Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
Women’s Experiences in the Gendered Environment of Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand – “I felt a need to prove my right to be there”.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Adult Education

Massey University, Palmerston North,
New Zealand

Anna Jones
2012
Abstract

This study researches women’s experiences working in the gendered environment of Outdoor Education within the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand has been strongly influenced by both British and American interpretations and has evolved as a traditionally male gendered environment with normative measures of competence based on physical strength, speed and technical ability. Most women choosing to work in this environment have internalised the gender neutral discourse of outdoor education, accepting the measures of competence and entering as ‘conceptual males’. This approach has costs, not only for the women but also for their families and students. Insights gained from listening to the voices of women sharing their lived experiences highlight costs and issues that must be addressed to create change for the future.

This research was undertaken using a feminist narrative perspective. Purposive sampling was used to identify women who had worked in outdoor education for a significant length of time. Semi-structured interviews were held with each woman to gather their experiences told through their own voices. The author’s own voice narrating her own lived experiences working in outdoor education is woven through the study. The experiences of the four respondents are presented in the form of mini case studies and interpreted through narrative enquiry.

The respondent’s stories suggest that they had entered outdoor education as conceptual males and had proven their right to be there against the male gendered measures of competence. Impacts resulting from doing this included doubting their competence, lack of confidence and constant feelings of pressure to improve and achieve more. All respondents followed an age related ‘career’ path showing a shift with focus on self being displaced by increased relational influences as they aged. Crossing the watershed to motherhood caused the women to address the competing discourses of good mothering and ideal worker and reassess their priorities.
**Acknowledgements**

I would like to give special thanks to the women who participated in my research and willingly gave of their precious time to share their fascinating stories with me.

I would also like to give thanks to marg gilling, my Massey University supervisor. I am privileged and grateful for the opportunity to have marg as my supervisor for this research. Without marg’s continually positive attitude, wisdom and support this thesis would have faded into obscurity as busy everyday life in post-earthquake Canterbury took over. Big thanks also to Dave Irwin at CPIT for being my second supervisor and sharing ideas and suggestions throughout the process.

I would like to thank Massey University for acknowledging the impacts and disturbances caused by the Canterbury earthquakes and granting an extension of time which made completing this thesis possible for me.

I would like to give a very big *THANK YOU*’to my wonderful family for giving me the time and space to pursue this thesis. To Mike, my husband, friend and colleague for his unwavering support, patience, tolerance and extra hours of looking after our children as well as to my amazing children, Jamie and Amelia, whose patience and understanding I have stretched to the limits.

Finally, I want to thank the woman who has consistently supported and believed in me throughout my life, my mother. Full of surprises and very astute she is an inspiration and when I am an old woman I too shall wear purple... (Joseph, 1962).
Table of Contents

Abstract ................................................................................................................................ i
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. ii
Table of Contents ............................................................................................................... iii

Chapter 1  Introduction .................................................................................................. 1
  Research Question .......................................................................................................... 2
  Overview of Outdoor Education in New Zealand ........................................................... 2
  Intellectual Biography ..................................................................................................... 5
  Overview of Thesis Structure .......................................................................................... 8

Chapter 2  Literature Review ......................................................................................... 9
  Outdoor Education .......................................................................................................... 9
    Historical background ............................................................................................... 10
    Development of outdoor education as a gendered space ....................................... 12
  Women and careers ...................................................................................................... 14
  Careers and motherhood .............................................................................................. 19
  Competence and Gender .............................................................................................. 21
    Gender Neutral Discourse ......................................................................................... 24
  Significance of this Research ......................................................................................... 26

Chapter 3  Approach to the Research ........................................................................... 27
  Research Paradigm ....................................................................................................... 27
  Research Methods ........................................................................................................ 28
    Narrative research .................................................................................................... 28
  Methods of Data Collection .......................................................................................... 29
    Earthquake note: ...................................................................................................... 29
    Purposive Sampling ................................................................................................... 30
    Semi-Structured Interviews ...................................................................................... 30
    Autoethnographic Narratives ................................................................................... 31
  Ethics ............................................................................................................................. 31
  Interpretation of Data .................................................................................................... 32
  Limitations .................................................................................................................... 33
  Presentation of findings ................................................................................................ 33

Chapter 4  Presentation of Data ..................................................................................... 34
  Case Studies .................................................................................................................. 34