1

2 **Exploring the Psychology of Extended-Period Expeditionary Adventurers: Going**

3 **Knowingly into the Unknown**

4

5   **Aim**: This research aimed to explore the lived experiences of extended-period

6 expeditionary adventurers to understand why these individuals adventure, and what they

7 perceive gaining from such experience. Most work in this area thus far has focused on exploring

8 pre-determined elements of adventuring such as risk, stressors, and personality traits. However,

9 rarely the aim has been to understand the overall *why* of this specific participant pool; the

10 meaning and perceived benefits of going on an enduring adventure or expedition. **Design**:

11 Seven participants were purposefully selected for their serial and extensive adventure

12 involvement to explore their lived experiences and in-depth insights. **Method:** This study

13 utilised a qualitative approach, using semi-structured interview techniques and an

14 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). **Results:** Three intercorrelated master themes

15 were revealed: pre-, during- and post-adventure, all with subordinate themes: *to go knowingly*

16 *into the unknown*; *autonomy, self-determination and liberation*; *resilience and growth.*

17 **Conclusion:** The results suggest that enduring expeditionary adventures have the potential to

18 accelerate and magnify individuals' growth and facilitate psychological well-being.

19

20   **Keywords**: Adventure, Expeditionary, Autonomy, Resilience, Outdoors, Growth.

21

22 **Introduction**

23   Never have so many people gone on an adventure in a quest to fulfil their lives, curate

24 memorable events and tick off items on their bucket lists in this experiential age. Between 2010

25 and 2014, the adventure tourism industry grew by 195% according to UNWTOs "Global

26 Report on Adventure Tourism" (2014). In the 2018 report from the Outdoor Industry

27 Foundation: "146.1 million Americans ages 6 and over, or 49.0% of the US population,

28 participated in an outdoor activity at least once in 2017." (2018, p.3). "The global adventure

29 tourism market was valued at $444,850 million in 2016 and is projected to reach $1,335,738

30 million in 2023" (Allied Market Research, 2018). Due to the rising interest in adventuring and

31 its growth in recent years, this research endeavoured to explore the meaning of an enduring

32 expeditionary adventure for these individuals and to understand better what they perceive

33 gaining from such experiences.

34

35 **Defining Adventure**

36   Defining 'adventure' is problematic in that it has multiple interpretations, covering

37 diverse forms of activity. Many researchers have grappled with this concept in attempts to

38 categorise Adventure Tourism, Extreme Sport, Adventure Recreation, Serious Leisure,

39 Adventure Travel and Extreme Expeditions, to name a few (Buckley, 2018; Ewert, 1994; Ewert

40 & Hollenhorst, 1989, 1997; Fletcher, 2010; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2016; Lee & Ewert, 2018).

41 Adventure is often defined in relation to risk or risk perception. Ewert suggests that it is the

42 "*sine qua non* of the adventure experience" (1989, p.3), suggesting that without risk, there is

43 no adventure. Mackenzie and Kerr suggest that common elements "involve some level of risk

44 and the active pursuit of risk-taking opportunities" (2016, p.3). The Adventure Model devised

45 by Ewert and Hollenhurst (1989) concentrates on merging individual and environmental

46 attributes, including risk and engagement. In 2017, Buckley defined adventure as a range of

47 disparate notions including: "an industry, an attitude, an addiction, a behaviour, a therapy", and

48 asked whether it is: "an activity involving challenge, thrill, fear, risk, or unknown outcomes?"

49 (p.2). Brymer and Schweitzer also pondered whether it is "a mindset or psychological state?"

50 (2017, p.2), and Buckley talks about the "psychological distinction" (2018, p.9) in analysing

51 the concept of thrill. Fletcher suggests that adventure typically contains the elements of

52 "novelty, uncertainty, and hardship" (2010, p.16).

53   This research was focused on understanding the experiences of extended-period

54 expeditionary adventurers, bordering on the extreme end of the "continuum" (Buckley, 2017).

55 The research was focused on the concept of embarking on enduring expeditionary adventures

56 rather than participating in extreme sports, living in extreme environments, or taking part in

57 one-off adventurous activities, such as kayaking or surfing.

58   Our definition of extended-period expeditionary adventure for this research was:

59 enduring expeditions, travels and experiences that are unusual or daring, and which involve

60 risk, commitment and responsibility. Extended-period was demarcated as lasting longer than a

61 week. Expeditionary was understood as relating to "… an organised journey for a particular

62 purpose" as defined by the Cambridge online dictionary (expedition, para. 1).

63   **Literature Review**

64   The primary aim of this research was to explore the experience of enduring

65 expeditionary adventuring. The purpose was to understand the meaning of enduring

66 expeditionary adventuring for these individuals. Furthermore, the aim was to explore the

67 reasons and perceived benefits of this type of adventuring. This study is situated in the wider

68 discipline of 'adventure pursuits', such as sports, extreme sports, risk recreation, adventure

69 tourism, outdoor education and serious leisure. However, as the following sections will discuss,

70 despite several common features and benefits, these forms of adventure pursuits also have

71 significant differences; the current study included.

72   Sport Psychology, as defined by the American Psychological Association's (APA)

73 Division 47 (Exercise & Sport Psychology) is: "a proficiency that uses psychological

74 knowledge and skills to address optimal performance and well-being of athletes" (sport

75 psychology, para. 1). Whilst Sport Psychology contains psychological constructs that may be

76 related to adventuring such as visualising success (Blackwell et al., 2013; Omar-Fauzee, Wan

77 Daud, Abdullah & Rashid, 2009; Vealey & Greenleaf, 2006) or goal-setting (Gould, 2006;

78 Locke & Latham, 1985; Schmuck & Sheldon, 2001) for example, there is not complete

79 commonality between the two. Extended-period expeditionary adventurers might not always

80 be considered as athletes, nor is going on an adventure necessarily a sport involving optimal

81 performance as defined in sports. Thus, the skills, optimal performance and wellbeing of these

82 adventurers might entail unique characteristics.

83   Extreme Sports have been defined as: "leisure activities where the most likely outcome

84 of a mismanaged mistake or accident is death" (Brymer, 2005, p.i). As an example, Alex

85 Honnold describes being one fingertip away from death in his TED talk (2018) about free

86 soloing El Capitan. Research on extreme sports reports on personality traits, mortality

87 awareness, hedonism, fear, sensation-seeking and risk-taking (Arnett, 1994; Breivik, 1996;

88 Cronin, 1991; Levenson, 1990; Llewellyn & Sanchez, 2008; Pain & Pain, 2005; Willig, 2008;

89 Zuckerman, 1994, 2007). However, studies have also revealed less "deviant" reasons to

90 participate in extreme sports such as courage, humility, and freedom (Brymer, 2010; Brymer

91 & Oades, 2009; Brymer & Schweitzer, 2012, 2013; Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012a; Suedfeld,

92 2001). This conceptualisation of multiple inspirations in extreme sports delves beyond

93 hedonism and risk-taking. These insights, derived chiefly from qualitative research, relate with

94 the research of Ewert, who found that experienced mountaineers had more complex and

95 comprehensive motivations from the relatively "mechanical" ones of novices (1994). Whereas

96 some of these elements could fit extended-period expeditionary adventurers experiences, it

97 would be important to understand the potential similarities and unique differences with these

98 two different types of adventuring.

