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**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

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## 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.

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## Chapter 1

## Introduction

*Gdung, gdung, gdung, gdung go the wheels of the scooter across the planks of the wooden deck. Scrunch, scrunch, scrunch, scrunch the running footsteps across the gravel that herald the imminent arrival of my nine year old at my hidey hole of an office in the back corner of our garage. "Not fair, not fair! I hate it; I'm not going to go. Why do I have to go? My mates don't have to. Why are you always working? You prefer work to your kids don't you?"*

This thesis is about women working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. Initially the intent was to explore the question 'women's experiences working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand' through listening to the lived experiences of women who have done this, together with my own experiences as a member of this group. However as I progressed through the research process the question started to evolve. My reading of the literature alongside reflections of my own experiences resulted in a clarification of the interpretations and understandings that had been simmering in the back of my mind. For years I had argued that outdoor education was a gender neutral workplace. I accepted the standards of competence and expectations of the job as achievable for anyone who wanted to obtain them and had not noticed, or considered, them to be gendered. I had observed that more males achieved them than females and that in general males seemed more comfortable to put themselves up for assessment but through my paradigm of gender neutrality and desire to be accepted and gain employment, I just accepted this was how it was.

Two concurrent experiences in my life initiated the path towards questioning my paradigm; becoming a mother and embarking on study for a Masters in adult education. Both of these compelled me to question my paradigm and I started to wonder if the outdoor education environment was as gender neutral as I had assumed or whether, as many authors proposed, it was a gendered environment based on male gendered expectations and measures of competence (Allin, 2000; Humberstone, 2000; Lugg, 2003; Prince, 2004). Most women, like me, entering this work place appeared to have done so accepting the standards and proving their competence by them. But, as I began to



realise, there are costs to doing this and my research question changed to match this growing realisation.

Now I wanted to investigate women's experiences working in this gendered environment and identify impacts and costs that may have resulted for the women themselves and their families and students. For as Roy observed, "the trouble is once you see it, you can't unsee it. And once you've seen it, keeping quiet, saying nothing becomes as political an act as speaking out. There's no innocence. Either way, you're accountable" (2003, as cited in Denzin, 2010, p. 6). Now I felt accountable. I couldn't ignore the realisation and needed to explore the costs to and impacts on women entering outdoor education, having internalised a gender neutral discourse, with intent to identify changes for the future.

## **Research Question**

This research investigates the question: What are women's experiences working in the gendered environment of Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand?

This overarching question was supported by sub questions;

- Had the respondents perceived outdoor education to be a gender neutral or a gendered environment?
- Had they felt accepted as an outdoor educator?
- Was proving competence an issue for them?
- How had they experienced the transition to motherhood?
- What had they perceived to have been the influences on their decisions along the way?

## **Overview of Outdoor Education in New Zealand**

The term Outdoor Education is broad and has many different interpretations, meanings and connotations for different people. The New Zealand Ministry of Education describes outdoor education in broad terms as "education in the outdoors, for the outdoors and about the outdoors (Straker, 2007, p. 10). This is a very broad definition which could include just about any activity undertaken outdoors. Boyes (2000) describes outdoor

education as “the use of the natural environment in the educative process using direct experiences as the teaching medium for any curriculum domain” (p. 6). Historically there has been a struggle between the outdoor adventure and the outdoor learning discourses for dominance and legitimacy in Aotearoa New Zealand outdoor education with adventure often dominant. As Boyes (2012) observes, “the outdoor–education–as adventure discourse has been dominant in the UK and totally embraced in NZ” (p. 31). In the last decade the dominance of this discourse in Aotearoa New Zealand has become increasingly challenged. The adventure discourse has its roots in the early and mid-twentieth century United Kingdom, a time in which social events such as two World Wars and the Great Depression influenced all aspects of life.

Building on philosophical understandings of war, adventure, and learning that date back to Plato, and the legacy of experiential educators such as Thoreau and Dewey, these emerging discourses increasingly viewed the outdoors as an arena where the virtues of character, resilience, self-confidence, bravery, comradeship and leadership could be built. (Boyes, 2012, p. 14).

The pakeha/eurocentric dominant adventure approach to outdoor education with its focus on personal challenge and outdoor pursuits is a legacy of this era.

Although women in Aotearoa New Zealand participate in the same active outdoor pursuit activities as men, the numbers of women doing so are lower. Equally, women appear to have a lower retention rate in these activities (Prince, 2004). These factors combined may contribute to the lower numbers of women attaining high levels of technical skills and leadership in outdoor pursuits within Aotearoa New Zealand (Booth, 1989 as cited in Prince, 2004). This trend is evident in the membership of the New Zealand Outdoor Instructors Association (NZOIA) where there are lower numbers of women holding awards, especially the higher level awards , level 2, and who are assessors.

NZOIA is the professional body for outdoor instructors and trainees in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZOIA, 2009) and as a part of this role, is responsible for the training and assessment of many of the country’s outdoor educators. “Because the syllabus and assessment framework of NZOIA qualifications focuses on the technical aspects of

practical pursuits... my perception is that outdoor education has also come to be focused in this way for NZOIA members” (Irwin, 2008, p. 37). Since its beginnings in the late 80’s NZOIA has had over 2500 members (S. Scott, 2006 as cited in Irwin, 2008) and a 2006 survey of the membership (with 52% response rate) revealed that males formed 77% of the membership (2006 member survey). At the 2009 annual NZOIA assessors meeting women formed an even lower proportion of the attendees with just 3 women amongst a group of 24 assessors (M. Atkinson, personal communication June 14 2009). Irwin suggests that this gender imbalance within NZOIA’s membership will contribute to a focus on the male values of “competition, skill acquisition and mastery of pursuits” (2008, p. 37) in NZOIA.

Many authors (e.g. Allin, 2000; Humberstone, 2000; McDermott, 2004; Pinch, Breunig, Cosgriff & Dignan, 2008; Prince, 2004) have discussed how outdoor education remains embedded within a traditionally male oriented culture. Lugg (2003) suggests that “women who wish to work in the outdoor education field have to find ways to work within this culture, or try to change it to meet the needs and strengths of women as well as men” (p. 1). Lugg also notes that “women in outdoor education should not have to ‘act like one of the boys’ [sic] in order to gain acceptance and recognition for their achievements”(2003, p. 11).

One of the issues for women working in the field is the “problematic nature of the notion of competence with its normative emphasis on physical strength, speed and technical expertise” (Lugg, 2003, p. 2). Not only do women have a greater struggle to develop the technical skills (Dingle & Kiewa 2006, as cited in Warren & Loeffler, 2006) but if they do develop them they also fail to recognise their own skill level or lack confidence in their skills even if these are well developed (Loeffler, 1997).

Another issue is the notion that the Aotearoa New Zealand outdoors is inherently a male space (Prince, 2004). Swain (1992, as cited in Prince, 2004) suggests men use space to produce and reproduce power. In the outdoors, a strong cultural perception of the outdoors as being dangerous and masculine may act to deter many women from entering it and thereby maintaining the notion of it as a masculine space (Prince, 2004).

Despite these issues, and multiple other factors, women continue to work in outdoor education in New Zealand across all levels. Research has been carried out into some aspects of women's experiences of working in outdoor education. For example, Allin (2000, 2003, 2004) and Allin and Humberstone (2006) have explored the experiences of women working in Outdoor Education and Careers in a UK context. Lugg (2003) examined the experiences of trainee female outdoor education instructors in an Australian context and Barnes researched the culture of Outdoor Education employment in the UK. Cosgriff (2008) explored women's experiences of making meaning in the outdoors and connection with nature in an Aotearoa New Zealand context.

As yet there has been little exploration of the lived experiences of women working in Outdoor Education in the Aotearoa New Zealand context and into the experiences of women outdoor educators as they cross the watershed to motherhood. This thesis explores these gaps through the lived experiences of the women participants combined with my own reflections. Insights gained from this help identify issues and actions and transformations for the future. Although as I write this thesis I acknowledge the strongly contested nature of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand and the validity of competing discourses, I have focused on women's experience in the gendered environment associated with adventure and have referred to this as the dominant discourse. The purpose of my research was to explore the lived experiences of women who have worked in outdoor education for the last 10 – 25 years. Like myself, these women's first outdoor experiences occurred prior to this through the 1970s and 1980s. Through much of this time the adventure model with its measures of competence based around the male traits of physical speed, strength and technical ability was the dominant interpretation and contributed to the development of a gendered environment. It is the women's experiences of outdoor education through this time and their transition to motherhood that I have focused on.

### **Intellectual Biography**

For most of the last two decades I have worked in Aotearoa New Zealand outdoor education and so consider myself as fitting into the grouping of women this study seeks

to focus on. I explored my own lived experiences of this in an unpublished autoethnographic study carried out for a Research Methods paper through Massey University in 2008 (Jones, 2008). In this research I set out to explore my own lived experiences with a focus to consider the meanings I had made from my experiences and the influences these meanings may have had on the process of defining and renegotiating personal and professional identities. In the Discussion of this study report I observed how the process of examining my lived experiences had revealed to me connections and links to the culture I had been immersed in which I had previously not noticed. I also realised that as I reconstructed these lived experiences from the context of the present, I found I was starting to understand more about the actions I had taken along the way, and the interpretations and meanings I had made at the those times. In many ways I started to notice the cultural ideology and normative social discourses I was living within for the first time.

Carrying out the autoethnographic process forced me to look inwards, to access my memories, from which I reconstructed my past. It also required me to look outwards at the world I was immersed in and to reflect on my social and cultural surroundings. One of the things I noticed from this process was a need for a sense of belonging; that I need an identity for myself which I recognise and am comfortable with. According to Suominen (2003) this is not surprising as “one naturally desires positionality and the sense of security provided by a feeling of belonging with the intricate structures of everyday life” (p. 5). So to know where and how I fit into the culture I identify with helps to provide a sense of security, purpose and meaning whereas being unsure of my position creates doubt and insecurities and I start to question who I am, what I am doing... “According to Rogoff by constantly asking oneself the question ‘where do I belong?’ and pursuing articulation of this question in relationship to one’s life, brings awareness to the process of self-positioning, in-flux identity and the complex process of writing one’s self into culture” (2000, as cited in Suominen, 2003, p. 5). As a woman who has experienced, and still is experiencing defining and renegotiating my identity whilst on my journey as an outdoor educator in Aotearoa New Zealand, this question holds significance.

Whilst, as mentioned earlier, there is significant evidence that the field of outdoor education is considered a male gendered space, I identified through the autoethnographic process, that I had always denied that perspective. Instead I have rationalized and articulated that the outdoors is a gender neutral space where there are equal opportunities for males and females. Although work in the field regularly requires long hours, physical and technical competence at a 'high enough' standard, nights away from home and time spent in the 'dangerous' outdoor environment (Allin, 2000; Allin 2004), ability to do this I always perceived to be possessed by the individual rather than being gender specific. As a dependents-free physically able younger woman this was achievable for me, allowing me to embrace the outdoor education ideology prevalent in the culture I was a part of. Not only was I able to buy-into it but I could also contribute to its continued maintenance through my own practices, so creating for myself a strong sense of belonging. Perhaps, as Snitow suggests, having internalised a gender neutral discourse I entered the field of outdoor education as a 'conceptual male' (1990, as cited in Ranson, 2005), unaware of how these liberal feminist perspectives masked from me my own acceptance of the male gendered values underlying the outdoor education culture. Liberal feminism is, according to Halley, "characterized by a view that women and men are, for all legitimate purposes, the same; equality is its central and social legal goal" (2006, as cited in Katamraju, 2011, p. 440). Welch explains that "liberal feminists are not challenging capitalism or patriarchy or any other fundamental structures of society, but rather looking for the removal of barriers that prevent women operating effectively in the public sphere on equal terms with men" (2001, p. 1), an approach consistent with that taken by women such as myself working in outdoor education.

My own introduction to outdoor education had a strong focus on outdoor pursuit activities and many of my formative years as an outdoor educator were in organisations influenced by the dominant adventure discourse. As a consequence I have empathy with the value of challenge, outdoor pursuit activities and development of the person. However this is a simplistic view and falls far short of the bigger picture of influences in my development as an outdoor educator. For example some of my earliest and most memorable formal outdoor education experiences were at 'field study' centres where the focus was on place rather than activities. Another significant influence was a year spent in the United States of America as an intern at The Audubon Centre of the Northwoods. Located in Minnesota this environmental centre was a leader in its field at

the time in the 1990s and was already promoting and living eco-centric values. Pursuit activities, if undertaken at all, were at a very low skill level and used as means to experience or travel through an environment rather than for the activity itself. Despite these influences I have spent much of my time working in organisations which I perceived to be based on the dominant adventure discourse. Being able to perform in the outdoor activities was part of the reality of my job.

