



Perceptions of Youth in Nature

A Case Study of Matric Enwild Nature Immersion Programme

by

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Introduction

With the help of funding from the Rim of Africa Trust, A youth-based study was conducted in 2018. The purpose of this study was:

1. To conduct research towards completing a mini dissertation required by the University of Cape Town to understand youth perception of nature. The study aimed to help form a discussion on the implications that such perceptions may have for the future of South Africa's development by making sense of these perceptions through theoretical assumptions.
2. To investigate the impact that a nature immersion programme has on participating youth.

This report will provide feedback mainly on the findings of the impact that a nature immersion programme had on youth. Youth participants for the study, all but one of whom grew up in South Africa, were selected from the Matric Enwild nature immersion programme.

Matric Enwild (previously called Matric Chill Out) is a nature immersion programme created by the organisation called the Rim of Africa Trust. A nature immersion programme is understood to emphasize conservation and to inspire environmental awareness and responsibility by promoting an interest in nature through first-hand experience gained from teaching and learning in nature, rather than focusing on effects and consequences of environmental destruction (Yardimci & Leblebicioglu, 2012).

Data gathered from students through qualitative interviews and questionnaire survey sought to investigate what and how much can youth learn by being immersed in nature for a long period of time (5 or more days). In highlighting the findings, the report aims to showcase any benefits that were found by the youth taking part in a Nature immersion programme such as Matric Enwild

Methodology

As an approach method, this study uses qualitative interviews and a questionnaire survey to gather information. The interviews formed the main source of data collection and a questionnaire survey provided a means of a secondary data collection – as the survey merely served to confirm information gathered through the interview process. Face-to face- interviews were conducted on six Matric Enwild participants between the months of July and August 2018. Three questions were aimed at probing Youth perceptions of nature and the other three were aimed at understanding youth experiences in nature.

The selection criteria for those interviewed for the study was based on race, gender and social background binaries (i.e., low income and high-income background based on place of residence). This allowed for data diversification, as literature has shown that one’s background greatly influences perceptions (Petrosillo, et al., 2007; Adams & Savahl, 2013). Using these selection criteria, it was investigated how youth experience of Matric Enwild differed. All this based on the responses from participants of different races, gender and locational background.

Table 1 below maps out all the youth members that took part in the whole study. The youth are coded as “student”, as many wished to remain anonymous. Information such as gender, age, race as well as the year of attending Matric Enwild are also given. Location of Upbringing is given as to elude to the economic background of the participants. Though location of upbringing does not necessarily show one’s class as a given. It was used as the basis of identifying or discussing one’s class.

From the six participants selected for interviews, there were three males, three females. Two participants were classified as coloureds, two were white, and two were black. Of these participants, there was one participant of each race from a high-income household, and one participant of each race from a low-income household. All interviews were recorded using a voice recorder and later transcribed and the data analysed. The data gathered from the interviews was used to guide the formulation of a questionnaire survey.

The questionnaire survey was then sent out to the rest of the participants to confirm key themes that emerged from the interview process. Questionnaires were created using Google survey and sent out via email. The full questionnaire is attached as Appendix 1.

Table 1. Profile of respondents interviewed in the research study

Respondent Code	Gender	Age	Race	Year Attended Matric Enwild	Location of Upbringing
Student 1*	Male	20	Coloured	2016	Cape Town
Student 2*	Female	21	Black	2015	East London
Student 3*	Female	20	Coloured	2016	Elsiesrivier
Student 4*	Male	22	White	2015/16	Drakensberg KZN
Student 5*	Female	20	White	2016	Grahamstown
Student 6*	Male	20	Black	2016	Khayelitsha
Student 7	Female	20	White	2015	Howick KZN
Student 8	Male	21	Other	2015	Cape Town
Student 9	Female	20	Black	2016	Cape Town
Student 10	Female	21	White	2015	Johannesburg
Student 11	Female	20	Other	2016	New Zealand
Student 12	Male	20	Coloured	2015	Cape Town
Student 13	Female	19	Coloured	2016	Cape Town
Student 14	Male	20	White	2016	Table View
Student 15	Female	20	White	2016	Grahamstown
Student 16	Non-Binary	21	Coloured	2016	Cape Town
Student 17	Male	22	Black	2015	Soweto
Student 18	Female	20	White	2016	Southfield
Student 19	Male	21	Coloured	2016	Cape Town
Student 20	Male	21	Black	2015	Johannesburg

() Indicates all the participants that took part in a face-to-face interview*

Findings

The following are the most significant findings related to the data collected to try and understand what youth have learned and taken away from Matric Enwild. By analysing the findings, a significance and or importance of a nature immersion programme can be argued. Through all that was discussed and queried during the face to face interview process and the survey sent out to participants of Matric Enwild, three key questions formed the basis of understanding the impact a nature immersion programme had on the youth.

1. What were some of your expectation of Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme?
2. What did you learn from the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme?
3. Which did you take away from the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme?

Expectations of Matric Enwild

Below are a few quotes taken from participants of the study. These quotes show the responses to expectations that the youth had before taking part in the Matric Enwild programme.

