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“The Perceived Impact of 'The Work that Reconnects'”

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Abstract

The WTR is a method developed during the 70's and is based on the work of Joanna Macy. Although Joanna Macy is a benchmark in the field of ecopsychology, this is the first study about the impact of WTR. This qualitative study used Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to explore the personal meanings of the participants and then interpret these results. The results revealed 5 main themes: (a) qualities of the experience during the WTR; (b) psychological and emotional impact of the WTR; (c) subsequent behavioral changes; (d) influence of personal expectations; and (e) influence of the retreat context. The results account for some core aspects of both Joanna Macy's proposal and ecopsychology. It is suggested to deepen the study of the impact of WTR, especially in relation to the transformative potential of rituals and the states of consciousness that these can promote during WTR.

Introduction

In 1992 a group of scientists published an article that warned of the path that humanity was taking in relation to ecological and environmental issues. Within the message the care and protection of natural resources on which human life depends, prioritizing the development of new energy sources with decreased use of fossil fuels, birth control, was among other(Union of Concerned Scientists, 1992). All of these suggestions were aimed at turning the tide in the face of imminent ecological collapse.

Twenty-five years after the so-called "first warning to humanity" a second warning was published, which was supported by more than 15,000 scientists. In it, the urgency of different actions for environmental care and survival was deepened, including among the necessary actions the education of children about nature and the promotion of the participation of society in the appreciation of the natural world (Ripple et. al, 2017). In this context, education in relation to ecological and environmental issues, as well as practical interventions and the facilitation of experiences in nature that help to create an affective bond with the natural world take on relevance and appear not only as an option, but also as an urgent ethical need.

The *Work that Reconnects* (WTR) is a proposal that combines theory and practice, which seeks to educate and provide a perspective that allows awareness of the situation global ecological. In addition, the WTR aims to create an environment to

facilitate a deep personal process that leads to mobilize personal resources to support the changes necessary to ensure human life on the planet (Macy & Brown, 2003). The WTR is practiced in different modalities (ie, half-day, full-day, weekend workshops, up to several days in duration), the 10-day residential intensive being its original version and about which this article is about.

Joanna Macy's work is a benchmark in the field of *ecopsychology*. His work and ideas have been cited in different writings related to ecopsychology, deep ecology, the planetary crisis, sustainability, the Great Turn, the potential that the WTR would have to help change consciousness and to mobilize action for the earth (ie, Hathaway, 2017; Macy, 1995; Villasenor-Galarza, 2013a, 2013b, 2015). There is evidence of some of the positive effects that human contact with nature produces, for example at a physiological and affective level (ie, McMahan & Estes, 2015; Twohig-Bennett & Jones, 2018), of the positive effect on the health of the forest bathing practice or *shinrin-yoku* (Ideno et. al., 2017), as well as pro-environment behavior that accompanies different forms of direct and indirect intentional connection and exposure with nature (ie, Martin et al., 2020; Rosa, Profice, & Collado, 2018; Whitburn, Linklater, & Abrahamse, 2019). Despite the relevance of this issue, and the recognition of Joanna Macy's work, to date there are no studies on the practice of WTR. In this context, this research takes on a double relevance: both because of the global planetary context, as well as because it is the first study to explore the impact perceived by those who have participated in this activity.

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Theoretical Framework

Ecopsychology

It could be assumed that the origins of ecopsychology are directly related to human history. Native peoples and different cultures have cultivated the relationship with the natural world through different rituals and practices, which are considered to be of relevant importance in the current care of nature and biodiversity (ie, Dafni, 2007 ; Geng et. Al, 2017).

The intimate relationship with the natural world of pre-industrial societies is possibly also linked to the dedication and importance they placed on the relationship between the physical world and the spiritual world, as well as the culturally accepted and valid ritual practices that allowed the connection with invisible realities through non-ordinary states of consciousness (eg, Bourguignon, 1973; Campbell, 1949/1968; Eliade, 2000). From this perspective, it is not surprising the understanding that these cultures had of the relationship between the psychological dynamics and the physical space to perform the rites, the valuation of the places of power, as well as the times and

spaces necessary to enter the dynamics. ritual and then return to the culturally accepted waking functioning of time-space (Eliade, 2000; Turner, 1969/2008; Van Gennep, 1908/1960).

