desire to see their client's outdoors could result in conflict with authority, a

situation requiring courage, support, energy, and knowledge to engage in. They also might lack the support of their colleagues and feel they are "on their own". This raises the question of how can therapists talk about working outdoors to colleagues or managers. In general, a good approach is to determine what your boss or organisation needs, and what role you (or a peer leader) could have in providing it (Baldoni, 2010). There is plenty of literature available on how to create change and have a challenging conversation in your workplace (Baldoni, 2010; Bridges, 1999; Dutton, 2003; Geuss, 1981).

Adapting the room by integrating nature and making the space more pleasant might be a better alternative for therapists who are unable to practice therapy outdoors due to poor location. Additionally, some clients prefer to be seen indoors, either initially, or throughout the duration of therapy. Reasons for this preference could be, feeling too exposed outside, they are used to indoor therapy and are uncomfortable with change, or they need the containment of a room and the predictability that comes with this (i.e. not affected by temperature and weather fluctuations). The section below, "Benefits of Ecotherapy" covers this detail.

Ecotherapy and Treatment Goals

Wolsko and Hoyt (2012) found that 29.5% of participants comments expressed the belief that ecotherapy was either ineffective or irrelevant to the healing process. Some of their comments highlighted a theme, that some practitioners believed that the client's internal space is the central focus of (their modality of) therapy and that ecotherapy would be an unhelpful distraction. "Do not think it is relevant to everyone. This type of approach assumes that everyone is a tree hugger when they are not" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 19). This type of thinking embodies the splitting that tends to occur around nature or the environment, and the belief that only certain types of

people can and should take care of our planet. Whether we are passionate environmentalists or not, we are all reliant on our environment to stay alive. Environmental activists tend to be on the receiving end of the split-off collective guilt about environmental damage, becoming the objects of ridicule "tree-hugging hippies", and effectively the collective guilt is neutralised (for more details see: Randall, 2005). I find this dynamic particularly upsetting, as we are all responsible for our lives and the effect that they have, not one particular, marginalised group.

Whether a therapist believes that ecotherapy is relevant to treatment goals, to some degree, depends on their understanding of human development. If they do not believe that our environment (and all that we interact with) affects a person's development, then it is more likely that they will deem ecotherapy, or any therapy modality that addresses the environment, to be irrelevant to therapy treatment. Personally, I think that for ecotherapy (and similar modalities) to actually be irrelevant to therapy treatment, there needs to be strong evidence that our relationship with this planet is irrelevant to our lives, and therefore to therapy, evidence that I find hard to imagine existing. Spaces and personal relationships dialectically co-create each other (Santostefano, 2008); we are changed by our location as we are embedded in (not separate from) our physical environment, if the space is changed, then so is the person (Stevens, 2010). I have experienced this dynamic recently when I travelled to India and stayed in areas where rubbish and dirt was everywhere, and the constant noise was inescapable. I felt very stressed and grubby, and I desperately wanted to find some peace and quiet. When I reached the hill stations and stayed in a hotel surrounded by greenery and minimal noise, I felt like a completely different person, far more relaxed and happy.

Additionally, memories are tied to our state of consciousness and our physical location (Nevid, 2012; Rubin, 1999), this means that it is much easier to remember

something if either of these elements are reproduced. This could be quite useful therapeutically, especially if the therapist is flexible to hold therapy in a contextual environment that helps the client to process and heal past trauma. Given the effect our environment has on our whole being, I believe that it would be consistent for therapists to be very thoughtful about where we practice, as well as how our environment affects health, for instance including in the assessment questions about the client's physical environment. I believe that integrating the environment into therapy, alongside therapists modelling respect and care for our environment, would expand the range of healing that therapy can offer, for clients, therapists, and our planet.

One related application of ecotherapy is to work with peoples' lifestyle choices in relation to the environment, a treatment goal of harmonising our lives with the ecosystem, such as decreasing our carbon footprint. In New Zealand, our relationship with nature, often, does not match our values. According to Carl Rogers (1989) from a person centred perspective, incongruence, which is a dissonance between our self-concept and our lived experience, is a source of human distress. Furthermore, Terrance O'Connor (1995) has argued that we need to gain insight into our ecological incongruence as there is a disconnect between how we feel about the environment and how we relate with it. For example, New Zealanders love to spend time outdoors in nature. In a New Zealand household sustainability survey (Research New Zealand, 2008) 83% of respondents stated that they believe we are all responsible for caring for the environment. This survey also revealed that two thirds of people with access to a motor vehicle drove to work without passengers, and of this number, a third described themselves as unwilling to change their behaviour, such as using public transport, carsharing, walking, or cycling. This illustrates this misalignment of environmental values and related behaviour; this incongruence is common, and I am aware that I too have ecological incongruences. This is not inherently a problem unless I am unwilling

to be aware of my behaviour, and reflect on how it relates to my values. Ecotherapy is about attending to this ecological incongruence which can creative positive changes, aiding us to face into, and take care of, our current environmental crisis (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009a).

Ecotherapy: Lack of Awareness or Confidence to Implement

The category with the lowest reported occurrence by participants in Wolsko and Hoyt's (2012) survey was 9.6%. In this category, the mental health practitioners felt as though they lacked sufficient awareness or confidence to incorporate nature into their therapy practice. "I think fear of stepping outside the box is a big factor. (Gasp, I am startled at my timidity.) I often, often, often think how therapeutic it would be to conduct a session while walking on a nearby bike path" (Wolsko & Hoyt, 2012, p. 19). This comment is an example of how hard it can be to really trust and act on our intuition, especially if the idea is unconventional. Often, practitioners do not know about ecotherapy, or if they do have some knowledge, they might feel unsure how to apply it. I imagine that this lack of awareness contributes the attitudes of the 29.5% of participants who mentioned their belief that ecotherapy was irrelevant to therapy. Consequently, this section aims to increase awareness and understanding of ecotherapy by focusing on some of the main benefits and limitations.