99   Research findings on adventuring thus far have suggested that individuals gain wisdom

100 through adventure experiences (Buckley, 2017; Ewert, 1994; Leach, 2016).

101   Finally, the "adventure paradox", sitting within Reversal Theory research, suggests that

102   adventurers have seemingly paradoxical needs, states and emotional fluctuations (Kerr, 2001,

103   2007; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012a; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2016). Adventurers have been found to

104   have a need for knowing and not knowing i.e., being prepared but not overly planned (Beedie

105   & Hudson, 2003), manage risk and safety (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1989), and have a telic

106   (serious) or paratelic (playful) experience (Apter, 1992). However, less is known to what extent

107   these paradoxical findings reflect the unique participant pool of extended-period expeditionary

108   adventurers and the experience of this form of adventuring.

109   Further to the literature review, many authors have researched associated fields such as:

110   human performance in extreme environments (Barrett & Martin, 2016; Leach, 2016; Leon, List

111   & Magor, 2004; Palinkas & Suedfeld, 2008; Smith, Kinnafick & Saunders, 2016; Suedfeld,

112   2001); endurance events (Swann, Crust & Allen-Collinson, 2016); alternative or extreme sports

113   (Buckley, 2017, 2018; Simpson, Post & Tashman, 2013); risk recreation and adventure tourism

114   (Ewert, 2004; Mackenzie & Kerr, 2012a, 2012b, 2016; Pomfret & Bramwall, 2014; Varley,

115   2006); adventure therapy (Bowen & Neill, 2013; Gass, 1993; Neil, 2003; Roszak, Gomes &

116   Kanner, 1995; Teaff & Kablach, 1987) and experiential outdoor or wilderness education

117   (Cason & Gillis, 1994; Teaff & Kablach, 1987).

118   An initial comparison would suggest that these various approaches to adventure appeal

119   to different adventurers, for different reasons. For instance, adventure tourists may seek the

120   perception of risk, however, simultaneously need to feel safe (Fletcher, 2010). Serious leisure

121   enthusiasts seek career progress and specific rewards (Lee & Ewert, 2018). It is apparent from

122   this literature review, that adventure and adventuring have a variety of definitions, and by

123   association, participants embark on these quests for differing reasons, thus gaining diverse

124   perceived benefits from them. Albeit out of the scope of this paper, a thorough comparison of

125 similar and divergent reasons for different adventure pursuits as well as an exploration of the

126 perceived benefits gained from such experiences would be an exciting research avenue.

127

128 **Methodology**

129 *Methodological paradigm*
130

131   This research utilised qualitative interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) due to

132 its exploratory nature. The method was specifically chosen to achieve the aim which was to

133 explore; rather than to seek correlation, cause or validation of a pre-existing hypothesis. This

134 research was interested in exploring the personal lived experience of the extended-period

135 expeditionary adventurers. IPA has theoretical underpinning in phenomenology and due to this

136 philosophical approach, it was a fitting choice to understand the lived experiences of these

137 serial adventurers (Smith, 2017). Rather than prescribing to pre-existing theories (Smith,

138 Flowers, & Larkin, 2009), the researchers embarked on an interpretative endeavour utilising

139 double hermeneutics. The researchers were firstly interested in the meaning-making of each

140 individual experience, prior to moving to more general suggestions.

141

142 *Participants*
143
144   IPA is idiographic and thus utilises small, homogeneous samples to enable rich,

145 detailed, layered and meaningful results (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Reid et al., 2005; Smith,

146 2017; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2003). This study recruited seven extended-period

147 expeditionary adventurers: four females and three males, aged between 23 and 55, mean age

148 43, all white and British. Utilising purposeful sampling, this study recruited participants who

149 were either full-time or part-time adventurers, self-ordained as either professional or amateur.

150 Participants had all taken part in several multi-week, often multi-month expeditionary

151 adventures including, but not limited to: two around-the-world sailing expeditions (10 months

152 each); two full-distance treks to the South Pole (46 days and 40 days); one trek to the North

153 Pole; two seven summits on seven continents; several multi-month treks; a 5000-mile run; a

154 6000-mile run; a circumnavigation row around Britain (51 days); walks across four countries;

155 cycles across over 20 countries: one of 14.000 miles; one of 4,350 miles (164 days); a sail to

156 Antarctica; a crossing of South Georgia; an eight-day eco-challenge across the Rockies;

157 paddling of four rivers; a sail across the Atlantic (two months) and others. In addition to

158 utilising pseudonyms, the expedition list above has been purposefully kept generic to protect

159 the identities of the participants. It is understood that with such a select group, the study will

160 only explore a specific slice, that is white and British, of the adventurer population.

161

162 ***Procedure***

163
164 The research was undertaken in accordance with the British Psychological Society

165 "Code of Ethics and Conduct" guidelines (BPS, 2009) and with the approval of the University

166 of East London's (UEL) Research Ethics Committee (2014). Face-to-face interviews were

167 conducted with a mean length of 55 minutes. Interviews utilised semi-structured techniques

168 and were non-directive to garner insights across the spectrum of interviewees and their multiple

169 adventure experiences.

170 Participants were encouraged to lead their story-telling and sense-making with the

171 occasional prompt for further or deeper interpretation. This methodology is in line with the

172 concept of interviewees being co-researchers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2005). The first author is

173 cognisant of the psycho-dynamic between interviewer and interviewee and the potential for

174 axiological bias and used cyclical bracketing to cut-off pre-conceptions or assumptions. This

175 also removes Husserl's "taken-for-granted" layers (Embree, Husserl & Kersten, 1985), and

176 preserves the uniqueness and value of the interviewee's own accounts.

177   The first author is also an extended-period expeditionary adventurer, and this insider

178   perspective was acknowledged throughout the research. Due to the existence of this shared

179   ground, richer insights with more empathic understanding and contextual interpretation of the

180   participant's worlds was possible (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The shared ground

181   additionally aided the cyclical and iterative interpretation of the results as they arose during

182   interviews and later in the analysis. The singular interpretation of the participant was thus

183   extended and became more layered through the dynamic interplay of intersubjective sense-

184   making between the interviewer and interviewee. The researcher was careful to practice

185   bracketing and reflexivity throughout the research and analysis phases, acknowledging that the

186   results are "always informed by our own assumptions, values and commitments" (Braun &

187   Clarke, 2013, p. 285). Awareness and reflexivity around one's assumptions, values and

188   commitments cycles back to the double-hermeneutics of shared interpretative analysis.

189
190   *Analysis*
191

192   Each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were

193   analysed systematically and creatively, with the first author cyclically reading, interpreting and

194   exploring themes. After each interview was analysed individually, the first author moved to

195   more generic themes between participants. Fourteen initial themes were analysed, divided and

196   re-clustered into three master themes, mirroring the adventure journey epochs of pre, during-

197   and post-adventure. These, in turn, contain seven subordinate themes as expounded in the

198   results section below. The iterative cycle of engagement and disengagement was used for

199   creating rich insights embedded within the bigger picture of "why adventurers choose to

200   adventure". Further insights and analysis were generated during the writing up phases.

201   Meetings with the second author towards the end of the analysis enabled greater clarity,

202   particularly drawing out the two opposing themes of "going knowingly" "into the unknown"

203   which had previously been obscured by a mixture of subordinate themes.