It is only as a result of the process of looking inwards at myself and outwards at the society and culture I am a part of, combined with reading of the literature, that I am becoming aware of both my own story and of alternative stories and paradigms. As Spencer Cahill observes, “my reading made me notice aspects of my experiences that had previously gone unnoticed. And once those seen but unnoticed aspects of everyday life came into view, I decided to view and report on them” (1990, as cited in Lofland, Snow, Anderson & Lofland, 2006, p. 13.). I have now also become curious about other’s lived experiences of being women in Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and “as intellectual curiosity is a powerful motivator of research” (Lofland et al., 2006) have decided to explore these further in this research.

## **Overview of Thesis Structure**

This first chapter has introduced the phenomenon of women working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand and the notion that this is a gendered environment. The thesis then continues with an exploration of the literature related to Outdoor Education in an Aotearoa New Zealand context, women’s experiences of outdoor education, the concept of careers, the notion of competence and the transition to motherhood. In Chapter three I address my approach to this research and the methods used. I also acknowledge the impacts of the Canterbury Earthquakes on this study. In chapter four I introduce the participants of this study through mini case studies of their lived experiences, followed by a preliminary analysis of these. Threads from the cases studies are identified, drawn together and analysed in chapter five and in chapter six they are woven together with material drawn from the wider literature and discussed further. In chapter seven I present my concluding thoughts together with some ideas and recommendations for the future.

## Chapter 2

## Literature Review

To explore experiences of being women in Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand it is important first to consider the origins, understandings and purposes of Outdoor Education. This review of the literature will explore origins, understandings and purposes of Outdoor Education found in contemporary Aotearoa New Zealand together with influences that contributed to its development as a gendered environment. It will also consider women's experiences of outdoor education, especially from the perspective of outdoor education as a workplace or career. As part of this the notion of a 'career' and its application for women in outdoor education will be examined. Examples of other non-traditional work areas for women will be considered.

### Outdoor Education

*Outdoor education has a rich history in Aotearoa New Zealand which has been influenced by multiple discourses and sets of ideas. (Hill, 2012, p. 46)*

Two of the prevalent discourses in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand over the last few decades have been outdoors-as-adventure and outdoors-as-learning. Boyes (2012) discusses the development and purposes of these discourses together with aspects of the struggle between them. "There has been a long history of contestation with adherents of the various position vying for the legitimation of their perspectives. Mostly this has been a struggle between outdoors-as-adventure and outdoors-as-learning" but, he identifies "both are competing for the same stakes" (p. 41). Environmental education, in various guises, has challenged the contested space of outdoor education but the space is being contested strongly in Aotearoa New Zealand at the moment by the critical socio-ecological perspective that is gathering momentum. This is driven by concerns and issues of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century "such as climate change, growing inequality between the haves and have-nots, and rising levels of consumption and waste" (Irwin, Straker & Hill, 2012, p. 12). Proponents of this discourse contest for a redefining of outdoor education away from outdoors-as-adventure.

arguing that education is a key mechanism of social change to move towards more sustainable ways of living. Outdoor education has a part to play in this shift of thinking, but the development of methodologies and pedagogies need to



be derived from this place in response to the pressures and needs of the people and the land (p. 20).

### **Historical background**

Adventure Education programmes are generally defined as those which use activities with elements of risk involved in them to create challenge and excitement within students. The Safety and EOTC document defines the purpose of Adventure Education as being “to enhance self-concept and improve social interaction” (Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 46). Miles and Priest (1990) define Adventure Education programmes as those which involve activities that have inherent risk built into them. Those risks may be physical, social, financial, or intellectual and are undertaken to achieve self-discovery objectives of learning, growing and expanding your vision of human potential. Most emphasis is usually placed on the use of physical risks to create challenging adventure activities. The activities involved may be in natural environments such as mountains, rock crags, rivers and bush or make use of purpose built facilities such as ropes courses and rock walls. In essence, adventure education is activity based and uses risk and the environment as the learning medium. Brookes (2002) in discussing Outdoor Education in an Australian context, notes how programmes that have been strongly influenced by UK traditions involved adventurous activities with mountaineering, rock climbing and white water kayaking as central elements. These three activity disciplines have traditionally also been dominant in New Zealand outdoor education which has experienced similar influences.

Environmental Education, although considered by some people to be an integral part of outdoor education, for others has been thought of, and treated, as the poor cousin (Martin, 1999) and as such loses out to the physicality, challenge and excitement potentially created for participants by adventure education. Loynes has discussed his concern about the focus on “commodified risk based on sensationalism” (as cited in Rubens, 1998, p. 19) from high adrenalin adventure activities and suggests that this reduces the opportunities for connections with both people and the environment. Boyes (2000) suggests that the term outdoor education is best interpreted in “a broad sense as critical outdoor education, maintaining physicality of the experiences while optimising the opportunities to understand people’s relationships in and with the outdoors” (p. 15).

Martin also promotes the concept of critical outdoor education based on the ideology of critical theory. Martin suggests that the use of outdoor activities and experiences provides the ability to take participants out of their normal society and into a new environment. By doing this the participants are better placed to critically examine the basic cultural assumptions of their 'normal' society. Methods such as this are used as education for sustainability and environmentally sustainable living "by focusing on the cultural beliefs and practices that are perpetuating the current ecological crisis, with change in mind" (1999, p. 464).

During the last decade more recent critical thinking around the purpose of Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand has seen an increasing challenge of the dominant adventure discourse with alternative understandings contesting the space. At the forefront of the challenges are education for sustainability, and socio-ecocentric discourses. The outdoor-education-as adventure discourse was initiated during twentieth century UK in response to the social circumstances of the time. "As the world enters the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the social, political, economic, and environmental contexts within which education, and more specifically outdoor education, now finds itself are vastly different from the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century" (Irwin, Straker & Hill, 2012, p. 14). A critical approach towards purpose and pedagogy are driving alternative discourses to be championed.

For example the Christchurch College of Education's outdoor programme, which is the only specific teacher training, in outdoor education has the vision "New Zealanders are innovative and motivated people who think and act sustainably' and the purpose of creating "Leadership for a sustainable future" (D. Irwin, Personal Communication). Similarly the vision of the Bachelor of Adventure Recreation and Outdoor Education at Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) is "to provide leadership and scholarship in outdoor education and adventure recreation in order to enrich individuals and society; and to contribute to the sustainability of the natural environment" (CPIT, 2001, p. 8). During the last two years this degree programme has been revised and reflects current debates in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

### **Development of outdoor education as a gendered space**

Several authors have noted that outdoor education has a gendered historical background (Allin, 2000; Allin 2004; Cook, 2001; Lugg, 2003; McDermott, 2004). As discussed in chapter one, the development of outdoor education in the UK in the first half of the twentieth was strongly influenced by the significant social events of the time. As a result programmes were developed predominantly to meet the needs of boys and the roles they would have to fulfil in adult life, such as preparation for hardship and war. Character traits considered essential to prepare boys for such roles included physical prowess, courage, strength, endurance, aggression and leadership (Cook, 2001). Developing life and survival skills for young men through the masculine attributes of hard training plus physical and mental toughness was of prime concern to Kurt Hahn, founder of the Outward Bound movement (Allin, 2000; Carter, 2000). “Both Kurt Hahn and Baden Powell, instigator of the Scout movement, were primarily interested in developing the fitness and moral character of *boys (sic)* with particular concern to release male aggressiveness and sexual tensions” (Allin, 2000, p. 51).

During the 1950s, in the UK, when ‘secondary education for all’ and ‘equal opportunities’ became the major educational and political concerns the focus remained on the needs of boys, for it was boys “that were usually seen as the root of social problems” (Cook, 2001, p. 49) and education using challenging activities in the outdoors was considered suitable for addressing these problems. At the same time it appears that outdoor adventurous activities were not considered to be suitable for girls and “girls were discouraged from taking part in outdoor activities in case it jeopardised the domestic role for which most were destined” (p. 45). Homemaking, mothering skills and the virtues of “loyalty, co-operation, smartness, cleanliness, fairness, exemplary manners, self-control and respect for authority” (p. 44) were considered to be desirable for girls.

The establishment and early development of outdoor education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand has been strongly influenced by the UK experience. Boyes (2000) identifies that several influential figures in outdoor education came from the UK during a period in which “Outdoor Education in the UK was seen as predominantly involving journeys or outdoor pursuits” (Loynes, 1999 as cited in Boyes, 2000, p. 7). As a consequence many of the well-established outdoor education programmes in Aotearoa

New Zealand have, as was mentioned earlier, centred on the core activities of mountaineering, rock climbing and white water kayaking. More recently a broader range of activities has been introduced but generally this is in addition to the traditional ones rather than in place of them. These include the use of low and high Challenge Ropes courses, based on the philosophy of Project Adventure from the US (Neill, 2007) rafting, horse riding, windsurfing, mountain biking, surfing...

As outlined above, the historical development of Outdoor Education appears to have contributed to it becoming a male gendered environment. Kane and Snyder (1989 as cited in Allin, 2000) discuss the concept of masculine and feminine physical activities and sports with the division usually being based on the degree of physical challenge, contact and/or risk involved in it. The activities traditionally associated with outdoor adventure education, are generally considered to be masculine in nature and fit with the concept of outdoor education as a male gendered space (Allin, 2000). Success in these activities tends to be measured in terms of 'conquering' the mountain, overcoming nature and challenges or the hardness of the climb or river through physical strength and determination. All of which are traditionally conceived as male gender traits.

Barnes (2003) proposes the need to research Outdoor Leaders as cultural phenomena, identifying that while research has been carried out into the benefits of outdoor education programmes for participants less attention has been paid to the meanings outdoor leaders themselves have made from their experiences. As a group of people they have the experience of being immersed "in a very profound manner in the outdoor environment" (p. 241) for a long period of time. Barnes suggests that as a result:

The physical and cultural environment in which outdoor leaders work has a powerful effect not only on their approach to the physical environment but also on their cultural and social identity. This in turn affects their approach not only to their work, their approach to professionalism and personal development but also to their lifestyle and relationship to a broader society (2003, p. 241).

As a cultural phenomenon Barnes suggest that outdoor education staff typically form a community of strong minded individuals who tend to have their own reasons for working in the field and resist being brought together as a coherent group. Common traits, Barnes suggests, include strong values and belief systems that places value on individuality, altruism and vocation together with a sense of an identifiable lifestyle. These features are particularly evident in residential outdoor centres. Barnes doesn't discuss the gender make up of these cultural groups, however many residential outdoor education centres were established on the principles of using the traditional pursuits based activities (2003).

The variation in reasons that influence people to work in outdoor education is in itself a cause of tension within the community and contributes to the contemporary debates around the definition and purpose of outdoor education. As Irwin indicates some of these “problems include the way the past has shaped our view of outdoor education and how this can impact on our present practice” (2008, p. 36). While the prevalent view in Aotearoa New Zealand may have been pursuits focused and women such as myself may have adapted to fit into this space – there are alternative paradigms for what outdoor education is and who can use the space and in what ways. Brown (2008) suggests that the concept of place provides an alternative lens through which outdoor education can be viewed. Irwin, (2008) argues that “when education for sustainability is woven into an outdoor education setting, the way outdoor education is perceived is changed” (p. 41). Woodward (2000) challenges the dominant male discourse she found in windsurfing and argues for looking at outdoor education through a feminist lens, to discover the meanings and understanding women make from their outdoor experiences, a view supported by authors (Allin, 2000, Collins, 2000; Humberstone, 2000; Lugg, 2003; McDermott, 2004).