Benefits of Ecotherapy.   Nature's restorative properties have been widely researched, studies show that nature restores depleted physical and psychological states and alleviates dysfunction (Antonioli & Reveley, 2005; Fuller et al., 2007; Gidlöf-Gunnarsson & Öhrström, 2007; Hartig et al., 2003; Kaplan, 1995; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001; Maas et al., 2009; Ulrich, 1984; Vries et al., 2003). When being outside in nature is not possible, indoor plants (Bringslimark, Hartig, & Patil, 2009; Park & Mattson,

2009) and images of nature offer some of these stress reduction benefits, the larger and more immersive the image, the greater the benefit (de Kort, Meijnders, Sponselee, & IJsselsteijn, 2006). As ecotherapy acknowledges and knows the importance of the space and place that therapy occurs, and as it is often located in the natural world, ecotherapy is a field with distinct advantages to traditional indoor therapy. Why not utilise spaces that people naturally tend towards for restoration (Ulrich et al., 1991) as a part of therapy?

Ecotherapy facilitates people to get in touch with their larger self (to experience an expansion of the mind-body), and explore dimensions beyond the intrapersonal and interpersonal (Berger & McLeod, 2006). This expansion decreases people's sense of isolation as they sense that they belong to something larger than themselves. There is a range of literature available for therapists on the self as interdependent and extending beyond our skin (Berger & McLeod, 2006; L. Conn & Conn, 2009; S. Conn, 1995; S. Harper, 1995; Hillman & Ventura, 1993; O'Connor, 1995; Rust, 2009, 2009; Sabini, 2002). Greenspace increases creativity and play, and develops the instinctual (animal) self, which is creative, spontaneous, capable of strong emotions, and deep insight (Berger & McLeod, 2006; S. Harper, 1995). Also, flexibility develops due to being immersed in an environment that is palpably uncontrollable, along with fostering feelings of acceptance and completion (Berger & McLeod, 2006). These benefits are similar to those of mindfulness meditation practices (Greenberg, Reiner, & Meiran, 2012), this similarity may be due to the common ground between mindfulness practices and ecotherapy; both cultivate awareness and compassion (Buzzell, 2009b; Clinebell, 1996).

A study commissioned by Mind (2007), a mental health organisation in the United Kingdom, and implemented by the University of Essex, found remarkable benefits of outdoor walking in natural spaces: 90% felt an improvement in self-esteem,

71% felt an improvement in depression, and 71% felt a reduction of tension. Only 5% felt their self-esteem decline, with 6% feeling more depressed after an outdoor walk, this is compared to 44% and 22% respectively, in an indoor walk (Mind, 2007). This simple intervention holds good potential for the reduction of depressive and anxiety symptoms; it is also cheap and could be effective in combination with psychological, physiological, and neurological interventions. Mind (2007) recommended that the primary intervention for people with mild to moderate depression is green exercise, or if this is not realistic, simply spending time in green environments. I personally have utilised green exercise for reducing anxiety and stress, I find that even a short walk in nature can help to reduce anxiety and increase my sense of wellbeing.

Another benefit of ecotherapy is that for some clients, working outside feels safer, more appealing, and spacious. Clients with a history of sexual abuse, and who feel afraid to be in a room with only one person, are likely to feel more able to engage and establish a therapeutic alliance outside, due to decreased anxiety (Totton, 2011). I also imagine that being outside helps, by putting less pressure on the relationship as being outside broadens the focus out from the dyad to include the surroundings. Also, the natural world can provide a sense of stability in its complexity and reliability at being unpredictable, and it is very engaging – it is hard to ignore nature when you are caught in a thunderstorm (Holifield, 2010). For some, being outdoors is a safer entry point as it assists people who have suffered by the actions of humans, such as torture survivors who engage with the soil and the cycles of birth and death through planting gardens (Rust, 2005). Practicing ecotherapy outside expands a therapist's treatment options by allowing for clients who prefer (or are more suited) to outdoor sessions.

An aim of ecotherapy is to assist in healing for all forms of life on earth. Thus, the crucial benefit of ecotherapy could be enabling humans to live more sustainably, by caring for, and valuing ourselves, and all the creatures who we share this earth with.

One method to accomplish this, according to psychological authors (Macy, 1995; Rust, 2008; Totton, 2011) on climate change, is that we each need support to face into our (often repressed) collective apathy, rage, guilt, despair, grief, denial, and dissociation about the state of our environment. Macy (1995) has found that sharing these potentially overwhelming emotions with the support of experienced facilitators in a group, is empowering and opens people up to the possibilities, rather than feeling helpless and stuck. For therapists who are interested in taking therapy outdoors, it is important that they too have moved through feeling stuck and helplessness about environmental issues, so that they are able, by feeling freer psychologically, to do the required thinking and preparation for adjusting the frame and space of therapy.

Another benefit is that people who feel more connected to nature have higher life satisfaction, and it is probable that they are more likely to engage in eco-friendly behaviour (Mayer & Frantz, 2004), although further research is needed to prove this link. How to enhance this connection to nature is one of the questions that ecotherapy and ecopsychology endeavour to answer; by deepening our connection within ourselves, becoming more aware of our body-mind, and feeling more at ease within ourselves, we are also deepening our connection with nature.