“To be honest, I thought it was just going to be a five-day hike with a bunch of Randoms ...” [Student 7]

“A long and somewhat strenuous hike that involved getting to know people you would never have met with guides who cared and knew a lot about the natural surroundings.” [Student 8]

“I wanted an adventure when I decided to go on this hike. I wanted to meet new people and experience the beauty of the mountains and sleep under the stars - I got so much more than just that.” [Student 9]

“A fun time to relax” [Student 10]

“Escapism. Nature. Mountains. Peace.” [Student 11]

“Escape from the world. Lots of walking and talking.” [Student 4*]

“I was expecting a lot of lecturing about life. I thought it would be a camp with less interesting places to see.” [Student 13]

“I really was not sure what to expect.” [Student 6*]

“I expected to spend time in nature with others who also appreciated nature and were also recovering from and celebrating the end of Matric.” [Student 14]

“Something counter to Plett rage, meeting people from all over South Africa, being in contact with a beautiful space after the stress of the Matric year” [Student 15]

“Hiking and enjoy myself since I completed my matric.” [Student 16]

Various ideas existed as to what student thought Matric Enwild was going to be. The responses that seemed to occur the most was that students felt the programme was going to involve hiking, spending time in nature and escapism.

The respondents that did not know what to specifically expect or had a vague idea of what a programme in nature entails, were mostly those that indicated they did not previously attend outdoor adventure programmes, nature programmes or outdoor excursions with schools.

Table 2 below is based on responses from both interviews and the questionnaire survey; where students were asked the question; whether they previously attended a nature immersion programme (much like Matric Enwild). Some schools often use such programmes as the foundation of conducting education lessons (House of Commons, 2005).

Interesting observation that students who answered “No” to this question, appeared to be those that grew up in areas considered to be for low- and mid-income households. These places were identified as being dangerous high crime area, hence activities outside the schools would be a safety risk for the children. Some of these places included Elsierivier and Khayelitsha.

Table 2. Students that have previously been to a programme like Matric Enwild

Student	Experienced Outdoor programme	Race	Location of Upbringing	Description of Area of Upbringing
Student 1*	Yes	Coloured	Cape Town	Urban (Suburb)
Student 2*	No	Black	East London	Urban (Suburb)
Student 3*	No	Coloured	Elsiesrivier	Urban (Suburb)
Student 4*	Yes	White	Drakensberg KZN	Farm/ Mountainous
Student 5*	Yes	White	Grahamstown	
Student 6*	No	Black	Khayelitsha	Township
Student 7	Yes	White	Howick KZN	Farm
Student 8	Yes	Other	Cape Town	Urban (Suburb)
Student 9	Only Science Students	Black	Cape Town	Urban (Suburb)
Student 10	Yes	White	Johannesburg	Urban (Suburb)
Student 11	Yes	Other	New Zealand	Urban (Suburb)
Student 12	Yes	Coloured	Cape Town	Urban (Suburb)
Student 13	No	Coloured	Cape Town	Urban (Suburb)
Student 14	No	White	Table View	Urban (Suburb)
Student 15	Yes	White	Grahamstown	Farm
Student 16	Yes	Coloured	Cape Town	Urban (City Centre)
Student 17	Yes	Black	Soweto	Urban (City Centre)
Student 18	No	White	Southfield	Urban (Suburb)
Student 19	Yes	Coloured	Cape Town	Urban (City Centre)
Student 20	It depends	Black	Johannesburg	Urban (City Centre)

The following are quotes taken from two student explaining why it would be difficult to have such programmes like Matric Enwild near where they stay.

“Because I live in gangster area, I don’t think I am exposed to my environment because we don’t really go outside...”

“I have never experienced [nature] quite before until that moment we went for the camp in matric...”

“There is constant noise, constant pollution, I can’t go outside and just take a deep breath because I don’t know what I’ll be breathing in.” [Student 3]*

“I went to school in Khayelitsha, we did not take part in any school trips beyond sports because it was dangerous... There was a lot of litter and pollution where I stay”

“... I am definitely mindful of my pollution and I use water saving measures as a means to fight environmental problems.” [Student 6]*

The findings gathered suggest that social location and background do play a role as to the perception and or experiences one has in nature. More on this analysis is provided in in Chapter 4 of my dissertation (see Appendix 2).

Lessons learnt from Matric Enwild

Matric Enwild was more than just about nature and more than just about hiking and experiencing a level of escapism in nature, for students. The following are some quotes taken from student participants of Matric Enwild, based on their experiences of the programme and what they may have significantly learnt from their experience.

“I learned that there is huge potential for ‘alternative matric rage’ experiences and events. It was also interesting to learn what other matrices were hoping on doing with their life, what their plans were, if they were going to study or not, how they felt about school and their experiences etc. I found this to be quite reassuring and comforting as I realized a lot of kids were just as confused as me at that point. I also learned (or probably knew but was reminded that) it doesn’t matter who you are, where you come from or what your story is, you are fully capable of making incredible connections with incredible people if you simply open yourself up to the opportunities!” [Student 7]

“The importance of disconnecting and being in nature, also how insanely easy it is to freak out about potentially meeting random people and then being nervous about that but then figuring out that they're in the same position so that anxiety is silly.” [Student 8]

“I also learnt how calming nature can really. I just didn't know it because I have never spent a lot of time in nature.” [Student 9]