## **Women and careers**

The traditional concept of a career as an unbroken linear path towards an identifiable end point is associated with a typical male work life where the male, as ‘main bread-winner’ in the Western family context, went to work and the female was responsible for the domestic life and children. Hargreaves (1994 as cited in Allin, 2004) describes the

connection of this pattern to the way Victorian familism resulted in women being positioned at home with the roles of wife, mother and house keeper, while the man worked outside the home. Prince (2004) explains how in the Aotearoa New Zealand context “with the emergence of capitalism, women continued to contribute to the maintenance of the family while men produced for both their family and the wider New Zealand society in exchange for wages” (p. 47). As a consequence of this society in New Zealand “is still generally organised on the idea of the nuclear family, with the mother primarily responsible for the domestic duties. Therefore, the concept of women as wives and mothers is still deeply embedded in New Zealand society” (Andrews, 1998 as cited in Prince, 2004).

Careers NZ Mana Rapuara Aotearoa report in their 2009 online magazine,

career patterns today are markedly different from those of the generations that have gone before... Just a generation ago, a career was viewed as a commitment to a lifelong occupation. Now, old occupations are disappearing, new ones are being invented, and many jobs have evolved to be considerably different than they were a few years ago. Couple this with heightened competition and an increasingly demanding labour market – hallmarks of an economic recession.

These factors all contribute to a changing work and career climate for both men and women. According to Statistics New Zealand (2010) the “proportion of couples where both are in paid work is the most common family type and has increased since 1991, along with those where both work full-time. 64% of couples with dependent children are both in paid work” (as cited in EEO, 2011, p. 11). Only about 20% of families now fit the traditional family model of father in full time paid work and the mother is in non-paid work at home now (EEO, 2011).

Acker (1990, as cited in Demaiter & Adams, 2009) suggests that “the very concept of a ‘job’ is gendered because it ‘assumes a particular gendered organization of domestic life and social production’” (p. 33). This traditional division of labour had the women managing the home and children whilst men engaged in paid work, jobs, outside the home. Consequently most “jobs were not designed to be combined with other duties, like caring for others and managing a household” (p. 33). Demaiter and Adams (2009)

identify that although in contemporary society “change has clearly occurred jobs and child-rearing are not easily combined” (p. 33). A problem for women and many men is that they do have obligations outside of their job resulting in negotiation of the two very different contexts of home and workplace every day.

Feminist researchers challenge the applicability of the traditional career concept for women. Evetts, (1994 as cited in Allin 2004) suggests that the traditional planned linear concept does not allow for the complexity of women’s paid and unpaid work roles. Allin (2003) reporting on research into women’s outdoor education career experiences observes how many of her respondents describe unplanned and unexpected or opportunistic moves through the field. Many women also appear to make meaning from their work and life experiences by re-defining ‘career’ as lifestyle and identity. Defining ‘career’ in this broad sense allows women to frame career success through “enjoyment, satisfaction and achievement on a personal basis rather than in the terms of societal expectations” (Allin, 2003, p. 235).

Halpern (2008) researching the experience of women in an academic workplace supports this idea noting that the career paths of women are less likely to be linear and often will involve temporary ‘stop-outs’ from employment. This contrasts with the demands of academic work as “the academic career path is designed for a traditional male breadwinner with a stay-at-home spouse or partner to care for children and others as well as handling the numerous hassles of everyday living” (p. 60). Halpern comments that everyone has a life outside of the workplace and despite the rhetoric of separate constructs of work and family/life in fact people live an integrated life where the two aspects “mutually effect each other”(p. 58).

Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) “were intrigued to find that women and men describe their careers quite differently” (p. 108). Women it appeared would create their own career to suit their needs and were less concerned with the traditional measures of career success. Men on the other hand “as a group were more likely to follow traditional career paths associated with one industry” (p. 110). Although not all men had a linear path, it was likely to be continuous and progress upwards. Women, they determined, were more

relational and made career decisions through a “lens of relationalism – they factored in the needs of children, spouses, aging parents, friends and even co-workers and clients – as part of the total gestalt of their careers” (p. 111). Based on these findings the authors proposed a new model for the experiences of employees today. “How do women’s careers unfold? What meaning does “career” have? And which factors are salient in the transitions they make in their careers?” (p. 108).

The model proposed by Mainiero and Sullivan (2005), the Kaleidoscope Model, considers three key issues or parameters which women consider when making career decision: authenticity, balance and challenge. The relevant importance of these three parameters shifts during a woman’s lifespan, creating different patterns, just as the pieces of glass in a kaleidoscope move creating different images. Mainiero and Sullivan’s research indicated a pattern common to most women at certain stages of their lifespan. Early in their career, Challenge appeared as the most important parameter yet as women shift towards mid-career and children and partners become more significant in their lives, Balance became the more important parameter. Then later in the career lifespan focus shifts towards, Authenticity or being true to oneself with work that is compatible to a person’s values.

O’Neil and Bilimoria (2005) also researched career experiences of women and proposed an age related 3 phase model as a consequence of this study. The “three distinct age – related phases are characterized by differences in the career pattern, locus, context and beliefs” (p.184). Phase 1, Idealistic Achievement (ages 24 – 25) is characterized by a women’s focus on achievement, success and satisfaction in their career. The career locus is internal and women typically have a self – focused perspective. Phase 2 Pragmatic Endurance (ages 36 – 45) sees women “operating in production mode, doing what it takes to get it done” (p.183). In phase 3 Reinventive Contribution (ages 46 – 70+) women become more driven to contribute and are more likely to focus on working in a work area that is meaningful for them.

Lu and Sexton (2009) carried out a study of senior female managers in the construction industry examining career progression and the interactions of agency and structure



which create a turning point. "It seems that a career changing "turning point" is reached when the interaction between structure and agency is sufficiently complementary or abrasive that it results in a decision by the individual which ignites action" (2009, p.135). Combining O'Neil and Bilimoria's age related career development model with White's senior female management career development model models and their findings, Lu and Sexton identified four broad career development phases for their senior managers each with its own contextual loci. Phase 1, Compromise with a parental relationship context, phase 2 Pragmatic, Developmental Endurance with a personal relationship context, phase 3 with Senior Management Role Consolidation with a business relationship context and phase 4 Reinvent Contribution with a society relationship context (2009).

As mentioned previously in this review of the literature, the traditional concept of a career is of an unbroken linear path which results in hierarchical progression. This progression has, in western society, become "constructed as normal and desirable" (Smith, 2010, p. 8). In her study on female teacher's career decisions Smith (2010) cites a substantial body of literature which has focused on barriers to women's career progression, but argues that the findings from her own study suggest the situation is more complex. "It became apparent that to limit the scope of the analysis to 'internal and external barriers' to progression would be to deny women's agency. Women can, and do, make decisions for themselves, and take steps to shape their own lives and careers" (p. 8). Smith suggests attention should be turned to focus on the interrelationships of a woman and her social context. This should include consideration of the barriers and constraints on a woman's life but should focus on the ways "women exerted their personal agency, and negotiated the constraints of their lives" (p. 8). So while constraints do exist women may opt positively for alternate career paths which are neither linear nor hierarchical in nature and hence redefine progression in the context of career or work life. As Smith summarises

women's self-perceptions regarding their own agency, and the ways in which they choose to exert it, are key influences in career decision making. This moves our understanding of women's career choices beyond a focus on barriers to progression, and allows alternative accounts of female teacher's career

decision-making to be considered, taking into account questions of power and resistance, values and positive choice (2010, p. 22).

## **Careers and motherhood**

Pregnancy, childbirth, and caregiving responsibilities place enormous demands on women that tend to deplete the time, energy, and psychological commitment they have available for work for at least a short period of time and often lead them to curtail their engagement in the workforce (Valcour & Ladge, 2008, p. 301).

As Ranson (2005) identifies, “motherhood is largely considered to be a watershed in the careers of professional women, particularly those working in male dominated professions” (p. 1). As for women in other work environments, women outdoor educators are forced to make some decisions if they cross the watershed to motherhood. In a study of women’s career development patterns Whitmarsh, Brown, Cooper, Hawkins-Rodgers and Wentworth (2007) identified three life patterns between their participants’ careers and family lives. The three categories were “(a) unitrack, a career/work history without the added role of motherhood; (b) sequential, an initial career/work history followed by an interruption for a focus on the responsibilities of motherhood with a reentry to career and world of work: and (c) multitrack, the juggling of expectations associated with full time employment with the responsibilities of motherhood (e.g. brief maternity leave with no break in career path) (p. 230).

Women choosing to work in an outdoor education workplace are likely to find themselves in a traditionally male oriented culture with its associated values of success and competence based on physicality and strength. Much outdoor education work also involves long and/or irregular work hours, overnight field trips and working in an environment which can be physically challenging and even hostile. Allin (2004) suggests that “for women outdoor educators, combining an outdoor career with family and relationships appear contradictory” (p. 1). Not only do women need to be physically fit and competent in the activities involved but need to find ways to balance the work

based demands of outdoor education with the other and more traditional roles for women

Levine, Lin, Kern, Wright and Carrese investigated why women leave careers in academic medicine and identified that participants experience a “disconnection between their own priorities and those of the dominant culture in academic medicine” (2011, p. 752). For most of their participants this was a result of a combination of factors which the authors grouped into four categories, lack of role models for women in academic medicine, frustration with research, work-life balance and the institutional environment. In analysing each woman’s story to determine an explanatory model for women leaving the profession, the authors identified “a common point, wherein respondents have recognized that their priorities for work and their views of success are incompatible with the institution’s expectations” (p. 756).

Whether a woman has real choice regarding leaving the workforce once she becomes a mother will be dependent on a wide range of factors, such as economics, culture. Those with choice face the decision of what to do. Research by Grant-Valone and Ensher (2010) into the career choices women make after having children suggests that in addition to the opt-in or opt-out option, women are also creating a third option, which Grant – Valone and Ensher term opting in-between. “Opting in-between is about keeping options open” (p. 344) through working part-time, negotiating flexible hours or modifying work. This may not be an option for all women, but the research indicated opting in-between to be a preferred option for many women.

Cabrera (2006), exploring reasons why women leave the workplace identified that “women are relational; they value connectedness with others, often sacrificing their own needs for others” (p. 219). Various pull factors may encourage a woman to leave the workforce, either short or long term, including caring for their own children or elderly parents, or to accommodate their spouse’s job relocation. Cabrera also noted that women who take time off are often perceived as less committed to their careers than employees who don’t and this can work against them when seeking future employment or promotion opportunities.

## Competence and Gender

For women in outdoor education the body has a central place in identity construction. Allin (2000) used life history interviews to investigate the experience of women following an outdoor education career in the UK and in particular explored how these women negotiated physicality in a male dominated work environment. Many of the women interviewed, all of whom had at least 10 years' experience in the outdoor education field, identified that they were physically strong and fit and were generally able to hold their own in a male dominated physical environment. Many of these women also identified that they were technically highly competent in their pursuits and enjoyed extending themselves during physical activity.

Competence, according to Loeffler (1997), is a complex and multidimensional construct which refers either to a person's ability to complete a task or to a person's ability to perform a task according to a prescribed set of values and standards. This, as Lugg (2003) discusses, leads to the issue of who defines the standards against which competence is determined and whose interests are being served by those measure of competence. Measures of competence based around physical strength, speed and technical expertise would seem to privilege men as these attributes are congruent with the social construct for the male gender in Western cultures (Humberstone, 2000; Loeffler, 1997; Lugg, 2004; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). While actual competence is important for outdoor leaders an individual's assessment and confidence in their competence, or their 'sense of confidence' is also important. "The ability of an outdoor education participant to form an accurate Sense of Competence is influenced by many factors. Participants tend to observe their personal competence through the lens of gender role socialisation. These assessments, in turn, influence their self-perceptions of their competence" (Sternberg & Kolligan 1990, as cited in Warren & Loeffler, 2006, p. 110).

Jorgenson (2002) in discussion of the issues faced by women in engineering comments how a women's "credibility rests not only on the ability to navigate male- defined interaction rituals but also how well they demonstrate an appropriate interest in technology" (p. 355). A similar situation is experienced by women in outdoor education where a person's credibility is associated with their ability to perform physically and

technically in activities as well as by the perception of a person's competence. Lugg (2003) reports on a case study by Green of four female students on a degree level Outdoor Education programme (1994, as cited in Lugg, 2003). Findings from this study highlighted the normative emphasis on physical strength, speed and technical expertise in the understanding of competence (Lugg, 2003). Additionally, studies by Allin (2000) and Green (1994, as cited in Lugg, 2003) suggest that while women working in the outdoors often do develop a high level of physical and technical skills they can lack "confidence in their competence due to the perception that their physical abilities are not valued as highly as those of their male counterparts" (Lugg, 2003, p. 37).