Limitations of Ecotherapy. Ecotherapy is a young field, and according to Berger (2009b), there is plenty of room for constructive critiques on its limitations; it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to review them all. Ecotherapy modalities include a wide range of philosophies, and in my opinion, this diversity is a limitation, as ecotherapy does not have a clear, coherent message. In addition, ecotherapy has a limited amount of in-depth case studies available, making it hard for ecotherapists to gain practical knowledge; there is a need for more in-depth ecotherapy literature that

covers the applied end of the spectrum, rather than the theoretical. This lack hinders a valuable source of learning for therapists interested in ecotherapy practice.

Psychologist Robert Greenway (1995) has spent nearly 30 years leading wilderness excursions and he collected responses from participants about the effects of the experience, 90% of participants reported an increased sense of aliveness, energy, and well-being upon returning home after time spent in the wilderness. These gains were short lived, with 52% describing themselves as feeling "depressed" a few days later (Greenway, 1995). This decline in positive affect illustrates the importance of integrating wilderness excursions, that may have felt transformative, into the participant's everyday life. Although these experiences offer benefits, such as enlivening the senses through expanding modes of perceptions and opening up or expanding our sense of self (S. Harper, 1995), interventions that intermingle with our daily lives offer more chance of long-term gains. Short-term intensives can be very effective, but there needs to be some sort of sustained follow up, otherwise the gains will be lost (Bassman, 1998; Seed, Macy, & Fleming, 2007).

Berger (2009b) has offered valuable contributions by identifying some of the limitations of ecotherapy. He raises the issue of how hard ecotherapy is to define as it is predicated on uniqueness and creativity. Generally, defining a therapy modality has the potential to limit the therapist's creativity and flexibility as they may feel, either consciously or unconsciously, that their practice should look something like the definition. To lose creativity and flexibility is to lose the vital element of therapy according to Irvin Yalom (2002). However, defining ecotherapy does not necessarily require a rigid or uncreative practice and there are advantages to having a more developed definition. If ecotherapy became simpler to describe and understand, it would help by raising awareness and perhaps, its popularity; this is also a challenge that psychotherapy faces. In my experience, there is a tendency to emphasise the individual,

subtle, and unique, aspects of the work (either ecotherapeutic or psychodynamic) and, it seems, a fear that candid communication with other professions and the public, along with a clear definition, could somehow damage the work. This attitude stands in strong contrast to research oriented psychologists, and the more technical modalities, such as cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). I wonder why more psychotherapists and ecotherapists have not shared their techniques and successes; are we afraid of robust critical thinking that is such a part of research and CBT? or do we feel that this is not our strength, as we are relationally focussed, and thus we miss the value of research and clearly articulating our therapeutic style.

Another benefit of simplifying ecotherapy is that critiques that are more sophisticated could be developed and assimilated, which would probably increase ecotherapy's robustness and efficacy. Berger (2008) proposed that the limitations of ecotherapy relate to the framework and the limitations of the therapist, such as their personality, character, training, and experience. It is the therapist doing the work, rather than the framework, according to Berger (2009b). They enliven and bring the spark to therapy through their interventions, actions, and way of being. If this correct, then the limited training, supervision, and mentorship opportunities available to aspiring ecotherapists will make it difficult for them to develop their unique, authentic practice. Although it seems that this is a limitation of any young field,

Another limitation could be the types of people who are attracted to practicing ecotherapy. It is conceivable that ecotherapy attracts practitioners who are less motivated towards consumerism, marketing, or business models, due to the philosophies underpinning ecotherapy. This raises the question of whether marketing and other capitalist enterprises are in opposition to ecotherapy values. Ecotherapy does not necessarily exclude green capitalism, the view that capitalism can be pro-environment (Wallis, 2010), but a strong critique of consumerism and capitalism is also present. I

believe that ecotherapy needs to utilise consumerist activities more thoroughly, even if this is seemingly against its values. Raising ecotherapy's (and similar modalities) profile could stimulate a deeper psychological engagement and dialogue of our environmental crisis than we are currently participating in. Should this happen then any philosophical incongruities, such as ecotherapy being anti-consumerism, could be addressed later, knowing that this transgression was for the greater good. What is more important is that we engage with the crisis, rather than being overly concerned with perfecting the ideology. Perhaps ecotherapists think that it would be inauthentic to enter into the social systems that have contributed to the state of our environment. Although I believe this question is interesting and worth investigating, it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to pursue it. However, what is relevant is that ecotherapy should be developed deliberately and coherently, creating a field that nurtures new ecotherapists through mentorship, specialist supervision, and training.

Another limitation has been raised by Snell, Simmonds, and Webster (2011) who expressed concern that ecopsychology can be misinterpreted as a new age therapy. This association diminishes its chances of gaining recognition in the academic community. The implication is that without the recognition of this community, ecotherapy will not be taken seriously enough to reach a critical mass or mainstream acceptance (if this is a goal). In response to these critiques, and in parallel with defining ecotherapy, creating a code of ethics (whether in the form of guidelines or rules) could assist in developing the identity, standards, and quality of the ecotherapy profession (Berger, 2008). As mentioned already in the section "Legal concerns: safety and ethics" Berger (2008, 2009b), in recognition of this idea, has initiated a dialogue on creating a code of ethics with ecotherapy colleagues.

