

## **“Like Thick Melted Chocolate Between Your Toes”: Being Barefoot, Blurring Boundaries and Breaking Bonds**



*Figure 1 -Muddy Feet*

**An exploration of the embodiment of being barefoot and what this means to our relationship with nature, our bodies and society.**

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This body of work is dedicated to the loving memory of Lesley Charman  
(1958-2018)



“We were not placed on this earth to walk alone” – Thomas S. Monson

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### The Peace of the Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me  
and I wake in the night at the least sound  
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,  
I go and lie down where the wood drake  
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.  
I come into the peace of wild things  
who do not tax their lives with forethought  
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars  
waiting with their light. For a time  
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

(Wendell Berry, 2018)

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to explore the embodiment of being barefoot as an opportunity to understand the complexity of our relationship with the natural and built environments. It also touches on the issues surrounding the nature/culture divide. This piece investigates how direct physical contact with the ground through the soles of our feet can help foster a connectedness with ourselves and our surroundings. Issues concerning categories, pollution and our relationship with dirt and how being barefoot blurs these boundaries are also discussed. Finally, this work examines how the historical social construct of the habitual wearing of shoes has created a society which is docile, and how being unshod breaks these cultural bonds in a social space.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

This research project investigates the intersections between flesh, the environment, concepts revolving around ‘matter out of place’ (Douglas, 2000) and *habitus* (Bourdieu 1992, 2000).

I will be using a phenomenological approach, in order to explore the particular nuances of being barefoot and how this meeting of flesh and ground fosters a sense of interconnectedness with our environment (Ingold, 2011). I am interested in what this means for our relationship with the Earth in the age of the Anthropocene, where capital and culture reign absolute. Can the simple act of removing one’s shoes and creating a connection with the earth through the ground foster a new way of thinking about the environment? I explored this hypothesis by using my own body as a research site. Further concepts are additionally explored, such as our relationship with dirt as matter out of place (Douglas, 2000), bodily boundaries, and pollution and danger. Additionally, ideas around how shoes generate social constructs and disciplined bodies, as well as how the seemingly innocent activity of putting shoes on is a part of our *habitus*.

To the best of my knowledge there is very little research conducted in this area; much of the research that does exist is concentrated around barefoot running, inspired by the book *Born to Run* by Christopher MacDougall (2010). However, most of the academic research around barefoot running is medically or scientifically based (see (Hryvniak, D. *et al*, 2014; Tam, N. *et al*, 2017 and Utztz-Meagher, C. *et al*, 2011)). My research is grounded in a more experiential and social arena, as I felt this was the most appropriate way of exploring the world through our feet (Ingold, 2011). I did not intend on doing a specific activity, such as running, to explore my hypothesis. Instead, I sought to simply do away with my shoes and carry out my usual daily tasks and routines to determine whether there was a shift in my perceived conceptions of my environment and my *habitus*.

I was greatly stimulated by Tim Ingold’s Essay ‘Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet’ (2011), and Ingold’s vision left a lasting impression which inspired the questions which formulated this body of research. I intended to develop

Ingold's (2011) theories which were touched upon in his essay with his notions of engaging with the environment. Additionally, I built upon Ingold's historical social construct on the habitual wearing of shoes using Bourdieu (2000) and a Foucauldian lens of examining how shoes create disciplined bodies. I furthered these frameworks with my own research on our relationship with the ground and more specifically dirt, using the theoretical framework outlined by Mary Douglas in *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. Therefore, due to the lack of research on barefoot bodies in a westernised culture overall, I believe that my research is an original concept. I hope that this study will fill any gaps that are missing in this area of anthropological and ethnographical research.

I carried out my study using the following methodologies. First and foremost, I approached the research using a phenomenological approach, complimented with vignettes of autoethnography from personal journals recording my experiences. All of my experiences were located in my immediate locale, a small market town located in Wales. Besides this, I also compared my own experiences from my key ethnographic text, an autobiography by Lynne Allbutt called *Barefoot and Before* (2015). Additionally, I supplemented my research with participant questionnaires, a group interview and a twenty-four-hour barefoot experience, which acted as an experiment to gauge other people's perceptions and understanding of whether their relationship with their surroundings and environment changed.

## **Background to Research**

Initially I intended to conduct research over the summer of 2017 at my field work site which was a glamping and camping site based in West Wales, UK. Originally my research was to focus on the social relationships formed around a campfire. I was employed in a role as a 'camp host' and I believed at the time that I could work and do research at the same time. However, by the end of my shift I was exhausted and only wanted to go home, telling myself I would do research the next day. It also became increasingly apparent that I did not wish to approach possible participants for research, as I felt shy and rude interrupting their leisure time whilst they were on holiday. Tim Ingold remarks that ethnography 'for the adult anthropologist, arriving as a complete newcomer and with limited time at his or her disposal, the hurdles are considerably greater' (2014:387), and this was something I experienced first-hand. The time ticked by and I had no data. At the time I felt demoralised and a failure to the discipline of anthropology, but as Judith Okely notes 'personal exposure may in time be seen not as professional disaster but intellectual growth' (1996:29). With this in mind I had a meeting with my dissertation supervisor and explained the difficulties I had in time management and anxiety approaching participants. We reviewed my experience where I recalled what I saw during my time doing 'fieldwork' (I use this term loosely in this context) and it transpired that one of my observations led to this research project. What I observed was that children on the campsite would often go around barefooted. This small observation and failure in my original research goal was the birth of this project.

## **Ethics**

I wanted to be as transparent as possible without being intrusive to let guests on site know that I was also based there as a researcher in my original research plans. After discussing the issue of ethics with my manager we decided that a notice in the reception where all guests would have to enter in order to check into their unit would have the option of reading the notice (Appendix A) and that on the website for the business under the 'Meet the Team' there would be a small note to let guests know that I was working and researching at the site too under my bio (Appendix a.1).

## Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter will outline my methodological approach to researching the topic of this project and the different ways I collected data. Although I have adhered to the 'Association of Social Anthropologists' Ethical Guidelines for good research practice (2018) regarding ethnography, I have found that I have taken a more experiential approach in gathering my research and results. Much of my research is auto-ethnographical, in this case where I have reflected and written about my own experience of being barefoot, and compared it to the experiences of my email participants, the group interview and the 24-hour experience participants.

- **Phenomenological Research**

According to Brian Allison *et al* (1996) phenomenological research in the social sciences takes the stance that every situation or circumstance is unique, and therefore it is its most important quality. It is often presented as an alternative to positivism and is useful as a research method that does not rely on measurement or statistics distinctive of a scientific method (Denscombe, 2003). The use of language is central to this research method in description, which in turn creates great emphasis given to the recording of events, circumstances and situations (Allison, 1996). I chose a phenomenological approach because it focuses on how life is experienced, and is less concerned with the causes of something, but instead, attempts to describe how things are experienced and felt first hand (Denscombe, 2003). A key characteristic of a phenomenological approach relies on the description, the description of the experience must be fairly detailed and not impose any artificial order to the experience, so as not to negate from the authenticity of the experience (Denscombe, 2003).

- **Auto-ethnography**

I was greatly influenced by researchers such as Bochner and Ellis (Eds) (2002) *Ethnographically speaking: Autoethnography, Literature and Aesthetics* and Danahay (1997) *Auto/ethnography: Rewriting the Self and the Social* who advocate auto-ethnography as a qualitative research method for anthropology. Authors such as Ellis and Bochner (Eds) (1995) *Composing Ethnography: Alternative Forms of*

*Qualitative Writing*, Chang (2016) *Autoethnography as Method* and Denzin (2013) *Interpretive Autoethnography* to name a few, all had a guiding and profound effect on how I conducted my own research auto-ethnographically. I also found Charlotte Aull Davies' (2008) *Reflexive Ethnography: A Guide to Researching Selves and Others* invaluable in aiding me to fully incorporate reflexivity methods during my research for this project and to develop a critical understanding of self-reflection.

Auto-ethnography falls somewhere between anthropology and literary studies and is a relatively new but contested area of research (Denshire, 2014, Clifford and Marcus, 2008). It is a form of 'highly personalised accounts where authors draw on their own experiences to extend understanding of a particular discipline or culture' (Holt, 2003:18). It is considered a postmodern research method and the relationship between the art of writing within a social science capacity and a literacy one has led to auto-ethnography as a research method being accused of blurring between "fact" and "fiction" and between "true" and "imagined" (Denshire, 2014). However, Holt (2003) advocates auto-ethnography as a challenge to 'silent authorship' and a way in which researchers can use their experience reflexively, as a way to look more internally at 'self-other' interactions. Auto-ethnography also gives the opportunity of avoiding some of the ethical problems during fieldwork, such as autonomy and informed consent (Murphy and Dingwall, 2001).

I decided to do most of my research auto-ethnographically, and to remain unbiased I did not read any works mentioned in the literature review section beforehand. This was decided so that I would not be influenced, that my feelings and thoughts surrounding the experience of being barefoot were my own. I was very interested in using my body as the site of research (Spry, 2001) and veering away from rigid and traditional academic methods. Writing about oneself as Denshire (2004) describes 'goes against the grain of much academic discourse', however I was aware that this type of auto-ethnography could be accused of being 'too self-indulgent and narcissistic' (Holt, 2003), I made every effort to avoid this.

## Conducting Interviews

- Open ended question interview (via email)

Two of my participants were approached via email as potential recruits to my research. I chose the participants based on their experiences of being barefoot. One participant, Bryan is a personal friend of mine who had mentioned that they had recently visited a barefoot park in North Rhine-Westphalia in Germany and I inquired whether they would like to be a participant and answer questions about his experience. Once both participants responded positively to taking part in my research I send them a consent form (Appendix H) with a list of questions (Appendix B and C). I felt that having guiding questions as a qualitative research data method would encourage my participants to stay on topic but not restrict their answers as the results depended very much on their personal experience and embodiment of being barefoot. I deliberately kept the questions open and more of a prompt, in the style of a semi-structured interview (Bernard, 1994). I also wanted them to follow the theme of being auto-ethnographical as a primary data source. Descriptive questions such as 'what attracted you to the *experience* of being barefoot?' encourages the participant to talk about a particular cultural scene (Spradley, 1979).

- **Participants in a group interview**

Group interviews are similar to focus groups which traditionally have not been a popular form of data collection, most likely due to the issue of non-existent statistics, however this form of methodology has grown in popularity since the 1970's as researchers, especially in the social science sectors became more adept at combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Bernard, 1994). This group interview consisted of three female participants who had answered a social media request for informants to discuss their experiences of being barefoot. At the designated time and date, I met the group and we proceeded to a small room in the library located at the university. I had booked a private room. I explained to the group what I was researching and the reasons why, and that I was interested in hearing about their experiences. Once the group understood the topic and the reason for the group interview I confirmed they were still happy to participate. They all consented and completed a consent form as well as confirming they were happy for me to record the conversation on my mobile

phone device in order for me to replay later and transcribe the results on to my laptop (Appendix D). I found this particular group to be lively, engaged, insightful and informative about their view when discussing the experience of being barefoot and what it meant to them. During the session I didn't feel that any of the participants were more dominant than another individual involved in the session, and that the flow of the discussion did operate at the level of the group (Denscombe, 2003). I was pleased that the group dynamics allowed everyone to voice their opinion and thoughts. Denscombe (2003) and Allison *et al* (1996) caution that this is an aspect of group interviews that the researcher needs to manage if some members of the group are quieter than others. However, I was aware of my positionality as the interviewer that potentially the group would only voice opinions that they perceived to be acceptable. The group members were aware of my research subject and I hoped they didn't moderate their views in order to give me the data they think I needed or wanted and based on my personal identity as well as my academic relationship with them (Denscombe, 2003). As the subject of the research is not personal, intrusive or sensitive such as issues surrounding sex, bereavement or serious illness (Ritchie *et al*, 2014), I feel that my participants in the group interview were open and honest with their answers and discussion and the power dynamics between myself as the researcher and the group were minimal.