Correll (2001, as cited in Smulyan, 2004) discusses the powerful influence cultural beliefs about gender can have on our own belief of our abilities and competence. Thus when a female enters a situation having internalized the belief that 'most people' expect more competent performances from men, even if she does not personally endorse this stereotypic behaviour, she may still leave the situation with a lower assessment of her ability compared to a male performing at the same level, due to the biasing effect of other's expectations (p. 227).

Warren and Loeffler suggest that the complex process of technical skill development for women is influenced by gender role socialisation, creating "the perception that certain outdoor adventure activities are not considered as seriously for women as they are for men" (2006, p. 108). The process of gender role socialisation into appropriate activities starts for young children and continues throughout life, prescribing which activities women (and men) should participate in and which they shouldn't. Demonstration of 'should' behaviours and participation in gender appropriate activities receives praise from the surrounding society while the opposite behaviours will result in negative consequences and social penalties (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Competence in the outdoors, as discussed earlier, tends to be based around physical strength, speed and technical ability, all attributes socially constructed as being male in nature. This creates a dilemma for women as Baruch (1974, as cited in Warren & Loeffler, 2006) explains

competence is apparently viewed as a masculine trait and our society values achievement and competence highly. Thus women are caught in a double bind:

if they develop their competence they are masculine; if they do not they are not socially valued and learn to devalue themselves (p. 109).

This dilemma may discourage women's participation in active outdoor pursuits or can leave women with the feeling that they need to prove themselves by outdoing the men technically and physically in order to be accepted. Another socially constructed message women must either embrace or deny is the feeling that they need to 'look good' in the outdoors. Either choice has its consequences and as Warren and Loeffler identify "this distraction of continually mediating conflicting definitions of identity in the outdoors, as well as the invalidation of women's desires to gain technical competency is problematic in technical skills development" (2006, p. 110) and hence in being seen as being competent. In addition, "feminist theory would posit that the whole dilemma of asking women to develop skill sets that support a historically hegemonic male-based system of outdoor adventure education is questionable" (Warren & Loeffler, 2006, p. 108). Woodward, discussing her windsurfing experiences describes how she struggled with the tensions associated with

acting 'like a man' so as to be accepted, or acting 'differently' and being marginalised. Sometimes I chose to prove my competence using the criteria associated with the dominant discourses, at other times to press for changes as part of resisting those dominant discourses (2000, p. 37).

Webb and Macdonald (2007) explored the dualism between male and female gender in sport as it relates to physical education teachers. They suggest that normative discourse in Westernised societies

construct femaleness and maleness as different and in opposition to each other, with maleness being marked as physically strong and skilled and femaleness as weak and unskilled. In addition what seems to count is how girls and women *look*, and what boys and men *do*, particularly as it relates to sport (and/or for men work)" (Wright, 1999 as cited in Webb & Macdonald, 2007, p. 493).

Webb and Macdonald (2007) identified that in terms of career development, age and experience are of particular significance to the physical education profession, as they also are in outdoor education, with the physical consequences of aging being of particular significance. For women concern about declining physical ability to perform,

as reported by experienced physical education teachers, seems significant with Sikes reporting that “it tends to be taken for granted that teachers will leave the profession at around 40-years-of-age” (1988, as cited in Webb & Macdonald, 2007, p. 495).

### **Gender Neutral Discourse**

In her study of how women in engineering negotiate gender and identity, Jorgenson identifies that many women engineers insist that they work in a gender neutral territory. The women participants indicated that they do not experience sexism and tend not to give any credit to feminism for advancing their work opportunities. In fact many of the women position themselves as non-feminists. Jorgenson suggests that taking the position of denying any presence of sexism within engineering may be part of these women’s strategies to blend in with “a gender status quo that favours masculine interests and viewpoints”(2002). Eisenhart and Finkel’s (1998, as cited in Ranson, 2005) research on women in the engineering profession revealed that both male and female engineers perceived the work place expectations to be gender-neutral. These gender-neutral expectations included organisational expectations about workplace activities that favour a worker identity which is able to put work demands first. These researchers describe the concept of gender neutrality as “a socially and culturally constructed discourse that ‘confers legitimacy on women’s professional contribution only when they act like men’ and ‘makes discussion of women’s distinctive issues virtually impossible’ ”(p. 148).

The IT (Information Technology) industry is according to Demaiter and Adams (2009) a traditionally male dominated workforce where “not only is the culture of IT masculine but studies also suggest that the very notion of competence in the field is also gendered” (p.38). Women in male dominated workplaces, such as IT, face a ‘double-bind’.

To perform their jobs well, they must demonstrate so-called male characteristic like toughness and aggressiveness, but simultaneously appear somewhat feminine, to avoid being derogated or criticized. Women are expected to be feminine on the job, but when masculinity is associated with competence, feminine women risk appearing incompetent” (Roth, 2004 as cited in Demaiter and Adams, 2009, p. 34).

In a study examining the experiences of women who had successful careers in the IT field, Demaiter and Adams reported that their participants used strategies such as downplaying the significance of gender, denying the existence of gender inequality and the salience of gender to their work, and masking their femininity. Or as Snitow (1990, as cited in Demaiter & Adams, 2009) suggests these women are functioning as “conceptual men” (p. 35). Snitow suggests that women who have internalised this gender neutral discourse are in fact not entering the workforce as women but as “conceptual men” (1990, as cited in Ranson, 2005, p. 146). Outdoor Education, like engineering and IT has historically also been a predominantly a male dominated workplace, and would have been when the women in this study started to work in it.

A problem with this approach is that a women’s “conceptual cover is blown when they become, or think about becoming, mothers” (2005, p. 146). A discourse of gender neutrality effectively masks the masculine expectations around performance and career yet when a woman becomes a mother she is confronted with society’s dominant intensive mothering ideology. It is difficult for mothers to meet the conceptual male good worker expectation of consistently putting work demands first (Ranson, 2005). As Demaiter and Adams comment “especially in male-dominated fields, women are less able to live up to the image of the “ideal worker and hence, are less likely to be successful” (2009, p. 32).

Warren explains how “women guides and instructors often deal with very gendered outdoor terrain by working to achieve unparalleled competence, in a sense overcoming gender through becoming a “super woman” (1996, as cited in Newbery, 2003, p. 208). A characteristic which supports Allin’s finding that many women who have successful ‘careers’ in outdoor adventure education appear to have accepted the structure of the outdoors as it is, as being a male dominated environment, and got on with being competent within those measures (2000). Lugg comments “Women who wish to work in the outdoor education field have to find ways to work within this culture, or try to change it to meet the needs and strengths of women as well as men” (2003, p. 33).



One of the work place demands that women identify is the ever present pressure to maintain, develop or update activity leadership qualifications and awards. Allin describes this pressure as particularly relevant in the UK after the introduction of the Adventure Activities Licensing Authority, a regulating body for the industry (2004). As achieving this requires a certain level of participation in activities for personal recreation to maintain currency and fitness, outdoor educators need to negotiate work, family, motherhood and a requirement for personal recreation time. For women, who as identified previously, tend to be less physically strong, less confident in their abilities and be socially conditioned to take on a greater mothering and domestic role in the home, this could and does create extra pressure. For women working in a tertiary outdoor education environment with the additional academic requirements to research, teach, lead, publish and be competent performers in their activity areas this potentially creates multiple roles that need to be fulfilled.

### **Significance of this Research**

As suggested by the selected review of the literature, there has been a limited amount of research into Aotearoa New Zealand Outdoor Education in general and even less into the lived experiences of the people working and instructing in the field. This research is significant in that it provides an opportunity to both explore and document the lived experiences of a sample of women who have worked within the field. In particular the study opened a pathway for me as researcher to explore, with other women, the meanings and understandings attributed to, or taken away from, lived experiences. Hopefully this research will help to reveal useful insights for those considering working in outdoor education as well as for training institutions and employers with the aim of improving and advancing outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand for women and men, worker and participant.

## Chapter 3            Approach to the Research

### Research Paradigm

Knowledge and how it is generated is highly contested, and there are many paradigms. This study has been undertaken using a qualitative research strategy which embodies a view of social reality as a constantly shifting emergent property of an individual's creation (Bryman, 2008). This research sought to extend understanding and unpack meanings made from lived experiences through use of an interpretive constructivist paradigm. A relativist- constructivist ontology accepts that knowledge is indeterminate and that the researcher always presents a constructed, specific version of social reality, rather than one that can be regarded as definitive (Bryman, 2008). The researcher therefore supports the existence of multiple constructed realities. An interpretive epistemological position asserts that social reality has meaning for human beings, therefore human actions are meaningful and humans act on the basis of the meanings that they attribute to their acts and to the acts of others. Or in other words "the knower and the known interact and in doing so shape one another" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 22). The values held by a researcher reflect their personal beliefs or feelings and as researcher in this study I acknowledge that my own lived experiences and values will have influenced and been integral to the research undertaken.

This study sought to hear the voices of women as they narrated stories about their lived experiences working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand and saw me as researcher adopt a feminist perspective. Lugones and Spelman (1990 as cited in Brayton, 1997) state that "feminist theory – of all kinds – is to be based on, or anyway touch base with, the variety of real life stories women provide about themselves"(p. 1). Harding suggests that the presence of three attributes is what makes feminist research feminist; "studying women from their perspective, recognizing the researcher as part of the research subject and acknowledging that the beliefs of the researcher shape the research (1987, as cited in Brayton, 1997, p. 4). This research is consistent with all three of these attributes.

A feminist perspective places importance on the location of the researcher. Both social locations in terms of age, class, race, gender as well as the researcher's position within the research process. As a woman working in a tenured position in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand, who has worked in the field for nearly twenty years and as the researcher who initiated this study I was mindful of the potential for power imbalances with the other participants. As insider to the study I used autoethnographic methods to explore and analyse my own lived experiences. As outsider, in the position of researcher undertaking the study and responsible for the writing up of participant's accounts and interpretation of their texts I was mindful of power issues and looked for mechanisms to expose and make these visible so as to keep them in check. One process I used to do this was to take the information back to the participants for their verification. Another was to seek feedback from supervisors and peers throughout the process.

Whilst this research does not seek specific outcomes or try to prove any theories it does seek to gain greater understanding and is also mindful that "feminism is about challenging gender inequities in the social world" (Brayton, 1997, p. 1) and as such is Critical research.

## **Research Methods**

### **Narrative research**

In this study narrative research was used to listen to the stories participants' recounted of their lived experiences working in Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand for "we know the world through stories that are told about it" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 641). The study also explored the meanings and understandings the participants made from their experiences. Chase (2005) suggests that creating narrative is a process of retrospective meaning making through "shaping or ordering past experience. Narrative is a way of understanding one's own and other's actions, or organizing events and objects into a meaningful whole, and of connecting and seeing the consequences of actions and events"(p. 656).

The act of retelling stories of past experiences allowed each participant to create narratives that described and explained their past experiences through their own particular voice, within the context of this research study. An important aspect of this study was seeking to hear the individual voice of each participant for as Lugg indicates 'voice' "represents the women's worldviews and knowledge developed through lived experience" (2003, p. 3). The use of narrative research is aligned with a feminist perspective as feminists are interested in "women as social actors in their own right and in the subjective meanings that women assigned to events and conditions in their lives (Chase, 2005, p. 655). As a feminist narrative researcher attention was paid to authenticity of the voice, interpretive authority and representation.

## **Methods of Data Collection**

### **Earthquake note:**

It was proposed that this research would use multiple methods of data collection; semi-structured interviews, autoethnographic narratives and photo-elicitation. The data collection for this thesis took place after the September 2010 earthquake in Christchurch. As all my participants and I are located in the Christchurch area and were affected to varying degrees by the quakes I decided to simplify data collection and restrict it to semi-structured interviews and autoethnographic narratives. My intent in doing this was to continue with the research but to shape it in an achievable research project for the context in which it was being undertaken.

Another change I made following the quakes was to reduce the number of women interviewed. I had planned to invite 5 or 6 women to participate in the research through semi-structured interviews. After consultation I decided to reduce the number of participants to myself plus three others but to look at their lived experiences in more depth through the mini case studies. These changes were made for pragmatic reasons as I looked for balance in an uncertain environment.