“I had to keep walking and in doing this, I learnt to stretch my limits, or rather, I learnt that my limits were far greater than I believed. I learnt that sometimes, in an attempt to be utterly

prepared, I could overload myself and hinder rather than aid my journey. I learnt in offloading, that others often value what you have more than you do. ... I learnt that often, you find friendship with the people you least expect if you take the time to get to know them. I learnt that food and water, that represented rewards, always tasted sweeter when I had worked to get to them.” [Student 10]

“The mountains are never too far away.” [Student 11]

“To appreciate people for who they are. Love nature for what it is.” [Student 12]

“I learnt how to interact with people I’ve never met. I got to understand the importance of water and food. Most importantly I learnt that life is not all about social media and technology. Nature provides peace which cannot be provided by technology.” [Student 13]

“I learned to appreciate the silent moments and to engage in the more often. I gained new perspectives on time and technology and saw how attached we are to phones and watches..” [Student 14]

I learnt about myself, interacting with others and that there are possibilities in life, and what I do with mine, that I had not really considered before. [Student 6*]

“To survive without any electronic devices and except for a camera and to take time to talk to the people around you and getting to know them on a personal level.” [Student 15]

The commonly recurring responses on what was learnt by students during Matric Enwild include: *learning about nature, learning new life skills, learning to interact with different people from different backgrounds and learning to not rely on technology.*

Learning about nature

As one of the reoccurring responses from students. Many felt that Matric Enwild taught them a lot about nature, as they learned to appreciate their time in nature and gain new fondness of nature through their experiences within nature. Words such as calm, love and appreciate are some of the positive terms that students used when describing their experiences in nature.

Learning new life skills

Students claim to have learned new found skills during their time at Matric Enwild. Skills such as communication skills, survival skills and self-awareness.

Learning to interact with different people from different backgrounds

A very important part of the Matric Enwild programme, was bringing together people from different walks of life. The programme hosted diverse groups of students, from different backgrounds. This diversity comprises of youth of different ages, race and gender. The diversity was noted by the students as being beneficial for them to learn about other people they considered much different to themselves and how easy it was to relate to them.

Learning to not rely on technology

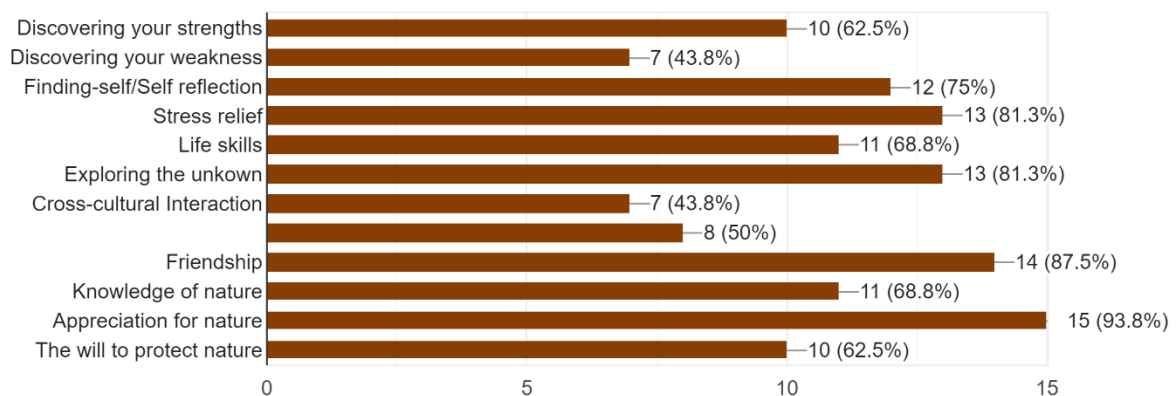
Being a nature immersion programme, the Matric Enwild programme was hosted in nature. As part of the programme students were thus not allowed to use any electronic products as such. This includes their cell phones. Many students acknowledged that this was quite an experience that took getting used to. However they found it to be a useful experience of being less reliant on such technological equipment.

Lessons students took away from Matric Enwild

It was interesting to find out that Matric Enwild left a lasting impression on student participants a few years after the programme. The following is a graph that contains statistical data based on the questionnaire survey taken by 16 matric Enwild participants. The graph shows the distribution of responses based on what students took away from the Matric Enwild programme.

Which of these did you take away from the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric EnWild programme? (Select all those that apply)

16 responses



The top three survey responses as to what students took away from the Matric Enwild programme were: *Appreciation for nature*, (where 15 out of 16 students ticked this outcome), *friendship*, (where 14 out of 16 students ticked this outcome) and *stress relief and Exploring the unknown* (in both cases 13 out of 16 participants experienced this)

The bottom three responses were that 7 out of 16 students said they learnt about *discovering their weakness*, also 7 out of 16 students indicated that they experienced *cross cultural interaction* and 8 out of 16 students *learned different cultural perspective*.

The following is a table based on the response of the research survey. It highlights the top and bottom three things that were learned by student during Matric Enwild. The table is separated by race and gender. The aim was to identify what prominent lessons did youth of different races and gender, take away from the Matric Enwild programme. Class would also have been an interesting factor to note, however a question to identify students class background was never asked in the survey. Class in the study was thus not easily identifiable. But as noted before, residential background was what was used to generalise potential class that was then used in some of the analysis.

