

**An Exploration of the Relationship between
Contemporary Spirituality, the Physically Active
Rural Tourist and the Geography of Place: a case
study of the Lake District**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the requirements for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Central Lancashire**

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I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution.

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An Exploration of the Relationship between Contemporary Spirituality, the Physically Active Rural Tourist and the Geography of Place: a case study of the Lake District

Abstract

It is well documented that the search for spirituality or spiritual transcendence is a defining characteristic of contemporary society. Paralleling this theme, it has also been argued that tourism, as a pervasive social activity, may be considered a modern sacred experience, a search for spiritual transcendence. However, few attempts have been made to explore empirically this alleged relationship between tourism and spirituality, particularly in the context of space-specific tourist activities, such as rural tourism. Once the domain of philosophers, academic knowledge of place, sense of place and place attachment has largely become the territory of human geographers who have contributed to defining these concepts and who, moreover, are responsible for classifying the complex interactions of humans with space and place. Present research undertaken has been directed at wilderness and outdoor environments and the concept of spirituality has, largely, been indirectly studied or purely arises as an outcome of the research. To date, limited academic attention has been paid to enhancing understanding of the role that 'place', specifically rural place, as a social construct, has in influencing physically active tourists' emotive outcomes and in particular, spiritual expressions.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore critically the concept of place with reference to the countryside, seeking in particular to identify the impact of constructed place on the emotive/spiritual experience of tourists engaging in physical pursuits in rural areas. More specifically, the location of the study focus is the Lake District National Park, a unique and popular rural landscape that embodies the socially constructed image of a rural idyll. Rural tourism, a prevalent contemporary activity offering a sharp contrast to the urban experience, is largely under-researched in respect to the potential spirituality of such experiences. This study facilitates the building of a contextual framework reflecting the dynamic tripartite relationship of place meaning, setting and physical activity and how these three concepts link to spiritual experience. It addresses a gap in academic literature by exploring rural tourism and the potential spiritual dimension of this activity drawing attention to the role that sense of place and physical activity plays in spiritual experiences. Academic research has, largely, focussed on tourists' overall experiences of place and activity, only noting spirituality as a response to certain environments and activities. In addressing this gap, this research seeks to clarify understanding of contemporary spirituality and identify clearly the spiritual dimension of the active rural tourist, pinpointing the external and internal elements influencing these experiences.

The research in this thesis incorporates phenomenological processes. These are employed initially in focus groups to develop emergent themes and, in the second stage, by way of a conversational interview format to encourage the flow of subjective commentary, thereby eliciting rich, thick data necessary for understanding the complexities of spiritual occurrence in a specific 'place'. The findings show that the rural tourist does not consciously search for spirituality but there is a spiritual dimension to rural visitors' experiences of the countryside. Place plays an important part in these experiences but sense of place, although frequently intensifying spiritual experiences, is not shown to be the embodiment of spiritual experience. Spirituality, as a dimension of rural tourism, develops from a tri-partite relationship incorporating aspects of physical location, physical activity and place meaning.

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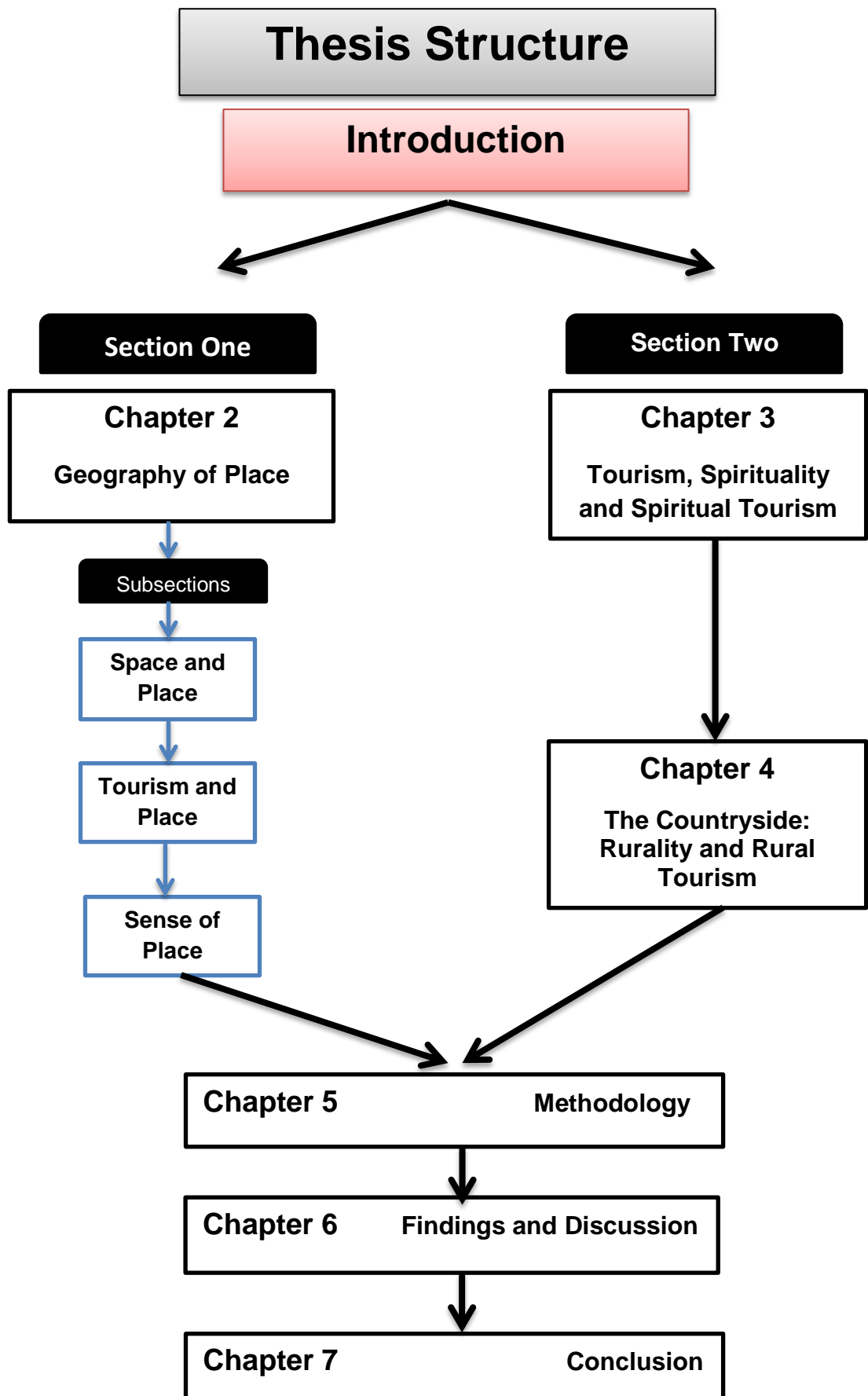


Figure 1.1 Schematic of thesis structure

Chapter One

Introduction

Tourism, considered to be both a social phenomenon and one of world's largest economic sectors (Smith, 2001; Cooper and Hall, 2008), essentially represents a spatial experience. Tourism, as a specific practice of mobility, is observable in the physical movement of people from a *place* of origin, to arrive at a *place* of destination. This migration or geographic mobilisation of people is driven by a diverse range of individual and collective motivations that draw the tourist to a place to engage in socio-cultural exchanges, emotive experiences or some form of physical interaction with the environment. Thus, on many levels, place is fundamental to the phenomenon of tourism.

In other words, in order to understand more fully the social or spatial movement that is contemporary tourism, it is necessary to explore the role of place in the tourist experience, not only as geographical loci but also in the context of the social and psychological interaction that visitors have with place (Morgan, 2009). That is, it is necessary to consider questions such as: what motivates tourists to go to certain places, how do they experience place, and what is their emotional involvement with place? Moreover, the relationship between a tourist and place starts long before the actual physical journey commences, either prior personal knowledge of the destination or a collectively-formed image of that specific place initiating visitor interpretation and interaction with place (Su, 2010). Indeed, 'place making' more generally is an instinctive part of human nature. Not surprisingly, therefore, how humans perceive and engage with place has long incited academic interest.

The struggle to define and understand what is meant by place and how places are socially constructed has been extensively addressed by philosophers and scholars as far back as the first century (Cresswell, 2004; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). In the present era, however, increasing academic attention has been paid to the concept, the significance of place being explored by human geographers, environmental psychologists, anthropologists and, more recently, sociologists. The study of place has focused primarily on the meanings that people attach to places and how they experience or interpret them (Tuan, 1974; Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Typically, the concept of place is considered to comprise three components, namely: the physical/objective environment or place, people's experiences/behaviours (activity) in

that place, and the constructed meaning of places (Relph, 1976; Stedman, 2003a; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Nevertheless, despite the increasing literature on the subject, there remains considerable debate as to the degree of influence exerted by each component.

In the specific context of tourism, place is a primary factor in the business of tourism; understanding the complex dynamics of the concept of place to the visitor is of fundamental importance to the tourism industry. Place entices tourists; place becomes the centre of meaning for tourists; place becomes constructed and bonds may be formed with place. These conditions influence individuals' decision making processes and, equally, decisions made in a wider social context. Consequently, the nature of tourists' engagement with place, in particular their emotional engagement, is fundamental to our understanding of tourist behaviour and motivations.

At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that contemporary tourism is driven by increasing demands on the part of the consumer to seek new experiences, to not only 'gaze' passively (Urry, 2002) upon landscapes, peoples and places but to also engage in and, perhaps, 'co-create' the experience (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009; Gotyia and de la Rica, 2012). That is, it is suggested that the contemporary tourist displays the desire to become involved in touristic experiences that fulfil inner emotional needs. Thus, in response to changing consumer demands and needs, the industry has seen substantial development in the scope, diversity and complexity of the tourism product and, particularly, in the area of what has been termed the 'experience economy' (Pine and Gilmore, 1999). Although relating to consumers and consumption in general, the notion of the experience economy is of particular relevance to tourism, the concept reflecting the fact that, according to Cooper and Hall (2008:29), 'consumers are seeking new meaning and self-actualisation in their tourism consumption patterns'. That is, they are searching beyond the tangible services offered by the tourism sector to engage in experiences that are transformative, memorable and personal. Thus, the experience economy is driven by tourists from Western cultures who are no longer satisfied with simply observing places and events but who seek interactive experiences that invoke emotional responses (Cooper and Hall, 2008).

It is, perhaps, no coincidence that this shift in the nature of consumption and sought experiences has occurred during a time in Western society that the traditional supports of community and family have become eroded. The state of contemporary society appears to echo a Durkheimian type of anomie, a state of 'normlessness' (Durkheim, 1897) in which a breakdown occurs between individual and community, and in which there is a collapse of social standards and values. Society has become increasingly

disenchanted by the values espoused by capitalist consumerism (Berry, 1990; Schwartz, 1996; Szerszynski, 2005; Meltzer, 2012) and there is a growing disillusionment with the pace and stresses of modern day living (Danesh, 1997; Timothy and Conover, 2006; de Vulpian, 2008; Sharpley, 2009). Additionally, an alleged secularisation of society can be observed alongside the decline of the church (Pargament, 1999; Lambert, 2004; Houtman and Aupers, 2007), an institution that historically demanded moral and social responsibility of the community (Wuthnow, 1998; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Heelas, 2008) and, in return, offered stability, cohesion and spiritual guidance to its followers. This purported post-modern decline in traditional religion and the commensurate secularisation of society has meant that Western civilisation has been set adrift with no moral compass to guide society, no sense of belonging or support (Houtman and Aupers, 2007). Without the church and traditional religious ritual as the cornerstone of society and with a lack of strong community/family structure, individuals have become 'disconnected'; a religious/spiritual void has opened up that has triggered a complex quest to find spiritual satisfaction through other means (Wuthnow, 1998).

Culturally, religious conviction and involvement may have weakened but, in its place, there is evidence of an escalating desire by society to sustain and nurture spiritual health (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). According to Wuthnow (1998:138), over the last half of the twentieth century religion experienced a major shift that saw 'traditional spirituality of inhabiting sacred places giving way to a new spirituality of seeking'. In contrast to religion that is fixed not only in time-bound rituals, sacred sites of worship and communal responsibility, contemporary spirituality offers the freedom to choose one's own path of faith without the condemnation and constraints exerted by ecclesiastical mandates. The general acceptance of both traditional and alternative religious beliefs has allowed people to have spiritual experiences without religious faith. Timothy and Olsen (2006:4) note that many people who consider themselves as spiritual would not view themselves as religious and vice versa. Spirituality has become a 'dynamic process' (Pargament, 1999:4), with individuals seeking to define their own private faith and adopting a patchwork quilt (Wuthnow, 1998) or bricolage (de Vries, 2008) of flexible beliefs and practices.

Contemporary spirituality appears to be located in the quest for personal identity, a journey to find one's inner-self (Teasedale, 1999; de Vulpian, 2008). This search for spiritual nourishment is often attributed to a fundamental and instinctive human need (Danesh, 1997; Hay and Socha, 2005) and is believed by some to be 'central to human social psychology' (Haq and Jackson, 2006:1). This is reflected in the growing range of spiritually enhancing activities such as Wiccan, spiritual pilgrimages, health and well-

being courses, alternative healing therapies, meditation and parapsychology, channelling, and holistic programs for the mind, body and spirit, such as yoga and tai chi practice (Heelas, 1996; York, 2001), all of which offer the opportunity to improve one's spiritual self, raise spiritual consciousness and nourish the inner person. Traditional religion may have diminished, but there is clear evidence of increasing interest in more unconventional belief systems, in particular the non-western spiritual paths and New Age mysticism (Heelas, 1996; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Timothy and Conover, 2006). The freedom to experiment with aspects of both established and alternative religious traditions has become an accepted route to self-spiritualisation (Tacey, 2004; Heelas, 2008). Indeed, belief in God or any organised religious creed is not seen as essential to the occurrence of deep spiritual experiences (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Spirituality has become mainstream, a consumable product custom-designed to fit each individual's needs (Carrette and King, 2005; de Vulpian, 2008; Heelas, 2008).

The quest for new spiritual horizons evokes the idea of a journey and it is increasingly evident that, in contemporary Western society, the human search for spiritual fulfilment and transcendence is reflected in the need of individuals to seek spirituality through touristic pursuits (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Laing and Crouch, 2009). However, the search for spiritual fulfilment through travel is neither a modern nor unique concept but is, rather, deep-rooted in history. According to Norman (2011), spirituality and travel have intersected throughout time and the roots of (post)modern tourism can be traced back to the early pilgrimages and other religiously motivated journeys (Digance, 2006; Kaelber, 2006; Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Moreover, understanding the dynamics and inter-relationship of tourism and religion has been the primary focus of academics in recent decades and this growing area of research has contributed a number of significant theories that have provoked considerable scholarly debate.

Tourism, it has been argued, is a modern sacred experience (Morinis, 1992; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005), a search for spiritual transcendence. It was MacCannell (1976) who first proposed the modern tourist as a secular pilgrim, a concept that was expanded upon in Allcock's (1988:37) argument that tourism 'is a secular substitute for organized religion'. Graburn (1989:22) also conjectured that 'tourism...is functionally and symbolically equivalent to other institutions that humans use to embellish and add meaning to their lives'. In contrast, the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy rejected the view that tourism is structurally and spatially similar to pilgrimage, suggesting that tourist motivations are irreconcilable with those of the pilgrim. These themes are widely recognized and have become key explorations in academic tourism literature but the

important point is that few attempts have been made to substantiate the assertion, through empirical research, that individuals search for spiritual experience or fulfilment through tourism. That is, although many have theorised that there is a spiritual dimension to contemporary tourism consumption, little evidence has been provided to support this claim.

Historically, religious tourists travelled to sites of sacred and symbolic meaning but contemporary spirituality allows not only for individual and subjective choice of transformative experiences but also for broader interpretation of sacred or spiritual places (Bremer, 2006). Traditionally, sacred places were associated with constructed or designated religious sites; however, this association did not extend to nature or natural landscapes (Collins-Kreiner 2006). Developing this argument, Timothy and Olsen (2006: 30) state that 'not all sacred places must be associated with a recognized religious body'. Thus, as a consequence of this broader interpretation, the tourist of today may be thought of as seeking their own personal 'places' of spirituality, deriving both non-secular and secular meaning from 'sacred places' of their own designation.

As already noted, tourism is inextricably tied to the concept of place and it has been suggested that individuals' place interactions may develop into 'a deep psychological association with a particular geographic region, a specific locale, or even, perhaps a spot that holds no significant meaning for anyone but the individual' (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999:22). Consequently, emergent literature has explored the relationship between spirituality and natural environments, such as wilderness, forests, rivers, the ocean and the outdoors more generally (Springer and McAvoy, 1992; Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Williams and Harvey, 2001; Allcock, 2003; Bull, 2006; Heintzman, 2007; McDonald, Wearing and Ponting, 2009), examining in particular the emotive/spiritual outcomes of visiting and experiencing such places. It is, therefore, conceivable that rural settings, as a specific form of tourist destination, may provide an environment conducive for transformative experiences and spiritual inspiration. However, it is significant that, whilst spirituality has been studied in a variety of different leisure/tourism natural environments, few empirical studies have been undertaken with regards to spirituality and tourism in the countryside. That is, other than an empirical study of the connection between the countryside and spiritual experiences by Sharpley and Jepson (2011), there remains a gap in the literature exploring the influence of rural landscapes on spiritual enlightenment and, in particular, unravelling the relationship between 'place', activity, location and spiritual realisation.

This thesis, therefore, seeks to address this gap in the literature. Within a space-specific context, it focuses on the touristic experience of the countryside. In particular, it

draws on the case of the Lake District, a place widely-recognised to be defined by both social and physical constructs (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Macnaghten and Urry, 2001; Roberts and Hall, 2001; O'Neill and Walton, 2004) seeking to identify the influence of 'place' on the spiritual experience of the rural visitor.

1.1 The Lake District National Park: an Invented Ideal, an Outdoor Playground or Both?

The Lake District National Park, an internationally and nationally renowned rural destination is located in the northwest corner of England in the county of Cumbria. It comprises an area of approximately 2292 square kilometres and is home to a resident population of approximately 42,000 (Hind and Mitchell, 2004) . The physical landscape of the National Park environment is noteworthy for its natural environment of lakes, forests, craggy mountains, rolling hills, and tended fields melding with the enchanted qualities of the built environment recognisable in the quintessential villages, charming old stone farmhouses and rustic country cottages. Despite the natural geological characteristics of the Lake District's iconic landscape, the impacts of man's hand in shaping the area is manifested in early farming and forestry that has transformed the Lakeland countryside adding to its unique charm and appeal (Hind and Mitchell, 2004). The area was first conferred with National Park status on May 9th, 1951 under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (Hind and Mitchell, 2004).

Rural areas in Britain have generally been idealised as a 'green and pleasant land' (Newby 1979), but none have encountered the same degree and intensity of historical romanticisation as the Lake District. As an area of outstanding natural beauty (UNESCO), the Lake District's distinctive visual characteristics have been reinforced by historic perceptions of the landscape, apparent in the pastoral and nostalgic legacy clearly associated with the Lake District (Darby, 2000). The uniqueness of the Lake District is attributable to its outstanding natural geography reinforced by place myths evolving from early literary and artistic works that conveyed a socially interpreted and culturally constructed view of nature and the countryside as aesthetically pleasing and spiritually uplifting (Urry, 1995; Darby, 2000). Over the passage of time, the Romantic artists and literary writers' portrayal of the iconic landscapes of the Lake District (Newby, 1979; Bunce, 1994) have become embedded in the national consciousness, endowing the Lake District with an almost mystical quality (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). In effect, the Lake District, according to Darby (2000:54) was 'written, mapped, sketched and painted into existence'

The Romantic Movement corresponded to a time in history when much of the populace, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, lived in urban areas. The increasing circulation of early representative works captivated the imagination of an urban population that was experiencing a growing dissatisfaction and disenchantment with the noise, squalor and crowded conditions associated with city life. Many were drawn to rural areas, seen in stark contrast to industrialised urban areas, spurred by Romantic literary and artistic imagery (Burchardt, 2002; Woods, 2011). The countryside, in particular, the Lake District was seen as a refuge from the city, leading to an unprecedented rise in *tourist* activities (Darby, 2000). The Lake District, characteristically, remains cloaked in nostalgic charm and idealised imagery that is further promoted and encouraged by modern mediated constructions.

The economy of the Lake District was largely agricultural until 200 years ago when the Romantic Movement provided an impetus for early tourism in the area (Urry, 1995). Mounting appeal of the Lake District shifted from romantic contemplation of the landscape to the more physical pursuits of walking, then in the twentieth century, rock climbing gained popularity (O'Neill and Walton, 2004) followed by numerous other physically engaging activities facilitated by the countryside setting. Improved transportation links, first by railroad, and later the motorway and other road networks, has supported the growth of an industry that has had significant social and economic impacts on the area. Building on the historic foundations of early tourism combined with limited economic viability in farm commerce, tourism has become the key economic driving force of the area.

Despite the honeypots capturing much of the commercial trade, tourism, as the lifeblood of the Lake District, has left little of the area untouched by this phenomenon. This is clearly observable in the diverse range of products and services competing to capture a share of the tourism marketplace (Urry, 1995). The scope of activities is wide ranging, incorporating aspects of the impressive natural environment and/or engaging with the charms of the picturesque villages. Whilst, sightseeing, shopping and dining are the choice of activity for many, even greater numbers choose to interact directly with the environment by engaging in physical pursuits such as cycling, hiking, biking, swimming, rock climbing and canoeing. Within this research, the focus is placed on individuals engaging with the natural environment in some form of physical activity.

A full consideration of tourism in the Lake District is beyond the scope of this chapter but see Chapter 6 for greater elaboration of the qualities of the Lake District.

Fundamentally, the Lake District has developed from early 18th century interpretations of the English countryside, endowing the area with enchanted qualities and a nostalgic legacy derived from its unique natural environment and sublime landscapes benevolently marked by man's hand. Although the socially constructed vision of the Lake District may not be based in historic reality, it appears to provide visitors an escape to an imagined past, to a simpler, more authentic way of life. The precise lure of the Lake District may be unclear – physical location, place meaning, activity or combination of all – but its popularity is undeniable as millions flock annually to the area every year, each with their own personal ideologies and motivations. The Lake District National Authority has estimated current visitors at over 14 million per year (2013). The distinctive qualities and the clearly defined boundaries of the Lake District National Park provide an ideal *place* to investigate the role of the rural setting in connection with tourists' spiritual experiences.

1.2 Aims and Objectives

As observed above, the potential for an emotional / spiritual dimension to the touristic experience of rural areas has not benefitted from empirical research, particularly from the perspective of developing knowledge and understanding of the role that place and activity play in this experience. Thus, this research provides a unique opportunity to examine spirituality in relationship to a specific tourist environment, the countryside, and may provide valuable insights and knowledge as a basis for future academic research and greater understanding of tourist motivations. Its overall aim is to explore critically the extent to which tourism in a rural place (the Lake District) is consumed in the expectation of spiritual experiences.

More specifically, the objectives of this research are:

- to define the qualities that individuals attribute to 'being spiritual' or 'experiencing spirituality' and, more generally, to consider if there exists a clear or collective definition of spirituality;
- to clarify whether or not spiritual experience is distinctive from emotive experience;
- to critically appraise if the socially constructed nature of the countryside or 'sociology of place' promotes spiritual experiences;
- to investigate if a tourist's perception of 'place', or sense of place, in this case the Lake District, affects the emotional/spiritual experience;

- to determine if a conceptual tripartite relationship exists between physical setting (environment), activity and meaning of place that in combination provide the stimulus for spiritual experience;
- to explore whether or not the Lake District rural experience offers a different spiritual experience to alternate rural loci;
- To assess the implications of these findings for tourists and the promotion of tourism.

1.3 Potential Contribution

Over the last three decades, religious and spiritual travel, as a specific form of tourism, have benefitted from extensive exploration and documentation. In contrast, the spiritual dimension of contemporary tourism has attracted more limited attention whilst, in particular, the potential influence of 'place' on spiritual experience represents an even narrower scope of academic inquiry although there has recently been increasing interest in this specific area of tourism studies. At the same time, studies of tourist behaviours and motivations have typically adopted an objective approach and have been primarily quantitative in design. However, in order to assess the sociological effects and behaviours associated with tourism in more depth, scholars are now increasingly adopting qualitative research methods. Reflecting this trend, a number of studies have applied qualitative methodologies to the exploration of the relationship between spirituality and different physical environments. However, to date only one study has examined the connection between spirituality and the countryside and, though significant in its findings, it does not explore fully the complex synergy between the social construct of place and spiritual experiences.

This research, the purpose of which is to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the spiritual dimension of the rural tourist, will therefore address a significant gap in the literature. More specifically, it will also determine the conditions for spiritual refreshment and the relationship that 'place', location and activity play in the emotive experience of the tourist. In so doing, it will broaden our understanding of tourists' emotional needs and how they may seek to satisfy these needs by physically engaging with the natural environment of rural areas.

1.4 Personal Statement

This study stems from both personal and academic motivations. I cannot claim to be particularly religious or to have examined my own personal spirituality to any great extent but there have been times in my life in certain situations and/or places that I have felt something positive and powerful stir within me that is not easily identifiable. In particular, I have on occasion experienced a sense of time suspended and true contentment – something that is rarely part of our daily lives – a sense of living only in the moment with total peace. I feel this is *my* spiritual experience and, as my life moves onward, there seems to be an increasing need to recreate this experience and an increasing desire to avoid situations that negate this experience. On a personal level I accept this without any further examination but, academically, it has led me to wonder about the importance of place to our emotional and spiritual wellbeing. More specifically, I am curious about tourists' motivations to visit places that may provide positive spiritual/emotive engagement and to understand the synergy between *place* and possible spiritual experience.

1.5 Paradigm of my Research

The research methodology was designed to meet the aims and objectives of the research problem. The thesis topic is subjective in nature and requires a deep level of engagement with the participants in order to delve beneath the surface and uncover the nuances of subconscious and unconscious thought. In assessing the aims of the study it was deemed appropriate to adopt a qualitative approach employing phenomenological methods to gain the greatest understanding and the deepest insights. Phenomenology is best suited for multiple method research in order to establish different observations of phenomena and is most effectively used in investigating smaller samples in great depth or over time (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe, 1991). Phenomenology, as a philosophical position, supports the view of the world as socially constructed and subjective. It encourages the researcher to focus on meanings and on the totality of a situation in order to 'to provide a description of human experience as it is experienced by the person herself' (Bentz and Shapiro, 1998:96). The observer becomes part of what is being observed and in this way the researcher must try to accurately record and interpret participant's perspectives and descriptive reflections. Directed by this epistemological stance, this research employed focus groups and in-depth interviews adopting a phenomenological paradigm.

1.6 Overview of the Methodology

The research methodology in this thesis was designed to address the research problem and to meet the aims and objectives of the study, and is discussed in more detail in Chapter Five. However, as summarised below, the research design employed a two stage process utilising mixed method enquiry.

- The first primary research stage employed focus groups to gather general background insights on the topic and to establish predominant emergent themes relevant to the research question.
- The second primary research stage utilised unstructured interviews in order to explore in greater depth the main themes generated by the first stage studies. The interview process allows for open discourse and, owing to the personal nature of the topic, this method aided in addressing issues of confidentiality and encouraged participant disclosure of private observations and feelings.

The findings were then analysed using NVivo to identify patterns, relationships and meaningful insights. In an effort to insure accuracy in the NVivo findings, a process of manual interpretation using an Excel analysis grid was carried out. This added validity and rigour to the process by cross referencing the principle findings from the two analysis methods.

1.7 Structure of the Thesis

In many cases a research thesis unfolds like a book, an introduction leading onto the main body of the story, chapter after chapter, a story steadily progressing to its conclusion. In this research, it has been deemed necessary to follow a somewhat different format. More specifically, in order to build a comprehensive overview of the themes of the study and to provide clear understanding of the subject matter, a divergent approach has been taken. The thesis opens with the necessary introduction but the subsequent literature review contains two parallel story lines that will be drawn together later in the concluding statement at the end of the literature review. It is not, of course, possible to physically read two parallel storylines at one time, so the outlay of the thesis will contain Section One and Section Two drawing the storylines together. In section one, the first story line, Geography of Place, directs the reader to an understanding of the concept of place and its relevancy to tourism. In particular, sense of place and the role it plays in tourist motivations and behaviours. In the second section, the storyline consists of two chapters, the first, Spirituality and Spiritual

Tourism, advances understanding of contemporary spirituality and explores the spiritual dimension of tourism. The second chapter in Section Two, the Countryside: Rurality and Rural Tourism, investigates academic and cultural understanding of rurality, the socially constructed nature of the countryside and the current demand for tourist experiences in the rural landscape. To provide the reader with a visual outlay of the thesis an outline has been drawn up in a schematic format, as shown, at the beginning of Chapter One (see *Figure 1.1* above). This schematic will be used at the beginning of each chapter, colour highlighting each chapter's topic in order to give clarity to the overall structure of this thesis.

1.8 Thesis Outline

Chapter 1 - This chapter outlines the nature of this research and demonstrated the significance of this study to academic understanding. It has placed the research within a specific context, place and contemporary spirituality, giving a brief overview of the intent of this research and highlighted potential gaps within tourism literature. The following chapters explore these issues in greater detail, building towards the study's primary research and findings.

Chapter 2 begins the literature review with a brief review of space as the foundation for place development, leading into a discussion on conceptualisation of place. It continues with an examination of tourists' production of place – the significance of place to that experience, the meanings and values attributed to place – themes that provide vital understanding of tourists' affective and cognitive experiences of place and the bonds developed from these experiences.

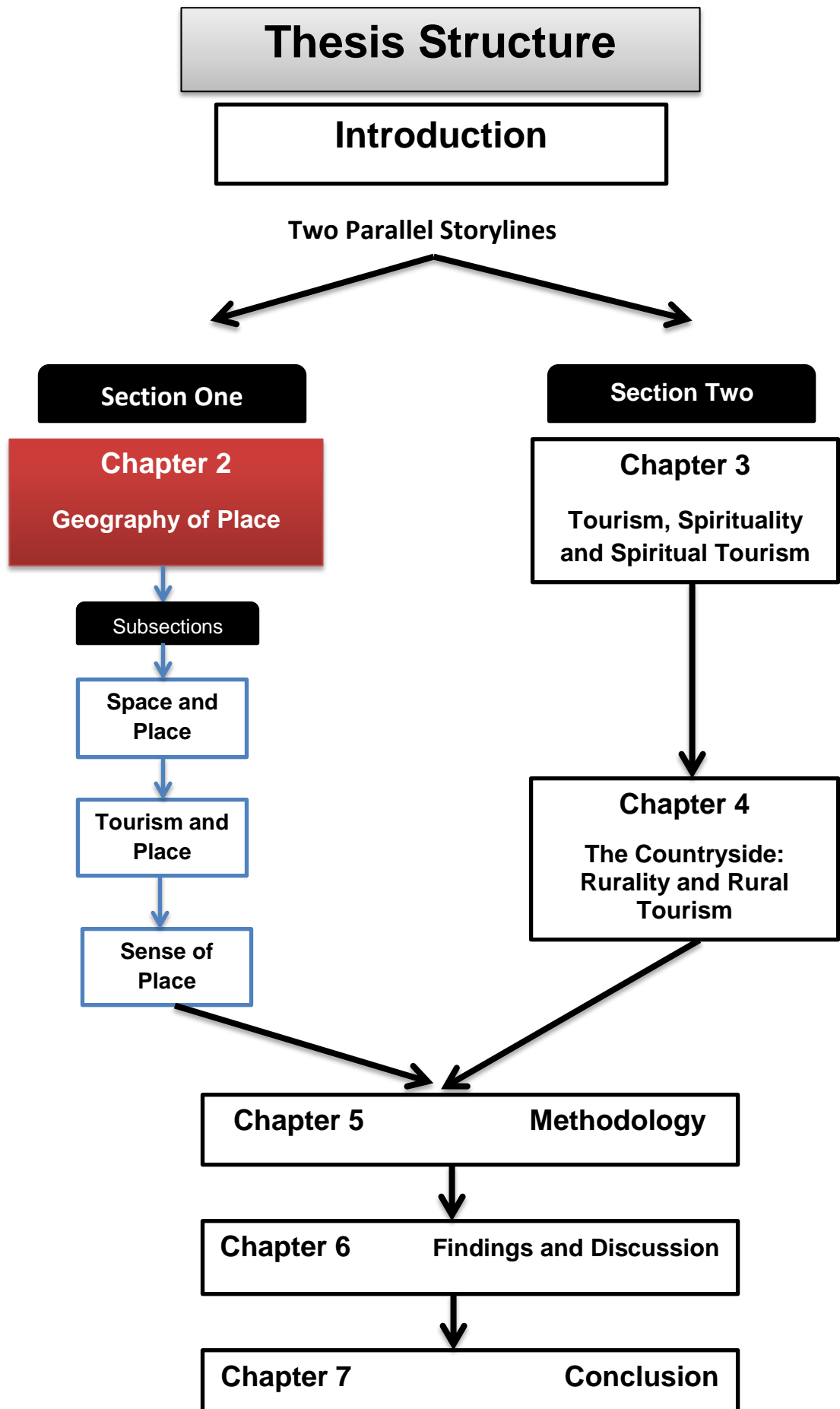
Chapter 3 gives an overview of the relationship between contemporary spirituality and tourism, exploring the early roots of tourism, the secularisation of society and the increasing trend for tourism that provides spiritual outcomes. In this chapter there is an examination of postmodern understanding of spirituality in western societies and a review of the contemporary search for meaningful experiences witnessed in the demand growth for spiritually motivated tourism.

Chapter 4 considers the countryside as a tourism destination, evaluating the concept of rurality, the growth of rural tourism and the experience of the outdoors and nature. This chapter clarifies the concept of 'rurality' and reviews the social construction of place exploring the effects of these factors on the public image of countryside whilst examining closely the power of social representation in the making of the countryside and consequent influence on tourism.

Chapter 5 considers the research design and methodology, demonstrating how they were used to address the research problem and meet the research aims. Focus groups were used in the initial phase of the research to identify key themes and concepts. This was followed in the second phase by unstructured interviews to explore in greater depth, participant understanding of place, significance of physical activity and physical environment on spiritual experiences.

Chapter 6 considers the findings of this study and discusses, through analysis, the results. This chapter starts with a review of the research question moving on to an exploration of the principal themes emerging from the first phase of the research, the focus groups. Using the focus group information as a backdrop, the second phase unstructured interviews are analysed and interpreted. Finally, the evidence from the data is summed up in a brief analysis.

Chapter 7 presents the conclusion of this research. Specifically, surveying the research participants' understanding of spirituality and identifying the need for spiritual experiences. The spiritual dimension of the rural tourist is then conceptualised within the context of the tri-partite relationship of place meaning, place location and physical activity. Future research is assessed, the gap in literature that this research fills is re-evaluated and a self-reflective report brings this thesis to a conclusion.



Chapter Two

The Geography of Place

“To exist at all...is to have a place – to be implaced...To ‘be’ is to be in place...”
(Casey, 1993:13)

2.0 Introduction

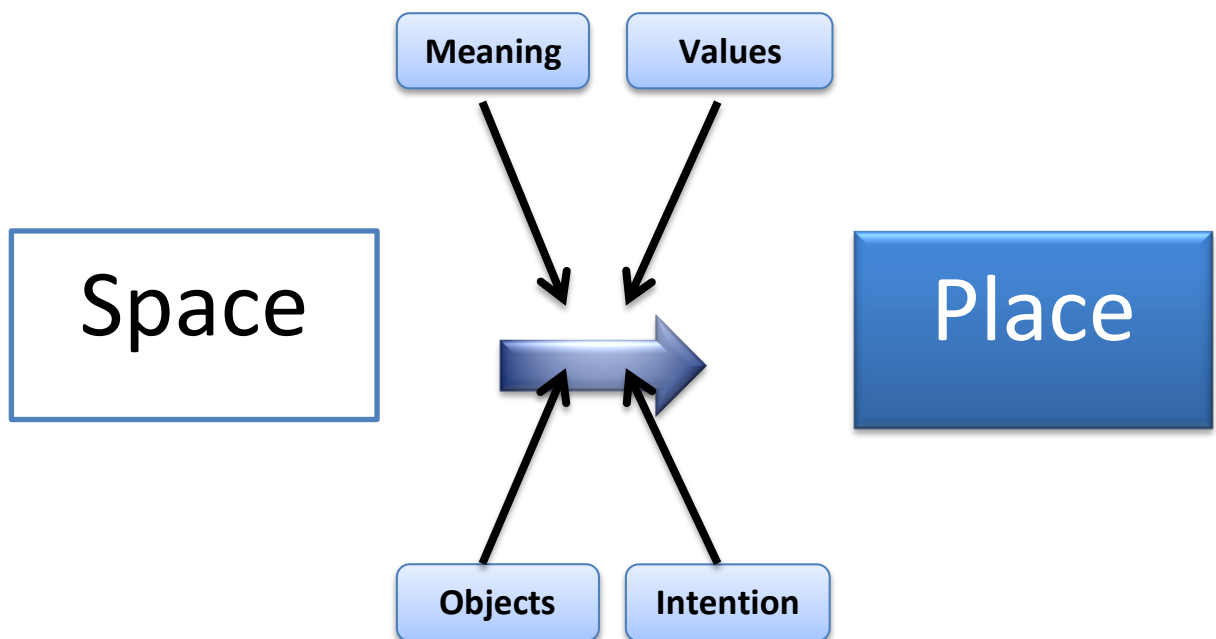
This chapter introduces the concept of place, an area of study once the domain of human geographers but now one that informs a range of disciplines including tourism. Tourism, as a social phenomenon, is a complex multifaceted process but the relationship of the tourist to place is essential to our understanding of tourist motives and engagement. The destination may be the objective of the tourist but place is the subjective reason for the journey; it represents often indefinable and intangible reasons why we choose to travel and experience certain destinations. The chapter commences with a brief review of space as the foundation for place development, leading into a discussion on conceptualisation of place. It continues with an examination of tourists’ production of place – the significance of place to that experience, the meanings and values attributed to place – themes that provide vital understanding of tourists’ affective and cognitive experiences of place and the bonds developed from these experiences. An overview of pivotal research identifies place-bonding elements, examining the influence on tourist perceptions and the behavioural implications. This chapter also includes a critical examination of the relevant place-bonding construct, that is, sense of place, a term commonly used to describe affective and cognitive attachment to place. In order that sense of place is understood in the context of this thesis, the final section explores the human experience of the natural environment and place attachments formed in these settings. The overall purpose of this chapter is to articulate the fundamental significance of place-making and place-bonding to humankind and furthermore, to convey the compelling linkage between place-bonding and tourist experiences and behaviours.

2.1 Space, the Foundation of Place

The German philosopher Heidegger (1927) referred to the human condition of existing as ‘dasein’, or literally ‘being there’. However, this concept of being-in-the-world has

been succeeded by the theory that, as humans, we exist and 'to exist' means to 'be in place' (Stefanovic, 1998). That is, the human condition of 'being' necessarily implies a spatial context. Human existence is marked by experiences that denote meaning and intention, which is the basis of place creation (see *figure 2.1*). By nature of our 'being', we are inherently emplaced. Space, interfacing with human intention, is the foundation for place (Suvantola, 2002); in effect, a 'particular or lived space' becomes a place (Agnew, 2005:82).

Figure 2.1 From space to place



The concept of space, once the domain of philosophers, now lies deeply in the realm of humanistic geography and environmental psychology. Indeed, the question of why things exist in specific locations continues to inspire academic conjecture as the relevance of space and place in our everyday lives takes on greater magnitude. Space, a concept interwoven and inseparable from place (Relph, 1976), provides a basis for contextual understanding of place-making and the commensurate ideas of place attachment and sense of place, all critical in framing human behaviour in correlation to place. Time and place are the essential measurements that human beings use as markers of their existence (Malpas, 1999). Temporal measurement is symbolic of the flow of time, a continuum signposting sequential events, but place is the measurement of spatial experiences and meanings (Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal,

2005). Malpas (1999:13) states that 'the very structure of our mind is intrinsically tied to locality and spatiality'.

At the most elementary level, space is a word that we commonly use in any number of contexts, for example, 'out in space', 'space aged', 'empty space', 'spacious', 'space for rent'. However, what does it mean and how does it differ from place? According to Cresswell (2004:18), prior to more enlightened thinking 'space was not embodied but empty and this empty space could then be used to develop a kind of spatial mathematics – a geometry'. The role of space is an abstract concept that seems to signify the experience of emptiness or a void (Lefebvre, 1991); it is empty of anything tangible or intangible until humans impart their experiential perspective.

However, as human geographers began to adopt the humanistic philosophy of phenomenology, taking into account human awareness and knowledge (Unwin, 1992; Cresswell, 2004), the 1970's witnessed a shift in disciplinary understanding of space and place. This move towards humanistic approaches was pivotal in space and place theories. It unleashed, in particular, ideas based on subjectivity and experience removed from the logic of empirical spatial inquiry. Relph's (1976:6) influential theories in the study of space and place dismissed the idea that space is a void, arguing that space 'provides the context for places'. Similarly, Lefebvre (1991) differentiated between the abstract idea of absolute space and the idea of lived and meaningful spaces or social spaces, the latter concept (social space) generally being used as a definition of place in academic writings. Although early theorists often treated the concepts of space and place as separate entities, space is now conceived as inextricably tied to place. We cannot have place without space (Agnew, 2005; 2011); space is the springboard from which all places come into existence but, equally, space is reliant on the idea that we move from place to place through space. Tuan (1977), at the forefront of conceptualising space, argues that movement is key to the definition of space and that space is dependent on place. That is, in order to define space, one must be able to move from place to place but in order for there to be place, then space is necessary. In explaining space and place relationships, Cresswell (2004:21) suggests a continuum 'which has place at one end and space at the other, simultaneously a continuum linking experience to abstraction'. Contributing further to these theories, Gieryn (2000:465) states that 'place would revert to space if we vacuumed out the distinct collection of values, meanings and objects that created it'. What distinguishes space from place is the meaningless to the meaningful or 'the particularity of place to the homogeneity of space' (Bremer, 2006:26).

2.2 What is Place?

Place, like space, is not the terminology of academics but common to everyday discourse. It is a concept at first seemingly simple but, upon critical reflection, encompasses a host of meanings and values. At the simplest level, Agnew (2005:82), states that 'space refers to the location and place to the occupation of that location'. Relph (1976:2), further defining the concept of place, theorises that 'places in existential space can therefore be understood as centres of meaning, or focuses of intention and purpose'. He believes that place determines our experience and that 'the essence of place lies in the largely unselfconscious intentionality that defines places as profound centres of human existence' (Relph, 1976:43). In Relph's view, this essence does not come from geographic location, functionality of place or from the people that dwell in it; the essence is derived purely from the fact of experience of place. Furthermore, according to Tuan (1977), place develops from human experience in undifferentiated space; experience is expressive of what we know and how we construct our reality. Place is space imbued with meaning and this meaning is developed from how we make sense of our own reality, our own experiences that reflect personal and collective values, cultural perspectives and historical influences.

2.2.1 The dimensions of place

Place is a multi-dimensional concept; a complexity of ideas that can be conceptualised in a number of ways:

- a) Places are constructions having both material and nonmaterial dimensions.** Place is not confined by size, title or tangible boundaries but has exclusivity in geographic terms. In other words, place has physical form, whether found in nature or in manmade structures; place is substance (Bott, Cantrill and Myers, 2003). Gieryn (2000), studying the sociology of place, claims that place is locative; it is physical, having material form, and is invested with value and meaning. Elaborating further, he maintains that place may be represented on a map, located in a room, in a town or a region. Similarly, Walmsley and Lewis (1984:160) assert that place is not based on size but can range from 'a rocking chair, through an urban neighbourhood, to a nation-state'. However, place is more than a sum of its material characteristics. Geographic location and physicality of form combine with attached meanings to become the defining factors in what differentiates one particular place from another.

- b) Places as complexes of meaning.** Place is the way we organise our world, how we make sense of it, how we perceive it, and how we come to know and understand it (Cresswell, 2004). There exists a social dimension to place as human practices and societal institutions are instrumental in the construction of places. Equally, places impact on human practices and the institutions within a society (Giddens, 1984; Gieryn, 2000). As Stedman (2003a) observes, place is a meaning-based concept and the meanings that people confer on their environment echoes their own socio/cultural experiences. In this way, places locate us externally by telling us where we are in the world and also places locate us internally 'by becoming part of one's psychological and cultural identity, telling one how one is to be here (Roberts, 1996:62). Equally, public and personal spheres of meaning exist. The dual character of place is observed, on the one hand, on the subjective meanings that individuals attribute to place through personal involvement and, on the other hand, the shared collective meanings that symbolise place (Suvantola, 2002). Thus, the concept of place is significant in that it can reflect the values of an individual, a distinct community, a culture, a nation or a global perspective.
- c) Places are relational and exist in the context of the outside world.** Place is not 'a thing out there' but is seen as a process, continuously being shaped and reshaped in response to internal and external forces. Massey (1994:155) stresses the importance of viewing place in relationship to the outside world, as what makes a place distinctive is not limited to the inherent qualities of a locale but also 'the particularity of linkage to that 'outside' which is therefore itself part of what constitutes the place'. Additionally, she believes that place cannot be viewed in isolation but must be consciously linked to the social relationships found in a wider geographical context. Essentially, places are never disconnected from the world but subject to continuous interaction with the world around, thus constantly producing and reproducing new meanings (Gustafson, 2001).
- d) Places are contested.** Place invokes qualities of ownership, boundaries, connection, privacy and belonging and, in order for places to exist, there must be human interaction with a place that fuels the human production and consumption of meaning (Cresswell, 2004). We use place to confer status, to denote cultural and community understanding of place, to express historic or political identities and, ultimately, to define individual and community connections or understandings of place (Gieryn, 2000). In effect, Gieryn (2000)

argues that place may not be bound by physical boundaries but by political, economic and social influences that determine the construct of a place and that are subject to continuous contestation. We use the concept of place to identify commonalities and differences between one place and another and, consequently, assign representations and values to these places. Relationships to place can result in feelings of alienation, rootedness, embeddedness or placelessness (Corcoran, 2002); place has the power of inclusion or exclusion (Relph, 1976; Cresswell, 1996). In this way, place can be both negative and positive depending on individual and/or collective experiences (Manzo, 2003). Spurred by conflicting political ideologies, cultural diversity and dissimilar value systems, places are continually contested (Devine-Wright and Lyons, 1997; Dixon and Durrheim, 2000). Through these struggles, both tangible and intangible boundaries are constantly produced, disputed and destroyed.

e) Places continually change. Place is a dynamic concept. It endures in locative terms but is never permanent in meaningfulness (Massey, 1995; Gustafson, 2001; Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005). In this way, places are emergent, possessing history and, constantly being constructed, reshaped and reconceived, mirroring transformations in individual and collective spatial and temporal attitudes (Dixon and Durrheim, 2000; Manzo, 2003). The construction and deconstruction of place is perpetual, occurring naturally as a result of both physical and mental processes (Agnew, 2005). As the physical landscape changes owing to natural or manmade forces, attitudes and place meanings may also alter in response. Equally, the constant transition of place reflects the social nature of people, their interactions, their discursive practices and the fluid meanings that are derived from these exchanges (Bremer, 2004; 2006). In these ways, place is continually imagined, constructed and contested (Gieryn, 2000).

f) Spaces, places and people are integrated parts of a whole composition.

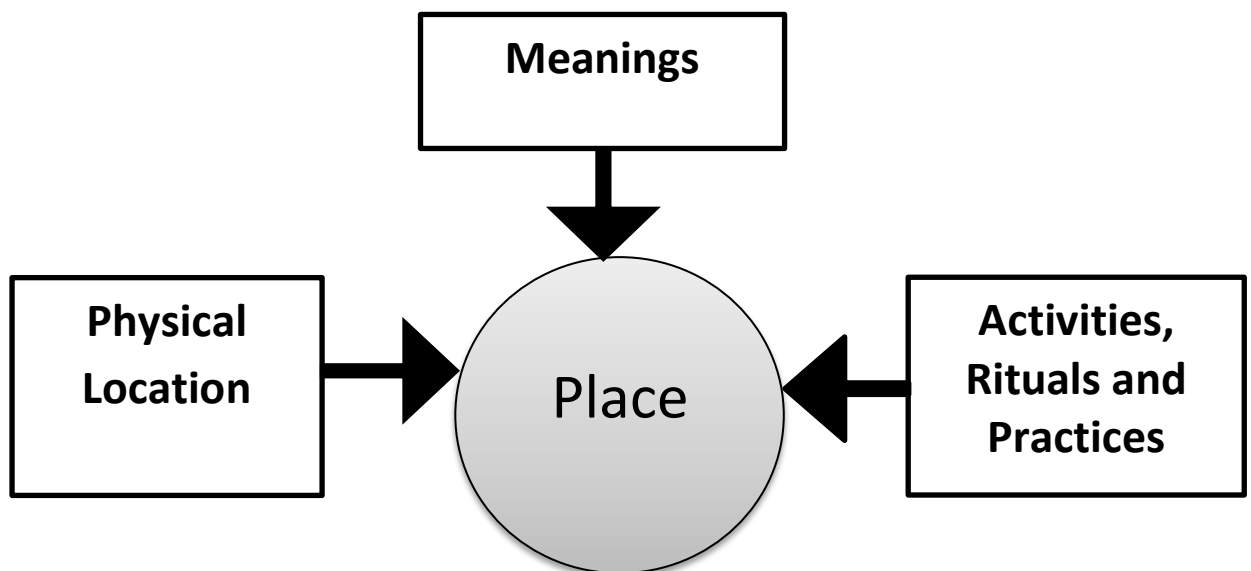
The space-place relationship must be recognised as more than an empty space of physical geography waiting for humans to attribute meaning to it. The geography of physical spaces constrains what a place can become and may even make it impossible to become a place: humans cannot just make any space into a place as physical geography limits the possibilities (Basquiat, 2010). Equally, there exists a reciprocal constitutive relationship, inasmuch as space signifies an area in which people operate or interrelate in ways that create a meaningful whole. However, place, according to Agnew (2005:84),

represents ‘the encounter of people with other people and things in space’. In effect, humans are shaped by places and correspondingly humans in turn shape spaces into places.

2.2.2 The elements of place

The components of place have been identified by various authors who ascribe different dimensions to the concept of place. Relph (1976) identifies the elements of place as physical setting, activities and meanings. Agnew (1987) argues that place embraces three fundamental criteria, namely location, locale and sense of place, whilst Gieryn (2000) offers a similar theory, proposing that in order for a ‘place’ to emerge there are the basics of geographic location (place), material form (physicality) and meaningfulness. These theories are mirrored in the general academic consensus that place is defined by the three interwoven elements (Figure 2.2): the physical setting, the person (the individuals’ internal social and mental processes) and the cultural component – rituals, practices or activities – at the place (Sack, 1997; Stedman, 2002; Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005).

Figure 2.2 The elements of place



The concepts of location and structural form are relatively simple to comprehend. However, the concept of meaningfulness and the social psychology behind how meanings and values are attached to place are more complex (Najafi, Mustafa and Shariff, 2011). This does not imply that the factor of ‘associated meaning’ is any more

central to the definition of place, but it is far more subjective and open to interpretation. The way we experience the world, individually or through a shared cultural, historical, political or economic lens, is instrumental in the place making process. For example, the psychologist Canter (1997) denies the importance of the emotional aspects of place, believing that the emphasis should lie on the effects of the physical attributes of place on behavioural processes. Nevertheless, he acknowledges that individuals' perception of places differs and, therefore, places should be considered from the perspective of their users. Thus, academic views accept that 'place' holds meaningful associations that are constructed from individual and collective influences that define or identify a specific site, area or structure as distinctive. Despite considerable exploration, however, it remains unclear what the human emotional and cognitive processes are that underpin space becoming place, or how these processes affect people's relationship with place (Walmsley and Lewis, 1984; Manzo, 2003). As people locate themselves in the world, places are built, attachments are formed and, from the point of view of the tourist, travel is also about experiences in places and, ultimately, the relationships that develop with particular places and resultant behaviours. Background understanding of people/place relationships offers insights into tourist/place relationships and equally, in return, knowledge of tourists' association with place and bond forming processes will inform people/place research.

2.3 Seminal Place Studies

There is general academic consensus that certain places have special meanings to people. The affective, cognitive and connative bonds formed by human interaction with place have been explored within a range of disciplinary frameworks including environmental psychology, anthropology, human geography, architecture and sociology. Early place theorists, notably Tuan (1974) and Relph (1976), led the way in phenomenological understanding of the concept of place. Subsequently, a disciplinary shift towards positivistic quantitative approaches with a focus on behaviours and measurement of those behaviours quickly gained ground (Lalli, 1992; Shamai and Ilatov, 2005). However, criticism was aimed at the empirical nature of these investigations that relied on quantifiable data for explanation, arguing that these methods often disregarded the subjective and abstract nature of human place bonding (Fishwick and Vining, 1992). As a consequence of this debate, the last decade has witnessed acceptance in both methodological approaches. That is, not only has there been development in empirical studies in using innovative means of measuring a sense of place (Shamai and Ilatov, 2005; Amsden, Stedman and Luloff, 2011; Soini, Vaarala

and Pouta, 2012), but also the increasing application of phenomenological research seeking to gain insights into the human psyche and place bonding processes (Schroeder, 2007; Morgan, 2009). Most authors recognise that quantitative research best serves some aspects of place study whilst other issues are better served by qualitative investigation (Morgan, 2009). The use of phenomenological, positivistic and mixed method inquiry in place studies acknowledges the complexity of the subject matter, and contemporary research supports a range of epistemological and ontological paradigms endeavouring to advance comprehensive understanding of place themes. In accordance with this thesis, research into the emotional or cognitive component of place bonding, in particular individuals' meanings and experiences of place, are best served by descriptive and qualitative phenomenological methods (Manzo, 2003). This will be discussed further in Chapter 5 Methodology.

Academic research into the complexities of people's relationship to place has seen the emergence of a number of fundamental concepts: sense of place (Tuan, 1974; Steele, 1981; Hay, 1998a; Manzo, 2003; Kyle and Chick, 2007); place attachment (Low and Altman, 1992; Vaske and Kobrin, 2001; Scannell and Gifford, 2009); place identity (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Darby, 2000; Williams, 2002; Devine-Wright and Clayton, 2010); and place dependence (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001). The variance in terminology describing the phenomena of human place bonding has led to some uncertainty as to the differences between these concepts. For example, Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) suggest that the lack of conceptual consistency regarding place constructs results from the multiplicity of disciplines researching the phenomenon of place and the diversity of research traditions 'based on very different, often incompatible epistemological foundations and philosophical assumptions about the nature of reality' (Morgan, 2009:1). Conversely, in Lewicka's (2011) critical analysis of place studies, the problem arises from, on the one hand, the 'divergent theoretical perspectives' of qualitative, phenomenological methods used mostly by geographers and, on the other hand, quantitative survey, the domain of researchers and environmental psychologists. Either way, this lack of clear understanding precludes universal accord (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001), and debate continues on the interrelationships of these concepts. Whether owing to the ambiguity of place concepts or the complexity of interrelated elements necessary in place bonding processes, phrases expressing this phenomenon are varied and offer subtle distinctions in meaning. Moreover, this continuing debate has slowed progress in the development of people-place studies as place concepts 'are treated as different pieces of a broken jigsaw puzzle which may (and should be) put together' (Lewicka, 2011:208). Arguments for variable place constructs subsuming, dominating or acting

independently of each other have concluded with some theorists suggesting that a more holistic approach to place research must be undertaken (Williams and Stewart, 1998). Nevertheless, theoretical debate regarding the correct usage of these terms persists with no unequivocal agreement on precise usage. Consequently, the justification for the use of specific place bonding terminology is left to the defence of the researcher, the choice being based on disciplinary approaches and interpretation (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005).

2.4 Justification for Terminology

In this thesis, the term 'sense of place' is employed. The rationale for the use of the term is based on an overview of academic perspectives examining the relationship between people and the physical environment. The most common expressions used to describe place bonding are 'sense of place' and 'place attachment', phrases often used interchangeably but not always considered equivalent. Smaldone *et al.* (2005:398), for example, note that 'few have disentangled sense of place from place attachment, but those that do generally note that sense of place is a broader more encompassing construct'. Similarly, Kyle and Chick (2007) defend the view of sense of place as an overarching construct considering it to be more wide ranging and comprehensive than place attachment, whilst Jorgensen and Stedman (2001) argue that sense of place is an umbrella concept that embraces the distinct components of place attachment, place identity and place dependence. Additionally, Hay (1998a) endorses the idea that sense of place studies are more comprehensive than place attachment research, arguing that a broader context of place relations can be explored. He asserts that 'sense of place can be assessed not only in an individuals' workplace or home but also subjective qualities and social context in a geographical region, as well as community and ancestral connections to place' (7). In Najafi's *et al.* (2011:187) opinion, sense of place is a prevailing concept, place attachment viewed as 'an objective dimension for measuring sense of place'. Adopting a slightly different stance, Low and Altman (1992:3) do not distinguish clearly between place attachment and other place bonding constructs, suggesting instead that 'place attachment subsumes or is subsumed by a variety of analogous ideas'. Clearly, then, there is a strong academic argument to use the term 'sense of place' as it embraces both affective and cognitive responses to place, offering a more comprehensive approach to place observations.