The historical roots of ecopsychology can be found in those works where the effect of the direct experience of nature on the human being is recognized and addressed (ie, Greenway, 1991, 1995), as well as in those authors who call for a cultural change within western industrialized societies (ie, Macy, 1995; Roszak, 1992). Specifically, Greenway (2000) reports that it was he who first used the term *psychoecology*, in an article he wrote in 1963 while working for Abraham Maslow at Brandeis University in Boston.

The origin of ecopsychology is also related to the social movements of the time in which it arose: with the increase of awareness regarding the ecological crisis that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s, as well as the environmental movements, civil rights and social movements. feminists (Davis & Canty, 2013). According to Davis & Canty (2013), ecopsychology begins “officially” in the 90's with various works that sought to fill the gap between psychology and ecology, since both seemed to work in separate domains; On the one hand, psychology viewed anxiety and mental illness and their pathologies from a solely personal perspective, while ecologists were focused on science and political action.

As Fisher (2013) indicates, since the original authors of ecopsychology, such as Roszak, Greenway and Macy, its main thinkers have had an important respect for science, and not only for political action oriented to the transformation of society. In addition, the ecopsychological perspective has also been critical of the more traditional psychology, questioning the individual vision of the human being and the denial of the effect that planetary reality has on well-being, as well as the critical participation that psychology has in societies where nature is dominated, suffering and ecological damage is created.

Ecopsychology tries to bring together what belongs to individual subjectivity and the relationship with the natural world that is "beyond" the individual, thus seeking to transcend the dual vision of reality and the idea that human beings are separated from our environment. These critical elements that ecopsychology aims to illuminate and overcome can be recognized not only in the current relationship with nature and within the field of action of the traditional psychological discipline, but they are also at the basis of Western culture, of science positivist-mechanistic, and even in phenomena such as colonization and cultural digestion (ie, Capra, 1999; Grof, 1985; Malhotra, 2011; Mohanty, 1994; Said, 1994). It could be argued that the division of the human being with nature is perhaps a consequence of the internal division between the mind and the body, and that it is expressed in the relationship with material reality as if they were objects independent of the observer. (Capra, 1999).

The Work That Reconnects (WTR)

The WTR is a method that emerged in the 70's, usually carried out in an intensive residential retreat format, and is based on the teachings and work of Joanna Macy (Macy

& Brown, 2003; Macy & Johnstone, 2018; Villasenor-Galarza, 2015). The WTR aims to engage its students in thinking and feeling about the negative effects of climate change, the extinction of species and other painful issues (Edelglass, 2014), as well as helping participants connect with inspiration to mobilize their resources and act for the benefit of the planet (Villasenor-Galarza, 2015). The WTR seeks in its essence to create awareness and provide tools to move towards a sustainable world where it is possible to “*satisfy our needs without destroying our life support system*” (Macy & Brown, 2003, p. 45).

According to Macy & Brown (2003), humanity is in a great crisis, having the opportunity to make substantial changes to move from societies that seek growth at the cost of unlimited exploitation of the earth, towards sustainable societies that help the regeneration of life on the planet. To support this change in lifestyles there would be 3 types of possible actions: (a) those that reduce the damage caused to life on the planet; (b) the creation of alternative structures and systems; and (c) a change in worldview and values. The WTR as a method seems to aim mainly at the third point, seeking to generate a transformational change in its participants, from there to mobilize and deliver tools to act in the everyday world.

The necessary step to move towards sustainable societies would be a change in consciousness of individuals and of society. This change would be possible to the extent that human beings would be able to get out of the current state of apathy, caused by the repression and avoidance of pain due to what is happening on the planet (Macy & Brown, 2003; Macy & Johnstone, 2018). From the WTR point of view, it is necessary to transcend the idea that “feelings of fear, disgust or despair with respect to the world are merely the reflection of an internal personal conflict” (Macy & Brown, 2003, p. 72), but rather they would be a natural response to what is happening on a planetary level (Macy & Johnstone, 2018; Villasenor-Galarza, 2013a, 2015), and finally they would represent a living example of our humanity.