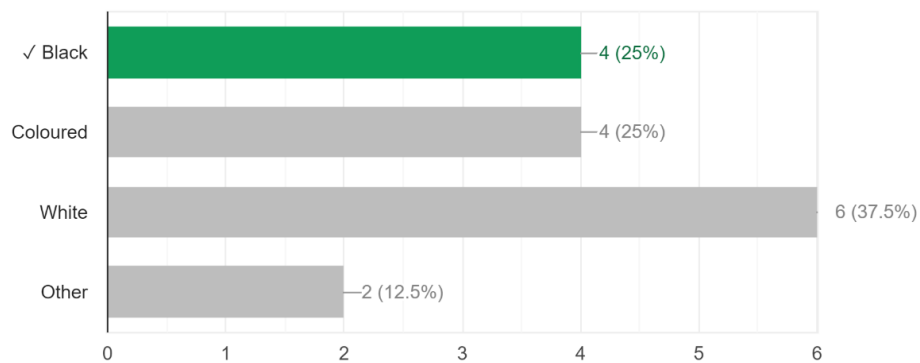
Table 3. Top 3 and Bottom 3 factors learnt at Matric Enwild by Gender and Race

What was learnt	Race				Gender		
	Coloured (4)	White (6)	Black (4)	Other (2)	Male (8)	Female (7)	Other (1)
<i>Appreciation for nature</i>	4	6	3	2	7	7	1
<i>friendship</i>	3	4	4	2	6	5	1
<i>Stress relief</i>	3	6	2	2	5	7	1
<i>Exploration</i>	4	5	2	2	6	6	1
<i>discovering their weakness</i>	2	3	1	1	1	5	1
<i>cross cultural interaction</i>		5	1	1	3	4	
<i>learned different cultural perspective</i>	1	5	1	1	4	4	

The following graphs represents the distribution of students (that took part in the survey) by race and gender. This information helped with analysing the quantitative data from Table 3.

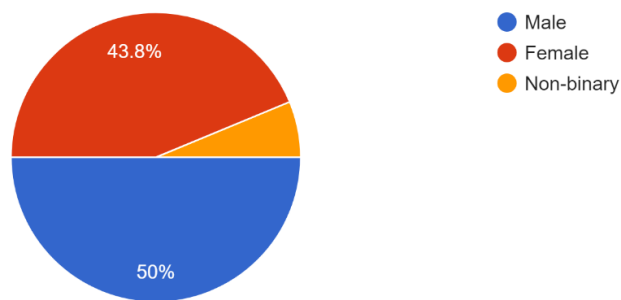
What is your Race?

4 / 16 correct responses



Gender

16 responses



Based on **Table 3**, a lot of interesting observations were made. Many of those that identify as females, felt that they learned about their weakness from Matric Enwild. A lot more white participants than any other race, took cross culture interaction and learning about different cultural perspectives as key to their experience during the Matric Enwild programme. Appreciation for nature, as something that was taken away from Matric Enwild programme, was evenly distributed amongst both genders. The same could be said for exploring the unknown and learning about different cultural perspectives. A lot more whites and then blacks, and coloureds combined, thought that Matric Enwild was good for stress relief. The information above was identified as being useful to use as the foundation of conducting further research and analysis based on gender and racial narratives.

The responses to the questions about expectation and what was learnt, not only helps show the experiences of youth in a nature immersion programme, but also the importance of such

programmes based on the impact they have on youth. It would be interesting to conduct a follow-up study a few years from now, to see if the youth still feel the same way about Matric Enwild, which may confirm whether the programme had a lasting impact in their lives, based on what they said they learnt. This study was conducted two or three years respectively after participation in the programme. Perhaps this timeframe may have been too soon, and the responses may differ if the study was conducted 5 years after the cohort attended the programme.

Despite this, what was noted in my dissertation is that a lot was learned on the camp about nature which may have certainly changed some youth perceptions for life. In **Table 3**, it can be observed that this evidently transcends race and gender. Almost everyone across all race and gender categories acknowledged that Matric Enwild gave them an appreciation for nature, The appreciation for nature was seen as particularly significant, especially based off those that indicated that they had not previously experienced being out in nature the same way as they did on the Matric Enwild programme. Some quotes from such students are highlighted below.

“When I got home I wanted to go back. The first night the stars, I can’t get that image out of my mind. I’ve been to the where you can observe stars and planets, but that does not compare to the stars at the camp. The stars were literally in front of your eyes, everywhere, there was no light interrupting. For me that was an image I couldn’t get out of my head. You couldn’t take a picture or capture it; I would like to go back there now. And it was peaceful.” [Student 3]*

“I learnt how to interact with people I’ve never met before. I got to understand the importance of water and food. Most importantly, I learnt that life is not all about social media and technology. Nature provides peace which cannot be provide by technology.” [Student 13]

“I was not an outdoors person, and I also learnt that in the wilderness everything is so in tune; like the trees, the mountains, the cliffs, and the water. The power, there is so much power, when you walk you can think things through so thoroughly so smoothly and you can actually come up with conclusion. Like you can be just there staring at a mountain and you’d be so free thinking, like you can go as far as you can...” [Student 2]*

Grant use

The grant that was provided for Rim of Africa Trust was used as follows:

Items	Cost (in Rand)
Travel	
Transport	1 000.00
Total	1 000.00
Materials	
Laptop	7000.00
Mobile data (remote internet access)	3000.00
Total	10 000.00
Data Collection and Analysis	
Copying, editing, proof reading, binding, transcription	10 000.00
Total	10 000.00
TOTAL COST	21 000.00

Conclusion

The funding provided by Rim of Africa Trust has been crucial to the two-part study that I was able to conduct. As part of my main master's dissertation, youth perception of nature in the context of South Africa was looked at, a context where very little research on this topic currently exists. This research ignited the conversation on what certain youth perceptions of nature mean for South Africa's future development.