204

205   **Results**

206   Three master themes emerged from the analysis; pre-, during- and post-adventure, all

207   with subordinate themes; to go knowingly into the unknown; autonomy, self-determination and

208   liberation; resilience and growth. All themes were prevalent in all interviews.

209

210   **Master Theme 1 – Pre-Adventure**

211   All participants described similar elements around the groundwork for adventure pre-

212   departure; the preparation, training, and planning required in the build-up to leaving for most

213   expeditions, or at least the forethought and conscious decision-making process for the (rarer)

214   spontaneous events. There was a strong sense of the importance of preparing for expeditions

215   that could be potentially dangerous and even fatal, where the participant was mindful of doing

216   their utmost to mitigate risk and be self-responsible. Conversely, at the same time, participants

217   consciously acknowledged that they were still going into an unknown world. That no amount

218   of preparing could guarantee them complete protection from the elements and often extreme

219   conditions and environments, which were, in turn, crucial components of adventuring into the

220   "unknown" as defined by the participants.

221

222   **1.1 Going Knowingly**

223   Going knowingly represents two cognitions. Firstly, the conscious decision: the choice

224   to go on an adventure; and secondly the conscious preparations pre-departure to be ready, able,

225   and safe. The adventurers were aware of what they were choosing to expose themselves to

226   which included risk, uncertainty, discomfort, pain, loneliness and danger, possibly even death.

227   Despite being aware of these potential future adversities, the adventurers still chose to go, and

228   to go responsibly and knowingly.

229   The first cognition of going knowingly, is the one of choice. Expeditionary adventurers

230   choose to put themselves out there. This also relates to Theme 2.1: Liberation. Adventurers are

231   free to choose extreme options whilst not bound by standard norms. As Ted describes: *"I chose,*

232   *and again it's a choice isn't it? I chose this in my world that I would cycle every inch. . . I*

233   *made the choice and to just have a go at – at doing the whole thing. . . I needed to make it to*

234   *the end - but there was a choice" (Ted, 7/215-229).* Ted seems unsure whether he will succeed

235   as he deliberates about cycling off into the unknown, but the repetition of choice suggests that

236   he owns the decision and he has certainty in choosing to go, no matter how uncertain the

237   adventure ahead may be.

238   The choice to go also involves the awareness, calculation, and then acceptance, of

239   reasonable risks and fears within the context of going on an expeditionary adventure.

240   Adventurers were cognisant of potential dangers ahead, and then appraised them knowingly,

241   using the perspective of embarking on an extreme experience "as an adventurer". The self-

242   label "adventurer" changed the calibration when assessing the risks:

243   *I'm pretty cognisant of potential crises or disasters or accidents, but I think I've got a*

244   *reasonable approach to them in that I choose not to worry about a lot of them. I think,*

245   *I think as an adventurer, you got to . . . embrace the potential difficulties,*

246   *tribulations, scares, dangers - otherwise you'd be a nervous wreck or freaking out the*

247   *whole time. I think you've got to have a pretty healthy attitude towards scary stuff and*

248   *kind of learn to live with it and embrace it and work with it because if you fight*

249   *against it as an adventurer, I don't think you'd step out your door. (Lara, 5/174-186)*

250

251 Jack is also very aware that adventuring contains risks. However, he accepts the twofold

252 responsibility: to choose to embark and to prepare in a state of knowing.

253 *You never know what's going to happen, which is the unknown, but it's more a case of*

254 *understanding the likely things that could happen and then already having a plan -- It's*

255 *calculated risks, and it's understanding and accepting – again, it's accepting*

256 *responsibility for whatever the risks are. So, I'm very careful to understand and*

257 *appreciate and manage those risks. I'm not saying you fix them, or you avoid them at*

258 *all costs, it's calculated risks and not being reckless.* (Jack, 4/120-2 & 142-3).

259
260 Jack's contemplation brings out the interplay between risk management, risk avoidance and

261 the acceptance of not being able to control everything. He is emphasising the difference

262 between seemingly similar constructs by reiterating them in different ways. Furthermore, to

263 Jack, the risk prevention tied in with success protection. Jack continues to describe the

264 importance of not being reckless: *"I'm not reckless because I want to succeed. Taking too*

265 *much risk or being too reckless would jeopardise the success of whatever it is I'm doing"*

266 *(Jack, 4/110-112).* Jack's repeated referrals to "reckless" emphasises in his words that his

267 choice of adventuring is not reckless. He strongly perceives being reckless as an impediment

268 to success, and instead uses the words: "calculated"; "responsibility"; "understand" and

269 "appreciate" to demonstrate that he is going knowingly and to disassociate himself from

270 reckless behaviour. Similarly, all the adventurers were cognisant of potential risks and

271 worked hard to mitigate them beforehand, going as knowingly as possible into the unknown.

272 They knew that once they departed, they were in an environment of uncertainty, and the more

273 anticipatory thinking they did beforehand, the better they would be able to cope, adapt or be

274 "*lazy*" when resources – including mental capacity - would be most stretched. *". . . the*

275 *lengths I go to, to be lazy is ridiculous"* Sean continues*: "I've done huge amounts of work*

276 *before I go . . . to make sure everything's right. To make sure I've got margins".* (Sean,

277 6/184-92). When asked what happened when danger or disaster struck, Sean replied: *"That's*

278 *just a day on the mountain"* (Sean, 7/220), thus revealing how he expects danger and

279 disasters in this environment perceiving them ordinary. However, Sean was ready for it and

280 his preparedness beforehand enabled him to cope when external conditions compromised

281 him. His control enabled him to cope with circumstances – such as weather – were out of his

282 control because he went knowingly into the unknown.

283
284   The concept of adventurers purposefully choosing to push themselves into challenging

285 experiences - and why they choose to - will be further explored in the discussion section below.

286

287   **1.2 Into the Unknown**

288   In defining adventure, all participants chose to define it by describing the uncertainty

289 of "*not knowing what's around the corner*" (Joanna, 14/490). This theme captures the core

290 essence of adventuring: going into the unknown. Participants described newness, variety,

291 discovery, exploration (of self and the environment), possibilities, chaos, and unpredictability.

292 This differs from adventure tourism, sporting and recreation activities, where agendas and

293 environments are more fixed and known, even if subconsciously. Again, there was a

294 recognition that "an adventurer" goes knowingly into the unknown; purposefully choosing to

295 step into *terra incognita*: *"It's the one who's stepping out from their known space. Their known*

296 *daily experience, which can be accidental… but we're talking about perhaps proactively*

297 *making it happen."* (Dora, 15/566-7)

298

299 Dora goes on to define it as exploring, whilst not necessarily labelling herself "an explorer", as

300 she travels into personal unknown, rather than public unknown, territory. Adventuring – or

301 exploring – pushes personal boundaries beyond the known-to-self territory geographically,

302 physically and psychologically. Emma defines one experience as an adventure because of these

303 elements:

304   *I think it was an adventure because it pushed my emotional limits, physical limits, it*

305   *pushed every single limit I had.* (11/348-9) and: *I think it is a bit of an adventure because*

306   *you don't know what you're going to find.* (9/305)

307

308 Emma suggests that adventuring pushes or expands boundaries, and it is partly defined by

309 that personal exploration. She later describes expeditionary adventure as *"leaving a scar"*

310 (13/438) on her internally, suggesting that the peak experience creates change within. This

311 will be further explored in Theme 3:2 Growth.