Williams and Vaske (2003) propose simply that the discipline dictates the terminology, environmental psychologists using place attachment whilst human geographers opt for sense of place. Similarly, Cross (2001) regards sense of place as interchangeable with

concepts such as place attachment, topophilia, insideness and community sentiment, asserting that terminology is largely dependent on the nature of the discipline. Thus, despite the complexity and lack of collective agreement on the hierarchy of place constructs, there is a seminal academic consensus acknowledging sense of place as an all-embracing conceptualisation of human place bonding constructs. Consequently, this research will adopt sense of place as the principal descriptor but will include the concept of place attachment as an important dimension of place bonding processes. Also, other place-bonding concepts, such as place identity, place dependency and placelessness, all relevant to this thesis, will be referred to as necessary.

2.5 Sense of Place

The origin of the term sense of place is thought to derive from the Latin term *genius loci*, referring not so much to the place itself but to the guardian deity of a place (Stedman, 2003a). The contemporary usage of the term *genius loci* refers to the 'spirit of place', reflecting the distinctive atmosphere or pervading spirit of a place. Sense of place, the modern expression for *genius loci*, refers to this atmosphere as 'the quality of its environment...which gives us a certain indefinable sense of well-being, and which we want to return to, time and again' (Jackson, 1994:158). *Genius loci* has also been linked to the 'character' of a place, the intangible qualities of a place that affect emotional experience, and response to, places (Jiven and Larkham, 2003). Spirit or the *genius loci* of place, Stedman believes (2003a:674), refers to a place's essence, which is not constructed through experiences of a place but 'is imbued in the setting itself'. Other academic perspectives suggest that experience and perception of *genius loci* are a component of familiarity with places, peoples' individual and collective values, and physical characteristics of places. Today, spirit of place, predominantly secular in meaning, has ceded to the more familiar expression 'sense of place' (Relph, 2007). Indeed, Relph believes that 'a powerful spirit of place will help to engender a strong sense of place', claiming that a sense of place is 'better reserved to refer to the ability to grasp and appreciate the distinctive qualities of place' (18). In effect, although *genius loci*, spirit of place and sense of place afford essentially the same characteristics expressing the distinctive allure of place, *genius loci* and spirit of place tend to refer to the intrinsic qualities of a place, whereas, the focus of the expression sense of place lies more heavily with human meanings and impositions (Brook, 2000). In summary, therefore, the above has provided a brief background to the origins and of sense of place, yet it remains necessary to clarify the intent behind the phrase.

Places are developed through direct and indirect collective and individual experience of a specific geographic location. Through these experiences, usually positive, a place bonding process occurs, a commonly referred to experience known as sense of place. Sense of place is a phrase used liberally in multiple disciplines (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005; Semken and Freeman, 2008). It is an intangible and vague concept that defies simple definition (Williams and Stewart, 1998; Cross, 2001). Barker (1979:164), for example, alludes to it as 'one of the most abstract and illusive concepts', the complexity of which is both difficult to define and problematic to quantify. Consequently, 'it is often easier to see its results in human behaviour than to define it in precise terms' (Lewis, 1979:28). The term sense of place denotes the emotional significance of place, or 'love of place', which Tuan (1974) refers to as 'topophilia'. The elusive qualities of the term sense of place has challenged academic perceptions and generated manifold yet strikingly similar descriptions.

The difficulties in characterising sense of place follow similar arguments as those used for place constructs in general – multi-disciplinary perceptions and interpretations that reinforce the idea that there is no single *sense of place*. Definitions usually reflect the researcher's disciplinary background but common to all definitions is the idea that sense of place is a multi-faceted concept combining elements of emotional engagement (usually positive), symbolic meaning, attachment and a specific geographic location.

Stedman (2002:563) defines sense of place 'as a collection of symbolic meanings, attachment, and satisfaction with a spatial setting held by a group or individual', whilst, Soini *et al.* (2012:125) refer to it as a group of concepts 'that aim to describe the quality and strength of embeddedness of people in a place'. More specifically, Stokowski (2002:369), reflecting on the nostalgia of place, views sense of place as 'an individual's ability to develop feelings of attachment to particular settings based on a combination of use, attentiveness and emotion'. Correspondingly, Shamai and Ilatov (2005:354) describe sense of place in more general terms as the set of 'feelings, attitudes, and behaviour towards a place which varies from person to person and from one place to another'. Adding a temporal aspect to sense of place, Galliano and Loeffler (1999) refers to it as 'the perception people have of a physical area with which they interact, whether for a few minutes, or a lifetime, that gives that area special meaning to them, their community, or their culture'. However, some scholars, principally from the environmental psychology field, contend that sense of place can only occur from repeated and long term exposure to place –such as a resident – although this is contested by tourism and recreation academics who believe that affective bonds can

form from short term and irregular associations with place (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005).

Broadly speaking, sense of place is a multi-dimensional descriptor that is considered to express different layers of meaning. Commonly, the construct is used to denote the characteristic of a geographic location that holds some personal or shared meaning, a quality or qualities that typify a place as unique or special. However, although geographic setting is a significant element of sense of place, location alone cannot generate attachment to place (Shamai and Ilatov, 2005). Therefore, in adopting a holistic view of sense of place, environmental sociologist Eisenhauer, Krannich and Blahna (2000) contend that there are two main elements: firstly, the social interactions, family activities and traditions at a place, and the memories associated with these interfaces with people; and secondly, the emotional response to the distinctiveness of an area inclusive of the landscape, climate, setting, natural attributes and wildlife. Sense of place, in Eisenhauer's understanding, is a blend of personal/social interactions and the environmental components (physical). Similarly, in an attempt to unify the different perspectives on sense of place, Cessford and Abramovici (2008:9) summarise sense of place as embracing three principle characteristics. Firstly, it is experienced at an individual level or collective/community level. Secondly, it encompasses cultural, emotional, spiritual and aesthetic values, and finally, sense of place values are both derived from and attributed to a place.

Additionally, Cross (2001) argues that sense of place involves two aspects, namely, relationship to place and community attachment. The former refers to how people relate to places or the types of bonds formed with places. Within her study, she develops a typology of the relationships that people have with place identifying six classifications of people/place relationships: i) biographical, ii) spiritual, iii) ideological, iv) narrative, v) commodified and vi) dependent, but acknowledges that people will have more than one relationship with any single place. The latter aspect, community attachment, considers the intensity and types of attachments formed with a particular place. Such attachment includes: incorporated rootedness (cohesive); rootedness (divided); place alienation; relativity; and uncommitted placelessness. Cross' research provides a number of conclusions but, significantly, there was an emphasis on the concept of place being psychological or interactional and not just physical. She asserts that 'the sense of place is an experience created by the setting combined with what a person brings to it' (Cross, 2001:13).

In contrast, Scannell and Gifford (2009) argue that a tripartite relationship exists in place bonding comprising the elements of place, person and process. The aspect of

place refers to social and physical dimensions, 'person' observes both cultural and individual influences and 'process' involves the factors of affect, cognition and behaviour. Evidently, there exist differing opinions as to the relative significance that these elements of place play in creating a sense of place. Stedman (2003a), for example, believes that the emphasis should lie on the physical environment as the principle mechanism contributing to sense of place. As an empiricist, he argues that too much importance and weight has been placed on 'place meanings and attachments as products of shared behaviours and cultural processes', asserting that 'the local environment sets bounds and gives form to these constructions' (2003a: 671). Conversely, Hammit, Backlund and Bixler's (2006) place-bonding study identifies several key elements in the development of attachment to place: place familiarity, place belongingness, place identity, and place rootedness. Interpretations of the concept of sense of place are diverse, usually reflecting a researcher's disciplinary position, philosophical stance and study aims. The lack of unified academic agreement regarding which element of sense of place should receive the greatest emphasis has led to unresolved and continuing academic debate. Regardless of this divide, however, there is a consensus that all elements are vital to the whole concept of sense of place. Thus, Williams and Stewart (1998:19) stress the importance of capturing the complexity of the sense of place construct in order not to 'diminish the holistic, emotive, social, and contextual quality of the idea, robbing it of the very richness that is its appeal'. In effect, sense of place results from a complex combination of elements that reflect cognitive and affective associations with a particular geographical location.

Attempting to provide clarification, Farnum *et al.* (2005) suggest that there is a need to differentiate place from the general environment. Their argument builds on Tuan's view that places have meaning and value whereas 'environment refers to the biophysical components of landscapes, components that exist regardless of human connections to them' (2005:2). The qualities of the environment are simply physical ones but the qualities of place are inclusive of physical setting and significantly, the human factor. Academics, in communicating conceptual understanding of sense of place, recurrently allude to the human element necessary to provide meaning and intention to places (Suvantola, 2002; Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005). More significantly, it is people that transform unstructured spaces into bound places of meaning and it is the human element, through the continuous flow of social and individual interactions, that gives rise to sense of place (Greider and Garkovich, 1994; Stokowski, 2002; Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005). Evidently, the sociological, psychological and biological processes common to humankind shape the 'specificity of place meanings' (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005:9); sense of place develops from human encounters and

engagement with place. Thus, the subjective nature of sense of place is recognised in the emotional and cognitive linkages that people develop to specific places and exploration of these associations to place contributes to a holistic understanding of people/place relationships and behaviours.

Furthermore, sense of place is often a very individual process, as each person's experience with a place stimulates a unique personal understanding of that specific place. The intensity of an individual's relationship to place is affected by the scope, depth and exposure to a specific place. This does not deny the existence and weight of collective influences – social, political, economic, historic and cultural - in place bonding processes, but personal practices and encounters shape conceptual imaginings of place and can define the degree of embeddedness individuals have to place.

The personal bonds that develop between people and place are generally thought to occur from repeated exposure over time (Hammit, Backlund and Bixler, 2006) and past experiences (Fishwick and Vining, 1992), although it is acknowledged that sense of place can result from single exposure to a place (Najafi, Mustafa and Shariff, 2011) similar to love at first sight (Tuan, 1977). Sense of place may also be stronger for individuals at locations that elude personal memories or are reminders of important or significant personal experiences (Scannell and Gifford, 2009). Manzo (2005:74) refers to this as experience-in-place, noting that for places to become meaningful 'it is not simply the places themselves that are significant' but rather the personally important experiences of that place. Sense of place develops from the synergistic relationship between people and place, the substance of place interfacing with the interpretive meanings and experiences to form attachments to place.

For many academics, sense of place conveys a deeper relationship to place attributing spiritual qualities to the concept. For Kaltenborn (1998:172), for example, sense of place signifies the relationship between people and spatial settings, addressing the 'emotional, symbolic and spiritual aspects of place'. An aspect of sense of place, *place belongingness*, according to Hammit *et al.* (2006:21), may involve 'a spiritual connection toward social and communal environments shared by individuals, or in the case of leisure other recreationists'. Fredrickson and Kerr (1998), defining sense of place, refer to deep feelings that can be described as either emotional, ethical, aesthetic, cultural, existential or spiritual. Similarly, Cressford and Abramovici (2008), discussing visitor experiences, ascribe sense of place with emotional, cultural, spiritual and aesthetic values. The spiritual quality of sense of place in their natural environment analysis reflects 'people's most profound, affective psychological and physiological responses to (natural) settings' (Overdevest, McNally and Hester, 1997:88). Clearly,

many academics support the theory that people's engagement with place can produce intense emotional reactions, commonly associated with spirituality, that help contribute to sense of place.

2.5.1 Studies of sense of place

In general, the sense of place and place attachment approach has been employed in several studies in a variety of contexts, including: urban areas (Soini, Vaarala and Pouta, 2012), rural residential (Walker and Ryan, 2008) and at the community level (Cross, 2001). There has also been significant research exploring place attachment to urban natural environments as a basis for seeking to understand the implications for planners (Talbot, Bardwell and Kaplan, 1987; Ryan, 2005). Place bonding relationships have been studied with respect to environmental perceptions and behaviour (Walker and Chapman, 2003; Scannell and Gifford, 2009; Gosling and Williams, 2010) and also with regards to natural resource applications (Mitchell, Force, Carroll and McLaughlin, 1993; Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005; Cessford and Abramovici, 2008). Place attachment studies looking at public lands have attempted to establish the importance of environmental features, social interactions or activities to places being regarded as 'special' (Eisenhauer, Krannich and Blahna, 2000).

Within the specific context of tourism, research has examined sense of place and place attachment with reference to recreational second homes and has also investigated the reasons why people visit a particular place (Hwang, Lee and Chen, 2005; Stedman, 2006). Sense of place has also been analysed from the perspective of residents in high amenity tourism communities (Amsden, Stedman and Luloff, 2011). Other tourist research on place attachment has focussed on specific recreational and natural environments, evidencing the relationships between visitors' attachment and their levels of experience and interaction with a specific setting (Moore and Graefe, 1994; Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; Stedman, Beckley, Wallace and Ambard, 2004). In addition, extensive studies have been undertaken into the effects of place attachment on users' social and environmental perceptions of natural places (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2004) while, most recently, visitor studies have sought to understand the association between place attachment and place meanings in natural areas, to identify how place attachment in a natural environment is reflected in meanings ascribed to the area (Wynveen, Kyle and Sutton, 2012). Other studies have examined the impact of the physical setting to the memorability of place (Fredrickson and Kerr, 1998; Greene, 1999) and generally, it has been revealed that specific locations with landscapes considered outstanding or more distinctive have a greater probability of being adopted as places (Cessford and Abramovici, 2008). Hammitt *et al.*

(2006), in a study on place bonding and recreation places, suggest that there are five dimensions to place bonding: i) place familiarity, ii) place belongingness, iii) place identity, iv) place dependence and, v) place rootedness.

In the particular context of rural tourism, the focus of these themes is the exploration of tourists' sense of place and place attachment in rural settings, an area that has primarily been analysed in the context of natural environments concentrating on impacts of landscape as opposed to socio-cultural effects. However, research into tourists' sense of place and the affective bonds of attachment to rural places has been more limited. Thus, further investigation into the nature and implications of these associations is examined in the context of this thesis. In order to gain a comprehensive background on significant place bonding concepts, there is a necessity to explore the underlying themes of place attachment, place dependence, place identity, and placelessness, all concepts linked to later commentary in the findings and analysis.

2.6 Place Attachment

As noted earlier, sense of place is only one of a number of place related concepts that consistently appear in the place bonding literature used to describe the quality and intensity of people's embeddedness in a 'place'. Within the realm of place studies, recurrent reference is made to the largely synonymous concept of place attachment. Definitions of place attachment, in a similar way to sense of place descriptions, tend to adhere to disciplinary emphasis and do not always reflect the complex, multi layered meanings of this construct. Soini *et al.* (2012), for example, describe place attachment succinctly, as a positive emotional bond that people have with a place, whilst it has been equally succinctly defined as 'the extent to which an individual values or identifies with a particular environmental setting' (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2003:250). Gieryn (2000:472) reflecting on the affective quality of place attachment, refers more explicitly, to the 'formation of emotional, sentimental bonds between people and place that brings together the material formations on a geographic site and the meanings we invest in them'. More usefully, perhaps, Farnum *et al.* (2005) attempt to clarify the distinction between sense of place and place attachment. They conclude that place attachment specifically involves an emotional element, whereas there are aspects of sense of place that are more cognitive than emotion-based. In support, Morgan (2009) states that emotion is fundamental to place attachment, viewing it as a crucial part of the relationship between person and environment. Scannell and Gifford (2010), on the other hand, argue for a multidimensional concept incorporating person, psychological process and place dimensions. In this latter study, analysis of the psychological

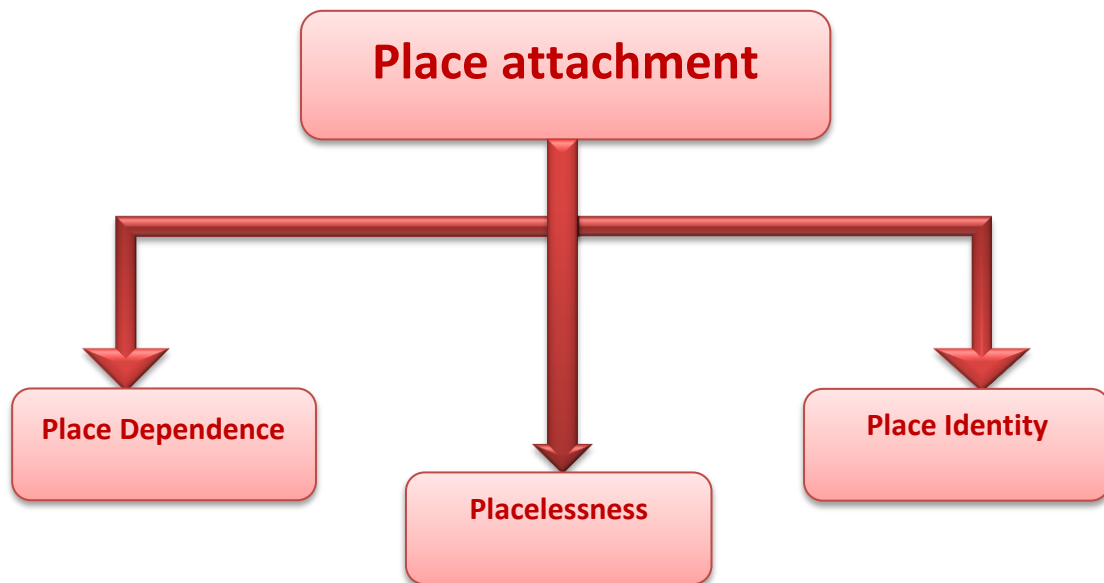
dimension is inclusive of affective, cognitive and behavioural processes, but highlights the significance of positive emotions associated with attachment to place. It would seem the distinction between place attachment and sense of place is subtle; there is no clear agreement between scholars and all offer valid descriptions. What is accepted throughout all fields, though, is that there exists a strong emphasis on the emotional dimension of place attachment.

As a bonding concept, place attachment is considered to be a fundamental part of a number of types of attachment that people experience (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005). Academics assert that the bonds we form with place fall within the wider context of human attachments; place attachment, in effect, is only part of a range of human bonding experiences (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005; Hammitt, Backlund and Bixler, 2006). Schroeder (2007) agrees that place attachment should be conceptualised in the larger framework of human attachments, a part of the whole human bonding process. This theory developed from early examinations of the interpersonal relationships of humans and the stages in the formation of love and attachment. Not all are in agreement, arguing that there is a static nature to the phenomenon of human attachment whereas place theorists stress the dynamic quality of people/place relationships (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993) .

The bonding with place is a temporal activity, usually emergent over time and often related to past experiences and usage (Giuliani and Feldman, 1993). In support of this, Manzo's study (2005:82) found that places of importance have been shown to act as bridges to the past supporting the idea of 'continuity over the lifepath'. Equally, though, the strength of the emotional connection to place is related to activity and location, with attachment to place increasing in intensity with positive evaluations of setting and experiences (Gross and Brown, 2008). In short, the affective bonds are the basis for place attachment development; the emphasis of place attachment stresses the emotional connections to place that develops from a combination of physical features of place, the social dimension and the activity or practice undertaken.

As mentioned earlier, place attachment is a complex, multidimensional concept, underlain by several sub-concepts such as place identity, place dependence, rootedness, placelessness and alienation (Seabra, Silva and Abrantes, 2011). Distinguishing between some of these concepts is sometimes difficult but nevertheless, within the context of this thesis, it remains essential to characterise a number of these terms. Therefore, a brief review of place identity, place dependence and placelessness is required, as these concepts will be referred to later in the thesis (see *Figure 2.3*).

Figure 2.3 Place Attachment Dimensions



2.6.1 Place identity

It is the emotional linkage to place that is significant in place building and it is the subsequent sense of 'belonging' or place attachment that can forge what is referred to as place identity. Proshansky (1978), at the forefront of place identity research, characterises it as:

those dimensions of self that define the individual's personal identity in relation to the physical environment by means of a complex pattern of conscious and unconscious ideas, feelings, values, goals, preferences, skills and behavioural tendencies relevant to a specific environment.

Place identity relates to the notion that 'what we are' develops from where we come from or develops from places which we have strong connections with over extended periods of time. According to Suvantola (2002), this developmental process is not based on the cultural experiences or societal influences connected with being located at a certain place, but stems from the deeper feeling that place is part of who we are and we are part of what makes that place. Developing this idea further, he argues that where a strong place identity exists, 'the feeling of oneness with the place can even have spiritual aspects that are impossible to explain analytically' (2002:37).

Research has shown that place identity is an outcome of the length of association with a particular place and how dependent people have become on that place (Gross and Brown, 2008). Theorists regard childhood memories and experiences as determinants in place bonding and the development of adult place identity (Morgan, 2009). Thus,

place identity is largely associated with places we have lived in for periods of time, places we may consider home, places where we gain a sense of 'rootedness'. However, it is also possible for new places, when there is strong involvement, to add to our identity (Suvantola, 2002).

Dixon and Durrheim (2000:29) assert that 'place belongingness is not only one aspect of place identity, but a necessary basis for it'. In consequence, place building and attachment to place are instrumental in the developing and sustaining of self and group identity. There is a concern today, particularly with urban planners and designers, that the loss of place individuality and distinctiveness affects the intensity and development of place identity (Lalli, 1992). Consequently, places with strong associations and meanings give rise to strong collective and individual place identities, contributory to 'human behaviour and mental wellbeing' (Najafi, Mustafa and Shariff, 2011:187).

Defining our place identity is a continuous process, never stagnant but dynamic, evolving throughout our lives subject to the impact and intensity of our involvement with place(s) (Manzo, 2005). Our identity can be tied up with more than one place, including places that we travel to, but there needs to be a powerful association with the each place that reinforces our sense of self (Suvantola, 2002). This usually occurs on a more individualised level, with personal encounters and associations with a particular place shaping our sense of self. Places that people consider significant to their lives facilitate self-awareness and self-development, part of the process of place identity that encourages attachment to place. Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson (1992) suggest that places are not only resources for satisfying practical or behavioural goals but may be viewed as a central part of one's self and significant in the development of place identity. They further add that people's motivation to participate in outdoor recreation is stimulated by the psychological importance to their self-identity, group identity and shared meaning. In effect, tourists' relationships to particular places may promote strong place identity and encourage attachment to place.

The dynamic nature of place relationships to the development of place identity has been the subject of several studies (Twigger-Ross and Uzzell, 1996; Hay, 1998a; Gross and Brown, 2008). Gross and Brown (2008), studying tourist behaviours in connection with place attachment, measured the underlying elements of place dependence and place identity to understand the extent and nature of tourists' bonds to place. Additionally, Backlund and Williams (2004), when measuring place attachment – specifically the elements of place identity and place dependence – found a positive correlation between prior setting experience and positive place identity. Other research

on environmental management of natural places also connects the strength of place identity to the degree of experience of place and, additionally, stronger place identity and place attachment shows greater sensitivity to recreation impacts (Vaske and Kobrin, 2001; Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2004; White, Virden and van Riper, 2008). Ultimately, place identity is considered to be a form of self-identity (Lalli, 1992); the strength of place identity is connected to the intensity of place attachment.

2.6.2 Place dependence

The concept of place dependence also falls under the heading of place attachment, relating more to the practical or useful aspects of place. Place dependence is seen as 'the functional attachment to a place' (Gross and Brown, 2008:3) or 'the *strength* of association between a person and specific places' (Manzo, 2003:47). In place attachment studies, the concept of place dependence for either individuals or groups has been attributed to the functional elements of particular places. In this way, dependence is related to the ability of a person to be able to do a specific activity at a place or at places that have never been visited before but afford a unique setting which facilitates their goals (White, Virden and van Riper, 2008). Stokols and Shumaker (1981) refer to two factors in determining place dependence: the attributes or quality of a particular place and the comparative quality of alternative places. In their study, the value or satisfaction derived from undertaking an activity or behavioural practice in a specific physical location establishes the degree of place dependency. This is also shown to be affected by the choice of other suitable options for pursuing the activity. This level of place bonding or attachment, according to Hammitt *et al.* (2006:23) relates to the specificity and functionality of a place and is likely to incorporate elements of place identity, belongingness, and familiarity 'thus, one may identify with a series of similar places, but depend on only a few, or one'.

2.6.3 Placelessness

Academics accept that the post-modern world, mediated through technology, constantly in a state of transition and fostered by globalisation (Gustafson, 2001), has led to instability in the structure of society, a feeling of disembodiment or placelessness (Relph, 1976). Space and place have become indistinct and indefinable, resulting in the weakened relationship of people to place, a disassociation from meaningful relationships with place. In Agnew's (2011:5) view, as the modern world has become 'increasingly placeless... space is conquering place'. The homogenisation of modern landscapes and the mobility of modern society has contributed to the destruction of

meaning of places and, consequently, diminished people's relationships with place (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977; Entrikin, 1991; Cresswell, 2004). The strength of community, traditionally defined by location and centrality of beliefs, has become devalued in the twenty-first century, leading to a sense of instability and uncertainty of place (Harvey, 1990). This state of anomie (Durkheim, 1897) can be witnessed in the breakdown of society and a subsequent erosion of standards and values that has been attributed to the postmodern destruction of place. In Entrikin's (1991) view, the bonds between individuals and groups has weakened and, subsequently, the binding of groups to place has deteriorated. He considers that attrition of place and the breakdown of social and cultural institutions, such as religion, has fostered alienation and isolation in today's world. Subsequently, this has led individuals to construct their own meaning in the world and, in particular, to create their own centres of place. Now, as a result, the certainties of modernity has been replaced by the uncertainty of placelessness or, as a parallel, the 'certainty' of religious institutions has been replaced by the indirect search for meaning/spirituality.

The question has been asked: is place still important to people in this modern high speed, transitory age surrounded by characterless, culturally barren landscapes devoid of any 'specificity of place'? (Lewicka, 2011). In fact, the opposite is claimed to be true: the need is even stronger. The significance of place in the contemporary world appears to have grown in importance as place bonding becomes a panacea to the condition of placelessness (Harvey, 1990; Gustafson, 2001; Kruger and Jakes, 2003; Lewicka, 2011). There is a need for stability and a heightened awareness of the necessity to find meaning in places, to forge place attachments and to establish identity through place. This is echoed by Lippard (1997:7), who comments on the continued pull of place 'as a geographical component of the psychological need to belong, somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation'. Place is essential to human existence. It is how humans make sense of their world, how they centre themselves in the world and the psychological and emotional links to place have been asserted to be 'a necessary part of the human condition'(Cresswell, 2004:49). These affective, cognitive and connative bonds formed over time with a specific geographic location are enduring and lead to a sense of belonging, or being of that place (Morgan, 2009). The enduring nature of human place bonding is corroborated in several studies undertaken in a variety of contexts that attempt to measure people's attachment to place (Shamai and Ilatov, 2005; Hammitt, Backlund and Bixler, 2006). Lewicka (2011:209) asserts that this largely quantitative research substantiates early phenomenological claims that 'sense of place is a natural condition of human existence.

In summary, peoples' relationships to place may have weakened but the need to belong and form place attachments is deep seated and a fundamental part of human nature. Place is relevant not only to fill sociological and physical needs but also to provide a sense of place and to strengthen personal and collective identity. The search for belonging, though, is no longer confined wholly to community/home settings but is observed in tourists seeking places that offer a context for experiences that may diminish the abjectness of placelessness and encourage a sense of place.

2.7 Tourism and Place

Certainly, travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.

Miriam Beard

Tourism is a spatial experience, signifying a change of place involving travel away from one centre of meaning (home) to a place (destination) that provides new meaningful experiences (Urry, 1995). It is a move away from the mundane norms of everyday life to an experience of the *Other* (Suvantola, 2002). There is the suggestion that the sociological context for tourism is motivated by a desire to experience *Otherness* (Urry, 2002). Tourists, readied with expectations and discourse, seek to contrast the customary place of home with unaccustomed places, to search out opportunities to gaze upon unfamiliar landscapes and cultures.

In essence, these ideas express the physical movement of people from place to place but lead to the question: what shapes people's relationship to particular places? The tourist place-construction process occurs when ordinary spaces are attributed with certain meanings and values that appeal to tourists and attract them to these particular places. The meanings and values associated with a destination, effectively, become so-called pull factors, part of the tourism demand process (Dann, 1977; Suvantola, 2002; Mohammad and Ahmad Puad Mat, 2010). According to Suvantola (2002:33) 'when tourists experience place, their experience is not so directed by what they encounter, but by what meanings they give to whatever they encounter'. He supports this statement with the view that meanings are derived from a combination of elements: their intentions or purpose towards a place, their contextual understanding of a place, the circumstances of their visit and the nature and degree of involvement. It is argued that tourist places are socially constructed and that this phenomenon is directed by several interlinked factors (Young, 1999; Stokowski, 2002; Williams, 2002). Paralleling some of Suvantola's thoughts, these include tourists' attribution of meaning, perceived and actual knowledge, past travel experiences, host/guest encounters, the physical,

cultural and historical qualities of the place, environmental aesthetics and the influences of mediated sources (Trauer and Ryan, 2005). In simple terms, tourist landscapes, like all places, are 'socially constructed in the context of particular actions, meanings and physical attributes and are, thus, the provisional result of social processes and individual experiences' (Klanicka, Buchecker, Hunziker and Muller-Boker, 2006:55).

It is important to note that construction of tourist places is often strongly influenced and manipulated by marketing forces. The commodification of place for tourism purposes is a well-documented phenomenon observed in the selling of culture as a capital product (MacCannell, 1976; Shepherd, 2002). The exploitation of place and culture is observable in the production of inauthentic or superficial experiences (Boorstin, 1972), principally used to appeal to tourists, with financial gain being the endgame (Roberts, 2004). Young (1999) asserts that place promotion for the purpose of capital accumulation is a major marketing strategy, adding that publicity not only involves promotional images and descriptions but 'places are subject to complex, contested processes where managers actively manipulate place meanings' for financial gain (374).

Critics of tourism commodification recognise the need to market places as unique but rail against the inauthenticity of the cultural products used to symbolise places and the so called staging of experiences (Smith, 2001; Shepherd, 2002; Suvantola, 2002). Places are always subject to symbolic representations, but tourism places suffer in the extreme from manipulated constructs that may not reflect the true image and ethos of a place. Conversely, though, tourists bring their own ideas, values and interpretations to a place based on previous knowledge and understanding, which may or may not be influenced by tourist marketers. For the individual, Young (1999) deems actual experience of place will decide place meanings regardless of industry-constructed meaning. Although the topic of authenticity is beyond the scope of this thesis it is, nevertheless, necessary to acknowledge how place image and marketing can influence tourist behaviours. Aspects of this will be considered in the discussion of the research findings in Chapter 6, in addition to an examination of the influences of other literary and artistic representations of place in the context of rural imaginings. Moreover, a deeper exploration of key tourism theories will be included in Chapter 3.

2.7.1 Place and tourist motivation

Why do people decide to visit some places and not others? There are, of course, the practical reasons of proximity, accessibility, social influence, activities at hand or the

destination's image. These answers do not, however, take into account the more complex and underlying affective factors such as sense of place. Research has demonstrated that sense of place is a significant element of the experience of visitors (Cessford and Abramovici, 2008) and the awareness of visitors affective experiences in natural areas has potential to guide further visitor research and organisational planning in tourist/recreational areas. In discussing *genius loci*, Jakle (1987:8) states that it is tourists, not residents, who are the best people to experience or communicate sense of place as tourism 'involves the deliberate searching out of place experience'.

There is a continuing question of whether 'outsiders' or visitors relate to a particular place differently than 'insiders' or residents. Additionally, there is uncertainty regarding the difference between residents and tourists' sense of place (Kaltenborn, 1998; Williams and Stewart, 1998). Several studies have shown that the intensity of place attachment is usually greater in residents than for visitors (Kaltenborn, 1998; Hay, 1998a; Stedman, 2003a; Klanicka, Buchecker, Hunziker and Muller-Boker, 2006). Hay (1998b) argues this belief, maintaining that tourists do not have the strong emotional and spiritual bonds forged by the long term ties – generational, social and cultural – of local residents and, therefore, the intensity of their sense of place is likely to be weaker. Non-locals' place attachment is largely based on visual aesthetics (Tuan, 1974) whereas locals' higher degree of place attachment relates to traditions, cultural and symbolic aspects and strong emotional involvement over time with place. With reference to these views, Williams and Stewart (1998:19) state that 'although we emphasise the importance of recognising 'local' meanings, these should not be limited to residents' sense of place. Many tourists and regular visitors have strong attachments to place...it is not the possessors of meaning that are local, but the meanings themselves'. This is reinforced in a recent study of tourists and residents of a Swiss Alpine village, where sense of place was found to be approximately the same amongst both groups (Klanicka, Buchecker, Hunziker and Muller-Boker, 2006). The study established that both tourists and locals identified the same place characteristics but different meanings and significance were attributed to these characteristics. Recognising the value of local attachment to place is essential but, in terms of tourism, it is important not to undervalue visitor attachment to place (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005) as these place bonds are important for appropriate economic development and constructive for both host and tourist relations and experiences.

Building on the earlier discussion of the commercial production of symbolic (mis)representations of tourist places, there is also a recent marketing trend endorsing the promotion of sense of place for specific locations. This organisational approach is used to differentiate the distinctive characteristics of a place and to extend a sense of

identity unique to that place (Walsh, Jamrozy and Burr, 2001). Tourism businesses, realising the special qualities of their place, can improve their promotional and marketing skills and bring out the best attributes of their locality. Developing sense of place in a community/region is thought to establish a strong self-identity, viewed as an asset to local businesses and a valuable tool in attracting visitors (Murray, 2001; Convery, Corsane and Jarvis, 2012). A strong sense of place projected by a community/area draws visitors and invites a sense of wanting to belong (Walsh, Jamrozy and Burr, 2001). At this juncture, it is unclear whether sense of place, as an intangible, is marketable as there is little documentation on the impacts of this particular type of promotion in influencing consumer behaviours. However, although it is recognised that unique places of natural beauty do encourage the development of visitors' attachment to place, ascertaining the return on the marketing of a subjective, emotionally derived sentiment presents significant academic and industry challenges.

Understanding what shapes people's relationships to particular places is difficult to isolate and even harder to assess, due to the complexities and subtleties of these connections. Sense of place is, equally, a difficult concept to evaluate and measure. It is observed not only in home/community situations but also with regards to tourists' engagement with place. The intensity of tourists' experiences, familiarity with place, the level of cultural interaction and appreciation, and the distinctiveness of the tourism place are all factors in creating a sense of belonging (Klanicka, Buchecker, Hunziker and Muller-Boker, 2006). The relationship between the tourist and the experience of place, particularly the role that place plays in influencing and enriching the tourist experience, has seen little academic exploration (Sharpley and Stone, 2012). Sense of place, as a component of tourism place bonding, has increasingly been explored in natural environments but further investigation of the effects of nature, the outdoors and countryside and essential in crafting the link between sense of place and tourism experiences and behaviours.

2.8 Nature and Place

The attraction of rural places is attributable to a combination of elements, including man-made, semi-natural and wholly natural, but it is recognised that the natural features of the outdoors are a powerful draw for most humans. Within place studies, the concept of place applies to both built and natural environments but, in the last decade, human interaction with the natural environment and the bond-forming mechanisms associated with specific landscapes has increasingly become the focus of academic attention (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2004). Significantly, these

themes are not only central to scholarly understanding of peoples' relationship to natural places but also provide key insights for environmental agencies, tourism associations, forestry groups, land management initiatives and a diverse range of organisations keen to identify the implications of human behaviours in the natural environment. Environmental psychologists and human geographers have spearheaded natural place research and it is through the lenses of divergent disciplines that natural environment place bonding theories have been established. In the same vein as place research studies, these fields, more generally, have commonly relied on quantitative data to observe people's fundamental relationships to place. In particular, studies measuring and categorising the intensity of peoples' bond to natural place has contributed considerably to scholarly theories (Moore and Graefe, 1994; Kaltenborn, 1998; Stedman, 2003b) and are of equal importance as practical measurements for industry. These findings are commonly used to implement policies and actions of change.

As previously observed, not all academics consider quantitative study to be effective, recognising the limits of this methodology in representing individuals' subjective experiences of natural places. Fishwick and Vining (1992:58), for example, point to the fact that critics of quantitative approaches believe these methods 'have become meaningless and divorced from everyday life'. Natural places, often viewed as commodities, were assessed both institutionally and publically by their functional attributes and objective features (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005) with little or no consideration for individuals' relationships to places. Consequently, the transformation in research attitudes stemmed largely from social scientists wanting to examine the deeper meanings and values associated with natural place settings. Thus, although quantitative research remains relevant and necessary, more recent studies have shifted emphasis from objective approaches to phenomenological qualitative understanding to explore 'the subjective, emotional, and symbolic meanings associated with natural places and the personal bonds or attachments people form with specific places or landscapes' (Williams and Vaske, 2003:831).

Environmental and land management concerns remain at the forefront of scholarly interest in nature and place studies but the qualitative nature of bonding constructs, such as sense of place and place attachment, have become essential for comprehensive understanding of peoples' deeper relationship with natural places and their ensuing behaviours. Paralleling this trend is the increased qualitative research in the tourism field, specifically recreational and leisure based studies, which explore subjective meanings and experiences of natural and rural settings. The continued increase of visitors to places that provide natural environment experiences has

implications for the tourism industry and, therefore, in order to better understand the motivations and behaviours of visitors, it is essential to look behind their quantifiable intent and actions and explore the deep seated and subconscious meaning of their experiences, experiences that may or may not be influenced by the social construction of natural settings.

2.8.1 The social construction of the natural environment

The natural environment is subject to different interpretations of meaning based not on the physical attributes of the socially constructed 'landscape' but emerging from people's values and beliefs (Greider and Garkovich, 1994). Greider and Garkovich (1994:5) elaborate further, arguing that meaning 'is constructed through social interactions among members of a culture as they negotiate the meanings of nature and the environment' According to Hull, Robertson and Kendra (2001), this dichotomy between humanity and nature does not in reality exist; they argue that in discourses about the environment there are degrees of naturalness that are more comprehensible and expressive when placed on a continuum. Most landscapes are found near the middle of the continuum, reflecting the degree of human influence (Hull, Robertson and Kendra, 2001). Man's manipulation of the environment is often misinterpreted by people who do not consciously recognise human effect on landscapes, viewing many produced terrains as natural. Upon reflection, it becomes clear that nature is principally a concept constructed not only through the physical processes shaped by man's hand but through the social and symbolic meanings that cultures attribute to the natural world. The very fact that we often refer to natural settings as landscapes reflects the socially constructed nature of natural settings. The term landscape's early associations were with human-made spaces in the land but later, with the influence of sixteenth century Northern European landscape artists (Olwig, 1996), the meaning evolved. According to Cloke, Crang and Goodwin (2005:13), nowadays 'landscape refers both to physical places in which we encounter the natural world and to artistic representations of such encounters and places'. In Greider and Garkovich's (1994:1) view, 'landscapes are the symbolic environments created by human acts of conferring meaning to the nature and environment'. Cultural symbols are used to transform the physical environment into landscapes that give meaning to a physical space and reflect the self-definitions of a culture. Natural environments, like all places, are subject to the same processes of being constructed, interpreted and contested. That is, historic events, political influences, symbolic representations, past experiences, present understandings and mediated sources shape conceptual understanding of natural places. Changes wrought on landscapes by natural occurrences or non-natural events

stimulate a constant cultural negotiation of meanings and symbolic representations of place.

In particular, wilderness, as a paradigm, exemplifies a socially constructed place, a culturally determined ideology. Generally associated with pristine areas, untamed and untouched by man, this representation fails to acknowledge the fact that civilisation's successful encroachment has threatened what little of wild nature is left (Rolston, 1997). In Graber's (1995:123) opinion

wilderness has taken on connotations and mythology that specifically reflect latter-twentieth-century values...it now functions to provide solitude and a counterpoint to technological society that is managed to reveal as few traces of the passage of other humans as possible.

Succinctly, wilderness in the postmodern world is an imagined ideal, an objectified landscape not reconciled to some of the harsh, unappealing qualities of the wilderness or to man's hand in taming that image. The reality is that wilderness is bounded by the politics of place; wilderness areas may have been geologically created but are now designated by legislated bodies and subject to the interpretations and representations of largely urbane cultures (Roberts, 1996; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). If wilderness is a social construct, it follows that nature and the countryside are also implicated in the mythical construction of place. Whether or not people understand or perceive the culturally determined nature of natural environments does not deter them from the desire to be in these places but acts as a stimulus to search out the perceived qualities of these settings.

2.8.2 What is our attraction to nature and natural environments?

Most humans are instinctively attracted to natural environments. Tuan (1974:115) notes that natural places 'appeal strongly to the human imagination'. A beautiful landscape, according to Elsner, Lewis, Snell and Spitzer (1996), can bring peace of mind, inspire creativity, and intensify respect for nature. The lure of natural settings is generally thought to be based on the physical aspects of a place, in naturalness or beauty. For example, Schroeder's (2002) qualitative study on special places in natural environments found that attachment to particular natural places, considered special places by participants, is largely influenced by topographical and geographical features, water features, vegetation and human made features such as trails, cabins and recreation facilities. This study also reveals that special places offer intangible qualities, such as naturalness, beauty, quietness, serenity and an unspoilt character. In addition, there are the more elusive responses, such as: a sense of wonder and magic; a sense of excitement; overwhelming beauty; awe-inspiring; and, a reflective or

meditative quality to these places. Similarly, in a study on place meanings, Manzo (2005) notes the importance of natural places for privacy, self-reflection and introspection. The element of solitude afforded more frequently in natural settings was also found to be significant to the experience. In Fishwick and Vining's (1992) recreational place study, participants' initial assessments of outdoors places were judged in terms of their activities. After some reflection by the participants, physical qualities, particularly the presence of water and the more indefinable qualities of remoteness, escape and solitude, were found to be emotionally positive, significant factors in their experience. Research has also been undertaken investigating the effects of the degree of naturalness and uniqueness of the setting on the intensity of people's responses to place (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson, 1992; Rossler, 2003). Generally, it has been found that the less human interference in the environment the stronger and more positive the experience and the greater attraction to place.

In examining other emotional benefits of natural settings, studies acknowledge the outdoors as places to contribute to mental well-being, self-renewal and for stress management, providing restorative and calming effects (Kaplan, 1995; Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner and Peterson, 1996; Korpela and Hartig, 1996; Montes, 1996; Edensor, 2000; Darker, Larkin and French, 2007). Other deeper emotional experiences, often difficult to express but educating spiritual or religious embodiment, are also triggered in natural settings. Driver *et al.* (1996) attests to spiritual experience and spiritual development as benefits of leisure undertakings in the outdoors. Williams and Harvey (2001:256) discussing how place contributes to the spiritual meaning of nature, describe this occurrence as the 'human-environment transaction'. Within this transaction, a form of transcendence is experienced in natural environments through the specific situational characteristics of a place and how they are 'perceived, interpreted and altered by human knowledge and behaviour'. Referring to other works, Williams and Harvey (2001) note that transcendent experiences are attributed to the merits of the physical environment rather than the activity undertaken in the outdoors. Similarly, Gelter (2000:78) discusses the Scandinavian concept of 'friluftsliv', a term directly translated to mean 'free air life', denoting 'a philosophical lifestyle based on experiences of the freedom of nature and the spiritual connectness with landscape'. He comments on the associated intensity and strength of this feeling, also noting that individuals' experience of this phenomenon can be quite different. In particular, some people, often urban dwellers who have lost touch with natural environments, struggle to experience the deep feelings that arise from being totally absorbed into nature. As a result, they are less capable of achieving a spiritual wholeness and connection with the

landscape. Friluftsliv is a lifestyle philosophy that engages the senses at an intrinsic level, taking people back to a more fundamental and organic relationship to nature, one generally lost in the modern world. This philosophy does not allow for the consumptive nature of most tourists and visitors but it does argue for the deep spiritual experience that people can attain in people/ nature interactions.

Further studies have observed that specific physical features of natural settings generate deep spiritual and affective responses (Ashley, 2007). Studies' linking physical attributes such as mountains, forests, deserts and water to spiritual experience (Schroeder, 1992; Williams and Harvey, 2001; Taylor and Geffen, 2004; Bull, 2006) raise awareness of humankind's innate and indefinable connection to the natural environment. Plainly, 'place' in terms of the natural environment is a context for profound emotional experiences, often reasoned to be spiritual in nature (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Johnson, 2002; Heintzman, 2010). This theme will be explored in greater detail later in the literature review. Suffice to say, at this point, evidence indicates that there is a relationship between the natural environment and emotive experiences – the questions are: 'Is this a reason for people to seek natural environments' and 'What is the nature of these emotive experiences'?

2.8.3 Why do people seek natural environments?

Seminal works on the natural environment have demonstrated the characteristics that are significant to people engaging with outdoor settings (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2003; Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005; Hammitt, Backlund and Bixler, 2006), but what other catalysts exist for seeking 'place' in nature? The reasons for people searching for meanings in natural places are multiple and diverse – there exists no single reason but multiple layers of motivation, intention and meaning (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Mitchell, Force, Carroll and McLaughlin, 1993; Stedman, 2003a). Recreational activities, restorative time, family time, physical challenge and the lure of mediated representations provide superficial answers, but this does not fully explain why so many people are eager to 'get away from it all' either in rural environs or even more remote wilderness settings. At the most fundamental level, however, there appears to be an inherent need that is not being nurtured within modern society (Roberts, 1996), a sense of disembodiment and disconnection referred to previously as 'placelessness' (Relph, 1976).

The concept of 'placelessness', as discussed earlier in this chapter, and the growing need for humans to locate themselves internally and externally through connections to

place, can be further examined in relationship to the natural environment. Humankind's relationship to nature is evolutionary, going back millions of years, and it has been argued that people inherently need to connect at an emotional level with natural places (Roberts, 1996). It has been noted that, in an age of technological and industrial urban domination, natural places have become devalued as human interaction declines (Bott, Cantrill and Myers, 2003). Places have lost cultural and personal significance as one cityscape becomes indistinguishable from another and, subsequently, bonding mechanisms are weakened to a point where it is difficult to realise a sense of place. Roberts (1996:63) argues that in effect, technological progress has led to urban landscapes being manufactured in repetitive sameness that has diminished people's exposure to the natural environment and reduced nature to a commodity to be consumed for its entertainment qualities. People, in the industrialised world, have become detached from natural places and the very roots of their existence, viewed by academics as central to the human spirit and psyche. Reproachfully, Roberts (1996:63) states that 'in an attempt to overcome what was thought of as the 'limits' of nature, humans have eliminated the very connections that give meanings to their lives'. This sense of belonging and connection has become vital in a post-modern society fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty. Nature offers a sense of stability and timelessness to ease the modern day condition of placelessness; a return to the rudimentary foundations of humankind, to search for a sense of place and connection in simpler, uncomplicated surroundings.

2.8.4 A sense of place in nature

At a time in history when people are seeking to establish connections to place and fulfil the basic need to belong, the outdoors and nature provide a setting in which to realise these needs, a place to have meaningful experiences germane in developing a sense of place. The lack of substance in modern day, frequently urban lifestyles, is an inducement for people to travel to more natural settings away from the stresses associated with built up environments (Roberts, 1996). Essentially, an epochal shift is taking place as people seek simpler, more fundamental ways to enjoy their leisure time in aesthetically appealing natural settings, in environments that satisfy both superficial objectives and deeper more complex human aspirations. Nature may be seen to offer an antidote to the societal ailments of post- modern times (Roberts, 1996; Szerszynski, 2005).

People's emotional relationship to place has largely been studied in the context of residential settings – neighbourhoods, communities and homes (Manzo, 2003). More

recently, increasing academic interest in people's subjective experience of natural places has provoked a number of in-depth studies examining sense of place and place attachment bonding mechanisms, and the behaviours associated with these concepts (Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2004; Schroeder, 2007; Wynveen, Kyle and Sutton, 2012). The most significant studies on sense of place stem from environmental and tourism agencies examining issues of land management and conservation relating largely to recreational usage in high amenity rural areas (Farnum, Hall and Kruger, 2005; Cessford and Abramovici, 2008). Other recent studies on place attachment have examined outdoor recreation places in different environments, such as lakes (Jorgensen and Stedman, 2001), sea coasts (Kelly and Hoskings, 2008), forests (Smaldone, Harris and Sanyal, 2005), mountains (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2003), rivers (Davenport and Anderson, 2005) and wild streams (Hammit, Backlund and Bixler, 2006) and wilderness places (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson, 1992). The trend in studies in this area reflects the increase in rural recreational consumption, owing in some part to Western societies' increased affluence, more leisure time and the appeal of aesthetic natural environments (Lewicka, 2011).

In characterising sense of place, different commentators emphasise certain components over others – location, activity or meaning – but in natural environments there is considerable academic claim to the theory that the physical features of a place hold the most significant influence in the bonding process (Schroeder, 2002; Stedman, 2003a; Soini, Vaarala and Pouta, 2012). Tuan (1974:113), for example, asserts that environment is not the immediate cause of *topophilia* but it nevertheless offers sensory stimuli by way of visually perceived imagery that 'lends shape to our ideals and joys'. In a similar vein, Scannell and Gifford (2010) believe that, unlike built environments where the emphasis for place attachment may be on the socio-cultural features of place or a combination of physical and social elements, the attachment to natural settings is strongly influenced by the physical characteristics of place. Concurring, Stedman (2003a) asserts that we place too much stress on the social construction of sense of place disregarding the impact of the physical environment on attachment to place and the meanings associated with place. His research demonstrates the significance of physical attributes of the natural environment to place meanings. In acknowledgement, Stedman's study does not ignore the validity of collective place meanings and cultural processes, but places greater emphasis on the importance of the effect of the natural environment on giving form to the construction of place and place attachment. Farnum *et al.* (2005:5) also concede that the physical characteristics of natural environments play a part in the construction of sense of place but, at the same time, accredits 'the

interpretations and representations of these attributes as well as the social dynamics of the landscape' to the development of a sense of place.

Adopting a slightly different approach, Fishwick and Vining's (1992) phenomenological study shows that participants' initial considerations are the functional qualities of an outdoor recreational setting or a consideration of the activity undertaken in the recreational setting. Further examination by Fishwick and Vining demonstrates that although these factors of function and activity are important to participants, outdoor recreation places are in fact distinguished by a combination of the elements of 'setting, landscape, ritual, routine, people, personal experiences and in the context of other places' (61). Coinciding with this, Hammitt *et al.* (2006:18) argue that place bonding in recreational areas does not just reference 'the perceptual prominence of special physical conditions and environments, but rather to the functional, affective and evaluative significances of these places'. Placing emphasis on the physical qualities of a place appears to have more validity for aesthetically distinctive natural places where physical features have profound visual and affective impact on people. This emphasis is likely to shift to socio-cultural influences in less natural areas or built up areas. Other natural environments studies have also explored the relationship between activities undertaken in the outdoors and sense of place or place attachment (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Bricker and Kerstetter, 2000; 2002; Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2003). The overall assessment is that peoples' attachment to natural places in terms of activity is largely based on past experiences and the degree of activity specialisation. In summary, therefore, there is a general academic view that natural environment place bonding is heavily influenced by physical aspects of the setting but it is essential not to ignore the holistic nature of the elements involved in sense of place.

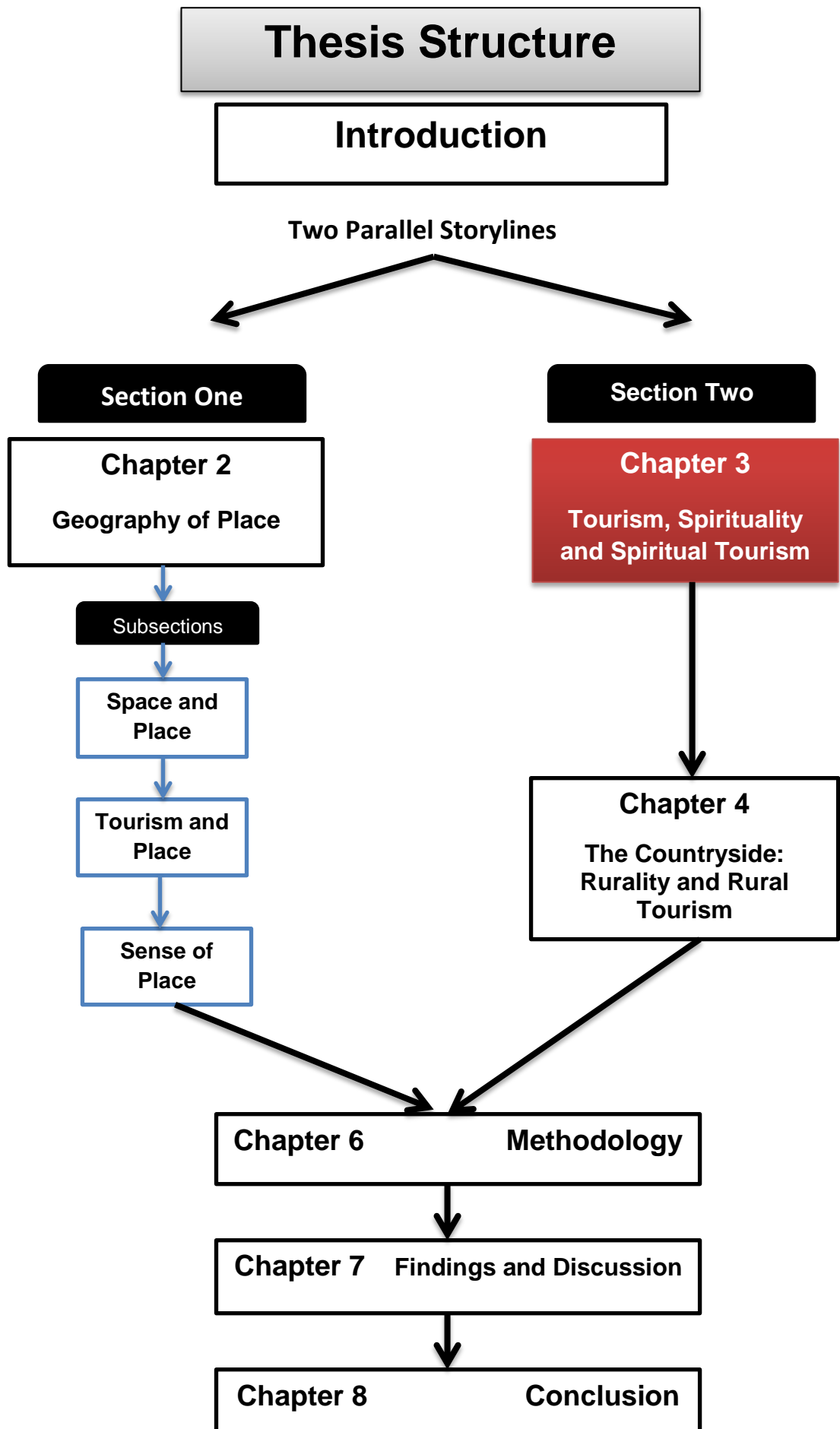
2.9 Summary

In summary, this chapter (and section) has communicated the authority of the concept of place, demonstrating the strength of the influence of place at multiple levels of human existence. Place, it has been established, is the foundation of mankind, the focus of human intention and meaning, and a function of humans' construction of reality. Moreover, the dynamic nature of place building and place bonding is expressed in the concept of sense of place, a phrase used to describe the affective and cognitive attachment to place.

Given the focus of this thesis, the role of place as a primary factor in the business of tourism has also been considered and the chapter has explored the complex nature of

tourists' engagement with place, and the implications of sense of place for tourists' motivations and behaviours. In particular, it has been demonstrated that although the relationship between tourists and tourism places is manifested in numerous ways, of particular significance is the theme of people's emotional and spiritual engagement with tourist places. Therefore, this chapter has also identified the important characteristics of natural settings and tourists' emotional and spiritual responses stemming from experiences in the outdoors.

Of course, for the purposes of this thesis, this review of the meanings and understandings of place, both generally and in the specific context of tourism, provides only part of the story. In other words, and as indicated in the introduction in Chapter 1, the literature review chapters of this thesis adopt a sectional format with two story lines running in a parallel format. This first section has considered the geography of place and sense of place in general, as well as the characteristics of place that may stimulate emotional and spiritual engagement on the part of tourists in particular. It is now necessary to consider the second, parallel theme central to this thesis, namely, tourism and the relationship between the tourist, spirituality and natural places. Therefore, the following chapter (Chapter 3) begins by exploring tourism, surveying its historic roots and identifying relevant seminal tourism theories before discussing the evolution of contemporary understandings of spirituality and, of fundamental importance to this thesis, the rise of spiritual tourism and tourists' spiritual engagement with nature. Subsequently, in Chapter 4, the parallel themes of (sense of) place and tourism (and spirituality) are drawn together in the specific context of the countryside and rural tourism, and a conceptual model of the construction of a sense of (countryside) space is presented as a framework for the empirical research in the latter part of the thesis.



Chapter Three

Tourism, Spirituality and Spiritual Tourism

In the middle ages people were tourists because of their religion, whereas now they are tourists because tourism is their religion.

Robert Runcie

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter considered the first of two parallel conceptual themes that are fundamental to this thesis, namely, understanding of place and 'sense of place', viewed in relationship to humanity and, in particular, to tourism processes. This chapter now turns to the second theme: the relationship between contemporary spirituality and tourism. It commences with an exploration of the roots of contemporary tourism, which is claimed by many to originate in early religious travel and pilgrimages. Travel for religious and/or spiritual purposes has historically been a principal characteristic of tourism and continues to be so. Indeed, despite the purported secularisation of postmodern society, there continues to be a growing trend for tourism that provides religious or spiritual outcomes. The demand by tourists for spiritually motivated experiences has implications for both contemporary and the future development of tourism. With this in mind, this chapter considers the alleged secularisation of contemporary western society and provides insights into a postmodern understanding of spirituality in general and the growth in spiritual tourism in particular. It then goes on to review briefly the tourist experience in relation to the contemporary search for meaning before concluding with a short analysis of humankind's spiritual relationship with nature and outdoor environments. In short, therefore, the overall intent of this chapter is to establish the link between tourism and spiritual journeys in order to demonstrate the significance of spirituality to contemporary society and to communicate the relationship between nature and spiritual experiences.