Methodology

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (AFI)

In this exploratory study we seek to delve into the question: what is the perceived impact of participation in the intensive retreat of “The Work that Reconnects”? For this we use Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (AFI). Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) developed the AFI, which allows to analyze the descriptions of the experiences of the participants and combine them with the researcher's interpretations. Along with respecting and giving a primary role to the rich and vivid descriptions of the participants, the AFI incorporates cycles of hermeneutical reflection to add something that mere description of experiences cannot achieve. In this way, this method allows the vision of him or the researchers to add new layers of analysis, something that the same participants cannot do through their stories and testimonies.

This approach incorporates elements of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography together (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). For this, it requires from the beginning that the researcher (s) place their previous ideas about the phenomenon under study “in parentheses”, thus practicing *epoché* Husserl's (Embree, 2011; Finlay, 2011; Husserl, 1913/1949; Spinelli, 2005). In this process it is sought to reach the central and essential elements of the study phenomenon, to then interpret them and give them a meaning as a body of knowledge and located in the current context.

The AFI places special emphasis on experiences that are meaningful to the people involved (Smith et al., 2009). This makes this approach an appropriate approach to explore the impact of the experiences during the WTR retreat, since the WTR seeks to mobilize personal resources and generate a change of outlook as indicated above.

Given its phenomenological influence, the AFI assumes that human beings can understand our experiences later through reflection, since at the moment the experiences happen they are difficult to take or sustain. This is why the intent through the AFI is to approach vivid experiences through detailed accounts, and then try to make sense from the perspective of the investigator (s). In this process, the aim is to contribute with a fresh look, which includes the issues that arise in a transversal way in the experiences of the participants, to offer an interpretation of the experiences that recognizes common elements among the participants, while giving rise to the individual idiosyncrasies.

Participants

6 participants, 3 women and 3 men, were selected through sampling selective, and from there it was followed with a snowball strategy from recommendations and contacts from the participants themselves. The mean age of the sample was 38.3 years, and all participants had previous experiences related to nature including permaculture, ecology, deep ecology, intellectual interest, etc.

The requirements to participate in the study were: (a) be over 18 years old; (b) have participated in the WTR in Chile within a maximum period of 2 years to date; (c) demonstrate the ability to share specific details of the language experience Spanish; (d) have the ability to reflect on their experiences. It was used as Exclusion criteria: (a) be an organizer of WTR training retreats, to avoid personal interest could affect the results; and (b) the presence of signs of a severe personality disorder, active psychosis, or any risk of suicide due to the risk that recalling an experience could negatively affect the individual.

The approval of the ethics committee of the Universidad Adolfo Ibáñez de Chile to conduct this study.

Data collection

6 semi-structured interviews were conducted in Spanish, lasting between 28 and 58 minutes. The interviews began with a description of the main experiences that occurred during the WTR retreat, followed by a reflection on the impact that the participants perceived these experiences. After this, the reasons were investigated to attend this retreat and on the perceived impact beyond the time of the retreat.

An invitation to participate in the study was published on online platforms, page website and email to the institution associated with the WTR in Spanish speaking (eltrabajoquereconecta.org). Volunteers who wrote to participate received a participation form to prove that they met the requirements. A person from those who could be contacted to participate were excluded from the study because they were organizing a WTR training retreat in Brazil, which was duly explained to through a telephone conversation. Then, before conducting the interview, Participants received informed consent, it was accepted and signed prior to the interview.

The interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed through Analysis Interpretive Phenomenological. Codes were generated and then topics were searched cross-sections that emerged from the analysis. For this, a table was taken where the recurrence of the themes according to the participants, The identities of the participants are They were kept anonymous and a code associated with the interview number was assigned. East procedure is used in this article as well. From here on we will identify ourselves as "the researchers" or "research team".

Analysis of data

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed following the AFI guidelines (Smith et al., 2009). Researchers read the interviews several times, then go highlighting those excerpts from each interview that seemed to contain meaning relevant to each participant. Along with this, the researchers added comments and descriptive notes as a way of tuning in with the subjectivity of the participants.

After reading the annotations and excerpts from the interviews several times, the first codes (sub-themes) began to emerge in each of the transcripts of the interviews. From these codes we began to group the extracts from the interviews, which allowed an organization of the information available with a certain coherence. This process was repeated with each formal interview.