312   In a seeming paradox or contradiction of opposing needs, adventurers go knowingly

313 into expeditions and prepare hard to be "*lazy*", and then consciously choose to step off into the

314 unknown, purposefully exposing themselves to risk and uncertainty. This behaviour is both

315 conformist and rebellious and perhaps re-ignites the childlike excitement of exploratory

316 adventuring. The unknown component clearly generates the curiosity or childlike joy that

317 adventurers relish as Ted describes in a strong rush of feeling when he sets off on his unknown

318 journey:

319   *. . . then I just had these like surges of like ecstatic like just like, 'Oh my God. I'm going*

320 *through the roof here. I'm going to rocket to the clouds in a minute!' And then I just got on the*

321 *bike, and I didn't have a map, and all I had was a compass, and it just pointed in the direction*

322 *of xxx . . . I was just like, 'What the f*** am I doing?!' (Ted,6/186-7).*

323 Ted experiences here the juxtaposition of joy in the childlike experience of just getting on his

324 bike without knowing where he is going, and the responsibility that comes with it, including

325 some doubt.

326   Ted is in a world with less imposed norms and rules, a world less *"regimented and*

327 *rigid and expected"* (Lara, 16/614-5), a world more ambiguous and uncertain. Dora describes

328 a world: "*where there are no rules, things can change*" (Dora, 2/64). The "no rules" aspect

329 allows for the liberation, autonomy and agility described in other themes. Thus, the unknown

330 was not only about the newness, variety, discovery, chaos, and unpredictability, both in their

331 internal and external worlds, it was about the freedom to choose all the above and self-

332 determinedly create your own rules.

333 **Master Theme 2 – On Adventure**

334   Participants described a definite shift - embodied and psychological - between pre-

335 departure pressures and on adventure lived experience. The build-up of activities involved in

336 getting ready and the mental strain of anticipatory angst, combine to create a busy time until

337 the moment of setting off, which Lara describes as follows:

338   *… some nervous anticipation, if you like, some worry about what's going to happen,*

339   *what to expect, what might happen, whether I'm doing the right thing, you know, how's*

340   *it going to go? And I think the day before you start is possibly the hardest day because*

341   *it's all built up into a big tidal wave of anticipation and all your energy is in check*

342   *because you haven't started and you haven't set foot out there and, um, it's kind of worry*

343   *about the unknown, I suppose. (Lara, 7/268-273)*

344 Lara appears to feel a lot of ambiguity about going, not even being sure if she should go, *is she*

345 *doing the right thing*. She is describing the excitement of going in to the unknown, which is

346 simultaneously bringing her uncertainty, doubt and anxiety. These different strong emotions

347 are present before departure and are in contrast to the normal, known world of non-adventure.

348 Going knowingly also brings with it a raised awareness of risks, fears, uncertainties and

349 potential failure, which is keenly felt pre-departure during the intense period of physical and

350 psychological preparation. Lara also feels that her *"energy is in check"* before she leaves; she

351 is primed to go.

352   Jack describes departure day as "*D-Day*" (9/278) which "*is a buzz. You know, this is it.*

353   *We're going. Almost a feeling of relief when you start*" (9/278-9). Ted also describes: "*Once*

354   *you start, all the anxiety and all the ridiculous thoughts, they just disappear*" (19/605-6).

355   At the point of departure, participants experienced an ecstatic release and then a simple

356   focus in the "bubble world" (Jack, 9/306) of the adventure itself; inducing liberation, autonomy

357   and authenticity.

358

359   **2.1 On Adventure – Liberation**

360   As a successor from the two previous themes: intense planning and preparation

361   combined with the uncertainty of stepping into the unknown; a third theme is born – liberation.

362   Suggesting a juxtaposition between being planned and yet being free: "*I don't think planning*

363   *necessarily ties you down and limits your freedom. You can still plan and be free*" Jack (7/232-

364   3). This demonstrates a tension between the needs for certainty and uncertainty in themes 1.1

365   and 1.2, and the needs for certainty and freedom in themes 1.1 and 2.1. Jack realises that the

366   pre-adventure planning – going knowingly – represents good preparation rather than a

367   confinement to a fixed agenda once on adventure. This extended-period expeditionary

368   adventure freedom differs from shorter or more repetitive adventure programmes and

369   recreation events.

370   Freedom on adventure is freedom from rules ("*there are no rules*"); society: "*I'd*

371   *associate adventure with being detached away from society*" (Ted, 24/775); expectations: "*I*

372   *can cry and bleed*" (Lara, 8/302); and noise "*You've just cut out all the background noise*"

373   (Jack, 10/317). There is freedom to do: "*knowing that at any point I could just sit down, roll*

374   *out a mat and go to sleep – anywhere*" (Joanna, 7/234-5) and freedom to be: "*You cast off all*

375   *your inhibitions*" (Lara, 8/277-8).

376   Associated with this lifestyle is a simplicity which casts off restrictions and

377   complications. The single focus of walking, cycling, running or sailing, over an extended

378   period of time on an expeditionary adventure creates a simple life; Jack's *"bubble world"*.

379   Combined with the singular expeditionary activity is a simplicity of existence, such as the

380   freedom to choose where to sleep as Joanna mentioned above and as Ted describes here:

381   *You're stripping yourself back away from the luxuries of life, which then basically*

382   *makes you appreciate life so much more. So, I remember being in a ditch … and shit*

383   *was all over me, I stank. I hadn't had a shower in two weeks and … And I sat there and*

384   *I thought, "I've near enough used all the money for the house that I didn't get," and I*

385   *was in this ditch on my tod and I was the most happiest I've ever been in my entire life.*

386   *(Ted, 24/782-6).*

387   In the non-adventure world, sleeping alone in a ditch with little money would generally be

388   considered a negative situation, but Ted finds happiness in the simplicity of his expeditionary

389   adventure lifestyle. The simplicity of life with less expectations, less rules, less norms, less

390   luxuries, gave Ted the awareness and presence to realise his happiness in that moment.

391

392   **2.2 On Adventure – Do It Yourself (DIY)**

393   The uncertainty and challenge of venturing into unknown territory generates the need

394   to be self-responsible, self-reliant, agile and solution-focused – extended-period expeditionary

395   adventurers need "DIY" (do it yourself) skills to survive and thrive in tough, ever-changing

396   conditions with fewer gadgets, technology, and experts on hand than usual. In relation to

397   Theme 2.1, this 'do-it-yourself' lifestyle is another form of liberation. There is freedom from

398   structured support and excess equipment, and freedom from guides and groupthink – elements

399   that you may rely upon on other types of adventures.