3.1 The Seeds of Tourism: Migration

Migration is an integral part of the history of humanity (Glick-Schiller, Basch and Szanton-Blanc, 1995). So too is tourism, in the sense that it has existed as long as people have been able to travel voluntarily, although tourism as it is understood today is a more recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, both migration and tourism are spatially

similar, involving the large scale movement of people (Hall and Williams, 2002). It is argued though, that the motivation for migration and tourism differ, migration often being a necessity or involuntary whereas tourism is typically undertaken purely by choice (Vukonic, 1996). Additionally, Vukonic (1996) notes that tourism is a temporal activity, usually short term and influenced by seasonal considerations.

The motivations behind tourism and migration may differ but, like migration, tourism involves the mobilisation of population, an altered rhythm to life and communication between new civilisations, albeit as a temporary experience for tourists. Correspondingly, tourism has long been viewed as a contrast between the *sacred* and the *profane*; a transition between non-ordinary (touristic) life and the ordinary (workaday) life (Graburn, 1989). Thus, tourism evidently involves mobility, the movement of people from one place to another (Smith, 1992), but as Graburn (1989) argues, it is more than just geographical motion. That is, tourism may represent a secular, ritualised break from normal life to experience excitement, renewal and self-fulfilment. Contemporary tourism is, of course, the subject of considerable academic discourse and, of particular relevance to this thesis, much of this commentary reflects the early origins of tourism in religious travel and pilgrimages.

3.1.1 Religious travel: the roots of tourism

Travel for religious reasons has existed for centuries. Pilgrimages, in their earliest form, are documented as far back as the Reformation era but those undertaken in medieval times are usually considered to be the earliest form of religious travel. They are also often considered to be the forerunner of contemporary mass tourism (Digance, 2003; 2006). That is, as Digance (2006) asserts, the impetus for undertaking pilgrimages underwent something of a transformation in the late fifteenth century, as pilgrimage became less a spiritually-driven activity and resulted more from personal motives, such as wanting to experience new places and to observe other cultures, and from a general sense of inquiry about the changing world. In other words, the term pilgrimage has traditionally been associated with the concepts of long journeys, sacred places and religious devotion – and indeed such religiously motivated travel remains popular today (Ivakhiv, 2003; Timothy and Olsen, 2006). However, in more recent times, less structured definitions have been applied to the term pilgrimage, and it has come to be associated with more secular activities and phenomena, inclusive of tourism (Kaelber, 2006; Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

The literature exploring the spiritual dimension of contemporary tourism broadly adopts two principal perspectives (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Firstly, there exists extensive

research that examines so-called religious tourism, 'whose participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons' (Rinschede, 1992:52). From this perspective, much of the academic discussion highlights the importance of pilgrimage as the earliest form of tourism, and falls within the framework of the *tourist as pilgrim* theory. This extensive literature draws parallels between the phenomena of tourism and pilgrimage, traditionally proposing that tourism exhibits similar traits to pilgrimages in terms of the ritual and structure of the journey and the search for meaning and content (Turner, 1973; MacCannell, 1976; 1977; Graburn, 1983; Eade, 1992). However, recent academic literature has focussed on more specific themes, such as the historical development of religious tourism (Swatos and Tomas, 2002), the patterns, activities and traits of religious tourists (Rinschede, 1992; Collins-Kreiner and Kliot, 2000), the potential economic benefits of religious tourism (Jackowski and Smith, 1992; Gupta, 1999; Vukonic, 2002) and the management of religious/spiritual tourism exploring, in particular, physical and cultural issues (Shackley, 2001; Olsen, 2006).

Tourists, according to MacCannell (1976), possess similar motives to pilgrims, both searching for authenticity and both breaking away from an everyday inauthentic shallow existence to find meaning. Turner (1973) and Turner and Turner (1978), studying the behaviour of Christian pilgrims, suggest that, like tribal rites of passage, pilgrimages involve three phases: separation from a fixed point in an ordered societal structure; a liminal stage whereby a transformation occurs; and a return of the subject to a stable social state with traditional norms and values. More simply, when comparing tourism and pilgrimage, there is the shared theme of a journey with its different stages, from departing from home to a destination, time spent at a destination – usually involving some form of transformative experience – and culminating in the return to home.

Central to tourism theory is MacCannell's (1976) suggestion that the modern tourist is a secular pilgrim, essentially, that tourism is a secular substitute for modern religion (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Thus, the second perspective within the spiritual dimension of tourism studies may be referred to as *tourism as religion* theory. Both Graburn (1989) and Allcock (1988) reason that tourism is fundamentally a substitute for traditional and structured religious practices that uses alternate symbolic and ritualistic processes to fulfil the human need to find meaning in life. In effect, leisure in contemporary secular societies, according to Sharpley and Jepson (2011), has become 'a space for the contemplative and the creative, a unity of thought and action' (Vukonic, 1996:8). In this way, tourism, as a leisure activity, has come to be regarded as a spiritual or sacred journey, an activity that is 'functionally and symbolically equivalent to other institutions that humans use to embellish and add meaning to their lives'

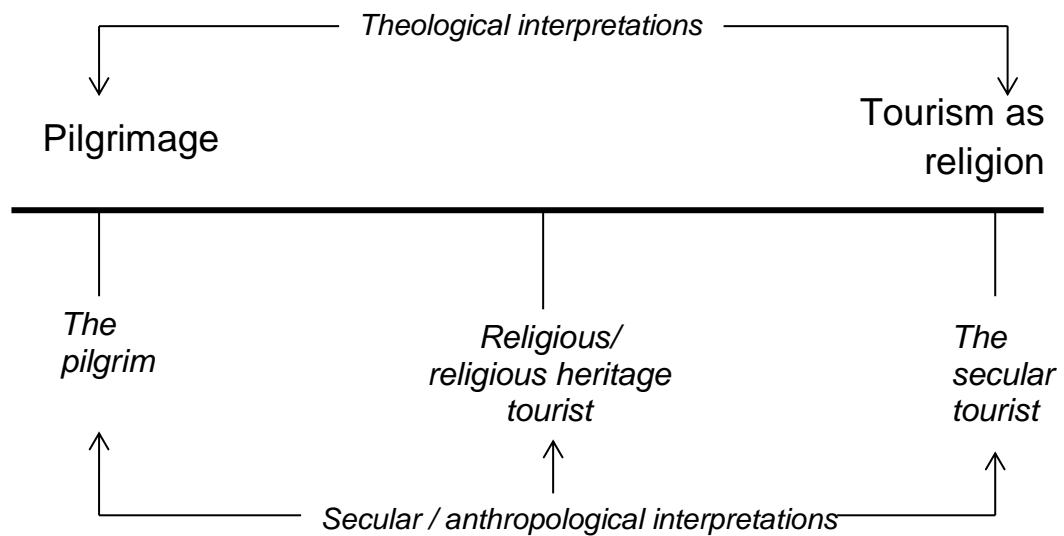
(Graburn, 1989:22). In other words, similar to pilgrims, tourists may be travelling in order to fulfil an inner need for spiritual fulfilment. However, the difference between pilgrims and tourists may lie in the level of awareness and the intensity of purpose.

Despite the increasing attention paid to the subject in the literature, there remains a fuzziness regarding the relationship between tourism and pilgrimage and, consequently, there is some difficulty in gauging the degree of religious motivation amongst tourists/pilgrims. Indeed, it remains the focus of extensive academic debate. As Gupta (1999:91) notes, 'apart from the devotional aspect, looked at it from the broader point of view, pilgrimage involves sightseeing, travelling, visiting different places, and, in some cases, voyaging by air, sea, etc. and buying the local memorabilia, almost everything a tourist does'. This lack of clarity and consensus between what defines a tourist and what defines a pilgrim has become widely recognised as the pilgrim-tourist dichotomy. In particular, Turner and Turner's (1978:20) work on tourist/pilgrim concluded that 'a tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist'. Nevertheless, in an attempt to distinguish between the tourist and the pilgrim, early theorists, such as MacCannell (1973), Cohen (1979) and Smith (1992), focussed on devising different tourist typologies (Collins-Kreiner, 2010). Smith (1992), in attempting to bridge the divide between opposing academic viewpoints, also derived a continuum, placing the tourist at one end of the continuum and the pilgrim at the opposite extreme. This continuum (see Figure 3.1) allows for an infinite number of sacred/secular permutations to fall between the two poles, though it may be considered an over-simplification of the complex relationship between tourism and pilgrimage. For example, as Figure 3.1 suggests, the continuum may be viewed within either theological or anthropological frameworks, providing potentially competing interpretations, whilst Olsen (2006:8) argues that the Smith continuum is of little value to researchers, suggesting that it does not factor in the 'multi-layered meanings of pilgrimage and tourism in the modern era' nor anticipate the fundamental difficulties of placing the pilgrim/tourist on the scale.

Moreover, not all commentators concur with the tourists/pilgrim concept, arguing that tourists and pilgrims have very little in common. For example, Timothy and Olsen (2006:7) assert that tourists do not possess the same spiritual and religious convictions as pilgrims but are, rather, motivated by 'education, curiosity, altruism and relaxation'. Similarly, Gatfield (2006) contributed to this argument by suggesting that tourists are hedonistic pleasure seekers who aspire not to experiences of spiritual significance but experiences of self-gratification. Despite these critiques, however, there are nevertheless still clear arguments supporting the notion that contemporary tourists do

indeed search for transformative and spiritually enlightening experiences (Little and Schmidt, 2006; Willson, 2011).

Figure 3.1 Pilgrimage-tourism continuum



Certainly, in the postmodern world pilgrims have continued to increase in number (Digance, 2003; Collins-Kreiner, 2010); it is estimated that more than 240 million people are annually involved in pilgrimages worldwide (Jackowski, 2000), though this figure must be treated with some caution. As Graburn (1989) notes, it remains difficult to compile reliable statistics with respect to pilgrimage travel given that not only is there no clear delineation between tourism and pilgrimage but also that, as discussed above, the modern concept of pilgrimage has become inclusive of a much wider group of travellers, all with diverse motives. More specifically, Collins-Kreiner (2010:153), citing Vukonic, describe the earlier pilgrimage as 'a journey undertaken by a person in search of holiness, the truth and the sacred', whilst, according to Barber, also cited in Collins-Kreiner (2010:153), pilgrimages, in an historical context, are defined as 'a journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding'. In contrast, pilgrimage today has expanded in meaning and can now be regarded as 'a traditional religious or modern secular journey' (Collins-Kreiner, 2010:153). Consequently, postmodern pilgrimage involves a new type of pilgrim who may or may not possess the same religious/spiritual intent or religious devotion common to pilgrims of the past (Timothy and Olsen, 2006).

Despite this on-going debate surrounding the tourist as a modern day pilgrim, there can be little doubt that, for some at least, tourism, has become a means of satisfying

spiritual yearnings (Little and Schmidt, 2006; Wilson and Harris, 2006; Sharpley, 2009; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). In other words, a spiritual experience is, for some, a desired outcome of engaging in tourism. Thus, as argued in the preceding chapter, tourism is a journey in search of new and meaningful experiences of place. For the purposes of this thesis, therefore, the next questions to be addressed are: how has spirituality come to be viewed as distinct from religion and to what extent is spiritual experience a part of tourists' journeys?

3.2 Secularisation: The Road to Contemporary Spirituality?

Just as a candle cannot burn without fire, men cannot live without a spiritual side

Buddha

Historically, religion and spirituality have been viewed holistically, with no distinguishable separation existing between religious experience and spiritual experience. However, the emergence of contemporary spirituality has challenged this commonly held interpretation, demanding an alternative or new understanding of the concept of spirituality, often disconnected from religious dogma (Pargament, 1999; Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott, 1999; Marler and Hadaway, 2002; Thomas, 2006; Houtman and Aupers, 2007). The distinction between the two concepts can be attributed to an observable rise of secularism in western societies, notable in the latter half of the twentieth century. This transformation is thought to reflect society's disillusionment and dissatisfaction with the limitations and constraints of religious doctrine (Beckford, 1989; Tacey, 2004; Flanagan and Jupp, 2007), heightened by a shift in focus from societal expectations to individual beliefs that encompass personal experiences of the sacred (Heelas, 1996; Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler, Belavich, Hipp, Scott and Kadar, 1997; Schmidt, 2005a).

Although increasing secularisation of the western world is widely recognised, it is less certain how and to what extent this has been manifested in what has been referred to as the decline in religion (York, 2001; Houtman and Aupers, 2007). Certainly, commentators argue that there is clear evidence of a decline in religion (Hay and Socha, 2005; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005), typically pointing to statistics that reveal decreasing levels of church attendance and declining participation in time honoured religious rituals (Harvey, 2003; Lambert, 2004; Houtman and Aupers, 2007). At the same time, it has been suggested that 'the modern empirical worldview has replaced the miraculous religious worldview' (Roberts and Yamane, 2011:326), and that the movement away from conventional religious practice is a result of advances in scientific knowledge and understanding over the last century (Szerszynski, 2005). This transition

in thinking has been compounded by a loss of confidence in religious institutions and leaders (Schmidt, 2005a) that has led to a questioning of traditional belief systems. In other words, religion has, according to Danesh (1997), arguably relied on the blind faith of its adherents, using indoctrination as a means of endorsing intolerant and superstitious practices that are discordant with the rational thinking of the post-modern world. In a similar vein, Thomas (2006:397) suggests that the rise in the spiritual movement can be viewed as a rejection of authoritarian structures but also notes the 'regular emergence in the religious traditions of renewal movements'. In echoing these sentiments, Tacey (2004:2) asserts that 'we are caught in a difficult moment in history, stuck between a secular system we have outgrown and a religious system we cannot embrace'

Additionally, factors of globalisation, technological progress and weakening of cultural and territorial boundaries have also 'combined to undermine the influence of religion in social life' and allowed exposure to other religious/spiritual influences (Maguire and Weatherby, 1998:171). Nevertheless, the arguments that Western world has become secularised and that religion and spirituality can be divorced from each other do not enjoy universal support (Lambert, 2004). For example, Fenn (cited in Szerszynski (2005:15), argues against the notion of increasing secularisation, claiming 'that in contemporary societies the sacred is not so much in decline as being fragmented and diffused'. Offering an alternative perspective, Beckford (1989) argues that secularisation does not signify a decline in religion but, rather, its deregulation. Moreover, current studies reveal a steady rise in the number of people, particularly young people, who are returning to religious ideals (Harvey, 2003; Lambert, 2004).

This revival, described by Harvey (2003:29) as 'religiosity without belonging', is manifested in a growing trend towards non-traditional forms of religion encompassed by the term spirituality (Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott, 1999; Tacey, 2004; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). In an apparent paradox, the decrease in the numbers of conventional religious adherents has not created a religious vacuum; rather, there has been a major shift from formal religious constructs to non-traditional and individuated expressions of religious and/or spiritual beliefs (Wuthnow, 1998; Lambert, 2004; Houtman and Aupers, 2007). In supporting this view, Bouma (2006:5) asserts that secularism is a misapprehension, and spirituality is not on the decline but has 'seeped out of the monopolistic control of formal organisations...resulting in a vastly increasing diversity of both organised religion and private spiritualities'. Reinforcing the notion of a conceptual differentiation between religion and spirituality, Hay and Socha (2005:590) comment on the 'growing propensity for people to split apart the two concepts'. For example, Teasedale (1999:17) states that 'being religious connotes belonging to and

practising a religious tradition' whereas 'being spiritual suggests a personal commitment to a process of inner development that engages us in our totality'. Indeed, it has become increasingly accepted that an individual can be religious without being spiritual and spiritual without being religious (Teasedale, 1999; Thomas, 2006). Thus, it is now commonly acknowledged that religion and spirituality are no longer viewed as inseparable but more often recognised as distinct entities (Bregman, 2005; Estanek, 2006).

In contrasting the two concepts, Pargament (1999) states that religion is now seen as a static entity whereas spirituality is viewed as a dynamic process that allows individuals to seek their own personal path to spiritual enlightenment. This contemporary view allows for evolving meanings of spirituality, and is observable in people who may or may not have a religious background but choose to adopt a number of diverse spiritual beliefs and practices taking a pick and mix approach (de Vulpian, 2008; de Castella, 2013) to spiritual concerns and the nature of existence. Moreover, as we progress further into the twenty-first century, and notwithstanding the secularisation debate, this ideological disconnect between the concepts of religion and spirituality can be witnessed in the opening up of new spiritual horizons affording secular and non-secular guidance and experiences.

3.3 Contemporary Spirituality

The spiritual journey is individual, highly personal. It can't be organized or regulated. It isn't true that everybody should follow one path. Listen to your own truth.

Ram Dass

It is well documented that spirituality and the search for spiritual well-being has become a predominant focus in the contemporary western world (Wuthnow, 1998; Flanagan and Jupp, 2007; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). As Pargament (1999) observes, 'spirituality' is 'in' and religion is 'out'; religion is no longer 'cool'. It has also been noted that religion in contemporary western society has taken on something of a 'negative' image whilst spirituality is viewed in a more positive light (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; de Castella, 2013). Moreover, profound changes have also occurred in spiritual practices, with an emphasis today on personal spiritual fulfilment and private expressions of faith (Heelas, 1996; Ivakhiv, 2003; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). Current trends indicate that spirituality is private and self-directed, an individual undertaking, but Zinnbauer *et al.* (1999:903) caution that 'not to overlook the cultural context in which this construct has emerged, or the fact that spirituality is not expressed or experienced in a social vacuum'. According to them, the rising popularity of

spirituality comes at a time when culture venerates individualism and has little regard for established authority but points out that this increase is accompanied by 'the establishment of numerous spiritual organisations and groups' to facilitate spiritual practices (Zinnbauer *et al.*, (1999:903). In effect, contemporary spiritual expression may be privatised and personalised but, in many cases, these chosen practices may be outside the traditional religious observances but still involve organisational formats such as Scientology, Wicca, EST, Buddhism, and Druidism (Wuthnow, 1998; Carrette and King, 2005; Timothy and Conover, 2006). This argument, however, does not deny the present widespread movement of the individual secular search for spiritual experience but places this development in the socio-cultural context of time, place and preceding events, dynamic and ever evolving.

Despite spiritual fluidity and associations, it can clearly be observed that the last decade has witnessed a growing trend in the search for spiritual engagement, perhaps seen as a response to the stress and disillusionment with materialistic modern day lifestyle (York, 2001; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011; Willson, 2011), or as a response to the jarring uncertainties of the present world and disenchantment with all that is scientific and rational (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Sharpley, 2009; de Castella, 2013). In summary, the cynicism and nihilism of the postmodern, according to Flanagan and Jupp (2007:5), have been rejected, 'hence the turn to hope, to trust and to the need to consider matters of ultimate veracity...spirituality is a revolt against the artificiality of modernity'.

Another visible affliction of postmodern society, as previously discussed, is the condition of placelessness (Relph, 1976). It is argued that, as a consequence of modern urban lifestyles lived largely in non-descript urban centres, and lacking any sense of unity or identity (Roberts, 1996) people increasingly experience a sense of emptiness and hopelessness (Lengfelder and Timothy, 2000; Willson, 2011). The stresses of modern day life and the breakdown of community and family ties have been compounded by secularisation and the consequential collapse of traditional support systems, such as the church (York, 2001; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Timothy and Conover, 2006). This account of modern western living is reminiscent of aspects of Durkheim's (1897) social condition of *anomie*. Contemporary western society has, in a sense, been set adrift with a loss of values and ethics and limited moral and spiritual guidance (Appelrouth and Edles, 2008; Willson, 2011). Therefore, in order to fill the spiritual void, a quest has developed as individuals explore the dimensions of human existence to find hope and meaningful reasons for that existence (Tacey, 2004).

This perspective of contemporary western society as a populace cut off from the traditional support of the church and community, driven by a sense of despair and hopelessness, seeking to fill a spiritual abyss, may be considered 'extreme' and perhaps represents an exaggerated view of reality. In all likelihood, most people probably do not suffer a spiritual void, but it is recognisable that the potential exists for that void. Although, it is not entirely convincing or at least obvious that modern society is in spiritual distress, it is evident that the consumption of experiences ostensibly providing spiritual support, guidance and mental well-being has intensified (York, 2001; Ivakhiv, 2003; Heelas and Woodhead, 2005; Heelas, 2008; Willson, 2011; de Castella, 2013).

The reasons may be diverse but the outcome can be observed in the increased demand for spiritual experiences, which has given rise to the belief that a modern day 'spiritual revolution is occurring (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005: 1). This so-called revolution is witnessed in the evolution of the western world from a religious society to a largely spiritually-minded social order, a revolution that, according to Tacey (2004:1) 'is our secular society realising that it has been running on empty, and has to restore itself at a deep, primal source which is beyond humanity and paradoxically at the very core of our experience'. Exploring the reasons for this phenomenon, Tacey (2004:4) goes on to identify it as a 'counter revolution against materialism, inhumanity, and economic rationalism'. The forces of capitalism and scientific reason may once have defined the western world but it has become harder to assess the worth of things that have no market value, such as emotion, spiritual need and responsibility to oneself and society (Flanagan and Jupp, 2007; Heelas, 2008). Thus, today's preoccupation with spirituality is focussed more on happiness and peace of mind in the here and now rather than insuring a comfortable future in the unknown hereafter (Heelas, 2008).

Theologians and academics generally accept that the postmodern western world has become spiritually rather than religiously inclined (Pargament, 1999; Szerszynski, 2005; Estanek, 2006). Heelas and Woodhead (2005), exploring the claim that conventional religion is ceding to holistic spirituality, have developed the conceptual phrases *life as* and *subjective life*. The term *life as* refers to the idea that, historically, people have belonged to long established community-based social orders, rejecting expectations and thoughts related to their individual being and focusing their attention on their duties and obligations to society at large and other *greater orders*. Thus, the *life as* perceptive suggests an outward focus with obedience to external higher authority; it is defined as the sacrifice of one's own desires to the greater good and the belief that to find the true meaning of life is through compliance to some form of higher power (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005).

In contrast, in contemporary society there has been a significant cultural rejection of *life as* and an alternate move towards *subjective life*. *Subjective life*, as defined by Heelas and Woodhead (2005:3) 'has to do with states of consciousness, states of mind, memories, emotions, passions, sensations, bodily experiences, dreams feelings, inner conscience, and sentiments'. The focus for *subjective life* is internally directed, or person centred, with the individual being one's own authority. The finding of one's own inner direction, seeking self-improvement and enjoying rich and meaningful personal experiences are considered sacred in *subjective life*. The movement away from *life as* to a *subjective life* is observable in many facets of modern day (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005) life but particularly apparent in the shift from an obedience to authoritative religious orders towards seeking personal forms of secular or religious spiritual experiences (Houtman and Aupers, 2007; de Castella, 2013).

The increasing interest in spiritual concerns can be reflected in what Brown (1997) calls 'spiritual commerce', a spiritual marketplace offering quick fix solutions – 'the new cultural Prozac...to calm restless, unfulfilled souls' (Flanagan and Jupp, 2007:7). This can be observed in the emergent number of websites, reading materials, holistic healers and tourist promoters offering ways to spiritual enlightenment and healing. Heelas (1996) refers to this as the 'New Age' of spirituality, whereby the spiritual dimension of individuals' lives has become mainstream business. Contemporary spirituality, according to experts, has been subsumed by the capitalistic doctrine of consumerism, witnessing a movement from the consumption of material goods to the consumption of spirituality (York, 2001; Carrette and King, 2005). In opposition, Heelas (1996:211) refutes the idea that capitalistic commodification has taken over the spiritualities of life, arguing that 'as they are understood and experienced, love and spirituality – let alone tranquillity, wisdom, a sense of being *centred* – transcend the capacities of cash flow'. Spirituality and spiritual wellbeing may have fallen victim to capitalistic forces but this does not deny the recognisable personal quests to achieve healthy body, mind and soul, untouched by the superficiality of the market place (Heelas, 1996; Flanagan and Jupp, 2007). Contemporary spirituality, fuelled by a philosophy of self-empowerment, and liberated from the constraints of established dogma, encourages individuals (and groups) to seek their own spiritual pathways (Wuthnow, 1998; York, 2001); to seek their own vision of the sacred, whether through market offerings or by way of more fundamental and unrefined routes to spiritual health.

3.3.1 Spirituality: a fundamental human trait?

The spiritual well-being of individuals has become relevant to all aspects of life, and is reflected in the increasing number of studies seeking to understand the significance of spirituality and spiritual well-being in a variety of social environments and institutions, such as education, healthcare, business and, of course, tourism and leisure (Bradshaw, 1994; Tischler, 1999; Bridger, 2001; McSherry and Cash, 2004). The principle rationale for this type of research is the perceived importance of nurturing spirituality and spiritual health for both individual and organisational benefits (Burack, 1999; Watts, 2003). Emerging from these scholarly articles is the idea that spirituality is inherent to all individuals. That is, it is considered an innate quality and, therefore, the spiritual wellbeing of humanity is integral to human existence and essential not only as a life-coping mechanism but to humankind's everyday functionality (Chandler, Holden and Kolander, 1992).

The notion that not only is spiritual wellbeing essential to all aspects of life but also that human beings are inherently spiritual is a widely held academic belief; it is a belief that humankind has always had a spiritual life, not necessarily at an awareness level but deeply embedded in the human sub-consciousness (Vukonic, 1996; Teasedale, 1999; Hay and Socha, 2005). Indeed, according to Hay and Socha (2005:598), 'spiritual awareness is a natural human disposition' and religion is only a subset of spirituality. But, what 'is' spirituality?

On the one hand, religion is deemed to be a socially-constructed phenomenon based on cultural and historical beliefs that allows individuals a choice of whether to believe or not; on the other hand, spirituality is deemed to be an intrinsic part of human nature that may encompass both religious and non-religious expression (Hay and Socha, 2005; Flanagan and Jupp, 2007). In essence, this suggests that an individual has no choice in 'being spiritual or not' as spirituality is inborn and an instinctive part of human nature (Maslow, 1971). Consequently, the existential search for finding connection to the world and meaning to human existence may be considered an instinctive and involuntary part of nurturing one's innate spirituality (Teasedale, 1999). Humankind, from prehistoric to modern times, has engaged in spiritual practices, rituals and rites, and the spiritual quest for enlightenment is reflected in the multiplicity of ways, myths and journeys that people have engaged in throughout history (Schmidt, 2005a). If it is accepted that spirituality is natural to the human state, then all people, will at some point in their lives, consciously or subconsciously, seek ways to explore and develop their spiritual being. Spirituality may be an intrinsic part of humankind's psyche but the answer to the question of 'what is spirituality' still remains unclear.

3.3.2 What is spirituality?

And the world cannot be discovered by a journey of miles, no matter how long, but only by a spiritual journey, a journey of one inch, very arduous and humbling and joyful, by which we arrive at the ground at our own feet, and learn to be at home. Wendall Berry

Spirituality, as the buzzword of the age (Brown, 1998), remains an elusive term that defies clear definition (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; Zinnbauer, Pargament and Scott, 1999); as Schmidt and Little (2007:222) assert, 'it is a domain used to describe that which is indefinable, immaterial and affects the core or souls of individuals'. Once firmly contained within religious guidelines, the term spirituality has become disconnected from its traditional religious connotations and presently encompasses a widening, very personal and elective scope of definitions (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; McSherry and Cash, 2004; Bregman, 2005). These definitions represent a spiritual taxonomy that, according to McSherry and Cash (2004:155), can 'range from the religious to the existential to the mystical' depending on philosophical perspective. In the context of modern day interpretations, academics offer several definitions for the term spirituality. It has been described as, amongst other things, 'a desire for connectedness, relating to an invisible sacred presence' (Griffiths, 2006:3), 'a search for universal truth' (Scott, 1997:108) or 'a conscious or unconscious belief that relates to the world and gives meaning and definition to existence' (Scott, 1997:115). Alternatively, Bouma (2006:12) defines spirituality as 'an experiential journey of encounter and relationship with otherness, with powers, forces and beings beyond the scope of everyday life'.

The concept of spirituality is commonly viewed as a phenomenon encompassing elements of transcendence, meaningfulness, connection to the world and others, and frequently, recognition of a higher or divine power (Bregman, 2005; Schmidt, 2005a; Estanek, 2006). Within contemporary society, the term spirituality has become a catch-all word used by individuals, marketers, business organisations and even in political contexts to describe any type of transformative process that purportedly helps an individual to find inner truth, discover the meaning of life and connect with the world (Danesh, 1997; Carrette and King, 2005; Marques, 2006; Heelas, 2008). Thus, this pluralism of definitions and context reflects the nebulousness and malleability of the term spirituality and, as a consequence, will always remain subject to individual and subjective interpretation (Spilka, 1993; Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; McSherry and Cash, 2004). In adding some clarification to a murky concept, the above definitions all offer qualities characteristic of contemporary understanding of the

concept of spirituality. Regardless of definitional obscurities, spirituality has become a personal modern day quest to find meaning and purpose in life, a search that has often evolved into travel to fulfil this need (Digance, 2003; Schmidt and Little, 2007; Willson, 2010).

3.4 The Relationship between Tourism and Spirituality

Travel is more than the seeing of sights; it is a change that goes on, deep and permanent, in the ideas of living.

Miriam Beard

There is increasing reference to the role of travel and tourism in fostering peoples' search to find meaning and purpose in life, and facilitating experiences of personal significance (Cohen, 1979; Ryan, 1995; Prentice, Witt and Hamer, 1998; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Zahra, 2006; Willson, 2010). Tourism is not only about the physical and functional action of movement to a place but can involve psychological benefits, self-actualisation, self-sacrifice, personal development, life changing and spiritual moments (Wilson and Harris, 2006; Willson, 2010). Contemporary tourists are no longer satisfied to just 'gaze' upon different cultures and sights (Urry, 2002) but seek active participation in their experiences, wanting to invoke personal meaning and situate their experiences within the wider context of their lives (McIntosh and Prentice, 1999; Farber, 2007; Lean, 2012).

Tourism is related to the concept of free time and the restorative nature of escaping or getting away from one's everyday existence (McDonald and Schreyer, 1991). For the contemporary tourist, *getting away* no longer means adopting a passive role but instead involves seeking meaningful experiences (Prat and Aspiunza, 2012). More specifically, in an age of consumption and consumer culture, the tourist experience, is considered to be a potential pathway to find happiness and wellbeing (Sharpley and Stone, 2012). Driven by the experience economy, a contemporary cultural business philosophy, experience has become a commodity to be produced and consumed (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Baerenholdt and Jensen, 2008). Particularly relevant to tourism consumption and management, the experience economy considers not only the provision of contemporary tourists experiences but the tourist as the co-producer or co-creator of their own 'memorable' experiences (Prat and Aspiunza, 2012; Sharpley and Stone, 2012). These experiences often relate to personal development, usually the result of a high value service experience that provides some manner of personal

transformation (Morgan, Elbe and Curiel, 2009). Thus, Morgan argues that personal growth and the emotional value of tourism experiences must be essential consideration in the production of tourism products.

In a further discussion of the emotional outcomes from tourism, Sharpley and Stone (2012) draw links between happiness, well-being and the concept of tourism as a secular spiritual experience. In so doing, they relate to arguments presented earlier in this thesis, namely, that contemporary tourism can be thought of as a secular pilgrimage or 'a contemporary journey that is not only physically but spiritually refreshing (Sharpley and Stone, 2012:5). Of course, as suggested in the previous section of this chapter, the concept of spirituality lacks precise definition; consequently, a clear understanding of the spiritual dimension of contemporary tourism is also elusive (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Nevertheless, Sharpley and Stone (2012) acknowledge that certain journeys of spiritual value may lead to happiness. In this way, it can be argued that people who actively seek spirituality through tourist experiences may in effect, be perceived to be seeking happiness. Correspondingly, if happiness (or a positive emotional state) correlates to spiritual experience related to a specific tourist activity, it is likely that the tourist will seek to reproduce that state in the same or similar contexts.

Other commentators have also noted the positive emotional and spiritual well-being of experiences emanating from tourist and leisure pursuits (Heintzman, 2000; Schmidt, 2005a; Schmidt and Little, 2007; Heintzman, 2009; Narayanan and Macbeth, 2009), acknowledging that these activities not only effect the individual at the physical and cognitive levels but also have bearing on spiritual outcomes. Schmidt (2005a:52), however, argues that the spiritual connection is 'more optimistic and anecdotal than empirical and proven'. This perhaps reflects the difficulties in studying the spiritual dimension of tourism which, in turn, are largely related to the emergent or inchoate meanings ascribed to spirituality, meanings that vary culturally, contextually and throughout different academic and professional disciplines (Flanagan and Jupp, 2007). Nevertheless, despite the lack of empirical evidence and theoretically informed understanding, it is generally acknowledged that there exists a spiritual dimension to tourism (Shackley, 2001; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Willson, 2011), whether located within the tourism market place or found through more personal and individual tourist pursuits (Demerath Iii, 2000; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Farber, 2007). The globally expanding tourist marketplace attests to the growth of spiritually motivated tourist products, both secular and non-secular in nature, but equally there are those tourists who seek spiritual refreshment in places and ways that are self-tailored to

satisfy personal needs (Ivakhiv, 2003; Heelas, 2008; Willson, 2010). Therefore, it is important to consider briefly what constitutes the spiritual dimension of tourism.

3.5 Spiritual Tourism: The Spiritual Dimension of Tourism

We are not human beings on a spiritual journey. We are spiritual beings on a human journey.

Stephen R. Covey

The human search for spiritual fulfilment and transcendence, as a dominant contemporary theme, is increasingly evidenced in the area of tourism and leisure pursuits (Schmidt, 2005a; Heintzman, 2009; Narayanan and Macbeth, 2009; Satpathy and Mahalik, 2010; Norman, 2011; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Spiritual travel, historically, fell under the umbrella of religious or cultural tourism but in the post-modern world, the relationship of religion to spirituality has diminished and these changes are reflected in today's tourist marketplace (Timothy and Conover, 2006; Coats, 2008; Willson, 2010). In consequence, this altered, modern day view of religion and spirituality has led to a shift in the motivations, sites and interpretations of religious/spiritual journeys (Rountree, 2002; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Digance, 2006; Haq and Jackson, 2006; Timothy and Conover, 2006).

Owing to the diversity of spiritual tourist activities, spiritual tourism lacks a clear definition as each faction - tourists, religious groups, academics and tourism organisations - hold varying views. The lack of clarity arises from academics viewing spiritual tourism as having a long historic evolution with a distinct religious focus (Vukonic, 1996; Gatfield, 2006; Timothy and Olsen, 2006) whereas in the industry, spiritual tourism is a recent phenomenon recognised only as a division of special interest or cultural tourism. According to Haq and Jackson (2006:5), a spiritual tourist can be defined as:

Someone who visits a place out of his/her usual environment, with the intention of spiritual growth (which could be religious, non-religious, sacred or experiential in nature, but within the Divine context), regardless of the main reason for traveling.

The spiritual tourist is often difficult to distinguish – at what point does the tourist become spiritually motivated and for that matter, at what point does someone on a spiritual quest become a tourist. This is a return to the pilgrim/tourist dichotomy whereby, as explained earlier, each individual tourist has varying degrees of motivation and intent when pursuing activities at spiritual sites or involving spiritual events

(Shackley, 2002). Spiritual tourism, as accepted by academics, entails some form of tourist activity associated with religious sites, rituals, memorials, pilgrimages or alternative interests that largely fall under the umbrella of New Age spiritualities (Heelas, 1996; Sutcliffe and Bowman, 2000; Pearson, 2002). But in effect, contemporary spiritual tourism can be part of any tourist experience, partaking in any activity at any location, dependent on individual interpretation of personal spirituality and context.

3.6 The Secular Sacred

Following from this, contemporary spirituality may or may not be related to the sacred or a least not in the context of religious dogma and principles (Varga, 2007). In adding to this, Varga (2007:145) states that 'aspects of everyday life that previously had no connection with the sacred have become sacralised and have had spiritual significance attributed to them'. The perceived secularisation of society, giving individuals freedom of religious/spiritual expression, has also given rise to a broader interpretation of what defines a place as sacred or spiritually meaningful (Demerath Iii, 2000). Traditionally, sacred places have been associated with constructed and formal environments and generally have not been associated with landscapes and nature (Collins-Kreiner, 2006). The concept that sites may be 'imbued with a spiritual magnetism' (Griffiths, 2006:3) may now be translated to encompass non-conventional places of individual religiosity. This notion is not entirely modern as earlier in the twentieth century Durkheim (1915:52) had opined 'by sacred things, one must not understand simply as those personal things which are called Gods or spirits; a rock a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house, in a word, anything can be sacred'. Contemporary commentators support this view. For example, Timothy and Olsen (2006: 30) assert that 'not all sacred places must be associated with a recognised religious body'. In attempting to characterise sacred places, Lane cited in Driver *et al.* (1996:73) suggested four guidelines: i) a sacred place is not chosen it chooses, ii) a sacred place can be an ordinary place, ritually revealed as extraordinary, iii) a sacred place is intimately related to our state of consciousness, and iv) the impulse of sacred place is both local and universal. Following on from this, Roberts (1996:23) states several reasons for places becoming spiritually valued or sacred, which are: physically unique places, places where human actions do not dominate, places of cultural history or context, places with special energy conditions, healing places and inaccessible places. Ultimately, the concept of sacredness has come to encompass sites of non-religious associations significant to the individual(s) resulting from personal connections, memories or experiences of that place. This returns us to conceptual understanding of

space and place, reinforcing the idea considered in Chapter 2 of this thesis that undifferentiated space becomes place through human experiences that endow it with value and meaning (Tuan, 1977). Consequently, places can become sacralised or spiritually meaningful because individuals or groups determine, through personal or cultural events, that a particular non-religious space is worthy of veneration, secular or non-secular.

Taking a broader approach to the concept of sacredness and, equally, to a more comprehensive designation of spiritually meaningful places, has expanded the scope of research in a number of areas, in particular the natural environment. Nature has been deified and revered throughout human history from the ancient mysticisms, to the archaic religions on to the monotheistic traditions, all exalting the sublime sacred qualities and transcendent characteristics of nature (Schroeder, 1991; Egri, 1997; Booth, 1999). The conservation of natural areas adopting a 'nature as sacred perspective' has become topical for academics, environmental scientists and preservationists (Mallarach, Papayannis and Vaisanen, 2010). For example, McIntosh (2010) examines the 'sacredness' of natural sites in Scotland, arguing for the combining of spiritual and scientific viewpoints for eco-system preservation and Carmichael, Hubert, Reeves and Schande (1994) explore the concept of sacredness and preservation in terms of heritage and cultural landscapes.

3.7 Spirituality, Nature and the Countryside

*And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man:
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.*

Wordsworth (1798)

Mankind's relationship with the natural environment is a long and complex one highlighted by the spiritual significance of nature. Nature has always held an aura of mysteriousness and enchantment, inspiring respect, ritual and worship (Schroeder, 1991; Booth, 1999). Throughout history, from the ancient divinities of pre-Christian

cultures through to the monotheistic beliefs of Christianity, Judaism and Islam, humankind's relationship to nature reflects religious ways of thinking and acting (Szerszynski, 2005). Religious history, it is argued, has conditioned humankind's understanding and view of nature and sanctioned the sacralisation of nature. Adding further, Szerszynski (2005) acknowledges secular contemporary societies have witnessed 'a revival of *nature religion*, forms of religiosity that make nature their central object of concern and sacralisation, this contemporary views and practices around nature signal a post-modern sacred, 'a mode of being-in-the-world and universe (Szerszynski, 2005:9). In Szerszynski's view, this is a Western cultural outcome, shaped by a long and distinct history and specific contemporary circumstances. Additionally, Roberts (1996) believes that people perceive nature through a cultural lens, impacted by social institutions such as religion, science, philosophy, economics, politics and art.

Nature as a place of contemplation, valorising solidarity, harmony and the spirit of humanity is a common theme recited throughout time, from past to present. (Schroeder, 1991; Szerszynski, 2005). Currently though, several commentators deem Western civilisations to have lost their spiritual relationships and connection to the Earth (Berry, 1990; Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner and Peterson, 1996; Gottlieb, 2004). This may be related to religion's smaller role in contemporary society, now displaced by science and technology, which has had the effect, of reducing nature to a commodity, a physical resource to be consumed (Roberts, 1996; Szerszynski, 2005). Equally though, there are signs that a contemporary response to nature indicates a spiritual renewal or spiritual awakening (Ashley, 2007). For instance, spiritual awareness and spiritual imperatives have become the theoretical framework for studies on public land management, environmental sustainability and national park operations in natural areas (Mitchell, Force, Carroll and McLaughlin, 1993; Fredrickson and Kerr, 1998; Schroeder, 2002; Ashley, 2007; de Pater, Scherer-Rath and Mertens, 2008). Rolston (1996:21) supports this philosophical attitude to research, commenting that 'a pristine natural system is a spiritual resource as well as a scientific, recreational and aesthetic, or economic one'. Deep ecology or eco spirituality, also a new area of research, connects the science of ecology with spirituality as a means of improving human-nature interactions (Booth, 1999). This philosophy views humankind as part of a natural process, holding no higher value than the rest of nature and suggesting that spirituality helps raise awareness of the living world and create sense of identification within that world (Booth, 1999; Gelter, 2000). The awareness of our spiritual human/nature interactions has become a leading focus in considerations of public environmental concern and responsibility.

In the context of leisure and tourism, emergent literature has explored natural environments, such as the wilderness, forests, rivers, the ocean and the outdoors, examining emotive/spiritual outcome (Springer and McAvoy, 1992; Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Taylor, 2001; Williams and Harvey, 2001; Allcock, 2003; Bull, 2006; Heintzman, 2010). These studies indicate that spirituality, in some form, can be experienced in a diverse range of natural landscapes. The spiritual benefits manifested in different environments vary according to participants' individual experiences and expectations (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson, 1992; Arnould and Price, 1993; Daniel, 2007; Heintzman, 2010). The physical environment, in its different states seems to 'heighten one's level of sensory awareness' (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999:34), and this increased level of consciousness appears conducive to spiritual inspiration and meaningful experience. Transcendent or spiritual experiences in nature produce a state of 'flow' whereby 'the usual distinctions between self and object are lost' (Williams and Harvey, 2001:250). The various studies also showed a correlation between the natural environment and emotional outcomes such as a deep sense of belonging, a sense of place, a profound connection with the world and harmonious feelings (Arnould and Price, 1993; Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Williams and Harvey, 2001; Heintzman, 2007). Solitude, silence, time and space were all important factors in spiritual well-being and nature was seen as life-giving and rejuvenating (Heintzman, 1999). In some cases, societal factors, or 'communitas', contributed to the transcendent or spiritual experiences of participants (Heintzman, 2007).

A large body of research has explored the spiritual effects of the natural environment investigating areas such as mountains, caves, forests, rivers and other water sources. Bull's (2006) research attempts to show a relationship between the seaside and spirituality; Springer and McAvoy (1992), Fredrickson and Anderson (1999) and Heintzman (2003; 2007) have studied the connection spirituality has with wilderness experiences; Williams and Harvey (2001) examined spirituality and forests; Taylor's (2001) paper looks at nature based spirituality; the outdoors and spirituality are documented by Allcock (2003); and other studies have related spiritual well-being to leisure activities (Doohan, 1990; McDonald and Schreyer, 1991; Heintzman and Mannell, 2003; Heintzman, 2009). The outcome of these studies demonstrates a strong link between spiritual experience and natural spaces, in particular environments removed from built up areas. This offers a clear indication that nature and the outdoors may provide a trigger for emotionally and spiritually positive experiences, areas commonly found in more rural settings.

Humankind's intangible relationship with natural places, as mentioned earlier in Chapter Two, is complex and multidimensional (Ashley, 2007), but present literature has clearly identified associations between nature and spiritual experience. Numerous academics have argued for human/nature interaction as essential to the human psyche and to the inherent spiritual nature of man (Schroeder, 1991; Kaplan, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Gelter, 2000; Szerszynski, 2005; Schroeder, 2007). Nature, according to Gelter (2000:78) offers a place for 'spiritual connectedness with the landscape...a new level of consciousness and a spiritual wholeness'. Nature, as a catalyst for spiritual inspiration, is viewed as an equaliser of mankind and nature (Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner and Peterson, 1996; Booth, 1999), an environment stirring spiritual consciousness by the impact of the landscape, the power of nature (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999), and the eternal, timeless quality of the natural world (Magary, 1996). A sense of awe and wonder is invoked in natural environments and, according to Kaplan and Talbot (1983:178), 'one's intimate contact with this environment leads to thoughts about spiritual meanings and eternal processes'. Within contemporary cultures, people's desire to interact with nature has been reawakened (Ashley, 2007), perhaps a renewed need, to seek out natural environments in order to experience the intangible.

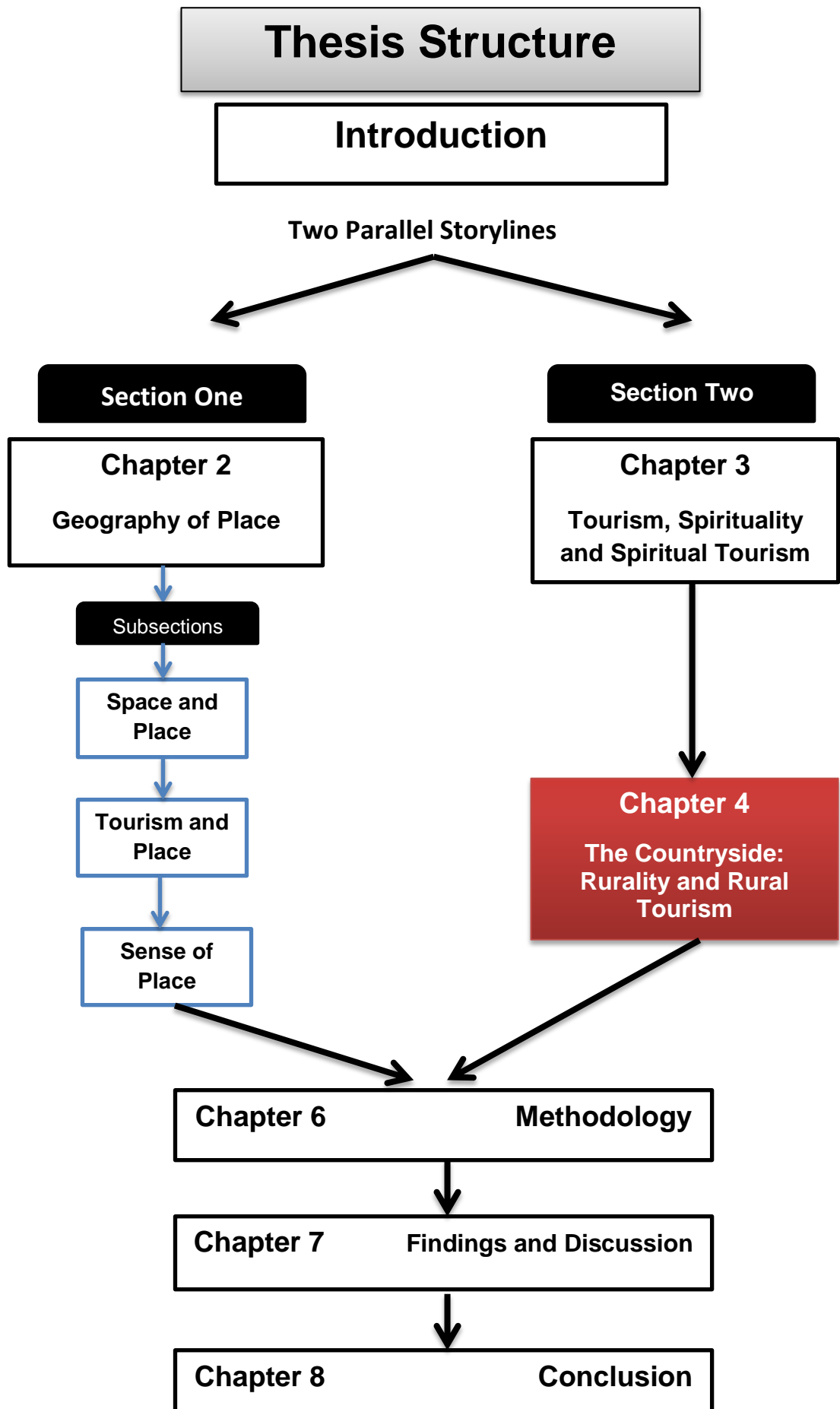
Nature is not exclusive to rural areas, but it is normal in western society to link nature to the countryside; the populace's greatest exposure to the natural environment is in the countryside. In seeking to interact and connect with nature, tourists will often visit places in rural areas to fulfil their physical, emotional and psychological needs (Mannell, 1996). The countryside, as the antithesis to the perceived negative effects of the built environment (Roggenbuck and Driver, 1996), has become instrumental in promoting relaxation, restoration and spiritual benefits associated with leisure activities in natural settings (Mannell, 1996; Ashley, 2007).

3.8 Summary

In summary, this chapter has considered the connection of tourism to religious/spiritual beginnings and explored the *tourism as religion* theory framing the contention that tourism, as a substitute for traditional religious practices, has come to be regarded as a spiritual or sacred journey used to fulfil the human need to find meaning in life. Secularisation and the evolution of spirituality were illustrated in the rise of contemporary spirituality and growth of spiritual tourism. The idea was developed that a principle consideration of modern day society is individual freedom of expression and choice, both aspects of contemporary tourism and spirituality. The ensuing discussion linked the contemporary search for individual spirituality to the idea that tourism fosters

peoples' search to find meaning and purpose in life, and is instrumental in facilitating experiences of personal significance. At this point, the concept of secular sacred places was discussed, advancing the claim that in contemporary society there is a broader interpretation of what defines a place as sacred or spiritually meaningful. This led to a return to the concept of place, affirming the theme of people's emotional and spiritual engagement with tourist places referred to in Chapter 2. The final section determined that the role of the countryside in tourist experiences reveals a connection between natural places and spiritual outcomes.

This sets the stage for the next chapter which focuses on the countryside, looking at historical developments of countryside and the growth of rural tourism. Revisiting the concept of place and the construction of place, it will consider societal understanding of rurality, the social construction of countryside and events leading from the early development of rural tourism to present day. The discussion will also consider how the construction of the countryside through the centuries has influenced tourism and the role of nature and the natural environment in defining the present day vision of the countryside.



Chapter Four

The Countryside: Rurality and Rural Tourism

*Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid nature.*

William Cowper

4.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapters, two topics fundamental to this thesis were identified and explored. In Chapter 1, focusing on the geography of place, the conceptual understanding of place and humankind's connection to place were explored and located within a tourism framework. Chapter 2 then addressed the development of spiritual tourism, from its historic roots through to contemporary expressions of the spiritual dimension of tourism. This was considered within the context of relevant tourism theory, establishing a foundation for the subsequent discussion of spirituality in natural environments. Collectively, these two chapters lead to the theme of this chapter, an exploration of the countryside as a tourism destination, evaluating the concept of rurality, the growth of rural tourism and the experience of the outdoors and nature. The purpose of this chapter is to clarify the concept of 'rurality', exploring the effects of these factors on the public image of countryside whilst examining closely the power of social representation in the making of the countryside. The countryside, as a socially constructed place, has had considerable bearing on how rural Britain is perceived, not only nationally but globally. The countryside has become representative of a rural idyll, drawing from an imagined and idealised past, set within the framework of sublime landscapes and quintessential villages that seduce with a promise of escape from the pressures of contemporary life. The pull of the countryside can be witnessed by the steady growth of rural tourism and a growing interest in exploring more natural environments.

4.1 Rural Tourism and Place

Rural places, as all places, are spaces of representation; spaces culturally, economically and politically produced (Anderson, 2009; Woods, 2011). The social production of the *space* of the countryside developed from the manipulation and production of spaces in nature (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Nature and the wildness

of rural areas, once seen as a threat, were tamed and over time, mythical pastoral representations became firmly entrenched in British culture (Woods, 2011). The countryside, conceived as an imagined space, has become a place characterised by scenic beauty offering relaxation, family time, outdoor exploits, history, tradition and perhaps most importantly, escape - escape from the negative effects of city living (Kastenholz and Lima, 2011). This vision of the countryside has historic origins that persist today; a vision that continues to mobilise tourists into rural areas and provide the stimulus for rural tourism, an industry responsible for economic and social regeneration of much of the countryside in Britain.

In essence, though, rural tourism largely emerged from the Romantic Movement, an era that elevated the status of nature and led the way in the valorisation of the countryside, providing the initial impetus for tourism in the early nineteenth century (Lane, 2009). The popular cultural representation of the English countryside idyll stems both from the works of the Romantic poets and artists, and from present day influences that have engendered an on-going and omnipresent vision of rurality and rural life (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Horton, 2008). Moreover, the steady rise of rural tourism, certainly in recent decades is, in part, attributable to a clear and conscious effort to reinforce and strengthen these deeply ingrained images of rural idyll in order to stimulate economic diversification, to consolidate political geographical boundaries and to promote a collective national identity of England as predominantly rural (Burchardt, 2002; Woods, 2011), a green and pleasant land (Newby, 1979). Consequently, rural tourism grew rapidly in the latter half of the twentieth century and the countryside became known as the 'playground of the urban population' (Hall and Page, 1999:189).

It is evident that tourism in rural Britain stems from a long history of events that has culminated with contemporary rural tourism adding significantly to the rural economy as the lure of the countryside stimulates people's imaginations and draws them away from urban living. Equally, other societal factors such as greater mobility, increased leisure time and more financial security are all factors in the that have underpinned the increasing popularity of rural tourism (Harrison, 1991; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Lane, 2009). As a result, over the last decades, the continued development of the countryside as a consumable commodity has led to greater academic scope of interest in the rural tourism sector and the rural visitor (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Lane, 2009; Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). Motivations for visiting rural areas are diverse, reflecting the fact that the variety and scope of opportunities and activities are equally diverse. Undoubtedly, the aesthetic value of rural landscapes is significant to most tourism activities but, correspondingly, the motivations of relaxation, escapism, romance and adventure, fundamental to participation in most forms of tourism, are also

of primary consideration in rural tourism (Cain, 2013). Indeed, for many, the countryside is a place to pursue recreational activities that involve engaging with the outdoors and interacting with the natural environment (Kastenholz and Lima, 2011).

Given the long popularity of rural tourism, it is not surprising that research into the phenomenon is not a new trend. To a great extent, however, the focus of such research has been concerned primarily with rural areas as a tourist resource, exploring either the economic potential or management of these areas (Sharpley, 2006). Conversely, within recent studies only a limited comprehensive understanding of 'the rural resource base as a multi-faceted environment accommodating a wide range of uses' (Hall and Page, 1999:273) has emerged whilst even more limited attention has been paid to developing insight into tourists' subjective and emotional experience of the countryside (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011), the primary focus of this thesis.

4.2 What is Rural Tourism?

The question 'what is rural tourism?' is riddled with complexities that have challenged academics, government and industry alike. It is difficult to define precisely as the term rural tourism is commonly used to describe a broad range of tourism activities that take place in the ambiguously defined 'rural' countryside (Page and Getz, 1997; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Hall and Page, 1999). Moreover, other terms, such as farm tourism or agritourism, are often interchanged with the phrasing *rural tourism*, further muddying the meaning and blurring perceptions of what constitutes rural tourism.

In simple terms, rural tourism is tourism that occurs in rural areas or the countryside. However, countryside, itself, is a vague concept, open to interpretation and continuously blurred by the ever-changing nature of rural areas as they acquire characteristics and activities commonly associated with urban spaces (Sharpley, 2006; Lane, 2009). In an attempt at clarification, Lane (1994) established a complex definition of rural tourism that included the concepts: i) located in rural area, ii) functionally rural (built on the special features of the countryside), iii) rural in scale (small scale), iv) varied (representing the complexities of the rural environment), v) traditional in character (local ownership, local products) and perhaps, most significantly, vi) the high importance of the countryside for consumer satisfaction. Further developing the debate, Sharpley (2006:152), highlights the tangible and intangible characteristics of the countryside, arguing that tourism demands must be considered in the context of a changing rural environment and that visitor classification should be accorded by activity rather than place. This is exemplified by Roberts and Hall's (2001:184) continuum *the importance of the purpose of the visit to tourist satisfaction*, which demonstrates the

environmental agencies has arisen over the complexities of identifying factors that determine what is rural, and providing a definition of 'rural' (Hoggart, 1990; Cloke and Little, 1997; Anderson, 2009; Woods, 2011). Early interpretations of rural space were associated with the provision of natural resources such as food, fuel and building material but this functional perspective on rurality has evolved into a view of the rural as a playground offering scenic views, outdoor pursuits and tranquillity (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Woods, 2011). Generally today, when people envision the countryside, there is a perception of areas devoid of heavy human activity and unburdened by the pressures commonly associated with urban environments (Sharpley and Jepson, 2011). There is the attraction of restful landscapes and an unhurried rhythm to life; a synthesis of timelessness and the harmony of nature (Little and Austin, 1996; Cloke and Little, 1997; Horton, 2008). This imagined countryside lures people from fast-paced lives to seek solace and peace in calmer surroundings, but more practical understanding of what truly defines rural from non-rural is far more complex and multi-faceted, requiring contextual knowledge of political, economic, social and geographical issues that define areas as 'rural' (Halfacree, 1993; Anderson, 2009). The countryside, seen in comparison to modernity and urbanity, symbolises a past associated with traditional values; a simpler age of innocence, without complication and contention (Bunce, 1994; Little and Austin, 1996). Nonetheless, these factors, although informative and germane in offering a socio-spatial determination of rural, are of limited use in clearly characterising the meaning of 'rural' places. For example, in economic terms, shifting rural economies have moved away from agricultural means of income to diversification geared largely towards tourism (Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Fursdon, 2003; Pender and Sharpley, 2005; Halfacree, 2007), which has seen the countryside become 'an object of consumption rather than a means of production' (Burchardt, 2002:5). Rural spaces can no longer be distinguished by agricultural usage or the provision of natural resources but offer greater scope of meaning and increased functionality.