In this report a brief overview of the experiences that youth had in a nature immersion programme, Matric Enwild, was given. The findings highlighted show how people from different gender, class and racial groups all took away different experiences from the programme. It was noted that a greater longitudinal study can stem from these findings.

The research done became more than just about the experiences that youth have in a nature-based programme, it also helped create a discussion on what the youth can do with this experience. One of the main discussions held in *Chapter 4* of my master's dissertation looked at how what was learned and experienced in nature during Matric Enwild, changed the perception that youth then held about nature. In doing so, this creates a favourable attitude and behaviour toward the protection of nature according to the New Ecological Paradigm theory (Part of this discussion is included in the appendix). Conducting a study on the youth from Matric Enwild gave clarity on the fact that amongst many things that youth may take from a nature programme, learning about nature was a prominent feature that transcended racial, gender and class binaries. This is a point of reference to further studies that I hope to conduct in future.

Several unanswered questions remain: Do nature immersion programmes and similar nature programmes cause participants to become environmental activist or environmentally conscious as a result of changed behaviours and attitudes towards nature? Does the appreciation for nature that participants of a nature programme expressed have a lasting effect 5 years on?

This research as well as future studies on this topic are therefore important as they could help pave a way for more of nature-based immersion programmes, or help improve existing ones, to maximize their potential impact on youth and society.

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Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Matric Chill-Out/Matric Enwild Questionnaire

1. Name *	
2. Email *	
3. Would you like to remain anonymous *?	
4. How old are you? *	
5. What is your Race? *	
6. Gender *	
7. Where are you from?	
8. Indicate what best describes the area in which you were raised	
Urban (Suburb)	
Urban (City centre/CBD)	
Rural	
Semi-rural	
Farm	
Mountainous	
Forestry	
Other	
9. I grew up half on a farm and half in Urban (Suburb)	
10. What is your understanding of word "Environment"?	
11. What is your understanding of word "Nature"?	
12. Nature is anything that has not been made or changed by humans.	
13. How easy is it for you to access nature where you were raised?	
14. Where did you go to school?	

15. Did your school partake in excursions /outings/journey programmes in nature?	
16. How did you find out about the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme? (Select all those that apply) *	
Mom	
Dad	
Siblings	
Friends	
Online	
Pamphlet	
Email	
Facebook	
Other	
17. What were some of your expectation of Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme?	
18. I expected to spend time in nature with others who also appreciated nature and were also recovering from and celebrating the end of Matric.	
19. What did you learn from the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme?	
20. Which of these did you take away from the Matric Chill-Out/ Matric Enwild programme? (Select all those that apply)	
21. Have you been back in nature after completing Matric Chill-Out/Matric Enwild programme?	
22. Are you aware of any threats against the natural environment in South Africa?	
23. Which of these threats concern you the most? (Select all those that apply)	
Climate Change	
Pollution	
Drought/Water	

Shortage	
Political Agendas	
Industries	
Deforestation	
Extinction	
Poaching	
Littering	
Destroying nature for profit	
Expanding cities	
Damage to Marine life	
Population growth	
Other	
24. Do you consider yourself a nature activist?	
25. What are you currently doing to combat these threats? (Select all those that apply)	
I am involved in groups that deal with nature initiative	
I am mindful of my pollution	
I educate others about the environment	
I volunteer in nature programmes/activities	
I donate to nature initiatives	
I am involved in political campaigns for nature protection	
I recycle whenever I can	
I try to support local trade	
I use water saving measures	
I petition against deforestation and the endangerment of wildlife	
None	
Other	

Appendix 2: Chapter 4 (Thesis discussion): Social factors that influence perceptions.

4.2.1 Perceptions of nature as influenced by access and geographic location

It can be said that the environment that a child grows up in, greatly influences them during later years. This is part of the ongoing nature nurture debate held by scholars (Moore, 2003; Plomin, 1994; Ridley, 2004). Linked to this, is the observation that access to nature and the location in which a child is born and grows up in, plays a role in formulating their perceptions. Perceptions in childhood that they may carry through their youth and eventually adulthood. The evidence gathered from the youth participants in this study would suggest this to be the case. The previous Matric Enwild participants perceptions of nature differed depending on where they grew up. Nature during the programme was experienced in different ways by the participants. Those that grew up in natural spaces were used to natural conditions and seemed more willing to return to nature even after the programme.

The following quote is taken from one of the participants of Matric Enwild who before the programme mentions that they grew up in a natural set up (Farm) for a few years and this they feel influenced their love for nature.