- **24 Hour Barefoot Experience**

Three applicants answered a request on social media for participation in a twenty-four-hour experience of being barefoot and asked to share their experience. I outlined on enquiry from the participants the 'rules' of the 'experiment', which consisted of those taking part to be barefoot all day. The participants would be expected to go without shoes or socks from when they awoke, and to go about their average day. I asked that they recorded their experience in a short concise paragraph and email their findings to me (appendix E, F and G) I gave them no indication of any areas I was researching as I did not want the participants to be influenced to write what they thought I wanted to know, in order for the result to remain unbiased. I also stressed that they were under no obligation to do the whole twenty-four hours, that they could leave at any point with no prejudice and remaining comfortable and safe was paramount. I did however,

stress that they were aware of their environments and not to put themselves in any danger.

- **Journals/Vignettes of my own experience**

I decided to keep a journal on my laptop to record my thoughts and feelings whilst researching the topic of being barefoot. I felt this would be the most appropriate way to capture moments and outlooks to keep to my method of phenomenology. I religiously would immediately type up my experience as soon as I returned home. The written recordings of my experiences were kept on a password protected laptop, but as I intended to concentrate on my feelings, security and data protection was not an issue. I only wrote about other people if what they said about my feet being unshod related with what I was researching. In actual fact no-one really commented on it.

## Chapter 3: Review of Literature

### Introduction

To many the thought of being barefoot for any length of time outside in modern Europe would be a very disconcerting concept. People have concerns about the outside, which they do not necessarily have if they pad barefoot around inside their house. Concerns lie primarily with dangerous matter, such as dirt, nails or broken glass and the hazards they represent leads to an aversion of being barefoot. Historically shoes were made to protect our feet, but their modern form and function today also includes decoration and identity (Ingold, 2011). During my research, to the best of my knowledge, I found that there was very little published data specifically about the embodiment or experience of being barefoot and that most literature revolved around the health implications or benefits of being unshod or research concerning the recreational activity of barefoot running. Therefore, I have used the following authors' theories in this review of literature as a backdrop to my own research organised by theme.

### Being Barefoot

Tim Ingold's essay 'Culture on the Ground: The World Perceived Through the Feet' (2011) looks at our relationship with the ground; he suggests that the feet 'propel the body *within* the natural world' (2011:35) and that humans are 'half in nature-half out' (2011:35) due to our bipedal posture separated at the waist. Shoes, Ingold declares 'imprison the foot, constricting its freedom of movement and blunting its sense of touch' (2011:36). Ingold (2011) proposes that shoes deny the feet from feeling and sensing the world around them. By imprisoning feet in shoes Ingold states that this 'deprives wearers of the possibility of thinking with their feet' (2010:39) and 'the once strong and positive orientation towards the ground is being eroded (2011:41).

The sole of the foot has over 200,000 nerve endings, making it one of the areas of the highest concentration in the entire body (Knight, 2016) so by imprisoning our feet in shoes, we are rendering them as mere tools for movement, not as part of our whole bodies. My ethnographic example publication '*Barefoot and Before*' (2015) by the author Lynne Allbutt is an autobiographical account of her journey to run the width of Wales in the United Kingdom barefoot and to be the first person to do so. I have relied

heavily on her accounts of embodiment through being barefoot, and much of what Allbutt experienced is tied into Ingold's theory of how shoes render the feet deaf and mute. Ingold (2011) suggests we can only be truly in touch with our surroundings if it is perceived through the whole body and 'it is surely through our feet, in contact with the ground...that we are fundamentally and continually 'in touch' with our surroundings' (Ingold, 2011:45). Allbutt (2015) recalls how she considered what would happen if she shifted her focus from her head to her feet: what would happen if she was led by her feet? This correlates with Ingold's (2011) theory of thinking with our feet. Allbutt describes that her feet felt 'enlivened and just connected to something powerful or even everything' (2015:26). I particularly enjoyed reading Ingold's philosophy of practical theory towards anthropology as a way of knowing the world and 'approach to life' (2011:16). His theory helped me to recognise this in action whilst reading Allbutt's account of her experience and during my own embodiment of being barefoot whilst approaching the research experientially. I find Ingold's suggestion 'to remove one's shoes and go barefoot' (2011:16) as a way to experience for myself his theory that our 'primary tactile contact with the environment is through the feet rather than the hands' (2011:16) was very novel. This was inspirational and a very appealing way of exploring the 'experimental nature of anthropology' (Ingold, 2011:16) and Ingold implores researchers to celebrate this aspect of the discipline rather than hide it (2011).

### **Blurring Boundaries**

Mary Douglas's ground breaking book *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (2000) demonstrates how we perceive dirt and danger, and in turn how we organise it. I have used Douglas' theory on this to express how notions of being barefoot transgress boundaries and how we organise our environment to avoid pollution from dirt. Douglas outlines how 'dirt is essentially disorder' (2000:2) and claims that by eliminating dirt, we are simply organising our environment and making it conform to an idea. Dirt as a category is an 'anomaly leads to anxiety and from there to suppression and avoidance' (Douglas, 2000:5). However, Sullivan in her essay "Dirt Theory and Material Ecocriticism" (2012) suggests that separating our categories of dirt risks a separation of 'our material surroundings into a place of "pure, clean nature" and the dirty human sphere' (2012:515). Sullivan proposes that "dirt theory" could remedy the divide between the environment and the nostalgic views of

nature as a distant and clean setting (2012:515). Dirt avoidance in contemporary Europe 'is a matter of hygiene or aesthetics' and 'our idea of dirt is dominated by the knowledge of pathogenic organisms' (Douglas, 2000:36). However, if we can separate hygiene and pathogenicity from our ideas of dirt 'we are left with the old definition of dirt as matter out of place' (Douglas, 2000:36). Therefore, any dirt is likely to confuse or contradict our classification of 'cherished' order (Douglas, 2000:37). However, Sullivan argues that 'there is no ultimate boundary between us and nature. We are enmeshed within dirt in its many forms' (2012:515). Where I have found Douglas' theory most useful is how the author explains the ways anomalies from classification and order such as dirt threaten the body as a bounded system (2000:116) and how disorder 'symbolises both danger and power' (2000:95) in relation to our ideas of dirt. Sullivan agrees with this by noting that 'thinking dirt is therefore challenging' (2012:516) precisely because dirt cannot be categorised: dirt is a 'hybrid of organic and inorganic matter – a cyborg of sorts' (Sullivan, 2012:516). Going barefoot is against the social norm and in doing so, you enter a 'transitional' state which is dangerous (Douglas, 2000:97). The danger lies at the boundaries of our own bodies, which are 'dirty, diseased matter under continual threat' (Sullivan, 2012:521).

Douglas (2000) also notes how there are four types of social pollution, which I have used against the backdrop of being barefoot, and I will explain how I have interpreted them into blurring the boundaries between the body, particularly the bare soles of our feet, and the environment. The first pollution is 'danger pressing on external boundaries' (Douglas, 2000:123) which I have understood in the context of the environment (e.g. dirt) being in direct contact with the sole of the foot without the barrier of shoes; the second pollution is 'danger from transgressing the internal lines of the system' (Douglas, 2000:123). The 'system' could be interpreted in two ways as either social taboo or the 'internal lines' of the bounded body. The third pollution, 'danger within the margin of the lines' (Douglas, 2000:124) I have understood in relation to my research to mean physical dangers, such as glass or thorns penetrating the bodily boundary through the sole of the foot. Finally, the fourth pollution is 'danger from internal contradiction' (Douglas, 2000:124), which have been interpreted by myself as the internal dialogue between the head (or brain/mind) and the environment. However, Sullivan (2012) appears to agree with Ingold (2011) in that she calls for a more immersive and embodied experience with our environment and to 'embrace dirt'

(Sullivan, 2012:517). Douglas has been useful in exploring how bodily boundaries are maintained which I have inverted in my research, for example Douglas explores how dirt or matter out of place that crosses the bodily boundary outwards (usually through an orifice) is taboo, where I have reversed the concept where dirt or pollution crosses into the bodily margins inwards due to dangerous substances. Although I found the theory outlined in *Purity and Danger* (2010) as useful to my research there were areas which were unsatisfactorily explained or expanded on. The main area that I was frustrated with is Douglas's lack of exploring the concepts of dirt as pollution, taboo and danger and elaborating on them. Douglas is also a structuralist in her thinking, and her ideas of pollution, danger and taboo could be said to be outdated compared to the more contemporary debates of new materialisms (see Coole, D and Frost, S 2010; Davies, M 2014; Dolphijn, R and Tuin, I, 2012; Ingold, T, 2000 and Malafouris, L 2008) posthumanism (Braidotti, R, 2013; Hayles, K, 1999 and Wolfe, C, 2010) and the nature/culture debates (Descola, P and Lloyd, J, 2014).

### **Breaking Bonds**

I have taken to the works of Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault to explore the social construction and concepts applied to wearing footwear as a social construct and the implications socially of publically being barefoot. Bourdieu's (2010) model of *habitus* refers to the physical embodiment of cultural capital, that is the deeply ingrained habits, skills and dispositions that people possess through enduring and learned action and experiences (Eriksen, 2015). Bourdieu (2010) maintains however that *habitus* is created through the social, rather than the individual, and refers to the patterns, which are entrenched through socialised norms and inclinations that guide suitable behaviour unique to that cultural norm. With this in mind, the individual habit of wearing shoes has been learned, because it is an acceptable social behaviour and a tool to navigate the complicated social norms of everyday life. To enter the public sphere shoeless would be akin to breaking bonds with your own personal habitus and ingrained dispositions of what is culturally acceptable.

In a similar theme Michel Foucault explores how the body is used as a target of power. In his chapter "Docile Bodies" in the book *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (1991) Foucault explains how, historically, the body has been subjected, used,

transformed and improved which in turn created a 'body that is manipulated, shaped, trained, which obeys, responds, becomes skilful and increases its forces' (1991:136). This in turn transforms it into a docile body. Those who appear in public barefoot are designated to the classification of 'deviant body' by society. Exceptions to appearing in public unshod usually include locations such as the beach, park or on holiday. Becker argues that 'social groups create deviance by making rules whose infractions constitute deviance' (1963:9). In other words, deviance is behaviour identified by a social group where an individual has failed to obey the group rules by their actions.