Geographically, there exist no clear cut boundaries to delineate the rural from the non-rural; rather there is an unconscious collective conceptualisation of rural, linking countryside to agricultural land usage and, more recently, largely as spaces for recreational and tourist pursuits (Hoggart, 1990; Burchardt, 2002; Woods, 2011). Political interpretation of the rural fails to look at the intrinsic nature of rural spaces, viewing them as entities of administrative power and policy, employing quantifiable measurements to determine the *ruralness* of places (Cloke and Little, 1997). Consequently, in an attempt to distinguish more clearly the characteristics of the rural, Cloke and Park (1985) devised the Index of Rurality, a comprehensive non-linear

continuum measuring specific characteristics from rural to non-rural. This Index provides relevant empirical data but has limited success in capturing the subtle and subjective associations of 'rural'. As a result, socio-cultural definitions have been offered as a way of capturing the meaning of rural by contrasting the characteristics of people based on the environmental setting (rural to urban) where they live (Halfacree, 1993). Clearly, divining the meaning of rural is not a simple task.

Capturing a true understanding of the concept of *rural*, according to Anderson (2009), is perhaps easier if examined in terms of what it is not rather than what is. Rurality, in post-modern society, is seen in sharp contrast to urban (Murdoch and Pratt, 1993), it is the 'otherness' of rural that defines it, but still this does not clearly identify the features and characteristics that order this 'otherness' (Little, 1999). Halfacree (1993) supports a distinction between rural and urban but, at the same time, argues that rural/urban dichotomies are simplistic and are unable to account for urban features of rural society or the existence of aspects of rurality in urban areas. Similarly, Woods (2011:28) claims that the fluidity of the actual boundaries between town and country belies the existence of urban-rural differences.

Spatial definitions employed by rural geographers categorise rural as being 'dominated by extensiveness of land either at the present time or in the immediate past' (Wibberley, Rogers and Bielckus, 1972). However, the concept of *rural* is generally accepted to encompass a number of distinctive qualities: agricultural land use, deprivation, remoteness, sparsely populated land areas, open spaces of undeveloped land and removal from urban centres, (Wilson, 1992; Page and Getz, 1997; Butler and Hall, 1998) but these distinctions do not capture the essence of 'ruralness'. Woods (2011) argues for a time-spaces definition of rural, believing the concept of rural is as much about when was the rural as where, accounting for the vision of the rural as nostalgic spaces linked to the past, in juxtaposition to modernity.

More comprehensively, rural is, according to Sharpley and Sharpley (1997:5), 'both a geographical definition and a description of the cultural characteristics of societies and communities in the countryside'. Effectively, the term rural encompasses a multiplicity of meanings based on economic, political, spatial and physical properties impacted by cultural interpretations and perceptions (Anderson, 2009). As a result, rural is a concept that remains elusive, (Newby, 1979; Pratt, 1996; Darby, 2000; Anderson, 2009) not definitive in any clear tangible form and subject to fluid ideas and associations that have developed over time, still open to continuous exploration and challenge (Hoggart, 1990). Consequently, if the concept of rural eludes both spatial and socio-cultural definitions, then an alternative determinism is needed to inform an

explanation of rural. According to Burchardt (2002), clearer understanding of the concept of rurality can be located in the theoretical understanding and cultural discourse of social representation. Social representations, according to Halfacree (1993:29) 'attempts to outline how people understand, explain and articulate the complexity of stimuli and experiences emanating from the social and physical environment in which they are immersed'. In effect, social representations are thought to signify both the processes of collective meaning-making, and the result of social constructions, which, additionally, may be modified by individual interplay with social structures (Hojer, 2011).

4.4 Conceptualising the Countryside

Conceptions of the countryside in contemporary society are still inclined to associate rural areas with agriculture processes but, although historically this association was accurate, through the centuries rural spaces have had to adapt to shifting economies and new land usage demands (Bunce, 1994; Little and Austin, 1996; Burchardt, 2002). Socio-cultural transformations in attitudes towards the countryside were seen as a response to a combination of wide ranging factors including economic, political and cultural forces (Bunce, 1994). In particular, the evolution of the countryside's image from backward places of harsh impoverished existence to landscapes of attraction and appeal is a process that began in the early 1800's and, as noted in the previous section, has witnessed the transformation of the rural economy from one of production to consumption (Newby, 1979; Lane, 2009; Woods, 2011). Academics concur that historic changes to the countryside arose from the mechanisation of the means of production and distribution in agriculture, the onset of the industrial revolution combined with increased transportation links and society's growing attraction to the countryside as a result of socio-cultural events (Bunce, 1994; Sharpley and Sharpley, 1997; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Burchardt, 2002).

The emergent fascination for rural landscape, particularly seen as the antithesis to city life, has been a principal factor in the development of tourism and leisure in the countryside (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). The contrast of the rural landscape to the urban landscape or the *Otherness* of rural has had a profound effect on people's view of the countryside and their motivation to engage with rural settings. The meanings of the countryside and the strength of these associations have emerged through events largely occurring in the last two centuries but these social constructed ideals of rural spaces have been deliberately fostered, reinforced and mediated by contemporary society and other vested interests (Cloke, 1997; Horton, 2008).

Although, it is beyond the scope and intent of this thesis to investigate history in any great depth, it is necessary to appreciate the influences of history on contemporary understanding and perceptions of the countryside in Britain. It is through the lens of past events that the modern day construction of the concept of countryside has evolved.

4.5 The Transformation of the Rural

'God Made the Country and Man Made the Town'

William Cowper

In looking back to the ancient Greeks, Romans and Mesopotamians, there is clear testament to the early veneration of the countryside. Bunce (1994:5), reflecting on classical civilisations' attitudes, asserts that 'modern sentiment for the countryside is the latest version of an ancient theme'. Evidence shows that the downfall of these civilisations brought to the end a development of early urban centres (Brunn, Williams and Zeigler, 2003). Britain, throughout history, was predominantly rural having little pre-existing large scale urban history (Short, 1992). Consequently, until the onset of the Industrial Revolution, the country remained largely rurally populated (Bunce, 1994; Darby, 2000; Holden, 2005). History also demonstrates that until industrialisation, it was the norm for aristocracy and commoners alike to live rural lifestyles as there were few large population centres (Burchardt, 2002). It is generally accepted that the Industrial Revolution and the development of urban centres led to the contextualisation of an urban/rural divide, with rural and urban perceived as opposing concepts (Burchardt, 2002; Woods, 2011). With the growth of cities during the 1800's and the profound changes to society and the landscape the term countryside was coined to delineate between urban and non-urban physical environment and to distinguish between the rural and urban social environment and lifestyle (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). The appeal and appreciation of the countryside would develop later with the Romantic Era as a revolt against industrialisation, societal norms and the scientific rationalisation of nature (Seaton, 2013).

Economically, with regards to rural areas, the most cited factor for changing attitudes in the 1800s arose not from events occurring in the countryside but as a consequence of the forces shaping the urban landscape (Bunce, 1994; Burchardt, 2002). The onset of the Industrial Revolution witnessed a structural shift in England from an economy largely based on rural production to an urban production base, from agriculture to industry (Hopkins, 2000; Burchardt, 2002). Academics recognise that the shift in

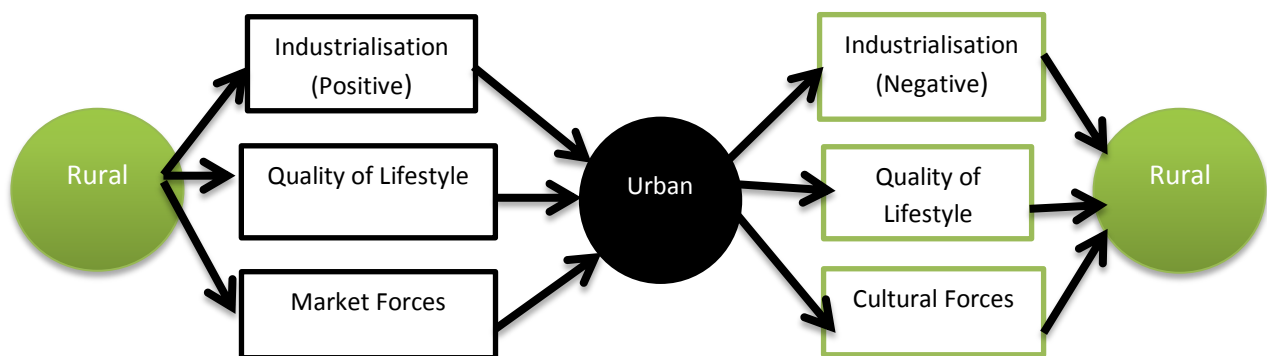
investment directives from agricultural focus to urban industrial ventures triggered the migration of people from rural areas to towns and cities to seek employment (Wrigley, 1988; Hopkins, 2000; Holden, 2005). Equally, the enclosure movement begun in the eighteenth century not only significantly changed the rural landscape (Butler and Hall, 1998) but was responsible for the loss of rural agricultural workers' income and jobs forcing them into urban centres for employment (Burchardt, 2002). As a consequence, whereas in 1800, 80% of the British population lived in the countryside; by 1900, 80% lived in urban centres (Burchardt, 2002). This large scale influx of people into the cities forced many of the working class into overcrowded, unsafe and unsanitary living conditions (Bunce, 1994). Documentation shows that by the middle of the 1800's, the typical British subject was working in industry rather than agriculture with the majority of the population living in cities (Burchardt, 2002; Holden, 2005).

Historians agree that urbanisation and industrialisation, thought to help alleviate economic woes, were instead responsible for social and environmental issues with people living in squalor, problems of ill health and widespread pollution (Bunce, 1994). As a consequence, this radical transformation of the structure of the economy was to have profound effects on subsequent attitudes to the countryside; effects compounded by the perceived detrimental effects of urban living (Harrison, 1991). The loss of community as a result of urbanisation saw a breakdown in societal norms, a displaced population (Bunce, 1994) that perhaps can be seen as an early form of contemporary 'placelessness'. According to Anderson (2009:3), industrialisation and urbanisation led to a 'dislocation and fragmentation of society' that he believes prompted the populace to search for a utopia, in this case arcadia, in order to 'recreate communities human solidarity'. Consequently, the countryside, once vilified, became the antithesis to the evils of urban living; an answer to the declining lifestyle of the city and the materialistic aims of a capitalistic society (Harrison, 1991).

It has been noted that although the middle and upper classes did not endure the harsh living and working conditions of the lower classes, the visual and social effects of urbanisation and industrialisation advanced pro-country sentiment (Bunce, 1994). Initially, the shift in views of rural life was observed amongst educated people who began to regard the countryside 'as a repository for their dreams and yearnings - a Golden age that represented all that the city was not' (Harrison, 1991:17). Subsequently, this changing vision of the countryside filtered down to a rising middle class armed with new found wealth and eager to emulate the upper class intelligentsia (Bunce, 1994; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). Benefitting from industrialisation, accessibility to rural areas became a non-issue as transportation and transport links to the most remote regions enabled new classes of society opportunities to explore and

enjoy leisure activities in the countryside (Short, 1992; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). These factors are accepted as instrumental in paving the way for the rising interest and steady growth of visitors to the countryside (Bunce, 1994) aligned with the vision of a countryside characterised 'by tradition, stability and permanence' (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998:185). Figure 4.2 below illustrates the variable effects of the Industrial Revolution and the evolving views of rurality.

Figure 4.2: Countryside and Industrialisation



4.6 Literary, Artistic and Mediated Influences on the Rural

Many of the historic influences of the past centuries have determined the postmodern understanding and vision of the English countryside. Today, these compelling artistic/literary representations, augmented by more recent mediated representations continue to sustain and promote an idealistic, romanticised view of rural settings (Newby, 1979; Butler and Hall, 1998; Burchardt, 2002). Bunce (1994:37) has argued that in a culture increasingly disconnected from interaction with nature, the land and country life, the main stimulus for the idealisation of the countryside has been the images and values propagated through early literary and artistic works and, more recently, the persuasive power of mediated representations. The popular *Picturesque* artists focused on the non-rational aesthetic appeal of places of subliminal beauty (Darby, 2000) dramatizing the scenery and seeking to arouse audience sentiment. Darby (2000) has pointed out that the valorisation of the landscape led to a new envisioning of the countryside, a transformation of space devoid of culture to places of cultural value. At a point in history when British nationalism was high, the aesthetic appeal of inspirational landscapes captured the imagination of the British upper and

middle classes (Darby, 2000). Numerous artists' works captured evocative, iconic images, depicting rural spaces as landscapes of hills, craggy tors, waterfalls, woods and fields with ancient ruins rising in the background (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). These served to arouse powerful emotions in those who viewed them and to embed iconic and subliminal imagery into a collective subconscious (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Darby, 2000). This romantic preoccupation with the rural managed to successfully whitewash the deprivation and poverty of life in the largely agricultural based English countryside, lending instead to the Arcadian notion of countryside, an imagined place of rural bliss (Anderson, 2009; Woods, 2011) .

The countryside was to remain at the forefront of socio-cultural attention as Romanticism (1850 – early 1900s) arose out of the Picturesque Movement. Romanticism was believed to be a reaction to the scientific and rational mind-set prevalent prior to and during the Industrial Revolution (Burchardt, 2002) and was a Movement that spread through art into literature and philosophy (Helsinger, 1996; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Darby, 2000; Lane, 2009). Romantic artists such as Constable, Cole and Turner and the evocative writings of the poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Keats were responsible for the continued influence on public perceptions of an idyllic countryside (Helsinger, 1996). In contrast to the growing acclaim for the countryside by the Romantic poets, other writers decried urbanisation and the effects of industrialisation. Literary representation by authors such as Hardy, Dickens or Trollope highlighted the depraved and vice filled existence of urban living. These eighteenth century authors offered a commonly depicted imagery of humanity living in dirt and squalor amongst smoke filled factories, experiencing all forms of human degradation. Portrayals such as this formed part of the iconography of that era and influenced attitudes towards life in urban centres (Burchardt, 2002). Other writers described the dark, satanic nature of cities whilst extolling the virtues of the countryside. Wordsworth, for example, through his poetry, did both, condemning the city...

*What a hell
For eyes and ears, what anarchy and din,
Barbarian and infernal – 'tis a dream
Monstrous in colour, motion, shape, sight, sound!*

Wordsworth

(1805)

...and exalting the countryside:

*All things that love the sun are out of doors;
The sky rejoices in the morning's birth;
The grass is bright with rain-drops;--on the moors
The hare is running races in her mirth;
And with her feet she from the plashy earth
Raises a mist, that, glittering in the sun,
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run.*

Wordsworth

(1807)

The Romantic artistic/literary movement and society's growing interest in nature and the natural environment are seen as backlashes against urban living and industrialisation (Burchardt, 2002). These sentiments were to have a profound cultural effect on how countryside was understood and the meanings society attached to rural settings (Darby, 2000). These factors are deemed to be significant in the return of the populace, largely as visitors, into the more natural surroundings of the countryside.

4.7 From Social Construction to Social Consumption

Landscape is fundamental to the English identity and exists primarily in the imagination of the national psyche. People may live in towns but in their imagination England is rural.

Sir Roy Strong

For the majority of people, the concept of rural has a clear and powerful meaning usually related to personal experiences and collective ideologies, not necessarily a uniform definition but rather an expression of similar characteristics believed to be representative of *rural*. Mormont (1990:40) refers to rural as a 'category of thought', which Woods (2011:16) states is 'a description that emphasises that the rural is first imagined, then represented, then takes on material form as places, landscapes and ways of life are shaped to conform to the expectations that the idea of the *rural* embodied'. The modern English countryside is an ideal, a mixture of myth and reality, that has developed over the last centuries through a combination of historical, societal and cultural processes that have shaped rural Britain's growth and forged a national identity (Short, 1991; Burchardt, 2002; O'Reilly, 2007). Darby (2000:125) is quick to point out that, in reality, two myths have been perpetuated: 'the countryside as a place of harmony and of England as still being a rural nation'. Agrarian rusticity and the

economic realities of rural survival have ceded from the collective mind set of the general population, replaced by symbolic conceptions of an invented and sanitised rural lifestyle (Newby, 1979; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Darby, 2000). The propagation of evocative representations of British rural life and landscapes has inspired an affection for a countryside that appears to advance the more basic human values commonly associated with a simpler way of life, the purity of nature and a lifestyle based around family, community, tradition (Bunce, 1994) and moral fortitude (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). These myths of rurality, firmly embraced, have become entrenched in the country's national identity.

Despite academic and official difficulties of clearly defining 'rural', as previously considered, there exists a strong collective ideal of the rural represented by imaginings of a bucolic countryside, a green and pleasant land (Newby, 1979); a romanticised view of rural lifestyle, evoking sentimental notions of more innocence and peaceful times framed by landscapes of exceptional beauty. Consequently, this nostalgia for an imagined countryside of the past has had a profound effect on how contemporary society interprets and engages with rural spaces, and this has contributed to the increasing consumption of rural spaces (Darby, 2000; Roberts, 2004). This phenomenon can be witnessed in the large numbers of people pursuing leisure and recreational activities in the countryside. What is perhaps difficult to ascertain is the significance of the social construction of rural places on influencing tourists' decision making processes?

The countryside is viewed as a place to 'escape to', a calmer environment, away from the fast pace of city life (Kastenholz and Lima, 2011) and ostensibly offering a more authentic experience (Sharpley, 2006). Rurality has acquired a special mystique, becoming a place of retreat, valued for its restorative qualities (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). Previously in this review, it has been suggested that individuals 'place' interactions may develop into "a deep psychological association with a particular geographic region, a specific locale, or even, perhaps a spot that holds no significant meaning for anyone but the individual" (Fredrickson, 1999: 22). In effect, the distinctive qualities found in countryside may inspire visitors to forge attachments to certain rural places, encouraging a *sense of belonging* or a *sense of place*. Sense of place, or love of place, as previously considered in this thesis, is the complex relationship that individuals or groups forge with particular places; the emotional significance, symbolic meanings and attachments of a specific place generated by the physical elements of a spatial setting, the cultural influences and activity/event place usage.

Significantly, the power of sense of place in tourism is observable in the marketing of rural places by tourist boards. For example, Powys Sustainable Tourism incorporates the concept of sense of place in their initiative whilst also notable are the Forest of Bowland Sense of Place Project and the Cumbria Tourism Sense of Place Toolkit. In order to effectively promote sense of place, visitors are helped to identify the special qualities of a place, local knowledge and history is fostered, and essentially, area loyalty is built. In terms of the market place this may be viewed as a form of branding in order to ensure customer loyalty but, in many cases, this may prove unnecessary as individual(s) will usually assign their own values and perceptions on a place based on personal experiences and expectations (Baerenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen and Urry, 2004). Consequently, although there may be commercial factors that influence tourists attitudes to the countryside, there will be many who visit the countryside for the naturalness of rurality or to pursue specific activities in an outdoor setting.

4.8 Nature and the Constructed Countryside

There is new life in the soil for every man. There is healing in the trees for tired minds and for our overburdened spirits, there is strength in the hills, if only we will lift up our eyes. Remember that nature is your great restorer.

Calvin Coolidge

Romanticism led the way in the idealisation of nature, a movement that advanced the transformation of nature into countryside (Macnaghten and Urry, 1998). Nature, once separated from humanity in its untamed wildness or alternately seen as a means of subsistence, became interesting in its own right (Burchardt, 2002). It 'gave human experience of nature new symbolic and sensory meanings' (Bunce, 1994:23). By way of explanation, Burchardt (2002) reasoned that with the advent of the scientific revolution, viewed as the foundation of industrialisation, humanity experienced an emancipation from nature attributable to greater understanding of the natural world and increased human control of the natural environment. Effectively, the changing view of nature as something to be feared or simply regarded for its utilitarian objectives permitted an appreciation of nature purely for its aesthetic qualities.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the veneration or sacralisation of nature (Tuan, 1974) embodied a general sentiment about rural scenery that was supported by the belief that rural life is more natural than urban life (Bunce, 1994). The Romantic poets, in particular Wordsworth, elevated society's awareness of the *naturalness* of nature as the benchmark of goodness and purity, in sharp contrast to the *unnaturalness* of cities (Burchardt, 2002). Philosophers of the Romantic era, such as

Kant, Rousseau and Hume, also espoused the aesthetics of nature, believing there is an instinctive interdependency between nature and humans, an acknowledged interdependency steering the way to early environmental awareness and preservationist instincts (Bunce, 1994). Inspired by the Romantic artists and poets, the upper and middle classes of urban society espoused the moral benefits of the natural environment; nature was viewed as the 'antidote to the supposed vices of the working people' (Burchardt, 2002:47). As a consequence, nature represented escape, an escape from the ugliness of the industrialised cities to spaces for reverie and self-contemplation (Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013; Seaton, 2013).

Significantly, the Romantic Movement championed the passionate emotional responses to authentic experiences derived from the aesthetics of nature (Barsham and Hitchcock, 2013), embracing the merits of 'emotion, joy, freedom and beauty that could be gained through visitation to untamed landscapes. Interestingly, according to Harrison (1991:21) it was 'the educated and cultured few that began to view the countryside as a source of spiritual renewal'. For example, Wordsworth eulogised that nature was the 'gateway to spiritual truth' (Burchardt, 2002:47). Other Romantic poets attributed nature with the power of healing along with the positive spiritual qualities of being in nature (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000).

Secular spirituality today, according to Timothy (2013:38) is manifested in 'soul stirring encounters with nature', exemplified by feelings of 'wonder, awe, wholeness, harmony, ecstasy, transcendence and solitude'. Consequently, non-religious forms of spirituality and increased tourism to indigenous sacred sites, the growth of New-Age travellers, greater numbers of spiritual retreats, and an emerging focus on deep ecology, ecofeminism, environmentalism and nature adulation (York, 2001; Coats, 2008; Timothy, 2013). In adding to this, Timothy (2013), alludes to the mounting demand of secular tourists seeking encounters with nature and the natural environment. This search for solace, reflection and communion with nature, he believes, may be a consequence of the conspicuous contrast between the unnaturalness of the city and the simplicity of nature.

Today, the appeal of encounters with nature remains strong, with tourism 'providing the bridge for these encounters' (Seaton, 2013:110). For tourists, there is the continued view of an imagined countryside contrasting 'urban sophistication with rustic simplicity' (Bunce, 1994:39); a place providing opportunities for leisure encounters with the natural environment. The popularity and diversity of nature-based tourism, it is suggested, may reflect contemporary *counterurbanisation* attitudes fuelled by intensive media campaigns and developing social trends concerning the environment (Coghlan

and Buckley, 2013). Additional considerations in the escalating demand for nature-based recreation are the intangible benefits from interactions with the natural environment, principally, health, wellness and spiritual well-being (Heintzman, 2010; Coghlan and Buckley, 2013). The attraction for the countryside and the appeal of natural environment is evidenced in the rapidly increasing numbers of rural tourists (Butler, Hall and Jenkins, 1998; Fursdon, 2003; Lane, 2009) and the mounting demand for experiences in nature (Coghlan and Buckley, 2013). Consequently, academics consider that is not enough to simply measure tourist motivations, satisfaction and behaviours (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Kastenholz and Lima, 2011; Wynveen, Kyle and Sutton, 2012) but more markedly, understanding of 'the elements that influence the actual experience', both cognitive and emotive, must be explored through 'new conceptual approaches and methodologies' (Coghlan and Buckley, 2013:338). Clearly, the intangible elements of tourism experiences, in this case, the countryside experience, will benefit from further investigation into the subjective and emotional aspects of those experiences.

4.9 Summary

In summary, this chapter has considered the concept of rurality, demonstrating the extensive influences of historical and socio-cultural events in the construction of rurality and the countryside. In particular, the impacts of the Industrial Revolution and strength of the influences of the Romantic Movement on past and present associations have been emphasised. It has been illustrated that the countryside, as a socially constructed place, is representative of a rural idyll drawing from an imagined and nostalgic past, highlighted by the scenic beauty of the surroundings. The significance of this popular interpretation of the countryside is illustrated in the flourishing rural tourism market, a concept defined in this chapter. The discussion centred on the consumption of countryside and a *sense of place* demonstrating this concept as both a tangible marketing technique and as an indefinable and intangible connection to rural spaces. As a final theme, nature as a prominent element of the constructed countryside captured the subjective and emotive outcomes recurrently linked to experiences in nature.

4.10 Place, Spirituality and Rural Tourism

Literature Review Conclusion

The preceding chapters have explored the significance of place in peoples' lives in general and, in particular, the dynamic relationship of place to tourism processes and

experiences. It has been demonstrated that tourist places, as all places, are socially constructed; they are derived from individual meanings and experiences of place within a specific socio-cultural context. The production of tourist places correlates to tourists' affective and cognitive experiences of place that may result in a unique relationship or attachment to place. The phrase commonly used to describe this concept is *sense of place*, an expression used to capture the special relationship that individuals or groups form with particular meaningful places. Sense of place is invoked by cognitive and emotive experiences, but of particular significance are the emotional and spiritual elements linked to this phenomenon. Returning to the geography of place, it was established in Chapter 2 that the natural environment, as a social construction, frequently induces a sense of place which may engender spiritual associations. Nature, throughout humankind's history, has been the focus of ancient faiths, mythical associations and traditional religion, all characterising man's innate spiritual union with nature. In effect, nature, from past to present, is deemed to be a catalyst for spiritual experiences.

The concept of spirituality itself, as an element or outcome of the experience of natural places, requires clarification. Therefore, Chapter 3 explored the concept in the context of early religious traditions through to contemporary understanding of spirituality within a secular and non-secular context. Emphasising the significance of spirituality in the post-modern western world, the chapter highlighted the contemporary search for opportunities to explore personal spirituality and for means of fulfilling the individual's spiritual needs. In developing the idea that contemporary spirituality is a very individual process, it was demonstrated that spirituality can be experienced in a diverse number of ways and in an equally diverse number of places. In particular, the search for spirituality is observable in the tourism industry, where there is evidence of increasing demand for spiritual tourist experiences or, more subliminally, encounters that advance potential spiritual outcomes.

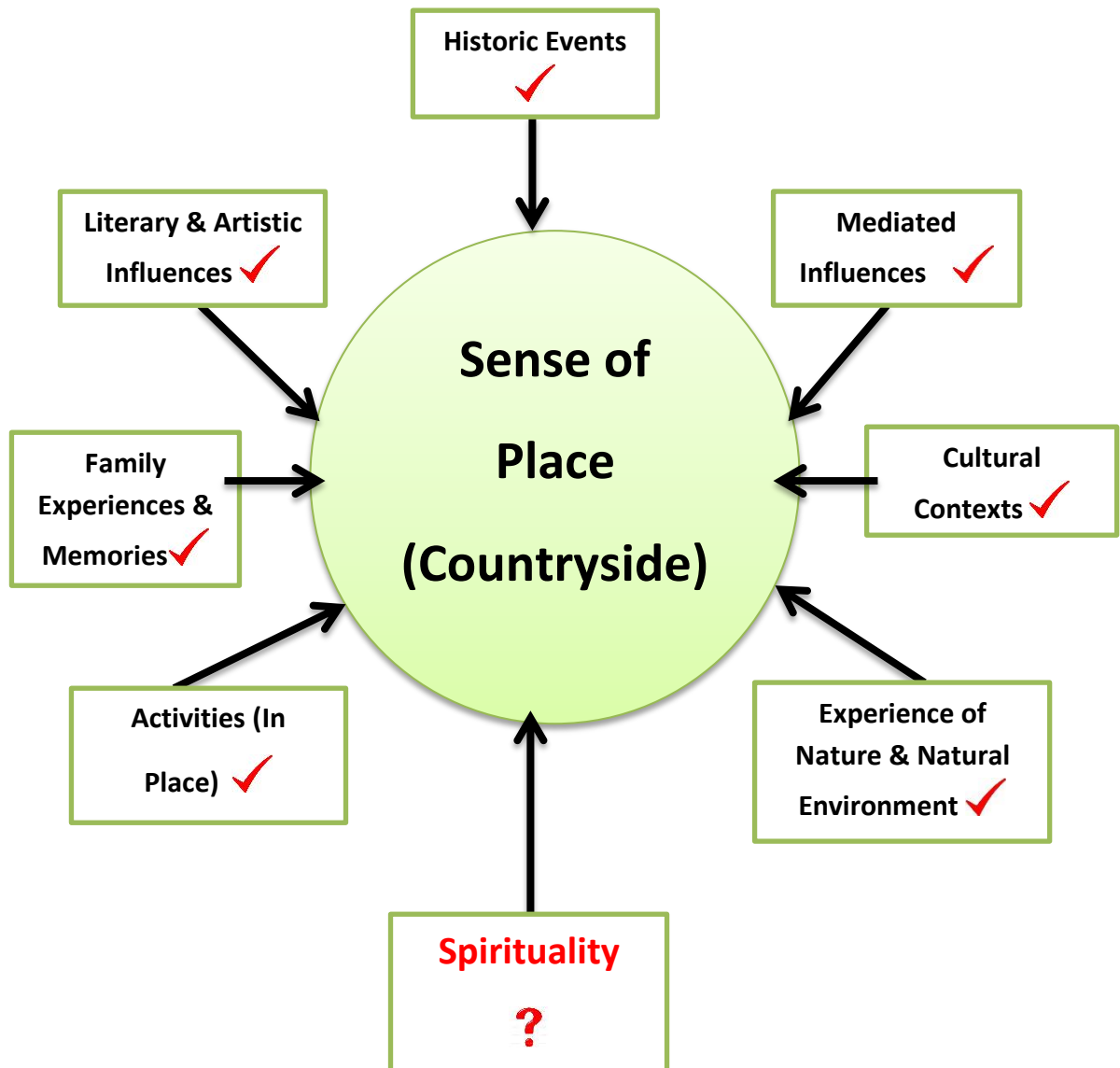
In effect, within contemporary society there is a broader interpretation of what defines a place as sacred or spiritually meaningful. This has led to a revalidation of natural environments as places engendering spiritual occasions in general and of the role of the countryside in stimulating tourist experiences and spiritual outcomes in particular. Thus, having identified countryside as a *place* for tourist activities, Chapter 4 then considered the possible spiritual dimension to the touristic experience of the rural. More specifically, having explored the concept of *rural*, the forces and influences that, to a lesser or greater extent, determine public image of countryside were discussed, in particular, the power of social representation in the making of the countryside and the consequential links to the growth in demand rural tourism experiences. It was argued

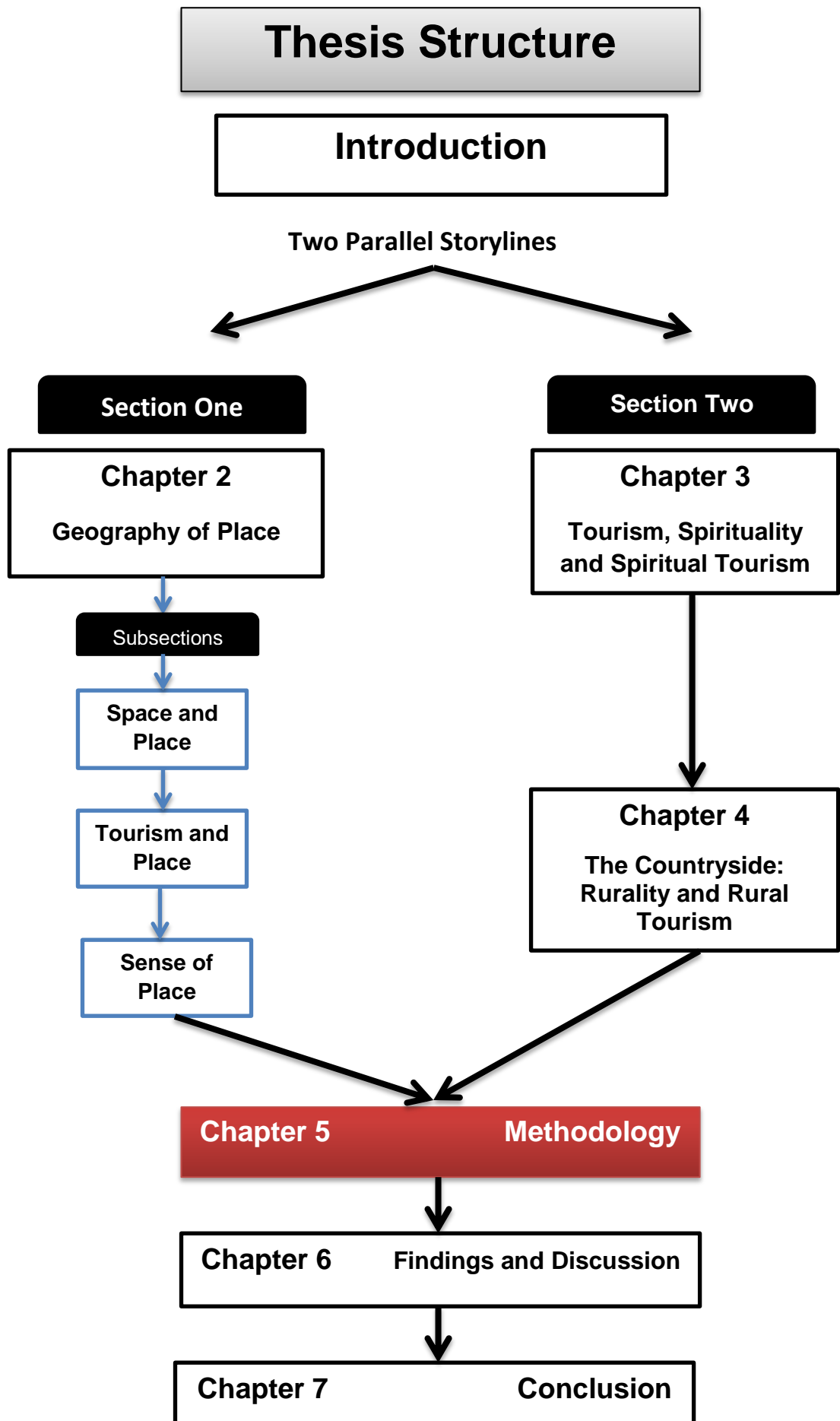
that, fundamentally, rural areas as physical spaces are socially constructed through cultural, economic and political processes defining countryside, and that the pull or attraction of the countryside, representative of a nostalgic and imagined rural idyll heightened by sublime landscapes, has been a significant influence on the increasing participation in rural tourism.

Drawing together these themes discussed in Chapter 2 to 4, it becomes evident that the increase in the demand for rural tourism corresponds with the strengthening appeal of rural settings as places where tourists can physically engage with the natural environment. However, the countryside possesses significance beyond the potential it offers for a variety of activities. As demonstrated, rural places stimulate cognitive and emotive processes that can promote feelings of attachment and belonging or, essentially, a sense of place which, as a complex human process, is a consequence of a variety of influences and experiences of place. The countryside and the natural environment represent a particularly powerful context for the experience of sense of place. Not only is the countryside identified with the socially-constructed concept of rurality but also, as argued, it is also frequently linked to the natural environment, a setting that has been shown to stimulate intense emotional effects, sometimes understood as spiritual experiences.

The question remains, however, as to what extent rural tourism offers a spiritual dimension. In other words, tourists' motivations for visiting and their experiences of rural places are undoubtedly influenced by a complexity of processes. Moreover, it has been clearly established that the emotional component of tourists' place relationships are significant to these processes. What is not clearly understood is the spiritual dimension of the rural tourist experience. Thus, as conceptualised in *Figure 4.3*, the elements, both affective and cognitive, contributing to sense of place are illustrated. Academic understanding of sense of place has referenced the spiritual element associated with this concept but it still remains unclear if spirituality is only an element of sense of place or is spirituality an element of the rural experience. Essentially, is rural tourism a spiritual experience, or does rural tourism in fact foster a *sense of place* that incorporates emotive experiences embracing a spiritual dimension?

Figure 4.3 Elements of Sense of Place





Chapter Five

Research Methodology

5.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explain and justify the research philosophy adopted in this thesis, as well as introducing and explaining the specific research methods employed to meet the aims and objectives of the thesis as established in Chapter 1. More specifically, the chapter considers qualitative research and the key philosophical elements of phenomenology, the methodological approach utilised here, explaining how these most effectively reflect the overall objective of the thesis, namely, to examine the spiritual experience of the rural tourist, in particular exploring the relationship of place to the emotional/spiritual responses of tourists. This research is focused on the experience of place, in this case the Lake District National Park in Cumbria. The thesis aim is framed initially within the context of four focus groups that provide the preliminary findings and relevant themes. The scope of the study is then narrowed to twelve suitable participants who were able to provide rich data through unstructured interviews. This chapter will discuss the sampling frame, the focus group method and the interview process. In addition, ethical issues, research limitations and the general findings of the research are also discussed.

5.1 Overview of Methodology

- ❖ **Stage 1** involves focus group discussions using prompts to encourage interactive ‘conversation and commentary’ to establish themes and patterns relevant to the study.
- ❖ **Stage 2** involves unstructured in-depth interviews, face-to-face with participants, in order to explore in greater detail individuals’ personal experiences of place and to reveal their understanding of these experiences.

There is no single, ideal paradigm for research in behavioural sciences; all have limitations but the use of a multi-method approach may help to overcome potential weaknesses in the study (Bernard, 2000). In this thesis, the use of both focus groups and interviews increases the rigour of the research, enhancing its accuracy and thoroughness (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000).

The qualitative paradigm adopted in this thesis uses the philosophy of phenomenological inquiry to probe deeply into the minds of the participants and uncover personal, subjective feelings. Phenomenological approaches, according to Wearing and Wearing (2001), involve exploration of *the heads and hearts* of the participants. In this case, this approach is undertaken in order to investigate individual experiences of place, their understanding of place and the effects of place on their emotive/spiritual outcomes.

5.2 Justification for Methods

The academic study of tourism is a relatively recent area of research and has generally been based on work conducted in the more established disciplines within the social sciences (Husserl, 1913b). Early academic observations concentrated on examining the historic roots and development of tourism. In later studies, the focus shifted onto the functional aspects of tourism processes, largely relying on the positivistic, quantitative strategies of 'structured surveys and quantification' (Riley, 1996:22) in order to measure the scope, direction and impact of tourism. However, reflecting the increasing influence of sociological, behavioural and anthropological research approaches in understanding people's behaviour, the study of tourism has more recently progressed to greater utilisation of interpretive, qualitative methods (Veal, 1992).

Academics recognise that the scientific approach endorsed by positivistic philosophies does not adequately assess the impact of human emotion and feelings that are an integral part of the tourism equation (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). Scientific inquiry tends to place self and Other as distinct opposites which leads to a disembodiment of the researcher from the object of study and is non-reflective of the individual tourist's experiences, perceptions and motivations (Hayllar and Griffin, 2005; Schmidt, 2005a). It has been argued that this subject/object perspective in tourism research has 'led to the objectification of cultures, societies, geographies and people' (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:39) and has been unsuccessful in understanding tourist's motivations and needs. Accepting the inadequacy and potential failing of objective scientific-based methods, this study has adopted a qualitative phenomenological approach in order to gain a clearer sociological and behavioural understanding of the tourist's perceptions and responses. This chapter, therefore, discusses the research design and methodology employed in this research, including justification of the suitability of qualitative techniques using the philosophy of phenomenology for this study.

5.3 Reasons for Using Qualitative Methods to Understanding Spiritual/Emotive Experience of Place

The power of qualitative research is the exploratory nature of this type of research, often used where little is known about a subject or a phenomenon (Jordan and Gibson, 2004), and in cases where the research inquiry may involve subconscious beliefs or behaviours not educed through quantitative methods. Qualitative research in social inquiry allows the researcher 'to collect data on behaviours, activities and events and seek an understanding of action, problems and processes in their social context' (Phillimore and Goodson, 2004:3). The use of qualitative research, whilst often faulted for its lack of scientific measure and objectivity, achieves a degree of intensity and scope of human inquiry and understanding not achievable within the limits of quantifiable positivistic research or methods (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000). A researcher using qualitative investigation veers from the pragmatic ordering of human thought and behaviour, seeking to expose how individuals think and feel and to gain insights into how they make sense of their world (Seale, Gobo, Gubrium and Silverman, 2004).

The best qualitative research, according to Ezzy (2002:xii), requires the researcher to enter into the participant's world, not distancing oneself but 'establishing a relationship with people, places and performances' in order to understand the socio-cultural processes of how people attach meaning in their lives. Qualitative research methods also allow a degree of flexibility and freedom in the data analysis, 'rather than a slavish adherence to methodological rules' (Miles and Huberman, 1994:5). This study focuses on using methods of inquiry that generate rich descriptive data, methods that tap into the wellspring of human emotion and subjective thought and allow for exploration beyond the limits of scientific approaches. Owing to the exploratory nature of qualitative inquiry and in order to meet the aims of this thesis, a phenomenological stance was adopted.

5.3.1 Philosophy of phenomenology

'Back to things in themselves'

Husserl

Phenomenology, it has been stated, is 'a simple enough concept' (Faulkner, 2000:78); it is a philosophy concerned with the structures of consciousness or experience. Phenomenology, as one would suspect, deals with phenomena and how one experiences things (Benton and Craib, 2001). However, this provides only a basic

understanding of the phenomenological discipline; it is an oversimplification of a far more complex movement or philosophy that has evolved over centuries and has been the subject of considerable debate and disharmony (Sokolowski, 2000). Academics acknowledge that phenomenology is not altogether a coherent movement and for this reason does not lend itself to any simple and straightforward definition (Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Laverty, 2003) . Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to explain all aspects of the phenomenological movement, it is nevertheless essential to examine the evolution and key concepts of this discipline in order to provide background insights that lend support to the use of this philosophical method.

Phenomenology is viewed as one of the most noteworthy philosophical movements of the twentieth century (Crotty, 1998), a movement that has made a number of significant contributions to academic research. The history of phenomenology can be traced back to the eighteenth century, with writings on the concept found in the works of early philosophers such as Kant, Hegel and Mach (Crotty, 1998; Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) and, subsequently in the nineteenth century, Brentano (Bernard, 2000). These early philosophers and psychologists believed that phenomena are the foundation for building knowledge, particularly science. Concurrent with contemporary views, realities are pure phenomena (Groenewald, 2004) and these phenomena are whatever we perceive and seek to explain. The twentieth century witnessed the most crucial and diverse development of phenomenology, principally advanced by the classical phenomenologists Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, each of whom offered different conceptualisations of the philosophy of phenomenology.

It is Edward Husserl, though, who is considered to be the founding father of the phenomenological movement (Badhra, 1990; Bernard, 2000; Benton and Craib, 2001). Husserl, at the vanguard of the phenomenological movement, had become disillusioned with the use of scientific methods and measurements to understand human issues and the value and meanings intrinsic to human understanding of their own existence (Grondin, 1994). It was Husserl who was responsible for the influential book *Logical Investigations* (1900/1901) that reacted against scientific methods, particularly positivistic inquiry advocated in psychology and social scientific research. He was instrumental in promoting the core doctrine of phenomenology, that of intentionality (Hedlund-de Witt, 2011) which, according to Sokolowski (2000:8), 'is the teaching that every act of consciousness we perform, every experience that we have, is intentional' and that 'all awareness is directed towards objects'. Crotty, (2000:79) speaks of intentionality as 'the relationship between us as human beings and our world' and that as beings-in-the-world 'we cannot be described apart from our world – always a human world – which cannot be described apart from us'. Intentionality, in

phenomenology, does not refer to the practical usage of the word but refers to the cognitive or mental; the 'conscious relationship that we have with objects' (Badhra, 1990:8). For Husserl (1913a), the state of pure consciousness is distinct from the domain of real experience and he defined phenomenology as the science of the essence of consciousness.

Husserl's phenomenological reduction theory claimed that it is necessary to reduce the world to its pure consciousness or primordial experience, making it possible to examine phenomena as 'they are originally given to the consciousness' (1913a:25). Phenomenology is about description but, for Husserl, this did not mean only describing matters of fact or even expressing one's own inner feelings or experiences, but suspending judgements about the natural world, removing inessential aspects and symbolic meanings, and disconnecting from context to get to the truest form of the experience (Willis, 2001; Hayllar and Griffin, 2005). In doing so, this would leave only the essence. This is expressed by the slogan 'back to things in themselves', which is the fundamental aim of phenomenology, that is, to return to the experience itself (Devlin, 1996; Groenewald, 2004; Hedlund-de Witt, 2011). Husserl's reduction theory was, thus, part of the development of transcendental phenomenology. Later phenomenologists, such as Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre and Gadamer, would establish their own theories and variances regarding phenomenology but, essentially, the academic focus of their hypotheses continued to address the different types and structures of experience.

A fundamental aspect of the phenomenology movement is the critical attitude held towards positivism and the scientific philosophies (Willis, 2001; Hedlund-de Witt, 2011). In particular, the phenomenology movement was highly critical of the exclusion of consciousness in these other philosophies as phenomenology was considered to be the source of knowledge and value (Crotty, 1998; Flood, 2010; Graburn, 2011). Researchers who engage in scientific enquiry avoid value judgements and focus on empirical evidence based on verifiable data acquired by objective observation and measurement (Bryman and Bell, 2002). Thus, epistemologically, positivism is underpinned by the stance 'that things exist as meaningful entities independently of consciousness and experience' and that meticulous research using quantifiable means can realise the 'objective truth and meaning' (Faulkner, 2000:6). However, in the late nineteenth century, William Dilthey, a proponent of anti-positivism, expressed the opinion 'that individuals do not live in isolation, they need to be understood in the context of their cultural and social life (Hegel, 1949:20). Life events and experiences cannot be explained or classified in the context of the laws of nature, as individuals do not exist in isolation but must be studied in social and cultural contexts.

The phenomenological movement thus abandoned the Cartesian view of a split between mind and body, of reality existing 'out there' and entirely detached from the individual (Crotty, 1998). In particular, the German philosopher Heidegger, in his book *Being and Time* (1927), argued that the detached Cartesian dualistic interpretation led to misinformation and, rather than gaining 'a deep understanding of our existence and our actions, in effect, made it impossible to grasp an adequate understanding' (Hirschheim, 1987:347). From the viewpoint of phenomenologists, both the objective physical world and one's subjective thoughts and feelings must be considered as a whole; that is, neither can exist without the other. For example, Winch (1958) contrasted the distinctions between the natural and social sciences, arguing that human behaviour intrinsically involves social meaning and this cannot be anticipated or generalised. He believed that understanding of human actions cannot be achieved by observing only from the outside, but requires internal or 'inside' understanding. Other contemporary critics of positivism, such as Gouldner (1970) and Hesse (1980), also supported the argument that scientific-based approaches to research attempt to take a value-free position but, in doing so, fail in the development of theories in social science as there is no recognition of social meaning (Hegel, 1949; Flood, 2010). In short, facts and verified data alone are not sufficient to develop theories of social science.

Generally, phenomenologists adopt the theory of a world constituted by experiences in the form of 'streams of consciousness', where 'the subjective is the source of all objectivities' (Flood, 2010:233). Ontologically, the phenomenological paradigm uses the lived experience as a springboard to understand how individuals construct their own worlds. However, whilst followers of phenomenology generally agree with the epistemological and ontological underpinnings there is, as suggested earlier, no clear definition as to what phenomenology actually is (Benton and Craib, 2001; Flood, 2010). Indeed, it is particularly difficult to define as it is viewed as a movement, 'never static but constantly changing and developing' and understandings of this philosophy are also dynamic and evolving (Lavery, 2003:3)

Perhaps as a consequence of this definitional ambiguity, the evolution of phenomenology has witnessed the development of different branches within the philosophical movement, including existential phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology, hermeneutic phenomenology and interpretive phenomenology (Badhra, 1990; Faulkner, 2000; Flood, 2010). Although differing in their degree of subjectivity, core commonalities exist between these approaches to phenomenology, including: the acknowledgement of self in the process; the selection participants who are varied, unique and willing to discuss their experiences; data collected based on

open dialogue and the participant's own words; and, 'a belief in the need to remove the knowing from the Cartesian duality of reality as being something that is remote or separate from the individual' (Hyde, 2005:83). As the originator of phenomenology, Husserl's early transcendental phenomenology followed his principles of intentionality and phenomenological reduction, arguing for practitioners of phenomenology to 'bracket' out or suspend preconceptions of what we think and focus on what is present in the world of experience (Hedlund-de Witt, 2011). More recently, however, phenomenological researchers have raised questions about Husserl's philosophy, asking whether it is possible or even desirable to bracket oneself out of the research process (Crotty, 1998; Lavery, 2003; Moran, 2009). Indeed, contemporary phenomenological scholars lean towards bracketing oneself *into* the research whilst, at the same time, remaining aware of the potential biases one may bring to the research process (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975; Burrell and Morgan, 1979; Hammond, Howarth and Keat, 1992). Thus, with increasing criticism directed at transcendental phenomenology, existential phenomenology and hermeneutic phenomenology have received greater focus. In these branches of the phenomenological philosophy, emphasis is placed on the need to embed the researcher within, rather than removing oneself from, the research process (Schmidt, 2005a; Moran, 2009).

Ultimately, researchers involved in phenomenological reflection must engage with the lived experience, the primordial phenomena or 'immediate, original data of consciousness' (Faulkner, 2000:79). They must attend to the consciousness prior to any meaning or interpretation being attributed to it in order to uncover the true essence of experience or, in effect, *to go back to the things themselves*. Phenomenological process explores the actual experienced world of the individual by 'slowing the researcher down and holding his or her gaze on the phenomenon itself...illuminating specific qualities of the experience' (Willis, 2001:2). Consequently, the trend in contemporary qualitative research using the philosophy of phenomenology is to write oneself into the research and, rather than considering this negative, to recognise that these biases can in fact add intensity and depth to the data.

5.3.2 Phenomenology and the study of spirituality and tourism

The phenomenological approach has been used to study spirituality in a diverse range of disciplines (Groenewald, 2004; McSherry and Cash, 2004; Hyde, 2005; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Marche, Brainerd and Reyna, 2010). In the area of psychology, for example, the philosophical underpinnings of phenomenology have informed a significant number of studies (Andriotis, 2009; Moran, 2009; Norman, 2011), whilst

other disciplines that have benefited from the use of phenomenological methods are: nursing; rehabilitation and counselling (Prentice, Witt and Hamer, 1998; Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Pernecky and Jamal, 2010; Purcell, 2010); management (Smart, 1983; Marques, 2006); theology (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; Robinson, 1999; Kerievsky, 2010; Schulz and Rubel, 2011); education (Groenewald, 2004; McSherry and Cash, 2004); geography and environmental psychology (Stefanovic, 1998; Shamai and Ilatov, 2005); and, leisure (Heintzman, 2000; Hyde, 2005; Darker, Larkin and French, 2007; Heintzman, 2010).

Within tourism research in particular, academics have primarily employed phenomenological inquiry to explore and enhance understanding of the deeper meaning individuals attribute to tourism experiences, though it has not been used specifically to explore the spiritual experience of tourists. For example, Andriotis' (2009) use of phenomenological inquiry proved effective in identifying spirituality as one of five core elements of tourists' sacred site experiences. In the same way, Li (2000) applies phenomenological techniques to explore leisure tourism in relationship to place, demonstrating that there is a spiritual dimension to that experience. However, neither of these studies specifically seeks to understand the spiritual dimension of tourism; they simply identify a spiritual dimension within broader scopes of inquiry.

Nevertheless, the studies above affirm that phenomenological research is both ontologically and epistemologically appropriate for exploring the phenomenon of spirituality. Effectively, they demonstrate that the phenomenological method of investigation facilitates researchers' understanding of the spiritual perceptions of participants as viewed through the lens of their own cultural meanings, individual experiences and world views. More specifically, there are several fundamental reasons for the suitability of phenomenological inquiry to acquiring rich, thick data on spiritual experiences. Firstly, phenomenology is concerned with the individual and their lived experience; it allows participants their voice in the research to express emotional and spiritual experiences as perceived through their own social reality (Hegel, 1949; Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000; Schmidt, 2005b; Moran, 2009). Thus, in adopting a phenomenological approach, researchers gain insights into the lived and remembered world of others, valuing individuals' viewpoints and, essentially, seeing the world through others' eyes (Schmidt, 2005a; Willson, 2010).

Secondly, phenomenology allows complex phenomena, such as spiritual experiences, to emerge instinctively, derived from individuals' personal meanings and associations (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001; Flood, 2010; Pernecky and Jamal, 2010). On the one hand, the intangible and personal nature of spirituality can create difficulties for some

participants in expressing coherent views, particularly in putting the phenomenon into words (Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997; Crotty, 1998; Schmidt, 2005a). On the other hand, other individuals may not recognise the concept of spirituality, it having no personal relevancy or meaning for them. Instead, they may ascribe alternate words or emotions to describe their intangible experiences (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999). Either way, however, phenomenological inquiry encourages participants to take *the lead*, as they are their own authority. Accordingly, phenomenology respects individuals' meaningful expressions of their own spirituality and experiences (Hammond, Howarth and Keat, 1992; Moustakas, 1994; Willis, 2001).

A third reason for the appropriateness of phenomenology is the rich, thick data that is gained from exploring the insights of personal human-lived experiences (Hegel, 1949; Schmidt, 2005b). In uncovering the layers of meaning, the researcher can reveal the essence of experiences, capturing in particular the subtleties associated with the spiritual dimension of tourists' experiences. Moran (2009:21) claims that 'the main contribution of phenomenology has been the manner in which has steadfastly protected the subjective view of experience as a necessary part of any full understanding of the full nature of knowledge'. Phenomenology, as a qualitative approach in the study of tourism, allows the researcher to go beyond the restrictions of quantitative methods and the search for facts, to investigate the subjective, multi-dimensional and personal expressions of the tourist experience (Fishwick and Vining, 1992; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Willson, 2010).

Importantly, phenomenology is not a rule bound process. It allows researchers the flexibility and participants the freedom to communicate personal, meaningful expressions of their experiences (Hegel, 1949; Schmidt, 2005b; Moran, 2009). In this thesis, phenomenology has allowed me to fully engage with the research project, to open my mind and heart and soul, to let go of precognitions and pre-determined expectations, and value the personal experience of others in being and meaning. The process of phenomenology 'offers the opportunity to wholly engage the self as researcher... but to recognise the self in the meaning-making process' (Schmidt, 2005b:122). In this way, as the researcher, I was aware of my own subjective feelings on spirituality and the influences of my own life experiences and cultural upbringing within the research process, thus recognising the idea that knowledge is inevitably affected by the knower (Husserl, 1907/1990; Schmidt, 2005b).

5.3.3 Researcher perspective: bracketing myself into the research

To this point, this chapter has reviewed the philosophy of phenomenology from classical to contemporary understandings, identifying the principal qualities of this philosophy in gaining deep, insightful and meaningful data. Equally, this chapter has noted that the nature of phenomenological philosophy has evolved to embrace the belief that the researcher is part of the process and, as such, must write the self into the research. Based on this philosophy, this study takes an *emic* perspective, one in which the researcher becomes an *insider*, and 'uses the knowledge bases of the settings, the people and the latter's explanations and language to describe the phenomenon being studied' (Jennings, 2001:440). Inevitably, therefore, in undertaking a study based on phenomenological enquiry, the researcher must embrace their own biases, recognising their own influences when engaging in inquiry.

In this study, although I endeavoured to follow classical, traditional phenomenological principles in the focus group scenarios, remaining the more neutral facilitator, it remained difficult to achieve as engagement between people always necessitates some degree of personal identity, reflexivity and influence (Jordan and Gibson, 2004). Indeed, Groenewald (2004:7) asserts that phenomenologists 'cannot be detached from his/her own suppositions and that the researcher should not pretend otherwise'. In stating this, it is often this aspect of qualitative research, and particularly, phenomenological research, that adds richness to the data but it must be taken into account in the research process. It became apparent in the unstructured interview process that it was impossible for me to remove myself from the process, owing to the need to build a deep rapport with participants and the subjective and personal nature of the discussion topics. Needless to say, as the researcher, I was aware of the importance of recognising my own biases and influences in both the data collection process and later in the interpretation and analysis of the data.

In utilising a phenomenological approach and bracketing myself into the research it is essential that I provide a personal profile to establish a lens from which the analysis of the data is filtered through. Interaction with a respondent, through focus groups or unstructured interviews engages us at both a cognitive and emotional level. The nature of phenomenological research implicates the researcher in the process. Although, as a researcher, I tried to remain objective, my own personal and cultural experiences naturally affect my perceptions and understanding of information received and then processed. Without further preamble, I now offer a brief overview of my background, my interests and other factors that may have impacted on the research process.