400   Extended-period expeditionary adventuring was often defined by the lack of outside

401   help or guides: "*If you're reliant on other people, that's just a holiday*" says Jack (7/208). Other

402   people were considered to be hindrances to the real spirit of adventure and self-reliance. Jack

403   describes the liberation and self-reliance that kicks in when a higher authority isn't present:

404   *It is different. Same environment, exactly the same, but it feels very different because*

405   *you've got guardians looking over you, I suppose. So, you become subservient to that*

406   *and, yeah, you're not, you're not responsible for yourself which I guess is part of it,*

407   *whereas when you're on your own, you've got to make the decisions, you've got to take*

408   *responsibility for what happens, you know, accept the consequences of what happens*

409   *whereas if you're there with-with your parents as a kid or with a leader, it's not quite*

410   *the same as being on your own. . . . a lot of the stuff I do now is solo. It's just me on my*

411   *own and I like the challenge of that self-sufficiency which is more, it's adventuring, but*

412   *it's the challenge of you fixing, sorting everything out. You haven't got to rely on anyone*

413   *else whereas if you're with a group of people and there's a leader, you tend to not give*

414   *it the same effort because, 'Oh, I haven't got to worry about that because someone else*

415   *is worrying about that' . . .which I think you're taking a little bit of the adventure away*

416   *from the equation. Still adventurous, but it's not the full thing - for me. (Jack, 3/86-105).*

417   Here Jack clearly grapples with the concept of having to be truly self-sufficient, where he has

418   to rely on his DIY skills out of necessity as no guardian, parent or leader is present to help.

419   There is no assumed reliance on others or shared responsibility even with fellow team

420   members. In fact, Jack often chooses to adventure solo, to purposefully experience and test his

421   own resourcefulness and responsibility. Sean also chooses to challenge himself in this way:

422   "*The solo in me was the proving to myself that I could actually do it myself. I didn't need anyone*

423   *else, and I didn't need anything.*" (Sean, 9/268).

424   Part of the lure of extended-period expeditionary adventuring then is the requirement –

425   out of necessity – for self-reliance, and the satisfaction gained from testing oneself, overcoming

426   obstacles and living in a self-supporting manner over a period of time. A solo, unsupported,

427   unassisted, extended-period expeditionary adventure would fall in the extreme end of that and

428   would be an interesting area for further study.

429   The need for agility and resourcefulness was also considered to be a core determinant

430   of defining adventure within an unknown world, testing unknown skills and knowledge: "*trying*

431   *to figure out how to do it.*" (Sean, 10/320), using "*your wits . . . about whether something's*

432   *safe or not*" (Emma, 8/299-301) and testing oneself in the unknown territory such as a new

433   route up a mountain says Joanna: "*It was about pitching yourself against something that hasn't*

434   *been climbed before in the purest sense... pure self-reliance*" (16/550-1).

435

2.3 On Adventure - The Real Outdoors

436
437

438   In addition to 'going into the unknown' and very much related to *"not knowing what's*

439   *around the corner"*, the natural, unpredictable, outdoor world was considered to be a vital

440   component of adventuring. No participant could think of a true adventure that was contained

441   within a building. Indoor bouldering was considered to be about as close as it could get, but

442   rejected as being too safe and pre-planned, as "*only an imitation; it's not the real thing*" (Dora,

443   3/88-90):

444   *I just think the world and nature has a way of . . . writing a script that is much more*

445   *than we could ever think of or dream up. . . . Because in the boulder one, you know*

446   *somebody has made it safe for you, especially nowadays, that's why it's so important*

447   *now, I think. Someone somewhere has made it so that, yeah, you're going to have this*

448   *adventure, but you know you're not going to die because somebody made it safe.*

449   *Nothing that we do in the built world is unsafe anymore. (Dora, 4/128-143)*

450   Here Dora claims that safety is a differentiating factor between the real outdoor and the

451   constructed indoor adventures. All participants spoke about going knowingly in their

452   preparation, including their awareness of risk, and their opposition to recklessness. However,

453   the real danger in the real outdoors was also considered to be a key component of these

454   expeditionary adventures. The natural environment and extreme conditions provide authentic

455   risk and danger, which genuinely require survival skills, without a safety net. Similar to the

456   need for self-reliance in 2.2, the realness of their expeditionary environments provided the

457   adventurers with personal tests and challenges, which was part of the appeal.

458   Nature's "gym" provides real physical and psychological fitness with it's

459   unpredictability and dynamic challenges: *"Because we are conditioned in the wrong ways now.*

460   *It's more natural to live like a hunter-gatherer."* (Dora, 9/316-7). The adaptability and

461   versatility required to survive and enjoy extended-period expeditionary adventuring were in

462   part due to the genuinely natural environment and natural elements that were unpredictable and

463   not homogenised or contrived. The authentic 'realness' of the outdoors was felt to be key to

464   adventuring into the unknown; away from society and a pre-constructed world.

465   Finally, the real outdoors; "*the awe and wonder at nature*" (Jack, 14/461), gave

466   participants some of their most simple and expansive experiences, where they felt fully present

467   and truly "*alive*": "[modern day living] *is too managed, too, too protected… You tick along,*

468   *and then you die… ultimately it's about feeling alive*" describes Jack (15/487-514). This

469   positive connection with nature has been documented a lot already in previous research and

470   will be revisited in the Growth theme.

471

472 **Master Theme 3 – Impact of Adventure**

473 Finally, the two main reasons participants gave for why they go on extended-period

474 expeditionary adventures are captured within the last superordinate theme: the building of

475 resilience and the expansion of their geographical, physical and psychological worlds. Here we

476 find the purpose and meaning behind adventuring; the reason why; and the positive perceived

477 benefits or outcomes despite, and because of, the peak lived experience. The theme three could

478 reflect a 'post-adventure growth'.

479

480   **3.1 Resilience**

481 Resilience was felt to accumulate during extended-period expeditionary adventures and

482 contribute to personal wisdom, enabling adventurers to go more knowingly next time as a

483 cyclical benefit and life-long skill. Resilience was present on the adventure, and further

484 developed and deployed post-adventure: "*You've increased your capacity to succeed again at*

485 *other things, deal with other things. It's a good feeling*" (Jack, 15/482-3). This corresponds

486 with the concept of expeditionary adventurers proactively choosing to test and challenge

487 themselves, to push against their known boundaries, in an effort to increase their psychological

488 resourcefulness. Adventurers were psychologically strength-building in this respect, like going

489 to a mental gym: "*I've learned to toughen up. Strategies and tactics with coping and dealing*

490 *with stuff and don't sweat the small stuff*", says Lara (11/398-9). Dora describes how she

491 evolved through adventuring:

492   *More confident and able to cope with anything. I don't panic. I don't panic if I'm on*

493   *expedition and, if anything, I actually love it when… actually I don't love it when things*

494   *go wrong, but I know that I can absolutely hold myself together under any*

495   *circumstances. That sounds really arrogant, but . . . I've done that many times and I*

496   *actually thrive. However, put me in a front of a computer that's not working and I've*

497   *got a deadline and I panic . . . it's weird. (Dora, 9/216-7)*

498   Interestingly, Dora has learned to be resilient and even thrive when things go wrong on

499 an expedition, compared with panicking when sat in a safe environment on a computer. Dora

500 believes that she is a better version of herself on expedition, and thus, better able to cope:

501   *I feel the difference is . . . just being more alive, um, I think I'm happier. I think I'm*

502   *better Dora. I-I impress myself sometimes just by like, what I achieve or my good*

503   *humour in the face of absolute nightmare or whatever. And sometimes, you know, I-I*

504   *can be sat in the office and just want to throw the computer out the window. (Dora,*

505   *8/268-271)*

506 Perhaps the mindset adopted on extended-period expeditionary adventures is more expansive,

507 patient, present or happy, and thus allows for greater resilience and openness to learning and

508 growth. Lara even felt there were two versions of herself:

509   *And even when the going gets tough if you're in adventure mode. So, sometimes I liken*

510   *myself to becoming Lara Croft when I'm adventuring because I just become her. I'm*

511   *tougher and wiser and more capable without the cotton-wool stuff that I get at home.*

512   *(Lara, 8/311-4)*

513 Lara claims to be able to "*do scarier stuff when I'm an adventurer*" (8/299) – when the going

514 gets tough, the tough get going; but when sat at home on a computer, in a "*cotton-wool*" world,

515 there is not the same demand for psychological resilience. The three female participants, Dora,

516 Lara and Emma all felt they were more capable in *"adventure mode": "I wouldn't have grown*

517 *into the person I am. . . . The strong, ambitious woman I am now."* (Emma, 4/116). Resilience

518 seems to be not only learned, but also assumed, on adventure.