## **Conclusion**

Tim Ingold (2011), Mary Douglas, (2000), Heather Sullivan (2012), Pierre Bourdieu (2010) and Michel Foucault (1991) have provided the theoretical framework for the research areas most concerned with the themes for this body of work. Tim Ingold's (2011) suggestion of taking anthropology outside as a way of knowing is a proposal I have taken seriously in order to do my research in an unconventional and experiential or phenomenological way to use my own body and experiences as a research site. This inspiration led to the embodiment of 'being barefoot'. Entwined with Douglas' (2000) theory of how we process and categorise 'matter out of place' as an avenue of exploring our relationship with dirt and our bounded bodies were instrumental in provoking thought about some of the implications of being barefoot. However, Sullivan (2012) argues that we are already in a relationship with dirt, and that our preoccupation in western Europe with separating ourselves from nature and the environment (through the barrier of wearing shoes) is therefore challenging because dirt ultimately cannot be categorised neatly due to its hybrid nature. Here we find many examples of blurred boundaries. Douglas' theory also illuminated categories of social control through ritual and hygiene, a point I explored further using Bourdieu (2010) and Foucault's (1991) philosophies to help place my identity of being barefoot in the public sphere. The social habitus of ingrained learning in order to navigate this sphere made me realise that the habitual wearing of shoes is a social construct, and that its power came from being a 'docile body' which is acted upon by the burden of social anxiety and wariness of being labelled a 'deviant body'. To go barefoot would therefore be akin to breaking bonds with acceptable social behaviour.

## **Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis**

This chapter presents the results and findings of the research methods used and discusses the core themes of 'Being Barefoot, Blurred Boundaries and Breaking Bonds' which were informed by the literature discussed in Chapter 3 and where I continue to demonstrate how my hypothesis that shoes are a barrier to achieving a connectedness with the earth and our natural environment, examine our relationship with dirt and how shoes are a social construct which is ingrained in our habitus to conform in western society. These observations and findings have formed as a result of my experiences in the field. There are also brief references to other bodies of work which I feel are important to demonstrate a point more clearly. The research I have conducted and the different methodologies used are to help support my original research question.

### **Being Barefoot:**

- Embodiment and Connecting

During my research and data analysis from the findings I concentrated mainly on the embodiment of being barefoot. In his essay, Ingold (2011) suggests that the foot is rooted in nature, but the development of technology in footwear has led to a desire for modern humans to be as far removed from nature as possible. Many of my participants discussed the feeling of being connected to something outside themselves, a feeling of being 'plugged in' (Lyndsey, 2017), a 'freeing sensation' (Eurgain 2018) and a 'natural high' (Bryan, 2017). An ethnographic example of this in action is the Kogi population in Columbia who 'consider that footwear cuts off their contact with Mother Earth' (Kunz, 2009:16) and therefore go barefoot to maintain their connection with nature. My own experience of being barefoot threw up some interesting embodiment sensations as described in the following vignette of my first encounter with being barefoot:

Upon reaching the beach I immediately took my shoes off and tried to concentrate on the feeling of being barefoot, I felt like a bit of a fraud,

as if some feeling of enlightenment would be apparent and jolt me like a thunderbolt. I didn't know what I was expecting, just some sort of feeling of 'eureka!' this is why people like going barefoot. In actual fact, none of those feelings came (Personal Journal, 2018).

However, as Davies (1999) notes it is important for researchers in the field to be aware of their own feelings, to be reflexive of their own internal self. On reflection after this attempt to 'embody' being barefoot, I realised that I was expecting too much of myself, that research takes time. Malafouris (2008) believes that we all share a common conception of our own bodies, and under normal circumstances we intuitively own and control our bodies, but when I attempted to experience the environment through my body, I was disappointed. Nevertheless, I carried on with my research and tried to immerse myself in the environment instead of the sensations I expected to feel:

Whilst walking (on the beach) I found myself looking down a lot at the ground, at first to watch my step and make sure I didn't pierce my skin on a particularly sharp shell, but I found my mind wandering from this task. I began to look and search for whole shells, attractive shells and interesting stones I could take home or admire there and then. Picking them up and turning them over, watching the light catch them at a certain angle and marvelling at the beautiful detail (Personal Journal, 2018).

Once I had let go of my inhibition of expecting enlightenment, I eventually found myself distracted from concentrating on bodily sensations and without noticing began to occupy myself by interacting with the environment around me. My experience relates with Lyndsey (2017) who noted that 'Being barefoot keeps you in the 'now' as you have to be present and engaged with your surroundings'. The discovery I wasn't expecting was how much I focused on the ground because I was barefoot, how much I noticed was on the floor; matter I would have stridden past blissfully unaware of had I been shod, safe in the knowledge that my shoes would protect me from danger.

As Ingold suggests, the ground is also a place that matter projects against as ‘things ‘stand out’ as foci of attention’ (2011:45) but he also asks whether the ground can also ‘be a focus in itself?’ (2011:45). Bennett (2010) describes how objects have “thing-power”, where an object achieves independence from subjectivity, and becomes “vibrant matter” which has the ability to affect other bodies which in turn either reduces or increases their power. However, Bennett’s ideas that ‘wildness was a not-quite human force that addled and altered human and other bodies. It named strange dimension of matter, an *out-side*’ (2010:3) became more apparent to me as I spent more time barefoot outside. The more time I spent doing this activity in the name of research and recording my experience, the more I became aware that I was indeed, *outside*. What I mean by this I shall try and describe as follows: being barefoot left me feeling vulnerable; therefore, I spent more time concentrating on my surroundings, learning to skim the environment and in doing so taking *note* of it.

My perception of my surroundings changed the more time I spent barefoot. I was acutely aware of where I was about to place my foot down, to the point I was making sure I didn’t step on any tiny insects. Instead of walking around the environment noisily, clumsily and with an air of entitlement, I began to tread softly and with great care, for myself and for other creatures. ‘Barefoot walking reveals the ground to be composite and heterogeneous, not so much an isotropic platform for life...woven from the comings and goings of its manifold inhabitants’ (Ingold, 2011:16). The premise of perceived danger or hazards on the ground forced me to be aware of my environment and *actively* look for potential matter out of place (Douglas, 2000).

One of the most influential studies of walking and seeing came from Goffman’s (2010) study of pedestrians in a city where he noted that all sighted people rely on their eyes to experience the world, where the sighted individual uses his eyes to guide his body around the environment. A process Goffman referred to as ‘scanning’ (2010:11). This came as a revelation to me: always looking down at the ground was a novelty whilst barefoot. This particular culturally ingrained *habitus* of looking forward and ahead when walking was the consequence, I believe, of habitually wearing shoes and the inhabiting of a built environment. As Ingold (2011) notes, urban spaces have transformed how we walk and are specifically designed for the boot-clad pedestrian. Ingold argues, ‘They have literally paved the way...no longer did he have to pick his

way, with care and dexterity, along potholed, cobbled or rutted thoroughfares, littered with accumulated filth and excrement' (2011:42). Ingold goes on to say that during the eighteenth century, for London in particular, the advent of pavements 'offered pedestrians a street surface that was smooth and uniform, regularly cleaned, free from clutter and properly lit' (2011:42). However, despite these improvements to our built environments and urban spaces, my participant Lyndsey commented that she felt "very unsafe and vulnerable in a town... Towns are harsh" (2017).

On the occasions when I walked barefoot on pavements or tarmac, I found myself scanning less whilst in the town. What I did notice is after a time spent on tarmac, I began to notice that my feet began to 'react' to this surface. A hot, stinging, itchy pain would overcome my feet; sometimes it was unbearable. I felt like my feet were protesting. After one intense episode of this sensation I recorded the experience in my journal because it affected me so deeply.

About a quarter of the way back to the car my feet felt like they were on fire, a creeping burning sensation. This was uncomfortable, and painful. The road was relatively flat, there were not many stones or sharp gravel to make my feet feel like this. I suddenly thought that maybe it was because the road was man made? Unnatural materials and my feet were reacting to it? Once we got to the car the burning and tingling increased, almost like a rash. It took a long time for the feeling to disappear (Personal Journal, 2018).

I researched how likely it was to be allergic to tarmac and found it is possible to be affected by tarmac and the bitumen contained in it. A study by Riala *et al* (1998) on skin problems suffered by road workers and roofers concluded that certain chemical components found in asphalt and bitumen can lead to an irritability on the skin, in particular the components such as *polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons* can be absorbed by the skin. My group interview participants (Appendix D) also noted how tarmac is unpleasant, even painful to walk on.

Because looking down at the ground meant I had to physically slow down, so I found that my mind began to slow down, as the following vignette illustrates:

I realised that if I hadn't been barefoot, I would not be doing this. I would be strolling down the beach at a pace, walking the dogs as if it was another chore and not really taking into account the environment. Rushed and in a hurry (Personal Journal, 2018).

Ingold and Vergunst agree that thinking whilst in movement, such as walking, reminds us 'that the body itself is grounded in movement' (2008:2) or to put it another way 'walking is not just what a body *does*; it is what a body *is*' (Ingold and Vergunst, 2008:2). Malafouris agrees with this thinking body analogy, he notes that 'Our brains are structured so as to project activation patterns from sensorimotor areas to higher cortical areas. Instead of abstract mental processes, cognitive processes are directly tied to the body' (2008:2). This started to become apparent to me during my research. I had found my feet, quite literally and I became aware of them as a thinking, feeling, tactile appendage that had long been forgotten about, imprisoned and hidden away in shoes. This leads to the next section of recalled cognitive processes which link to embodiment.

- Embodying the Environment and Memories

'Feeling the environment with your feet is incredible' states one of my participants, Lyndsey (2017). A finding that came out this research was a theme of memories evoked from feeling the environment whilst barefoot. Dee from the group interview recalls 'when I was younger I used to always go out in the mud, camping and stuff. We always used to take our shoes off' (2018). Bryan notes that the 'first barefoot sensation to walk on was sand...Close your eyes and you could be on the beach...Sand is definitely associated with those days on the beach or holidays away' (2017). Finally, Rebecca recalled memories of her childhood:

*More often than not I enjoyed the sensations as I spent most of my childhood shoeless and certain sensations brought back memories, such as standing on cold pavement reminded me of walking home on*

*an evening from the town along the promenade, back towards the beach* (2018).

Ingold argues that memory and remembering is different to cultural knowledge. He believes that 'if culture is taken to consist of a body of acquired information that is available for transmission independently, then memory must be something like an inner cabinet of the mind, in which this information is stored and preserved from the vagaries of everyday life' (2000:138) Could this impulse of memory account for the changes in behaviour I noted occurred during the group interview (Appendix D). For example, I observed that once the participants had removed their shoes and socks, they started to skip and almost appeared 'giddy'. I propose that my participants were embodying a younger version of themselves, of a past remembered. One foot in the present, one foot in the past, traversing the boundaries of time through memory. Sebba's (1991) study shows that there is a connection between a child's quality of memory based on their experience with the environment and the way it is engraved in memory as the child matures. Sebba's conclusion showed that:

'An experience in which the child is actively involved, with his body, his senses, and his awareness, is likely to be etched in memory for a long time; and the sympathetic attitude the child displays toward nature is likely to accompany the experience even when recalled in memory' (1991:395).