Subsequently, the codes of all the interviews were revised as a set, process that allowed us to discover the transversal or super-ordered themes, stage of analysis called "abstraction" in the AFI, as well as the "subsumption", which consists of recognize cross-cutting and super-ordered themes and their sub-themes or codes related (Smith et al., 2009).

This stage of the analysis allowed the research team to begin to give an consistency across the large amount of information available. An example of The result of this stage is

found in table 1, where item 1 (Qualities of the experience during the WTR), the 4 codes that constitute this topic, and examples of excerpts from interviews. Next to each topic and code there is a number in parentheses that indicates the saturation of each; to be considered relevant we define that each code it had to be present in at least 3 of the 6 participants. Along with each interview excerpt There are letters and numbers that indicate the code assigned to each participant and the number of the paragraph to which it corresponds.

Table 1. Example of summary table with content analysis.

Topics (super ordered)	Code (sub-topics)	Example of units of meaning (excerpts from interviews)
[1] Qualities of the experience during the WTR (6)	a. Experiences of a ritualistic nature (rituals) (6)	- Mandala of truth E1, 2; E2.1; E6, 1 - Rite of despair E3, 3, 4 - See the suffering of other people E3, 4 - I asked to see the origin of my fears E3, 6
	b. Self-(6)	- Childhood memories E3, 2 awareness and awareness- More aware of generated waste E3, 22 - Deeper information about myself E1, 1
	c. Experience of being part of something greater (experience transpersonal; with nature) (6)	- Feeling of unity E1, 5 - We are this great thing living this individually E1, 5 - Becoming aware of yourself, of your place in everything, E4, 5 - Feeling of completeness E4, 2 - Being one with nature E6,5 - Compenetration with nature E4, 1; E2, 36; E3, 2 - I felt part of nature E5, 8
	d. Resolution of emotional issues (5)	- Combat hopelessness and get out of a state of collapse E1, 17; E2, 41 - Regaining hope E1, 17; E3, 18 - I managed to dissolve the pain a bit and thus begin to rearrange my ideas in a more positive way E6, 17 - It made me exercise more gentleness E5, 33

Categories were defined on each of the topics found, in this way seeking to give a greater organization to the information collected and discovered through the analysis. Table 2 shows a summary of the results obtained in the study, covering the categories, themes and codes.

Put "in parentheses" the previous conceptions of the research team

The role of the researcher and their observation plays a fundamental role in any research that seeks to interpret the information obtained. Also, the way of approaching the phenomenon has a lot to do with the research team. In the logic of practicing the phenomenological epoché, the research team carried out the exercise of make explicit the ideas and expectations at the beginning of the study, in order to keep this in mind and recognize those prejudices or positions that could a priori influence during the performance of the study. Among the ideas and expectations that we discovered in ourselves were:

- Find stories of a powerful experience in terms of introspection and connection with the earth.
- Reports of experiences evaluated as positive.
- Empowerment of aspects of themselves or thoughts / experiences that take a place. - Clarity on daily actions regarding the issue of caring for the planet. - Proposals for other formats to make the withdrawal appear.
- Find evidence of the possible transformative power of WTR.
- Find potential negative effects of WTR.
- See that the impact of the WTR is directly related to the expectations of the participants.
- Find criticism of the retreat.
- Conclude that the impact will be scarce or limited in its specific applications given the little time since retirement.

Results

Given the large amount of information obtained in the results and the length of this article, it is not possible to expose each category with its topics and codes in detail. That is why this section focuses on the presentation of descriptive results, on the aspects that are considered relevant to present and that are related to the first and third topics (qualities of the experience during the WTR and subsequent behavioral changes).

The first topic, “qualities of the experience during the WTR”, consists of the description of the experiences experienced by the participants, and is made up of 4 codes or subtopics. This topic is identical to category I, since the category only contains one topic, unlike categories II and III, which have two topics each with their respective sub-topics.