In addition to the Canterbury earthquakes other personal circumstances that occurred during 2010 prior to this resulted in a loss of work and study time. As a consequence I

applied to Massey University for, and was given, a year's suspension of study. This enabled me to resume working on this research throughout 2011.

### **Purposive Sampling**

In this study I chose to explore the lived experiences of a small sample of women, in addition to myself as a member of the group. In doing this I sought to explore a small number of individual experiences to a greater depth. I interviewed three women who fulfilled the criteria of having worked in outdoor education for a significant period of time, over 10 years. Being a relatively small field of employment in Aotearoa New Zealand and due to my own position as a tenured tertiary outdoor educator working in a large institution and my years of experiences working in the field, as researcher I am in the position of being aware of the relatively small number of the women who fulfil the criteria above. I created a short list of possible participants who met my criteria and then filtered the list by location of the participants and selected three that lived in the same region as me to invite to participate. All three were willing to be involved.

### **Semi-Structured Interviews**

A semi-structured interview of between one and half and two and a half hours was held with each participant. Perakyla (2005) suggests that interviews consist of accounts given to the researcher by the participant about issues in which the researcher is interested and asks questions.

By using interviews, the researcher can reach areas of reality that otherwise would remain inaccessible such as people's subjective experiences and attitudes. The interview is also a very convenient way of overcoming distances both in space and time; past events or faraway experiences can be studied by interviewing the people who took part in them (Perakyla, 2005, p. 869).

A semi-structured interview method was used to facilitate hearing the participant's voices as they constructed their narratives in the context of this research and in the presence of myself as researcher. A series of five broad questions was prepared to keep the direction of the interview focused but my intent was to keep the interview as open as possible to let the participants' tell their stories in their own voices.

### **Autoethnographic Narratives**

My own narratives were recorded in Journal entries made during the data collection phase of this study and taken from my unpublished autoethnographic study 'a Journey through Outdoor Education and Motherhood, (Jones, 2008). White (2003) discussed her own experiences of autoethnographic research in a study where she explored her own experiences as well as those of her participant group, commented on issues of interviewing using an interactive interview approach where the researcher is both subject, as a member of the group being researched, and researcher. While encouraging autoethnographic interviewees to be willing to participate fully in the interview conversation, sharing their own experiences and allowing their own life to be probed, White cautions the interviewer to be mindful to not overshadow the participants story. This mirrors the position I was in during this study and as White (2003) identifies, my "aim is to give participants a voice – not to speak for them" (p. 30).

### **Ethics**

As with all research this study had potential ethical issues associated with it. To ensure harm to the participants, researcher and any other persons does not occur a process was used to identify and assess any potential ethical issues prior to the study commencing. In this research I chose to interview a sample of women who have worked in the outdoor education field in Aotearoa New Zealand for a number of years. As discussed previously, I fit in this category and used a reflective methodology to explore my own experiences as well as semi structured interviews to explore the experiences of others. While the central focus of the study is experiences during a 'career' journey in outdoor education I acknowledge that it is not possible to explore these experiences in isolation. We are all always within a context and in that context are likely to be other people be they family, friends, peers, work mates or students. If in the process of retelling excerpts of narrative these characters become involved I have taken precautions to preserve the anonymity of these people through the use of pseudonyms.

Other ethical issues could arise as a result of my own position as researcher and the other participants' positions working in the same field in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is a relatively small field and there could potentially be issues related to power and influence.

As a tenured employee at one of the larger tertiary institutions in the country I am mindful that this could influence the participants' perception of my role as researcher and my purposes in carrying out the research. To mitigate against this I have endeavoured to make my research proposal, purpose, design, methods and interpretation as transparent and available as I can to participants. All the participants were supplied with a copy of their transcribed interview, for verification. The interpretations presented in the final report are available for participants to comment should they wish.

All recordings and transcriptions of interviews were stored in a locked filing cabinet and will be destroyed once the final report has been submitted and accepted.

The Massey University Research screening questionnaire was completed and the Low Risk Notification Process followed. Confirmation of this project being recorded on the Low Risk Database was received on 2 July 2010 (see Appendix 1).

## **Interpretation of Data**

*In the telling of my story I am not declaring my emerging knowledge as scientific truth, or as a discovery beyond me, but rather as my creative construction of a reality, which I have lived through (Dyson, 2007, p. 39).*

Narrative enquiry leads to the arrival of meaning as explained by Fitzclarence and Hickey (1999, as cited in Dyson, 2007, p. 30) "narratives provide the sources of meanings that people attribute to their experiences. Stories not only express meaning given to experience but also determine which aspects of experience are selected for expression. In this sense narrative or story provides the primary focus for interpretation of experience". A reader of these narratives will be able to identify connections to their own lives and experiences and as a result this "writing promotes dialogue, connections, empathy and solidarity and is to be used rather than analysed (Ellis & Bochner, 2000 as cited in Ferrence, 2007, p. 28).

As I went through the process of reflective writing, the events discussed and the direction the narrative takes was an evolving process and in itself, through selections made, has revealed its own meanings to add to the tale.

## **Limitations**

1. Data collection for this thesis occurred after the September 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 Canterbury earthquakes. Analysis of the data and the writing of this thesis were done over the following 15 months and as mentioned in Earthquake notes earlier in this chapter this had impacts on the research. Quantifying the impacts is difficult. All aspects of life have been affected in some way, from the changes to the physical environment, managing disruptions at work, disturbed sleep patterns, unsettled children, colleagues, students and self all contribute to disruptions in concentration and priorities at times.
2. As I wanted to explore women's lived experiences at depth I elected to restrict the research to a small number of participants. Interviewing a great number of women would have allowed for a broader perspective to be gained.
3. The women in this study were all white, educated and living in the Christchurch area at the time of the interviews. A more ethnographically diverse mix of women or women from different locations within Aotearoa New Zealand would generate a broader picture.

## **Presentation of findings**

Each of the women in this study is introduced through a mini-case study at the start of the next chapter. These case studies are written from the material contained in the interview transcripts, or for myself, through reflective writing.



## Chapter 4      Presentation of Data

In this chapter I introduce each of the women who participated in my research through the means of mini case studies. This is followed by a preliminary analysis of the case studies identifying common themes and differences in the women's experiences.

### Case Studies

#### Cath

At the time of the interview in 2010 Cath was a 50 year old woman with two children living in Christchurch and working part-time at a tertiary level institute teaching outdoor education. Cath grew up in a town in North West England with a school teacher father and at home mother. Family holidays were spent in the Lake District. Cath's father took his school students for a one week camp in the Lake District each summer and Cath's family would go as well and take part in the activities. By her late teens Cath was competing at elite level her chosen outdoor pursuit, orienteering, and spent 17 years in the National Team for her sport.

*I got into the outdoors pretty much after university but I knew I wanted to do that from about 16. We'd always done a lot of climbing, tramping and stuff with my dad in the Lake District in England and I loved doing that stuff. I didn't know what I wanted to do as a career but I met an older friend who was already working in an outdoor centre through orienteering actually, she was also orienteering and her job sounded wonderful and I thought Yes this is a job I want to do. My parents were a bit lukewarm because they didn't think it was a career job.*

Encouraged by her parents Cath went to University to study physical education and geography "because it got me outdoors doing field trips and stuff". Cath continued on to teacher training college, being accepted on to a specific course as encouraged by her mentor who was already working in an outdoor education centre. At the time this Post Graduate Teacher Training course was one of only two in whole of the UK which specialised in outdoor education.

Following this Cath got a job at a residential outdoor education centre in Scotland which she did for three years. At this point her boyfriend's contract at the Centre finished and he decided to find a school job so he could complete his teacher registration. Being 'keen' on the boyfriend Cath looked for work in the same part of the country and got a job teaching outdoor education in a secondary school in the same region

*I thought here is my career teaching job still doing the outdoors, so that's cool. Mum and dad, it's all subtle, there wasn't really any big push but it was like, you know, a proper job, a teaching job even though the outdoor centre job was actually paying me more than the school job.*

Feeling a need to move out from her boyfriend Cath took an opportunity to take up a seconded position as a peripatetic teacher going around schools within the Local Education Authority and helping teachers set up outdoor programmes,

*it was a great job, for me it was like it had the best of both worlds and it was a dream job actually. It was only a year so it was something to do and then I knew I had school to go back to. So I took that job and then it gave me a reason to move out from the boyfriend.*

The position was extended for a further two years. When the role was finished Cath had her original school position to go back to but with her current partner and later husband, a New Zealander, living a three hour drive away Cath looked for other potential job opportunities closer to where this boyfriend was living and working. At this point a job at a teacher training college close to where Cath was living became available "it was a bit uncanny how jobs came out of the thing for me" and so although no closer to her partner Cath applied for and got this position

*so that was almost like going from one dream job to another which was much more hard out on the academic side and being prepared for students because you've got to be on top of your game more with that age group but it was good, a career move I was keen to make.*

Whilst at the Teachers' College Cath got married to her partner although they continued to live a three hour drive apart due to his work being based in a large city. During this

time an enquiry came from a tertiary institute in New Zealand looking for help setting up their programmes. Cath enquired whether this could be an exchange and ended up being offered a one year contract at the institution in Aotearoa New Zealand, with her own UK job to come back to afterwards.

*We had a year and I got all the residence and entry things so it was a way of checking out what it was like here.*

Part way through the year Cath was offered a permanent position and the couple decided to stay.

*Once I got here something about New Zealand got under my skin differently and it wasn't just the outdoor scenery, it was the people and it was the attitude to life, it was the fact there's no nukes.*

Cath, emotionally describes how she made a big shift during this time, a shift away from a strong career focus and towards tying in with her husband.

*It was like if I'm going to have kids I want to have them here. That was definite. The year was really quite significant for me because it was when I decided I wanted to stay here and I want to have my kids here and the job wasn't as important as the rest of things.*

Although wanting to stay in Aotearoa New Zealand Cath did not want to stay in the large city they were living in and was keen to move to the South Island before her children started school. Around this time Cath was approached by someone working at a tertiary institute in the South Island which was developing its programmes and asked if she would be interested in working there. At this stage Cath was offered the opportunity of part time work and a teaching load that would work for her with young children.

*It's all subtle reflecting on it thinking if I get into this degree then I can get myself a 0.6 job which just fits with the kids and the family and all those other things which are now more important to me and still contribute to the job, 'cause I love my job.*

Cath continues to work part time in the niche role she created for herself in this tertiary institute. For Cath the focus has changed

*When I moved here I wasn't thinking career at all in fact. It was to work, to contribute to the broader outdoor education discipline, community whatever you want to call it. I am passionate about it and I still want to contribute to it and earn a bit of money, that helps. So I don't really mind whether I become, I'm not interested in Heads of Department or any of that, I just want to teach and I've found where I can teach and be significant and help students. Help is a word I use a lot because that's sort of, I like helping. That's the driving thing you know, I can help these students so I'll stick with this little niche.*

Cath remained active in orienteering after having children,

*we did that a lot because I love it for fitness. I'm a bit of a fitness freak and it was my way of staying fit and for us as a family, we took (1st child) to his first event when he was 2 weeks 'cause we do the whole change thing. (husband) could run, I could feed whatever, so it was my way of getting outdoors and that's another story but my whole thing around orienteering is because I see it as a great outdoor activity to introduce kids to the outdoors*

### **Fiona**

Fiona grew up in a large city in northern New Zealand and spent many holidays at a family bach by the beach, spending hours on the beach. Her father was a keen fisherman and duck hunter who took Fiona out with him from an early age.

*It was all adventurous stuff when you are a little kid even the duck shooting. One of the things that really stands out in my mind is him taking us up to the back of the farm duck shooting and the cows had been across the paddock and it was really swampy and it had been wet so their hooves had gone in quite deep so actually negotiating across that when you are this little kid was like this major epic.*

Fiona also became involved with Surf Lifesaving and body surfing in the sea “and these big tropical storms, we'd be out there catching these waves and now I think about it and I think oh my god how did I do that!” Being more from a swimming than surfing background Fiona continued swimming when studying Physical Education at university and in her holidays worked as a pool lifeguard.

Whilst at university Fiona joined the kayak club and became a very keen kayaker.