If we apply the translation of the English '*remember*' from Latin, '*re*' means to pass back through and '*memor*' means mindful or mind. Therefore, '*remember*' means a passing a segment of time back through the memory (Narvaez, 2006). The sensation of being barefoot implies that a nostalgic memory from childhood, an abstract from a forgotten past, becomes part of a present identity. Alternatively, 'a felt memory, something embodied, can become a conscious cognitive memory' (Narvaez, 2006:51). A memory, can in theory, come from below (literally the ground we walk on) to then travel up the body and form an abstract perception in the mind. Memories are called forward from habitual knowledge and transform 'mere experience into an experience' (Hastrup, 1995:184). This transformation, according to Hastrup, is created

through narrative expression; by sharing a memory 'we carve out units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life' (1995:184).

But what of this new identity temporarily formed because of the memories invoked from being barefoot? I suggest that this recollection of embodiment may also go further back in our ancestral DNA. As Lyndsey (2017) proposes: that "Being barefoot...reacquaints us with our primal self". Ingold also alludes to this notion, as he comments 'For our earliest ancestors did not stride out upon the land with heavy boots, but made their way within it, lightly, dextrously, and mostly barefoot' (2011:50). In Allbutt's autobiographical account, they explain how their embodied personhood and identity began to change:

'The further I travel along this unshodden path, the less I want to be unshod; the more I want to be barefoot. It's addictive or maybe it's just authentic. Or could authenticity be addictive? Is it our natural state? Being barefoot and authentic?' (2015:51).

Allbutt's (2015) words resonated with my own experience, whenever I went barefoot in the name of research, the more I craved being barefoot. I would take off my shoes at every opportunity, and the distances increased until eventually I walked barefoot five kilometres through a woodland. As soon as my feet touched the ground, I relaxed. The constant noise in my head from daily life ceased. I became at ease with myself, kinder to myself and in turn I craved my next fix of being barefoot again. It was addictive, exhilarating and freeing. I felt, for the first time since childhood, alive and present. Engaged with my surroundings and feeling the earth and the environment through my feet. There was a dialogue between me and the environment. I realised this during one of my forays where half of the walk was through a wood and took around forty minutes, and the other half was on tarmac road, taking around twenty minutes. As soon as my feet left the grass to step onto the road, the internal dialogue between myself, my body and the environment abruptly stopped. There was just an immense feeling of hostility, it shocked me. I was desperate to return to the woods and my more authentic self.

- The exhaustion of Embodiment

Another peculiar result from my findings was the feeling of exhaustion which came after being barefoot for a particularly long time, usually around 6 hours. I got used to not automatically putting on my socks and then shoes when going outside, in fact after a while it didn't occur to me. I actively began resenting having to wear shoes or be associated with them. However, if I had walked for half a day barefoot doing an activity, as opposed to pottering around the house barefoot, I would return exhausted. One event I recorded demonstrates at the time how fatigued I felt.

I returned home after walking barefoot through the woods. I had crossed dirt paths, logging roads, streams, peat bogs and balanced over fallen trees to reach my destination. I only suffered one thorn, my feet were filthy but I was happy. On entering my house this wave of pure exhaustion washed over me, my muscles felt like lead, my body was heavy and I struggled to focus or think. All I wanted to do was go and lie down. I was utterly dog-tired (Personal Journal, 2018).

On recalling that entry, I can honestly say that this feeling of weariness overtook me as soon as I left the outside world and entered the threshold of my home. The abrupt loss of contact with the ground outside seemed to trigger the tiredness. I recalled my participant Lyndsey saying "I have likened it to being 'plugged in' and whereas most people take their shoes off to relax, I have to put mine on, as I then feel more disconnected" (2017). She also goes on to say "As strange as it may sound, that [being barefoot] can be tiring depending on the environment" (2017). I could now relate to this feeling: this constant exchange between me and the ground, my surroundings and environment had been a sharp learning curve. In the twenty-four barefoot experiment, another participant, Deanna, wrote of their experience as follows:

*By the evening however, being connected to the ground became too overwhelming and I began to struggle processing how much information I picked up through the ground. As a practicing Pagan, being connected to the Earth was wonderful but when things became too much I wanted to crawl home and put on shoes (2018)*

Allbutt (2015) claims that this connection is an organic exchange of the earth and our own electrons, conducted through the body. Numerous studies showing the health benefits (see Chevalier, G et al, 2012; Ghaly, M and Teplitz, D, 2004 and K, Soskal and P, Soskal, 2011) have been conducted on this particular phenomenon, commonly referred to as 'grounding' or 'earthing'. Presently, I cannot find any research about whether 'grounding' can lead to those feelings of exhaustion. However, a quick search online through some forums on grounding shows that it is a very common side-affect, with symptoms being described as 'flu-like' with fogginess, aching muscles and headaches. Perhaps the exchange between my body and the earth had overwhelmed me, flooding my body with negative electrons whilst the positive electrons were discharged. Maybe the whispering internal dialogue between my body and the surroundings had left me exhausted. After all, I had been shielded from this interchange with my environment for the best part of twenty years. Re-establishing a natural connection with the Earth would unsurprisingly be tiring. I was also forgetting that I had re-employed a highly receptive sensory organ, my feet. My brain was probably feeling the effects of sensory overload, in the same way that participant Deanna had commented on earlier.



Figure 2



Figure 3

### **Blurring Boundaries**

- Dirt as matter out of place

'Dirt is the stuff of tactile sensation' (Ingold, 2011:42). However we categorise dirt, it is still a sensation to embody and feel. The habitual wearing of shoes denies the ability of thinking and feeling with our feet, and in turn feeling dirt (Ingold, 2011). Yet we actively avoid dirt when we wear shoes: a barrier is created. Douglas suggests that 'in chasing dirt' (2000:2) we are essentially 're-ordering the environment, making it conform to an idea' (2000:2). However, by trying to categorise dirt, we are frustrated by its fluidity. Sullivan points out that 'dirt is always shifting and on the move' (2012:2). This seemingly fluctuating category of dirt is 'challenging' (Sullivan, 2012:2) and inconsistent to think with, and this theory connects to Douglas' idea that an 'initial recognition of anomaly leads to anxiety and from there to suppression and avoidance' (Douglas, 2000:5). There are microscopic elements which form dirt that are invisible to the naked eye; this could be conceived as a polluting danger and has the potential to transgress bodily boundaries. These characteristics contribute to dirt's ubiquitous and anxiety-provoking nature due to its hiddenness (Patton, 1985).

Furthermore, according to Douglas, dirt is 'matter out of place' (2000:41). Shoes are used as a barrier against this potentially dangerous, shifting matter. Howson (2013) suggests that when substances leave the body, they cross over from the social world to the natural world. However, when substances transfer from the natural to the social world this transgression of matter in reverse leads us to feel the anxiety that Douglas identified. These movements of 'such substances reinforce the significance of the margins of the body, the vulnerable points of contact between the body (the natural world) and the social world' (Howson, 2013:102)

In continuation, Douglas states that 'Reflection on dirt involves reflection on the relation of order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death' (2000:6). When conducting auto-ethnographic research, I confronted my own perceptions of being barefoot, and having dirt on my soles. The thought initially made

me uncomfortable, the fear of the unknown dangers lurking on the ground. I endeavoured to overcome this aversion by actively embracing dirt, to use my body as way to think through it (as advocated by Attala and Steel, in press). Many of my negative perceptions of dirt found in the natural and built environment is due to an ontology of otherness and separation, facilitated by the barrier of wearing shoes. I fell into the same category of those who believed 'that dirty nature is something far away and disconnected from themselves and their bodies' (Sullivan, 2012:529). Whilst many of my fears were based on danger from hazardous or repulsive matter, many of my participants echoed the same sentiments. On contemplating the mission of completing the barefoot park walk and its many obstacles, Bryan felt uneasy when confronted with planks of wood, commenting that he "instantly associated the planks with splinters from previous experience" (2017). One of my group interviewees Dee commented that they "couldn't walk across woodchip" as they would be "scared of getting splinters". However, most of my participants were concerned with the dirt and debris found in urban spaces; Molly from the group interview stated that if they were in their home city, they would be wearing shoes.

*Purely because you don't know what is on the floor, not like dirt but glass or needles. I come from a not very nice area, so if I walked around Wolverhampton barefoot I'd get a hypodermic needle stuck in my toe...and people just throw their fags on the floor and they might not be put out. There is a lot of chewing gum too (2018).*

Lyndsey makes the same distinction between walking barefoot in urban spaces as opposed to natural environments, commenting that:

*The pavements are dirty and there is inevitable broken glass to be wary of. Mountains, beach and woodland are just beautiful. Towns are harsh, the countryside is soft (2017)*

In contrast, I felt more comfortable at walking through a town than a woodland barefoot, which is why I concentrated most of my research in these natural environments to test myself. I found that the more I was exposed to these surroundings, the less my fear of dirt and what was hidden on the ground became. As

my participant Bryan concludes with his apprehension of the unknown he faced at the barefoot park, during and after the experience he resolved his fear through exposure:

*Your brain [is] working on overload to resist and fight those unknown feelings, or relating them to past experiences, whether they be positive or negative...each [obstacle] getting easier with time, most would think it was your feet getting used to it, however it is just your brain re-training itself that it is not a danger and as you get used to it, your brain is no longer seeing it has a threat or pain (2017)*

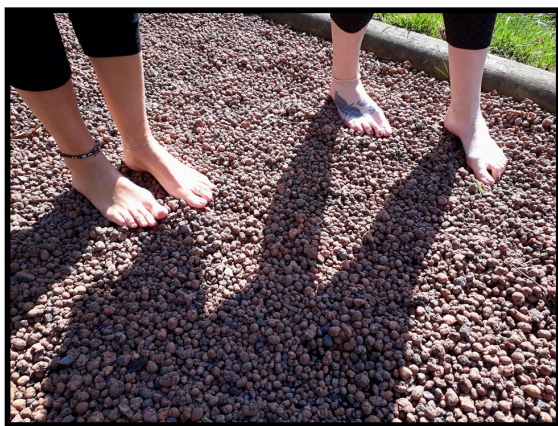


Figure 4



Figure 5

As I researched my relationship with dirt the more comfortable I became. I immersed and enmeshed myself in the 'dirty' environment and the fear of the unknown unravelled around me. My perception about dirt and danger changed drastically the more and more I was exposed to it. Dirt began to shape me, as Sullivan notes: 'Human bodies and minds are fully ensconced in material environments, which shape us just as vividly as we shape them' (2012:532). I no longer perceived that dirt was attacking the boundaries of my body. I am dirt, and dirt is me.

- Travelling matter

During my research I realised that dirt was a part of me, and in being a part of me, was also using my body as a vehicle to move across space and time. As Sullivan states, 'Dirt, soil, earth and dust surround us at all scales: we find them on our shoes, [and] bodies' (2012:515). Being in the environment meant I was surrounded and engaged with dirt. There was a sense of "transcorporeality" (Alaimo, 2010, see also

Ingold, 2000) between me and the environment. As Descola describes more articulately:

‘The soil is like an outer envelope of our body and an expansion of our muscles and senses. It is not within ourselves, obviously, but it is not entirely separate from us either; it is the accomplice of our body and that which anchors it to the world’ (2010:xiii)

Only one of my participants touched upon this relationship between travelling, bodies and matter from the twenty-four-hour barefoot experiment. Andrew noted that:

*The overall experience of my feet being bare can be summed with one word: transition...Another factor was the fact my feet picked up things from where it had walked upon them – mud from the meadow, tiny pieces of gravel from the road, fluff from carpets, i.e. matter was travelling with me as I was travelling upon it (2018).*

This exchange between dirty matter and human bodies adhere to the theory that bodies are always becoming. I shed organic (or inorganic) materials that dispersed and clung to the environment, such as hair, dead skin cells and fibres from clothes. The boundaries between the matter of my surroundings and my body were becoming blurred, and not just at one fixed point through the soles of my feet. Coard (in press) notes that ‘the epidermis, the outer layer of the skin...forming an impenetrable boundary between us and our environment’. Yet, I began to realise that my body was not ‘bound’ by my outer layer of skin but was seeping and shedding out into the environment, just as much as the environment was transgressing the porous boundaries of my skin. Attala and Steel (in press) stress:

‘Being human is a physical or material relationship as much as a social one, and [that] being human demands constant negotiations between material entities. Indeed, we are reminded that we are not only situated within a physical world, but crucially we are a part of it’.