Within the first topic are the "experiences of a ritual nature", reported by the 6 study participants. These experiences account for the assessment of participation in dynamics in nature, mainly in groups, which have a ritualistic quality and atmosphere. The dynamics are valued positively for allowing the recognition and expression of emotions in a protected context, for their powerful emotional impact and for facilitating a connection that transcends the rational. Some examples of excerpts from the interviews in relation to this code are:

E1: *"...group dynamics in ritual harmony, where I have somehow managed to access information that I did not have before, let's say. I am struck by the power in the group of people, right? As by being able to verbalize the truth to others, I can access deeper information about myself. That's the first thing that comes to mind..."*

E1 adds that:*"The mandala of truth, as a dynamic [...] the first time I connected with this dynamic, I really received new information –like what I mentioned above-, Being able to analyze and express without premeditation, deep thoughts in relation to an emotion, allowed me to observe or untie knots in myself, to observe where it is more or less stuck, to observe where there was apathy in relation to certain feelings, how to be able to express them in a group -that it is what proposes the dynamic allowed that".*

E3: *"in the pain for the world module, of course, the most representative thing there is a rite called 'the rite of despair' and at that same time I was doing a healing of ancestral lineage and in that specific activity they mixed me up; it was equivalent to like 4 ancestral healing sessions. Where I saw one of my lineages backwards, I saw everything as the pain that that lineage had had, which was a feminine lineage and super powerful too; and that later I could corroborate it with the following session. So there was also a lot to understand fears of today, fears that I have today, where they come from, that I do not know where I would be because this incarnation of mine is super calm, there is nothing terrible and there were fears that were super strange that I had them and there I understood where they came from; So that is still super powerful and having lived it in that rite was super heavy anyway."*

E6: *"When we were all going backwards. You go forward in time, you go back in time and you go to the point of the Bing-Bang and then you start to advance, it was also power. There are several power truth. I believe that we also had the virtue that a colleague who did the course with us, has had a very 'pachamamístico' development, of shamans and everything; She put a lot of energy into it that the places were beautiful, she hardly participated much in the course in terms of intervention, but she adorned the places... it was incredible. I remember that very well, of all the energy put into it, when we went for a walk and we were sitting observing a place, connected and then you returned to a circle and she smoked you... It was all very ritualistic, all very beautiful. You could tell a lot of energy that I had put into that."*

E2: *"It seems to me that perhaps the most shocking are those that have to do with pain,*

where we perform, for example, the mandala of truth [...] This was a dynamic where we arrived at a place inside the forest, what We decorated as if it were a mandala and it had three circles in the center, which showed different emotions [...] In this mandala, they made you walk in circles, saying –with all your companions, because it was together– saying all the things that you wanted to get rid of yourself, like everything that caused you anger, discomfort, perhaps injustice; everything that came to mind, actually. [...] It was super powerful, because people began to speak, then one was also listening to what people were saying and some were stories of their own lives, others were pain for the world, social injustices; and that everything is crazy, I all think they shared those things. So it was super powerful. "

These extracts show the relevance of the ritual for the study participants, which is expressed through emotions and the meaningful content associated with the experience.

Within this first topic there is also the code called “experience of being part of something greater”. This sub-theme accounts for the recognition that participants make, from direct experience, of being connected to something that goes beyond themselves. These experiences seem to have a transpersonal quality, since they refer to access and connection with something that extends “outside” or something “bigger”, being able to be an experience of totality, completeness, unity or feeling in intimate relationship with nature.

Some examples of extracts from this code are:

E4: *“I remember the practice of contemplation, where we each went alone; It was very inspiring of nature, as a not merely rational experience; but as the inability to... as a feeling, a feeling of completeness with the whole; with integration...”*

E6: *“that's when I shared that this for me was a discovery of experiencing things that one thinks, experiencing feeling one with nature, experiencing that we are all connected...”*

E2: *“we all felt those pains, like a weight, same as loading; [...] It also reminds me a lot of that shelter that nature has, as a mother”.*

E5: *“I felt part of nature”.*

Finally, we want to mention the code of "responsibility in relation to nature", which is part of topic 3 (subsequent behavioral changes). This third topic accounts for those changes made after the WTR, both in the routines and habits themselves, in the relationship with nature, and in the professional project and / or workplace.