I am a fifty-three year old female and I began my life in the UK, one of a family of five children, who immigrated to Canada in my early years. As a large, busy family, we spent much of our time outdoors or involved in recreational and organisational activities, pursued both outside and indoors. Raised in a home by a stay-at-home mum and a schoolteacher father, idleness was discouraged. Our family could be best described as a WASP family – white, Anglo-Saxon, and Protestant. We were encouraged to stay busy and active and in my youth I was involved in ballet, gymnastics, badminton, Brownies, Girl Guides, piano, volleyball, track and field and any other pursuits that were considered beneficial to producing a well-rounded individual. Needless to say, I excelled at very few apart from competitive swimming, which I loved. As for my religious upbringing, we attended church regularly in my younger years but as I grew into a teenager, my visits to the church diminished. My mother and father, also, adopted a more casual attitude to church attendance but maintained their Christian values and beliefs. For myself, I still extol the basic values associated with Christianity and other benevolent religions but I personally, do not hold any religious beliefs or convictions, instead following a more rational school of thought.

In adulthood, I soon had a family of my own and spent many years as a stay-at-home mum. Like my parents, I enrolled my children in activities of their choice, physical or otherwise. I attended university for two years but family commitments and accessibility to education ended my push for a degree. That would come much later. In my thirties, moving from a city to a rural environment provided the stimulus for encounters in the natural environment. Up until that point, my activities such as squash, weights and aerobics had been indoors but snowboarding, water skiing, cycling, road and trail running and triathlons became a familiar part of my list of activities. At the same time I was also involved in instructing aerobics and step, personal training, body building and other gym pursuits. It was in the outdoors that I first became aware of the possible spiritual experience derived from particular landscapes and/or activities. I do not want to over emphasise this awareness as it was a fleeting thought that would sometimes work its way into my consciousness. In effect, it was not something I gave a great deal of consideration to. Later, in participating in yoga, which argues for spiritual and emotional well-being, I feel that I have become more cognisant of that aspect of my life. Stress and disharmony in my life, have also, at a subconscious level, pushed me to undertake activities that nourish those positive/spiritual feelings that help re-centre and restore me.

In the last few years, I have become an avid walker in the Lake District, enjoying many of the same things that my participants have spoken at some length on. Also, I have

undertaken different walks in Wales and Yorkshire as well as continuing with my gym pursuits. Physical activity is part of my life style for health benefits, enjoyment of challenges and for social reasons. Engaging in the outdoors in both active and relaxed pursuits is also necessary for my well-being, emotional and spiritual.

There is no doubt that I am influenced by my own personal interest in the countryside and my enjoyment of physical activities but I also, recognise that spiritual and emotional well-being can also arise from completely different built environments and non-physical activities. Any direct bias in my thesis may be noticeable in the sample group I used – physically active people. It was necessary to narrow the sampling frame and it seemed appropriate to engage with participants who enjoyed physical activity. Studying a sample frame of non-active participants would provide data useful for comparison but in order to simplify the study I chose one particular, yet still broad sampling group. The choice of place was down to the distinctive and clearly identifiable qualities of the Lake District rather than my personal involvement with the area. Again, a comparison with other distinct rural regions leads to an informative study but equally, this would change the aims of my particular research. Comparisons, to some extent, naturally came from the participants' discourse as it was natural for them to speak of other rural areas and those experiences. Owing to my childhood experience with religion, my later unstructured views of religion and my ensuing loose beliefs regarding spirituality, I feel I have no personal agenda in the research but rather a curiosity regarding the wide scope of beliefs, understanding, and the conditions of those experiences. I would like to think that my interest and curiosity has been a positive aspect of the research process and believe that it has not led to an inaccurate or flawed representation of the findings of the study.

5.4 Sampling

Qualitative phenomenological research is generally not concerned with looking for large random samples as, unlike quantitative research, there is no intent to generalise the findings (Veal, 1992). To meet the aims of this thesis, there were two requirements for participant selection: firstly, direct experience of the Lake District and, secondly, experiences that involved physical engagement with the natural environment. The factors of age and gender were not a consideration, although for both interviews and focus groups there were almost an equal split between males and females, and ages ranged from thirty to seventy-five. The participants all enjoyed different physical

activities in the outdoors, such as walking/hiking, ice climbing, rock climbing, cycling, mountain biking, swimming, canoeing, fell running and caving. It should be pointed out that all the participants had experience of walking not only in the Lake District but usually in several other rural places. A large number of the participants belonged to either walking clubs or a mountaineering club. The remainder of the participants had pursued their interests on their own with either friends, family or both. The participants' level of activity and familiarity with outdoor experiences in rural environs ranged from fairly recent involvement to decades of experience.

I decided to focus my study on people who were engaging in physical activity outdoors because of my own personal experiences, interests and influences. Equally, I felt that visitors engaged in the more touristic consumption of place, such as shopping, dining out or driving around the countryside, did not have the same depth of emotional experience and engagement with the natural environment that I wanted to explore in this research. My inclination and intent was to look at the rural experience through the eyes of people who perceived rurality as countryside and natural, not through the eyes of people who journey to rurality seeking a replacement for urbanity with the added bonus of exceptional scenery. There is cause to argue that these tourists may also have the same spiritual and emotive experiences as those that engage with the environment at a physical level, but I felt it would be a different study, perhaps a comparative study, definitely an area that I did not want to explore in this research. Narrowing the participant field allowed me to focus on a particular subsection of visitors to the Lake District and delve deeply into their experiences and behaviours without being diverted by tourists who perhaps have very different expectations, motivations and experiences by nature of their chosen activities. This would have made a very different study, one that may be well worth examining in future research.

The total number of participants was thirty one in four different focus groups. There were slightly more males than females in both sampling frames, with the interviewing process involving seven males and five females. In reviewing overall potential volunteers, there was a greater number of males who showed interest in the research than women. However, as this research was not concerned with age and gender this did not affect the research aims and intent.

Sampling stops at the point where the researcher determines that saturation has been reached (Ezzy, 2002) and this, according to Pitney and Parker (2009:44) is 'when you start hearing similar information from multiple participants'. In effect, this is when redundancy of data has been reached or there is no new information or the information is very similar (Holloway and Wheeler, 2010). In the case of both my focus groups and

interviews, I stopped the procedures when I felt the study's purpose had been reached and there was enough data to answer the research question.

5.4.1 Locating the research participants: focus groups and interviews

Purposive sampling was identified as the most suitable method for locating participants for the focus groups; it is considered by Welman and Kruger (1999) to be the most important type of non-probability sampling. This decision follows the claim by Hycner (1999:156) that 'the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa), including even the type of participants'. Purposive sampling or judgemental sampling allows the researcher to use their own judgement in choosing participants who will be best able to answer the research question and to meet the studies aims and objectives (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000). Using personal judgement and recognition of the subjective purpose of the research, participants were selected on the basis of their experiences or potential experiences relating to the phenomenon being researched. The volunteers were located through the Internets' social networks, the university's newsletter, telephone inquiries, posters and personal contacts, which helped to identify suitable candidates for the study.

In order to access additional participants for the first stage of the research, snowball sampling was also incorporated. Snowball sampling helps to expand the sample by using the initial contacts or participants to recommend others that may be useful for the study (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000). This was only used sparingly as there are concerns about this method relating to isolation of the researcher from the potential candidates, biases in the initial participants choices of contacts, and a lack of representativeness or exclusivity of the group being studied (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998; Bryman and Bell, 2002; Groenewald, 2004). For the purpose of this study's sample frame, all prospective volunteers were evaluated for their suitability.

In the second stage, the unstructured interviews, the participants were selected from the focus groups. The people selected were participants who I felt would be able to think deeply about the themes, were observant, could vocalise their thoughts, had great interest and experience relative to the phenomena and most importantly, were happy to be of assistance.

5.5 Methods used in this study

Two main research methods were used in this study to gather data. This section will consider the use of focus groups and unstructured interviews.

5.5.1 Focus groups

Focus groups, as a phenomenological qualitative process, rely on a form of group interaction that allows individuals to express their own personal views and feelings on relevant topics (Jones, 1996). Focus groups are generally a small group of people 'characterised by homogeneity but sufficient variation between the participants to allow for contrasting opinions' (Kruger and Casey, 2009:71). There are differing views as to the number of people that are ideal in making up a focus group. For instance, (Macmillan and Weyers, 2007) maintains that four to six participants are ideal, whereas Finn, Elliott-White and Walton (2000) suggest that six to twelve is acceptable. Generally, the appropriate size of group is usually agreed to be anywhere between four and twelve participants, with smaller groups considered more productive in the following cases: i) where the topic is complex; ii) in cases where there are likely to be strong feelings about the topic; iii) if there are numerous questions; iv) if participants' level of experience or expertise is high or most significantly; and, v), when the purpose is to understand issues or behaviours (Kruger and Casey, 2009). In focus group scenarios, the researcher acts as an impartial facilitator, directing the flow of conversation, introducing themes and topics, and encouraging all members of the group to participate.

In the spring of 2011, four focus groups were held, two in Preston and two in Lancaster. The groups consisted of mixed gender and age, with all participants having visited the Lake District on a number of occasions to engage in some form of physical activity. The participants included walkers, mountain bikers, ice and rock climbers, fell runners and swimmers. The first focus group of ten people was hosted at UCLan and was made up of academics and administrative staff who had responded to a call for volunteers through the university newsletter. The second one was also held in Preston and involved eleven members of the Fylde Mountaineering Club. This club engages in a variety of outdoor activities in the Lake District, in other areas of Britain and also in Europe. The third focus group consisting of six volunteers was hosted in Lancaster and was a mixed group involving persons from the Lancashire Ramblers Association, the Bogtrotters and one from UA3 who had no club affiliation. The final discussion was

also held in Lancaster and involved only four participants, all walkers but with no association to each other and no connections to any organisations.

The discussions, directed by the facilitator, addressed key themes relevant to the understanding of the participants' physical experiences and emotive outcomes in the Lake District. The volunteers were also prompted to relate their perceptions of the tangible and conceptual qualities they associated with the Lakes. The focus groups were recorded and transcription of all the data was quickly completed. The general outcome and dominant themes of the focus groups identified core themes relevant to this stage of the study and defined the format and context of the following second stage of the research.

5.5.2 Disadvantages of focus groups

Whilst focus groups as a qualitative method allow for the subjective study of an individual's state of mind, experiences and feelings (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000), there are intrinsic problems encountered in using this method. The fundamental problems of focus groups relate to acquiring appropriate volunteers, finding suitable times for meeting and providing a comfortable environment for discussion but, at a deeper level, there are a complexity of issues relating to group dynamics, individual personalities, time constraints, no-shows, researcher control and an unwillingness or inability on the part of individual volunteers to express innermost thoughts (Bryman and Bell, 2002; Kruger and Casey, 2009).

Commonly, focus groups may be dominated by more vocal participants who unintentionally may intimidate or discourage other members' participation. Group situations are difficult for certain personalities and the group format may inhibit the personal expression of thoughts and opinions by participants uncomfortable in these situations. Additionally, more outspoken volunteers may subconsciously or consciously sway general opinion and/or re-direct the flow of conversation away from relevant themes. In spite of these complications, however, focus group methodology offers a valuable tool for inquiry and are significant in gaining rich data (Kitzinger, 1994; Kruger and Casey, 2009). Although I encountered some of these issues, they were relatively minor and manageable and I was able to gather extensive, rich data, relevant to the exploratory stage of my thesis.

5.5.3 Unstructured or in-depth interviews

Interviewing works well in situations where the researcher is unable to observe behaviour or feelings and cannot view how people attach meaning or interpretation to what goes on in the world (Earle, 2010:88). The interactive nature of interviewing promotes specialised forms of conversation regarding the social world and can be a practical tool in the generation of research data (Weinberg, 2002), allowing respondents to impart their own reality (Riley, 1996). The interview process allows for individuals to express their own descriptive viewpoint of a particular social event (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007). In unstructured interviews, there is more fluidity and the interviewer is able to use the responses to encourage further insights into other relevant areas or to smoothly lead into other topics already set out in the interview schedule (Merriam, 2009). Ineluctably, the interview encounter involves both the interviewer and respondent in an active collaborative engagement that consequently results in the construction of knowledge (Bryman and Bell, 2002). I chose to conduct loosely structured interviews because I hoped to uncover thoughts and feelings that participants may not have wanted to divulge or were unable to in the context of a focus group situation. This type of interview takes a conversational format, 'designed to elicit an authentic account of the interviewee's subjective experience' (Klenke, 2008:125), owing to greater social interaction between the participant and interviewer. With this type of unstructured approach, according to Bryman and Bell (2002), the researcher is less likely to come at participants' world views with presuppositions or expectations.

My interviews were all undertaken face-to-face as I felt that in order to build a rapport and to break down any communication barriers it is important to be in the same physical space. This did mean that I had to travel to interview a number of the participants, but this did not present any major problems. This type of interview allowed me to construct an image of the respondent and their background and develop a deeper understanding of their thought processes. I did undertake one pilot interview in order to ascertain any potential difficulties with flow or interpretation of themes but, with an unstructured approach, every individual's conversation is unique and it is difficult to pre-assess or preordain the flow and exact content of the conversation. Equally, I had already met with the participants so there was some degree of familiarity and awareness of the themes. This was very beneficial as it allowed me to move into the important themes more quickly and I was able to subtly direct the conversation. Initially, I started each interview from a broad approach, chatting about personal information about their past lives up to the present – childhood years and experiences, initial rural encounters, early outdoor activities, family experiences, first Lake District

experience – designed to understand cultural background and behaviours. If possible, I then focused the direction of the conversation towards present day experiences in the Lake District and other rural areas seeking to assess their understanding and behaviours in relationship to these areas. As the conversation developed, I sought to find out more about the emotional and spiritual feelings associated with rural places. This progression, from general conversation to more specific dialogue, eased the interviewee into the exchange and diminished any feelings of unease. The relaxed format of these discussions encouraged me to look at the sense of words and signifiers to assess deeper level of meaning, or hidden truths and indirect inferences. Additionally, in unstructured interviews, the researcher cannot 'slavishly follow a schedule' (Bryman and Bell, 2002:477), something that became quite apparent to me as my interviews progressed. The need for structure with sufficient flexibility is paramount (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003) and each participant required a slightly different conversational approach to ensure empathy, rapport and disclosure (Weinberg, 2002).

All twelve interviews were recorded with two separate mini voice recorders used as unobtrusively as possible, with most interviews lasting ninety minutes as, according to Taylor and Bogdan (1998), the minimum length of an in-depth interview is one hour. My shortest interview was fifty-six minutes and my longest interview was just under two hours. Interviews were transcribed by me as soon after the interview as possible to ensure that the subtleties of conversation and nuances of voice were fresh in my mind and details were not misremembered (Legard, Keegan and Ward, 2003). Each transcription was very time consuming, with an interview taking an average of eight to twelve hours to transcribe. All interviews were transcribed verbatim with no language or grammar corrections. A follow-up email was sent to six of the respondents to clarify or follow up aspects of the conversation. The transcript, with any notes or memos, was analysed in conjunction with the data collected during other interviews to identify themes, patterns and categories.

5.5.4 Disadvantages of unstructured interviews

With all research methods there will be disadvantages to consider. The main problems associated with the in-depth interview paradigm are: i) different types of information from different participants results in different information collected that limits the comparability of responses, ii) in-depth interviews produce less systematic and comprehensive data set, which may increase the difficulty of organisation and analysis of the data, and ii) problems with interviewer biases (Klenke, 2008). Additional

problems are logistical and relate to time and costs, which in my case were not a factor.

5.6 Research Limitations

Before going on to consider the methods of analysis utilised in this study, the issues of reliability and validity of the research need to be addressed. It has been pointed out that qualitative studies should 'play down the salience of measurement issues' and should not be evaluated or judged using the same criteria used in quantitative studies (Bryman and Bell, 2002:410). Proponents of this school of thought denounce 'positivist criteria' as unsuitable for interpretive types of research (Jamal and Hollinshead, 2001:76) believing that qualitative research needs alternative ways to establish reliability and validity. Trustworthiness in qualitative research is aimed at supporting the stance that the inquiry's findings are 'worth paying attention to' (Guba and Lincoln, 1994:290). Trustworthiness is deconstructed into four criteria that are deemed important in assessing qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Riley, 1996; Bryman and Bell, 2002). While I have used these four criteria in my analysis below, I have also endeavoured to show trustworthiness through triangulation.

Credibility, paralleling *validity* in quantitative research, refers to 'whether the participants' perceptions of the setting or event match up with the researcher's portrayal of them' (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2010). In effect, it ensures that the researcher has followed good practice, accurately representing what the subjects 'think, feel and do' and that the researcher has correctly understood that world (Bryman and Bell, 2002) and 'the processes that influence participants thoughts, feelings and actions' (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtle, 2010:169). *Credibility* in my study was enhanced by securing member checking of the study interview transcripts by several participants and, once the findings were largely concluded, these were also checked as a measure to help establish the *trustworthiness* of the qualitative analysis process (Riley, 1996).

Transferability refers to the 'probability that the study findings have meanings in other situations', (Streubert and Carpenter, 2010:49), comparable to *external validity* in quantitative research. Greene (1990:237) asserts that the researcher should provide 'at minimum, a thick description of the inquiry context and the transactions or processes observed in that context that are relevant to the inquiry problem. I have undertaken to do this by accurately describing and detailing the interview context and

techniques used in this research (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Riley, 1996; Streubert and Carpenter, 2010). In distinguishing it from generalizability, this research does not produce 'generalizable, theoretical propositions' (Greene, 1990:232), but the findings or outcomes may be transferred or employed in other contexts where they are considered to be comparable or similar (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Greene, 1990; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2007).

Dependability, equivalent to *reliability* in quantitative studies, concerns whether the 'process of the study is consistent, reasonably stable over time and across researchers' methods (Miles and Huberman, 1994:278). In this instance, I documented all processes and methods carefully, to demonstrate consistency and stability of process throughout the period of my research. For example, I began with a clear research plan (Finn, Elliott-White and Walton, 2000) and my supervisor examined the content and direction of my focus group questions and themes and reviewed various transcripts to act as an *auditor* and to provide a second opinion regarding the interpretation of the data (Riley, 1996; Bryman and Bell, 2002; Streubert and Carpenter, 2010).

Confirmability, which corresponds to objectivity in quantitative research, uses the so-called 'audit trail' in qualitative research, which is 'a recording of activities over time that another individual can follow' (Streubert and Carpenter, 2010:49). This, according to Bryman and Bell (2002:414), should show that the researcher 'has not overtly allowed personal values or theoretical inclinations manifestly to sway the conduct of the research and findings'. In this case, this process was aided by keeping on-going documentation with regards to decisions about my data analysis and my collection procedures. The journal contains such information as topics discussed during the focus groups and interviews, emerging themes, gestures, intonations and body language that may illuminate meanings and responses (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

5.6.1 Triangulation

Triangulation, as a form of cross-checking in qualitative research, means that 'your findings can be verified by other sources' and is considered to be another technique employed to increase the trustworthiness of the research (Pitney and Parker, 2009:64). Triangulation is a strategy to validate procedures and results of social research (Flick, von Kardoff and Steinke, 2004) or 'essentially a combination of methodologies used to study a particular phenomenon' (Streubert and Carpenter, 2010:359). Fundamentally, triangulation is 'a multi-method approach that incorporates two or more data collections

in the study of some aspect of human behaviour' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007:141) in order to provide more holistic understanding. For example, in this thesis, I have incorporated both focus groups and unstructured interviews to view the data from different perspectives to provide a fuller understanding and increase trustworthiness (Pitney and Parker, 2009).

5.7 Ethical and Information Considerations for Participants

In order to follow ethical guidelines, at both the focus groups and interviews, volunteers were given a Participant Information Sheet and a Consent Form. The information sheet included:

- An introduction to the researcher
- The purpose of the research
- Previous findings - first stage data (only used on the interview information document)
- Explanation of what was expected of the participant
- The subject's right to stop the research at any time
- Data recording, transcription and analysis information
- Confidentiality and Anonymity
- Study funding
- Researcher's contact details

On a separate form, participants were asked, at their discretion, to give their names, addresses, ages, email address, phone number and a signature of consent. The ethical considerations for this study are not as critical as some studies where the information may be highly sensitive and confidential but, nonetheless, the researcher ensured the participants' confidentiality, anonymity and respect for privacy with regards to any information divulged. Care has been taken to ensure that all documentation, records and computer data are securely stored and only relevant academic parties involved in the research process are allowed access presently or in the future. Names of the participants are not used but identified by initials as a coding.

5.8 Methods of Data Analysis

Data gathered through the focus group process and the interview process was analysed separately in this study. Both methods of data analysis are discussed below,

including the role of computer software in the data analysis and the reasons for my choices.

5.8.1 Use of computer software to assist in analysis of focus group data

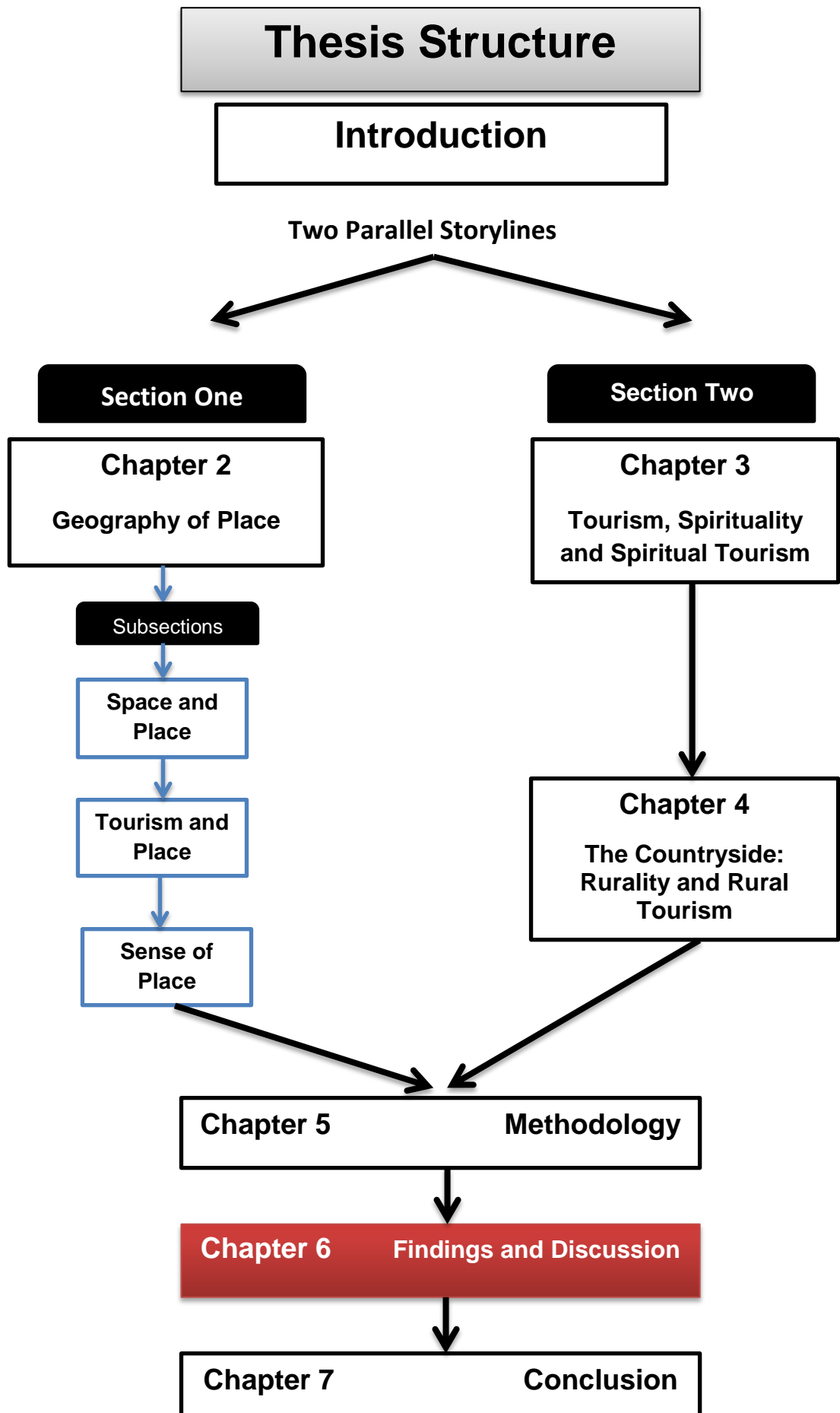
It is notable that, in recent years, software programs for qualitative analysis have become 'an indispensable tool for...storage, retrieval and manipulation' (Kelle, 1995:1) of text-based data, photographic material, audio data, videos and other multi-media. Not only can computer software for qualitative data analysis (CADQAS) make data retrieval and coding faster and more efficient (Bryman and Bell, 2002), but it has been argued that it can also provide greater reliability as 'analysis is more systematic and transparent' (Mehmetoglu and Dann, 2003:10). Furthermore, it has been contended that another advantage of CADQAS is that it can add rigour to the researcher's analysis (Silverman, 2000). Equally, there are those who dismiss the use of software analysis, claiming qualitative software analysis leads to the temptation to convert qualitative findings to quantitative, resulting in a loss of the richness of data, and the narrative flow becomes fragmented which may result in chunks of data being taken out of context (Bryman and Bell, 2002; Ezzy, 2002). From my experience, I do not fully agree that the absence of such software tools makes qualitative research any less rigorous, exacting or trustworthy. Mehmetoglu and Dann (2003:10) suggest that research quality 'depends on the experience, creativity, and theoretical awareness of the investigator' rather than the computer software used, but recommend combining both new and old methods, as I have done in this research.

I used the NVivo program to assist with the analysis of my focus group data and interviews. Text from all meetings, both group and individual, was transcribed electronically into NVivo to be stored, coded and retrieved when required. NVivo helped facilitate categorisation and kept track of 'the emerging, ideas, arguments, and theoretical concepts' (Kelle, 1995:4) whilst helping with theory building. After reading and re-reading, all data was categorised into nodes, broken down into sub-classifications (trees) and in some case even smaller sub-headings. I explored these classifications extensively, looking for patterns and prevalent thoughts, then refined and merged data categories establishing predominant themes, coded under a smaller number of headings. This data was then colour-coded according to grouping to help identify trends and in the case of the focus group data, used to direct the focus of research queries and information collecting for the next stage.

After completing this intensive task I felt that, for the unstructured interviews, I was losing an integral part of the rich data that, I had collected and, therefore, I decided to undertake a complimentary manual analysis of the data. I was inclined to agree with the academics' belief that data becomes fragmented and is not always understood in the appropriate context. Although software still requires the researcher's manipulation and interpretation of data, I felt I had greater control of the text and a much clearer, insightful view of the information in using a manual approach that would provide a more direct account of individuals' subjective experiences. Significantly, I considered that I had deviated from a phenomenological emphasis and was losing touch with the humanistic approach and understanding underlined by my chosen philosophy. In following this thinking, I initially employed some of the concepts of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative analysis originally developed for psychology that emphasises understanding of 'how people make sense of their major life experiences' (Smith, Flowers and Larkin, 2009:1). IPA, though, is a deep analysis of a particular human lived experience rather than human lived experience(s) in a specific study context and is a process that must be undertaken prior to data collection in order to fulfil the approaches directives. By manually operationalizing some of the phenomenological and interpretive aspects of IPA I was able to deconstruct my data through a process of *phenomenological reduction* to reach the essence of the phenomenon (Patton, 1990). This produced data clusters around emergent themes, which through a process of delimitation, 'irrelevant, repetitive or overlapping data' was purged (Andriotis, 2009:8). At this juncture, I was able to formulate an analysis grid to isolate relevant perceptions and viewpoints, and in effect 'go back to the thing itself' (Heidegger, 1927). The condensed experiential elements provided the basis for the findings discussion.

5.9 Summary: The Strength of the Research

For all intent and purpose, I have employed a qualitative approach, informed by a phenomenological paradigm. The reasons for this approach have been laid out in this chapter, discussing the exploratory nature of the study and the desire to collect rich, thick description in order to uncover or discover the complex human understanding of spirituality as a dimension of rural tourism. The outcomes of the research are now considered in the following chapter.



Chapter Six

Discussion of Key Findings

6.0 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the key findings of this research and, in particular, to identify and consider critically the themes and implications that emerge from an analysis of the data. The chapter commences with a re-introduction to and review of the research question before providing a context for the research findings by way of an assessment of participants' motivations for visiting the countryside, specifically the Lake District, and their activities there. It then turns to the outcomes of the research, the narrative reflecting the two stages explained in detail in the preceding methodology chapter. Thus, it first introduces and explores the principal themes emerging from the focus groups encounters, the dialogue from the focus group discussions being used as a means of highlighting relevant discourse. The discussion then moves on to the second stage of the research, namely the, unstructured in-depth interviews. Drawing on the principal themes that emerged from the focus groups as a framework, the analysis focuses on the significant findings of the interviews. The use of key quotes and participants' inputs provides an essential underpinning to the central themes of the interviews and, reflecting the phenomenological approach adopted in this research, characterises the participants' individual understanding of the issues and topics discussed. The process of narrowing the data by characterisation and categorisation is then charted and, finally, the evidence from the data is summed up in a brief analysis.

6.1 Returning to the Research Question

In the specific context of tourism, place is a primary factor in the business of tourism; understanding the complex dynamics of the concept of place to the visitor is of fundamental importance to the success of the tourism sector. Place entices tourists, place becomes the centre of meaning for tourists, place becomes constructed and bonds may be formed with place. These conditions influence individual tourists' decision-making processes and, equally, decisions made in a wider social context. Consequently, the nature of tourists' engagement with place, in particular their

emotional engagement, is fundamental to our understanding of tourist behaviour and motivations. In other words, in order to understand more fully the social or spatial movement that is contemporary tourism, it is necessary to explore the role of place in the tourist experience, not only as geographical loci but also in the context of the social and psychological interaction that visitors have with place (Morgan, 2009).

It has been suggested that the contemporary tourist demonstrates a growing need to become involved in touristic experiences that fulfil inner emotional needs, to not only 'gaze' passively (Urry, 2002) upon landscapes, peoples and places but to also engage in and, perhaps, 'co-create' the experience (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). That is, they are searching beyond the tangible services offered by the tourism sector to engage in experiences that are transformative, memorable and personal. It is, perhaps, no coincidence that this shift in the nature of tourist consumption towards the search for lived, meaningful experiences has occurred during a time in Western society when the traditional supports of community and family are claimed to have become eroded and modern life is lacking focus and direction. Society, notably, has been affected by a purported post-modern decline in traditional religion, recognisable by a cultural landscape that is increasingly secular in nature. Perhaps largely as a response to secularisation and mounting disillusion with materialistic lifestyles, an escalation can be observed in the innate need of individuals to find personal spiritual fulfilment (Heelas and Woodhead, 2005). The quest for new spiritual horizons evokes the idea of a journey and it is increasingly evident that, in contemporary Western society, the human search for spiritual realisation is reflected in individuals seeking spirituality through touristic pursuits (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Little and Schmidt, 2006; Laing and Crouch, 2009)

Recognising the broader interpretation of contemporary spirituality and meaningful places, the tourist of today may be thought of as seeking their own personal 'places' of spirituality, deriving both non-secular and secular meaning from *sacred places* or *special places* of their own designation. Emergent literature has explored the relationship between spirituality and natural environments, but there remains a gap in the literature that explores the influence of rural landscapes on spiritual enlightenment and, in particular, that unravels the relationship between 'place', activity, location and spiritual realisation. Within a space-specific context, therefore, this thesis focuses on the touristic experience of the countryside. In particular, it draws on the case of the Lake District, a place widely-recognised to be defined by both social and physical constructs (Newby, 1979; Macnaghten and Urry, 1998; Macnaghten and Urry, 2001; Roberts and Hall, 2001) seeking to identify the influence of *place* on the spiritual experience of the rural visitor. The question this thesis addresses is, essentially, does

rural tourism offer a spiritual dimension or is spiritual experience embodied in the complex place bonding process understood as 'sense of place'?

6.2 The Focus Groups: Findings and Discussion

As discussed in the preceding chapter, the principle purpose of the first stage of the primary research based upon focus group discussions was to gather background data in order to build a foundation or overview of participants' experiences, perceptions and general feelings about the Lake District. Additionally, the research sought to achieve achieving a level of understanding of the participants' emotional and possible spiritual motivations or outcomes from their activities in the Lake District, thereby identifying key themes that would inform the in-depth interviews at the second stage of the research. Within the focus group context, it is relatively easy to elicit more general information and opinions; however, in order to encourage deeper and more personal responses and contributions, an *icebreaking* conversation and a slower, relaxed approach is required. In all four focus group sessions, this was achieved by starting the conversations with open-ended inquiries about participants' activities and general feelings about the Lake District. By using a broad approach and progressively narrowing the groups' thematic focus, there was a natural progression from superficial conversation to more personal descriptive and emotive revelations. Naturally, some participants were more willing to disclose personal feelings than others. The benefit of a group situation, however, is that the conversation flows more freely and, as ideas are expressed, this catalyses others to express opinions and commentary that might not be forthcoming in a more structured, one-to-one (interview) context.

The rich information gathered from the focus group sessions provided an outline of the group members' reasons and motivations for visiting the Lake District, their past connections with the area and the activities they engaged in during their visits there, as well as an indication of their conceptual understanding and their emotive experiences of the Lake District. Generally, the discussions were designed to allow for natural conversation in order to uncover common thematic strands, to assess evidence of 'sense of place' and uncover predominant emotive observations expressed by the respondents. More specifically, although the key concept of spirituality was briefly discussed by each group, this emerged only later in the discussions. Purposefully, no attempt was made to encourage the participants to qualify or define this concept, nor was any pressure exerted on them to gain responses. Nevertheless, and significantly, the term spirituality arose several times in the conversations without any prompting.

As a result of these informative focus groups, a number of significant themes emerged: the uniqueness of the Lake District; common reasons / motivations for visiting the Lake District; the significance of the physical activity to experiences; the physical environment; place importance; childhood family influences and memories; current or recent family experiences; cultural influences; affective (emotional and spiritual) experiences; and, social experiences with a group, partner or friend. In order to organise these themes for closer examination, the data was deconstructed into the following key themes.

6.2.1 The place: the Lake District

Tourism places, as socially constructed places, develop from tourists' experience of place and, through these encounters, the meanings that they attribute to place (Suvantola, 2002). This occurs at both the collective and individual level, with tourists deriving meaning from their contextual understanding of place, past and present experiences, aesthetics of the environment, and the influences of culture, history and media (Young, 1999; Stokowski, 2002; Williams, 2002). Certain places, for this complexity of reasons, have become centres of tourists' focus. Tourist places, as desired places to visit, usually have qualities of environmental aesthetics, facilitate visitor activities and hold appeal influenced by past experiences, perceived ideas or mediated sources (Trauer and Ryan, 2005).

The rural tourist is generally drawn to places of exceptional beauty that offer a scope of activities and provide an environment viewed in sharp contrast to their (typically urban) home setting (Kastenholz and Lima, 2011). It is the special qualities of specific areas of the countryside that chiefly attract tourists' attention and experience the largest number of visitors. In particular, the Lake District National Park, recognised as an area of outstanding natural beauty, has long been impacted by the forces of tourism, inspired by the popular representations of the Romantic Movement that have helped shape the vision of British countryside as an idyllic retreat from the perceived ills of urban living (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Darby, 2000).

All participants in the four focus groups considered the Lake District a unique and special place, distinctive not only in Britain but worldwide. They attributed the distinctiveness of the Lake District to a number of both tangible and intangible factors. The superlative beauty and diversity of the landscape was uniformly agreed upon whilst, specifically, the arrangement of the physical environment, natural and man-made, was a quality of the Lake District appreciated by all. The compactness of the

area and the variety of activities available in such a small region was mentioned numerous times in the focus group discussions:

It's very small geographically but you can actually...be alone in a very short space of time.

I think it's the variety of it. I like the compact nature of it. You get a lot of variety in a small space. I feel when I go up to Scotland that I get lost.

It's only about 50 or 60 miles from suburbia...it's a phenomena and it's all so enclosed in a small area. When you're actually stood on one of the high fells you realise how small it is but it's actually quite vast when you start to explore it.

It is very pleasing to the eye. Everything just seems to fit into place.

I just love being among the mountains.

Contributing to the list of other qualities considered distinctive to the Lake District were the idyllic villages and houses built using local stone.

The villages are just beautiful.

Overall, the tangible qualities were appreciated at a holistic level, each element significant to the complete picture.

The intangible qualities of the Lake District were, by definition, not so clearly referenced. Some of the impressions alluded to by the focus groups cited the special quality of light, the unspoilt quality, the smell, the sense of a weight lifting off their shoulders, the magical quality, quietness, and the sense of energy or life force experienced when visiting the Lakes. It was clear that, for some group members, the Lake District has an appeal that comes not only from the exceptional tangible qualities but also from indefinable emotive responses to the particular physical environment of the area.

With respect to negative impressions of the Lake District, there was collective agreement by all the focus groups that the volume of traffic and the large number of tourists detracted from the area. Interestingly, as the participants spent a great deal of time pursuing activities on the fells and very little time in the villages, they did not consider themselves as tourists. Tourists, from the perspective of focus group members, seemed to be the people who spent their time in the 'honeypots', shopping, eating and having a short walk or quick look at the Lakes. Indeed, I felt the participants had an air of disdain or superiority towards the non-active tourist or tourists who chose to walk in places that they considered 'touristy'. It seemed, perhaps, that their experiences had given them more 'rights' or a greater sense of ownership or belonging.

At this point, it was unclear what was actually intended by these comments and what manifested these feelings. For example:

There are far too many people going there for the capacity of the roads to cope with it (traffic). And if you are on Scafell, solitary as you are on Scafell, you can look across to Scafell Pike and see them all milling at the top. All they do is focus on those particular points!

It is a victim of its own success.

You have these hotspots and that's where the tourists go...as long as they don't start spreading out into the smaller valleys.

These feelings seemed to relate to sense of place but needed to be explored in the interview situation in order to gain clearer understanding.

6.2.2 Visitor motivations

Tourism, as a leisure or free time activity, is motivated by numerous factors but the restorative nature of 'escaping' or getting away from one's everyday existence is a primary stimulus (McDonald and Schreyer, 1991). The participants, as rural tourists, expressed this idea along with several other reasons for visiting the countryside. Motivations for visiting the Lake District were diverse, consisting of both push and pull factors (Dann, 1981; Suvantola, 2002; Mohammad and Ahmad Puad Mat, 2010), but throughout the groups there appeared to be a general consensus. The most common reasons were fresh air, exercise, getting away from an urban environment, convenience, accessibility, enjoying a variety of activities, family time, social aspects, the scenery, escaping from 'normal' life and the stresses associated with everyday living and general mental health benefits. From the participants' comments, the most important reasons for visiting the Lake District were narrowed down to three main reasons: the opportunity for physical activity, the physical environment and accessibility.

All the participants presently live in Lancashire; therefore, given its proximity, the Lake District is an obvious choice. However, many still visited Wales, Scotland, Yorkshire and even travelled into continental Europe in order to enjoy rural environments and pursue their activities. The Lake District offers easy access but, for most, the Lake District experience seemed to be special and, therefore, although accessibility emerged as a key reason for visiting, it was by no means the driving force in their decisions to go there. This was demonstrated by the fact that the Yorkshire Dales, the Forest of Bowland and even North Wales are close to where most group members live, but these places but did not seem to have the same drawing power as the Lake

District. The key motivations that emerged were the appeal of the Lake District countryside combined with the love of their particular activity. In effect, the scenery and an environment that facilitated their chosen activity. Decidedly, these were the most important factors but also, the contrast to their home environment and escaping from every day existence were also instrumental factors in the decision making process. Fundamentally, the Lake District, provided the physical environment necessary to pursue their activity but participants' relationships to the area were far more complex tying into elements of familiarity, socialisation and past memories (nostalgia) all elements of sense of place.

6.2.3 Physical activities

Owing to the nature of the study, only participants who were engaging with the environment in a physical manner were sampled. The members in all the groups were largely involved in similar activities, with hiking/walking the predominant activity. Other physical pursuits were rock climbing, ice climbing, cycling, hiking, swimming, canoeing, sailing, mountain biking, camping and wind surfing. Participants had contrasting levels of expertise and some were involved in a variety of outdoor activities although perhaps unsurprisingly, fell walking was the one activity that was uniformly enjoyed by all the participants. Consistently throughout the data, place and activity showed strong linkages to participants' enjoyment of the activity. This was reflected in the conversation as the activity, almost exclusively, was of salient importance to the participants. Indeed, at this stage in the research process it was difficult to distinguish between the importance of the place and the importance of the activity.

The activities, for most, usually were pursued in the Lake District although many had travelled to different rural places throughout Britain and into Europe specifically to enjoy their chosen pursuit in different environs. Significant elements of these experiences were seeing new places, new challenges, different scenery, group/family experiences and achievement.

6.2.4 Childhood and past experiences

Childhood experiences and early associations with the Lake District appeared to have a powerful and positive impact on current perceptions and appreciation of the Lakes. During the course or the focus group, it became abundantly clear that the majority of participants had childhood associations with the Lake District, usually with family involvement at a young age but also through school experiences, Scout and Guide

clubs, friends from university and other organisations. The effect of past experiences in the Lakes seemed to provide a stimulus for current visits to the area. This suggests that participants' present trips to the Lake District may hold some nostalgic motivations to recreate past events but, primarily, it seemed that old memories were being replaced or added to by new experiences. It was clear that past associations provoked emotional feelings that were a significant factor in present day visits, but the extent to which earlier memories had an influence on emotional and possible spiritual outcomes was indeterminate.

6.2.5 Social and family experiences (communitas)

Some of the participants were attached to clubs, whilst others pursued their interest with friends or family. Equally, there was a smaller number who preferred solitary outings. Overall, however, most group members indicated that they enjoyed the company for reasons of shared experience, social conversation, problem solving, safety and a sense of 'communitas' – social equality, togetherness and solidarity. There was also the element of safety and, with walking in particular, a comforting reassurance, that getting lost would not be factor.

For a large number of the participants, family (their own children) outings were part of the experience or had played a part in their past experiences. These were (or still are) positive experiences, which appear to have contributed to their continued relationship to the Lake District.

6.2.6 Descriptions of emotive (and/or spiritual) experience: terminology and occurrence

The descriptors used to identify emotive (and/or spiritual) observations were fairly consistent throughout the groups and included such terminology and phrases as exhilaration, elation, terror, peace, contentment, euphoria, satisfaction, self-satisfaction, self-reliance, sense of achievement, sense of being part of it, also being part of the landscape (connectedness), success, well-being, worthwhile, tranquillity, calmness, restorative and restful. The words/phrases distinguished as spiritual descriptors were: awe, inner peace, moved, oneness, amazement, tranquillity, calmness, introspective, something more, connectedness, enlightenment.

The strongest emotive and spiritual responses seemed to be catalysed by physical challenges, particularly successful achievements, and were usually associated with

specific views, commonly views from higher up or on top of a mountain. The stimulus of water, light and weather were all factors in emotional responses and the intangible quality of silence affected emotional outcomes. Historic sites, such as old quarries and mines, provoked emotive reactions insofar as there seemed to be a reverent attitude to these sites in recognising the hardship and enduring nature of the people and the landscape.

Note on Spiritual Experiences: Prior to any mention of spirituality, a number of group members had already used the term 'spirituality' in some of their observations. Later, when the topic of spirituality was gently broached by the facilitator, it emerged that a number of participants had not considered the possible spiritual aspect of their visits. After short consideration, some group members provided accounts of experiences that they thought may be spiritual but they seemed unclear about how they defined their own spirituality or if they even were spiritual. Interestingly, words or events describing spiritual experience for one person were the same events or words considered purely emotive by another. The recognition of personal spirituality or, indeed, having no personal spirituality was clear to some, but the remainder seemed unsure about their feelings on the topic. In at least two focus groups, when referring to spirituality, extremely definitive negative responses by a participant appeared to intimidate open responses from other members – this is an obvious problem of group discussions. The conclusion derived from these findings indicated that personal conversations/interviews would produce more insightful and conclusive data.

6.2.7 Sense of place

Interestingly, and as suggested above (*Section 6.2.1*), the majority of the participants did not view themselves as tourists or visitors but seemed to lay great personal claim to the Lakes. Tourists, in the participant's view, were considered to be those who came and 'gazed', but did not interact with the environment. For many, this sense of 'guardianship' or attachment to the Lakes seemed to be based in both past and present memories, with the activity being of importance but the *place* provoking the most illuminating commentary. It is unclear at this point in the analysis if attachment to *place* is associated with a collective or individually constructed interpretation of the Lakes, or if the physical aspects of the environment create that bond, although the indications are that there is a combination of factors influencing the *sense of belonging*. Clearly, there is a strong, positive emotional response by participants when engaged in physical activity in the Lakes, which is also relevant to those who recognised a spiritual

experience. Also at this stage in the research, however, the occurrence of spiritual experiences was indeterminate whilst the relationship between place and spiritual experience remained uncertain

Overall, then, whilst the focus groups provided some very clear and rich data, they did not allow for understanding of individual perspectives and, although most respondents talked very openly, it was impossible to follow up individual strands of the conversation. Nevertheless, the data collected did provide some provocative insights and establish a baseline for a more intensive and probing line of inquiry through the subsequent in-depth interviews.

6.3 Unstructured Interviews

The second stage of the research involved unstructured interviews probing deeply into interviewees' conscious and subconscious thought processes in order to establish personal background and experiences, and to identify clearly emotional responses and possible spiritual connections to place. This stage involved twelve participants purposively selected from the initial members of the four focus groups at stage one of the research. From the twelve respondents interviewed, six were subsequently contacted again and asked specific questions in order to clarify comments from the initial interviews that were vague or ambiguous. The interview sessions were intensive and comprehensive whilst the follow-up questions were brief and to the point, focusing on amplification, elucidation and any further thoughts the interviewee may have had since the interview. The primary aim of these interview sessions was to address specific lines of inquiry, those being:

- Exploring religious and/or spiritual backgrounds to establish current views on spirituality
- Characterising the variant meanings and understandings of the concept of spirituality
- Attempting to establish the differences between emotive and spiritual experiences
- Examining the significance of the activity to the rural experience
- Exploring the value of the physical environment to the rural experience
- Establishing each interviewees' perceptions of the significant characteristics of place (the countryside and the Lake District) to identify sense of place

- Defining explicit emotional/spiritual responses to place (the Lake District and the countryside) and the context of these responses

6.3.1 Unstructured interviews discussion

In the context of people engaged in physical activity in the countryside, is rural tourism a spiritual experience or is spirituality embodied by the complex place bonding process understood as sense of place?

In order to answer this comprehensive question, a number of underlying themes needed to be surveyed and explored in extensive detail. The following discussion breaks down the data into those significant elements and subsequently gives some order and direction needed to demonstrate how the answer to this thesis was derived. This was supported by asking further key, fundamental questions and providing answers revealed in the data to develop the strength of this thesis' argument.

Finally, as an observation and a guide to the reader, it is essential to note the difficulty of analysing and categorising abstract data such as human behaviour and emotions. Affective or emotive experiences rarely come from one singular circumstance but are generated by the interplay of event, place and state of mind. Taking this into account, it is without doubt very difficult to isolate any one clear element that dictates an individual's emotive and spiritual experiences. Nonetheless, in analysing the information I decided to deconstruct the data into the subsections stated below, first considering contemporary spirituality and then specifically exploring aspects of physical place, physical activity and place meaning, in order to determine the impact of these parts to the whole experience and to identify what role they had in spiritual experiences. The final theme in the discussion draws these complex strands together to create a complete picture. This is not wholly satisfactory as the nature of human experience is a series of interconnected events that cannot be clearly separated from each other. However, this was deemed to be the most appropriate approach to exploring all the elements of the rural tourist experience and possible spiritual dimension of that experience.

After commencing with a discussion of contemporary spirituality, the subsequent sections are structured to illustrate the contrast between experiences of the countryside and sense of place with the added element of physical activity. Finally, the spiritual dimension of the countryside visitor experience is considered. The thematic elements that are now analysed and developed are as follows:

- ❖ Conceptualising Contemporary Spirituality
- ❖ Countryside: Tangible and Intangible Qualities
- ❖ Physical Activity
- ❖ Sense of Place: The Lake District
- ❖ Countryside: Rural Tourism and Spirituality.

6.4 Conceptualising Contemporary Spirituality

Is spirituality a quality of the participants' lives and what is their understanding of spirituality?

As explained in the methodology chapter (Chapter 5), sampling was purposive throughout the two stages of the research. In the second stage, and following on from the focus group discussions in which group members revealed their understanding / attitude / beliefs with respect to the notion of spirituality, interview respondents were targeted on the basis of three categories: religious, spiritual, and non-religious/non-spiritual. This was done in order to establish a sampling that offered contrasting viewpoints, ideologies and world views. It also reflected more accurately the fact that not all people identify with the concept of spirituality. Recognisably, in a focus group situation it was difficult to truly know and clearly identify participants that fulfilled this sampling objective so, effectively, it relied solely on the researcher's judgement.

First and foremost, in analysing the data, it was necessary to identify the number of participants who considered themselves spiritual and then to gain understanding of their spirituality and spiritual experience. This proved to be both simple and difficult at the same time. Ascertaining numbers was fairly easy but categorising their understanding of spirituality was much more complex. In numerical terms, out of the twelve participants, seven considered they were spiritual, two had strong religious/spiritual affiliations, one was unclear or did not want to name the feelings as spiritual and the last two considered themselves non-religious/non-spiritual. Spirituality is an abstract, subjective and highly individual concept (or process) that most people would have difficulty defining and even greater difficulty placing in a particular context. This is owing to the all-encompassing nature of the concept that defies any collective understanding and equally, the broadening scope of meaning and activity attributed to contemporary spiritual experience. This phenomenon has been noted by Flanagan and Jupp (2007:24) who argue that, as the domain of spirituality grows and develops, it has moved away from traditional religious beginnings reflected not only in personal meanings of spirituality but also in disciplinary approaches to spirituality. In effect,

contemporary spirituality is emergent, lacking a clear language of its own and encompassing a disparate array of practices and beliefs, neither clearly understood by individuals or academics.

These issues are compounded by the fact that those who do consider themselves spiritual have never stopped to ask why or what does it mean to be spiritual. Spirituality appears to be something that we 'feel' but we do not actively characterise these feelings. In effect, spirituality is the 'sense of something', ethereal and intangible, a very personal and individual inner sensation, exaggerated consciousness or reaction that therefore defies concrete and tangible explanations (Driver, Dustin, Baltic, Elsner and Peterson, 1996; Ashley, 2005).

Consequently, there is often inconsistency in an individual's discourse on spirituality and a distinct lack of clear understanding of their own spirituality. For example, in one particular interview when discussing the context of their spiritual experiences, the respondent remarked:

I've also had it in cities to be honest...in Paris...a cathedral...Jesus on the ceiling...so not just in the mountains.

It is interesting that this participant should say this as he did not consider himself religious but was moved in a spiritual way in a religious environment by an iconic religious image. He related his spirituality to Celtic, Druid and Buddhist beliefs. In contrast, he considered himself to be Christian with small 'c' values but saw nature as the context for most of his spiritual experiences. Clearly, he drew his spiritual beliefs from a number of different types of faiths. This 'pick n' mix' approach is commonly reported as an aspect of contemporary spirituality (de Vulpian, 2008; de Castella, 2013) and underlies the complexity of individuals' spiritual understanding and beliefs. This is but one example of the nebulousness of the concept of spirituality and expresses the inherent difficulties of collating a collective understanding and distinguishing spiritual experiences, a complexity that has been well documented (Spilka, 1993; Zinnbauer, Pargament, Cole, Rye, Butler *et al.*, 1997).

In effect, spirituality is not and cannot be defined by any clear and collective definition. Therefore, individuals often find it hard to express meanings of spirituality and to isolate spiritual moments or times. Spirituality is a psychological process, one that involves both inner thought processes and outer influences derived from experiences of culture, religion and personal life experiences. In this way, what became eminently clear through the research is that each respondent defined their own spirituality in terms of past and current influences in their lives, influences that have shaped their

understanding of their lived experiences and determined their personal spiritual pathways.

Within the spiritual group of respondents, there was an interesting understanding of spirituality in relationship to religion, some seeing it as separate from religion. For example:

Religion is kind of mechanistic or it can be mechanistic. Spirituality is something that is much more innate and free flowing. You can have deeply spiritual people who wouldn't know religion if it hit them in the face kind of thing! I think they are quite different things.

Spirituality is separate from religion, very much so! In fact I think that organised religion hijacks peoples' spirituality.

These feelings, as a commonly identified aspect of contemporary spirituality (Ashley, 2007; Flanagan and Jupp, 2007), seem to indicate perceived failure or disaffection with traditional religion and its inability to fulfil spiritual needs.

And others, viewing religion and spirituality as not easily separated:

I would say it's separate only from the point of view that a spiritual feeling can be gained from a non-spiritual environment. My spirituality comes, maybe, originally from a religious aspect...so maybe thinking about it and I never really gave it a thought...maybe there is religious aspect of everything I do.

There were those who seemed confused by the word spirituality but identified with spirituality in religious terms.

Some people are very spiritual. I wouldn't say I am that. Spiritual for me is people that believe in spirits...they believe in ghosts and ghouls and clairvoyants. I just have a belief that there is always somebody there with you. I do have beliefs. There is a god there looking down on us and Jesus Christ did come a thousand years ago.

And equally, the research revealed significant variance in contextual interpretation of spirituality. For example:

I think it is very much to do with a sense of myself, how comfortable I feel with myself and how accepting I am of myself.

I don't necessarily think of the spiritual thing in terms of God, more in terms of a Celtic Druid way. I think there are a lot of bad things to blame on religion...the regimented religion.

My own spirituality...makes me explicitly conscious of morals and morality and the other kind of spirituality is in appreciating landscapes and nature, memories of this, very happy memories.

Spirituality is what animates us. It is in all of us...from the Greek word anima. It is the essential essence, the core of them, the bit that is them that will continue, that has been, and that will be. I don't 'have' spirituality, I'm me, and it's just part of me!

I suppose I have a very animalistic approach to this (spirituality) and it just makes you feel at one with the world, with the natural side of the world rather than the sort of built environment.

Then there were the respondents who felt they held no religious or spiritual beliefs but were unsure of what their emotions signified. They obviously did not identify with the term spirituality and, during the interviews, I felt they were responding to the influences of the conversation rather than answering to their own beliefs.

I don't know whether you call it spiritual or not but you definitely get a feeling of well-being when you are up on the tops.

It depends on your definition, it certainly lifts my spirits...mentally it refreshes me...whether that is a spiritual thing or not, I don't know.

And then there was the definitive and clear answer:

My view is that...religion and spirituality...come out of peoples' fear. I guess I am not a spiritual person...for me that is just what I call an emotional experience...as far as spiritual experiences go I don't relate to it at all.

It became apparent that a continuum was perhaps the best way to visually illustrate the complexity of participants' spiritual views. The figure below depicts the extremes with non-religious/non-spiritual at one end of the spectrum, and religious/spiritual placed at the other end. Along the continuum, the varying degrees and differences of spirituality are indicated, capturing the diversity and scope of spiritual awareness (see Figure 6.1).

At each end of the continuum lie the two extremes, those with no religious beliefs and an aversion to ideas of spirituality contrasting with those whose lives are built around their religious and spiritual beliefs. From non-spiritual / non-religious, the continuum moves to those who sometimes allude to spirituality but seem vague and apprehensive about the concept. The centre ground is occupied are those who are happy to acknowledge their spiritual nature but interpret their spirituality through individual practices and beliefs. Moving further along the continuum are those who clearly recognise their own spirituality but attach religious connotations to their feelings; their lives and spirituality are influenced by Christian values but they are not convinced of the veracity of traditional religious history, conflicted by the scientific rationalisation of the modern world.

Non-spiritual/Non-religious

(Unequivocal)

Spiritual

(Multiplicity)

Religious/Spiritual

(Unequivocal)

Spirituality – uncertain

Spiritual/ Christian Values

(Ambivalent about beliefs)

(Ambivalent about religion)

6.4.1 Emotive or spiritual?

I think that you have to be in a sort of emotional frame of mind to be open to these things really. So whether it is a piece of music or whether it is a painting or whether it is a beautiful garden you are making an emotional response to it that can become spiritual.

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emotional feelings is not dissimilar to phrases described as spiritual by those who acknowledge their spirituality. For instance:

Sometimes just sitting there with great views down a valley and thinking to myself that I am part of something but I am only a small part of something that is really big of an area that has so much power, I feel that it has got a lot of power, the size of the fells and that plays a great part in it.

I just feel glad to be alive. I just like looking at awesome views and things when I am up there. Sit down on rocks and you know...just sit there and let go of all the worries.

In describing spirituality, common terminology or phrases were: intense joy, sense of self, peace, magical, sense of connection, wonder, awe, amazement, reverence, gratitude, atmospheric, centred, balancing, introspective, energised, in the moment and flowing. Emotive descriptors were peace, freeing, escape, joy, well-being, relaxation, contentment, elation, rebalancing, amazement, enjoyment and refreshing. Although some of the phrases or terms articulated were only referred to in the context of spiritual experiences, there are a number of terms that seem to be used interchangeably for spiritual and emotional experiences. This served to demonstrate that those respondents who rejected the notion of spirituality still experienced powerful emotive feelings akin to spiritual experiences. The situations in which these feelings occurred were almost identical for non-spiritual and spiritual participants. That is, these emotional/spiritual feelings, for all participants, appeared to be linked to a combination of circumstances that brought an intensity of emotions. Equally, it is important to note the fact that, for some, perceived spirituality is on-going or consistent, whereas, for others, certain events and places intensified spiritual moments.