*Figure 6*

Furthermore, everyday movements of bodies created paths that I was traversing along. A sense of histories and the past rose up through the ground to meet the soles of my feet. Questions about my surroundings formed almost constantly as I walked: why was this path made? Who else had walked along it today? The concept that occupied me the most was fact that I very rarely left a mark whilst barefoot. In shoes or boots I would have left an imprint, but barefoot I was light and silent. But I knew the weight of my body bearing down on the ground would leave some sign I had been there, no matter how imperceptible. Only 'soft' ground recorded the movement of my body, mud, soil, moss, sand etc. Yet 'hard' ground such as sun-baked paths, hardly changed to reflect my moving body. Some ground resisted me, whilst others yielded to me. My footprint was also a symbol of blurring the boundaries between time and space. Other bodies and the weather would soon erase my connection with the ground. As Ingold notes:

'Footprints thus have a temporal existence, a duration, which is bound to the very dynamics of the ground to which they belong: to the cycles of organic growth and decay, of the weather, and of the seasons. The

ground, as we have seen, is matted from diverse materials. Footprints are impressed in the mat' (2010:129).

### **Breaking Bonds**

- Social construct and affluence

Ingold (2011) argues that humans are *in* nature from the waist down, implying that our feet have been mastered and bought under the control of our hands and brains by the imprisonment of shoes. As humans sought to master and control nature, the foot has 'been increasingly regulated and disciplined in the course of history by the hand-made technology of boots and shoes' (Ingold, 2011:46). Ingold furthers his argument by stating that 'Boots and shoes, products of the ever more versatile human hand, imprison the foot, constricting its freedom of movement and blunting its sense of touch' (2011:36). There are numerous studies supporting the detrimental effects shoes have on the natural spread of our feet and toes (see D'Août, K et al, 2009; Kim, Y et al, 2013 and Shu, Y et al, 2015). As noted in the previous section my participants all felt a sense of freedom when barefoot as noted in the previous section, but other people's reactions are what is explored in this section.

Surprisingly, only one of my participants remarked how abnormal it felt to not put on shoes when leaving the private space to enter the social space. Deanna noted that "Leaving my house to begin my day barefoot was somewhat surreal and I had to remind myself not to put socks nor shoes on". This chimes with Bourdieu's *habitus* theory 'that the principle of this construction is the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions (1992:52). The repetitive daily act of putting on shoes is an ingrained habit for Deanna who felt that going against this grain was "surreal". An experience that struck them, even going as far to remark that they felt they needed to consciously remind themselves not to it, instead of unconsciously performing the act of putting their shoes on. Likewise, Allbutt (2015) experienced a similar feeling when getting ready for a social event with friends. She recalls 'There is something very surreal about getting dressed to go out and then putting on a coat, hat and gloves. But not shoes' (Allbutt, 2015:24). Bourdieu (1992) claims that *habitus* is especially

developed through social processes, not individual ones, which in turn establishes a wide array of dispositions that shape individuals. These dispositions are formed, stored, recorded and then exert influences of power which consequently shape practices of human behaviour (Navarro, 2006).

Furthermore, many of my participants commented on other people's reactions to them walking barefoot in a social space. Deanna commented that "As I walked through campus I noticed that people seemed to stare at my feet in disbelief, unsure how to process the fact my feet were bare" whilst Rebecca found it interesting to observe "that people stare at your feet quite often. This was something I had not noticed before going barefoot for the day and found it strange how often it happened". They also further this by comparing this experience to one whilst living abroad as "when I was a child in Spain, it was not seen as unusual to go barefoot into shops in the town but in Britain it is deemed odd". Equally, Andrew noticed that individuals "were quick to notice the lack [of] shoes upon my feet – most notably in Sainsbury's, but also in the library". This demonstrates how unnerving it appears for society to witness the bare flesh of feet, not imprisoned by shoes. People in the public social sphere were in "disbelief" at this apparent breaking of bonds linked to *habitus*. Individuals "stared" and tried to process this seemingly abnormal and possibly unsocial approach to exposing bare feet. The habitus of wearing shoes is conceivably so deeply ingrained in the British population that to be without shoes was 'unnatural'.

There are also categories of class at play here, usually being barefoot was reserved to the classes of 'the criminal, the young and above all, the ignorant' (Ingold, 2011:38). Although Ingold was specifically referring to the activity of walking here, I feel that it applies to the notions of being barefoot in a public space, not usually deemed appropriate in western culture unless at the beach for example. However, I would also add in another section of class, the poor. 'To the affluent, the constriction of the feet remains as sure a mark of civilisation as the freedom of the hands' (Ingold, 2011:37). Without any evidence of course, I speculate that the majority of peoples who witnessed the participants walking barefoot would have formed negative reasons as to why. Very few I believe would have accepted that the participants were walking barefoot, because they wanted to. My participants would have to either be delinquents, children or insane to justify being barefoot without an explanation in the public sphere. My

participants were literally 'stepping out of line' by not conforming. As Allbutt sums up 'it was a step too far for many, especially in Wales. Barefooting is not big here' (2015:93).

- Shoes as social control

Allbutt (2015) in her account of being barefoot recalled her anxiety at the prospect of rejection from social spaces due to the nakedness of her feet. Allbutt states that her 'fear wasn't of any possible physical discomfort or danger but of being confronted, challenged or even chastised. I really didn't want to be asked to leave the restaurant. Not in public' (2015:25). The socially ingrained *habitus* of wearing shoes is a subtle avenue to exert social control to make the population conform. In short, we are *docile bodies* (Foucault, 1991) in shoes. The group interview participants explored this area with Dee suggesting that 'we perceive our bodies to be delicate vessels, in which we are pruned and perfect in society' and donning shoes aids us in that perceived perfection to enter a social space. Eurgain made the claim that 'its geared towards women more...Women have to be soft' which I interpreted as follows; because the ground is full of 'matter out of place' (Douglas, 2000) it is therefore dangerous, and the 'softness' of women makes them more vulnerable without the protection of shoes. Seemingly, from our head to our toes in western thought the body as a whole is 'required to be docile in its minutest operations' (Foucault, 1991:156).

The demand by societal judgements to wear shoes is an insidious social control of the body that is required to conform. The body has become an object of control, in the grip of strict hierarchal powers 'which imposed on it constraints, prohibitions or obligations' (Foucault, 1991:136) to be shod. This is demonstrated in Allbutt's angst at walking barefoot in an unconventional environment, she recalls 'I just felt incredibly exposed, I risked criticism, rejection and ridicule. It took courage to dare to be different and when you take courage you automatically risk feeling vulnerable' (2015:94). In this passage she demonstrates how societies expectations and pressure for bodies to conform appropriately leads to oneself regulating their own behaviour. It is the power of fear.

When carrying out autoethnography, I had no issues with appearing barefoot in public, wherever that space was located. Perhaps I am naturally a 'deviant body' (Becker, 1963), my predisposition has always been somewhat 'anti-authoritarian'. There were

spaces I would not enter barefoot, such as public toilets, but these issues were more concerned with hygiene and pollution. I was never accosted or subjected to ridicule. The only words said to me were usually 'well, I couldn't do it'. But now during this research my only regret is that I did not dig further when people commented their aversion and find out the reasons why. In fact, I began to wonder why people did not go barefoot more often, my identity began to change. I no longer felt the need to wear shoes, I felt like I was not being true to my more authentic self. Other people who wore shoes in my eyes were now appearing as the 'deviant bodies' (Becker, 1963) or more often than not I began to feel pity for people who habitually wore shoes. I began to view shoes as a 'type of ball and chain' an implement to keep the society cohesive, conforming and docile. I slowly began to loathe my shoes, viewing them only as a way to imprison not just the soles of my feet, but my very soul. I rejected shoes, and in doing so I was rejecting societal norms. The anxiety was so strong at the prospect of having to wear shoes at some point, and more and more as the weather turned, I invested in a pair of minimalist shoes. I had converted, and I was not turning back.

I therefore propose that the social discipline of habitual shoe wearing creates a docile body, and in tandem with Bourdieu's (2010) theory of *habitus*, being shod is an ingrained practice which is used as an instrument to exert social control.

## Conclusion

The aims of this research project were to explore and investigate our connection with the environment through the soles of our feet through direct physical contact with the ground. The research also examined the complex relationship between dirt and the classifications we assign to matter out of place (Douglas, 2000). Additionally, the theory of *habitus* (Bourdieu, 2000) and a Foucauldian view point were adopted when examining the social constructs and group cohesions generated that the daily wearing of shoes helps to facilitate.

My research and consequent findings can be summarised as follows; a number of the hypothesis I proposed were founded, such as removing one's shoes to establish a connection with the earth, and how shoes are viewed as a social cohesion tool. Surprising findings which presented themselves through the research are areas I feel to be further investigation, such as travelling matter and the exhaustion of embodiment.

I believe further research and analysis would be beneficial to the academic world in this area of experiential anthropology, especially in the innovative direction of New Materialisms. I offer this research as a small contribution to fill any gaps, and welcome any involvement to built upon my findings.

## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Notice in Reception

Dear Guest,

My name is Laura Yates and I am a third year undergraduate student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David on the Lampeter Campus. I am currently studying a BA in Anthropology and have chosen to conduct my dissertation research and field studies at 'Top of the Woods' in Boncath.

My subject for my dissertation is to explore social ties or bonds which appear around a campfire. Due to 'Top of the Woods' having limited access to WiFi, mobile reception and charging points I am intrigued to investigate whether the lack of this modern technology facilitates a unique environment which is cultivated, constructed or manifested around the primeval setting of a campfire.

I am interested to hear about guests' experiences around the campfire here at Top of the Woods, any thoughts, opinions, feelings or views are valid. If you would like to take part in this study, which is very similar to an informal chat then please do not hesitate to approach me and I would be happy to arrange a convenient time.

I will also be approaching guests on site too, in the hope that some will be happy to speak to me about their experience/s. I will be looking to speak to all demographics from the very young to more mature persons, families, friends, groups and couples.