Further research is required in order to develop a good understanding of who is suitable for ecotherapy; this lack of developing a clear clinical application is another

limitation of ecotherapy. People with certain psychological difficulties could be at risk of overwhelm, or harm, if not adequately screened prior to treatment. Unfortunately, there are not many guides available on what this screening process looks like. Berger (2009b) notes that nature therapy, being experiential and creative, tends to require the client to be comfortable enough with connecting into child-like states, and as such is probably not appropriate for people who need clear boundaries, hierarchy, and high levels of control. Clients with difficulties in reality testing (tendency for psychosis), post-traumatic stress disorder, or who experience complex psychological issues, need ecotherapists to be aware of their condition and to adjust treatment accordingly, after a thorough assessment process (Berger, 2009b). This necessitates broad experience and good knowledge and skills (i.e., in handling flash-backs and panic attacks) of how different psychological states might interact with certain ecotherapy modalities, such as being outside, which can be unpredictable (Berger, 2009b). This raises the question of whether ecotherapy places greater demands on the therapist due to a higher degree of unpredictability in treatment. If this toll on the therapist does exist, it is another limitation of ecotherapy, making practice challenging for novice and adept ecotherapists. On the other hand, perhaps the restorative benefits of working in nature outweigh these more difficult aspects of ecotherapy.

As mentioned already, ecotherapy will not suit everyone, clients, or therapists. According to Psychotherapist and Shamanist Will Taegel (as cited in Bradley, 1997) some people's feelings range from discomfort, to an alienated and a severely damaged relationship with nature, as a result they will be unable or unwilling to engage in ecotherapy. Scull (2009) echoes this idea and does not recommend nature therapy for these people, although he has had success in some cases by working with the clients negative responses by uncovering and understanding the underlying thoughts and feelings. People who have spent little or no time in nature will tend to feel more

comfortable with therapy in an urban environment; humans are habituated – preferring

people or things that we have been the most exposed to (Baumeister & Bushman, 2013;

Chaiken & Trope, 1999).

Further critiques of ecotherapy come from varied lenses: feminism, social justice

and poverty, ethnic diversity, and minorities. One critique is that despite recognising

interdependence with all beings, ecopsychology still values (and focuses on) the human

experience. The exploitation of animals, according to Eco-Feminist Pattrice Jones

(2010) is not given the weight the theoretical basis compels. Environmental and Social

Justice leader, Carl Anthony (1995) mentions that ecopsychology has shown some

promise in addressing race and class , although there is plenty of room for further

development (Kovel, 2007). For instance, Jungian Ecopsychologist David Tacey

(2009) has explored the way in which the Australian people's relationship with nature

closely parallels and intertwines with their relationship with the Aboriginal people of

Australia. Ecopsychology is not solely about healing our relationship with nature, it is

also to heal communities that have disintegrated through racism and urban neglect. To

heal these splits, stories of all life forms need to be heard, respected, and incorporated

into our lives, and our therapy practice (Anthony & Soule, 1998).

Chapter 6: Practice Resources for Therapists

This chapter offers some further practical applications of ecotherapy that were not covered earlier, as they did not belong in any of the five categories of obstacles. I believe that it is important to provide therapists who want to practice ecotherapy with a variety of situations where ecotherapy can be used. This is useful as this area needs development (S. Conn, 1995), in addition to offering therapists options so that they can decide what suits them and their practice modality. This chapter provides examples of what practicing ecotherapists are doing in sessions, this includes an ecotherapy assessment; how to develop a sense of connection, awareness, and mindfulness with nature, along with exercises for clients outside of therapy; and how to practice outdoor ecotherapy.

Assessment

When assessing and meeting a client for the first time, it is helpful to gain information about the relationship between a client's sense of place and their health, and what ecosystem the client inhabits (Buzzell, 2009a). Specifically asking about the client's relationships with people, nature, and animals; their concept of "home" such as where they and their ancestors were born and live now; do they have now (or in their past) special environments that they connected with or felt at peace in (Buzzell, 2009a; Cahalan, 1995; Milton, 2009; Rust, 2009; Scull, 2009). Ecotherapists are interested in where and how clients spend their time and what makes up these spaces, such as the lighting (Buzzell, 2009a; Rust, 2009). How often are they are touched and how; do they spend most of their time, with loved ones or strangers, or do they spend a lot of time alone; how active are they and where; how is much sleep do they get; and how much time do they spend watching television or in front of other electronic equipment? (Buzzell, 2009a; Rust, 2009) In addition, it is helpful for therapists to ask whether the

client prefers indoor or outdoor spaces, and if they know the reasons behind this preference, such as an event in their past or their associations with spaces (Rust, 2009).

After gathering this information, therapists need to be able to use it to influence their formulation or treatment planning. The ecological is included alongside the psychodynamic (or the chosen modality), by acknowledging the client's relationships with nature and their environment, and assessing for relationships and behaviours that are contributing to their presenting problems; this is examining and understanding clients within all that influences their life, rather just their human relationships (Cook, 2012). This seems like a challenging endeavour, one requiring creativity, and freedom in how the therapist practices, along with a supportive supervisor or at the very least, supportive colleagues:

> psychologists and other mental health professionals may find great support and energy in coming together to discuss this professional journey, especially if we move outside of our usual groups and debate these issues with colleagues from a range of disciplines and experiment with new ways of practice together.
> (Milton, 2009, p. 12)

A different approach is offered by Cahalan (1995) who wrote about exploring with clients what type of animal they are like, what are the animal's traits, and how does this animal relate to client. Although this might feel strange at first, it can provide useful information, such as whether there is dissonance between their chosen animal, and how the therapist experiences the client (Cahalan, 1995). Depending on the client, Buzzell (2009a) asks about their relationship with the sacred, and if they have felt close to mysteries in life. This assessment is to determine "the role place and space play in this person's life, and whether, how, and why, place and space are involved in the person's conflicts" (Santostefano, 2008, p. 550), in addition to how humans and non-humans have contributed to the clients current struggles. According to Buzzell (2009a)

clients are often surprised by these questions as they are more familiar with the impact of genetics, family dynamics, themselves, or neurochemicals; rather than how modern lifestyles can take a massive toll on an individual's psyche. She also explores how they feel about the state of the world, and if they have children/grandchild, whether they imagine life will be easier or more challenging for them than their lives are (Buzzell, 2009a). According to Psychotherapist Chris Robertson (2012), the client's struggles have manifested through personal and collective history, and some clients could be considered the designated clients for the earth, as they are particularly sensitive to hearing its message.