“For the first seven years of my life I grew up on a farm there was a lot of nature around me definitely influenced my appreciation and love of nature. After that we moved to town...Grahamstown in the middle of town and look [referring to looking out her window] see the side of the town and you can see the mountains side where there's nature around too much experience and you can walk out of town without too much effort so quite a good amount of nature places you can go to... quite often I would go out and walk my dog. In the natural places. [Student 5] ¹*

The following quote is taken from another previous participant of Matric Enwild. From this quote it can be seen that this participant was fortunate enough to have a yard in the house where they grew up which provided that natural setup. This participant acknowledges that the yard, together with their moms love for planting and dad for animals, influenced their love for nature.

¹ Student 5* (30/08/18, Rhodes University Grahamstown campus)

“... In our house we have a big tree in our back yard, and we have a lot of dogs. My mom is more a plant person and my dad are more like an animal person... I think that where we learnt our love for nature, we have 6 dogs and 1 cat” [Student 3]²*

The next quote from a previous Matric Enwild participant highlights how the participant was so use to being out in nature that they felt that they already knew what to expect from the programme beforehand. The participant also highlights a scenario where a girl that attended the trip experience the direct opposite of this (that is, that she did not know what to expect).

“The first time I was on top of the Drakensberg I was 12 my brother was 10. My dad is an entomologist, so he is out in the field a lot, so we had a lot of exposure to that. My mom likes hiking as well... I already knew what I was in for [referring to the Matric Enwild programme]. When you don't know what to expect it could be harder. Like in 2017 we had one girl drop out on the first day. It's a long steep up hill and its very hot in December” [Student 4]³*

An individual's location impacts how much a part of nature they feel and how they behave because of this attachment (or lack thereof), or their ideologies towards nature (Vining, Merick & Price, 2008). What an individual may feel are important aspects of nature or whether nature is in a crisis can directly be linked to the location in which they grew up in (Hunter et al. 2010). Growing up in a farm like [Student 5*], for example, may play such a significant role in shaping one's outlook on nature, that they may still find themselves actively seeking to connect with nature (e.g. through activities in nature), even a few years after relocating to the city. Similarly, [Student 4*] agrees with this opinion, having grown up near the Drakensburg mountains and being outdoors a lot with their parents.

Access to natural spaces also plays a role in one's outlook towards nature, for example, [Student 3*], who found it difficult to recall any natural spaces around them growing up, spoke of the little nature near the house. Therefore, an attachment to nature could not, for them, be created from first-hand experience in the same way as in [Student 2*]'s upbringing. [Student 4*] suggests that being exposed to nature when you are previously not accustomed to it (perhaps from having grown up in the city suburbs, thus having little to no natural spaces growing up), may be overwhelming for some. [Student 4*] recalls a fellow participant in the Matric Enwild programme that dropped out after one day, citing that she viewed the experience very differently to the rest. Despite not having much access to natural environments, one could

² Student 3* (20/08/18, University of Cape Town upper campus)

³ Student 4* (28/08/18, University of Cape Town upper campus)

still cultivate a connection and respect for nature in other ways. [Student 3*] suggest that it was probably their parents that made them and their siblings love and appreciate nature. This alludes to the strong influence of upbringing and parental (familial) influences on perceptions of nature, which will be discussed in depth later in this chapter.

Indicate what best describes the area in which you were raised.

16 responses

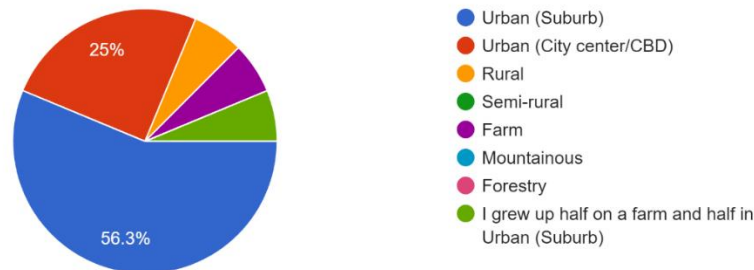


Figure 1

Bar graph indicating the percentages distribution based on the area where previous Matric Enwild participants grew up.

How easy is it for you to access nature where you were raised?

16 responses

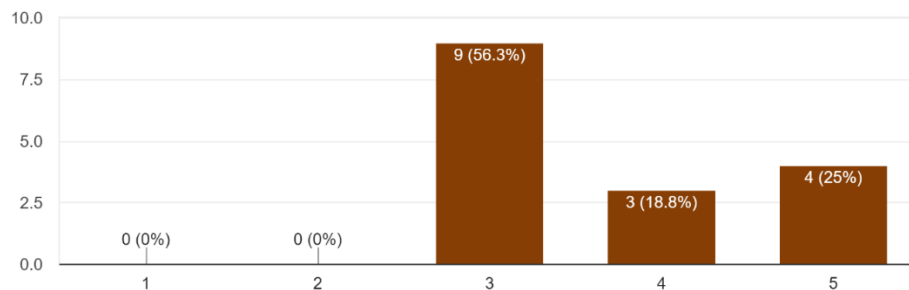


Figure 2

Histogram representing the percentages to responses of a scaled question on how easy it is for previous Matric Enwild participants to access nature where they grew up, where 1 was set at very difficult and 5 at very easy.