*We had some really good people in the club who taught me to roll and (we) did some pretty epic trips. So that's where I started kayaking and that's probably what inspired me in some ways to try and get some work... I decided to finish my phys ed degree and I really wanted to work in the outdoors and be an instructor, still not really having any idea what it was all about really or how it worked.*

Writing to a large outdoor centre asking if they had any work for someone with her Physical Education degree, Fiona was encouraged by the Chief Instructor of the centre to do a 10 week outdoor educator training course. After this she decided to go to teacher training college, thinking that if she wanted to work in outdoor education "a teaching qualification is a good thing to have behind you". After completing her teacher training Fiona did some part time and relief teaching work, but at this time she was really keen on kayaking and wanted to improve her kayaking skills.

*So that's why I shifted to Christchurch because I'd heard there were a bunch of women down in Christchurch who were really into kayak slalom and I thought to myself oh wow I'll head down there and then that sounds liked a really good place, maybe I can link up with some people and get better at that sort of thing. So yeah it was kind of all these funny decisions that you make based around your interests really.*

Unable to find an outdoor education teaching job in her preferred South Island town, Fiona returned to her home city to complete her teacher registration period in the same large multi-cultural high school that she had attended herself as a student. Whilst at the school Fiona had the opportunity to be involved in school camps. Organised by the senior teachers Fiona, as a junior teacher, was able to use her technical skills to run the surf lifesaving and kayaking components.

*It was a big school for its time and that was a few years ago now and it was very multicultural which was quite cool in some ways and there was quite a neat aspect to that but it was also quite hard and you have to be a certain type of person to work in that environment so it was really good to give it a go but it wasn't me really it wasn't my thing.*

*I never really had a big drive for career ever really all the way through it was always like OK school's going to finish soon I need to get into my car, I usually had my boat on my car, had to drive... and then I would go train. So that was my main focus really, it was never really ever focussed on a career much.*

Once finished with her teacher registration period Fiona obtained both outdoor guiding and outdoor instructing short contracts and headed out of the city. "It just felt so good to drive out of Auckland I was off by car with my stuff in the back".

Fiona's preference had always been for the education side rather than guiding and she really enjoyed working at a large residential outdoor education centre, spending five years working there.

*It was a long time and by the time I'd finished I'd definitely had enough of working there but still was really attached to the place though it's got, I don't know what it is about (the place) but it definitely grabs some people I guess. I loved the area and I loved the people I worked with but that changes as well, the people that you work with there.*

*Now that I look back at what I did and the amount of time I did it for in that sort of environment and what we were doing I was knackered. By the time I finished there I was absolutely stuffed... and that's part of it as well, because it's that sort of work where you are working long hours, you're working outside whatever the weather, in the rain and it's quite hard physical work as well. You don't notice it for a while but then after a while you do start to realise and I think I realise more now when I look back to what I was doing, just how physically tiring that sort of work is, constantly having to make decisions, the amount of risk management. I'd had enough; it was time to go for me.*

So with the combination of Fiona deciding that her time at the residential outdoor education was up, she was ready to do something else away from the physicality of the job, and her partner needing a city for his work opportunities the couple moved to a city. Not being strongly career driven Fiona comments "when I left the outdoor centre I didn't know what I was going to do next really" although she was confident that she would be able to pick up some teaching work in the city. At first she picked up relief teaching followed by part time teaching work in the same school. Fiona and her partner

spent three years in the city before moving to a city in the South Island. This move they planned, with her partner organising a work transfer and Fiona again confident of picking up work in the new location with her teaching background. Prior to moving Fiona had been looking for a new direction, wanting to move on from Outdoor Education and as part of this had started study towards a Masters in Environmental Education through an institution in the South Island. After the move, Fiona was offered work teaching environmental and outdoor education at the same institution and continued working in this position through to the birth of her first child.

Following maternity leave after the birth of her first child Fiona returned to her job part time although she comments that she

*would have stayed home if I could have, and I could have. I had the ultimate choice. I would have stayed as a mum and not gone back to work probably but in the end I felt like I needed to go back ... and still be a part of what's going on. Just working and doing what I was doing seemed important.*

Fiona felt pressure to return to work from her partner reminding her of the financial side of things, from the people she worked with encouraging her to go back and keep teaching but also “then it was my own pressure. It’s like yeah I do need to go back and it’s probably important that I keep my finger in the pie and not just become a mum so to speak”.

Returning to work Fiona negotiated her duties so that she would no longer instruct some of the practical pursuits. Following maternity leave, taken after the birth of her second child, Fiona again returned part time to her role. Having done the work previously meant that Fiona found it quite easy and she enjoyed working with the students. Changes in the Institution over the next year caused her working environment to change. Several people left, including a key person who had encouraged Fiona to return to the job. “And so I felt like I was working on my own a lot of the time in the end and I was just like Nah, this isn’t really what I’m into”. The next year Fiona decided not to return and since has done some work as a relief school teacher.

*The reason we are doing that is because mostly I can, it's a way of earning some money over a year and then also be home when the kids are at home, and I like to cook rather than just use stuff that you buy from the supermarket. That's all part of your philosophy really and the way you think and what you want to happen in your family.*

Reflecting on the changes in her recreational activities post children Fiona commented on kayaking. "It just fizzled out as far as a passion went for me really. I'd had enough. I didn't want to get wet anymore". In general terms relating to recreation and keeping fit Fiona reflects

*yeah it was harder. It's definitely much harder so mostly what I turned to was going back to biking things which I could do in a short amount of time and the skiing thing. We didn't do a lot in the first year. We didn't go back to the ski field much in the first year at all but once (second child) came along we were like right it's winter, this is good snow, let's go skiing and we'd go to the right place, that was good. We got this really good social thing going because we'd see people up there that we hadn't seen for a while which was also really good. So one of us was always in the café, obviously (with children), and we'd catch up with people while we weren't having our blat on the ski field.*

## **Mel**

Mel was in her mid-30s at the time of the interview in 2010 and with a four month old child, the couple's first, was loving being an at home mum in a new town. A move they had made for her husband's new job. After leaving high school Mel "was floating around a bit not sure what I wanted to do and it was my brother actually who I think encouraged me to get involved in outdoor stuff". Her brother had been on a school outdoor education camp and on his return said to her

*you have the same personality as those instructors you should get involved in outdoor education. I didn't know whether that was a compliment or not but I didn't know what I was going to do so I started tracking down outdoor courses and found (course) and did a year programme there and really enjoyed being involved in the programme. I felt like I took off and found my place.*



Mel was so inspired by the course that “I wanted to do more and kind of decided that when I was in my forties I wanted to be an outdoor educator doing what (tutor) was doing and be a Polytech teacher”.

With this as a clear goal Mel did a second year course in a different institution and then spent a few years working in a retail shop in a resort town whilst spending her free time taking part in, and up skilling in, various outdoor activities. After a few years Mel

*decided OK time to grow up and be an adult. You’ve got to make a decision about what you are going to do in your life. It’s all very well hanging out here but you don’t want to be working in a retail store for the rest of your life.*

Mel completed a third year polytech course and knowing that there was a new degree programme soon to be launched, took a part-time outdoor education teacher job at a high school until it started. Among the first intake of students for the new programme Mel worked to complete the degree and just before completing was encouraged to apply for a tutorial assistant position at the same tertiary institution she was studying at. After doing this for a couple of years Mel was feeling undervalued and underpaid for the work expected and with no apparent change to this likely applied for other positions.

*They were offering me what I didn’t think were reasonable wages for what I was doing and they were happy to keep me on doing that but they wanted me to not take very much money, so I left. It was a strategic salary change. I was sick of being undervalued I’m out of here.*

Obtaining a position at another tertiary institution Mel and her partner relocated to another town where they both found employment. Not finding a good fit with this position and with her partner’s father being unwell the couple moved back to where he could be close to family. Mel describes the year she spent at this institution as being “a really hard year for me and I spent a lot of time in tears and wondering what the heck I was doing and why I was there”. She also acknowledges that despite this she developed her confidence significantly during the year and after it “I kind of felt like I’m an outdoor

educator and I'm good at what I do. And I do enjoy it and it has place". This development in confidence helped with her

*ability to be able to articulate the value of outdoor education in society. Often when I would say I'm an outdoor instructor people would say 'oh that must be fun' and 'oh you're away having fun doing all these recreational fun things' and I think I really struggled with how to articulate my thoughts about how I valued it and the role of it in society.*

Mel was contacted by a key person in the institution she had previously worked for and was encouraged to apply for work there. This time Mel was offered what she considered to be a decent salary for the work she would be doing.

While working at the institution for the next few years Mel predominantly looked after the first year Certificate students but increasingly had the opportunity to work on a range of different courses

*which I really enjoyed because it was me learning again. New papers and learning new things to be able to deliver to different students and working with different age groups and year groups which I really enjoyed. Then I got pregnant and cut a whole bunch of stuff back.*

Mel worked until close to the birth and then took maternity leave. During this Mel's partner obtained a new job in a different town and the family decided to relocate. Mel left her job and at the time of the interview was "having a really good time being a mum".

Looking ahead Mel is unsure what she will do next

*I think about what I'd like to do next year. I still would like to be involved with (institution) even though there's lots, probably lots of work opportunities that I haven't explored here in (town) and I think that's partly because I like what's happening at (institution). I like being involved in environmental education and the opportunities you have with the depth of learning and the type of learning that can happen there. I think I compare that with the opportunities here, a lot of that might be working with corporate groups or it might be working with school kids where you*

*still can have deeper levels of learning and connectedness but you're not developing that over a really long period of time. And I like watching students go through that and seeing them link stuff and playing with thoughts and ideas and concepts over a long period of time and see how they end up doing stuff. How they connect it with their own lives and what changes they make in response to that. I like, actually really like, watching that happen. And I think that's why I really liked working as well with some of the other years. I'm not only learning new content but I'm seeing them make links to what they did in certificate or their life and they go "ah ha".*

Since having her child Mel comments that she has lost lots of confidence in doing "stuff". In the early stages Mel found taking her child out for a walk quite daunting and

*if I have had such a big confidence shift in just being able to go for a walk around the streets or in the bush what am I going to be like on the water or on the rock and am I going to be able to remember stuff because it's been a year probably since I've been actively involved.*

Mel hasn't kayaked since becoming pregnant and although this had been her passion for several years she isn't sure whether she will kayak again or not.

*It's strange when I talk about it because I still get little rushes of really beautiful movement on the water like doing a really beautiful turn. I can still really feel that and prior to giving birth that was just such a driving factor. I really wanted to get on the water because I could feel that through every core of my being. Since giving birth it's not such a... I don't know whether it's because of... I wonder whether it is just a confidence, you know, what's going to happen to (child) when I'm on the water in terms of who's going to look after him? Is he going to be OK? And am I going to need to feed him?*

**Researcher: Me**

In 2010, at the time of the interview conversations with the other women in this study, I was 44 with two children aged five and eight. I was working a 0.9 proportional contract in tertiary level outdoor education in a role combining teaching and operational responsibilities. I live with my husband and children just outside the Christchurch city

boundary and along with other Cantabrians have been affected and continue to be affected by the Christchurch earthquakes over the past year in numerous ways.

I grew up in southern England and was always attracted to sports and any outdoor activity opportunity. My country primary and secondary schools took students to their Local Education Authority (LEA) residential outdoor centres and I went whenever possible, loving every moment of the outdoor activities on offer. When my secondary school ran its first summer holiday expedition I tried to persuade my parents and the school to let me go even though I was too young. Two years later, when old enough, I went on the next expedition walking and climbing in the Spanish Pyrenees and really have never looked back. After returning home from this I joined my local canoe club and after a fairly short space of time spent all my spare time canoeing and kayaking and started to compete around the country at the weekends. This continued throughout my three years at university and although studying for a science degree my interest always lay towards outdoor activities. Through this time I met many people involved in outdoor education especially in schools and residential centres.

When I left school I never considered that there was an alternative to going to University and getting a degree, but I had no clear idea of what I would do once I had the degree or thoughts about a career. I think at the back of my mind I knew I would probably end up teaching and if possible it would be field study type stuff in an outdoor centre type setting. During a university holiday I went on a Mountain Leader training course at the National Mountain Centre and met an instructor who told me about the best course in the country for teacher training in outdoor education as well as school teaching. To get the best jobs, which at the time were mostly based in LEA Centres, you needed to be a trained teacher so with this in mind I applied for, and got accepted into the course, with the entry delayed for a year so I could work to save money and go travel and adventure overseas. During this year I climbed, kayaked and adventured in New Zealand and the United States of America. After completing my year at the Teacher Training College I decided to head back to New Zealand, where my boyfriend of the time was living and working in an outdoor education centre. Keen to be at the same Centre I worked as a cook and did other support tasks until instructing work became available.