Interpreting the data, some of the spiritual respondents made clear distinctions between their descriptions of spirituality and descriptions of emotional feelings but, at other times, it was exceedingly difficult to assess the difference between spiritual and emotive events. It is noted by Flanagan and Jupp (2007:25) that there is a school of thought that spirituality is, essentially, no different than emotional phenomena, such as love, hate, joy, despair and other strong emotions. Although I do not personally agree with this view, as spiritual feelings, for me, are far more powerful and sublime, I can appreciate, from my research, the difficulty of delineating between intense emotional feelings and spirituality. It became clear to me that, as spirituality seems to derive from highly emotive contexts, I must adopt the assumption that the degree of intensity and the conditions for the experience dictated whether it was spiritual or just emotional. Clearly, affective experiences for some were spiritual ones for others depending on personal beliefs.

The context of spiritual experiences and feelings were quite diverse, with each individual offering a different perspective to the framework of these occurrences. Despite these variances, there were a number of discernible conditions and circumstances for spiritual outcomes that were consistently agreed upon. These will be discussed within the subheadings, found further below, in order to identify factors that specifically impact on spiritual experience and categorise the nature of participants' spiritual experiences.

6.4.2 Sacred places in the countryside

In exploring respondents' understanding of spirituality, I investigated the idea of modern secular sacred places in the countryside. Noting the broader contemporary approach to sacredness, embracing both religious and secular expressions, sacred or spiritually meaningful places may encompass unconventional places such as nature and natural places (Durkheim, 1915; Schroeder, 2002; McIntosh, 2010). Natural places that have the power to stir people's hearts and spirits and strengthen one's sense of belonging to the world may be considered sacred (Roberts, 1996). The aim of this thematic area of discussions in the interviews was to establish if places other than conventional religious settings provided a spiritual context.

Discourse showed that, for a small number of respondents, there were 'distinctive' places that did offer spiritual comfort or well-being but, generally, places were just considered special, not sacred. These places seemed to be spiritually meaningful; places as centres for spiritual well-being or healing, but were not considered sacred places.

A few years ago I lost someone...every year on the anniversary I go to the Tarn Hows later in the day...most people are pretty much gone and I just sit there and have this, I suppose, spiritual feeling. I will just sit there as long as I need to really.

Although not all were natural places, they were all found in natural settings. The built places seemed to be historic structures or sites of archaeological interest no longer used for religious purposes but which have now become visitor attractions (Shackley, 2001).

Castle Rigg...there is something about that place, about the way it lines up with the mountains and the way it lines up with the valleys. Some places just have that aura. It just seems a special place and it definitely is a religious place...that is not the right word for it...but it is a special place.

For one participant, places that were sacred seemed to have a special aura, perhaps connected to religious events.

Spiritual places...you come across them. It's mainly places where there has been a concentration of spiritual activity and it's seeped into the ground or it's in the atmosphere.

Another interviewee seemed unsure about their opinion, which made me feel that the place (in nature) was just special and not sacred.

In the past I have had places that I had not wanted to share with others, so perhaps, they could be called 'sacred'.

Participants recognised that places could hold special meaning and were emotive places, but the word 'sacred' still seems to remain religious in connotation and/or concerned largely with the built environment.

I would put a sacred place in the context of something that had or has a religious purpose as opposed to a general environment. Castle Rigg or Stonehenge...I would consider those to be sacred places.

Those who were not spiritual had trouble identifying with the word sacred, even when referred to in a secular sacred nature. Talking with the interviewees, I felt that although they did not consider places sacred, there were special places that intensified their emotional mind set and set the stage for spiritual experiences or heightened emotions at the very least. These occurrences were not always related only to the place but also other conditions that set the stage – that is, solitude, weather, light, and mood etc., all added to the context.

Curiously, quite a few respondents mentioned that they wanted to have their ashes scattered on mountain tops in the Lake District or on other hill tops. At last two of these people had been reluctant to lay any great claim to being spiritual. One even said they would like to die in the Lakes. It was particularly striking that they felt their ashes must contain something of themselves, other than the material substance of their bodies. I could only conjecture that, in some subconscious part of their minds, they believed they were spiritual beings. This appeared to be the only sensible reason for wanting their ashes scattered in a place that had held great personal significance. In effect, the Lake District fells or other distinctive rural areas held some sort of secular spiritual meaning. This may be a giant conceptual leap but, nevertheless, I felt that there was definitely something significant in these comments and reflected the academic view that we are all innately spiritual (Chandler, Holden and Kolander, 1992; Hay and Socha, 2005).

6.4.3 Modern day secular pilgrimage

Although the discussions with interviewees did not touch specifically on the idea of their tourist experiences being a form of secular pilgrimage, it was revealed that there were many commonalities of pilgrimage underlying their experiences. The parallels were noted in the patterns and processes related to the activity, mainly walking, and the symbolic similarities of fell walking to pilgrimage walks. There are, of course, particular rituals and practices associated with pilgrimage: (i) separation – from the routines of normal existence, (ii) the journey – hardships and physical effort, (iii) transition – emotional or spiritual realisation such as healing, transformation or renewal, and (iv) return – back to normal life (Rinschede, 1992). Pilgrimages reference both the external or physical journey and the inner journey, the quest or search for meaning (Digance, 2006). Walking groups also provide the opportunity for shared experiences or similar experiences to the *communitas* of pilgrimages whereby participants ‘experience...a spontaneously generated relationship between levelled and equal...human beings, stripped of structural attributes’ (Turner, 1974:202). The parallels of pilgrimage to fell walking has been noted by Darby (2000) who, like myself, recognises the similarities of shared past and present experiences, physical challenges of exertion and weather combined with panoramic views and a feeling of being away from it all that leads to the possibility of connection to something larger, a sense of proportion and the chance for spiritual renewal.

6.5 Countryside: Tangible and Intangible Elements

What elements of the countryside are important to the rural experience and how do these elements contribute to emotional and spiritual experiences?

The countryside, representative of the rural idyll, has become an increasingly popular focus of tourism. The place of countryside engenders a vision of landscape and spatiality of nature coalesced with the nostalgic imaginings of a simpler and more harmonious way of life offering a refuge from modernity (Bunce, 1994; Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000). Popular cultural representation of the countryside as idyllic is deeply embedded in the national psyche produced and reproduced through past interpretations of the rural to present day mass produced, mediated representations (Horton, 2008). The socially constructed nature of the countryside provides a collective understanding but, through individual experiences, personal constructions of the countryside are reshaped, redefined and, thus, implicated in the tourist decision-making process.

The reasons for visiting the countryside are diverse, particularly as rural areas seek to add value to the countryside experience by expanding the range of activities and sights available to visitors. Evidently, a large part of the countryside's appeal is the natural environment, with other elements such as villages, churches, pubs, shops, farms, purpose built activity centres and museums adding to the lure of the countryside. The countryside is many things to many people depending on the nature of their visit and their motivations for coming. In the context of this study, all the respondents were involved in outdoor activities with other elements (man-made) of the countryside contributing to their experience. In seeking to ascertain the impact of the countryside environment (natural and built) on emotive and spiritual elements, it was deemed necessary to explore a number of key areas relevant to that understanding. These themes relate to countryside in general, with the focus on the Lake District coming later in the discussion on sense of place.

6.5.1 Rural versus urban

The increasing movement of tourists into rural areas is attributed to several factors, primarily highlighting the contrasts between so called rural environments and urbanised environments. Conventionally, counterurbanisation has referred to urban dwellers' relocation into the countryside but the term has now been adopted for usage in the examination of the growth phenomena in rural tourism. Rural tourism as a form of temporal counterurbanisation is seen as a response to pressures of urban life, a search for relaxation an escape, and a retreat from modernity, catalysed by the emergent belief of the countryside as an idyllic refuge from stresses and worries associated with built up environments (O'Reilly, 2007).

It appears there is always an element of escape in tourist pursuits and this was voiced by a number of the research participants. None of the respondents lived in very large cities, and all were based in Lancashire, but for those who lived in built up areas and even areas more rural in nature, there was the sense of getting away. Although couched in different terms by respondents, it was clear that the rural experience offered something different than living in a town; an experience that offered not only physical escape but emotional escape. Common phrases expressed were: a contrast from home, away from normal routine, getting away from people and letting go mentally. The push factor seemed to be to escape the stresses associated with work, home and built up environments, whereas the pull factors referenced the scenery, the activity, socialisation, quality down time either alone or with people, and love of nature and the outdoors.

You know you are away from work. You know you are away from your troubles...escapism really...you are away from the hustle and bustle as well.

Mostly I think it's the views and the space...sort of getting away from people and things!

I like the fact that it is a very different place to where I live. I like the fact that when I am there I can basically do what I want within reason. I don't have to bother about things at home – DIY and all. I can go out for the day and feel fully refreshed and exhilarated depending on what I have done.

On loving the countryside:

It's quite hard to explain really. I just feel that's where I should be.

I like to be in built up areas where there are things that I am interested in however I would much rather be out in the countryside.

Countryside...kind of a de-stressor or where bits of the mental jigsaw kind of fall into place when I am out and about.

Countryside was about contrasts to normal routine, but it was clearly evident that the slower pace away from urbanised areas was very mentally and emotionally significant to their lives. Touristic consumption of place is a multi-sensory process as sights, sounds, taste, smells and touch influence negotiation and associations of place (Bunce, 1994). Rural places, as tourist places, engage the visitor at many levels and impact on the totality of experience.

6.5.2 Physical environment

The physical environment often plays an important part in emotional engagement and attachment to places (Stedman, 2003a; Soini, Vaarala and Pouta, 2012). The countryside offers a particular physical environment often related to sense of space, greenness, hills, mountains, lakes, marshes, moors, forests, fens and any number of attributes commonly associated with rural spaces. This may also be inclusive of farms, villages, churches, sheep huts and other man-made objects reminiscent of countryside settings. The landscape of the countryside is a powerful enticement for tourists, whether purely to gaze upon or to physically interact with the environment. The Lake District has particular magnetism observable by the millions of tourists who travel into the area to enjoy the spectacular Lakes scenery. Understandably, there are many rural areas in Britain and Europe that entice visitors to enjoy leisure time pursuing a variety of interests.

All the participants in the research study had visited numerous rural places in Britain and abroad, often places that facilitated their particular activity(s) but at other times,

places just to appreciate the scenery. Part of this study's purpose was to explore the tri-partite relationship of place meaning, physical location and physical activity to assess the importance of each element on emotional and spiritual outcomes. This section of the discussion will examine respondents' understanding of the significance of the physical environment of the countryside to their touristic activities. The discussion will look at the impacts of the countryside's physical environment on participants' cognitive and affective behaviours. Later, in the analysis of Sense of Place, the focus will be on the physical environment of the Lake District. In this way, it is possible to assess not only the importance of the physical environment to the participants, but also the strength of their relationship to a specific physical environment, the Lake District.

Physical environment embodies the physical characteristics of a place, both natural and man-made. The physical environment of the countryside is particularly significant to the emotional and spiritual experience of the participants, with certain conditions producing stronger reactions. Participants referred to a number of conceptually similar attributes when referring to tangible qualities of the countryside, such as: scenery, landscape, outdoors, nature and physical environment. Although these terms are often used interchangeably, they do differ in meaning, intent and usage. Landscape embraces the idea of a picture, a snapshot of a particular view inclusive of the physical elements, such as mountains, hills, lakes, streams, the land use elements or built structures and the impermanent, transient elements related to weather and light (Darby, 2000). Landscape, according to Aitchison *et al.* (2000:72), 'suggests a scene from nature that has been appropriated and framed by the agency of human perspective'. Scenery gives character to the landscape. Both imply a visual quality, whereby the observer gazes rather than interacts with the environment. Contemporary understanding of the term conveys greater depth of meaning, allowing us not only to view landscapes but to engage with landscapes and, in effect, become part of the landscape.

Respondents gained positive emotional experiences from looking upon the scenic qualities of the landscape, but actively engaging with the physical environment/landscape added a different quality to the emotional experience. For some, the physical engagement is weightier than the scenery, for others scenery outweighs the physical interaction but, for most participants, a balance is needed for more intense emotional experiences. In effect, all the participants felt that although the scenery generates positive emotions, the physical interaction with the physical environment produces more emotive responses. To simply stand and look at the scenery without physical engagement was not as emotive as becoming part of the landscape; connecting with the environment at a physical level. Thus, physical activity

was part of the complex affective and cognitive process of place experience, an area that will be addressed later in this chapter.

Yorkshire is beautiful with its rolling hills and limestone. There are some beautiful walks down rivers and other places.

We have friends that have a place down in Devon and when we visit them we go on the coastal walks...that is beautiful.

It emerged that there were a number of specific tangible and intangible qualities related to the physical environment that stood out in the minds of the respondents: the mountains, the views from the mountain tops, valleys, moors, ocean, nature, solitude, quiet, weather conditions, and other aspects of geological and geographical interest. The quality of the tangible properties of natural area settings has been deemed to be emotionally and symbolically tied to place experiences and place bonding relationships (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson, 1992).

6.5.3 Countryside views

The quality of countryside views was cited by all respondents. Places such as the Yorkshire Dales, north Wales and Scotland were all noted for their dramatic landscapes and scenery along with coastal areas and the moorlands of Dartmoor and Exmoor. Not all had the same degree of appreciation for the same types of landscapes but it was evident that the interviewees all enjoyed their visits to different types of countryside. It was generally agreed that mountainous or hilly areas offered the best views. The varying mountain perspectives and profiles of the mountains added striking contrasts within the landscape, which was commented on numerous times.

I suppose I just like mountains.

At the base of the Isle of Skye there's these things called the Black Cullins, some of the toughest mountains apparently in Scotland...an absolutely amazing place.

Although the views looking out over the mountains were valued, there was much greater impact felt from mountain or hill tops. This reflected the fact that all were avid walkers, as well as some who also mountain biked, climbed and enjoyed fell running. Getting to the top offered a definitive point to aim for and there was the two-fold reward of achievement and views.

At the end of the day you know that you have got up to the top of something and you can look down and just see what are 'amazing views' and some people will never ever see those views.

You don't realise it until you get on top...it's just awesome, the views are awesome!

The things I am interested in are peace and quiet and views.

I do like being up high and seeing the view for miles around and that's after the physical climb.

It emerged that views from mountain tops or higher up combined with the physicality of getting up there prompted the right conditions for emotive feelings.

I sit there and I am in awe of the surroundings and feel that I am just one person who is so insignificant in comparison to my surroundings. When I look down a ridge and the power of the land, the rock, the formation...I am just in awe.

And for spiritual experiences:

It refreshed my soul! All I can say is that when I am out in the mountains (walking) I can look at the wonder of it and I can say that there is more to life than this. There is a creator out there who has created this.

For me personally...my spirituality...is connected to the mountains.

Views were a significant part of the experience but were often strongly connected to the activity, particularly, deeply emotional or spiritual experiences.

6.5.4 Weather and light conditions

Interestingly, weather was an element of the emotional experience that frequently came up in conversation. Weather has always been evocative and within specific physical surroundings it emerged that this can play a strong part in the experience. Extremely bad rainy or snowy weather detracted from the experiences for the obvious reasons of discomfort, obstructed views and dangerous conditions. Although in realising the power of the weather and nature, this did sometimes give respondents a sense of their insignificance and added to the experience. For example:

In a bizarre way I enjoy the weather changing so much. It is fantastic when it is sunny but it brings you back down to earth sometimes and makes you realise that there are greater things out there...nature and it is a lot greater than mankind.

Changing weather conditions generated a certain ambient mood to the experience whilst providing an added challenge to the physical activity. Atmospheric changes, clouds building, sun through the clouds, odd light conditions, thunder clouds, crisp

snow on the ground, cold but clear - all added a special quality to the experience. The aura created by certain weather conditions appeared to evoke intense feelings and provoke a frame of mind open to spiritual moments. This was markedly in the context of the other aspects of the experience, the activity and/or the physical environment.

In commenting on the emotional effects of weather and light conditions:

Have you ever seen a Broughton Spectre...you know where you get above the clouds and then the sunshine comes out and you get a shadow thrown onto the cloud. It is amazing!

One of the things that I have identified is when the weather is bad it is actually better because you have to really focus on what you are doing. It is very much about the here and now and everything else just disappears.

I've been up there when it has been really windy and really cold and you battle and crawl along the mountain ridge because it is that wild but sometimes that can add to it.

6.5.5 Nature

The respondents frequently employed the terms 'outdoors' or 'being in nature' when referring to the natural environment. Not surprisingly, nature and the outdoors rated very highly in the emotional and spiritual experience. Nature, as a component of the physical environment, provided a backdrop to their experiences and activities. Respondents repeatedly referenced the importance of nature and outdoors, not only to their experiences but in many cases to their whole beings. To be outdoors in nature appeared to feed some inner need, an innate need to interact with the natural environment (Roberts, 1996; de Pater, Scherer-Rath and Mertens, 2008). Countryside nurtures these feelings by providing access to nature.

My emotional well-being is more to with being outside and in nature. I love going to castles and abbeys...but I get a much nicer and more contented feeling from just being outside.

And there were also references to deeper spiritual feelings associated with nature:

Spirituality...whatever it is it is more than just this material existence and you do get in touch with it out in nature. I think when you are out in nature you are probably doing what humans beings were meant to do.

It could be a stream. It could be on a top of a mountain. It could be the sunlight coming through the trees and you are walking down a path.

Nature, it was revealed, represented simplicity and a return to the basics, a return to a simpler existence. Fundamentally, nature seems to strip back the superficial layers of contemporary society and take us back to an instinctive and intuitive unity (closeness) with the natural world, a relationship that has been lost in the materialistic, urbanised western world (Roberts, 1996). The natural environment provides an escape from technologically driven lifestyles (Szerszynski, 2005), an opportunity 'to experience settings that are dramatically different from the artificial environments' that are part of everyday urban lifestyles (Schroeder, 1996).

I like the fact that there are no modern gadgets...really there is nothing....it's very basic.

Nature was a definite emotive trigger and a crucial part of the experience of the countryside. Many of the respondents were quite explicit in their comments regarding the affective quality of being in nature or at one with nature.

I feel that I have a need to be outdoors...forget the Lake District or whatever. I just love fresh air around me and I always have ever since I was a young boy.

Research has demonstrated that the natural environment has profound psychological and physiological effects, and that the thoughts and feelings that arise from these encounters with nature are those most commonly linked to spirituality, such as awe, inspiration, reverence, connectedness, timelessness and reflection on personal meanings (Crystal and Harris, 1997; Fredrickson and Kerr, 1998; Cessford and Abramovici, 2008).

Natural settings and communion with nature catalyse profound experiences, creating feelings of rejuvenation and reverence (Arnould and Price, 1993). Mannell (1996) noted that psychologically deep experiences or altered states of consciousness are a normal and valid feature of human experiences of nature, citing flow and peak experiences as examples. These experiences will be looked at more in relationship to physical activity in the countryside.

Nature, it was expressed by respondents, was deemed a strong catalyst for spiritual experiences and natural surroundings were seen as a place of spirituality.

Being on a mountain or being in a valley on a way to a mountain is a bit like being in church. Instead of the built environment of the church I am in the natural surroundings.

In the outdoors and natural environment...I definitely feel closer to God there than I do in a church. At the end of the day you can do away with everything and as long as you have nature you can survive. What does

mean a great deal is being out there and the wildlife and countryside and strip back.

I certainly actively seek out natural rather than man-made environments. I do find that emotionally and spiritually these environments do help me and my mental health improves as a result of being immersed in such places.

Many of the respondents claimed that they were happy to be outdoors at any time and place. There was positive satisfaction from being out in the garden, or walking in natural areas near to home. It was not always necessary to travel any distance to enjoy the outdoors and satisfy the need to connect with nature. What did become apparent from the interviews was that, generally, these everyday emotional fixes provided a communion with nature but did not have the emotional intensity associated with visiting more distinctive physical environments or when undertaking greater physical challenges. For some, local walks fulfilled fitness requirements, dog walking necessities, relaxation and spousal time, but offered only limited emotional rewards in comparison to other experiences.

6.5.6 Silence, quiet and the sounds of nature

Silence or the sounds of nature aroused strong positive emotive feelings amongst respondents. This once again seems to demonstrate the desire to be removed from the noise and disharmony of the built environment. In discussing rurality, Bunce (1994) noted that the rural idyll is not only represented visually by its landscapes but also by soundscapes, often referred to in terms of *tranquillity*, *quiet* and *peaceful*, perceived in contrast to urban noises, such as traffic, construction, sirens, loud music and machinery. He suggests that the rural soundscape adds another dimension to the rural gaze, impacting on biological processes and relaying messages expressive of the rural landscape. The idealised soundscape of rurality is associated with tranquillity and calmness inclusive of the natural sounds of birdsong, waterfalls, farmyard noises and weather (Bunce, 1994).

You know when you are up on top there is this amazing silence.

When you get to a place that you can listen to silence...because I think that is totally missing from our modern lives...silence. No human sounds...no wind either...you can hear the insects, the sheep bleating and the skylarks...the sounds of nature. It's very therapeutic.

It was the quietness. It was so quiet... I could have just stayed up there. It was so awesome.

When talking about silence or quietness, respondents considered that both these circumstances helped produce highly desirable mental states. I believe, for some, it predisposed them to spiritual experiences and for the others it clearly heightened their emotional experience. This is not unexpected as studies by Heintzman (1999; 2010) show that environments characterised by silence, quiet and solitude are favourable for spiritual experiences and spiritual well-being. It was noted by participants that the noise of traffic, airplanes, and people chattering diminished the likelihood of experiencing spirituality.

6.5.7 Solitude

Solitude is a concept academic studies have associated with contemplative and reflective time that supports emotional well-being (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2009). Solitude is the one element of the experience that achieved uniform consensus. It continually arose in the discussions and for most participants it was identified as an essential part not only of the rural experience but to their lives in general. There were a number of vague terms used by interviewees that needed to be characterised but seem to indicate similar yet distinct forms of solitude. 'Alone time', and 'getting away from people' were other common abstract phrases mentioned indicating solitude but within slightly different contexts.

Clarifying these concepts, solitude is often used in reference to a chance to be alone with one's thoughts or time for introspection, which may be within a group setting, in pairs or alone. *Solitude* was referred to ambiguously by participants as they were often with other people but still managed to enjoy moments of self-reflection and contemplation. *Alone time* seems to reference undertaking an activity on one's own, giving an opportunity for self-challenges, but more importantly time to think or 'be' without any other company and no disruptions to the psyche. Solitude was inherently part of the process of alone time. *Getting away* is a phrase that generally seems to indicate the desire to be removed from large numbers of people. This usually involves a group situation but needs to be with like-minded people enjoying a physical activity away from towns and areas that may be full of people.

Markedly, the getting away in a group situation allows for safety in numbers, but of greater significance is the shared experience; a shared experience that still allows time for solitude. It is a common desire of individuals to seek time for their own thoughts but it is apparent that for most people, despite the group situation, they can manage time for both reflection and a sense of camaraderie. This is possibly due to the nature of the

activity whereby at times they are on their own but still within a group such as on a single file path or climbing a rock face. *Getting away*, in my interpretation, references a physical rather than mental state. In effect, there may be opportunity for a mental break and refreshment from the physical change of environment away from the routine and pressures of home and work life.

Most people go out to work or are at home doing other things, so just to go out, particularly in the Lake District...it's just so different than being at home and the normal day activities...and it's the thrill of being in wild places.

Stringer and McAvoy (1992) observed that spiritual experiences are enhanced not only by the physical setting but the *being away* from the constraints and responsibilities associated with normal, everyday built environments. I do feel that well-being was associated with getting away to a different environment but there was no direct link to spiritual well-being although I believe that this provided opportunity to nurture spiritual feelings.

There is also the getting away from large crowds of people (often other tourists), which seems to be the essence of this phrase. It is ultimately clear, though, that the act of getting away, whether from the routine of home or away from crowds of people, is an integral part of the experience.

I don't really want to go to all the places everybody else is. I know I go with quite a big group...but they are like-minded people and we don't all crowd together. We go places some people will never have seen...the people that lead us know these places and we can walk all day and hardly ever see a soul.

Whatever the terminology, solitude is a highly regarded state, appealing to the majority of people. It is a time for introspection, problem solving, shedding of stressful issues, and cleansing of negative thoughts. It appears to help with emotional realignment and is beneficial for mental well-being. The emotional effects are generally positive and respondents rated solitude highly, perceiving solitude as a vital part of the total experience. For most participants, the physical environment combined with the physical activity and solitude, defined the emotiveness of the experience.

I think when you are on your own your mind is ticking over all the time. Sometimes you are looking around appreciating the physical surroundings and your thoughts are geared to that....but at other points you start thinking about your own personal situation.

I do like being on my own, planning something and doing it on your own, not relying on someone else...you just free up your mind. Maybe you have a problem to solve so it is easier to solve tromping up a hill or something.

Solitude in the natural environment, as documented, leads to a heightened sensory awareness that encourages spiritual inspiration (Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999). According to Roberts (1996:71) 'the need to remove ourselves from the familiar, the predictable, the human, in order to hear the voice of the spirit is perhaps the most well-documented use of nature for spiritual encounter'. This statement was validated by the respondents' comments as solitude appeared to induce a mental state of mind conducive for possible spiritual experience.

In referencing his spiritual needs, one interviewee stated:

I like going to the more wild, quiet places, away from other people because the further you are from the built environment the closer to that other side of things you are and it is that I like.

This is aligned with a number of other conditions too, as noted below.

When I've been on my own and you get to the top of a mountain somewhere, if it's nice weather and you've really enjoyed it, it is almost a religious experience, being on your own. Nobody else about you and you are part of nature and it's almost a religious experience.

Although it was not specifically discussed, I felt that the type of solitude that respondents were seeking was found in the natural environment. Interestingly, throughout the conversations, man-made places such as exemplary cathedrals or churches seemed to allow for feelings of solitude. This may be partly due to the natural reverence people have when they enter religious buildings and also, the natural introspection induced by the solemn atmosphere of these environments. Decidedly, whether a person is religious or secular there is undeniably a reflective quality to these types of environments, historically based for some and grounded in religious nuances and meanings for others.

It was apparent, though, that out in nature there was a chance to escape people or conversation and have time alone with one's thoughts. The need for solitude may reflect the busyness of people's lives, constantly under siege from the noise and stress of the modern world and searching for places and/or activities that allow the down-time necessary to rebalance themselves or to find inner peace. I could not ascertain whether the state of mental solitude was an innate need or an outcome of modern living. For some, it appeared to be an intrinsic part of their nature and for others it seemed they needed to escape their mundane and/or pressurised mental stimulation of everyday life.

I've tended to be somebody that is really independent rather than being part of a big group. I love it if I go out and don't see anybody for the whole day.

It was clear that people sought varying degrees of solitude, whether physically alone or taking a few moments to themselves to enjoy their own thoughts and feelings. The actual physical motion of the activity also allowed for solitude. For example, with walking, swimming, canoeing or climbing there is a certain rhythm to the exercise that can induce a meditative state. The repetitiveness of the body's movement seems to help shed the pressures of external concerns and opens the mind to more enlightened and positive thoughts.

It was recognised that solitude could be achieved in other ways but combined with other factors the experience was quite different.

I could have that kind of solitude and peacefulness in the garden and in a way, perhaps I do, but it is nowhere near as powerful as when you are out in the middle of nowhere.

Solitude, it seems, is a powerful stimulus for emotive or spiritual experiences in various contexts but the natural environment is particularly evocative.

6.6 Physical Activity

What relationship does activity have to spiritual experience?

Physical activity undertaken in a specific environment fosters a sense of close engagement with place (Wylie, 2005). Spiritual experiences, it has been demonstrated, arise from gratifying physical activities that focus the attention completely on the task, attributed to a state of 'flow' (Williams and Harvey, 2001). According to Williams (2001:250), flow is a state whereby 'the usual distinctions between self and object are lost' and 'internal and external worlds are fused into a single stream of being'.

All the respondents were physically active within the rural environment and this was an essential and key part of the experience for them. For those who chose to do activities such as climbing, mountain biking or fell running, the activity dictated the place. In particular, the climbers sought new challenges in different environments and many had spent time in mountainous areas in Wales, Scotland and Europe as well as the Lake District.

The walkers also felt that place was an important part of the experience, but the activity allowed for greater choice of places to pursue their walking. Nevertheless, most were serious walkers and loved their chosen activity and had explored many rural areas through their activity. Many had travelled all over the UK and to parts of Europe specifically to participate in walking activities. For others, the walking was a by-product of being in a different place and not the main reason for visiting. Nonetheless, the

importance of the activity over place, for the interviewees, was not notable, although some had the tick box mentality, which in effect dictated the places that they would walk. For others, such as the climbers, the activity dictated the place as they needed an environment that provided specific physical elements. Walking was engaged in by all respondents, and many were happy to walk in a variety of places that offered natural environments. This included walks that did not entail driving to rural areas but could be achieved by heading out into more rural surrounds near to their homes. These walks seemed to be more purposeful. For instance, to clear the cobwebs, fitness and health reasons, walking the dog, getting fresh air or a change of environment. Walking was obviously very important to all the participants, although the experience did not appear to be the same as visits to areas like the Yorkshire Dales, the Lake District or Wales. For most, these types of walks seemed to lack the combination of intensity, the challenge and the physical environment necessary for spiritual experiences. The main purpose of these walks was relaxation and fresh air.

The phrases and words often used to describe the emotional outcomes of their activity in the countryside were: contentment, satisfaction, achievement, joy restorative, therapeutic, challenging, meditative, stress release, enjoyment, escape, freedom, peaceful and mentally healthy.

I feel my mental health improves enormously when I go walking and that is really relaxing. The second thing is the exercise.

For the first half hour you are not stressed but you just want to get out there walking. Presumably what happens as you are walking...I don't know how quickly endorphins kick in but there is something that makes you unload everything. You stop worrying about things and by the time you are on top of something it is the peace and quiet.

Walking is a great sort of thing...that's what we were built for really and it's quiet and it's tranquil...I like getting away.

The value of physical activity is recognised as beneficial to our physical, psychological and spiritual well-being (Pelletier, 1994; Fouhy, 2007). According to Drury (2008:145), 'across nearly all spiritual traditions and throughout many lands – walking plays a central role in spiritual practice, texts disciplines and customs'. Although this theory is directed to walking similar benefits have been associated with other activities that involve the outdoor environment (Jensen and Guthrie, 2005; Keyes, 2013).

The spiritual outcomes of engaging in outdoor activities were also evidenced by a number of participants although for some, the consideration of experiencing spirituality was not definitive in their minds whereas others openly expressed their spiritual encounters.

That's what I find with climbing...you have to concentrate. You don't worry about the rest of the world around you. Then I've sat on a ledge for quite a few minutes...just sat there as long as the suns setting and watched it go down. Yeah, I suppose you would call it spiritual.

I just think I am too bloody busy to be spiritual. But the only times that I may feel like that is when I am doing that kind of rhythmic exercise. Because when you are on own, like walking or swimming, which is probably why I like it...it gives you peace.

The spirituality thing is something that builds as you go along because you start off and you are still anchored in the built environment and all the hang ups of work and the rest of it but as you go on walking – it's a journey- you gradually get to the point where you feel a lot better. At the end of it you've done a physical journey and a mental journey.

It's that protracted period of time, which gives you the opportunity to develop whatever you are developing.

Interestingly, this idea of a state of *flow* or a *peak experience* when undertaking an activity was highlighted in these above comments and was emphasised several times in relationship to the activity. Flow experiences are typified by a transitory quality, richer perception, forgetting oneself, centring of individuals' attention and total involvement with the activity at hand, whilst peak experiences in Maslow's view are 'moments of highest happiness and fulfilment' habitually achieved through 'the nature experience, aesthetic perception, creative movement, intellectual insight, organismic experience, athletic pursuit and the like' (Mannell, 1996:47). I felt that the repetitive motion of walking or swimming, for instance, seemed to lull people into a meditative or contemplative state that opened them to spiritual experiences. It gave them a chance for their minds to float free and reflect, consequently, developing a mental state conducive for spirituality to flow or for peak experiences to occur.

It was obvious that the activity played a significant part in engendering emotional and spiritual feelings. Clearly, this participant had very strong views about the importance of his activity to his spiritual side and relayed his feelings of dissatisfaction with traditional religious rhetoric.

Sometimes I think of walking as a bit like a replacement for going to church because it is the sort of thing that allows you to have space and put things in perspective. Walking puts me in touch with my spiritual side I can confirm that! The thing that always irritates me about the Sunday church service is it always starts on a negative – forgive us our sins! I often feel very negative at the end of a church service whereas I very rarely feel negative at the end of a walk.

This seems to, once again, express a common contemporary view of traditional religious as rigid and unfulfilling. The constraints of traditional belief systems aligned with intransigent attitudes and out-dated rituals do not appear to reflect modern societies' lifestyles or independent, personal spiritual needs (Heelas, 1996; Tacey, 2004).

6.6.1 Physical challenges, exertion and achievement

There was an element of the activity that seemed to stimulate intense emotional experiences and this was often the precursor for spiritual moments. This phenomenon has been noted in a study by Fredrickson and Anderson (1999), which attributed spiritual feelings to a renewed sense of their bodies, reawakening to their physical capabilities and indulging in the physical side of nature rather than the intellectual, all leading to a sense of empowerment and self-esteem.

Not all respondents needed challenges to attain these feelings but it was a common theme that was raised consistently in the interviews. The physicality of the activity, particularly if a challenge, had been met appeared to trigger a psychological frame of mind favourable for emotional and spiritual realisation. This was usually highlighted by the naturalness of the environment, frequently linked to hill tops or mountain tops offering substantial views. At an emotional level, feelings of satisfaction, achievement, elation, connectedness, joy, amazement and exhilaration were used to express feelings.

I feel really good and exhilarated that I did a really hard walk over tough terrain...you achieved what you have come to do and you overcame the adversity of the elements.

At a spiritual level, the words or phrases used to describe these feelings were: at one with the world, connectedness, well-being, reverence, gratitude, joy, inner peace, moved, centring, alive, enlightening and energised.

Definitely with climbing, the harder it is, the closer to death you are, the more alive you feel.

It was like 5 o'clock in the morning...sunrise...we were running over the pikes...that was...like a spiritual thing.

Exertion, for some, was seen as a way to de-stress, to burn anger off, and get rid of worries or whatever problems or issues that were bothering them. Exertion appeared to create a physiological state whereby there was an emotional release from the negative

effects of everyday life. It was indicated that once their minds were free from these cares they were able to achieve a positive emotional state, an openness of mind necessary for

If something is really bothering me in life, one of the best ways to deal with it is to go out and really exert myself and work a sweat up and I can burn the anger off or whatever is bothering me. You get plenty of exercise and it does make you a better person.

The importance of the physical challenge was easily identified but coinciding with this was the sense of achievement that came out of being tested. Achievement, for many of the interviewees, was considered essential to the experience or gave more meaning to the experience.

There is the satisfaction of being able to do it, having got there, particularly if it is uphill...the satisfaction of achievement.

The positive and strong emotions related to a sense of achievement were clearly stated by a number of people, including those whose spirituality was directly related to realising their goals.

It is almost like a meditative state. You get involved in what you are doing, where you are going, what the route is like, what you can see and hear... I find it very good for quietening worries.

I think perhaps it is being high physically...it makes you feel high emotionally and spiritually as well but it is also about achieving because I've had to walk up there as well.

There were some that did not feel it was necessary all the time to achieve something. They still received positive emotional effects without challenges.

It's never about accomplishing anything when I go walking. It is never really about getting to the top. The feelings for me are probably...peaceful. It definitely refreshes me.

It was very personal conditions and context that each individual experienced emotional or spiritual feelings but it was apparent that the circumstances of views, challenge and achievement were a common theme.

6.6.2 Fitness element

Fitness and health are often the main reason for being active but, clearly, although the fitness aspect was a consideration of the activity, it was not the reason for the activity. The adage 'healthy body, healthy mind' was cited, but only as a supplementary effect

of the total experience. I felt that the fitness element held value to the interviewees but was not the focus of the activity.

In linking with fitness...I'm not interested in walking to get fit but I am interested in staying fit to be able to walk.

Fitness was seen as part of a complex equation. It was based in practicality related to the activity rather than a goal in itself.

6.6.3 Group, alone, pairs – komunitas

For most, the activity was enjoyed in a group situation or pairs. There were practical reasons associated with these choices, such as travelling together, being part of a club and safety aspects, but most enjoyed the sense of community and camaraderie that was part of the shared experience.

One of things I do love is the company and the talk. There's nothing like a long walk with good friends for getting your worries in perspective... by the end people have listened to you and laughed with you...a lot of laughing!

It was noted that group experiences, perhaps by the nature of never being in solitude, interfered with spiritual experiences.

I like walking with others...I have a very poor sense of direction...although you are less likely to get the same sort of spiritual experience when you are in a group.

6.6.4 Danger

Danger is sometimes an inherent part of the activity. The majority of respondents indicated that they did not seek danger, nor were they thrill seekers but, nevertheless, they were not adverse to challenges that offered a degree of danger or risk. Danger was about the challenge, the achievement, overcoming emotional issues and adding to the experience. Climbers, by the very nature of the activity, expose themselves to greater risks. They were all very conscious of this and whatever the activity, all respondents had explored their capabilities – some with greater intensity and risks – and seemed to feel emotionally rewarded for coping.

Danger...I'm not seeking it. It's part of the walk and because it's a strenuous walk and it's challenging...it's not going to deter me.

It's like pitching yourself against the environment...if you don't take the appropriate care... the Lake District can be a dangerous place to be. I got the same feeling in Scotland on limited occasions.

In effect, although danger was not sought, if within their capabilities, it added an extra frisson to the experience. For instance, a climber had this to say about the effects of danger and spiritual/religious feelings:

I've been in some pretty bad situations...say in the Alps...my mum she passed away quite young...at 62 and I feel very strongly that she is there with me like a guardian angel. I do believe there is an afterlife. I believe in spirit life going on.

Danger intensifies emotions, particularly fear, and overcoming obstacles contributes to a sense of renewal (Arnould and Price, 1993). Fear heightens awareness and clarity of mind that may help to define one's sense of self (Donohue, 1991). This may not necessarily inspire spiritually peaceful moments but, perhaps, sharpens our sense of insignificance, vulnerability and need for strength from some other power or something intangible and unnamed.

6.6 Place: Sense of Place

Do participants have a sense of place and what affect does 'place' have on spiritual experience?

Up to this point, the discussion has focused on the interview respondents' generalised understanding of countryside and the rural experience but this next section will examine place and, more specifically, sense of place in the context of the Lake District. Earlier in this thesis (Chapter 2), it was identified that sense of place results from a complex combination of elements that reflect cognitive and affective associations with a particular geographical location. Sense of place develops from human encounters and engagement with place, and there is a consensus that all elements are vital to the whole concept. In reference, Williams (1998:19) stresses the importance of capturing the complexity of the sense of place construct in order not to 'diminish the holistic, emotive, social, and contextual quality of the idea, robbing it of the very richness that is its appeal'. Thus, the subjective nature of sense of place is recognised in the emotional, cognitive and conative linkages that people develop to specific places and exploration of these associations to place contributes to a holistic understanding of people/place relationships and behaviours. In effect, sense of place develops from how we think, feel and act. As a complex phenomenon, Hammitt *et al.* (2006:18) state that the factors involved in human place bonding are: (i) the characteristics of the physical

environment/ landscape; (ii) human use and experience of the environment; and (iii) social, psychological and cultural interpretations and constructed meanings of people-place interactions. This is the tri-partite relationship of place meaning, physical location and activity.

For the purposes of this thesis, the Lake District was considered an ideal focus of the research because of its distinctive and celebrated qualities, and its lengthy exposure to tourism. In terms of the number of respondents who felt a sense of place in the Lake District, of the twelve interviewed eleven had strong bonds to the Lakes. From those eleven, two had bonds to other rural areas as well as the Lakes but not felt as strongly.

6.6.1 Uniqueness of the Lake District

Tourism has played a large part in the history of the Lake District and the area continues to draw millions of visitors each year to enjoy the stunning views, picturesque villages and the wealth of physical activities and attractions. Since the Romantic Movement, the Lake District has been recognised as a distinctive area of scenic splendour but, prior to the 1800's, the area was viewed as wild and desolate (Burchardt, 2002). Viewed today, it appears to personify all that is natural but this misrepresentation, according to Urry (1995:193), belies the fact that the 'area had to be discovered; then it had to be interpreted as appropriately aesthetic; and then it had to be transformed into the managed scenery suitable for millions of visitors'. The Lake District epitomises the social construction of place, a place culturally produced, increasingly consumed and carefully managed.

As part of the Lake District Tourism Boards' manifesto, developing a sense of place is considered an essential part of their marketing strategy. This may prove to be a valuable method of attracting tourists but, for many people, it is an instinctive cognitive and affective process that is not shaped by publicity and promotions but is felt at multi-levels defined by experiences, people and places.

It was evident that the interviewees regarded the Lake District as exceptional and attested to this with fervour and enthusiasm.

I feel it is such a concentrated area of natural beauty...God that's cliché but it is and the more that I have got to know about it I understand why so many people have become fascinated by it over the years. For all the publicity, the fame, the grandeur of the clichés...it is better once you get to know it...you understand why people praise the area so much.

I think because it is a unique landscape in England. It's the geography of it, the charming little villages...it's very beautiful, very special and it's very

historical. The houses look as if they are growing out of the landscape. The dry stone walls look like sculptures, covered in moss and everything. It just conspires to make itself look almost too good to be true sometimes

I think it's the variety of it. I like the compact nature of it. I feel that when I go up to Scotland that I get lost. You've got a lot of variety in a small space. The villages are beautiful.

It was clearly evident that the Lake District inspired great passion and admiration for its aesthetic values and also for the multiplicity of activities that it offers. This led the way to discovering if respondents felt a sense of place and, if so, what elements and experiences contributed to this feeling.

In drawing on an understanding of this concept, an in-depth exploration of the interview data revealed several prominent themes relevant to sense of place specifically in the context of the Lake District. The table in below (see *Figure 6.2*) breaks down the facets of sense of place to give a clear visual understanding of the complexities involved in this concept. The discussion below will explore each heading – place, person and process- examining the elements of these themes.

Figure 6.2 Elements of Participants' Sense of Place: The Lake District

Place	Person	Process
Physical Environment	Historic Influences	Family Experiences
Nature	Literary Artistic Influences	Childhood Memories
Scenery/Landscape	Milestones/ Special Events	Communitas
Weather	Activities/Experiences	Familiarity
Built Environment	Symbolic (personally)	Place Attachment
Sacred or Special Places		Place Identity/Dependence
		Emotional Experiences
		Spiritual Experiences

6.6.3 Place

Physical Environment

Attributes of the physical environment are important in the place-bonding mechanism, satisfying needs for naturalness, scenery, activity facilitation and other amenities associated with the built environment. According to Wynveen *et al.*, (2012:288), 'meanings ascribed to particular places often reflect the physical characteristics of the setting and the social interaction that occurs there'. The physical characteristics of the

landscape, in particular the pristine qualities/naturalness, facilitation of desired recreation activity were positively associated with the physical environment as well as the intangible quality of escaping everyday life (Wynveen, Kyle and Sutton, 2012). These three elements were judged as integral in levels of place attachment.

Throughout the interviews, there was unanimous agreement that the physical environment of the Lake District was a principal factor in respondents' emotional engagement with place. In discussing the physical environment of the countryside of the Lake District there were several tangible elements that contributed to the emotive experience but, more specifically, the spiritual experience. As initially indicated by the focus groups, the Lake District views, the mountains, valleys, lakes, foliage, weather conditions, man-made structures and scenic qualities all defined the Lakes uniqueness and in further analysis appear to contribute to a sense of place.

It's something to do with the balance between the natural environment and the human input.

I feel as if I am part of something that has happened thousands of years ago. You can sit there and appreciate the geography, the different rock formations and you know that something physical has happened there. It's almost like the fells are wild beasts. I feel I want to be part of that life and by being on the fells and appreciating how they were formed I'm sharing an experience with them.

The last comment seems to reflect a common feeling of connectedness or oneness with the environment, specifically the natural environment. This sense of union or oneness is a positive emotional experience that typifies many characteristics associated with spirituality. Some, consequently, see this as a spiritual experience, others purely emotive.

Nature and Naturalness

Mankind's relationship with the natural environment has been diminished by societies that largely live in urbanised areas. In effect, modern man has lost touch with nature and, in doing so, has lost meaning and rootedness to place as natural places (Cessford and Abramovici, 2008). According to Roberts (1996:69), 'the human search for connectedness with the Earth and each other is universal', a belief supported by Wilson's (1984) biophilia theory of an innate bond between human beings and other living systems. His argument maintains the idea that human preferences towards nature are a result of biological evolution and that our human spirit and heart are inextricably woven with life and lifelike processes found in nature. Effectively, humans are hardwired to connect with nature, commonly referred to as the human-environment

transaction (Gelter, 2000; Williams and Harvey, 2001), a relationship conducive to spiritual inspiration and meaningful experiences (Rolston 1996; Booth, 1999).

Correspondingly, the restorative power of nature has been well documented and, according to Kaplan (1983), 'it employs the mind without fatigue and yet exercises it, tranquilises it...yet aligns it'. Nature, according to Louv (2008) does not require the directed focus and attention of our normal daily technologically driven activities. Instead, when immersed within it, nature arouses one's senses, engages attention and captivates to enhance our psychological well-being.

As one participant noted I find it much more tiring going around...galleries, cathedrals and museums...much more exhausting than a day on a three thousand footer. It's more of an intellectual level, whereas I don't have the same sort of effort with the landscape and nature. I can just enjoy it.

Nature and the naturalness of the environment were revealed as strong incentives for visiting the Lakes. The area afforded exceptional spaces of countryside to appreciate the qualities of nature.

I'm interested in the natural areas. I'm not so interested in the manmade areas.

The Lake District to me is all about the mountains and lakes.

...obviously being out in an emotive environment and in the hills and fells that is a far more appealing an attachment than walking through a town or the bricks and mortar that make up a landscape

It's being back in touch with nature, back in touch with the environment.

The Lake District's diverse plant life and foliage added to the pleasure of being out in nature.

I'm keen on plants. I like plants. Watching the trees change and seeing the flowers and identifying them.

People talk about the Lakes but the trees are one of the beautiful things in the Lakes... there are some magnificent trees in the Lake District.

The simplicity of nature or the naturalness seemed to be the lure, but it is possible that the desire to connect to nature is attributable to man's innate need for interaction with the natural world, to gain back a relationship that has been lost or diluted by urbanised living.

Being outdoors, particularly the Lake District...the spirits are lifted, it gladdens the heart.

Nature and the outdoors were definitely a catalyst for intense emotional and/or spiritual feelings.

Scenic Qualities

The most significant element of the countryside is commonly correlated to the visual dimension or aesthetic value of the scenery or landscape. Prior to 18th Century the Lake District was a largely unknown part of England, a barren and inhospitable area, but place-myths of the area developed as an outcome of an increase in visitors, often artists and writers (Urry, 1995). The 'proliferation and circulation of myths of place' led to a different opinion of marginalised rural areas, such as the Lake District, and a shifting view of landscape beauty (Urry, 1995:197). The rural gaze, as suggested by Bunce (1994:103), is the result of social conditioning that has shaped 'our evaluation of what is scenic, what is not, our appreciation of the aesthetics of landscape, and our judgement about authenticity and naturalness' that also informs our 'selective view of the landscape'. Clearly, the Lake District is perceived as a place of exceptional scenery and views, no doubt as a result of socially constructed visions of the countryside landscape but, whatever the factors are, it remains that the unique, scenic qualities of the Lakes offer substantially to feelings of attachment and contribute to a sense of place.

The landscape of the Lake District is renowned throughout the country and it is not surprising that the interviewees were very expressive of their feelings about the scenery and the views. Although most of the group members had travelled throughout rural Britain and many had been to Europe, they were still enchanted by the views and landscape of the Lakes. There was a clear acknowledgement of the splendour and beauty of other rural England locations such as the Yorkshire Dales, Dartmoor and Exmoor and the Peak District. Equally, areas of Scotland and Wales were mentioned and the Alps and other European countryside drew rapturous comments. Despite the fact that a small number of respondents felt other areas were equally as attractive or had physical qualities that they found more to their suiting, there was a consensus that the Lake District had a captivating and very special landscape.

It seems to be the right amount of green, the right amount of orange in the trees, the odd crag just peeking out and it just seems to fit. Everything just seems to fit into place. Just as it should!

Beautiful scenery! The water, the mountains, the mist...everything really!

I like the beauty of the hills, the sheep, the farming countryside, the farmers where they live and the villages, and the quietness.

The mountains and the views from the mountain of the Lakes offer incredible, contrasting views spreading over the region, as noted by some respondents:

They are not the biggest mountains in the world but when you get up there on top, let's say Great Gable, it's just awesome, the views are awesome. A lot of the mountains are like that and they are all different. And that's what I love about it!

When you are on top of one of the high ones and it is a beautiful day...you feel exhilarated.

The feeling of being right on top of something...particularly looking down onto water...the water always looks a lovely colour.

It was notable that the mountains from different perspectives and with different conditions conspired to never look the same. Each experience was seen as a new experience, always enjoyable and satisfying. Definitely never a negative experience!

Villages and Man-made Features

The built environment of the Lake District is particularly distinctive and the villages add to the overall feel of the area. The characteristic old cottages erected from local stone and slate are an integral part of the iconic image of the Lake District. For many tourists, the stone buildings are representative of the Lake District, with the lakes and hills providing a dramatic backdrop. However, this was not the case for the interviewees. Although there is no doubt that the villages added to the complete picture of the Lake District, adding to the scenic richness of the region, this was not the focal point of those interviewed. Certainly, the built environment added to the charm but this was not of primary interest or even any interest to some of the respondents. The reasons for this seemed correlate to several factors, namely: their aversion/avoidance to crowds of people, the importance of their activity, their desire to engage with nature, and general lack of interest in the commercial aspects of the Lakes.

...being somewhere like Grasmere or Ambleside for a bit but not for long really. I don't think those places matter to me in the way that the fells and lakes do.

The towns...the only thing it adds for me is if I stay up there and go out and have a drink, but if there is a little pub nearby I would never go to Ambleside or Windermere.

It was pointed out a number of times that the pubs were fantastic for socialising and also for the quality of the beer. This seemed to be the reward at the end of the activity – cosy atmospheres, good company, refreshment and time to chat about the days' challenges along with other relaxing conversation. This was part of the shared experience contributing to emotional well-being and sense of belonging.

You have all day to get a thirst and a hunger on so you've got these great pubs that are there.

Owing, perhaps, to the respondents' love of the activities they were engaging in and their love of the physical environment, they seemed to marginalise the built environment. The iconic stone walls of the Lake District were an accepted part of the landscape. Other notable man-made structures that held underlying rather than obvious attraction were the quarries, mines and sheep's bothies. All respondents were well aware of these features of the area, adding to the overall surroundings but largely as background to other more dominant and natural elements. Familiarity, also, may have led to a diminished response to these features. Interpretation of the discourse led me to believe that these built elements had been absorbed into the totality of the landscape but still held a subconscious appeal to the respondents. Essentially, this added to the particularity and distinctiveness of the Lake District's physical environment fostering greater attachment or sense of place. These attitudes were reflected in their comments:

You just kind of think 'who built that wall'...they go straight up...there is a certain value or quality to the past and there are reasons why things are there...it is amazing when you do find out what they are.

Quarries...in a strange way they are a bit of an eyesore...but they have become part of the landscape. Over the years it has changed and made somewhere quite a different scene.

Some of the buildings...the derelict buildings...there is a sense of history. And, yes it is nice to add a bit of character to some areas that otherwise just lack that little bit of human feeling.

The visual appeal of the villages was also noted:

I think the towns in the Lake District are all attractive as well...they all have the mountain like character.

In summary, the villages and towns represented something they were not fond of – people and commerce – but at a subliminal level the built environment was part of the unique quality of the Lakes and without these iconic man-made structures, such as the villages, farms and stone walls, and so on, the appeal would have diminished. Essentially, the built-environment adds to the charm and the embodiment of the Lake District, contributing to sense of place.

Weather Effects

It was interesting that several people commented on the Lake District having very distinctive and unpredictable weather conditions. Additionally, there was considered to

be a unique quality of light experienced in the Lakes. This may have been due to the considerable time participants had spent in the Lake District or the nature of their activities, rather than any verifiable difference from other areas of the country. It was significant, though, that both weather and light had frequently been mentioned and evidently added a sense of atmosphere or ambience to the environment, triggering particular emotions for each individual.

I think for me the beauty of the Lakes is the severity of the Lakes...looking back on top of certain fells as the rain is coming in, the traditional horizontal Lake District rain and it's freezing cold and you are soaked... especially if you are isolated...it's being back in touch with nature, back in touch with the environment.

Emotional wow factor is being up there on a winter's day with snow on the tops and it is really clear with good company. The snow across the peaks is just spectacular.

Some of my happiest times have been crouched behind a wall in the driving rain eating a butty.

It emerged that the conditions created by weather, light or both in the Lake District had a highly emotive and potentially spiritual quality. The interviewees gave the impression that the Lake District had its own weather patterns and light qualities distinct to the region.

Depending on what it's like...it can be blue skies, lovely views or it can be really cold, wet and grey and a beautiful silvery colour...or the snow and even though I don't say 'oh that's beautiful, oh that's beautiful'. I think I just accept that it is there.

I take a long time to go a short distance because I am just stopping and staring. It's the light...the quality of the light. I'm not a poet but....

In my view, the Lake District's weather and light conditions, unique or not, were very emotive to the respondents and held great influence in how they felt and the totality of the experience. Unquestionably, I feel that certain conditions conspired to provide an atmospheric mood contributory to spiritual thoughts or feelings.

6.6.4 Person

Historic Influences

The Lake District has been shaped and changed by people for thousands of years. Starting from the Stone Age, to the Romans and Vikings, the medieval era, the Industrial Revolution and the Victorian era through to present day, people and events have transformed the landscape, all leaving their imprint. For many people, history

holds special interest and adds a quality or air to places where the significant impacts of man remain. The emotive quality of history seems to be expressed by the phrase 'a sense of history', indicating that this connection to the past can provide a timeless quality that lends to an air or atmosphere to a place. For the respondents, the history of the Lake District was something that most had considered at some point but had not give a great deal of thought to. Historic sites and places where historic events had transpired did give some interviewees a sense of timelessness and continuity or made them aware of the harsh living conditions of Lakeland dwellers in the past, but this was largely as a spin-off from their activity. Generally, the history of the Lake District was of minor interest to the respondents, with only a few taking greater and more active interest in historic events and places.

I can appreciate the history of the place and the life of the people from the farmers that have worked the land for generations. I can appreciate that but it is not something I dwell on a great deal.

There is enjoyment to the fact that it is where rock climbing in the UK started and there is the history, wonderful photographs of those pioneers.

Nevertheless, there were some who were more inspired by the geological and physical history of the landscape.

Wordsworth, Beatrix Potter...that doesn't interest me! It's reading the history of the landscape and the anthropogenic factors, the mining history, the farming history, looking at some of the old paths, which would have been the drover's roads.

Although a sense of history did not seem to have any substantial bearing on most respondents' emotional involvement with place, it was something that engaged their attention subliminally if not directly. The essence of The Lake District seems to be bound in its history, part of not only the physical environment but absorbed into the atmosphere of the place - intangible but very real, just not as impactful to the respondents as other elements of the area. Despite any excessive interest in history, their awareness and knowledge led me to believe that there remains some cognitive impact generating a comprehensive vision of the Lake District, which adds to the total experience.

Literary, Artistic and Mediated Influences

Literary writings by authors such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Beatrix Potter, Ransome, as well as early books on walking in the Lake District, have been transformed into the living memory; in effect, they have become part of the memoryscape of the area. Their

representations have become symbolic of the Lake District and have been instrumental in creating the iconic images indelibly stamped on people's imaginations. Interestingly and with great insight, one respondent firmly believed that the Romantic writers and poets did not shape the Lake District but, rather, were shaped by the Lake District. The extent to which is the case may be debateable but, nonetheless, the influence of the Romantic era on past and present tourism is attested to by the numbers of urban dwellers visiting the Lakes nowadays. The early writers' romanticisation of the Lake District contrasted decidedly with the unromantic view of the industrialised cities of that era (Burchardt, 2002). This rural/urban contrast still endures today and continues to be validated by the modern day influences of media and advertising. Interestingly, media and advertising seemed to be regarded rather negatively by the interviewees. That is, the media were considered to be responsible for drawing hosts of people to visit the Lake District, people who, in the mind of some respondents, did not fully appreciate the real qualities and essence of the Lakes.

I think it is an area that gets pushed at you so much, it is famous, it is one of the top tourist spots, I think, in the UK...in the past I had done a lot more walking around the towns than on the fells. You go away thinking you have been up to the Lake District but really you have just been into a town.

Interestingly, lamenting the opening of the railway through to Windermere, Wordsworth had expressed similar reservations in 1844 (Sharpley 2007)

Certainly, literature and artistic works have played a part in shaping the nation's collective vision of the countryside in general (Aitchison, MacLeod and Shaw, 2000; Darby, 2000) and of the Lake District in particular (Urry, 1995). However, from the research, it became evident that, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, their impact is, to say the least, indirect and incidental to those interviewed.

Nevertheless, one of the most notable and influential Lakeland writers of the last century was Alfred Wainwright, guidebook writer and illustrator. Wainwright, along with his predecessors, would inspire affection for the countryside and reflect the image of a nation as a green and pleasant land. Correspondingly, his literary works would stir longings to explore this very distinctive rural area.