The findings from responses gathered from participants who were interviewed were further substantiated by responses to the questionnaire survey. From the respondents that took the survey (16 students), 9 (56.3%) of them acknowledged growing up in an urban suburb and 4 (25%) in an Urban city centre (Figure 1). Out of the 16 respondents 9 (56.3 %) reported that they were living in areas that are in between very easily accessible to very difficult to access nature (Figure 2). What should be noted here is what students defined nature as. This paints a

clearer understanding of why some might feel that nature is not easily accessible where they grew up.

The following are a few quotes from the questionnaire survey taken by previous Matric Enwild participants, that show the definitions given to nature by the participants. There is a consensus amongst participants as to the definition of nature. Therefore, when analysing weather, one feels they grew up or had access to nature growing up, a factor that may impact their perception of nature as a youth; there was no real outlier as most participants understanding of nature was similar.

“All organic matter [or] non-synthetic environment [or] the collection of land and whatever the lives or grows on it and contains life giving and flowing energy.”

[Student 7, 10 and 13]⁴

“Non-man-made [Or] Nature is anything that has not been made or changed by humans.” [Student 8, 12 and 15]⁵

“Physical work which consists of landscapes, seas [or] trees, plants, animals’ rivers, mountains s” [Student 12, 16 and 18]⁶

“Everything around you. I view nature as the untouched lands and places that have not been manipulated or altered in any way. It is how it was many years ago and remains in the same condition.” [Student 14]⁷

Out of 16 respondents, many lived in an urban setting. They would have considered many aspects of their surrounding as manmade and therefore, according to the insight gathered by what the youth believe to be nature, these respondents would not classify their surroundings in urban setting as nature. This may create a feeling of separateness from nature. Vining, Merick and Price (2008) suggested that even if a person may live separate from nature; because of one’s inevitable interaction with nature at some point in life, they should therefore not be considered separate from nature. Even so, most people, especially in urban settings consider themselves distinctly removed from and separate from nature. However, this should not be the case. This finding confirmed how location and access reinforce each other in influencing one’s feelings and perceptions of nature.

⁴ Student 7, 10 and 13 (Online survey, conducted between the 13/10/2018 – 29/10/2018)

⁵ Student 8, 12 and 15 (Online survey, conducted between the 13/10/2018 – 29/10/2018)

⁶ Student 12, 16 and 18 (Online survey, conducted between the 13/10/2018 – 29/10/2018)

⁷ Student 14 (Online survey, conducted between the 13/10/2018 – 29/10/2018)

Appendix 3: Chapter 4 (Thesis discussion): Impact of specific perceptions on behaviours and attitudes.

4.3.6. Making sense of perceptions: Theoretical outlook: Human Exceptionalism Paradigm and New Ecological Paradigm

Various perceptions were held by the students that took part in this research. It has been acknowledged that there are nuances that influence the perception of nature held by these students, however beyond these nuances' students seem to hold many similarities with their perceptions. It can be said that no student had a perception of nature that cause them to behave in a manner that was selfish towards nature., as would be described by traits of the HEP. Traits such as individualistic ideologies that create selfish behaviours stemming from a belief that nature exists only for human use. The research postulates that this is because most student participants are educated enough to know that there are in fact problems that exist in nature and that resources are not unlimited.

The following graphs generated from the survey response by previous Matric Enwild participants, helps to show the attitudes and behaviours that the youth have towards nature, based on their perceptions of nature. Such attitudes and behaviours are what can then further be explained by the HEP and NEP theories.

Are you aware of any threats against the natural environment in South Africa?
16 responses

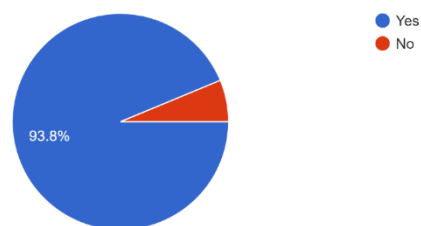


Figure 7

Pie chart depicting the percentage of previous Matric Enwild participants that are aware and those that are unaware of threats towards nature in South Africa.

Which of these threats concern you the most?(Select all those that apply)

16 responses

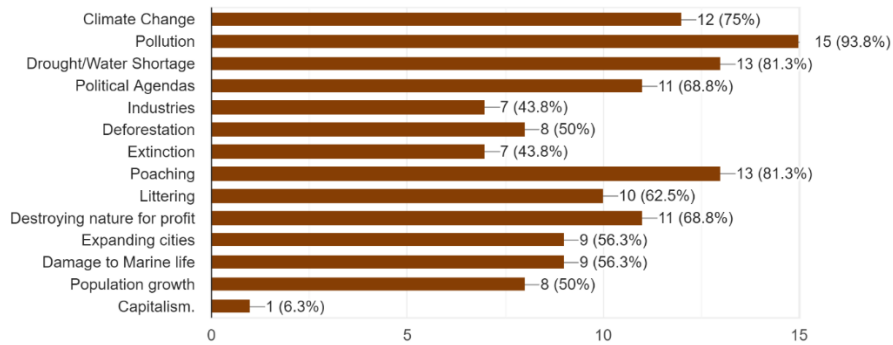


Figure 8

Bar graph showing the threats toward nature in South Africa and the percentage and numbers of previous Matric Enwild participants that acknowledge each issue as a threat.

Do you consider yourself a nature activist?