After a couple of years my boyfriend decided to go to America to study for a Master's Degree in Outdoor Education so I went as well. Looking for something productive to do that meant I could live in the same area, I was offered the opportunity to be an intern at an Audubon Centre, an environmental education centre. Located a couple of hours drive away from where my boyfriend was studying, I spent most of the year there. I really enjoyed my time at this Centre and working with the passionate environmental educators who lived there. My time at the environmental centre was quite a contrast to the Outdoor Centre I had been working at in New Zealand because although I had less knowledge and experience in the local environment, the culture of the Environmental Centre was not as performance related. We didn't spend as much time doing outdoor pursuits and those we did were within my comfort levels or at low skill levels that I could pick up easily. In many ways living at this residential environmental centre was similar to the outdoor education centre I worked at in New Zealand. A close knit group of people with a common interest but there were also some significant differences. I found the culture much less competitive and there was no pressure to spend time pushing the difficulty and grades in outdoor activities. Many staff did participate in outdoor activities such as canoeing and cross country skiing but the focus was on spending time doing them rather than constantly pushing for higher performance and skill levels. I really enjoyed my time in this environment despite undertaking many new challenges such as handling birds of prey, making maple syrup the traditional way and teaching environmental education within the American elementary school system.

After a year in the USA we both returned to jobs at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre in the Central North Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. I returned to an instructor's position but it was at about this time that I started a move sideways, spending less of my recreational time doing the traditional pursuits such as climbing and kayaking. Instead I spent time orienteering, doing multisport events and training and competing my dog at Agility events. All of these activities I found less stressful in terms of pressure to perform. When the Operations Manager position became available I applied for and to my amazement was appointed to this role. My first year in this job was very difficult and at the end of the year I resigned in frustration. When the job was advertised I decided to reapply for it and again to my surprise was appointed to the role. This time, with the previous year's experiences behind me and a new resolve I determined to make it work. I carried out

this management role for another three and a half years before deciding I could leave the Centre and move on to something else.

Although I loved the lifestyle and work at the outdoor centre I also felt quite unconfident in my own skill levels most of the time I was there, especially in kayak related activities. There were very few women working at the Centre at the time and it was not unusual to be the only women instructing out of a group of eight people. The women who were there tended to be very competent in their skill areas and I perceived them as being strong and self-assured. The male female balance did change over the years I worked at the Centre to become much more equal. Most staff were passionate at pursuing their pursuits at any available time, always out developing their skills further organising trips and pushing their performance levels. I found the culture quite daunting at times and perceived women had to not only be self-sufficient but also able to perform well to be accepted. In hindsight it was about being accepted as one of the boys though I don't think I was really aware of that at the time. Although comfortable in a male environment and reasonably competent by the measures of the culture, I often did feel unsure of my abilities. It felt as though every trip out was to do something hard rather than something fun.

Having separated from the long-term boyfriend who worked at the Centre, after a complex relationship, and with no family in Aotearoa New Zealand I moved to a large city to be near the next boyfriend, and who is now my husband. With neither of us in long term jobs we decided to take the opportunity and go overseas for a long rock climbing trip before returning to Aotearoa New Zealand and looking for work. On our return and not having a strong commitment to be in any particular location we decided to look at the jobs available and decide where to go based on who found something they wanted to do. An ideal job for my partner came up in a small South Island town and as I had some contract work to take with me it was an easy decision to move there. I was offered work in a nearby institution and we spent three years living and working in this town. During these years I rediscovered rock climbing and mountaineering and became much more active in these pursuits. Much of this I attribute to spending time recreating in these activities in a supportive environment with my new boyfriend and other friends. My personal skills level and confidence developed and I was now teaching

these pursuits in a tertiary institute at a higher level than previously. This was challenging, for example in the first year I had very able group of young men to work with. They were always going to climb harder and faster than me but I now had the confidence to play to my strengths, my ability to teach stuff, my years of experience and my technical expertise. This combined with a good enough personal skill level and high levels of endurance helped me feel justified in being there. We both eventually ended up being employed by the same institution and were moved to Christchurch by this employer. This worked well for us as we were ready to move on to a new location and at the time of the move I was five months pregnant with our first child. We both had tenured jobs, we were moving to the city we were interested to try living in and were expecting our first child.

I returned to work part time after a shortened maternity leave to start teaching on a new degree programme being offered. Initially I only worked a couple of days a week and increased to three days a week after about eight months. I felt pressure to go back to establish a place for myself as a member of the team and as a tutor on the new degree programme. It didn't seem smart to turn down the offer of running one of the new courses. If I didn't take the opportunity then it may not have been there next year as someone else might have taken on and 'owned' the course. It was a largely theory based course with only Canterbury based short field trips so I thought it the perfect opportunity to start to create a niche for myself with a work load that wouldn't require me to go away from home a lot and wouldn't require me to stay current and maintain a level of performance in lots of outdoor activities. I also felt pressure from my manager to return and contribute to the programmes and that contributing meant being fit and able to instruct in the field.

For the first year after having my first child I felt very unfit and found it challenging to manage life, work, restless baby and integrate it all with my husband who went away regularly for work. I also felt pressure to start instructing rock climbing again and that I should be teaching this as a part of my workload. To do this I needed to start putting energy into personal rock climbing again. With my husband and another friend we took our first child away to Australia for a rock climbing holiday, so that I could develop my confidence as a rock climber, at Mt Arapiles in Victoria. This involved camping in a very

basic campground with minimal facilities and taking turns to be with our child whilst the other parent went climbing with the friend. As a couple we returned to the same location twice for work, both job sharing the teaching and sharing the child care responsibilities. As a consequence of this our first child had their first and second birthdays camping at this Australian rock climbing site.

This was all part of working towards going for my National Body level II rock climbing instruction award and required a big commitment which wouldn't have been possible without the support of my husband. On the last work trip, which I did after having achieved the award and during which I finally felt assured that I had the skills and experience and confidence to be doing the job, I clearly remember thinking "right I've done it. I don't need or want to do this anymore". The relief of that realisation was immense and apart from one occasion as a participant in a student's research project, I haven't climbed since.

During this time I also started working towards a Masters and continued to work part time. After the birth of my second child I effectively retired from the outdoor activities. Partly because I had had enough and partly because with two children, study and work I couldn't see how to put the required time into 'perform' in the activities I would need to teach. For me it was always about being able to do enough of the pursuits regularly to be able to confident in my ability to perform in front of students – and so in my mind be credible.

An opportunity for me to define my niche further arose when our Manager left the organisation leaving a temporary position to be filled. Taking on this role allowed me to continue working and so earning income towards the family whilst still able to contribute with my own niche at work. Study towards my Masters continued through this time though become increasingly more difficult as my work proportion returned to almost full time and family commitments seem to take up more and more time.



Around the same time I started to take my first child to a local riding school not realising at the time how much this would introduce horses and ponies into our lives. I also started to learn to ride, finally doing something I had wanted to do as child and now starting to get involved with as an adult. Through the riding school and ponies I felt like I was meeting people who were family oriented, who understand the impacts of having children and being a mother with a family. Association with horses was giving me a reason to be outdoors and learning and participating in an activity with challenge, fun and adventure. In many ways these were the things that had drawn me to the outdoors in the first place. I found involvement with horses was providing a way of doing this in a more family friendly environment than I perceived in the outdoor community I worked in. There it was more common to not have children and to be able to focus on your performance in the activity without children around. In that environment I felt, as I had always felt, intimidated about the thought of having to perform at an activity that I should be 'good' at but which I had lost interest in and which I needed to be doing regularly to feel any confidence in. I didn't have the time or motivation for that anymore and finally was allowing myself to move on from it.

### **Preliminary Analysis and Synthesis**

All four of the participants in this research undertook tertiary level education achieving an undergraduate degree plus some form of further teaching qualification. Three of the women completed secondary teacher training through a one year post graduate course whilst the other participant achieved a Certificate in Adult Education completed through the work place. Following their own tertiary education all then worked in some form of outdoor education for several years before having children. All the women became mothers during their 30s, having already established themselves in the outdoor education field prior to this. Following the birth of their first child all took maternity leave followed by a change to their working conditions. Mel, the woman, with the youngest child at time of interview, is currently an at home mother, considering looking for part-time work for the following year. The other three women returned to their jobs but on a part-time basis and with a change to their duties. Each woman made changes unique to their own situation but all of the changes resulted in a reduction to the amount of practical outdoor pursuits instruction that they did, with a switch to either more environmental education or teaching and learning education as focus. After the

birth of their second children all three followed this pattern again with a return to part-time work after maternity leave. By this time two of these women had removed themselves from teaching practical outdoor pursuits all together whilst the third had narrowed the range, dropping white water kayaking, mountaineering and rock climbing from the mix but keeping tramping and orienteering type activities.

All of the women were in long term relationships and commented on their partner's employment needs at some time in the conversation. At the time of the interviews three of the participants were living in or near Christchurch and their partners were employed in the city whilst the other had recently relocated from Christchurch to another smaller Canterbury town for her husband's work. Two of the women commented that their partner needed a city for their work.

At the time of the interview three of the participants were in their mid-forties or over. When these women had left high school they did not have the option of studying Outdoor Education at University or degree level. These women all attended university and studied a degree associated to outdoor education, two being in physical education and one biological science. These three women all developed their outdoor skills through, family, clubs and recreational activities with peers. After gaining their degrees they went on to complete teacher training at a College of Education which specialised in Outdoor Education as well as the more traditional school subjects. For the fourth woman, ten years younger than her colleagues, other pathways were available and she worked through a progression of Certificate and Diplomas and was one of the first graduates of New Zealand's first dedicated Outdoor Education degree.

Two of the participants grew up in the UK and, although five years apart and from different parts of the country, ended up following similar pathways with similar influencing factors encouraging their decisions. Both these women experienced residential outdoor programmes when school aged and were participating and competing in their activities before leaving secondary school. Both had met people working in outdoor education and were interested in pursuing it as work. Both were encouraged by parents to go to university first and get a degree with the option of going

on to Teacher Training College as a possibility for afterwards in the back of their minds. Both continued competing in their activities and participating in a range of outdoor activities through their time at University and applied for and were accepted on to the only post graduate teacher training course to focus on outdoor education and high school teaching available in England and Wales at the time. Both women had been encouraged to do this course by people, mentors, already working in the field. Following completion of the teacher training course both women gained employment in the residential outdoor Centres where their mentors were working. These women also ended up to be working in the same residential outdoor education centre as their boyfriend of the time.

After working in outdoor education for over ten years both women had children in their mid to late thirties took periods of maternity leave and have continued to work in outdoor education. Both work part-time and are employed on proportional contracts at a tertiary institution working on outdoor educations programmes in their own niches which allow for a balance of work and family. For one this niche consists of a narrowed and specific teaching area and for the other this has seen a shift to a more operational/management role.

The youngest woman in the study describes herself “once I left school I was floating around a bit not sure what I wanted to do”. Encouraged by her brother to try outdoor education she completed a one year Certificate course at a Tertiary Institution and “really enjoyed being involved in the programme, felt as if I took off and found my place”. From here on she made a decision and had a clear picture of what she wanted to be by her forties and started investigating how to work towards that goal. She sought advice from professionals working in the field and worked towards the Diplomas that would help on this path.

This clear picture is in contrast to the experience of the fourth woman in the study who decided she wanted to work in the outdoors as an instructor whilst studying for her Physical Education degree at university. This decision was influenced by the group of people she met, and the experiences she had, with the kayak club at university. Whilst

making a clear decision she wanted to work as an outdoor instructor in the outdoors she didn't really have "any idea what it was all about really or how it worked".

While fitness and time spent doing outdoor activities was important to all of the women, two in particular discussed the importance of fitness to their image or identity and confidence. One knew that her own high level of fitness, especially in running, and success at an elite level in her sport contributed to her image and that her associated nicknames supported this image. For another her own experiences as a student, where she felt outside of her comfort zone and like a victim, drove her to ensure she was never going to be in that situation again. Her way of ensuring this was by working hard at her own health and fitness and striving to develop her skills so she would not let herself down in that physical way again.

