



MAKING THE CONNECTION: USING VIRTUAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH TO EXAMINE AWE AND CONNECTION TO NATURE



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AWE



AWE



Photo credit: Kayla Shively/Cascades Carnivore Project

MY BACKGROUND



OUTDOOR EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS

Nature as
resource /
Disconnection
from Land

Activity > Place

(D'Amato & Krasny, 2011;
Lee-Hammond, 2017;
Lowan, 2009; Payne &
Wattchow, 2008)



OUTDOOR EDUCATION OBSERVATIONS

Solitude, wonder,
in nature
yields
wellbeing

(Bratman et al., 2019;
Kalisch et al., 2011)



RESEARCH QUESTIONS

→ What is a meaningful, or spiritual, connection to nature?

→ How can awe facilitate such a connection?

METHODOLOGY

DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

The essence of a
phenomenon, as
experienced by a
participant

(Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003; Jackson
et al., 2018)



METHODS

PARTICIPANT-DRIVEN PHOTO ELICITATION

- Rapport
- Memory anchors
- Increased reflection, emotional responses



(Hidalgo Standen,
2021; Nelson, 2019)

METHODS

PARTICIPANT-DRIVEN PHOTO ELICITATION

- Co-generative inquiry
- Increased agency, confidence, engagement

(Harper, 2002;
Schaeffer & Carlsson,
2014)



METHODS

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

(Kvale, 2011; Loeffler, 2004)

Interview prompts:

1. Can you tell me, in as much detail as possible, about what is happening in this photograph?
2. What is a meaningful experience in nature?
3. What does it mean to have a connection to nature?
4. What does it mean to have a spiritual connection to nature?
5. Can you tell me about how you were feeling or experiencing, when the photo was taken?
6. Why did you choose to share this photo with me, for this research project?
7. Can you tell me about your feelings, in relation to this photograph?

METHODS

DATA SATURATION

- Photos
- Interviews
- Emails
- Notes
- Journalling

(Creswell, 2014;
Kvale, 2011)



RESULTS

THEMES



Connection to Self

Connection to Others

Well-being

Presence

Awe

Spiritual Connection

RESULTS

THEMES



Connection to Self

Connection to Others

Well-being

Presence

Awe

Spiritual Connection

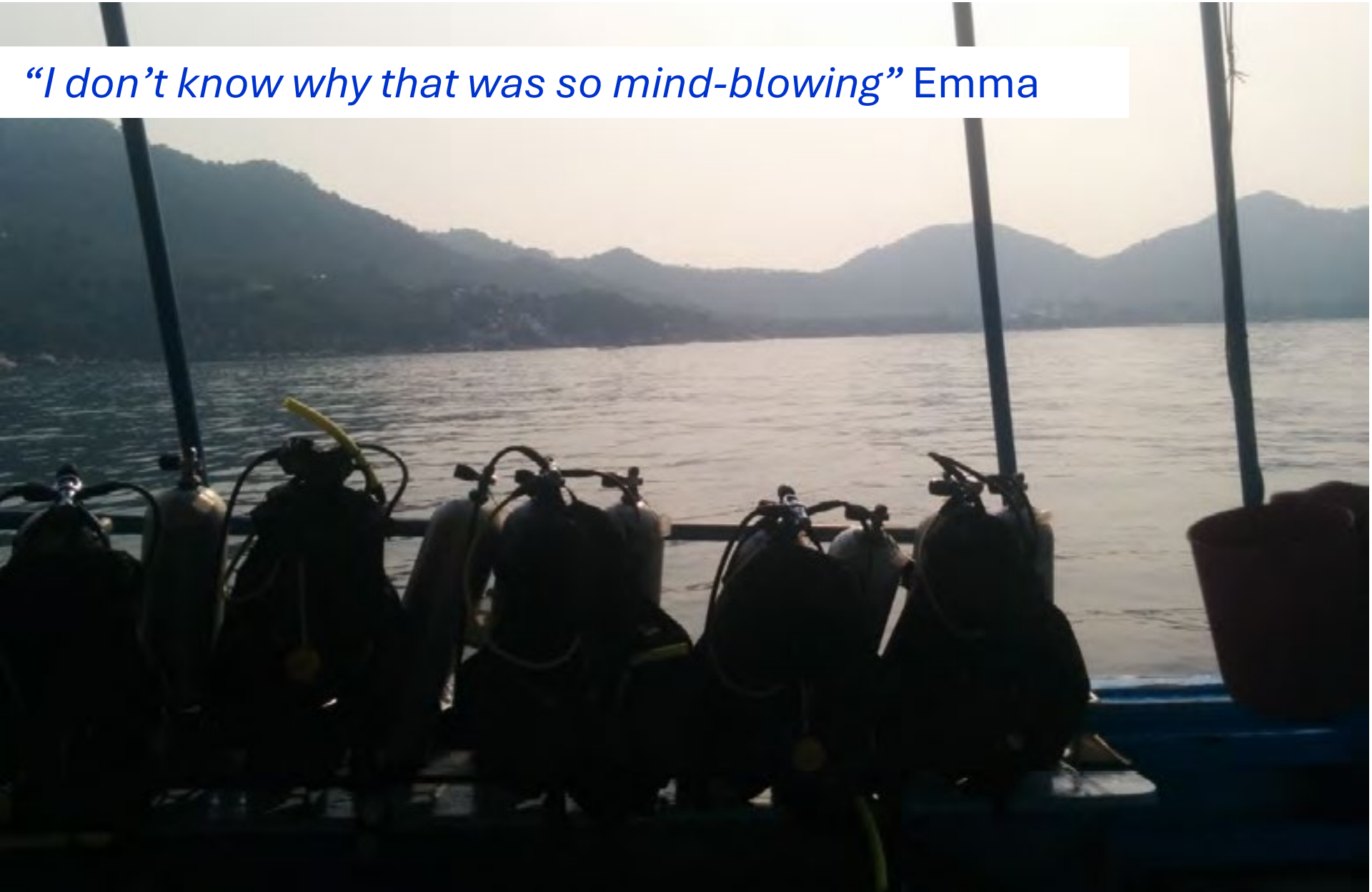
PRESENCE

“Remember what is important” Jeanne



AWE

“I don’t know why that was so mind-blowing” Emma



SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

“...just feeling so connected with something” Em



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Virtual methods are viable alternatives

Elicited photos:

- Hold meaning
- Represent stories
- Jog memories
- Recall feelings



FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

Photo elicitation

- Effective icebreaker
- Shifted focus from participant

Alternatives for photos

- Creative representations





PHOTOS & MEANING

Stories, memories

Emotions, meaning

Connect to nature for a sustainable future



THANK YOU!

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FIN

METHODS

DESCRIPTIVE PHENOMENOLOGY

(Creswell, 2014; Starks & Trinidad, 2007)

Read the entire transcription

Grasp the essence

Notice any shifts in meaning within the transcription (meaning units)

Cluster these descriptions into categories

These categories describe the essence of the experience

ADDITIONAL CALLS TO ACTION

1. Invite the wonder
2. “The Gift of Time”
3. Language of Connection



DYNAMIC RELATIONSHIP