They are beautiful books, beautifully illustrated, incredible books. I would never take them out with me but I look at them, look at his routes and maybe use some of the routes that he uses to get up to the top.

What is great about them is they were written fifty years ago and really nothing has changed.

There was a general agreement amongst the interviewees that the early writers held little influence or sway over their decisions to visit the Lake District. Although they were clearly aware of the impacts of literary and artistic representations, they felt it was neither a motivator nor a factor in their personal reasons for visiting the Lakes.

I did English at university, but to me, it was the poets that were inspired by their surroundings but I never thought to read more about them or have a look at the places that inspired them.

The feeling that you get when you are in the Lakes and the thing that evokes something intensely personal is quite different than what you get from reading someone else's experiences. You make your own photo by being there!

There were a number who clearly recognised that these powerful early works were largely responsible for the growth of tourism in the Lakes, but they did not relate that to their own experiences. As already mentioned, the exception was Wainwright, who was well known by all, loved by most but disliked by a small number. Several respondents, in a tick box manner, were completing his walks or already had done so (there is a total of 214 named peaks in his seven volume 'Pictorial Guide to the Lakeland Fells'). For most, Wainwright's love of the Lake District seemed to reflect their own feelings and they could identify with his commentary through their own experiences.

In my impression, literary and artistic influences were minimal or incidental to the respondents' experience of the Lake District. Concurring, Urry (1995) claims that literary and artistic associations are not a primary motivator for tourists visiting the Lake District and many visitors are, in fact, often unaware of these associations. There are, no doubt, residual, subconsciously registered effects regarding the Lake District's literary/artistic history and also, perhaps, a subliminal awareness of the collective identity of the countryside forged by the Romantic Movement. However, these are not likely to be dominant in the minds of visitors. Amongst the interview respondents, many had childhood experiences of being in the Lakes, and their parents, friends or club members may have been influenced by literature or media; however, this had in no way impacted on them. Generally, mediated influences seemed negligible although a couple of respondents' initial visits had been inspired by advertising or media. Other influences of family, friends, club members and other social organisations had greater influence and more emotional impact in feelings for the Lake District.

Milestones/Special Events

This is a topic of conversation area not discussed at length in the interviews, although it was of relevance to the experience of some respondents. The Lake District, for

example, was the first place that they had walked or climbed, or the first place they had seen mountains, or the first experience swimming in open water or their first real rural experience. These new experiences had a lasting impact on their impressions of the Lake District and shaped their future experiences. For others, it was more about milestones or special events, such as completing all the 'Wainwrights' (as noted above, all the peaks referred to in Wainwright's guidebooks) or being successful at fell racing or managing a difficult climb. These experiences seemed to consolidate a number of positive emotional feelings about the Lakes. Even such things as surviving a particularly difficult walk in bad weather conditions or reaching a high peak on a sunny but snowy day became milestones of achievement. These milestones or special times created important memories tied closely to place.

Activities

Academics have noted that people who are actively engaged in place are more likely to sustain a stronger connection to the area (Relph, 1976; Stedman, Beckley, Wallace and Ambard, 2004; Amsden, Stedman and Luloff, 2011). The Lake District was admired for the variety of activities in such a compact area. This was a common theme throughout the interviews. The area offers many choices where respondents can pursue their activities, with good accessibility within the region.

I think the quality of the experience is as good as anywhere in terms of the rock climbing, the canoeing, and the mountain biking...a good day in the Lakes is as good as a good day anywhere in the world.

The activity was a large part of the reason for visiting the Lake District and this came through very strongly in the research. Indeed, it was difficult to ascertain which was the more important, the Lake District, the physical environment or the activity, as all three were so intensely bound together.

I think it's the activity but if you're looking at beautiful things all day and you've got this quiet and you hear birds...it's just great.

From my standpoint, all elements - place meaning, location and activity contributed to the experience with some having greater emphasis for different participants.

I think everybody loves the physicality of it, the physical challenge of it. OK...there is the lovely oneness with nature, solitude, lovely scenery and on and on but I think it is just doing it!

Interestingly, although in the above quote this respondent argues that the activity is ultimately of most importance, it is clear that the context of the activity is also significant and cannot be denied.

Visiting the Lake District seemed to facilitate the opportunity for respondents to engage in activities that provided mental and emotional well-being. The enjoyment of the activity was fused with the special feelings for the Lake District.

For me, it's the feeling of freedom. When you are out there you are away from society and people. It's just the freedom of it all. That is probably what I still love about it (Lake District).

I don't go to the Lake District for the physical benefits I go for the mental benefits.

The spiritual aspect of performing the activity was also noted:

It's a spiritual thing as well. It's about finding peace. Sometimes your head gets cluttered with nonsense and I think if you walk, whether you are with someone or by yourself or on your own you can find that peace you are striving for.

Ultimately, the activity was part of a process that provided positive emotional stimulation and for several people was a catalyst for spiritual experiences.

6.6.5 Process

Family Experiences

Time spent with family doing something special in an exceptional environment creates memories of shared experiences and strengthens family bonds. Many of the respondents, in raising their families, had visited the Lake District for day trips or for their holidays. Although most now had grown up families, it became apparent that they still managed time together in the Lakes and still cherished past and current times together.

When we had children we obviously couldn't walk as much but we could go to the pretty places. We always took the children and at the time my sister had three children so she used to bring the children up and go on holidays with us.

It has been bound up with very important relationships in my life. I've walked with AL for forty years...and it is something that has bound us. We've taken the children there and they've grown up doing all these things.

It was two days of walking and spending those two days together, which is precious times with your kids...to do something that you both really enjoy

and it was hard. We were trudging through snow and we hardly saw anybody because of the time of year. It was just a very special time.

Family experiences have helped to bond respondents not only to their families but to the place. Whether bound in nostalgia or anticipation of future shared experiences, they provide important emotional links to place.

Childhood Memories

Childhood memories are bound in nostalgic remembrance of a less complex, carefree existence (Boniface, 2001) and these idealised memories can shape relationships with place. Adult remembrances of places associated with pleasure have been shown to be central to the development of place attachment and also instrumental in strengthening self-identity (Morgan, 2009). Childhood memories and experiences are particularly noteworthy in participants' present experiences of the Lake District. A considerable number of the respondents had strong childhood associations with the Lake District, associations which have played a large part in shaping their view of that area. This was reflected not only in their cognitive processes and how their perceptions of the Lake District were influenced but, moreover, their emotional engagement with the Lake District was heightened by these past, early experiences. This emerged as the starting point for several interviewees' relationship with the Lake District. Initial experiences had shaped their view of the Lake District and had stimulated their continued visits there. As a consequence, these early experiences and the memories they created appear to play a strong part in their attachment to the area. Childhood experiences frequently form the basis for the development of place bonds and this appears to be true with the respondents. These memories linked with more recent events and experiences have consolidated these feelings towards the Lake District.

My love of the Lakes and the outdoors started from day walks with a church group...from the age of eleven...I was fortunate that I had people showed me that there is more to life than being in towns...wilderness and beauty.

My relationship stems from my childhood because I had loads and loads of holidays when my aunt and uncle lived along the shores of Lake Windermere and it was magic. I just used to spend holidays there and I loved it.

Highly emotive experiences from childhood become embedded in our minds and beings, in essence forming part of our identity. It is natural human instinct to not only look back fondly on these positive nostalgic experiences but also to attempt to recreate them in a similar manner or to supplement them with new experiences. Early childhood

experiences were not always activity-based but, for the respondents in this research, they were a means of maintaining their relationship with the Lakes. Studies have documented that settings of personal or human history have been linked to spiritual well-being usually within the context of sense of place or favourite places research (Williams, Patterson, Roggenbuck and Watson, 1992; Korpela and Hartig, 1996; Heintzman, 1999).

Communitas and Shared Experience

For many respondents, an important aspect of their experience of the Lake District was a sense of belonging, being part of a group or community of fellow walkers or climbers – people of different backgrounds, various ages and gender, but all like-minded in terms of the activity. In effect, this evokes qualities similar to Turner's (1969) 'communitas', a community of people enjoying social equality, having a sense of solidarity or togetherness forged by a uniform goal, in this case, a physical activity. The similarity to pilgrimage can be noted as the journey leads to a temporary fellowship with other travellers, bound by common interests and shared experiences, where social status and normal boundaries are disregarded (Digance, 2006).

A number of the respondents belonged to clubs and had very strong affiliations and emotional attachments to the group. Memories had been created through their experiences and these were tied not only to the group members but to the places where the memories were created. These shared experiences were symbolic of meaningful and emotive events and places embedded in the respondents' minds. For those with group associations, many of these shared experiences had taken place in the Lake District. Thus, the Lake District, as a place, is especially meaningful and evokes positive memories of emotionally good times. These feelings aligned with other elements of place have contributed to a strong sense of attachment to the Lake District. This was also true of couples or friends who had shared experiences of walking together. There is an emotional bonding between people who are involved in a positive, enjoyable activity together but, equally, the place where the experience occurs also becomes special. If this is repeated then the bond to place grows and becomes part of the experience.

Studies have demonstrated that emotional ties to particular settings are linked not only to physical activities but also to social activities (Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2003; Kyle, Bricker, Graefe and Wickham, 2004; Kyle, Graefe, Manning and Bacon, 2004). According to Kyle *et al.* (2004), as social ties to the activity grew along with the

importance of the activity, so did participants emotional attachment to a particular setting or place. In effect, social interactions, aligned with setting and activity combine to strengthen place bonds.

Clearly, many of the respondents had enjoyable shared experiences in other rural locations, but the exposure to a particular place with specific people can define not only the experience but the place. In effect, place, place meaning and activity, all contribute to the experience and to the sense of place.

It is nice to share it. I think it always nice to have a pleasurable experience but it is even nicer to have a shared experience with someone that appreciates it.

I don't walk by myself. I suppose I could but it doesn't give me the same pleasure of the company of others that I enjoy.

You want to share the experience with people, don't you, and if I can take people up mountains that have not been up mountains that is even better for me.

It was also noted by several people that there is also a sense of community with other people who are pursuing similar activities in the Lake District:

When you go walking the atmosphere is different in the Lakes because everyone says good morning and good afternoon...you always see that.

Walkers are very nice people.

We were up the Catbells and it was heaving but a lovely atmosphere. It was lovely...all the families and kids.

Several studies have demonstrated that spiritual well-being develops from shared experiences - either in groups or pairs, or threesomes – and from discussions that facilitate an exchange of ideas, opinions and stories (Stringer and McAvoy, 1992). Heintzman (2010:81) views the 'opportunity to discuss with others, to share stories and personal life experiences, and to have friendships and camaraderie' as beneficial to spiritual well-being. However, although a shared experience of walking together may stir positive emotions, it was suggested by some respondents that group experiences (or pairs) could be inhibitive to spiritual experiences as it is sometimes hard to be alone. Despite the group or paired situation, most found time, at some point, to take a few minutes to reflect and fulfil whatever emotional or spiritual needs they might have and, overall, it appeared that shared experiences did contribute to general spiritual well-being.

Familiarity

This is, perhaps, one of the key factors in sense of place. Familiarity, according to Hammitt et al. (2006), contains the elements of pleasant memories, perceptions, achievement memories, lasting images of the environment derived from associations, and recollections that shape place meanings and promote bonding to place. Farnum et al. (2005), in concurrence with other studies, note that the higher level of direct experience of place, the higher levels of place attachment.

In the interviews, familiarity featured prominently, either directly or indirectly, in the conversations about the Lake District.

A favourite walk has always got something of interest, there is familiarity, which is lovely but it has always got something new.

I think the Lakes is such a special place to myself because of the familiarity that I have with the place.

I think the Lake District is probably special to us because we know it...I think it's the place the more you know it the better it gets.

Familiarity, linked with positive emotional experiences, helps build place attachment. Long term or continuous exposure to place is a common factor in the place bonding process but, equally, short term exposure can still stimulate feelings of attachment and sense of place. For example, one interviewee had only begun walking and exploring the Lake District in the last twelve months and, although well into his fifties, a strong sense of place had evolved.

I have had so much satisfaction in the last twelve months...it made me realise...that you can get your own satisfaction quite simply. It has certainly changed my views about the Lake District...it makes me want to preach about the area. After I am retired I do consider moving up there because I love the area so much.

Familiarity has heightened respondents' bonds to the Lake District, though even short but intense involvement with an area that engages a person at a deeper emotional level seems to engender sense of place.

Place Attachment, Place Dependence and Place Identity

Place attachment, as outlined in the literature review in this thesis (Chapter 2), evolves from affective and cognitive processes but the emphasis is on the emotional engagement with place. It was evident that many of the respondents were enthralled by

the Lake District and had formed strong attachments to the area. This special connection was clearly a sense of place.

(Special connection)...I would say so! It is kind of because I know it so well you kind of feel at home when you are out walking...the sense of not so much being at home but the sense of comfort.

No other area provides precisely the same stimulus. This is because of the unique familiarity of the Lake District to me, and its being a backcloth to various significant ups and downs in life

The things I'm interested in are peace and quiet and views. I am interested in going to places to see what they are like and whether they can offer me those things. I do always come back to the Lakes.

It is my favourite place...its magic. Whenever we go away we always come back and go for a walk in the Lakes. When we first went to the Alps I thought is this going to spoil the Lakes, and it doesn't. It still has that pull and that magic to it.

It is just a natural beauty that you can appreciate and you come away feeling that you have been part of that but you want to get to know it more. I always come away thinking and planning my next visit.

We go to the Lake District because we have always gone to the Lake District. I love the Lake District, the landscape and everything else.

Respondents recognised that their experiences in the Lake District changed the way they felt about other places. For instance, when talking about Scotland, one participant commented:

I didn't feel as if I belonged there.

Another respondent reflected on Devon, where he and his wife often visit.

It is beautiful but I don't get the same sense of belonging as much as I do in the Lake District. I feel like a visitor to those areas. When I am walking in the Lake District I feel like I am walking on my own turf.

Conversely, others mentioned:

If my life had taken me to the Highlands or Exmoor, I would possibly have the same bond.

That's not to say that somewhere else couldn't give me the same emotions and the same feelings if we visited enough.

They did not have the feeling of belonging or attachment to other rural areas but, nevertheless, recognised they might have felt differently if circumstances had been different. This reflects several components of sense of place but familiarity, memories and exposure to place are very relevant. Place belongingness, as a form of social bonding, encourages feelings of being connected to place and, people may in fact feel

they have a special exclusive 'membership' to an environment, one that may also entail a spiritual connection (Hammitt, Backlund and Bixler, 2006).

Related to place attachment is the subtle sense of ownership or having more rights, owing perhaps to familiarity and long term physical engagement with the Lake District countryside.

One respondent had this to say:

Since I joined the walking club and we have properties there... I think I'm not a local but I do feel that I have more right to be there than some of these other people.

Yes I definitely have a sense of ownership...maybe because we've been there more frequently and actually have a holiday home there...we actually feel that we are locals. In my retirement I wouldn't mind doing some voluntary work up there as a ranger...give something back.

Another respondent, talking about the Lake District, commented revealingly:

Someone said 'the mountains belong to all of us that have legs to walk and eyes to see' and they do! I don't think it's mine more than anybody else's...but I do think it's mine!!

In my opinion, this reflected a general view held by those interviewees who held a strong affinity to the Lake District. They did not lay claim to ownership but they expressed a serious and often long term vested interest in the region. This appeared to inspire a sense of belonging and stimulate a self-identity with place.

Place identity often comes with feeling a special affinity with a place. In effect, the place had become an integral part of their lives to the point where they identify their own being or their identity with that place. In a study on place attachment by Moore and Graefe (1994), place identity in recreation areas develops through long associations with place and is linked with symbolic and emotional meanings. It was evident in this research that a number of respondents had spent a great deal of time over many years pursuing their activities, building friendships, creating memories and coming to know the landscape intimately. Places with strong associations and meanings have been shown to give rise to strong individual and collective place identities, contributing to mental well-being (Najafi, Mustafa and Shariff, 2011). Although some respondents had probably linked their identities to the Lake District, the fact that they did not actually live there but were only visitors probably limited such feelings. Not surprisingly, though, some had spent so much time in the Lake District that they did not consider themselves either visitor or tourist, but as locals. For these respondents, their identity was more closely bound to the Lake District.

Activity specialisation can imply that certain physical environmental elements are necessary in order to pursue that activity. As a consequence, place dependence may arise from that need for specific environmental factors. Place dependence, according to Kyle *et al.* (2004) 'reflects the importance of a resource for providing amenities' and the fact that functionality, frequency of use and place satisfaction are instrumental in place attachment. In effect, people become dependent on particular places that facilitate their chosen activity. In this study, those respondents who participated in rock climbing, mountain biking, canoeing open water swimming seemed to have a stronger degree of place dependence than those mostly participated in walking. That is, the Lake District provides the necessary physical environment for those more 'specialist' activities and, thus, becomes the focus for the activity. This appeared to be causal in forming bonds with the Lake District, alongside other contributory factors associated closely with the activity such as shared experiences and familiarity. The walkers, conversely, were not as dependent but many enjoyed climbing hills and loved the scenic qualities the Lake District provided. In effect, the Lakes, due to proximity and other significant visual and physical qualities, created a dependency.

Placelessness, as a condition of modern society, sees a loss of community, a sense of isolation and alienation in a society ruled by technology, transitory in nature with little structure and weak value systems (Relph, 1976; Gustafson, 2001). When considering the idea of *placelessness*, I do not feel that the interviewees were in any sense 'lost souls' seeking a place to belong and connect to but, largely through group activities and familiarity, they had created strong sense of community and did derive immense pleasure from being with like-minded people, pursuing activities they loved in an environment that had very special meanings for them. Although I had gained valuable background information, I could not attest to the strength of their ties to their homes and community but I did gain a sense that the Lake District, the people accompanying them and the activity they engaged in was immeasurably important in adding meaning to their lives. There is no doubt, in my mind, that the strength of their place relationship had developed from these factors.

Sense of Place and Spirituality

Sense of place develops from cognitive and affective feelings derived from a particular physical location. Spirituality is recognised as a component of sense of place. Peoples' psychological and physiological reactions to place can generate deep feelings, incorporating aesthetic, cultural, emotional and spiritual values engendering a sense of place (Fredrickson and Kerr, 1998; Kaltenborn, 1998; Cessford and Abramovici, 2008). Studies have shown that spiritual experience in natural environments is closely related

to sense of place (Mazumdar and Mazumdar, 1993; Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999) influenced by conditions associated with both the social and physical environment (Williams and Harvey, 2001).

It was apparent that the majority interviewed in this research experienced a very strong sense of place with regard to the Lake District. The element of sense of place that this thesis is seeking to identify is the spiritual dimension. Spirituality, an affective based experience, was clearly evidenced by several of the respondents. Sense of place, as a complex concept, embraces spiritual feelings and, from the interviews, sense of place was found to contribute to respondents' spiritual feelings. Their involvement with the Lake District gave them very special feelings towards the area. The intensity of this involvement highlighted their emotional relationship with the Lakes and their spiritual outcomes. In effect, the positive significance of their relationship with the Lake District meant that spiritual feelings were intensified or more clearly appreciated in a place that held so much meaning for them. The context of their spiritual experiences occurred not exclusively in the Lake District, but sense of place contributed to the depth of spiritual moments/times.

Commenting on spiritual experiences and sense of place:

I think that you can feel that in the Yorkshire Dales or Snowdon, it's the walk; it's getting higher up and away from people. But the Lakes, it's a better feeling, slightly superior feeling in the Lakes.

Other outdoor areas are restorative too, but with the attainable heights of the Lake District, as well as the Lake District's unique scenery, then there is a different feel about it.

Commenting on spiritual moments identified as part of their sense of place in the Lake District:

One of the things you can never predict...you don't know if on that day it is going to be the day when you turn the corner and things are different, just the way it catches your eye, catches your emotions.

There is the visual beauty that we have talked about and there is a sort of spiritual development aspect of it. You kind of walk outdoors and you find yourself.

We've done some serious walks. We've done Snowdon and even Ben Nevis and I can't say I have had a spiritual experience. A sense of achievement, nice views but not the emotions I get out of the Lake District.

Referring to sense of place and spirituality, Heintzman and Mannell (2003) consider that in pursuing leisure activities, people will tend to use this as an opportunity to engage with places or settings that heighten spiritual experience or spiritual well-being.

Sense of place, in my view, helped to generate spirituality due to the complex, intense emotional and cognitive relationship participants had with the Lake District but was not the overarching reason or the only context for spiritual occurrences.

6.7 Countryside: Rurality and Contemporary Spirituality

What is the effect of the countryside on spiritual experience?

The ruralness of the countryside, seen in sharp contrast to more urbanised settings, was a significant factor in respondents' motivations to visit rural places. The countryside, in particular the natural environment, generated positive emotional feelings; feelings of mental well-being, relaxation and revitalisation were all attributed to rural settings. Although the spiritual dimension of the rural experience is largely unknown, studies on recreational wilderness experiences have evinced spiritual experiences stimulated by the natural environment (Kaplan and Talbot, 1983; Fredrickson and Anderson, 1999; Heintzman, 2003; Ashley, 2007). Countryside, as originally characterised by the Romantic Movement and still nowadays, is identified by expanses of natural areas. Although not considered wilderness, there are physical similarities, such as panoramic vistas, particular flora and fauna and other biophysical attributes found in natural landscapes. There were strong indications that these qualities of the countryside, for the interviewees, were not only beneficial for emotional health but were spiritually inspirational.

The respondents did not disregard the fact that spirituality could be experienced in built environments – particularly religious sites such as cathedrals, abbeys, shrines and stone circles – but the natural environment stimulated spiritual openness and provided them with greater spiritual fulfilment.

That would be my religion. Nature!

To me, with the sunrise and you are there and it's kind of religious because God has made this...so for me this is the closest I can be to God I think.

For some, particular places in the countryside, such as the Lake District, added to the experience. Place meaning was shown to enhance the emotional relationship to place, thereby intensifying spiritual experience. This does not alter the fact, however, that other rural settings also offer significant elements for spiritual development and realisation. Indeed, it was evident that, for most respondents, rural settings in general that were familiar, nostalgic, memorable, scenic, and that facilitated a favourite activity, added to the emotiveness of place.

Spirituality, for many, seems to be attainable only after breaking down the barriers of everyday life and normal existence. Stresses need to be released, work and mundane worries forgotten in order to achieve a mental state that allows the mind time for introspection that leads to inner peace. Correspondingly, physical activity frequently was seen as a factor in respondents' spiritual experiences. Challenges, achievement, exertion and physical movement alone contributed to the context for spiritual events. However, views, scenery and other conditions such as solitude, quietness, light and weather conditions were also significant factors. Ultimately, then, spiritual experiences in the countryside were linked to the tri-partite elements of physical location, activity and the place meaning. For the respondents, the significance of each of element differed. For some, activity had greater emphasis, other stressed two of the three elements and for most it was a combination of all three elements – physical location, place meaning and activity.

Activity and Spirituality

Comments on spiritual experiences from the activity:

I suppose I just like mountains...I just like walking.

There is an element of -I don't really care as long as I am walking.

It emerged that activity appeared to trigger emotional responses or spiritual awareness regardless of the place or place importance; walking could be along the sea front, along the river or wherever the nearest natural space could be found. Nevertheless, although these respondents stressed the importance of the activity, it was notable that the activity was always enjoyed in the natural environment, suggesting that features of the countryside are in fact part of the experience.

Emphasising place meaning, this respondent commented on spiritual feelings attributed to gazing upon a small church in a natural countryside setting:

The place that I have experienced the most powerful spiritual presence of all is not in the Lake District but in Wales. A remote valley in central Wales...the church it was an old shrine...now a centre for cancer, a sort of healing centre and you can feel the most amazing presence there. It is really, really a quite extraordinary and powerful place. Set on a dead end road in a valley, a tiny little church, surrounded by water...it's absolutely stunning!

A number of respondents placed importance on two elements, usually physical location and activity:

I think the physical location and activity add to my emotional experience. The activity I like doing most (mountain walking) involves being in a particular location (preferably the Highlands of Scotland).

Commenting on spirituality and the total experience:

You've got the basic level of physical exercise and then if it's a reasonable day you get the peace, the spiritual thing and that's the sort of thing it does - the physical, the mental and the almost spiritual as well.

All three elements add to my spiritual experience. There are places that matter to me because of times that I have been there before...visual beauty matters and sometimes the physical activity is paramount.

It's a sense of belonging, and loyalty to the Fell Walkers Club and the belief in what we do together, which is usually in the Lakes. It's a combination of all the factors, place meaning, location and activity.

It is a combination of all three...activity being the least important and natural setting as the most important.

The elemental features of countryside, the power of nature and simplicity of the natural environment provide space for contemplative and extraordinary experiences. But for many respondents, these intensely emotional or spiritual experiences are compounded by the physicality of the activity enhanced by the strongly embedded sense of place.

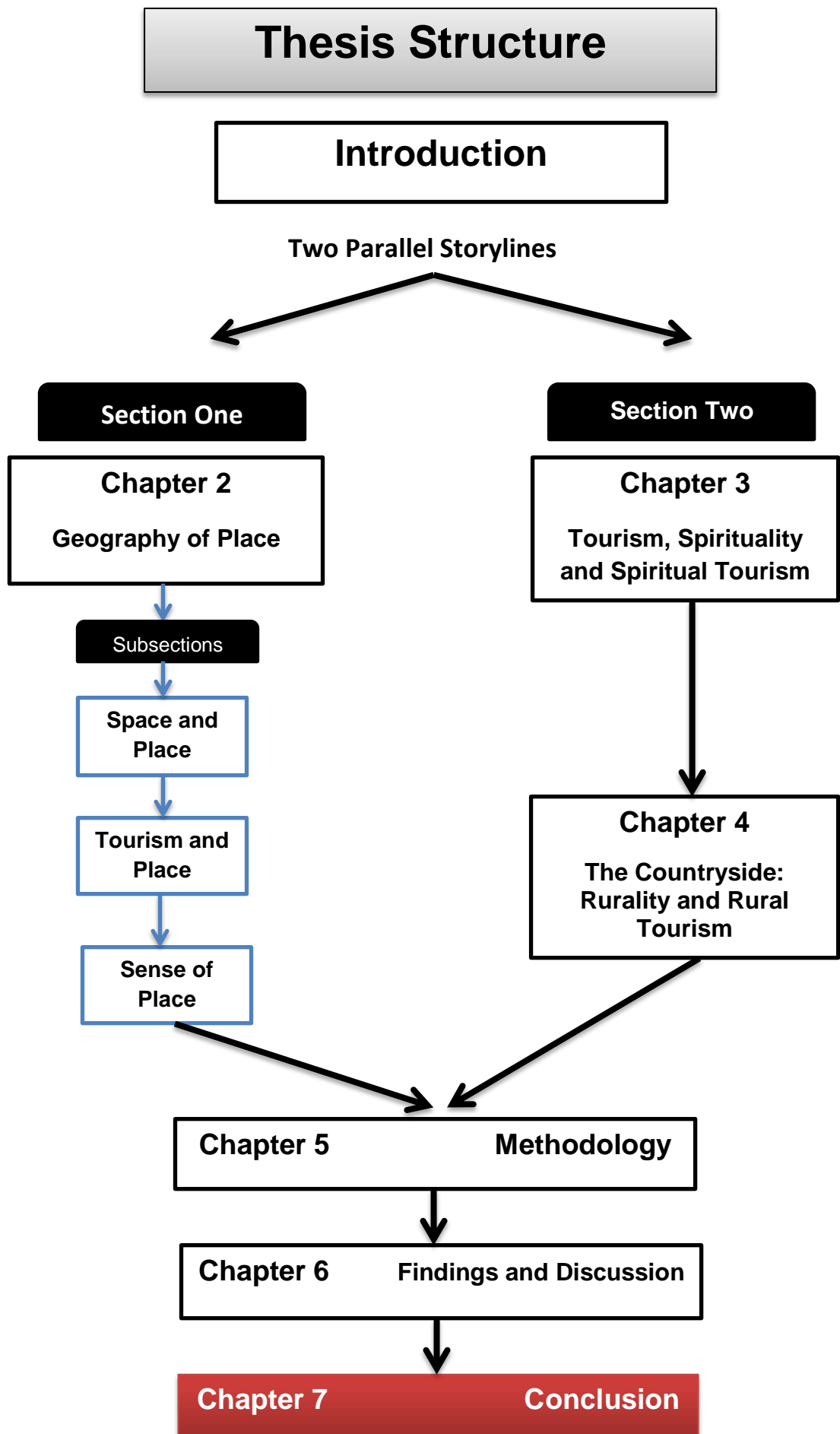
Overall, the general feeling was that a combination of all three elements is important to experiences of emotional intensity or spirituality. The spiritual dimension of rural tourism results from the intersection of the three principal variables of place meaning, activity and physical location. The situational characteristics that effect deep emotional experiences in the countryside are a complexity of these variables, underpinned by the distinctive elements encompassed by each variable.

Arguably, the fact that the respondents were all physically active predetermined that activity would be significant to the overall experience. Interestingly, though, the respondents' spiritual experience was not attributed directly to the activity but instead to the qualities of the physical environment of the countryside. The activity, as a significant part of the whole countryside experience, cannot be detached from the emotional/spiritual experience as the properties of physical environment and activity are psychologically interwoven. The role of the physical activity, as a physiological condition, aids in developing an open state of mind or, perhaps, a flow state, that allows the sensory impact of the physical environment to induce spiritual outcomes. For the respondents in this research, place meaning or sense of place contributed to the emotional intensity of the countryside experience but could not account for spiritual experiences occurring in places that sense of place had not developed. In effect, sense

of place was a contributing factor but was not necessary for spiritual development. Other countryside environments where participants had no sense of place could still be conducive for spiritual experiences.

6.8 Summary

This chapter has brought together the elements of place, looking at experiences of the countryside, notably physical environment, physical activity, and the place bonding mechanism of sense of place, as relayed through the discourse of the respondents. This discussion was set within the framework of the countryside assessing the complexity of psychological, sociological and physiological elements necessary for spiritual experiences. Initial findings were directed at clarifying respondents' understanding and interpretation of contemporary spirituality. The discussion moved on to explore the significance of the physical environment to spirituality, then examined spirituality in reference to the activity. The role of sense of place in rural tourist experiences was analysed, followed by an examination of the connection between sense of place and spirituality. The final part of the findings and discussion chapter reviewed the effects of the tri-partite relationship of physical location, physical activity and sense of place on the spiritual dimension of the rural tourist experience. The final and concluding chapter will state the findings in a clear and concise summation supported by schematic models to visually illustrate the thesis conclusions.



Chapter Seven

Conclusion

7.0 Introduction

The overall purpose of this thesis has been to explore the spiritual experience of rural tourists, seeking in particular to understand the role of place in supporting this experience. More specifically, the research discussed in this thesis has focused on the spiritual dimension of rural tourism and the role of sense of place in determining spiritual fulfilment, drawing on the experiences of a purposefully targeted group, namely, tourists involved in physically active pursuits within the countryside environment. Thus, research began with one overriding question and several underlying objectives. The purpose of this final, concluding chapter is to consider how and to what extent these aims and objectives have been met.

In fulfilling the immediate aim of this thesis, the principle research question is answered first:

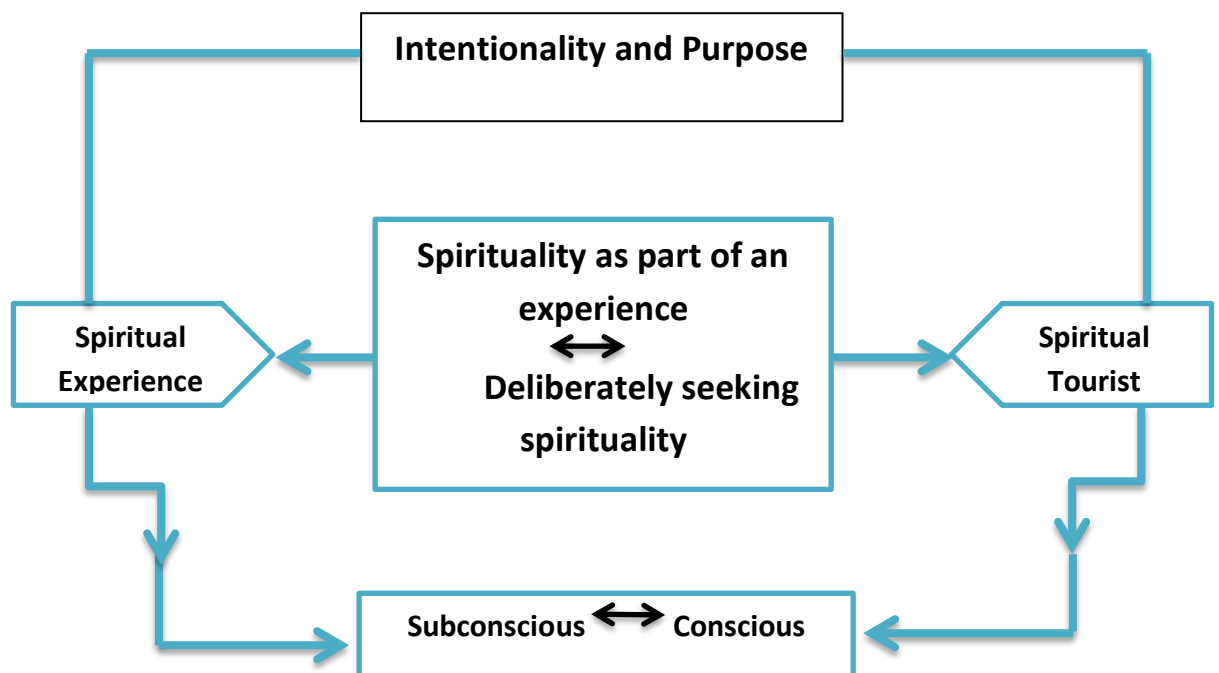
Is rural tourism a spiritual experience, or is there a spiritual dimension to rural tourism and, if so, does place experience, or sense of place, determine the spiritual element of the rural experience?

There are essentially two parts to this question. I will begin by answering the first part: 'Is rural tourism a spiritual experience'. In considering the outcomes of the research, I found myself facing something of a dilemma, having to decide whether I fell into the 'MacCannell camp' (see page 55), that is, viewing tourism is a secular substitute for organised religion or, conversely, concluding that tourism and pilgrims have very little in common (Timothy and Olsen, 2006), pilgrims being motivated by spirituality, tourists by a diversity of motivations, largely self-seeking, that may or may not include spiritual intent. Reflecting on the findings of the research and drawing on my own interpretations, I believe that, within the framework of my research, rural tourism indeed represents a spiritual experience or, at the very least, offers a spiritual dimension. The interview respondents' experience in the countryside undoubtedly embellished their lives and gave greater meaning to their existence whilst, in some cases, the rural tourist experience was acknowledged as a substitute for traditional religion. In essence, the research showed that the rural tourist is not a definitive search for spiritual fulfilment but there is, nevertheless, a clear recognition that their experiences may offer

emotional and spiritual benefits. Can I therefore argue that they are modern day secular pilgrims? Perhaps – though this is not an argument for this thesis. Rather, what this research has established is that there is a certain degree of spiritual intent observable in visitors' experiences in the countryside. Earlier in this thesis I proposed a continuum reflecting the pilgrim/tourist relationship (see page 57); following the research, this now requires further clarification to demonstrate the spiritual motivation of rural tourists (see Figure 7.1).

The diagram below (Figure 7.1) represents the differing spiritual motivations of tourists, relating such motivations to either subconscious intent or conscious purpose in seeking spirituality. It does not attribute secular/non-secular qualities to the experiences but, rather, reflects an acceptance of the concept of spirituality. At one extreme there are those who embrace spirituality but do not consciously seek it (through tourism) whilst, at the other extreme, we find the spiritual tourist whose purpose is to engage in spiritual activities and to consciously seek spirituality. In this research, the respondents' spiritual experiences were largely derived from subconscious actions rather than conscious purpose. Individually, the extent to which they sought spirituality as a dimension of place and activity varied, dependent on religious associations, the strength of their spiritual beliefs and their desire to achieve spiritual fulfilment. Each individual respondent had different degrees of intentionality and awareness, which may reflect the nature of spiritual seeking in a wider societal context.

Figure 7.1: Continuum of Spiritual Intentionality and Purpose



In clarifying the nature of the respondents' spiritual experience, both personally and academically, the answer to the primary research question became clear, enabling me to progress onto meeting the other research objectives underpinning the fundamental purpose of this thesis. Indeed, in order to understand fully how the research question was answered, it is essential to return to the underlying aims and objectives first presented in the introduction to this thesis. In particular, it is important to discuss the notion of sense of place in order to explore the contribution of place experience to spiritual fulfilment as revealed in this research. The first task, however, is to clarify understandings of contemporary spirituality within the context of this study.

7.1 Contemporary Spirituality

My first principle objective, fundamental to the overall purpose of this study, was to define the qualities that individuals attribute to 'being spiritual' or 'experiencing spirituality' and to identify if there is any clear or collective definition of spirituality.

Disregarding the fact that two respondents claimed to have no religious or spiritual sentiments, contrasting viewpoints of spirituality emerged from the analysis of the research. That is, as evidenced by the manifold ways in which spirituality was individually conceptualised by respondents, a contemporary understanding of spirituality was not consistently agreed upon. Thus, this research reflects the common academic belief that the concept of spirituality lacks clear and concise definition. Spirituality was observed to be a very personal and individual process incorporating Christian values, religious doctrine, Buddhism, Druidism, Celtic spiritualism, metaphysical theories and a 'hodgepodge' of abstract belief systems. However, the overarching theme that emerged from the research was the differing foundations of spiritual conceptualisation but functionally similar spiritual responses to similar circumstances. In other words, despite the divergent belief systems or understanding of spirituality amongst the respondents, their spiritual experiences corresponded with and were activated by relatively comparable conditions. These circumstances or conditions are considered in more detail shortly but, in general, elements of the physical environment, the physicality of the activity, place meaning and the psychological processes focused around these elements stimulated spiritual experiences.

Despite the lack of uniform interpretation of the concept of spirituality, the terminology surrounding spiritual experiences revealed many commonalities. Words such as intense joy, sense of self, peace, magical, sense of connection, wonder, awe, amazement, reverence, gratitude, atmospheric, centred, balancing, introspective,

energised, in the moment and flowing were used to refer to spiritual feelings. Thus, although the concept of spirituality may be interpreted individually, the language employed to describe spiritual experiences communicates similar expressive meanings. This is consistent with terminology that is commonly used in characterising perceptions of spirituality. In short, the research revealed that, despite different interpretations of spirituality, the language of spirituality is similar and, as will be demonstrated, the circumstances of spiritual experiences were also generally consistent.

In determining the difference between emotive experiences and those considered to be spiritual, there were some clear findings from the research. Emotive descriptors, such as satisfaction, enjoyment, peace and relaxation, were terms used uniformly by all respondents to describe positive experiences. Interestingly, terminology used by non-spiritual respondents to describe intensely emotional experiences was comparable to that used to describe spiritual experiences. It is concluded, therefore, that the respondents who rejected the notion of spirituality still experienced powerful emotive feelings akin to spiritual experiences which were the result of similar conditions or circumstances. In effect, depending on our beliefs, it appears that what is spiritual to one person may be just an intensely emotive experience to another. This would require further in-depth and focused investigation.

Importantly, spiritual experience was not generally a primary consideration when planning visits to the countryside, but the research revealed that there existed the underlying knowledge amongst respondents that the experience could provide emotional and spiritual well-being and health. Thus, the research suggests that there appeared to be an underlying motivation amongst respondents to achieve emotional/spiritual fulfilment, perhaps as an innate need. Certainly, the affective part of the experience, whether emotional, spiritual or both, was fundamental to the totality of the experience.

7.2 Countryside: Rural Tourism and Spirituality

In investigating the spiritual dimension of rural tourism, I wanted to determine if a conceptual tripartite relationship exists between the physical setting, the physical activity and meaning of place that, in combination, provide the stimulus for spiritual experience. The research does indeed suggest that spiritual experiences occur as a result of these elements coming together to create a set of circumstances or conditions that support or stimulate spirituality. Each person has their own specific conditions for experiencing spirituality although there are significant collective commonalities. First, I

shall address the individual elements of the tripartite relationship and then draw the elements together to complete the picture.

7.2.1 Physical location

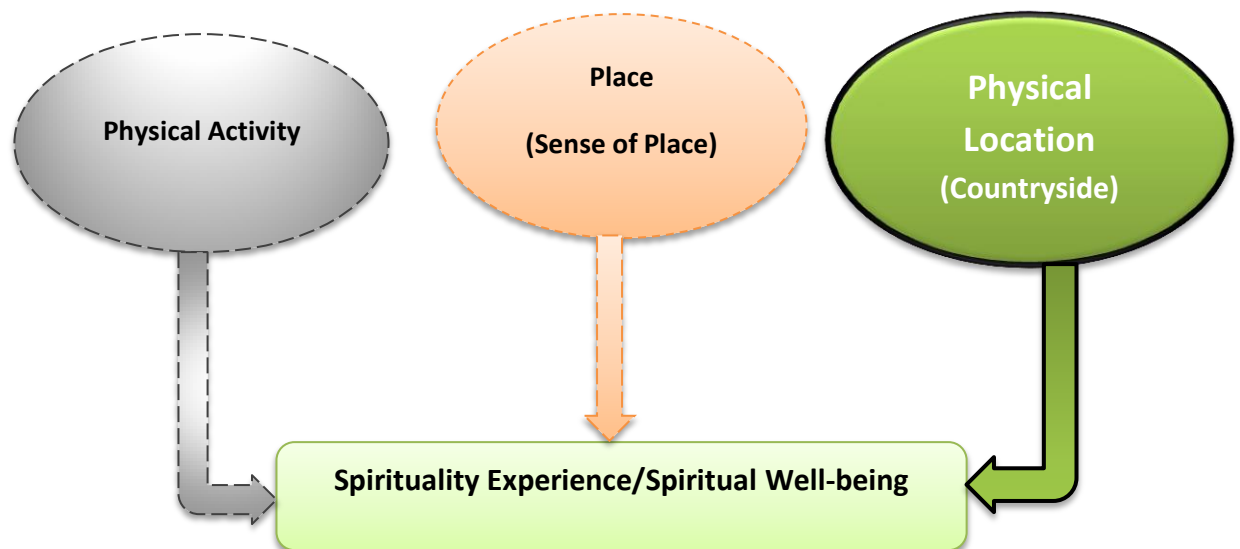
The physical location of the countryside is defined by the natural environment, the built environment and the geographical location. This study has shown that the significance of the physical location stems, firstly, from being non-urban whilst, from a practical perspective, accessibility is an important element of visitor motivation to travel to particular rural areas. The physical location comprises both the built environment and the natural environment. The most important factors in predisposing spiritual experience were associated with elements of the natural environment visually perceived as the landscape. The most common natural elements referred to were: the views, the scenery, the mountains, the hills, the lakes, and the weather and light conditions. These factors drawn together produced a kaleidoscope of shifting landscape arrangements contributory to spiritual realisation. The built environment, as a backdrop, does not directly account for spiritual experiences but contributes to impressions and understanding of the countryside, thereby adding to the total experience and to the affective experience of place.

Individuals' experience of place is impacted upon by the elements of physical location, the activity and place meaning, the respondents placing greater emphasis on particular element(s) influencing spiritual reactions. For some, the physical location – the countryside – has the greatest impact, for others the activity is the most significant factor whilst, for a small number, sense of place was the dominant factor. The model below (see *Figure 7.2*) below captures the different elements of spiritual experience, namely, the physical activity, place meaning and the physical location. In this figure, the significance of physical location has been emphasised. The study has shown that the strength of each element is very individual, contingent on personal importance and relevance to the experience. For some, activity has greater influence on spirituality, for others it may be the physical location, and others, sense of place is significant to spiritual experience. What the data has revealed is that spiritual experience arises from a combination of at least two elements and, in some cases, all three elements provide the best conditions for spiritual realisation.

Whilst, each individual places different emphasis on different elements it was shown that although one element could be particularly strong, there is always an interaction, a

synergy, between these elements that contributes to the spiritual dimension of the countryside experience.

Figure 7.2 Elements Contributing to Spirituality - Emphasis on Physical Location



7.2.2 Sense of place

This thesis has explored in depth the social construction of place, focusing on countryside as a conceptualised place produced through political, economic, cultural and social interpretations of space. Countryside, as the antithesis to urbanity, represents spaces of naturalness, symbolised by the tranquillity and beauty of the physical environment. These visions were enhanced by the perceived simplicity and innocence of country life placed within the framework of picturesque villages and rustic farmhouses. This imagined countryside, shaped by the ideology of the Romantic Movement and perpetuated by cultural and economic forces, is firmly entrenched in the subconscious minds of the nation, heralding rurality as the essence of the national identity.

Our relationships with place, both cognitive and affective, are determined by collective understanding but, more significantly, our individual experiences add definition to that understanding. Countryside, as a place offering respite from urbanity, the restorative qualities of nature and a physical environment facilitating mental well-being resulting from outdoor activities, has become understood as a space for contemplation and reflection. In critically appraising if the socially constructed nature of the countryside or 'sociology of place' promotes spiritual experiences, the research demonstrated that the

respondents' vision of the countryside was influenced by constructed meanings, the natural qualities of the countryside being perceived as providing emotional well-being and spiritual health. Respondents had a sense of escaping to the countryside, with countryside comprehended through social constructed meanings as a place of retreat and refuge.

Rural tourists' collective processes are influenced by these cultural perceptions of countryside that has resulted in an ever-increasing consumption of the countryside further accelerated through modern day media representations. The Lake District National Park, historically shaped, politically bound, economically structured and now culturally defined as an idyllic, outdoor playground, has in both the past and present been a focus of tourist activity. Overall, within this study, the respondents, through their personal tourist experiences, had built strong attachments to the Lake District, attachments recognisable as sense of place.

For the respondents, this sense of place generally derived from several factors: familiarity, childhood memories, family and/or friend experiences, a sense of community (club situations), and the activity, all influenced by the unique quality of the physical environment. At some psychological level, the significance of collective cultural visions of the Lake District have undoubtedly, influenced respondents interpretation of the Lake District, but sense of place seemed largely to be derived from individual experiences. Many elements lending to sense of place were easily discernible but other associations, largely collective, such as historic and literary constructs, were not easily identified as factors in developing sense of place. In essence, sense of place arose from individual experiences over time, in a physical location that offered visual pleasure and facilitated activities of choice. Cultural influences appeared to exist at a subliminal level, embraced as part of a collective rural identity that informed respondents' unconscious understanding of the Lake District and the countryside as place.

The strong bonds developed with the Lake District were evinced by the intensity of the respondents' affective relationship to place. Their love of place, or topophilia, was clearly evident in their animated descriptions of the Lake District, reinforced by the strength of their emotive responses to experiences of place. The psychological conditions and physical circumstances of these highly emotive experiences were shown to inspire moments or times of spiritual awareness/feelings. Sense of place was revealed to be instrumental in creating an environment fostering spirituality.

In seeking to understand if a tourist's perception of 'place', or sense of place, in this case the Lake District, affects the emotional/spiritual experience, this study has

demonstrated that the affective element of sense of place pre-disposed respondents' spiritual experiences, but sense of place did not determine spiritual experiences. In effect, sense of place can add to individuals' spiritual feelings by increasing possibilities for spiritual realisation and enhancing the intensity of these responses, but it is not a prerequisite for spiritual experiences to occur. In other words, spiritual experiences can arise in unfamiliar rural areas where sense of place is not an element of the experience.

7.2.3 Activity

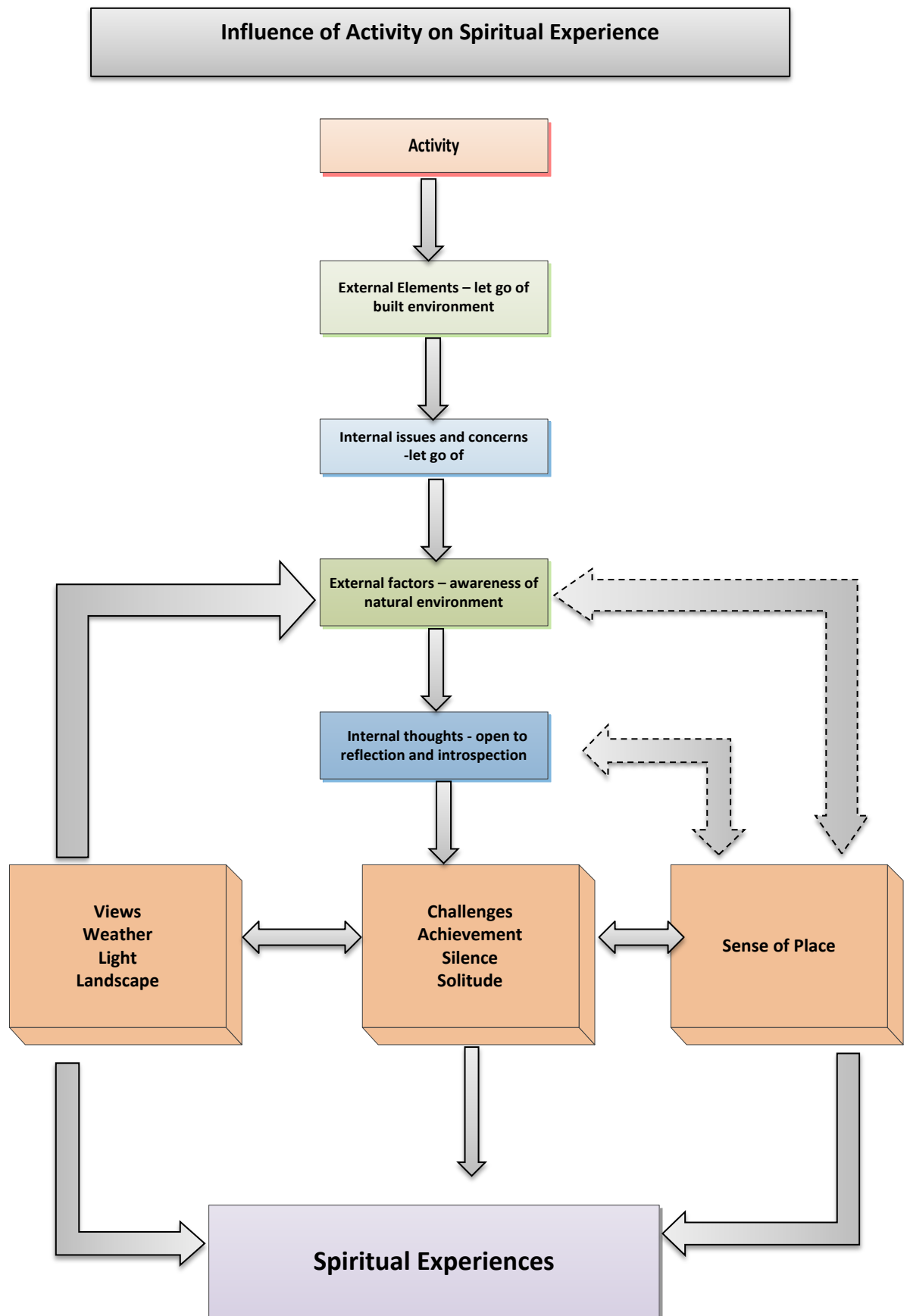
From the research, physical activity was revealed as having a strong impact on spiritual experience. Physiological conditions produced by exertion, physical challenge, risks, attaining higher levels and the meditative quality of activities, like walking or swimming, created a state of mind open to feelings of a spiritual nature. The activity appeared to awaken sensory receptors, producing a heightened sense of awareness to both external and internal influences.

The diagram below (see *Figure 7.3*) illustrates the significance of the activity to spiritual experience and is an attempt to capture the process that occurs when undertaking a physical activity in the countryside environment. Although stemming from the physical activity, it incorporates the elements of the physical environment (physical location) and sense of place (place meaning). The figure emphasises the activity but, in effect, it demonstrates the tripartite relationship that reflects the respondents' discourse. From the respondents' perspectives, as the activity began the influence of the external built environment seceded from visual view, progressing further with the activity as internal influences, such as everyday stresses and worries, slowly slipped away. Further along in the stages, an awareness of the influence of external visual factors, such as views, weather, light and landscape is notable and the mind turns outward to appreciate and absorb the outside natural environment. This leads, in the next stage, to internal mental stimulation, allowing for introspection and reflection influenced by elements of physical challenge, solitude, and quiet. Owing to a combination of psychological and physiological factors influenced by place, the countryside, spiritual well-being or enlightenment is achieved. Sense of place, may or may not be part of the equation, as shown in *Figure 7.3*. In the latter stages, sense of place may add to the experience with elements such as familiarity, past associations, love of the unique physical qualities adding to the emotional intensity of the activity and contributing to spiritual experience. Reciprocally, receptiveness to the natural environment may stimulate place bonding responses leading to a sense of place. Thus, the schematic below (see *Figure*

7.3) attempts to capture some of the complexities of the spiritual dimension of rural tourism.

In clarifying Figure 7.3, the first text box denotes the individual embarking on an activity, still retaining the stresses and weight of everyday home and/or work life. The participant, at the beginning of the activity, has a sense of moving away from the built up areas and slowly opening up to the natural environment. In the next text box downward, as the activity progresses, there is a sense of mental release or letting go of the internal issues and concerns commonly associated with home, work, health, family, etc. In the next phase of the schematic, with the built environment disappearing and mundane problems receding into the background there is a growing awareness, appreciation and absorption of the external influences of the natural environment. Continuing downward on the diagram, with the mind freed from stress or routine thoughts, there is an increasing openness to internal reflection and retrospection. The model then captures the impact of the combination of activity, environment and a relaxed mental state, the elements instrumental in generating conditions beneficial for spiritual experience to occur. The diagram demonstrates that sense of place may be an added factor in increasing the chance for spiritual experience but is not a condition of spiritual experience.

Figure 7.3 Activity and spiritual experience



The physical activity, notably, was significant to spiritual experience but without the element of the physical environment and in some cases, the added element of *sense of place*, then spiritual outcomes were not as achievable.

7.3 Summary of the Tripartite Relationship

In order to draw together the strands of this study clearly and concisely, I shall review briefly the study findings and conclusions. In addressing understandings of contemporary spirituality, it was demonstrated that spirituality is highly individual, not only in definition but in interpretation. Nevertheless, commonalities in spiritual experiences in the countryside and the circumstances of these experiences were clearly established. Thus, answering the main aim of this research, it has been concluded that rural tourism, within the context of this study, is a spiritual experience or at the least offers a spiritual dimension. Sense of place, having an affective element that embraces spiritual feelings is important to place experience but does not determine spiritual experiences; spiritual moments/times may occur in places where there is not a sense of place although sense of place may enhance spirituality. The social construction of place influences bonding mechanisms to place. This was found to result, largely, from individual rather than collective experiences, with these experiences potentially contributing to spirituality. Finally, the threads of place meaning, physical location and physical activity have been drawn together in a comprehensive tripartite relationship as illustrated below (see *Figure 7.4*).

This schematic below (*Figure 7.4*) attempts to capture the impacts of the tri-partite relationship of physical location, the physical activity and sense of place illustrating the role each element plays in the rural visitor's spiritual experience. The diagram uses darker shading to emphasise the two main elements, physical activity and place, and also, the significant underlying sub-elements. For example, as depicted, the important factors of physical activity in encouraging the rural tourists' spiritual experience are exertion, challenge, solitude, *communitas* and quiet. The 'place' element was more complex having two underlying significant components, physical environment and geographical location, and a third less significant element, the built environment. In terms of sub-elements, the physical environment, as shown, had a number of qualities contributory to spiritual experience such as weather, light, views, hills, mountains and nature.