In relation to the code or sub-theme of "responsibility in relation to nature", all study participants reported changes in the sense of responsibility and commitment in relation to nature and its care. This can also imply a questioning and change in some daily

habits. Some excerpts from the interviews that exemplify this topic are:

E6: *"This feeling that your consciousness grows and evolves, that you can no longer do like: 'I no longer care', you cannot go back".*

E2: *"living in a much more ecological way, that is, permaculture. So that, meeting new people [...] I feel like that takes you to another dimension. In addition to the fact that we were in a place without internet, without signal, then from there a change begins. And like throwing away, cleaning, cleaning a lot from the beginning; because super healthy food and everything, in the end; the bathrooms, a dry bathroom..."*

E4: *"I went to live there, to nature... Do the process of understanding the importance of empowering oneself in the environment, in a comprehensive way... perhaps now I would be claiming because it is much colder, but today I live the cold in another way, cachai? I live the discomfort of the cold of a place of acceptance. Cachai? Internally..."*

E5: *"My feeling was that I really had to do something because of nature [...] at that moment I felt that I really had to do something, the urge to do something"*

Table 2. Summary of results

Category	Topics (superordenado)	Code (sub-topics)
<p>I. Qualities of the experience during the WTR</p> <p>Describe the experiences during the WTR retreat.</p>	<p>[1] Qualities of the experience during the WTR (6)</p>	<p>to. Ritual experiences (6)</p> <p>b. Self-awareness and realizing (6)</p> <p>c. Experience of being part of something greater (transpersonal experience; with the nature) (6)</p> <p>d. Resolution of emotional issues (5)</p>
<p>II. Effects of WTR.</p> <p>Describes the effects that go beyond the duration of the retreat, and that persist and permeate the daily lives of its users. participants.</p>	<p>[2] Impact at level psychological and emotional WTR (6)</p>	<p>to. Understanding emotional processes (6)</p> <p>B. Process continues (6)</p> <p>c. Later challenges (4)</p> <p>d. Effect on interpersonal relationships (3)</p>

	[3] Subsequent behavioral changes (6)	to. Responsibility in the relationship with nature (6) b. Transfer of learning in context work and/or work project (6)
III. Elements contextual factors that influence the experience and impact of the WTR.	[4] Influence of personal expectations (6)	to. Theoretical interest and methodological (6)
	[5] Influence of the withdrawal context (6)	to. Influence of the place where the WTR is held (6)

Describes the influence of one's own expectations, as well as contextual elements about the experience and long-term impact		b. Influence of the group on one's own experience (6) c. Features of the facilitation (5) d. Characteristic of the methodologies used during the WTR (4)
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Discussion

The results of the present study indicate that the WTR allows promoting deep experiences of connection with the natural world, transcending identification as an individual separated from the environment. The group ritual nature of WTR activities, situated in a natural context, seems to facilitate this deep experiential connection. The above seems to mobilize towards responsible action in the relationship with nature.

In relation to the ritual quality of the experiences during the WTR retreat, it is worth noting the importance of the appropriate mindset or attitude to enter the state necessary for this together with group work. Although there is evidence of positive effects of direct exposure to nature such as decreased blood pressure, reduced cortisol in saliva, decreased heart rate, increased positive affect and reduced negative affect among others (ie, McMahan & Estes, 2015; Twohig-Bennett & Jones, 2018), it seems that the power of WTR lies more in the ability to create meaningful group rituals in a natural context. This is consistent with the potential of rituals to sacralize and cultivate the relationship with the natural world, which can lead to greater appreciation and care for the environment (ie, Dafni, 2007; Geng et. al, 2017).

The ritual quality of the WTR seems to invite us to face the dynamics with an attitude and

inner openness that seems to facilitate access to a depth of experience different from spending time in nature. The results suggest that rituals during the WTR facilitate the connection with deeper information than that accessible in the waking state, which is related to the momentary transcendence of the individual egoic identity, thus giving access to significant symbolic and emotional contents of a personal (related to the individual's experience) and transpersonal (beyond the individual). These types of experiences during the WTR may be related to (a) the liminal process of rites of passage (Van Gennep, 1908/1960), where individuals access information and potentials available thanks to these psychological states, as well as (b) with the experience of *community*, where established social roles are transcended to access an expanded and deeper identity that connects all beings (Turner, 1969/2008).

It could be assumed that the emotions generated during the ritual dynamics could be explained by the phenomenon of emotional contagion in the participating group (Hatfield, Cacioppo, & Rapson, 1992). However, access to meaningful information of a personal nature, as well as experiences beyond one's own bodily ego, suggest contact with transpersonal or even archetypal realities, which are typically accessed during expanded states of consciousness (Grof, 1985, 2002, 2012; Eliade, 2000; Landaeta, 2018).