519   There was no doubt that the adventurers had earned their resilience by experiencing

520 some very tough times, which they had a love-hate relationship with: "*Some of my difficult*

521 *times have been some of my best times*" says Dora (19/636). "*Masochistic pleasure in pushing*

522 *myself*", describes Joanna (19/660). Ted laughingly remembers: *"I just wanted more pain*

523 *(laughs). I wanted more pain"* (8/244-5). This is sometimes referred to in the adventure

524 community as "type two fun" - miserable at the time, but enjoyable in retrospect: "*...*

525 *afterwards, bleeding love it, even if at the time you hated it"*, laughs Dora (19/650). This

526 perverse pleasure can be found in the endurance aspect of extended-period expeditionary

527 adventures. The requirement is to endure, with not much hope for a quick escape from the

528 arduous reality. Perhaps this purposeful endurance of painful or traumatic experience creates a

529 peak state in which presence, pride and confidence can be cultivated.

530 Participants also experienced the contrast between the difficulties and the post-

531 challenge high, with the resilient ability to bounce back: *"...in a way, the harder and tougher*

532 *it is, the bigger the bounce back*", says Jack (16/531-2), and "*the more intense the low, the*

533 *more intense the high... because you know the reverse, you know the opposite*", describes

534 Emma. She goes on to say:

535 *...you don't think you could get any lower and all you want to do is find a dark hole and*

536 *live in it, you just - I try and embrace that feeling because I know that when I come out*

537 *of that hard place, the - the happiness after is going to be so amazing and intense and*

538 *I'm going to be so much stronger from the pain that I felt that's it's - that I think it's*

539 *something to be embraced and appreciated. (Emma, 4/133-6)*

540 Emma is choosing to push her boundaries, much like the other expeditionary

541 adventurers, and is realising new skills and tools to better live life post-adventure. These

542 adventurer were using the "dark holes" and "hard places" to fast-track psychological resilience,

543 growth and wisdom; further expanding their capacities and capabilities for stronger functioning

544 in future.

545   **3.2 Growth**

546   In going knowingly into the unknown, participants were choosing to push and explore

547   themselves, physically and psychologically, and experienced post-adventure growth as a result.

548   No matter the objective or external "success" of the expedition, there was a subjective success

549   in self-development, self-actualisation, and self-transcendence. "Expansion" and growth

550   received over double the quantity of mentions in interviews (number: 145); typically answering

551   the 'why' question: why adventurers choose to adventure; with various comments around

552   growth, achievement, significance and a "more than" experience. Dora sums it up: "*Win, lose*

553   *or draw, you basically win because you're giving yourself the chance to expand yourself*"

554   (6/209).

555   Dora claims that adventure is "*humbling and empowering at the same time*" (20/695),

556   Joanna speaks of reciprocity which is "*beyond myself*" (20/712), and Ted talks about

557   self-transcendence, going from: "*I felt I had a lot of ego problems*" (12/365) to "*the*

558   *journey just became bigger than me*" (22/697) which "*gifted me a pathway to help*

559   *people*" (25/816). He reflects*:*

560   *What I didn't realise and now looking back, is those were all the ingredients . . . giving*

561   *back, moving, travelling, adventure, so you never know what you're going to wake up*

562   *to every single day. All those little ingredients, what I didn't realize was just the recipe*

563   *for a fulfilled happy life, and now I can look back and go, 'Oh, my God. I got it so right*

564   *back there' . . . I then created a pathway for myself that I just didn't even know existed.*

565   *That's how I see it. Yeah. (Ted, 13/422-8)*

566   This reflection about Ted's past journey, includes the memory of lying in a ditch to appreciate

567   happiness. Ted's psychological world grew richer as he cast off his physical luxuries and

568   money. Extended-period expeditionary adventuring can be *"humbling and empowering"*. In

569   the dark holes, hard places and ditches, the participants found humility and were thus open to

570 receive wisdom and growth. Yet they also found empowerment, resilience and growth in their

571 ability to survive and even thrive during such challenging experiences.

572 **Discussion**

573 The aim of this research was to explore the psychology of 'extended-period

574 expeditionary adventurers' to better understand why they adventure and the benefits they

575 procured (Buck, 2019). Results emerged under the temporal headings of pre-adventure, on

576 adventure and impact post-adventure. The seven themes were: going knowingly into the

577 unknown (1.1 and 1.2); liberation, DIY and the real outdoors (2.1, 2.2 and 2.3); resilience and

578 growth (3.1 and 3.2). A significant result of this research is that these themes emerged

579 unprompted while using non-directive and inductive methodology and prevailed over countless

580 other potential themes. They were also repeatedly mentioned (each theme was stated 39 to 145

581 times across all interviews) and all themes were raised by all seven participants.

582 In addition, researchers have concentrated on the 'right stuff' required for extreme

583 expeditions (Kjærgaard, Leon, Venables, Fink, 2013; Kjaergaard, Leon, & Venables, 2014),

584 typically focussing on character traits. Contrastingly, this research corresponds with a more

585 contemporary supposition that the "…overall positive psychological adaptation may be a key

586 factor, rather than a specific 'right stuff' constellation of personality traits." (Blackadder-

587 Weinstein, Leon, Norris, Venables & Smith, 2019, p24). Blackadder-Weinstein et al found that

588 irrespective of "notable" trait differences, teams can achieve their expedition objectives. This

589 research proposes that the ability to psychologically adapt (towards growth, resilience,

590 transcendence and empowerment, for example) explains one purpose: why expeditionary

591 adventurers go on an adventure and the positive benefits they procure.

592

593 **The Themes**

594   The first theme: Going Knowingly into the Unknown, demonstrates a seeming

595   contradiction between the need for certainty (knowing) and the contradictory need for

596   uncertainty (going into the unknown). This dualistic dynamic was a significant finding in three

597   respects: the 'need to know', diverging from risk-taking and spontaneity (Pain & Pain, 2005;

598   Willig, 2008; Zuckerman, 2007); 'into the unknown' ultimately defining adventure according

599   to the participants; and the co-existence of the two creating a novel and unique dichotomy.

600   With regards to this paradox in adventure tourism, a point is made by Fletcher that: "People

601   always ask, "Am I going to fall out of the boat?" Like they want to know for sure what's going

602   to happen… Like the unknown makes them really uneasy" (2010, p.28). This discomfort with

603   uncertainty may be a crucial difference between adventure tourism and extreme adventuring.

604   Certainly, attitudes towards risk, perceived risk, safety, uncertainty and hardship seemed to

605   differ across adventure disciplines (Fletcher, 2010; Gordon, 2006; Holyfield, Jonas & Zajicek,

606   2005).