Awareness and Practice

There are many ways for a client (or anyone) to practice connecting into the world and developing awareness, many of these ways utilise mindfulness techniques such as: meditation, drawing, looking, listening, writing, keeping a time-diary, simplifying lifestyles, having a weeklong media fast, and changing eating habits (Buzzell, 2009a; S. Conn, 1995; Gomes, 2012). Conn (1998) encourages clients to search for some form of connection with the natural world that feels restorative, and to focus on sources of nourishment. Therapy sessions can be as held walking in nature and allowing the client to feel drawn to places or objects, and voicing any associations or responses that arise. Conn (1998) would also help the client to develop an awareness of emotional states by taking time to discover a mindfulness practice that works for the client, and then having them practice it by describing a physical space, such as their apartment. Once their relationship is established, they spend a few sessions, or more if needed, talking about going outside, and exploring how the client feels it could help them. For instance, a client felt that going outside would help her to be able to hold contrasts or extremes, something she normally struggled with (S. Conn, 1998). In this

example, the client appeared to find her emotional vulnerability soothed by nature, perhaps by seeing trees adapt and survive through rain and wind, or by expanding her awareness beyond her personal troubles. Based on this case example, I speculate that (for therapists who prefer to use diagnostic terms) some clients with borderline traits or personalities could also notice a similar soothing effect with exploring outdoor therapy.

For therapists wanting to practice ecotherapy, a useful tip is to oscillate awareness between the personal and the larger areas, such as the political, ecological, and cultural. (S. Conn, 1995). In this manner the tendency of client or therapist to pathologise personal pain is reduced, as the pain is situated (and held) in the larger context, enabling other hurts to be acknowledged (S. Conn, 1995). For example, when treating a client with a sexual abuse history a therapist could explore a range of areas, from the very personal sphere, to the cultural context and gender concerns, and then shifting further out to the environmental abuse (S. Conn, 1995). Santostefano (2008) and Totton (2011) have suggested that these spheres are also the networks of places, people, and animals that form embodied meanings, which in therapy, client and therapist seek to discover and understand.

Psychoanalyst Shierry Weber Nicholson (2009) has presented an example of a client's beloved pet dying; the client feels silly or unjustified about feeling upset as it was not a person (2009). This is a good opening, according to Nicholson (2009) to provide, "them [clients] space to feel, to go beyond the embarrassment, and the sense of illegitimacy and feel that grief." (p.110). Another potential scenario is a client raising the topic of environmental degradation or pollution, or their distress about the environment. When practicing ecotherapy, the therapist does not interpret these as displacements or projections from an inner source (Mack, 1995; Watkins, 2009). Instead, the topic is considered within the scope of therapy and worthy of direct exploration.

At times, it may be useful to offer the client exercises to practice outside of therapy. These exercises depend on what the client appears to need to cultivate, support, or release. Some examples are, going outside at dawn, sitting under the night stars, searching for something in nature that reminds them of a particular person, or being open to an object that chooses them (Harris, 2009). This object can be a tree, rock, or a landscape that is convenient for the client to visit daily, spending time in silence. In all of these exercises, the client guides the therapist to discover suitable homework (L. Conn & Conn, 2009; Harris, 2009). These exercises foster an appreciation for just being, allowing the client's sense of time to slow down as they develop an awareness of their connection with the object, and hopefully, broadening their sense of boundaries (L. Conn & Conn, 2009). Identification with a natural phenomenon, animal, landscape, or plant helps people emotionally engage with nature and re-establish an ancient connection that has been severed (Roszak, 2001; Seed, Macy, Fleming, & Naess, 1988). In this respect, nature therapy joins ecotherapy by offering a practical framework that can be used to broaden people's "ecological selves" (Totton, 2003) and hone the importance of this basic human-nature alliance (Berger, 2009a).

Buzzell (2009a) often begins treatment with a nature journal whereby clients record time spent outside, sometimes with surprising results, as some clients spend less than 30 minutes outside per day, other than walking to and from their cars. Therapists can encourage their clients to slow down, and to spend time in nature (Walsh, 2009), especially whilst exercising, as this is can improve their health and wellbeing, receiving the combined benefits of physical activity and the restorative qualities of nature (Mind, 2007).

Outdoor Therapy

There is a range of options for seeing clients outdoors. Some therapists have a private space such as a garden where they can see clients undisturbed by passers-by. Psychotherapist and Ecotherapist Linda Buzzell believes that introducing and respectfully acknowledging the natural world as a third party in the therapy expands the therapy conversation. Buzzell (2009a) practices ecotherapy in her permaculture garden where the client is invited to choose the space to spend time in, and to explore their process behind this choice. In Buzzell's (2009a) experience, the space tends to reflect an aspect of the client or the session. This approach seems to fit better for therapists in private practice, although an agency could have a shared garden as long as there is due consideration to the privacy needs of the client (and therapist). The benefits of a private outside therapy space include easy access (i.e., in therapist's backyard), the possibility of setting up a sunroom/shelter to protect against the elements, fewer contracting or frame considerations (see framework section), and being able to design the garden. These benefits make this a good option for therapists living in urban areas with limited or no access to suitable public greenspaces. In contrast, the limitations are that options of how to use the space is limited; a private garden will generally not be large enough for incorporating walking, or varied enough for more contextually-orientated therapy, or other activities (see below) into sessions.