On the other hand, the participants' perception of being connected or part of something greater that transcends them, reaffirms the convictions of both the WTR, as well as ecopsychology, that our deep identity goes beyond the limits of the ego and body, and that human beings are in intimate connection with the natural world (Macy, 1995; Macy & Brown, 2003; Villasenor-Galarza, 2015). Likewise, this characteristic of the WTR experience, where the subject-object duality is transcended for moments, allows its participants to recognize the interdependence from which the web of life is built (Macy, 1995). Furthermore, from the perspective of transpersonal psychology, a current of psychology that validates spirituality in its various expressions, it is interesting to note that the WTR not only facilitates experiences of vertical spirituality (connection with something higher), but also reminds us the fundamental dimension of horizontal spirituality, which implies a connection with our environment and with life itself (Daniels, 2008).

In relation to responsibility in the relationship with nature, we can point out that it seems that the recognition of interdependence with the natural world generates a fundamental impact that could effectively drive a change in values and worldview. As indicated previously, the connection with nature tends to go hand in hand with pro-environmental behaviors (ie, Martin et al., 2020; Rosa, Profice, & Collado, 2018; Whitburn, Linklater, & Abrahamse, 2019), which would explain why emotionally significant immersions and activities in nature would generate a subsequent positive effect of care and responsibility for the natural world.

From the ecopsychological perspective, the movement towards caring for nature can imply not only a change to take care of nature "out there", but ultimately taking care of oneself, understanding that nature and the self would be closely related. If the individual knows that

he is part of nature, then his care would be self-care. The WTR seems to fulfill its objective of creating awareness of the basic interdependence with life (Macy, 1995; Macy & Brown, 2003; Villasenor-Galarza, 2015).

The degree of impact of the WTR on people's values and worldview must be investigated in greater depth. Given the theoretical and methodological interest of the study participants, as well as their previous experience, it could be that their experiences and their effects are closely related to the expectations, intentions, motivations and values prior to participation in the study. WTR withdrawal. Likewise, the connection with nature, as well as responsibility and pro-environmental behaviors could exist prior to the activity and not necessarily be a consequence of it. In this sense, from the results of this study it is possible to infer that expectations prior to the WTR retreat seem to have an influence on the experiences, as well as the context of the retreat and the format of the retreat. Furthermore, given that we work with rituals that seem to have a high significance, emotional charge and psychological impact, the analysis of the effects of the WTR in the future should include a reflection that includes the variables of *set* (motivations, intentions and objectives sought) and *setting* (therapeutic context in which the ritual is performed), concepts related to therapies and rituals that use non-ordinary states of consciousness as a means of healing and transformation (Grof, 1985, 2002).

Limitations of the study and future studies

It is possible that the study sample limited us for different reasons. One of them is the possible interest of the participants in contributing to the development of the WTR, given their participation in the retreat as part of their personal and professional interests. Additionally, access to people who attended WTR with exclusive personal or other healing interests of which we are unaware are outside the scope of our study. The limited sample size and the difficulty in extrapolating to other contexts is another typical limitation of qualitative studies. We are left with the question of whether it would be feasible or possible to facilitate experiences such as those mentioned by the study participants, as well as the type of learning mentioned by them, in people who have no interest in environmental issues, the climate crisis, and/or or in the individual and collective difficulties experienced in relation to the current global context.

It would be of interest to delve deeper through studies on the effect of the WTR in specific populations and with a larger sample (for example, young people of a certain social class, groups belonging to indigenous peoples, etc.) to explore possible effects and specific cultural influences. Likewise, it would be important to begin incorporating measurements of mental health and/or well-being in mixed studies in order to, together with accessing the phenomenology of experiences and experiences, be able to measure the quantitative impact of the WTR. Interesting designs could incorporate control groups and thus compare the effects of WTR with other practices carried out in nature such as: (a) trekking; (b) therapeutic practices such as forest bathing (*shirinyoku*) and ecotherapy; as well as (c)

compare WTR with other types of rituals performed in nature (e.g., temazcales, shamanic ceremonies), and with experiential therapies that include expanded states of consciousness (e.g., meditation retreats, breathing holotropic).

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