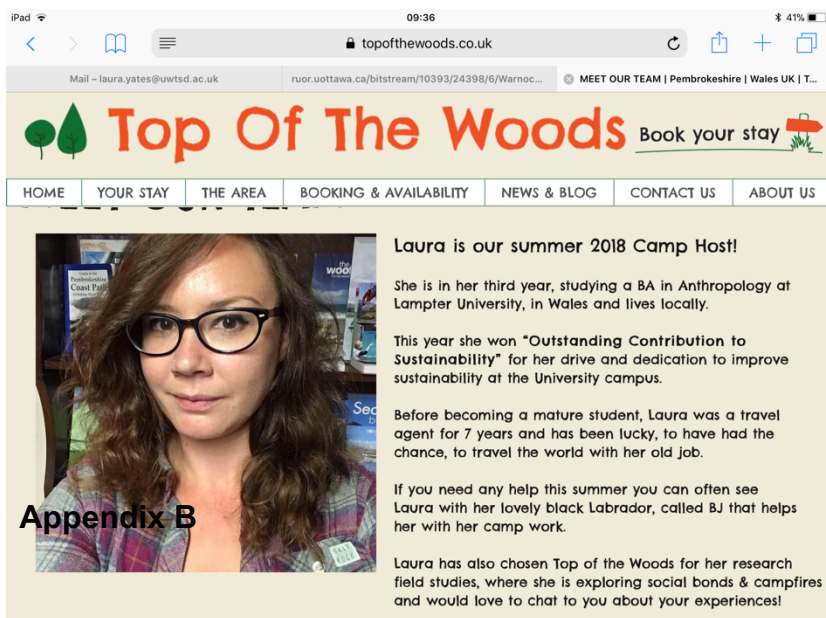
If you would rather not be approached by myself or take part in this study, please let one of the staff here at Top of the Woods know.

\*Please note all conversations will be recorded using a Dictaphone device (unless I am specifically requested not to do so – in which case I will record information by hand). All personal information is completely data protected and no personal information will be released to the general public. All personal data will be stored on a password protected computer and all physical information for example notepads and diaries etc. will be kept either upon my person or in a locked office here on site or at my home address and any information will only be shared with my dissertation supervisor.

Kind Regards,

Laura Yates

#### Appendix a.1 – notice to guests (ethics)



The screenshot shows a web browser on an iPad displaying the 'Top of the Woods' website. The page has a navigation bar with links: HOME, YOUR STAY, THE AREA, BOOKING & AVAILABILITY, NEWS & BLOG, CONTACT US, and ABOUT US. The main content area features a large photo of Laura Yates, a woman with glasses and curly hair. To the right of the photo, the text reads: 'Laura is our summer 2018 Camp Host! She is in her third year, studying a BA in Anthropology at Lampeter University, in Wales and lives locally. This year she won "Outstanding Contribution to Sustainability" for her drive and dedication to improve sustainability at the University campus. Before becoming a mature student, Laura was a travel agent for 7 years and has been lucky, to have had the chance, to travel the world with her old job. If you need any help this summer you can often see Laura with her lovely black Labrador, called BJ that helps her with her camp work. Laura has also chosen Top of the Woods for her research field studies, where she is exploring social bonds & campfires and would love to chat to you about your experiences!'

### Appendix B

## Appendix B

Participant Lyndsey

Participant Research Questions:

Name: [REDACTED]

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> December 2017

Why do you go barefoot?

*I initially explored being barefoot to raise money for Charity by running a barefoot 10K. During training I was hooked and intrigued by the unexpected benefits and explored it further .. to the point of running 52 miles across Wales barefoot!*

What attracted you to the experience of being barefoot?

*Initially a desire to raise money for Trees for Cities by running their barefoot 10K in Battersea Park – it was a challenge and something I hadn't done. Simple!*

Did you have any drawbacks/reservations?

*None – just intrigue.*

How did you begin?

*By walking barefoot over increasingly difficult surfaces and then starting to run short distances and increasing the distance and severity of surfaces.*

How do you feel when you are barefoot compared to when you are wearing shoes?

*It depends on the circumstances and environments but generally I feel much more connected when barefoot. I have likened it to being 'plugged in' and whereas most people take their shoes off to relax, I have to put mine on, as I then feel more disconnected.*

*Being barefoot keeps you in the 'now' as you have to be present and engaged with your surroundings. As strange as it may sound, that can be tiring depending on the environment and particularly as I am usually active and barefoot. Obviously being barefoot in a hammock, for example, is a different thing altogether!*

What are other peoples' reaction to you being barefoot?

*They have varied from distress to disgust and from respect to awe, but generally just interest and 'I could never do that'.*

How does the sensation of different textures (grass, moss, road etc) feel?

*Awesome. It is like having a sixth sense – and I wonder if that's where the saying came from? Feeling the environment with your feet is incredible – I was giving a talk at a big Hotel and being barefoot, I could feel that the carpet was wet. On inspection (and after disbelieving me), it turned out there was quite a significant leak that no one had spotted through the dark coloured carpet.*

Do different environments make you feel differently when barefoot? For example, a town, the beach, the countryside...

*Yes – I feel very unsafe and vulnerable in a town – the pavements are dirty and there is inevitable broken glass to be wary of. Mountains, beach and woodland are just beautiful. Towns are harsh, the countryside is soft.*

Why do you advocate being barefoot?

*I actually don't; I just encourage people to try it for themselves. In my experience, being barefoot realigns us on a cellular level and kind of reacquaints us with our*

*primal self, all of which I find hugely beneficial from a mind, body and spirit aspect. However, it may not be the case for everyone. I believe we all have to find our own path to a healthy and whole existence – and to feel the best that we can. I never preach, although I do get excited about it! But simply want to share my experiences so other people are aware of it as an option and opportunity.*

How do you view others who wear shoes all the time?

*The same as I view other people in general. We are all individuals walking our own path – be it shod or barefoot. I don't judge.*

## Appendix C

Participant: Bryan

### Re: Walking barefoot in the park

Bryan larkin <larks180@gmail.com>

Thu 25/01/2018 13:48

To: Laura Yates <laura-yates@hotmail.com>;

14 attachments (3 MB)

17626168\_10155283035645854\_4824714093080021976\_n.jpg;  
17553463\_10155283035330854\_7800655943019481820\_n.jpg;  
17757299\_10155283034515854\_8124020782451083470\_n.jpg;  
17634366\_10155283034360854\_2068828197237926228\_n.jpg;  
17759785\_10155283034070854\_8176171261589305138\_n.jpg;  
17634644\_10155283032655854\_7853043592782651678\_n.jpg;  
17499121\_10155283031860854\_6423540331404262362\_n.jpg;  
17634852\_10155283031560854\_1177739506074314179\_n.jpg;  
17499487\_10155283030680854\_8717278049065892731\_n.jpg;  
17757457\_10155283030880854\_8875996039090697094\_n.jpg;  
17760010\_10155283030585854\_4752054356869308255\_n.jpg;  
17759909\_10155283030395854\_6213705250697040405\_n.jpg;  
17630067\_10155283030310854\_5009767788374168073\_n.jpg;  
17156256\_10155283029815854\_4163752531172997215\_n.jpg;

Laura,

I AM SOOOO SORRY THIS IS LATE! (Hope it is not too late)

Mental this end :(

Right, sooooo.....

Myself, Kelly, Llinos and Johan when to the barefoot walk park in

We decided to go as it was a recommended place for locals and tourists alike to experience different terrains while barefoot.

The location was great in the middle of a valley, surrounded by nature and many animals such as goats and cows.

There was an ice cream parlor where we decided to take on a refreshment prior to our barefoot adventure.

The start of the walk was symbolized by a giant foot sculpture that you walk through to get started. First we dropped our shoes and took a much needed selfie to capture our first official outdoor barefoot park.

The first barefoot sensation to walk on was sand, which was a nice feeling. Close your eyes and you could be on the beach, minus the seagulls and waves crashing. Sand is definitely associated with those days on the beach or holidays away.

Next we moved on to gravel, which was a slight increase in discomfort, however we were sure that it was only going to get worse.

From the gravel we were able to enjoy the cooling soft touch of the grass as we headed for our next obstacle of a row of wooden planks. Instantly associating the planks with splinters from previous experience, so taking our time and watching our step.

Next up was wood chip, which had it's moments of softness and the often "Ouch!". This led us on to a running stream...

Which, putting it politely was 'toe numbingly cold!' having to walk 50m down this rocky stream with ice cold water was too much for some of the group, however those that made it agreed it was a great exhilarating experience which made great photos with some funny facial expressions.

After the stream we moved on to some more stones, wood chip, wooden bridges and gravel. Each getting easier with time, most would think it is your feet getting used to it, however it is just your brain re-training itself that it is not a danger and as you get used to it, your brain is no longer seeing it has a threat or pain it starts to become exciting and comfortably

massaging.

The best part of the barefoot walk, just over the rope bridge was the mud section, shin deep sloppy, runny and slippery mud. This was hilarious to watch, fun to take part in and one of the most strangest feeling sensations my feet have ever felt. Like thick melted chocolate between your toes, it was a great laugh and luckily after the mud section was a deeper river to wash off. This again was very very cold.

The last little bit consisted of more stone paths and ended on a cobble lane.

The experience is amazing, gets your brain working on overload to resist and fight these unknown feelings, or relating them to past experiences, whether they be positive or negative. It was a great day or natural high and one that we will all remember and definitely do it again. I for one had to think about injury, due to my ankle, but took it at a slower pace and made it through. I think everyone would have some worry of injury, if we didn't our brains would allow for ankle rolls or trips. So I imagine it is a great way to improve your balance and proprioception.

Many of the sections like grass, sand, mud, they were all pleasant, enjoyable and comfortable. However the gravel, wood chip, rocks and cold water even now can be associated as previous pain causing experiences.

I think it does help with going barefoot again, especially on the positive terrains mentioned. I for one hate wearing shoes when on grass or sand, but unfortunately these days walking bare foot on grass can end unpleasantly with some irresponsible pet owners, but I think you just have to be careful of where you choose.

I would recommend a barefoot walk to anyone capable, to get out there and experience new things.

Hope this helps you out Laura :)

Thanks for the chance to bring up what was a great memory.

Bryan

(P.S I have attached some pics of the day)

## Appendix D

Transcript of Group Interview

Location - Library

Present: Dee, Molly and Eurgain

I asked the group to take off their shoes & socks, at first they seemed reluctant. However, half way through the library they started 'skipping' and seemed to be 'giddy' for being barefoot.

Dee explaining how she felt being barefoot

Dee – its really releasing, its really cathartic – I forgot how much I enjoyed to wander around barefoot. Its very, very cathartic. Its somewhat comforting as well I think.

Eurgain – Its so relaxing!

It's a freeing sensation, I miss this feeling. thank god for the sunny weather.

Me – free from the bonds of shoes?

Eurgain - Yes!!! Its so weird because as soon as I sunbathe in the garden first thing I take off is my shoes.

Me - Do you feel that you are more connected to nature?

Dee – Oh Gosh yes, by far. Definitely for me at least.

### General murmur of agreement from rest of group

Dee – with my religious practises as well, anytime that I could be barefoot, like its so comforting.

Me to Molly – How do you feel being barefoot? How does it make you feel right now?

Molly – I enjoy the texture, the different textures. Like walking up there (paved/cobbled flagstones). The different pavements have a different texture to it.

Me – What texture were they?

Molly- Like this, (rough sandpaper type flagstones) is really rough and really sandpapery but in an enjoyable way, and there's this one is smooth but its ridged, so you can feel the bumps on your feet. Then there's tarmac, and tarmac is so painful.

Dee – Tarmac is really painful.