Outdoor spaces that are suitable vary on the type of therapy practiced. Some therapists take clients on walks through forest areas situated nearby, others use a public park to use a combination of walking and sitting, or they can just sit in an area chosen by the client. Sometimes time is spent silently with the client gesturing to indicate areas of interest, or therapist and client separate and meet at an agreed place and time, and reflect on the clients process, and when appropriate, the therapists process (Cahalan, 1995). When working with groups or individuals in a nature walk meditation or

activity, Scull (2009) recommends a three step process. The first step is giving mindfulness instructions (preparation), followed by the experience, which is solitary and/or silent, and then debriefing with a particular focus on the individual's sensory experience and discouraging theorising.

Other outdoor practices involve the client engaging in an activity that the therapist believes might facilitate healing, such as a client named Ran, who was experiencing intestinal symptoms resulting from stress (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Ran described his stomach as revolting and unpleasant, like "wet soil". Instead of working with the metaphor, the therapist asked and gained the clients permission to go outside and work with actual soil. Through a series of activities where Ran interacted with the earth, he processed and reflected on painful childhood memories, until he realised how much he had missed his childhood and being playful, and how this affected himself, and his relationship with his children. This illustrates a shift from working person to person, to person and nature with therapist acting as mediator. This approach might work well for clients who feel that talk therapy is not the best fit for them, and where a more tactile or body-oriented process in relationship with the natural world in conjunction with talking helps shift blockages (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Watkins (2009) practices near a lake and woods with children who feel safer out under the sky, as it is wider and less personal than at home, which they have experienced as dangerous.

Another option is creating a home in nature. This is a therapeutic/sacred space chosen, created, and maintained by the client, with the assistance of the therapist; this space is very important as it influences the entire therapeutic encounter (Berger, 2007b). Through creating a home in nature, clients create their own space and can tell stories about its meaning, it can also be incorporated into the creation and performance of rituals (see: Berger, 2007a).

Therapists with access to suitable public outdoor spaces and the flexibility to

practice in different locations face additional challenges, as there is the need for more contracting with clients, particularly in the initial stages in order to establish the frame, context, and what happens with variable weather, such as who decides and how is this decided. Also discussing with the client how he or she might like different situations that may arise handled, and safety/first aid practicalities if an accident occurs.

In outdoor therapy there is a flattening of power and hierarchy between client and therapist, as the space is not owned and controlled by the therapist (Berger, 2007b). Whereas indoor therapy can create the dynamic of the therapist as expert, which could lead to the client feeling passive; the more passive a client is, the less benefit they will gain from therapy (Duncan, Miller, & Sparks, 2011; Lambert & Barley, 2001; Miller, Mee-Lee, Plum, & Hubble, 2005; Norcross, 2011). Therefore being outside can be a unique advantage for some clients, possibly helping them to feel freer and more empowered than if seen indoors. Gestalt and person-centred therapies come to mind as therapies that also aim for this flattening of hierarchy; "a horizontal dialogue" (Houston, 2003, p. 6), where therapists are not the expert, and instead they trust the client's own wisdom and ability, as a self-regarding and individual being (Gillon, 2007).

There is a symbolic power to being outside (Jung, 1968), the open sky, exposed to changing forces; this can create a feeling of openness, perhaps dissipating the insulating effect of the indoor therapy room (Roszak, Gomes, & Kanner, 1995). I wonder if, for some clients, being outside might feel dangerous, too large, and uncontained (Counselling and Psychotherapy Outdoors, 2009), perhaps they prefer the comfort of feeling as though the therapist owns the space and holds more power.

In my opinion, working outdoors could reduce the likelihood of the client compartmentalising their life inside and outside of therapy, this is because therapy occurs in a neutral outside space that is more similar to where their life occurs than inside the therapist's room. The therapist's office is a private space, compared to the

publicly shared space of a park; this division could lead to clients acting differently in the therapist's private domain compared to when they are in a public domain. If a client has insights that they feel are lost when they leave the therapy room, perhaps working outdoors in a more public space could help them to feel the continuity (and enhanced benefit) of therapy in the rest of their life. In addition, different spaces influence our entire being, therefore changing the therapy space could help the client and therapist access new material, changing the conversation and perhaps moving the therapy along in a positive way.

Chapter 7: Discussion

To conclude this dissertation, there are four points that I think are important to convey to the reader so that they are left with questions to explore, personally and within their therapy practice, and to discover whether they feel compelled to utilise some aspect of ecotherapy practice. These four points (summarised below) will be illustrated through discussing them in relation to my personal process writing this dissertation. These four points are: (a) therapists need to consider how they are taking up the environmental crisis in their practice; (b) ecotherapy interventions can be simple and transformative; (c) therapists can utilise the healing properties of nature with clients; and (d) consider the different possibilities for bringing nature into the therapy room.

Writing the final stages of this dissertation has been very challenging. Spending a lot of my time working and being inside on the computer, has been taxing physically, mentally, and emotionally. It has been agony to live so near the beach, in beautiful bush and not have much time outside to enjoy it (as I had very little free time with the pressures of a looming deadline). This combined with moving countries and looking for employment to start my new career as a psychotherapist, has been very stressful and at times, overwhelming. In order to work with my sense of overwhelm, and the pressure to push on, I thought critically about my situation and tried to make my work structured, and planned out, in order to maintain a sense of accomplishment, and to contain my anxiety of not finishing or not doing a good job. After working with this for a week or more, I had reached the stage where I could not push on, and this intellectual technique was no longer helping. I needed to clear my head, take some space, and realised that I needed to get to the beach. This was not an unusual desire, as I often use nature to feel restored, so I trusted my intuition about what would help me find some space.

