Impressions from the wild: A thematic analysis of adolescents’ experience on Project K’s Wilderness Adventure
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Participants

23 Year 10 students
8 focus groups
12x Otumoetai College, Tauranga
6x Waitakere College
5x Northcote College
Themes

CHALLENGES

Outside comfort zone
Real consequences
Interpersonal challenges

OUTCOMES
Mastery
Attitude
Interpersonal skills
Challenge: Outside comfort zone

“not a part of my normal life. Yea, it’s quite different, to kind of everything.” (Alexa)
Challenge: Outside comfort zone

- Wilderness environment

“like kind of rough, like a rough way to like, live for 17 days.” (Smith)
Challenge: Outside comfort zone

- Being away from family

“17 days, like, [...] it’s too long. For like, if you’re going away for the first time away from your family, 17 days is like a bit much.” (Jock)
Challenge: Outside comfort zone

- Wilderness activities

“It was like, really hard, like the physical stuff. [...] I cried so much, I’d just be walking and start crying.” (Ella)
Challenge: Real consequences

- Taking responsibility

“The more breaks we take the more, like, less time we actually have to get there.” (Tim)
Challenge: Real consequences

- Being embedded in the experience

“I kind of just knew that, like, no matter how hard it is, you’re in the middle of nowhere so you have to keep pushing.” (Jess)
Challenge: Real consequences

- Relying on each other

“Everybody realised we needed to stick as a family and work as a team. Like, we’re gonna get nowhere if it doesn’t work.” (Rose)
Challenge: Interpersonal challenges

- Being stuck together

“Being with each other for ages was probably like not a good thing? ‘Cause we [...] had to do everything together, everything. (Whispers) everything! That probably wasn’t like, a good thing I guess.” (Ella)
Challenge: Interpersonal challenges

○ Tensions

Auckland group

“Yea there was a bit of like um, like tension sometimes, but naturally not too bad.”
(Oliver)

Tauranga group

“Pretty much no one worked together at the beginning. [...] But towards the end we kind of just were like, well, we’re now like family so we kind of all have to.”
(Jess)
Challenge: Interpersonal challenges

○ Leadership

Auckland group

“In the future if we ever do something where we have to lead a group, we know what to do, we know how to lead.” (Jack)

Tauranga group

“I feel like when you’re a leader, you have to be like, kind of angry, [...] they don’t listen to you if you’re not like, kinda like, angry.” (Smith)
Outcome: Mastery

- Motivation

“Just like having a strong mind. Just keep like, if you like, say fall over, just tell yourself keep going, it’s almost over.” (Jack)
Outcome: Mastery

- Experience of success

“I mean, it felt easier, the more it went on. Like less challenging, ‘cause like, I dunno I just kind of adapted to the challenge, so like, it felt easier I guess.” (Oliver)
Outcome: Mastery

- Exceeding expectations

“Parts of the Wilderness, all the tramping and stuff, like, I would like just tell myself I couldn’t do it, but then I would end up doing it like every time.” (Ella)
Outcome: Attitude

- Effect on their experience

“We believed we couldn’t do it. But we did it anyway, ‘cause we just thought happy thoughts and we encouraged ourselves.” (Lacey)
Outcome: Attitude

- **Attitude outside of the wilderness**

  “Like, not arguing with my brothers, as much. [...] Like, attitude towards class like, towards school work. Like just putting my head down and doing it.” (Blake)
Outcome: Attitude

- Gratitude

“I dunno just, being out there, you can like realise what’s like actually around you.” (Jess)
Outcome: Interpersonal skills

- Working with strangers

“When you were like, cooking dinner and stuff you’d like, just talk to people. And I guess people kind of just, found like the common ground.” (Jess)
Outcome: Interpersonal skills

- Not judging others

“You got to make a lot of new friends that you wouldn’t think about talking, like, approaching before the project.” (Smith)
Outcome: Interpersonal skills

- Two schools versus one
  - Auckland group
    “And like, if they believed that we could do it, then we could do it. ‘Cause [...] they don’t really know us. But they still believe that we can do it. (Nadia)
  - Tauranga group
    “I mean if, if we had to like, go with strangers, it’d be harder ‘cause you’d have to like, make that connection with them.” (Jess)
“If anything’s like real hard, I can be like I did Project K I can do this.” (Ella)