Molly – But I also like the fact that its' so warm, that the floor is kind of warm.

Me – So if it was raining, you wouldn't be out here then?

Molly – No my toes will fall off.

Me – Just because its cold?

Molly – I wouldn't go on grass if it was wet because it feels slimy.

Dee – I don't mind that, when I was younger I used to always go out in the mud, camping and stuff. We always used to take our shoes off because it was a lot cleaner, you would just wipe the dirt of your feet. I don't like sand between my toes though.

Molly – Oh I love sand on barefeet!

Dee – after a while it just gets a bit 'urgggghhhh'

Molly - yeah like you have to clench your toes all the time

Me – So if you wandered around barefoot for half the day, here and there and then you went back to your house, would you wipe your feet or walk straight in with dirty feet?

Molly - I would a little bit, not like I would wash them (as you probably should), but I would probably wipe them. If I could see visible dirt.

Me – what if there was dirt between your toes?

Molly – Oh yes I would get it out.

Me – before you went in the house or soon after?

Eurgain – I'd get into trouble for judging mud everywhere

Dee – I don't know how well you could walk into a shop with barefoot though? I think there a whole culture against it.

Molly – A well known local supermarket is fine, because 'Z' used to do it all the time. He never used to wear shoes.

Me – Is it because of other people's perception of you?

Dee – Well I think it's a societal perception of barefeet. Flip flops are fine, you can have your toes out. As long as you've got something on the bottom of your feet, that's seen as like a barrier between the floor and its perceived as being more comfortable than if you have no shoes on.

Dee – a lot of countries...like when I went to Guatemala a lot of people went barefeet, no body seemed to care. It seems to be, like a global north perception perhaps? That we aren't seen as cultured.

Molly – my thoughts are that im happy to be barefoot now, but off campus id have to put my shoes on to go home. Purely because you don't know whats on the floor, not like dirt but glass, or needles. I come from a not very nice area, so I walked around Wolverhampton barefoot id get a hypodermic needle stuck in my toe. That would just

happen. And people just throw their fags on the floor and they might not be put out. There's a lot of chewing gum too.

Me – so you perceive those types of areas to be dirty and dangerous?

Molly – the dirt is not as bad, but it's more the dangerous stuff.

Dee – I couldn't walk across woodchip, I think I'd be scared of getting splinters in my feet.

Eurgain – Do you know what gets me then? It's the texture underfoot.

Me – Would you walk through a forest?

Dee & Eurgain – Yes

Eurgain – I think for me it's more that because I have hard soles and skin under my feet, if I – say I was back in Uganda where they were barefoot quite a bit of the time I wouldn't mind whatsoever, but here, there's this thing about having soft feet. Soft skin.

Group murmurs agreement

Me – so it's a beauty norm?

General collective 'yes' and discussion about removing hard skin and how painful it is. I decided not to transcribe this part of the conversation as it was irrelevant to my research.

Molly – so the hard skin is what protects your feet, but it's more socially acceptable to have soft skin. Hard skin protects you from the floor, your feet have basically grown their own shoes. But that's not socially acceptable so when you take it off (the hard skin) you're back to having baby skin.

Dee – I think we perceive our bodies to be delicate vessels, in which we are pruned and perfect in society and everything from our head to our toes needs to be manicured to a certain extent.

Eurgain – And it's geared towards women more. Like a man with hard feet I don't think anyone cares or notices. Women have to be soft.

Me – so you think there's a gender divide when it comes to being barefoot.

Dee - but the thing is, it's only when puberty hits I think. Up until that children could run around barefoot.

Eurgain – if you saw kids running around barefoot I wouldn't think anything of it, but us now...

Molly – were supposed to know more of the dangers

Me – so are you saying that from adolescence we begin to become cultured by wearing shoes?

General group agreement

Dee – I think that's a large portion of it, and people don't realise the health benefits of not wearing shoes. Because overall not wearing shoes helps your posture.

Molly – I wore heels for six years, and my posture is ruined. And the tendon that runs up the back of my leg is really short, I need to do a lot of exercises to lengthen it again, flex it back out. Before walking barefoot would 'kill' me after about 20 mins.

Dee – however, if you get shoes that are flat footed, without support it would damage you too by restricting your posture.

Eurgain – Would you walk into the toilet barefoot now?

Molly – No!

Dee – I don't know; I know the toilets here are quite clean.

Eurgain – if no one was watching id go

Dee – but people go to the beach barefoot and use the toilets...?

Molly – I don't! If its public 'public' bathrooms then no!

Me – why?

Molly – because there gross, because people pee on the floor.

The group then agreed that the libraries toilets were not strictly public and therefore acceptable to walk in barefoot.

Molly – but id look where I was stepping, usually id be walking around barefoot with my head in the air but if I was using the toilet id be looking at the floor. Any mysterious patches I'm not going anywhere near.

Dee – but isn't interesting that, especially women, on a night out, drunk, will take their shoes off and walk home barefoot.

Me – because you've lost your inhibitions through alcohol?

Eurgain – yeah because you're under the influence of alcohol you forget about the danger.

## Appendix E – Rebecca's Barefoot Experience Account

24hrs no shoes or socks



Rebecca [REDACTED]

Mon 21/05/2018 17:48

To: ● Laura Yates (1403123) ↗



Reply all | ▾

Inbox

Hi Laura,

Below is my experience of wearing no shoes or socks for 24hrs! Hope it helps:

Having bare feet for the day was an interesting experience. Throughout the day, my feet felt a variety of textures, from the marshmallowy sensations of the carpet inside Old Building to the cold, hard floors of Sainsburys. The most interesting point of the day was around 7/8pm when we became children and decided to experience the world with our feet. I found the sensations of certain stones did not appeal to my feet, but others did. More often than not I enjoyed the sensations as I spent most of my childhood shoeless and certain sensations brought back memories, such as standing on cold pavement reminded me of walking home on an evening from the town along the promenade, back towards the beach. Something I found extremely interesting is that people stare at your feet quite often. This was something I had not noticed before going barefoot for the day and found it strange how often it happened. An interesting comparison for me is that when I was a child in Spain, it was not seen as unusual to go barefoot into shops in the town but in Britain, it is deemed odd.

Best,  
Rebecca

[REDACTED]

## Appendix F – Andrew's Barefoot Experience Account

Diss stuff



Andrew [REDACTED]

Today, 12:30

Laura Yates (1403123) ▾



Reply all | ▾

Inbox

To Laura

The overall experience of my feet being bare can summed with one word: transition. The changing of the sensations that were under my feet were the most poignant part of the experience. The my feet are usually sensitive, so what stuck out for me was that I could feel everything on the ground, the little blades of grass and the mud on the meadow, the little shards of gravel that are on the drive way, the smoothness of the rocks just by the entrance by College road. Another important note were that individuals were quick to notice the lack shoes upon my feet – most notably in Sainsburys, but also in the library.

Other noticeable factors include the fact my feet enjoyed other surfaces more than others, such as the soft almost marshmallow like carpet in the old building and the very smooth boulders by the entrance. Another factor was the fact my feet picked up things from where it had walked upon them – mud from the meadow, tiny pieces of gravel from the road, fluff from carpets, i.e. matter was travelling with me as I was travelling upon it.

From [REDACTED]

## Appendix G – Deanna’s Barefoot Experience Account

### My Barefoot Experience



Deanna [REDACTED]

Today, 15:03

Laura Yates



Reply all | v

Inbox

This message was sent with high importance.

Hello,

Hope you are well, here is My Barefoot Experience:

As someone who wanders around at home and in the garden barefoot it did not seem difficult to do so for twenty-four hours. Leaving my house to begin my day barefoot was somewhat surreal and I had to remind myself not to put socks nor shoes on. As I walked through campus I noticed that people seemed to stare at my feet in disbelief, unsure how to process the fact my feet were bare. At first the different sensations of the ground were intense, and I noticed I was looking at the ground more to see where to step to prevent any ‘unnecessary pain’ through my feet.

Most of the day went smoothly, it felt great to be connected to the earth; it became very soothing to feel dirt and grass under my feet and through my toes. Walking on concrete and the lino inside Sainsburys provided new experiences and sensations I had never even contemplated before. By the afternoon, it became a game to explore new textures, becoming like a child with no care for judgements. Apart from glass, dirt on my feet was no issue and within a few hours I had stopped caring.

By the evening however, being connected to the ground became too overwhelming and I began to struggle processing how much information I picked up through the ground. As a practising Pagan, being connected to the Earth was wonderful but when things became too much I wanted to crawl home and put on shoes. When I did eventually put shoes and socks on, my feet felt trapped and the feeling of wearing shoes and socks became the opposite of the morning; it became weird and surreal wearing something on my feet. Overall, being barefoot proved to be an enlightening experience that everyone should experience at least once. To be shoe free is to be care free.

Hope this helps,

Deanna

## Ethics Form



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**  
 UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
**Trinity Saint David**

E3 FORM

## APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL – BA level

## CAIS AM GYMERADWYAETH MOESEGOL – Lefel BA

Mae'r ffurflen hon i'w chwblhau gan bob BA myfyrwr. Rhaid i bob ffurflen gael ei ystyried gan diwtor y modiwl. Dylai un copi o'r ffurflen yn cael ei roi ar y ffeiliau Gyfadran ac un copi cadw ar y ffeil myfyrwr.

This form is to be completed by all BA students conducting research, projects or productions. This form should be completed by the student. All forms must be considered by the Module tutor. A copy of the form must be kept centrally and on the student file.

## ADRAN 1 – MANYLION MYFYRIWR

## SECTION 1 - STUDENT DETAILS

Enw Llawn  
Full Name

Laura Alice Yates

Ysgol/Cyfadran/  
School/Faculty

Anthropology

Rhif  
Myfyrwr  
Student  
Number

1403123

Cydlynnydd prosiect /  
Tiwtor  
Module Tutor/  
Programme Co-ordinator

Luci Attala

Enw'r Gradd  
Name of  
Degree

BA (Hons)  
Anthropology

Teitl dangosol yr Traethawd Hir:

Indicative Title of Dissertation:

Being Barefoot, Blurred Boundaries and Breaking Bonds

## ADRAN 2 – MANYLION CYFRANOGWYR / CYNULLEIDFA

## SECTION 2 - PARTICIPANT / AUDIENCE DETAILS

| Pwy yw'r cyfranogwyr arfaethedig?   | Who are the intended participants?      | Ydw / Yes | Na No |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------|-----------|-------|
| Myfyrwr / staff Y Drindod Dewi Sant | Students / staff of Trinity Saint David | Yes       |       |

|                                                                                      |                                                                                      |     |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----|
| Oedolion (dros oed 16 ac yn gymwys i gydsynio)                                       | Adults (over the age of 16 and competent to give consent)                            | Yes |    |
| Plant a phobl ifanc dan oed                                                          | Children / legal minors                                                              |     | No |
| Cleifion neu gleientiaid gweithwyr proffesiynol                                      | Patients or clients of professionals                                                 |     | No |
| Rhywun sy'n cael ei gadw yn y ddalfa neu y mae'r llys wedi cymryd cyfrifoldeb amdano | Anyone in custodial care or for whom the court has assumed responsibility            |     | No |
| Aelod o unrhyw sefydliad lle mae'n bosibl bod angen i unigolyn arall hefyd gydsynio. | A member of any organisation where another individual may also need to give consent. |     | No |
| Eraill: Nodwch: / Others: please identify:                                           |                                                                                      |     |    |

| <b>Nifer, Oed a Ffynhonnell y Cyfranogwyr</b><br>Rhowch fanylion yr demograffeg y cyfranogwyr / gynulleidfa. |                                 | <b>Participant / Audience Number and Age</b><br>Provide details of the demographics of the participants / audience. |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Nifer o Gyfranogwyr / yn y Gynulleidfa                                                                       | Participant/ Audience number    |                                                                                                                     |
| Grŵp oedran y Cyfranogwyr/y Gynulleidfa                                                                      | Participant/ Audience age group |                                                                                                                     |