607   Reversal Theory is also evident here and tallies with other qualitative adventure

608   research (Brymer, 2005; Kerr 2001, 2007; Kerr & Mackenzie, 2012) suggesting that Reversal

609   Theory is a useful construct to help understand the complexity and fluctuations of adventurer

610   motivations. The subthemes of going knowingly - with responsibility and rule-abiding

611   conformity – and liberation also appear paradoxical, and this research revealed that the very

612   preparedness in going knowingly enables the liberation, or *"laziness"* as Sean put it. Similarly,

613   the responsibilities that come with sub-theme 2.2 (DIY), appear to oppose liberation. The need

614   to be self-responsible and self-reliant in a hostile environment would suggest an industrious,

615   utilitarian focus away from freedom. However, DIY involves autonomy, and autonomy is

616   implicit in the notion of liberation: adventurers are free to make things happen and get things

617   done without 'experts' or guides on hand.

618   Going knowingly into the unknown combines the positive psychological paradigms of

619   intrinsic motivation and control exhibited in self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2002), hope

620   (Snyder, 2002), goal setting (Latham & Locke, 1991; Locke, 2002), proactive coping

621   (Aspinwall & Taylor, 1997) and mastery (Gluck & Bluck, 2013) as evidenced in 'going

622   knowingly', with the psychology of possibility (Langer, 2009), growth mindset (Dweck, 2017)

623   openness (Fredrickson, 2011), courage (Pury, 2010) and creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 2014) –

624   'into the unknown'. The complementarity of the two enables and liberates the participants to

625   enjoy adventure flow; defined as the combination of high challenge and high skill by

626   Csikszentmihalyi (1990, 1996). This would further support previous research naming flow as

627   a key element of adventuring (Mitchell, 1983).

628   Results show that adventurers choose to go knowingly into the unknown to discover

629   themselves, whilst at the same time be willing to lose themselves. The notion of psychological

630   self-exploration and discovery are reflected in the physical and embodied adventurous journey,

631   with little expectation placed upon them by society - or themselves - to be productive, perfect

632   or certain. This 'psychology of possibility' as Langer describes it (2009), allows for ontological

633   expansion, mindfulness, creativity, and emancipation (Fatemi, 2016).

634   Contrastingly, extended-period expeditionary adventures are not usually 'too known':

635   packaged or heavily guided, as they then lose the 'spirit' of adventuring. This tallies with

636   adventure recreation research where "…there occurs something of a paradox whereby the more

637   detailed, planned and logistically smooth an itinerary becomes the more removed the

638   experience is from the notion of adventure" (Beedie & Hudson, 2003, p. 627). However, it has

639   been suggested that extreme adventure tourism – such as climbing Everest – would qualify

640   (Ortner, 1999) and indeed participants in this research had taken part in extreme adventure

641   tourism whilst climbing the seven summits, sailing around-the-world, and skiing to the Poles.

642   The second master theme, On Adventure: Liberation, DIY and the Real Outdoors

643   revealed the core psychological constructs that adventuring facilitated. Evidence from the

644   present research demonstrates that partly as an outcome of the previous two constructs, and

645   predominantly as a result of an adventure; liberation, autonomy (DIY) and unity with nature

646   are experienced once the adventure begins. These three most dominant themes were expressed

647   repeatedly across all participants. Previous research has explored these psychological concepts,

648   however scarcely in the context of extended-period expeditionary adventuring. This research

649   thus adds further definition and a new contextualisation to the understanding of the

650   transformational benefits of liberation (Brymer & Schweitzer, 2013), flow (Csikszentmihalyi,

651   1990), independence - in autonomy and self-efficacy (Bandura, 1989), coping with stress in

652   salutogenesis (Antonovsky, 1979, 1987) and physical activity (Hefferon, 2013; Holder,

653   Coleman & Sehn, 2009) embodied in the outdoors (Meier, Schnall, Schwarz & Bargh, 2012).

654   The theme of liberation (2.1) is commensurate with Brymer and Schweitzer's research

655   into the quest for freedom in extreme sports and the transformational benefits of such (2013).

656   Results from this research found similar references, and thus it is hypothesised that the

657   combination of physical activity, with the right mix of challenge and skill, plus a degree of

658   preparedness with an acceptance of uncertainty (going knowingly into the unknown), can

659   generate embodied, emotional and psychological freedom. These results are also consistent

660   with Csikszentmihalyi's flow matrix (1990, 1996), where 'skill' equates to going knowingly,

661   and 'challenge' equates to going into the unknown with the dynamic coping required in "DIY".

662   The liberation felt is in part due to the embodied experience of flow and fully present

663   functioning.

664   Additionally, the mindset of liberation and openness to explore the unknown, with the

665   element of challenge, enables further growth; providing fertile conditions for experiential

666   learning, transformation and the development of wisdom (Gigerenzer & Goldstein, 2011;

667   Gluck & Bluck, 2013; Knowles, Holton & Swanson, 2014). This suggests that the quality and

668   quantity of growth and wisdom achieved post-adventure is increased by the fact that the

669   experience was gained while in an open-minded, fully present and challenged state of

670   psychological functioning. Gigerenzer and Goldstein (2011) suggest that wisdom includes the

671   recognition and management of uncertainty, thus being useful pre-, and on adventure, and

672   honed for life post-adventure.

673   Self-reliance, referred to 'DIY' in this study, is the second positive by-product of being

674   on an adventure. Participants gained self-efficacy through the agentic conquering of physical

675   and cerebral challenges whilst lacking traditional back-up and support (Bandura, 1989; Brymer

676   & Schweitzer, 2013). Thus, the adventurers who went knowingly into the unknown, enabled

677   themselves to be both liberated and agentic as demonstrated in themes 2.1 and 2.2. Reward

678   included the feeling of empowerment, especially situated within the hostile and uncertain

679   environments, and a feeling of confidence post-adventure to cope with life.

680   DIY coping on an adventure is commensurate with Lazurus' transactional model

681   (1966), where dynamic accommodative and constructive efforts to master demands over

682   resources can reduce or eliminate stress. Adaptive coping has been associated with well-being;

683   the ability to recover or bounce back from difficulty in resilience and post-traumatic growth,

684   lower cortisol levels (Carver & Connor-Smith, 2010; Snyder, 1999, 2002), and the agility to

685   adapt and cope; all common themes in this research. Further research could explore the

686   possibility of post-adventure stress, as compared with post-traumatic stress, and the impact of

687   reflectivity and emotional regulation.

688   The third subtheme in this section – the 'real outdoors' (2.3) – is commensurate with

689   the evidenced benefit of adventuring within a genuine natural environment. Being outdoors has

690   been found to be beneficial to mental health and psychological well-being (Atchley, Strayer &

691   Atchley, 2012; Ewert, 1983; Passmore & Holder, 2017) and unsurprisingly, this research aligns

692   with previous literature on the subject.

693   Adventures strip away the stress of maintaining facades, allowing participants to be

694   authentic: *"I can cry and bleed"* (Lara, 8/302), so that they may truly become their whole

695   selves and self-actualise (Kashdan & Biswas-Diener, 2014; Maslow, 1943, 1962). This concept

696   of authentic personal expressiveness is explored by Waterman (1993) and Ryan and Deci

697   (2001), whereby people live in accord with their "daemon" or true self, articulated multiple

698   times by the present participants.