16 responses

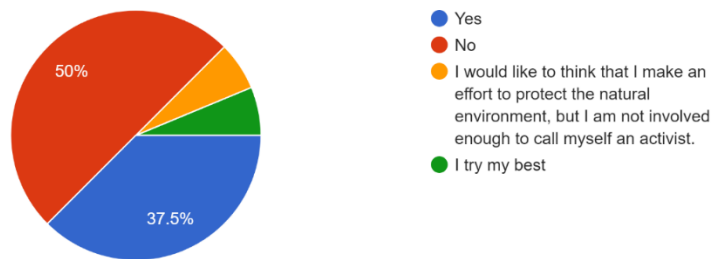


Figure 9

Pie chart depicting the percentage distribution of previous Matric Enwild participants that consider themselves nature activist.

What are you currently doing to combat these threats? (Select all those that apply)

16 responses

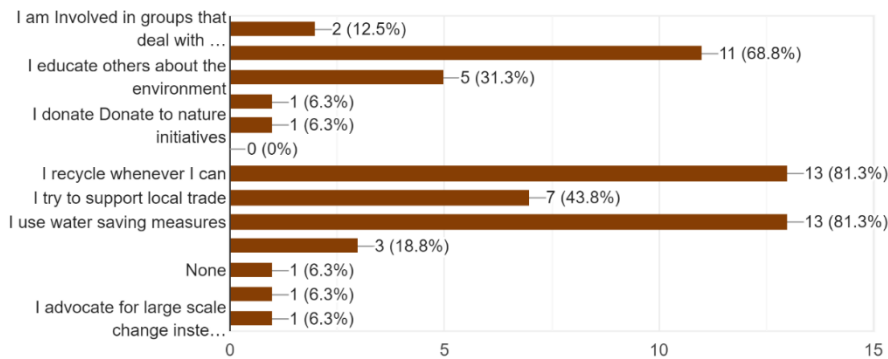


Figure 10

Bar graph showcasing what Matric previous Enwild participants are currently doing to combat threats against the natural environment.

Out of the 16 students that completed the survey, all but 1 respondent answered yes to the fact that they are aware of a threat against the natural environment in South Africa (Figure 7). There were various things that concerned students as a threat to the natural environment (Figure 8). But the most interesting aspect to note was 15 out of 16 students, identified pollution as a great environmental concern. A further 12 out of 16 students mentioned climate change as a great concern, 11 students mentioned political agendas as the implicating factor in the destruction of nature, 10 students out of 16 mentioned littering as a concern and 13 students out of 16 mentioned poaching as a major concern. Most students acknowledged that they are concerned about the impacts that human have on nature, leaning towards the NEP theory. The NEP theory states that one recognises that there is an interdependence between them and nature, causing them to have an attitude or behave in a manner that reflects this (Dunlap, 2002). This is confirmed by the fact that even though 50% students did not feel that they were nature activists (Figure 9), the answers that were given to what they actively do to combat concerning threats to nature, suggest that the awareness and the urge to do something towards protecting nature, is there (Figure 10). Notable response was that 11 students were mindful of their pollution, another 13 said that they recycle whenever they can and 13 also indicated that they use water saving measures. Overall out of the 16 students that responded to the questionnaire survey, only 1 responded that they do nothing towards protecting nature. Students that were interviewed face to face also acknowledged that they may actively do things towards protecting nature, as they are aware of threats concerns against nature.

The following quotes are taken from the interviews of previous Matric Enwild participants and helps show how different participants are conscious about nature issues, and the attitudes, behaviour and action these participants have towards issues in nature.

“I feel like I do try [speaking on environmental activism] but not hard enough. I’ve joined things where I’ve gone to talks. And I also think it’s important to tell people don’t do this and that because the environment is failing...” [Student 3*]

“I’m on the green campus initiative for the rest, but it is very in active. I just try to do it on a personal level, try to cut down on plastic as much as possible. Making a difference on a large scale seems daunting” [Student 4*]

“... I would say that I am mindful of pollution, but sometimes it is hard you know... I do also water saving measure, especially now when we are in crisis” [Student 6*]

These responses suggest that there is enough awareness that would refute the HEP theory amongst them. The different social factors like location, culture, risk, education and nuance; that influence one’s perception of nature, would be enough within the current landscape of South Africa to deter students away from being selfish toward the environment. The theory of NEP best fits to explain the meaning behind the youth perception of nature as it would explain the following. There is an understanding of common good and a global responsibility amongst the students that exists towards playing a role in nature protection. There is a level of guilt expressed by students that may feel that they are not doing enough or are doing nothing to prevent harm to nature. There is a deep understanding of nature to the point that students understand that nature does not exist for the exploitation of humans and natural resources are not unlimited. Through the constant interaction with nature, most students developed a bond or a rather a respectful relationship and love for nature. The positives of the relationship are what allows the youth to exist unselfishly with nature. This is good for the future generation of South Africa. As the future of South Africa is reliant on this positive relationship. NEP is driven by a pro-ecological world view (Dunlap, 2002). Therefore, using this theory to explain the meaning behind South African youth perception of nature; it can be suggested that the youth exist as part of a universal unit with the behaviours and attitudes towards nature that stems from their perceptions. As future political leaders, consumers and decision-makers of the country, South African youth would in future, work with other world leaders to combat environmental issues.