At this early point in my process, I had lost touch with my connection to the natural world even though my work was focused on the environment and nature, this was because I had spent most of my time inside and on the computer. Through feeling as though I needed to accomplish this task (writing this dissertation), the pressure of the work had taken over, and my connection to, and love of, nature had been lost. I realised I felt this way as I experienced very little emotion during the later phase of my work, even though I tend to feel emotional about this very personal topic. This disconnection with nature could also occur for others who are focusing on environmental work. Even though, cognitively, they are focused on this area, by sitting indoors and thinking about it, the feelings and passion for this earth, that probably were the impetus for this activity, can become lost. It is important to regain this connection; otherwise, the work could become methodical, uncreative, and rudimentary. This could result in people not reaching the goals they had set out to achieve.

Returning to my process, once I was outside and walking along the beach, I felt some space, breathing room, and the feelings of overwhelm and pressure disappeared. I was no longer concerned about getting things done, and making my dissertation as good as I possibly could, I was being present and aware of my body and the beach, and really enjoying it. I admired the beauty of the cliffs, the forming rock pools, and the rhythmic waves; I felt a sense of reconnection to nature, and the beauty of the earth. Simultaneously, thoughts arose of how we are mistreating this planet and I became aware of feeling sad and angry; I wanted to make it stop, to go away, and for this dissertation to mean something to others, for therapists to become healers of the earth and its inhabitants. My gaze was turning critically towards psychotherapy, and strong emotions arose with questions about how it came to be this way, and why does therapy limit our care and attention to humans. These questions felt like accusations, directed at all of the talented and inspiring therapists in history. I became aware of a felt sense of

moral requirement, that we should be doing more to protect the natural world.

This brings me to my first point, that therapists should take up some form of ecotherapy, or at least, consider how they are, or are not, addressing the environmental crisis in therapy (and their lives). I feel that morally, therapists should do something, rather than remaining invisible on the sidelines. This use of the world "should" is worth examining, as I believe it can have negative connotations, such as being associated with guilt, rather than love. Nevertheless, I feel that psychotherapists have unique skills to bring to the environmental crisis, and as this crisis needs urgent attention, I believe that we all should bring our unique skills to help address it. I also think that we should respond to this crisis, as deep down many of us do love nature, and we should do our best to act in accord with what we value deeply.

Additionally, behind this "should" are my personal feelings of sadness and anger at environmental degradation, along with the real sense of the beauty of the earth. These feelings are very personally connected, and they are a sustainable, healthy source of motivation (Nordhaus & Shellenberger, 2007). This is in contrast to the "should" that we are often faced with around the environment, internally or from other sources, that are often driven by a sense of guilt and fear (Nordhaus & Shellenberger, 2007). For example, we should stop global warming as the polar ice caps are melting and if this continues, a whole ecosystem will become extinct, and this will be our fault, something that we might feel very guilty about. However, viewing this from a more sustainable perspective (Nordhaus & Shellenberger, 2007) could look something like this: polar bears live in these affected areas; I find them very beautiful, and they are majestic creatures that I really care about. They also have as much of a right to life as I do, and I want to do what I can to protect them, and this means protecting their habitat – the ice. In essence, this protective behaviour is motivated by love instead of fear. According to Nordhaus and Shellenberger (2007), environmentalism has tried to motivate people

through presenting scientific data to engender the motivations of fear and guilt, the ineffectiveness of this is shown through the lack of adequate collective behavioural change in the face of large issues, such as climate change.

Returning to my point, that therapists should be engaged in environmental issues (Blair, 2011). Up until recently, our attempts to deal with the environmental crisis has been to explain these changes through scientific evidence, in the hopes that being faced with the facts, we will decide to become more environmentally friendly in our behaviour. These appeals to the rational mind have not been enough; something that does not surprise therapists, who know that human behaviour is complex and often highly irrational. Despite psychotherapy having a valuable understanding of unconscious processes, we have offered little of our expertise to help us to understand the relationship between humans and the environmental crisis. That ecotherapy is such a fringe part of psychotherapy is evidence that psychotherapists have not taken up environmental issues to the extent that other more politically or scientifically oriented professions have. For instance, the research that I referenced regarding the numerous benefits of exposure to nature (covered predominantly in the introduction section), were not studies by psychotherapists, they were executed other professionals, such as environmental psychologists (Bringslimark et al., 2009; Gidlöf-Gunnarsson & Öhrström, 2007; Hartig et al., 2003; Kuo & Sullivan, 2001), physicians (Antonioli & Reveley, 2005; Maas et al., 2009; Park & Mattson, 2009), scientists (Fuller et al., 2007), or social scientists (Mitchell & Popham, 2008; Vries et al., 2003). Psychotherapists have a unique and valuable perspective on human behaviour that would expand and deepen the dialogue on the environmental crisis and human-nature relationship – benefiting our planet and its inhabitants, and increasing the reputation of psychotherapy. Are we going to step up to the challenge of environmental issues, or are we going to continue to convince ourselves that the environment, or ourselves as psychotherapists,

are not relevant?

To go back to my process after my walk on the beach, I realised that I felt alone and incapable of making a difference, and unable to complete my dissertation to my satisfaction. I had connected with feelings that people often face when looking into environmental concerns, helplessness and a sense of overwhelm (Macy, 1995). What made a difference in my situation (Macy & Johnstone, 2012) was how I had also reawakened my sense of love for, and connection with, nature, along with the feelings of sadness and anger towards environmental degradation. This engagement helped me not to dwell in feelings of helplessness, as I had a strong, personal motivator for action (Macy & Johnstone, 2012). I then became aware of a new sense of purpose, and for the first time, I felt strongly that I wanted someone beside me in this process of completing my dissertation; previously I had felt capable and able to work with a small degree of support.