699   The authenticity experienced psychologically is in harmony with their authentic

700   environment and stripped away lifestyle "*detached away from society*" (Ted, 24/775) and the

701   stressors of modern living. Going on an adventure is perhaps an experience that we are designed

702   to thrive in, with reference to Dora's notion in 2.3 that humans interact with the world best in

703   hunter-gatherer mode (Louv, 2012).

704   Finally, the third master theme 'Post-Adventure: Resilience and Growth'

705   suggests there is a strong element of resilience involved in adventuring as evidenced in the

706   results (3.1). These findings are in accordance with the extensive research and literature on

707   psychological coping in tough times, similarly, found in hardiness, resilience and mental

708   toughness (for example: Clough & Strycharczyk, 2012; Swann, Crust & Allen-Collinson,

709   2016; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). Extreme expeditionary adventure experiences in particular

710   are most impactful, providing stimulus for adaptation and peak life challenges that enhance

711   resilience: "…adventure experiences may help participants develop adaptive systems that will

712   aid them during future uncertain and demanding events." (Overholt & Ewert, 2014, p1-2).

713   Coping behaviours can be learned by "explorers and adventurers" (Leach, 2016, p1). Research

714   also supports the notion that adventure experiences may be positive or negative, but it is the

715   'peakiness' that stimulates resilience and growth (Leon, Sandal, Fink & Ciofani, 2011;

716   Tedeschi, Shakespeare-Finch, Taku & Calhoun, 2018). Wong's second-wave positive

717   psychology construct correlates here (2016) with regard to his balanced taxonomies,

718   specifically either a negative or positive experience input with a positive output.

719   Correspondingly, this is associated with post-traumatic growth; potentially 'post-adventure

720   growth' is just as salutary. Adventurers knowingly participate in trauma-inducing events or

721   shaping "crucibles" as described by Bennis and Thomas (2002), and participants described a

722   strengthening of character as a result (Joseph, 2012).

723   Growth and wisdom are achieved through experience, and challenging, peak

724   experiences are more experiential, therefore, educational. An adventure represents a span of

725   life's journey, where learning and growing are intensified, illuminated and accelerated.

726   Adventure is a growth accelerator, and its learnings are used in non-adventure life as a

727   psychological toolbox. Additionally, an adventurer's growth journey is cyclical as they choose

728   to go 'more knowingly' on to their next adventure, with the psychological and cognitive

729   toolbox they have built over the years. Overall, the results reveal that adventures serve as

730   significant peak experiences that enable post-adventure growth: accelerating development

731   towards realising one's own full potential in self-actualisation (Maslow, 1943); expanding

732   boundaries as experienced in self-transcendence (Frankl, 1966); and increasing wisdom

733   (Ferrari & Weststrate, 2013).

734   On a higher outcome level, adventuring is analogous with Joseph Campbell's "Hero's

735   Journey" and Viktor Frankl's "Man's Search for Meaning" (Campbell, 1993; Frankl, 1984). In

736   both narratives, the human-being undergoes a long journey of enduring challenge, whereby

737   through adversity and suffering they find themselves – the 'hero' within. Adventurers choose

738   the more difficult path; they go knowingly into the physical and psychological unknown, on

739   their quest for growth and self-actualisation and in their search for a meaningful existence.

740   Adventurers induce peak experiences that can create mortality awareness in themselves and

741   others (Yalom, 1980). This intense, embodied and emotional experience is clearly expressed

742   by Ted who *"created a pathway"* for himself in his expanding world that he didn't know

743   existed (3.1) and had *"surges"* of ecstasy so much so that it felt "*like the chemicals that was*

744   *rushing through my body was probably the most powerful ever in my life"* (Ted,6/186-7).

745   An adventure is a peak experience which makes participants feel *"super aware"* (Lara,

746   5/165) and *"really alive"* (Lara, 5/161). A prolonged challenge, fear or trauma, or a reprieve

747   from death, can create a "plateau experience", a serene calmness, (Krippner, 1972; Maslow,

748   1962) yielding an added profundity that makes the adventure more transformational, and

749   potentially life post-adventure, more meaningful. This achieves post-adventure growth, much

750   like post-traumatic growth (PTG) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1995, 1996, 2004), where a higher

751   outcome, such as appreciation for life, is the positive result of a negative experience. This

752   correlates with previous research findings around transcendence (Leon et al, 2011; Marsh,

753   2008) or a "crystallize[d] selfhood" (Ewert & Hollenhorst, 1997, p.1).

754   In the search for something higher, adventurers not only climb mountains to reach a

755   physical summit and potentially feel positive emotions such as awe and joy in the achievement,

756   but they may also find inspiration and meaning within the yin and yang of that 'peak'

757   experience; incorporating the complementarity impressions of beauty and danger, or survival

758   and survivor's guilt, for example (Lomas & Ivtzan, 2015). It is proposed that to 'go on an

759   adventure' is to choose to have a natural peak experience that is good for our eudaemonic

760   happiness and psychological wellbeing.

761   Further research could explore more extensively and quantitively using surveys across

762   higher numbers of participants, or more widely using qualitative methods with additional

763   participants. Each theme has the potential to be further investigated, perhaps in correlation to

764   different demographics. The main limitation of this research is that it only represents seven

765   subjective British, white mindsets. It is concluded that with this small sub-section of the

766   adventurer population, there are clear and common themes that arise on interpretation and

767   analysis that are worth further investigation. Furthermore, there are interesting similarities,

768   disparities and distinctions across different adventure disciplines and pursuits, which would

769   also be worthy of research, analysis and comparison.

770   In a final and significant point of discussion, it is proposed by the authors that

771   'Adventure Psychology' has the potential to become a new discipline to sit alongside Sports

772   Psychology, potentially encompassing the associated yet disaggregated fields of: Adventure

773   Tourism; Adventure Therapy; Adventure Recreation; Adventure Travel; Adventure Education

774   and Expeditions. Possibly also including adventurous activities (such as rafting or kayaking),

775   human performance in extreme environments (such as polar, space or desert), extreme sports

776   (such as BASE jumping) and serious leisure (such as skydiving). This would provide a point

777   of collaboration and inter-discipline co-operation. Best practice research, evidence,

778   approaches, and interventions could be exploited more skilfully by practitioners who share the

779   same goal of improving psychological health under this banner.

780   The definition of 'adventure' would need to be resolved to enable categorisation. We

781   propose the following for future discussion: 'adventure: to go knowingly into the unknown on

782   expeditions, travels and experiences that are unusual or daring, and that involve opportunities

783   for taking risks, whilst demanding commitment and responsibility'.

784

785   **Conclusion**

786   To go on an extended-period expeditionary adventure could be cursorily perceived as a

787   selfish or risky undertaking, whereas this research has revealed more layered and penetrating

788   purposes and benefits. The answer to: 'why adventure', is complex and phenomenological;

789   principal implications suggest resilience, post-adventure growth, and self-actualisation, even

790   transcendence.

791   We leave the last word to one of our participant adventurers:

792   "I'm always on edge wondering, "What's next?" I don't know what it is, but there's

793   got to be something. There's always got to be more, and it will keep going until it stops

794   completely because I'll be dead. [laughs]" *(Sean, 25/819-822).*

795

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