The schema shows that geographical location was deemed to be a significant part of the rural experience, as countryside, the antithesis to urbanity, offered an escape and

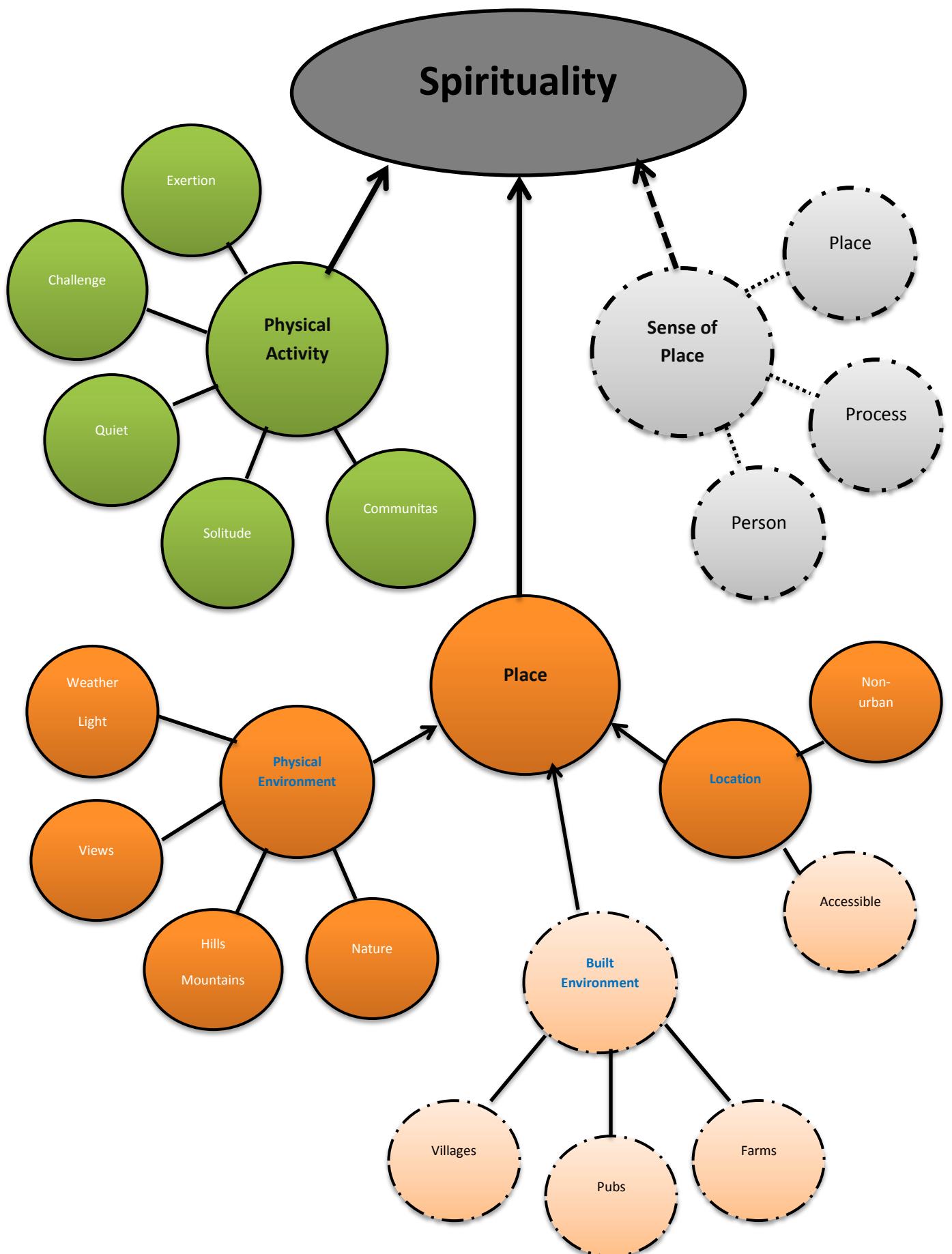
restorative qualities necessary for spiritual fulfilment. Indicated by the lighter shading, geographical location in terms of accessibility was not significant to spiritual experience but viewed as a background factor, helping to facilitate experiences of the countryside that may lead to conditions for spiritual experience. Similarly, the built environment, as illustrated, also provided only a backdrop, adding to overall appealing visual attractiveness and boosting emotionally positive feelings but not directly relevant to the spiritual dimension. Sense of place, denoted in the diagram with lighter shading, indicates that this element may or may not play a role in facilitating spiritual outcomes.

The overall diagram helps to visually clarify the conditions for spiritual experiences, particularly noting the significance of physical location and physical activity. The diagram demonstrates that the element of physical activity was a fundamental part of developing conditions for spiritual experience but the physical location, in particular the natural environment, is central to that experience. In effect, all of the elements either alone or in combination, according to the data, contribute to spiritual occurrences but there are elements that exert greater influence on spiritual outcomes.

What has become clear is that place is important; place does matter. Whether it is a place that holds significant meaning to us or a place that facilitates an activity or a place with a satisfying physical environment – or any combinations or permutations of these elements – place cannot be ignored. This study has looked at a particular place, the countryside and refined that to an understanding of a specific place, the Lake District, to establish the context of spiritual experience. Arguably, different place and different people may produce different outcomes but, nonetheless, this study has given us greater insight into understanding people's emotional and spiritual relationship to place. Tourism, as a spatial concept involving the mobility of people from place to place, can only benefit from more comprehensive appreciation of the affective bonds people have with place and the spiritual element of that experience.

In a society witnessing a state of flux and fluidity in so many aspects of our lives, tourism may offer more meaningful and profound experiences, should we choose to incorporate contexts of greater emotional/spiritual consequence into our tourist consumption. From the perspective of tourism, this study offers insights into the tourists' relationships with place and the attachments that are forged from experiences of place. Significantly, in understanding place/people bonds, particularly affective bonds, tourist boards may find ways to promote a sense of place, and stimulate a sense of belonging that encourages repeat visitations. Similarly, there is an opportunity to develop or maximise environments fostering emotional and spiritual well-being.

Figure 7.4: Factors Influencing Spirituality - Tripartite Relationship



7.4 Filling the Gap in Literature and Exploring Future Studies

This research has been instrumental in broadening understanding of several current academic topics, contemporary spirituality, place and place relationships, and the countryside as a socially constructed environment benefiting both tourist and tourism. Tourism, as a place related industry, has received limited academic research in understanding the role of place and place relationships in supporting spiritual experience. More specifically, in addressing the gap in academic literature, within the context of tourism, this research has focussed on the significance of tourists' physical pursuits undertaken in the countryside and the possible spiritual outcomes of these experiences. Presently, there is a growing body of research examining contemporary spirituality, which this research has addressed, adding to the collective academic understanding of the complexity and individuality of contemporary spirituality. More significantly, it has revealed the significance of spiritual well-being to individuals in contemporary society and the underlying need to explore ways to nourish emotional and spiritual and mental health, expressively, through participation in physical activities in rural environments, a notion only explored in Sharpley and Jepson (2011). In effect, this confirms other research findings regarding the present day need to nurture spirituality but defines, more clearly, the context and place of spiritual experience, explicitly, physical activities in the outdoor environment of the countryside.

The role of place relationships, specifically sense of place, was an intrinsic part of this study, demonstrating similarly, to other studies, that this concept can influence tourist place making decisions. In contrast to other research though, this study, explored further and discovered that spiritual experience is not just an element of sense of place and that, in fact, spiritual experience happens in a variety of places where little or no previous engagement with the place has occurred. Sense of place can catalyse spirituality but is not necessary for spiritual nourishment. In conclusion, this study has confirmed findings on spirituality from previous studies, particularly in reference to physical activity, but has examined a number of areas that have not previously been explored: the spiritual dimension of the countryside as a physical place, the effects of sense of place on spiritual occurrence, and finally, the role of physical activity in the rural tourists' spiritual experience.

The limitations of this study are clearly recognisable: the scale of the study, the narrow focus adopted and the subjective methodology embraced. Despite these limitations, salient information has been accrued lending to increased knowledge and understanding of a specific type of tourists' emotional/spiritual motivations and behaviours in a particular area of tourism. In effect, there has been limited research

into the emotional impacts of rural tourism and even less understanding of the spiritual dimension of the rural tourist experience, which this thesis has attempted to address. It is acknowledged that the study of tourists' emotional and spiritual experiences is a relatively new and growing area in the academic field signifying a move away from the positivistic tendencies to scientifically account for and rationalise tourists' actions and behaviours. In recognition of this trend, this study strived to add to the growing body of subjective, qualitative studies examining affective experiences but also, to stimulate ideas about future possible research areas. There are several future tourism studies that could advance academic and industry knowledge.

7.4.1 Rural tourism: spirituality and the non-active tourist

Perhaps the most obvious topic for future study is the spiritual dimension of the non-active rural tourist in order to assess the similarities and differences in emotional/spiritual engagement with place and the circumstances of these experiences. This would contribute to knowledge of contemporary spiritual understanding and aid in defining spirituality. Sense of place could also be targeted here to investigate the influence of sense of place on spiritual experiences.

7.4.2 The spiritual dimension of teenagers and young adults' rural tourist experiences

The sampling group in this thesis were from thirty years old and upward, the majority of respondents being over forty-five. Spirituality, or at least awareness of spirituality, seems to develop more definitively with age, often becoming more reflective with the passing of time. Contrasting or identifying the spiritual dimension of teenagers and young adults' rural tourism experience could be used to refine marketing objectives or simply to achieve greater comprehension of a different segment of the tourist market place.

7.4.3 Effects of sense of place marketing on the rural tourist

In moving away from spirituality, there is a recent trend in marketing sense of place, mentioned in the literature review. This is an area that may benefit by further research investigating the influence of sense of place marketing on consumers and ways to improve or refine both the marketing and the product.

7.4.4 The rural tourist: the spiritual dimension of countryside walking

Walking in rural Britain has become a national pastime, representative of the cultural identity of the countryside. The allure of walking in the countryside, inspired by the Romantic Movement and later facilitated by the right of access laws, has achieved mainstream popularity observable in the numerous Rambling Associations, the frequent television programs and magazines extolling the merits of walking. Clearly influenced by collective constructions, there are the obvious tourist motivations of travel, sightseeing and escape but the spiritual aspect of walking in the British countryside is largely uninformed and may benefit greater understanding of tourist motivations and behaviours.

7.4.5 Sense of place and the rural tourist

Place satisfaction, enjoyment and feelings of comfort are an integral part of repeat visits to places. Place bonding mechanisms are the result of a complexity of collective and individual experiences. There are numerous studies explaining place bonding processes and a growing number investigating place bonding in respect to specific environments but limited research has been undertaken to explore rural tourists' place bonding experiences. Equally, greater understanding of influences encouraging place attachment in the countryside and how this affects visitor behaviour would add significantly to academic and industry knowledge.

7.5 Self-Reflective Thoughts

When I began the PhD journey, I did not fully understand the ramifications of the task that lay ahead; the complexity of the process, the emotional and mental involvement and the time commitment required. I had a belief, a belief that I could overcome whatever lay ahead. A PhD journey, in a mildly analogous way, corresponds to a pilgrimage, albeit a mental pilgrimage, secular in nature. The journey begins with anticipation, highlighted by the preparation and planning. As I moved away from my normal existence, I became removed from all but those who are on the same journey. A *communitas* was formed with those on the PhD journey; a solidarity enhanced by the experience of similar fears, problems and isolation. There is a liminal quality to the process, breaking away from previous routine and practices, a transitional period or rite of passage finalised by reintroduction to society with a new identity. Unlike a pilgrimage, the PhD journey is without physical challenge but the mental challenge is

long and arduous, involving a complexity of emotions and experiences that test your mind and soul. Throughout the journey, similar to a pilgrim, I faced moments of truth and insightfulness, moments of despair and fear, fear at failing to reach the journey's end. These feelings culminated in a sense of transformation, a sense of wonder at the obstacles I have overcome, the trials I have survived, the times of enjoyment and the people that have helped me along the way. Although, there may not be any religious or spiritual connotation to the journey, there is a renewal of faith, faith in oneself and faith in others who have supported me throughout this extended time. This journey has helped me to recognise my own spirituality, to know the circumstances of that experience and to seek ways to nourish that intangible, yet very real part of my life experiences and personal well-being. I have also grown to understand the importance of place in my life, particularly sense of place. I have reflected on the sense of place elements that are most important to me, accepting it holds a complexity of meanings. I have come to believe that the people I have encountered through my life, the relationships with family, friends and strangers, are at the very essence of my sense of place. Place, for me, exists due to the human factor and my bonds with place have been strongly influenced by my bonds with people, reinforced by cultural and physical attributes of place. The PhD journey has, in a strange way, given me a sense of place. The act of doing the PhD, the university as physical space and the personal experiences of people and events that have given meaning to the process, have all contributed to my sense of place. My journey is nearly over but as a tourist in the journey of life, I hope to travel to new places of enlightenment, challenge and spiritual rewards.

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To Whom It May Concern,

Hello! My name is Deborah Jepson and I am a post graduate student at the University of Central Lancashire. I am currently working on a PhD in Tourism Management. The general area of my research is in rural tourism with the Lake District being used as my case study. I am looking at the visitor experience to the Lake District specifically examining 'the meaning of place' and its relationship to the visitors' emotive experience. Different places, different activities and the meanings we attach to any particular place can affect the visitor experience. I hope to gain greater knowledge of the connection between these factors in order to further present understanding.

The visitors that I am interested in researching must be involved in some form of physical activity. I am aware that you may not just go to the Lake District for your activities but go to a variety of rural areas. This does not affect the study in any way and in fact will offer additional applicable information to the research.

I have decided that the use of focus groups is the best method of obtaining the relevant information and I am hoping that I can get a number of volunteers from your organisation. The focus group situation requires seven to twelve participants to make up a group. We will sit down in an informal meeting to discuss a number of themes that I will bring to the group. This is meant to be a very relaxed and comfortable process that allows the participants to discuss openly their opinions and feelings on the subject matters put forth by me. Volunteers are free to talk at any time or to withhold comment if they see fit. Non-members, members, family and friends are welcome. These focus groups are usually very enjoyable and can even be quite insightful! Refreshments and snacks will be provided and the event can be hosted at a local pub for a more convivial atmosphere.

The whole process will take approximately 1 hour or just over an hour. Participants will be required to sign a consent form. This form will allow for information disclosed by participants to be used solely by me for academic purposes directly related to my PhD and will not be distributed to anyone else. All information will be anonymous and kept confidential. The form will be very simple and clear and state all the ethical considerations in a concise and understandable format. There will be refreshments offered and facilities available to ensure that everyone remains comfortable.

If you are interested in helping me with my research I would appreciate you contacting me as soon as possible.

Yours Sincerely, Deborah Jepson

M) **07922 821284** or email [**dcjepson@uclan.ac.uk**](mailto:dcjepson@uclan.ac.uk) and Checkout my Facebook Community Page – The Lake District: Rural Tourism and the Experience of Place

The Lake District and the Rural Tourist

Volunteers Needed!!!



- **Do you visit the Lake District?**
- **Do you enjoy the activities you do there?**
- **Student and non-student volunteers needed for focus group chats to help out with post graduate research.**
- **It will take about 1hr of time.**
- **Place and time will be organised to your convenience. On Campus or off!**

Contact dcjepson@uclan.ac.uk

Or checkout my Facebook community page – The Lake District: Rural Tourism and the Experience of Place

The Lake District: Rural Tourism and the Experience of Place

Consent Form

This information is being collected as part of a research project concerned with identifying how visitors to the Lake District experience place. The research will increase understanding of the relationship between physical activity, location, and the meaning attached to a place, in this instance, the Lake District. The investigator is Ms. Deborah Jepson. The information which you supply will be entered into a filing system or database and will only be accessed by authorised personnel, which in this case is the UCLan supervisory team. The information will be processed solely by Ms. Deborah Jepson and will be treated appropriately in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998. No identifiable personal data will be published.

Name_____

Address_____

Email Address_____

Date of Birth_____

Contact Number_____

I confirm that I have read and understand the participant information leaflet for this study. I have had opportunity to ask questions if necessary and have these answered satisfactorily.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any given reason. If I withdraw my data will be removed from the study and destroyed.

I understand that my personal data will be processed for the purposes detailed above in accordance with the data Protection Act 1998.

Based upon the above I agree to take part in the study.

Signed

Witnessed

Date

The Lake District: Rural Tourism and the Experience of Place

Participant Information Sheet

What is the purpose of this study?

The overall aim of this research is to look at the visitor experience to the Lake District specifically examining 'the meaning of place' and its relationship to the visitors' emotive experience. Different places, different activities and the meanings we attach to any particular place can affect the visitor experience. This investigative study is an attempt to gain greater knowledge of the connection between these factors in order to further present understanding.

What do you have to do?

The use of focus group discussions allows for individuals to talk openly and freely about their own personal experiences. In using this type of research format the participant is given prompts by the facilitator (researcher) to stimulate discussion. The volunteers' conversation is allowed to flow freely with the facilitator gently directing the course of the conversation to ensure that thematic areas are covered. Participants may join in at any time but also have the right to withhold comment. All that is required of the volunteer is that they engage in the conversation, that no one person dominates the discussion and that each person respects other participants' thoughts and opinions. The focus group experience is usually a very positive and enlightening one. The length of time required for a focus group may vary but an hour is usually required with a short time allowance for covering any housekeeping items, signing consent forms and introductions.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All data will be anonymous except to the researcher. It will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) on password secured computers and servers at the University of Central Lancashire or on the researcher's password protected personal laptop.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without the need for explanation.

Data Analysis

All the data analysed and interpretation will be maintained confidentially on the secure University of Central Lancashire computer system and on the researcher's password protected laptop. The research gathered along with the data analysis and interpretation will be written up as a thesis and used for purposes of examining the PhD candidate.

Funding

This study is funded by the researcher, Deborah Jepson.

Questions and Contacts

If you have any questions about the study you can contact the researcher, Deborah Jepson at dcjepson@uclan.ac.uk or 07922821284.

Focus Group Transcript

Fylde Mountaineering Club Transcript 1

ME – It would be nice if you could all start with talking about what activities you actually do in the LD?

KE – Do you want it from a club perspective or an individual perspective?

MB- Rock climbing!

ME – I want it from the individual perspective. You can mention what you do at the club or whatever.

KE - Well, I'm predominantly a walker and occasionally cycling. I'm not into climbing personally, these guys are and I'm sure they'll talk about their climbing experiences.

I particularly like the mixed walking in the LD. It's got tremendous scope there with the variety of valleys, mountains and hills.

ME – So has someone else

AL - Well, I'm a walker too and what I particularly like is the ridge walking. Getting up on to one of the high ridges and doing a horseshoe or a circular walk or something of that sort. I also particularly enjoy winter walking when there is snow on the ground and often the views are absolutely fantastic in the winter.

CB - Well I'm a walker as well and I've done a bit of climbing but having said that I haven't climbed for quite a while. I enjoy the hills particularly in the summer, let's say when the sun's shining and the snows about but in the summer, if it's not raining which it does a lot in the Lakes, it's just a beautiful place to be whether you're walking, climbing or what you're doing. As far as the clubs concerned if we can do it on a mountain we do it, that's walking, biking, climbing, canoeing, fell running, skiing, kayaking, drinking, anything....!

AL – It's probably worth saying that when we talk about walking that probably applies to all of us, we aren't talking about walking along the valleys unless it's going into the pub. Walking is going up the mountain, which could be merely a steep path or it could be a scrambling walk. Like Angela (wife), I'm not a climber but certainly when it comes to walking in the winter it can get quite serious mountaineering because you have to judge the snow and the steepness and safety. You need wearing ____ ?? clothing. I also cycle in the Lakes whenever I get a chance. (3.23)

KE – Geoff may give you a different angle on this because one of the reasons I asked to bring Geoff along is that not only is he a club member but he also owns a lodge up in the Lakes and spends a lot of time there.

GB – I'm mainly a walker these days but I have done quite a bit of sailing up there. In fact you won't believe but I used to wind surf as well. And yes we used to go camping up there and caravanning and now we have a lodge up there.

ME – All sorts of activities well that's good! Now down to this end of the table!

(Chorus) We're all rock climbers.

LW – I was until I got injured four years ago. I was but not to the standard of these guys. I'm very fortunate that I've been able to go with young good leaders and I always think that I'm a decent second, a done a couple of climbs with Ali (club member) and I did a bit of ice climbing and did a bit of fell running but later, later years I'm a bit of a ____,. My son's a good fell runner. At the moment...I started of as a walker, I did all the Wainwright's years ago too... many times. I've not done as many now because of my (injury) but so...

AW - I'm more into fell running than climbing so, racing in the Lakes and doing some of the long distance stuff like Bog Wray(??) round and that kind of thing. Mainly summer than winter.

MB – I'd like to think I've been a mountaineer for forty odd years and therefore any aspect of moving on mountains is of interest. If I had to give it all up I'd remain a rock climber, which invariably involves walking because you've got to walk to the steep bit to start rock climbing and then you've got to walk down again. So sometimes that's at the top of the hill and sometimes the steep bits in the valley somewhere. Inevitably if you're a rock climber in the LD you're going to find yourself a walker as well.

NH – Mainly rock climbing, winter climbing and like MB said anything to do...occasionally walking, scrambling, mountain biking, quite a lot of kayaking summer time, winter time...the walks may not be so high (?). We also take groups up there, I'm a lecturer, so we do some outdoor ed., some residential trips up there in summer, which involve anything from hill walking, mountain biking, gorge walking.

TH - Mainly rock climbing and in the last year I've taken up mountain biking. There's opened up quite a lot of new trails, purpose built trails in the LD. The jogs are not necessarily on mountains, they are not specifically for mountain bikers, the jogs are really, really good. Most of the mountain biking I've actually been on those but I've also done mountain biking over the mountains. I do prefer it.

MD – Mostly rock climbing. I do ridge and fell walking too. I don't particularly like winter climbing nowadays. I like to get out on the fells on my own really. I like the solitude of it.

ME – I guess everybody's got some things the same and some things that are different that they all do but what is it that you enjoy or why do you like to do these activities?

KE – It's different from everyday activities for most people I think. Most people go out to work or they are at home doing other things so just to go out, particularly in the LD, it's just so different to being at home and the normal day activities and it's the thrill of being out in wild places I guess.

TH(?) - It's so close as well to our house. It's only about 50 to 60 miles away and to go from suburbia where we are now to something as beautiful as that in such a short space of time. It's phenomenal and it's all so enclosed in such a small area as well. And when you're actually stood in the LD on one of the high fells you realise how small it is but it's actually quite vast when you start to explore it. (8.40).

NH – I think the quality of the experience is as good as anywhere in terms of the rock climbing, the canoeing, the mountain biking, as TH mentioned, although it is a small area as compared

to North America, it has so much variety in such a small area. A good day in the Lakes is as good as a good day anywhere in the world.

LW – And away from the hotspots, you've got Ambleside, Windermere, Grasmere and Keswick. People say they are going to the Lakes hey say they are just going to Ambleside, Windermere and Keswick. They don't go to the proper Lakes out to the West to Wasdale and out to the East – Ullswater. You can get away and you don't see anybody and people say it's crowded but you can easily get away from people in the Lakes if you know where to go.

AnL - And there's tremendous variety even though we keep going sometimes to the same places, the weather's different or the conditions are different in some ways and it always looks different and there's always something new to notice and to enjoy. It's refreshing!

GB (?) -There's no way to put in words the sense of achievement when you get to the top of a mountain...the weather's nice and the views are nice. It's difficult to put into words what you get out of it. (10.00)

AL (?) - But you don't always do it for the views either because I've walked in filthy weather and had a good walk.

AW - The sense of achievement when you've set out to do something and you achieve it.

AL - Some of these people are very good photographers. I take photographs myself, but I wouldn't class myself as a great photographer but I've got some very good photographs.

ME -I've taken some very good pictures. Well I thought they were good. Some comments have come up and they are specific to the LD and I'm just trying to identify what it is about the LD, if you think it is a special place, and if you do think it's a special place then why?

AL – It's a special place because it's near. As near as you could ask for.

CB – It's only an hour away.

(Chorus of voices protesting slightly at this summing up of LD)

It's the most beautiful place in all of Britain. (Enthusiastic agreement and similar comments)

(Added comment by unidentified speakers) In all of the world. (Then) It's still the best place anywhere.

CB – There's people in North Wales and Scotland that would dispute that but they're wrong!!! (Rumblings of agreement and commentaries)

(Unidentified speaker) There's people in the Alps that would dispute that!

(Unidentified speaker) Some people like North Wales better but no, it's not as nice.

MB(?) -Wales has got good ice climbing, so does Scotland but none of them have the charm.

AL – The wonder of the LD is that it is relatively easy to get roundabout. At about the two and a half thousand foot mark and from there you can link to ridges between the fells and you get constantly changing views and even a walk that you have done many, many times before, the

conditions change...in winter it's totally different although even when a cloud comes down it is very, very rare that you go up on a miserable cloudy day that you don't get one good view. It does happen.

LW or GB (?) - People talk about the Lakes but the trees, the trees are one of the beautiful things in the Lakes. We have to admire our forefathers. They planted a lot of these trees and there's some magnificent trees in the LD and it's beautiful. One of the most beautiful things in the LD is the trees as far as I'm concerned.

KE – It almost looks like it was built specially to please the eye.

LW – Some of it was!

TH (?) - It is very pleasing to the eye. Everything just seems to fit into place. Just as it should. It just seems to be the right amount of green, the right amount of orange in the trees the odd crag just peaking out and it just sort of fits. When you go to other places, like up to Scotland, it's very rugged, huge mountains there compared to here it doesn't seem to have the same (feeling)...?

(??) It's much harsher!

KE – It's the compactness. You might have heard me say this before but if you set out to design an area for outdoor pursuits other than having an area of one or two higher mountains you probably wouldn't do much better than the Lakes does. And the other thing, LW has mentioned how other people just go to place like Ambleside and Keswick and don't see the Lakes but maybe that's part of its attraction. You can go as a family and leave your wife in Keswick shopping and while within a few minutes you can be off up a mountain somewhere.

(Gentle jeering from group) Sexist!!

KE – All right then I'd go shopping and my wife would go up the mountain then!

ME – So just on that point then, do most of you go alone, with family, the club?

NH (?) – For the most part I do go up the mountains with other club members but I do go up with my wife as well.

CB – But separately!!

NH – No, no!

MB (?) - See I don't. I go up to the Lakes with my wife or I go up to the Lakes with the club. She doesn't want to get involved with climbing and far end of the heart discussions as I call them. It's like analysing a game of Bridge afterwards.

KE – Well my wife doesn't want to go up a mountain but she likes to go to the Lakes. We went on a working weekend this weekend and she thoroughly enjoyed it. She enjoyed just pottering about in Little Langdale.

CB (?) – Well they do! Lots of people go to the Lakes just to potter. It doesn't have to be a big, busy day rushing up mountains, climbing up crags...you can be a potterer!!

ME – It seems like this group generally goes with people.

AnL - Well I certainly do. One of the things I do love is the company and the talk. There's nothing like a long walk with good friends for getting your worries into perspective and by the end of it you can know where you are and people have listened to you and laughed with you...a lot of laughing.

KE - Some of the world's problems have been sorted out. The solutions just haven't got through to the right people yet (laughter).

AL – There's a wonderful solitude to walking. You have to rely upon yourself. I'm much more careful.

CB - The conversations better as well (laughter).

LW (?) It's the challenges. It depends what sort of challenge you want. There's any kind of challenge you like. At the end of the day walking, rock climb, ice climb,

KE – Or not.

MB - I like a day when I'm pushing it a bit and wondering whether I can do what I actually set out to do, especially when I can. But I also enjoy just going up and doing climbs that are well within my capability and just enjoying the weather, the views, and the sunshine. So there are all sorts of aspects to it. You don't have to be pushing yourself all the time to get a lot out of being in the LD.

ME – That kind of leads me to the question, when you are doing these activities, what kind of emotions do you experience? What kind of feelings do you get out of it?

GB(?) - It depends where you are!

(Unidentified) Terror!

(Unidentified) Fear!!

ME – Well give me them all, good and bad!

LW - Depends which end of the rope you are on, doesn't it?

MB - Self-satisfaction

(Unidentified) Elation!

(Unidentified) Euphoria!

AnL - Contentment!

(Unidentified) Depression (?) when you've just not achieved what you just might.

NH – Healthy now and then

KE – Peace and well-being. Getting away from the everyday things in life and just concentrating on what you're doing that weekend or week if you're there and just putting all the other things in life out of your mind.

CB - Well I'm retired now but when I was working it used to be nice to go up there on Friday night and meet on the weekend. As soon as I get up there I'd just go up Catbells which isn't very high but it was nice to go up there nobody about and just blow the cobwebs away, get rid of work. And that sort of worked and over the weekend you'd just forget about it ...but now I'm retired I just forget about work.

ME – AnL...you said contentment??

AnL – You know you get to the end of a long day and you're tired and you're pleased with what you've done and you've enjoyed the views or you've enjoyed finding your way and there's been some challenge, like LW says somewhere along the way, and there's been some interest and by the end of it I feel yes, that's been a good day! You've lived!

AL – A worthwhile day!

MB - One of my feelings, that feeling in the days that we used to work could last until Wednesday morning, halfway through the week. The elation of a successful weekend in the LD...

LW – From then on you're looking forward to the next weekend.

MB – You never have to think about work at all (General laughter)! Even though you're there!

LW – My wife who's not a climber she's just a walker, low level walker.

CB – (Every credit to her)

LW - We went to the Alps many, many times and we'd come home and go somewhere in the Lakes and they were easy and she'd wonder why we send thousands and thousands of pounds going to the Alps. She said I'd sooner come here. And that sums it up as far as I'm concerned.

NH - Sometimes when I'm in the Alps for a long time, like six weeks I really look forward to going back to the Lakes because it's so green, the Alps are very bare and ...you never get to the tops of many Alps. ***May need to listen on other recorder.***

MD – I've climbed all over the world but I always feel like the Lakes is one of the best places.

AL - I'd say it's never actually a negative experience. The weather can be awful, you can get lost and go far longer and you can put far more effort in than you were expecting but it's always satisfying. I don't think there's anything else I can do that I can be so certain I can enjoy myself. I suppose if you are feeling that low that you don't go out.

CB – Last weekend or the weekend before it was my meet, I was going skiing, and couldn't go out so KE did instead and it chucked it down all day so in the afternoon he just went home because it was so awful.

KE – I went out on Friday night. J's wife P. goes out there a lot. She doesn't walk much these days, she used to, but she still loves it up there doesn't she?

AL (?) She's done most of the high mountains of the Lakes.

KE - She still loves going up there.

MB- Personally after I've done a decent walk I'm probably a much nicer person.

CB – Are you the best judge of that? (Laughter)

KE – Of course he is!

AW – I would say if there's one negative thing there is too much traffic up there, driving at 20mph and braking on a bend even when there's no need to.

ME – What are some of the tangible aspects or what stimuli for your senses do you get, what visual sensory stimulations?

AL - There's something about looking down, looking across, just looking at the fells knowing that there is nowhere as satisfying as the different angles you see things from. It's almost like when you're a child everything's taller than you and when you're in the mountains you are seeing things from a different angle, a different perspective and also the perspective changes.

CB - There's a sense of achievement as well when you get to the top. I did that. You can see beautiful pictures from the tops of mountains but it's not the same as being there, being part of it.

AW – I like sunrises! Running long distances and you meet some body on the (neck?)section, you might be running Helvellyn and the suns coming up or you might be running on Langdale Pikes.

MD – We've talked about views and everybody's talked about the views from high up but sometimes when you are actually rock climbing it is basically only the few feet in front of you that really matters. When you're going well you almost feel that you are part of the rock, so you actually become part of the landscape. And so when you get to the top you experience the views again.

NH –The sense of history, particularly with the rock climbing again where some of the routes were put up in Victorian times, some are relatively modern routes , put up in the 70's, 80's even 90's but knowing who did the first ascent. Just being able to place it and thinking about how it was past done 120yrs ago without the gear we've got nowadays or that type of thing, you know. You've got an historical perspective, which a lot of areas where you climb you know nothing about what's gone on before. Rock climbing in Spain all you perhaps know is a name, a date when that route was first done; it doesn't have that history like the LD does.

ME - So do you think the LD has...there's history but there are also a lot of literary references, pictorial references. It's sort of been romanticised the LD. Do you think this plays a part in why you enjoy the LD?

KE – I don't think the literary side does. Picking up on NH's comments about the history if you look around the LD a lot of the landscape is a actually manmade through the historical activities that went on there, the industrial side of it, the mining, the quarrying, you know there was charcoal burning, there was foundries, there was explosive works, you know and all

that sort of thing. And if you look around you can see that history. That in itself I find extremely interesting more than the literary side. Not that Wordsworth wandered around the place doesn't particularly interest me nor does the fact that Beatrix Potter lived at Hilltop Farm.

AW – But what about Wainwright books? I got a set for my 18th and I was over the moon really.

ME – There's also like the Constable pictures that go way back and they sort of have given some people that imagery of the LD and they want to go see it because of that.

AL – When you see the pictures from the 17th and 18th century one thing that always strikes me is how wrong they are. It's not in the LD, there's one in particular of Godel's Scar in the Yorkshire Dales and it's wrong, and he's tried to turn it into the Alps. When I'm in the LD I'm not reading Wordsworth.

MB – I think the early painters definitely overdid it. Exaggerated! Stylised it!

ME – Was it too pastoral?

MB – No, no! Too dramatic! They were trying to make it into their mountains and it was never going to be and that's where the history that NH was talking about, well this end of the table particularly and all of us, is that the LD is the cradle of Alpine mountaineering. That's where it all began. If it wasn't for the ribs there wouldn't be any alpine climbing or downhill skiing come to that because we invented it. (Laughter)

KE – The world would have stopped!

ME - You were responsible for a lot of good things, I'll say that. There's some question about all of them! (Laughter)

MB - The Victorian mountaineers they went to the Alps and they discovered the LD as a training ground and then discovered it as an end in itself and were devoted to getting up to Wasdale and every part of the LD at every opportunity and exploiting these mini Alps that they had found. I think that's the part of the history I'm involved with that intrigues me, rather than the Romantic poets.

AL –can be wonderful but the feeling that you get when you're in the Lakes and the thing that evokes something intensely personal is quite different that what you get by reading someone else's experiences. You make your own photo by being there.

CE - I think it's very nice to go see Wordsworth and the daffodils, there alongside the Lake (noises of agreement). There is a bit of poetry there. He never went up the tops and went climbing did he? But if you walk down the valleys like he did then you can get what he gets.

AnL -And then there Arthur Ransome's books?

GB – Talk to the farmers who live there, if you ask the farmer's who shaped the Lakes and there's only one thing that shaped the Lakes and that was the sheep. Without the sheep, in most cases, there wouldn't be the Lakes as we know it now. (Interjection - glaciation!) The sheep, one particular breed that's synonymous with the Lakes.

AL – It was actually all full of trees.

KE – That's why it was so full of charcoal, foundries ended up there, mining...

ME – So most of you when you were young did you have any experiences of the Lakes, any family experiences or history? Is that what your initial exposure was?

(Chorus of yesses)

When I was in me short pants....

LW - It depends how old you are!

MB – And some of us can't remember! (Lots of laughter)

LW – During the war for me to go up to the Lakes during the war...

We're talking about the Second World War not the First World one? (Laughter all round) It was an absolute treat to me, just a half day trip.

CB (?) – When I started walking no one had a car did they?

KE - When I was a kid we lived in Manchester and I used to go on day trips on the train and we used to be able to get to the Lakeside on the train and then you'd jump on the boat and go up to Bowness or somewhere. Then you'd sail back later in the day and catch the train to Manchester.

MB - I used to catch a train. I used to also go walking with my dad. Yeah short pants! I was only 12yrs old and then there was a very adventurous school mistress, she took us to the Lakes as well at a time when health and safety hadn't been invented (General laughter). She'd send us up to the top of Scafell in a white out and say see you later please.(More laughter)

CB – I was much the same but I was from the northeast. I used to get the train to Keswick and get a taxi up to Newlyn to the farm; this was through school, the same sort of thing...no health and safety! You just get on with it.

ME – And what about you guys at this end? Did you have any experience as a young person?

TH - Like many sort of people of my generation before we didn't have a car. When I was young we used to be able to get a railway ticket for a week and you could go virtually anywhere. So everybody wanted to go to the Lakes so we used to get off at the railway station walk down to Bowness, look across the lake, see the mountains and decide ...go to the otherside? *Check other recorder. 31.30?* Then when I was in my late teens I got a motorbike and I used to go to the Lakes quite a lot then. You were limited by how far you could see but once you started walking you start to realise what is there...even now I'm discovering places at the Lakes that I've never been to before.

KE – I think the first time I experienced what was beyond Lake Windermere and the boats on there and Ambleside was a trip when I was at school and I was about fourteen and we went up Cat Bells and all those sort of places and I just thought this is so different than anything I've ever done before in my life. It's that getting away for me from those tourist hot spots .

CB – I think it's one of those things that at that age that you do and for me I said 'Wow I love this' and for other kids it was 'What we doing this for. I just want to go home'.

ME -Do you think that the initial exposure that you had with the LD has given you an identification with the LD more so? Do you think it would have made a difference if you'd never had that experience?

MB – I think maybe you're right. Although we may have all pooh poohed the idea of proximity as being important in that respect, we're going back to the fact that when some of us were quite young, transport wasn't so easy and the LD was an obvious place to go. So maybe the fondness for it is rooted in that. It's hard to say. There are so many different aspects to a lifetime of mountain going.

ME – I'm just speaking from my experience which I'm probably not supposed to do, I would say that you can still form an attachment without having... although I did visit when I was young, about twelve...

AnL – I first went to the Lakes as a very young girl and I was hopelessly head over heels in love but I did manage to lift up my eyes to the hills. I was pretty smitten! With the hills as well!

ME – What about the bloke? (Laughter all around)

ME – She's still smitten.

AL – The Lakes was sort always of there. I'd go there with my parents and the Scouts. I remember the first time when I was about fifteen with the Scout camp we went up Great haven that set the scene. It wasn't going there and looking up to the mountains but actually going up the mountain. That's almost where thecheck other recording!

MB -And did you get your mum to sew it on your anorak when you'd done Helvellyn? Skiddaw? (Teasing)

ME – I just want to know if anybody gets a deeper, more intense emotional experience from anything they do while being in the LD? Is there anything more moving or transformative, more sense of connectedness?

MB - I would say yes because I just read...it was in an interview...the interviewer referred to his involvement in mountains as a sport and he said 'Stop, this is not a sport nor is it a pastime, it's not tiddlywinks...it's a way of life'.

KE – I think it's more like a religion for some. I think MB might have the religion thing.

MB – Yes, it's a way of life!

ME – Is it spiritual in anyway? (Chorus of yeses) Can we talk a little bit more about this? What are the spiritual aspects of this and how you find it spiritual...in what way??

NH – To me, like I said, with the sunrise and you are there and it's kind of ...religious because God has made this so for me this is the closest I can be to God I think. 36.30

KE -What about you MD? For **you** it's a way of life, it's not a way of life for me. I do other things. For you it's the main thing in your life.

ME – Is there a spiritual aspect to that?

MD - I get enlightenment from it, I guess.

ME – You get enlightenment from that in what form...can you just enlighten me on that??

MD – Well you forget all your worries and cares and things. I like to go on me own you know

ME – What situations would you have this sort of enlightenment? What would you be doing or is it anything you are doing when you are in the Lakes or are?

MD – When I'm out... there on me own. I was out there Sunday alone and when I'm high and when you are pushing yourself on something you haven't done before.

NH – I think when you pushing yourself. It's very engaging activity rock climbing more so, for me probably more than any of the other activities. I think...depending...well obviously you can do something well within your ability and have a nice day but if you are really pushing yourself your focus is absolutely total. There are very few things in life where you would focus exclusively on the moment without being aware of anything else past or present or future. Sorry past or future! You are totally in the present and can't think of so many things where it's all consuming.

CB - When I've been on my own and you get to the top of a mountain somewhere, its nice weather and you've really enjoyed it, it is almost a religious experience being on your own. Nobody else about and you're a part of nature and it's almost a religious experience.

LW – I think it's being on the tops as well. There's such a thing as a Brocken spectre, which a lot of us have seen. If you see a Brocken spectre it's the rings and you can put yourself right in the middle of these rings. You've got the whole rings if you've got a full Broken and if- you've got the sun shining behind you of the snow...usually in winter, you get beginning of summer as well...something must be making that...it's out of our hands. To experience a Brocken Spectre especially when the cows are below you, that is absolutely magical.

AL – One of the things that you can never predict you don't know on that day if it is going to be the day where you turn the corner and things are different, just the way it catches your eye, catches your emotion. It's not the standard view we all know.....it's good but it didn't get that depth of emotional response that you get sometimes that you get more in winter than you do in summer. Some summer days it can be very hazy and yeah they are good but winters better.



Lake District Research

September 2011

Deborah Jepson (PhD Candidate)

Hi!

I hope you are well and that your summer was restorative. It has been a few months since you attended my focus group discussing your experiences of the Lake District. Thanks again for volunteering your time and comments. The information has been interesting and very valuable to my research. The focus group scenario was part of the first stage of my study but now I am moving into the second stage and once again I need volunteers to assist me with the research. I may have mentioned previously that I would be looking for volunteers to be interviewed individually. Interview is perhaps the incorrect term as it can sound somewhat intimidating. In actual fact the 'interview' would be more of an in depth discussion on the Lake District and other rural areas of the UK. This 'discussion' would take place at a time and place of your convenience preferably somewhere that we can have our discussion over a drink or a coffee. There would be no set length of time for the discussion but I would like at least an hour of your time. If you would be willing to help me out I would greatly appreciate your assistance. I hope to complete all my 'interviews' by the end of November so if you are able to help out could you please let me know your availability and the best time for us to get together.

Thanks once again and I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely, Deborah



The Lake District: Rural Tourism and the Experience of Place

Participant Information Sheet

Introduction

My name is Deborah Jepson and I am a post graduate student at the University of Central Lancashire. I am currently working on a PhD in Tourism Management. The research I am undertaking is concerned with rural tourism and the focus of my study is the Lake District. The visitors that I am interested in researching must be involved in some form of physical activity. I am aware that most people do not visit exclusively the Lake District for their activities but go to a variety of rural areas in Britain and abroad. This does not affect the study in any way and in fact will offer additional applicable information to the research.

What is the purpose of this study?

The overall aim of this research is to look at the visitor experience to the Lake District and other rural areas specifically examining 'the meaning of place' and its relationship to the visitors' emotive experience. Different places, different activities and the meanings we attach to any particular place can affect the visitor experience. This investigative study will endeavour to gain greater knowledge of the connection between these factors in order to increase present understanding.

Previous Findings

Focus groups were used in the first stage of the research to identify key themes to be explored more fully at the PhD level (second stage). The emergent themes were:

- Activities undertaken in the countryside
- Visitor motivations
- Historic/literary associations
- Significant characteristics of place (Lake District and other rural areas)
- Past associations and memories
- Emotional/spiritual responses to place
- Urban versus rural; nature versus man-made

What do you have to do?

The method chosen in the second stage of the research is an unstructured interview format. The use of the interview technique allows for individuals to talk openly and freely about their own personal experiences. This type of research is a form of social interaction, a face to face encounter encouraging an exchange of thoughts. The volunteers' conversation is allowed to flow freely with the interviewer subtly directing the course of the conversation to ensure that thematic areas are covered. Participants have the right to withhold comment. All that is required of the volunteer is that they engage in the conversation and attempt to offer honest

insights and their own understanding of the concepts discussed. The interview experience is usually a very positive and enlightening one. The length of time required for in depth interview may vary but an hour and 15 minutes is usually the minimum time required with a short time allowance for covering any housekeeping items, signing consent forms and introductions. A short follow up interview may be necessary in order to expand on existing commentary or to gain answers to overlooked queries.

Confidentiality and anonymity

All data will be anonymous except to the researcher. It will be stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998) on password secured computers and servers at the University of Central Lancashire or on the researcher's password protected personal laptop.

You have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without the need for explanation.

Data Analysis

The event will be recorded. All the collected data will be analysed and interpreted and will be maintained in confidentiality on the University of Central Lancashire secured computer system and on the researcher's password protected laptop. The research gathered along with the data analysis and interpretation will be written up as a thesis and used for purposes of examining the PhD candidate. The thesis will be held in the library for student access. The data collected may also be used in published papers in educational journals.

Funding

This study is funded by the researcher, Deborah Jepson.

Questions and Contacts

If you have any questions about the study you can contact the researcher, Deborah Jepson at dcjepson@uclan.ac.uk or 07922821284.

Interview Prompts

Initial Chitchat

- summer, weather, hols, individual queries

First prompt

- Activities in Lake District
- Favourite places in Lake District

Second Prompt

- General family history and past experiences in Lake District and other rural areas
- Childhood memories or images of the LD and 'countryside'?

Third Prompt

- Tangible and intangible things that the Lake District offers. Other rural areas also
- What comes first to mind when you think about the LD? Other countryside?
- Is it the social construct of the place that lures them there or the scenery or the physicality of the area?

Fourth Prompt

- Emotional experiences associated with LD or other rural areas.
- What rural areas or locations provoke these emotional/spiritual responses?

Fifth Prompt

- Spiritual religious background
- Definition of spirituality

Sixth Prompt

- Most memorable experience or special moments in the LD? Other rural locations?

Seventh Prompt

- Test the strength of the relationship or attachment to the LD and the countryside.

Eighth Prompt

- Talk about other rural areas and experiences
- Is nature/countryside the catalyst for emotional/spiritual experience? Is the physical activity the catalyst? Does the physical activity alone provide the emotive/spiritual stimulus or is the context important?
- Is it purely the LD?

Ninth Prompt

Is the experience better alone or as a shared experience?

Interview Transcript Example

P. C's Transcript

Me – Where are you originally from?

PC – I am originally from Ashton, Preston. I have not moved away from the street where I was brought up in. In fact I work two streets away from where I was brought up now. So Aston born and bred! I consider Preston, Aston, that side of Preston to be my home. I've never been comfortable...we've looked at moving house...anywhere else. That is where my roots are!

Me – The house you live in now, is that the house you grew up in?

PC – No, I lived with my parents for the first twenty years of my life. In the same house for seventeen then they moved within the same locality. I was married at twenty and then moved to a home with my wife, again in Ashton and then we moved from our first house to where we are now. Again, in Ashton! My wives parents are in Ashton, she's an Aston girl, born and bred. Her family is Aston. All lived in and around the area. I come from a slightly different...my father's side we were never particularly close and my mum's side, she was an only child so my grandparents, now deceased, were Aston people.

Me – So you go back a long way?

PC – Yeah, so we've got roots here. It's where I feel most comfortable when I am wandering around and when we've been away and come back to it.

Me – Where did you meet your wife?

PC – I noticed her at church because she was in the girl guides and knew her through the local church disco. I had seen her for around in those two locations, if you will and just asked her out basically. I asked her if she wanted to come swimming one day.

Me – How old were you then?

PC – I was fifteen at the time. Struck it off and it went from there really. Engaged at eighteen and married at twenty and had our first daughter at twenty three.

Me – What did you start out doing when you finished school?

PC – I went through a local primary school then a local secondary modern, then high as they call them and then I went to Sixth Form College because I knew I didn't want to be office bound because I am an outdoors type of person. I knew I wouldn't be happy stuck behind a desk, nine to five every day of the week. When I went to college, because I had flunked a couple of what we called 'O' levels, I wanted to do the retakes at college. They would only let me take two 'A' levels and three O level resits. I wanted to take three 'A' level resits and they wouldn't allow it so...anyway I took the resits and passed them. I had too many distractions in the summer. I passed those and I realised at that time to come out of college with two 'A' levels and everybody else would be coming out with three would put me at a disadvantage and I thought I might be better doing some vocational training as opposed to academic...we've never been a university family so it wasn't like university was part of the game plan. I went to the job centre and had a look and they had a job, coincidentally on the same afternoon that

was going on site and measuring grills, a bit like quantity surveying I suppose. I thought that sounded all right. So I got offered an interview and at the start of my second year of 'A' levels I decided to do vocational training with technical college and trained in my industry. So I am qualified within my industry specifically and then progressed within my industry in a drawing office of a company doing surveys and designs and mechanical building services. I progressed through contracts manager to senior engineer then decided to move for more senior positions and got out of project management into the service and maintenance side of the industry. I have been doing the service and maintenance part of our industry for the last twenty four years and prior to that I was doing the project management.

Me – You've had a career that went up steadily?

PC – Yes with no particular aspirations other than feeling that with my own ability I should achieve a certain level if the opportunities were there. If I had gone looking for a change say if perhaps it had run its course where I had been looking for a challenge, well I have done it each time. Not many times, three times to achieve where I am now. I have achieved the level that I wanted to be and there is no more levels to achieve other than owning my own company and that has never been a particular desire. It was a desire but only a minor one and it wasn't achievable because I just couldn't raise enough money basically.

Me – Were you involved in sports when you were young?

PC – I've always...going back to being an outdoorsy person...where we were brought up and the age we were brought up we didn't have the distractions that people have nowadays...electronically or whatever. You were told to go out and play whatever...come rain, hail or snow and make your own entertainment. We were always kicking a ball around, playing cricket, kicking a can or whatever, playing hide and seek, whatever but we were always outdoors and made our own entertainment. My dad was a footballer, only local amateur level but played for one of the better teams in the area and played cricket, swam well. He was always very sporty minded. My mum wasn't sporty minded in any way shape or form. He always encouraged me to play football which was my main sport. I was OK at it and they supported me through, my mum and my dad, watching me very Saturday and Sunday. They were always there on the side-lines, chauffeuring me or whatever. They have always been very supportive. Dad was a scout, an adventure scout even into his twenties. He had no hesitation on jumping on his bike and cycling to the Lake District and camping. He was very much an outdoorsy type person from not just sports but loving the outdoors as well. Maybe that is where I picked up the genes from. The introduction that I had...came from being sporty...I've always liked the outdoors even from being...as long as I can remember. When I was able we used to go camping and walking. At half terms 'we're going do this walk' catch the bus and then go out cycling.

Me – How old were you when you did that?

PC – Probably ten or eleven! That probably came from being in cubs that was an introduction because we used to go camping with cub scouts. Then we used to do it ourselves. We had a small group of friends, close friends, and we used to do our own thing. Went out cycling, played football and we used to go camping as well. Then you get to an age where you are allowed to do a bit more by yourself.

Me – Where did you go camping then?

PC – Locally, mainly. We had a couple of sites on around Scorton and on the outskirts of Garstang. There was a farm that we came across when we were out walking one day and we said 'can we come camp here next week' and they said 'OK that's no problem'. It was a dairy farm so we used to help milk and whatever. Then one from the circle of friends his father was a walker in a walking club with the post office so we used to go with him. That kept my walking going and then when I became a teenager we used to plan our own walks. We would just do them ourselves. The wife enjoyed walking. She used to do it through guides and when she met me she tagged along with us.

Me – So you were basically walking at the point when you were a teenager and then you were walking with your wife and you said your dad liked the outdoors but did he never actually take you with him?

PC – No! Never, never! The only sport I used to do with my dad would be kicking the ball around or playing tennis against him on holidays or swimming with him. My dad worked basically seven days a week most of his life to give us an income that was enough to go on holidays. Irrespective of that when he was available not a working weekend he would always be there at football. If it was a quarter final or a semi- final or a representative match or something he would not work that weekend or he would actually come and watch but my mum was always there, always without fail.

Me – I guess you didn't really aspire to be like him in that way?

PC – No, no! My dad is a very intelligent man. He missed his...could have achieved great things, a far greater level than he achieved as a (14.00) school worker but in his family the elder brother got the chance to go to the local grammar school and progress but he didn't because they would only take the eldest. That was just the way it was! He came from quite a privileged background from the point of view that his father had his own joinery business and grocery business and small holding that is why my dad became a joiner and a carpenter. But as a trade, he had the only car in the village but then they lost it all through the war years...credit and so on. They downscaled and then his mum died and his dad remarried and the money all went elsewhere.

Me – Do you have brothers and sisters?

PC – I have an older brother by eighteen months and a younger sister three years younger than me. My brother has completely different characteristics to me. He is a fifty two year old with still the mental attitudes and aspirations of a fourteen year old. He is still in Preston, drives fast cars and still doing things that stopped impressing me when I was a teenager but God love him, he's the kind of person you wouldn't wish to meet. He's had a failed relationship and is living at home with mum and dad. He was a very awkward child. I can remember him being streamed in the bottom class at school, which probably didn't help him. He got in with the wrong crowd and never really...

Me – Probably not a lot of self-worth?

PC – No, not a lot of self-worth particularly as I was perceived to be the brighter one of the two of us. Maybe he lived in my shadow but never purposely...but maybe that is what he thought.

We were all treated identically and still are but we all have our strengths and characteristics that sometimes determine where we end up. Some people have the ability but not the smarts to use the ability and vice versa. You can have the smarts but not the ability or even the characteristic that you want to use those abilities. My sister is very much like me as a character.

Me – So you are not particularly close to your brother?

PC – Not particularly close but close as blood is thicker than water but that is about it. We don't have a relationship other than that really.

Me – When did expand your walking?

PC – It sort of tailed off initially. Right up until getting married we were regular walkers and I was known as being a walker because at college I was actually asked to lead some treks. After our first daughter came along that is really when the serious walking diminished or went on the back burner. Although bringing the children up, both of the girls, we joined Rail Ramblers, which is a rambling association and the girls were brought up walking every other week with their grandparents because my wife's parents enjoyed walking as well. They used to go walking themselves so they used to take Victoria and Alexandra with them walking because we tended to be busy because I was happy playing football on a Saturday. WE had our own commitments if you will. Then we used to do bits of walking with them ourselves. Every bank holiday we would always be out walking as a family. So we did it sporadically but nothing serious or challenging...not from a personal point of view...but the girls enjoyed it.

Me – Where were you walking at that point?

PC – Mainly the LD and Derbyshire! The Rail Ramblers tended to go around the Derbyshire area but ourselves we tended to go to the LD because that is what I know best and what I've always grown up with. It's an area I am familiar with and feel as a second home definitely feel just as comfortable in the LD as I do at home in Ashton. That feeling has actually grown over the years as well. I feel certainly from an experience point of view and it might be because...digressing now... a lot of good times that we have had up there with both the children and ourselves, we have had a lot of good times. We've put a lot of things to right up there when the girls have had issues and problems. It's a good place to find time for yourself to sort problems out.

Me –You are not digressing, I need to understand your view of the LD from an emotional point.

PC – From an emotional point, from the original of where we used to go that diminished when the girls went to high school, they get their own distractions, boys, homework, a new circle of friends and they just become totally disinterested in what mum and dad are doing. They stopped walking and we stopped walking for a period of years. It got to about ten years ago or so when we were only walking sporadically and we had an opportunity to buy a static caravan in the Lakes, on the Lakes borders. The decision was made on the basis that if we get one family weekend together as a family unit, up there as a catalyst then it would be good because it is a place that we know and love and hopefully would be a catalyst for meeting up once a year, twice a year or whatever. All come to together and have a picnic or whatever. We bought that nine and a half years ago and because we were putting ourselves in the

environment of back in walking country two weekends out of every four our walking frequency increased. Over the last nine and half years we have got back into it and also because we don't have any restrictions on the challenges' we can do. WE can do the more challenging walks and are able to get out on the high tops to do things that are within our capabilities as opposed to working towards somebody else's capabilities or what they want to do. That is how the walking has evolved over the years. Every time we go up there we are usually walking.

Me – Do you remember the first time you ever went to the LD?

PC – No, I can't to be honest. I can't remember.

Me –Do you recall the first impressions you had of the LD?

PC – I can remember general impressions but not necessarily any specific for any one moment in time 'oh that is my first view of the LD'. I can always remember when we used to go the Lakes and I think it's probably would have been my first impression and it is still maintained until today...the road into Windermere...when you come up to the top and you come over and look down over Windermere lake. That view has always stuck in my memory for as long as I can remember. That would always be the first view of the LD as an entrance into the Lakes as that is our most popular route into the LD generally.

Me – What does that view do for you?

PC – That lifts my spirits. Generally being outdoors, particularly the LD as that is where we tend to be outdoors mostly, the spirits are lofted, it gladdens the heart...I don't know how you want to describe it...a sense of enjoyment just taking it all in and being appreciative of what is out there and looking forward to the challenge that it offers up as well even if we are not actually doing a walk we just enjoy being in that environment. We both share the same thoughts and we get the same enjoyment about just looking at a hillside and going 'I wish we were up there today' and being out on the tops or having the challenge of battering against the elements or weather or covering the distance is very rewarding. I always enjoyed that and again going back to as life's challenges come about particularly when you've got children, it has been a great leveller, being able to go out. We find we talk more, we always talk a lot but when we are out walking we never stop talking always something. It could be anything we've got on the agenda or a particular angst that may be going on at certain times. Not that we get a lot but there are times that you need time to yourself and it does tend to put things into perspective. We found that once you get away from or you find some quiet time away at a place that you love and just being there helps put things into perspective ' yeah perhaps it's not quite as bad as you think'. It gives you more...how can I put it...you can be more reflective and objective, I suppose. When you are outside or in an area that is conducive to...it is difficult to put into words feeling that you get. I get excited...when we jump in the car and know we are going...I get excited the day before and look forward to not just the physical challenge as you know from people that go to circuits and have their physical challenge there but I do believe it is not just the feel good factor that is maybe a chemical reaction that you get but I do think that there is an experience or feeling irrespective of exertion or whatever comes from being in the LD...talk about the sense of feeling of being at home or being at one with a place even to the point that I can see myself retiring there and being totally...in fact we feel just as home as in the LD as we do as where I grew up?

Me – So you would consider living there?

PC – Definitely! Other than Aston I have never had that feeling of attachment to a place before.

Me – And that has come about purely from the experiences that you have had?

PC – It can only come from that. I don't see where else it could come from.

Me – I suppose it can...(I discussed the situation that had happened with my parents when they first moved to Creston, BC and their love at first sight).

PC – I would agree on that because looking back to when we first bought the ...where we have are caravan now...we were introduced to the particular location by friends of my wife. They had bought one and asked if we wanted to stop there and from the moment I walked into that particular sight I felt at home and that is why we ended buying one when we did. That was purely a feeling...an initial reaction. I am a great believer in atmospheres. We certainly like old buildings where there is a sense of history or there is a sense of something within a place that you get in certain situations. I get that in certain buildings like churches, old homes because we are members of the National Trust and we visit quite a few of them. I think when you walk in the footsteps of history and where other people have been I think you get a sense...some remembrance of the past still lingers in the air. I don't know. Certainly in the Lakes...I'm religious but not hard core. I believe in what I believe. I am thankful for what I have and what has been made, what's in front of us. Whoever made it originally is up for discussion but I still get an extra sense of enjoyment out of it because there is a small religious or spiritual...or whatever you call it!

Me – Well, let's just approach that religious aspect first a little bit. You're Catholic right. You are basically saying that you are religious but not overly religious? It is part of your life but it is not the basis of everything in your life?

PC – I suppose it is the basis for a lot of what we do. The RC's are very strict, church on Sunday and certain guidelines and if you don't do this you will be castigated and all this. That has been relaxed over the years. The Catholic Church has relaxed a lot of rules and regulations and they have now opened their eyes...I think everyone has...and it's more ecumenical now...