These emotions parallel emotions that come up for others, and myself, in ecotherapy (Clinebell, 1996), a fringe field, that is somewhat isolated, especially in New Zealand where it is mostly unknown. In addition, the feeling of wanting support reminds me of how we cannot go it alone in working with environmental change; we will manage better with a support network of others who have similar intentions (Macy, 1995). In any endeavour that is alternative, it is likely that we will feel alone at times, thinking that we are different from others which could lead to alienation. Amidst these feelings was the realisation that I needed to reach out, to be understood by others in order to feel less different or isolated. Although in the beginning this was difficult, through talking I began to see what was happening by seeing the link between my writing process, and the project of ecotherapy. This felt very helpful as I felt relieved to make sense of my painful state rather than feeling overcome by a strange, negative state.

This links in with my second point, that ecotherapy interventions do not need to

be complicated; they can be very simple. Often when people are faced with the challenge of how to address the environmental crisis they can end up feeling overwhelmed, and thinking there is nothing that they could possibly do to help (Macy, 1995; Rust, 2008). They might think that their actions need to address everything (fixing the whole environment), and that this needs to be well informed and perfect (Lappé, 2011). This overwhelm, feeling as if they do not know enough to act, and the sense of powerlessness, often leads to inactivity (Lappé, 2011). "If I can't do something that I am certain will really make a positive difference, then I might as well do nothing" would be the thought process if it were made conscious. However, often this decision is not well thought out or rational, and instead is an avoidance of painful feelings (Lappé, 2011; Macy, 1995; Roszak et al., 1995; Rust, 2008).

My ecotherapy intervention in the face of difficult, overwhelming feelings was very simple, a walk along a beautiful beach. When feeling overwhelmed, it is useful to do something simple to process that overwhelm, such as going for a walk in nature, even if you are not sure that it will help, trust in the hope that it will be helpful in some way. Through listening to that hope and believing in the intuition of what might be helpful, I reached a place of feeling more empowered. This small act of trusting myself, helped me to get to a place of feeling more trusting in general, and feeling more able to look at "what's in front of me, and what can I do about what's in front of me?" rather than feeling a pressure to fix everything and make it perfect. This simple walk led to reconnecting with nature and myself, and opening up some space, where previously there was none. It also transformed my state of mind, and my sense of wellbeing, and I am very glad that I that did this rather than staying indoors and trying to work through my feelings of overwhelm. This example illustrates the power of moving in a beautiful natural environment, a simple ecotherapy intervention.

This leads onto my next point, the healing power of the natural world. There

are many benefits to spending time in greenspace or having a green view (see: page 6),

why not integrate these into your therapy practice? Do this in a style that feels

authentic, such as a one-off session where you both go outside to discover this healing

power. If this is completely new to your client, you can guide them through it, sharing

your own experiences where time in nature helped you to feel better. Every time we go

outside, there is a sense of discovery as everything changes from moment to moment –

even if we do this every day. Take a chance and experiment with going outside and

trust that this sense of discovery or surprise can happen repeatedly, for both client and

therapist. It is important not to assume that clients have already been exposed to

nature's healing, even if we think it is common sense, nor that a client does not need

this in sessions, even if they have done it before. Keep a fresh, open, not-knowing mind

whilst experimenting. Given this natural healing resource is so simple and accessible

for many of us in New Zealand, I think it is a pity that therapy is so removed from the

natural world.

My final point is about the importance of the therapeutic space. People want to

spend time in a beautiful room and their energy and sense of wellbeing is greater than in

an ugly room (Maslow & Mintz, 1956; Mintz, 1956). In addition, bringing in elements

of nature into the room will provoke conversations about nature, a client could express

their thoughts and feelings towards a plant that needs watering, or a flower that has just

opened up; the possibilities are endless. These small details contribute to both the

possibility of nature being brought up by a client in therapy, and to creating a space that

is welcoming and energising. To illustrate this, during my walk on the beach, it was the

small details that I noticed, rather than the overarching landscape that contributed my

increase in wellbeing; standing on a rock while the water pooled in around me, creating

rock pools. This experience increased my happiness and contentment, through

appreciating the beauty of the waves and rocks, a little part of the whole; I slowly

became more in touch with my feelings. The sensory experience and being in a beautiful place was important to this process. By appreciating the beauty of the landscape, I was able to experience the loss of it, this was important for processing my grief, sadness, and anger about this loss, and specifically for cultivating my motivation for pro-environmental behaviour (Buzzell & Chalquist, 2009a; Macy & Johnstone, 2012; Rust, 2012; Totton, 2011).

To conclude, I desperately hope that we can address our current environmental crisis. When I hear another story of a creature that is on the brink of extinction, or already extinct, and how we are likely to lose much of Antarctica within the next twenty years, I feel devastated. I know that this is because of the actions of humans, of living as if what we do does not matter, even if we are killing the creatures we share this planet with. I want to belong to a profession, a group of people, who care about this, and show this care through their actions, and by talking and thinking about this, rather than a group that appears to be turning away, denying the relevance of what is in front of us.

I have been fortunate enough to have been raised spending a lot of time in New Zealand forests and the high-country of the South Island. When I spend time around Lake Tekapo, or in the beech forests, I feel completely at home and in love; I feel in awe of the beauty of our country. I want to enable others to experience these feelings, in whichever setting speaks to them and to their heart, by ensuring that these places are looked after. Ecotherapy, for me, is about helping people to find this love and sense of connection with this great earth. Please, find the places that bring tears to your eyes, that touch your heart, and where you feel at peace, allow these places to bring forth your love for this world, and let this love show you how to protect and care for this earth.

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