**ADRAN 3 – GWEITHGAREDD YMCHWIL****SECTION 3 – RESEARCH ACTIVITY**

| 1. | Ydy'r prosiect yn cynnwys:                                 | Does the project include:                           | Ydy / Yes | Nac ydy |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|---------|
|    | Defnyddio holiadur neu offeryn ymchwil tebyg               | Use of questionnaire or similar research instrument | Yes       |         |
|    | Defnyddio prawf ysgrifenedig neu gyfrifiadurol             | Use of written or computerised test                 |           | No      |
|    | Cyfweliad (cysylltwch gwestiynau posibl)                   | Interview (attach provisional questions)            | Yes       |         |
|    | Dyddiaduron                                                | Diaries                                             | Yes       |         |
|    | Arsylwi ar gyfranogwyr a hwythau'n ymwybodol o hynny       | Participant observation with their knowledge        | Yes       |         |
|    | Arsylwi ar gyfranogwyr a hwythau ddim yn ymwybodol o hynny | Participant observation without their knowledge     | Yes       |         |
|    | Recordio fideo neu sain                                    | Video or audio-taping                               | Yes       |         |

|                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                |  |    |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|----|
| Mynediad i wybodaeth bersonol neu gyfrinachol heb gydsyniad penodol y cyfranogwyr                                                                                          | Access to personal or confidential information without the participants specific consent                                                       |  | No |
| Defnyddio unrhyw gwestiynau, ysgogiadau prawf, cyflwyniad y gallai rhai cyfranogwyr eu profi fel rhywbeth sy'n achosi niwed / tramgwydd corfforol, meddyliol neu emosiynol | Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive |  | No |
| Cyflawni unrhyw weithredoedd allai achosi embaras neu effeithio ar hunan-barch                                                                                             | Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem                                                                    |  | No |
| Ymchwilio i gyfranogwyr sy'n ymwneud â gweithgareddau anghyfreithlon                                                                                                       | Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities                                                                                   |  | No |
| Gweithdrefnau lle defnyddir twyll                                                                                                                                          | Procedures that involve deception                                                                                                              |  | No |
| Gweini unrhyw sylwedd, cyfrwng neu blasebo                                                                                                                                 | Administration of any substance, agent or placebo                                                                                              |  | No |
| Dull arall o gasglu data neu fformat cyflwyno (esboniwch)                                                                                                                  | Other method of data collection or presentation format (please explain)                                                                        |  | No |

|           |                                       |                                             |
|-----------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| <b>2.</b> | <b>Restru eich dull o gasglu data</b> | <b>List your method of data collection:</b> |
|           |                                       |                                             |

|                             |                                                                                          |                                                                                |              |          |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------|----------|
| 3.                          | <b>Risg Posibl:</b><br>(corfforol, seicolegol, cyfreithiol, cymdeithasol neu economaidd) | <b>Potential Risk:</b><br>(physical, psychological, legal, social or economic) |              |          |
| A oes unrhyw risg bosibl i: |                                                                                          | Is there any potential risk to:                                                | Ydw /<br>Yes | Na<br>No |
| A                           | Cyfranogwyr?                                                                             | Participants?                                                                  |              | No       |
| B                           | Ymchwilydd?                                                                              | Researcher?                                                                    |              | No       |
| C                           | BrifYsgol/Cyfadrn?                                                                       | University?                                                                    |              | No       |

|           |                                                                              |                                                                                   |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4.</b> | <b>Rheoli Risg:</b><br>Os oes, beth yw'r risg a sut y bydd yn cael ei reoli? | <b>Management of Risk:</b><br>If yes, what is the risk and how will it be managed |
|           |                                                                              |                                                                                   |

|    |                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                     |          |     |
|----|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|
| 5. | Os ydych yn delio â phlant a / neu oedolion agored i niwed, rhaid i chi gyflwyno eich tystysgrif DBS i'ch tiwtor goruchwylio i'w cymeradwyo cyn i unrhyw gysylltiad â cyfranogwyr hyn. | If you are dealing with children and/ or vulnerable adults you must present your DBS certificate to your supervising tutor for approval before any contact with these participants. |          |     |
|    |                                                                                                                                                                                        | Ydw /<br>Yes                                                                                                                                                                        | Na<br>No |     |
| A  | Ydych chi wedi gwneud cais am dystysgrif DBS?                                                                                                                                          | Have you applied for a DBS certificate?                                                                                                                                             |          | No  |
| B  | A yw eich tiwtor weld a'i gadarnhau eich tystysgrif DBS?                                                                                                                               | Has your tutor seen and approved your DBS certificate?                                                                                                                              |          | N/A |

|                                                                 |                                                                        |                                                                  |          |     |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|-----|
| 6.                                                              | A fyddwch yn cael cydsyniad gwybodysysgrifenedig gan eich cyfranogwyr? | Will you obtain written informed consent from your participants? |          |     |
|                                                                 |                                                                        | Ydw /<br>Yes                                                     | Na<br>No |     |
| A                                                               | Os na fyddwch, pam hynny?                                              | If no, why not?                                                  |          | N/A |
| B                                                               | Os byddwch, sut byddwch yn sicrhau cydsyniad gwybodys?                 | If yes, how will you secure informed consent?                    |          | N/A |
| Rhowch eglurhad / Please explain:                               |                                                                        |                                                                  |          |     |
| Cynhwyswch gopi o'r ffurflen gydsynio os ydych yn defnyddio un. |                                                                        | Please include a copy of the consent form if you are using one.  |          |     |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| <b>ADRAN 4</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |  | <b>SECTION 4</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |
| <b>CEFNOGWYD /APPROVED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  | <b>NIS CEFNOGWYD/<br/>NOT SUPPORTED</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |  |
| <b>Datganiad</b><br>Mae'r wybodaeth a gynhwysir yma yn gywir, hyd eithaf fy ngwybodaeth a'm cred. Rwyf wedi ceisio dynodi unrhyw risgiau a phroblemau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r prosiect / ymchwil neu gynhyrchiad ac rwyf yn cydnabod f'ymrwymadau innau a hawliau'r cyfranogwyr. |  | <b>Declaration</b><br>The information contained herein is, to the best of knowledge and belief, accurate. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the project/research or production and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. |  |
| <b>Llofnodau</b><br>Dylai'r ffurflen hon gael ei chwblhau a'i llofnodi gan y myfyrwr a'r Cydlynnydd y prosiect /Twtor                                                                                                                                                          |  | <b>Signatures</b><br>This form should be completed and signed by the student and the Module tutor/Programme Co-ordinator.                                                                                                                                                    |  |

|                                                               |                  |
|---------------------------------------------------------------|------------------|
| Myfyriwr / Student                                            | Dyddiad: / Date: |
| <hr/>                                                         | <hr/>            |
| Cydlynnydd y prosiect /Twitor<br>Project co-ordinator / Tutor | Dyddiad: / Date: |
| <hr/>                                                         | <hr/>            |



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
**Trinity Saint David**

Cyfranogwr Rhif Adnabod:  
Participant Identification  
Number:

**CWESTIYNAU CYFWELIAD SAMPL**

**SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

TEITL Y PROSIECT: / PROJECT TITLE:

|   |  |
|---|--|
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
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| 9  |  |
| 10 |  |

ENW A CHYFEIRIAD YR YMCHWILYDD

NAME &amp; ADDRESS OF RESEARCHER



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU

**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**

UNIVERSITY OF WALES

**Trinity Saint David**
 Cyfranogwr Rhif Adnabod:  
 Participant Identification Number:

**FFURFLEN GANIATÂD CYFRANOIAD****PARTICIPATION CONSENT FORM**

TEITL Y PROSIECT: / PROJECT TITLE: Barefoot, Blurring Boundaries and Breaking Bonds

Name of Researcher:

**Please  
initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

3. I understand that any information given by me may be used in future reports, articles or presentations by the research team.

4. I understand that my name will not appear in any reports, articles or presentations.

☐

5. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant                      Date                      Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher                      Date                      Signature

You may decline to participate in this study. You may end your participation in this study at any time. If you decide to remain anonymous, maintaining your anonymity will be a priority and every practical precaution will be taken to disguise your identity. If you prefer anonymity, there will not be any identifying information on audiotapes or transcripts of this or any interview. No-one will hear any audiotapes or see any transcripts without your prior consent. All materials generated from this or any interview will remain confidential.

**When completed, please return in the envelope provided (if applicable). One copy will be given to the participant and the original to be kept in the file of the research team at: **PLACE: School House, Church Lane, Newcastle Emlyn, Carmarthenshire SA38 9AB****

ENW A CHYFEIRIAD YR YMCHWILYDD

NAME & ADDRESS OF RESEARCHER  
Laura Yates



PRIFYSGOL CYMRU  
**Y Drindod Dewi Sant**  
UNIVERSITY OF WALES  
**Trinity Saint David**

Cyfranogwr Rhif Adnabod:  
Participant Identification  
Number:

**FFURFLEN GANIATÂD CYFRANOGIAD**

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

TEITL Y PROSIECT: / PROJECT TITLE: Barefoot, Blurring Boundaries and Breaking Bonds

Dear Participant:

My name is Laura Yates and I am studying in the School of Anthropology (BA Hons) at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

I would like to invite you to participate in my research project. This project will research the phenomena of being barefoot and our sensations/experiences when being barefoot and aims to understand what our perceptions of dirt, danger and pollution means when we are unshod.

Through your participation in the questionnaire and/or interviews, I hope to ascertain and analyse other participant's experiences of being barefoot and understand deeper or connection with the earth when we do not wear shoes and how this feels for different people.

All questionnaires will be kept strictly confidential to the researchers involved and at **NO** time will individual questionnaires be released to the general public. This gives you a chance to express your views on your programme a confidential and anonymous forum and still be able to make a difference. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary so you can withdraw from the questionnaire at any stage.

Our questionnaire should take about 30 minutes to complete, but there is no time constraint. There are also no right or wrong answers. Attached to this letter along with the questionnaire is a consent form.

After careful and precise analysis of the data obtained from this questionnaire, I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the findings at your request. The results of this questionnaire will hopefully enhance my understanding of and will be stored on my password protected personal laptop and as a hard copy kept securely in a locked filing cabinet. The results of the research will be fed back to myself and my supervisor.

I thank you in advance for your time and participation. If any questions do arise, feel free to contact me at your convenience.

|                                |                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| ENW A CHYFEIRIAD YR YMCHWILYDD | NAME & ADDRESS OF RESEARCHER<br>Laura Yates<br>School House, Church Lane, Newcastle<br>Emlyn Carmarthenshire. SA38 9AB |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

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