The Use of Nature to Address Psychosocial Wellbeing in Children Affected by Conflict.

Tiffany Greene.


A thesis submitted for the degree of Masters Honours of Professional Studies of the University of New England.

24.03.08
Acknowledgements.

First and foremost I would like to thank my family: Neville, Sandy, Stacey and Saxon, for their continued support. Your love, help, and belief in me made this thesis possible. In many ways it is as much yours as it is mine. Thank you for helping me to fulfil another of my dreams. I love you all dearly. Secondly, I would like to thank my supervisor Dr. Rebecca Spence for her unfailing encouragement. Your motivation has been invaluable. I would also like to thank Dr. Bert Jenkins, who initially inspired me to undertake this thesis. Without your eagerness for me to convert an idea into in-depth research, I would not have chosen this path. I will be forever grateful. Thirdly, I would like to thank my friends worldwide, those who believed in what I was trying to do and whose positive enthusiasm for my topic spurred me on, as well as those who put up with my frustrations, lapses in confidence, and peripheral life situations whilst I was researching and writing. Hugs of gratitude to you all.
Abstract.

Within academic fields little previous emphasis has been placed on the use of nature as a tool for peace-building and reconstruction. The psychosocial state of individuals in conflict scenarios is of paramount importance. Environmental psychology is highly relevant to the peace-building and reconstruction field. Ecotherapy - essentially access to and interaction with nature with the aim of improving psychosocial wellbeing - is well recognised and implemented in Western countries in various spheres but receives scant attention, if not exclusion, in post-crisis reconstruction of traumatised emerging societies. This is particularly pertinent in relation to children, who are responsive to, and benefit greatly from, nature’s healing balm.

This thesis addresses the current and potential application of nature-based therapy within psychosocial programming for children affected by conflict. It provides a general overview of the situational context of children in conflict scenarios, with specific focus on psychosocial interventions. Critical analysis of current interventions, as well as the use of ecotherapy within Western contexts, provides a correlative examination of nature-based interventions in conflict scenarios.
I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.

......Tiffany Greene.......................................................

Signature
# Contents

Chapter 1 ................................................................................................................ 1

Context of the Problem ........................................................................................... 1

Children in Conflict Scenarios. ............................................................................ 2

Statement of the Problem ....................................................................................... 6

The Need to Address Psychosocial Wellbeing ................................................... 8

The Representation of Psychological and Emotional Wellbeing in Documents. .. 9

Programming for Children in Post-Conflict Scenarios. ...................................... 10

Research into Psychosocial Programmes ........................................................ 11

The Application of Western Psychotherapeutic Techniques ............................. 13

The Application of Alternative Techniques ....................................................... 14

Nature Based Interventions as Alternative Therapy ......................................... 15

Statement of Hypothesis and Research Questions .............................................. 16

Questions to be Addressed in the Research .................................................... 17

Significance of the Problem and Hypothesis and Research Questions ......... 18

Assumptions and Limitations ........................................................................... 19

Research Design and Methods ........................................................................ 20

Definitions of Terms ......................................................................................... 21

Thesis Outline .................................................................................................. 23

Chapter 2 .............................................................................................................. 26
Masters Honours Thesis

Introduction. .................................................................................................................. 26
The Situational Context of Conflict Scenarios ................................................................. 26
Children and Conflict: The issues. .................................................................................. 28
Child Psychosocial Wellbeing in Conflict Scenarios: Recognition and response. ....... 32
  Practical Response. ........................................................................................................ 34
  Why Address the Psychosocial State of Children? .................................................... 37
Symptoms and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Classification ....................................... 40
Diverse Effects of Conflict on Children and Youth: Culture and resilience. ............... 43
Conclusion. .................................................................................................................... 44

Chapter 3 ...................................................................................................................... 46
Introduction. ................................................................................................................... 46
Dealing with the Trauma: Programmatic responses. ..................................................... 47
Issues in Addressing the Trauma: Considerations for programme implementation. ...... 49
  Which Youth? ............................................................................................................. 51
Youth : Victims, threats, and resilience. ...................................................................... 52
Youth Involvement ......................................................................................................... 56
Local Knowledge ......................................................................................................... 58
Programmes with a Community Focus ...................................................................... 60
Conclusion. ................................................................................................................... 61

Chapter 4 ...................................................................................................................... 62
Introduction. ................................................................................................................... 62
Problems and Trends in Programme Classification.........................63
Non-Primary Psychosocial Wellbeing Focused Programmes...............65
Reproductive Health Programmes....................................................66
Vocational Training Programmes.....................................................66
Basic Skills Programmes.................................................................68
Peace Education Programmes..........................................................68
Programmes Primarily Aimed at Improving Psychosocial Wellbeing.....70
Identifying and Measuring Wellbeing...............................................71
Classifying Psychosocial Focused Programmes.................................72
Problems with Programme Classification: Sommers – A case study....73
Kalksma-van Lith, de Graaff et al. – A continuum approach................76
Conclusion..........................................................................................78

Chapter 5..........................................................................................81
Introduction.........................................................................................81
The Alternative Therapy Debate.......................................................82
The Curative/ Non-Curative Debate....................................................82
The Benefits of Alternative Therapy Implementation with Children within a Post-Conflict Context......................................................83
Art as Therapy....................................................................................86
Music as Therapy..............................................................................88
Play and Sport as Therapy.................................................................91
Holistic /Interdisciplinary Approaches..........................................95
Masters Honours Thesis

Tiffany Greene

Alternative Therapies Not Being Implemented. ..................................................... 96
Conclusion. ........................................................................................................... 97

Chapter 6 ............................................................................................................ 100
Introduction. ........................................................................................................ 100
Nature and Children. ........................................................................................... 102
Nature as therapy: A theoretical background: Biophilia ....................................... 105
Ecopsychology and Ecotherapy. ......................................................................... 108
Research on Ecopsychology and Ecotherapy. ................................................... 110
  Animals. .......................................................................................................... 110
  Plants. ............................................................................................................. 111
    Gardening/Horticultural therapy – Ecotherapy using plants. ....................... 113
  Landscapes. ................................................................................................... 115
  Wilderness. ..................................................................................................... 118
    ‘Outdoor Education’ – Ecotherapy using wilderness. .................................. 119
Conclusion. ......................................................................................................... 124

Chapter 7 ............................................................................................................ 125
Introduction. ........................................................................................................ 125
Nature and Peace-building- A natural choice. ..................................................... 126
The use of Nature in Psychosocial Programmes within Conflict Scenarios. ..... 129
  The Construction of Green Spaces ................................................................. 129
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Getting Out There</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Hands-on Approach</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Butterfly Garden. A critical case study</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Situational Context of the Butterfly Garden</td>
<td>137</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description of the Butterfly Garden</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Approach</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Success Story</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of the Butterfly Garden</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critical Analysis</td>
<td>147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 8</strong></td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potential Explanations for the Limited use of Nature-Based Interventions</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems with Current Methods and Applications</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicability of Nature-based Programmes in Post-Conflict Settings</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Nature-Based Programming as a Component of Holistic Peace-Building: The Use of Green Spaces</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Research</td>
<td>163</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ix