One of the women, who spent several years working at a large residential outdoor education centre, commented on the physical nature of the work and her feeling of tiredness. "By the time I finished there I was absolutely stuffed". She also comments that she is not a physically strong person and being a good technician is what had allowed her to perform to high levels.

Only one of the women interviewed talked about career jobs and the taking of a new job being a career move. When asked whether she was thinking in terms of career another woman phrased it not as 'career' but in terms of doing exactly what she had set out to do. The third woman, Fiona, describes herself as not being at all career driven at any time through her work journey. I would describe myself as being driven to work in a role where I can contribute and earn enough money to look after myself, rather than career driven. I have ended up progressing through organisations into management roles. But rather than being driven to move up a career ladder these moves have been driven by wanting to create a niche for myself which keeps me employed and earning a salary.

In this chapter I have presented each woman's lived experiences working in outdoor education through the form of mini-case studies. These case-studies represent my

interpretation of the transcription of the women's narratives gained through semi-structured interviews. I have where possible tried to present the women's experiences through their own voices to maintain authenticity. I have also carried out a preliminary analysis of the transcripts, identifying ideas, trends and issues to draw out further in the next chapter.

## Chapter 5

## Analysis

### Starting out

Childhood outdoor activities were important formative life experiences for three of the women in this study. These women all spent significant amounts of time in the outdoors with their families taking part in activities such as tramping camping, climbing, duck hunting, beach and surf activities. All of these activities exposed the women to participation in and enjoyment of outdoor activities from a young age and this may have contributed to their developing an interest in it as a future occupation. The two women who grew up in the UK, Cath and myself, also mention time spent on school residential outdoor education camps and prior to leaving school both also became involved competitively in one of their outdoor activities. Through their competitive involvement both of these women met older people who became mentors and encouraged them in the possibility of working in outdoor education.

The fourth woman in this research, Mel, also links her connection to the outdoors to childhood experiences but for her they were quite different in nature. Mel commented how her parents moved home probably “more than twenty times by the time I was eighteen. We shifted around all the time...but I was off at boarding school here and back there and everywhere”. The one year certificate in outdoor recreation that she completed after leaving school Mel observes to be the first time “I felt like I had genuine relationships and friendships with some people. I wasn’t shifting around and I wasn’t transient”. Despite the wide range of physical outdoor activities she participated in and enjoyed over this time it appears to be the relationships she developed with people that motivated her to want to work in outdoor education. “It nurtured me and I was really inspired to want to be able to let other people have that in their lives because it was so valuable to me”.

### Career

Asked when she was starting in Outdoor Education whether she saw it as a career Cath states “I did think of it as a career but I always thought in the back of my mind that I would go teach because that’s what my parents saw as a career”. Although an elite

performer in her outdoor pursuit field and with seventeen years in the National Orienteering team Cath stresses several times during the interview that “I suppose it is a big part of my life but it’s not the main drive career wise. I’m still driven career wise by this whole big picture of the outdoors and what it does for people”. When discussing each of the job changes she made Cath identifies each to have been a career move and comments on her parent’s positive response, although she describes the influence as subtle, not pushy. For example when she took the job at Teachers College her “parents just loved that. College lecturer, not that my parents were that pushy on career and stuff it was more in terms of...it was more subtle...it was there”.

Although Cath appears to have been triggered to look for her next job by relationship factors she also appears to have a consistent career focus and each move she makes to a new job is another step along a pathway. Her first job was in a residential Outdoor Centre, from there to secondary school teaching which combined her love of teaching in the outdoors with a School based job. From there she took a secondment to a peripatetic role in which she was able to influence policy rather than just work with it as a teacher in school would do. At the end of this secondment Cath chose to ‘move onwards’ to become a lecturer at Teachers College, rather than return to her school job. This move she saw as a career move, working with next level of student, more challenging academically but also what she wanted to do. At this stage Cath noted that she realised she could have more influence on the direction of OE if she was teaching teachers each of whom then goes out and teaches students in their schools. This allows her to increase her circle of influence and reach a wider circle of people, something she observed during the peripatetic job.

Asked whether she was thinking career when she moved from the UK to New Zealand Cath responds

*no. When I moved here I wasn’t thinking career at all in fact...it was work to contribute to the broader outdoor education discipline, community whatever you want to call it. I am passionate about it and I still want to contribute to it and earn a bit of money...that helps.*

Fiona identifies that she was never career driven at all and comments on the decisions she made based around her interests rather than career.

*I was really into kayaking so after being at the Outdoor Pursuits Centre and learning some really good kayak skills through the programme then I decided I was really interested in things like slalom, kayak slalom and that's why I shifted to Christchurch because I'd heard there were a bunch of women down in Christchurch who were really into kayak slalom...And I thought to myself oh wow I'll head down there, that sounds like a really good place, maybe I can link up with some people and get better at that sort of thing.*

After stating this Fiona stopped and reflected for a moment before stating, "so yeah it was all kind of (laughs) all these funny decisions that you make based around your interests really".

Fiona's expression of low career drive is shown again by the language she used to describe moving to a city for her partner's work. She comments that would be able to 'pick up' work once the couple had moved to where they wanted to be. This suggests that for Fiona a combination of lifestyle factors influence her actions rather than being driven to look for the next career step. It also indicates she is confident of being able to find suitable employment where they move to. In the first city Fiona and her partner moved to she did gain work, at first relieving and then part-time in a High School. After three years when the couple moved to Christchurch, the city they wanted to live in, Fiona did in fact gain employment at an institution teaching outdoor and environmental education. This could be considered a career step despite Fiona not appearing to having been a driven career at all.

When Mel was asked if she had been thinking and acting with a career mind set, she responded

*career as in I was always wanting to be... in that I was doing exactly what I wanted to be doing and had set out to do after my first year at (polytech). I didn't expect to be doing it quite so soon to be honest, I thought that I would perhaps be looking to doing that now, it's quite funny so now I'm thirty-five I thought I would be starting to get involved with teaching in Polytech but now it kind of feels like it's over...it was*



*always the bottom line that eventually I wanted to end up working in Polytech and working in outdoor programmes.*

Reflecting on my own work journey, I don't think I would have ever described myself as career focused or as following a career path. I have always been motivated to work but the driving factor has been to be employable in a job that earns me enough money to look after myself. Initially this was to be able to look after myself on the far side of the world to my family and where I grew up. I had little financial support, though I did know if desperate I could call on my family, but wanted to be able to be independent and look after myself. So the drive was to be employable and in a job that let me live where I wanted to be.

I worked as an outdoor instructor for several years but when the Operations Manager position became available at the residential outdoor centre I saw it as a way that I could stay involved with the outdoor centre and outdoor education but not have to focus as much on performance at pursuits. Reflecting back now I can see I was starting to create a niche for myself in outdoor education; one that let me stay involved with a field I was interested in but one that let me contribute in a different way.

## **Competence**

### **Being accepted as a woman outdoor educator**

Cath, when asked whether she thinks that proving their competence is an issue for women in the outdoors, reflects

*yes I do and for some women I think it is and it might have been for me if I hadn't had that different thing, or that might have been my way of proving competence by using orienteering, navigation and multi...you know the fitness.*

At another point Cath comments on the image she had at the time she was working in her peripatetic role, visiting teachers in school and helping them to develop their outdoor programmes, she describes this as

*the male physical image. I could run them off the ground whenever we did anything to do with fitness. I didn't even go out looking for the opportunities or anything like that at all but whenever something happened when I might have been training a group of teachers to run or even mountain leader certificate stuff I didn't compete but I was obviously fit and able to do what I could do and underneath I think that helped.*

At this time the 'guys' she was working with gave her a couple of nicknames associated with her fitness and abilities. Asked whether she liked the nicknames, she responded "underneath it was like yeah, it was my way of getting accepted in the outdoor community to be quite... that fitness and that side of it". The importance of fitness to her sense of credibility shows through later in the interview where she acknowledges "so for me my confident self as a women is being able to run around those orienteering courses at age fifty and wop all those male students... so I don't feel any need to assert anything..." She carries on agreeing that she thinks this does give her credibility in what she does and acknowledges "it would be very interesting to know if, whether I couldn't still do that what it would be like".

Mel also refers to use of a male competitive approach

*it's interesting you talk about the whole conceptual male thing because if I think about how I saw myself I can see totally as part of my identity how I was as a fit activated, active, motivated person. I'm not saying that those are masculine traits necessarily but probably the way I went about it was very masculine and that competition...of course those students aren't going to beat me.*

Both women appear to maintain a sense of self when working with students which is based on their own fitness and skill levels together with a confidence that they will beat the students in a competition. Mel also refers to this competitive approach when working to gain acceptance as a kayak instructor when teaching males.

When asked whether she had ever felt advantaged or disadvantaged as a woman in outdoor education Mel comments "I felt like I had to work really, really, really hard on a personal level to perform and then to be really valued as an outdoor educator I had to be a high performer in pursuit areas".

Cath, through her elite performance in her sport didn't need to go out and prove her ability in that or related pursuits. In activities areas in which she didn't feel as confident, such as white water kayaking, Cath seems to have used a different strategy and instead to have emphasised her skills as a teacher, rather than to compete as a performer. This strategic approach seems to have worked well for her, allowing her to use her acceptance as a performer in some areas, to then teach in a way that works for females and children in other pursuit areas. "I wasn't a hot kayaker or anything, I was ok, I could teach it quite well and I could teach it to women very well because I knew exactly what they'd been through".

Fiona makes no reference to issues of acceptance or competence during the interview. She appears to credit her own ability to perform at a high level with technical ability. "I'm a really good technician so it was the technical side, the technical ability which enabled me to kayak to a higher level. It wasn't my strength, my body strength at all".

Mel places emphasis on and gains confidence from her fitness and skills, a factor resulting from her own experience as student

*You see, arrogant as this is going to sound I've always been quite physical and something that (happened) when I was a student...we'd been on this huge tramp that was completely outside my comfort zones and we had huge wind and I just totally could not cope and it was really early on in the year and I'd never experienced anything like it in my life and I was completely blown away and became this kind of victim that people had to look after and that was a real turning point for me and it really made me look at how fit I was, how I ate, my level of ability and all of that kind of thing and I made, after that trip, I decided I was never ever going, I was just so embarrassed with how I was I was never ever going to be like that again. So from that point on I did, went out of my way to make sure I kept fit and active and healthy and that I was always pushing myself to learn more and develop my physical performance really so I knew after that I got really good at doing stuff and I had a level of doing stuff then I got to a point where actually felt really confident in my skills level and my ability to actually be able to perform stuff.*

Cath was a top performer in orienteering but stresses many times that

*it isn't the whole thing, all these other things are part of it because I like them. Nordic skiing, telemark touring that was huge for me at a time in Scotland and I wanted to be identified as a telemark skier possibly because not many people were doing it at that stage in Scotland and it was at the time a mixture of women and men. In the group who were doing it, it was equal and the women were just as good as the men.*

Cath appears to be attracted to pursuits which are fairly equal in terms of either numbers of male and female participating or where they are participating at an equal level. Other pursuits she was interested in included sailing, in which she competed in both mixed and female teams, sea kayaking and rock climbing. White water kayaking was, in her perception, the most male dominated of the activities and also the one she was least interested in.

Throughout the early years of my work life, instructing at a residential outdoor education centre I regularly questioned my ability to perform in the range of different outdoor activities. Although my abilities were good enough to do my job there were always people around with higher skill levels and my perception was that being able to perform at high levels was what was valued rather than necessarily being a 'good' instructor in terms of the experience you provided for the students. As a woman wanting to work in the outdoors I was aware of and accepted this. But being able to perform at a high enough standard didn't feel as if it was enough. I felt I should always be striving for harder more difficult grades climbed and paddled, faster at biking, steeper skiing... Weekends and after work time should be spent going on challenging trips participating in the pursuits and pushing to harder grades. This was my impression – and Mel makes similar comments as she describes her awareness of the feeling as if she was in the chase game.

*Constantly you know these thoughts of developing and going down the NZOIA path and picking up level ones and then level twos and what am I going to do next and I need to be doing my Masters and I should be climbing grade 20s by now and why aren't I paddling grade five?*

Although I loved the Centre I'm not sure I ever felt completely at home working there. When an opportunity arose to move sideways to a management position I applied for this as it would mean I could be involved and contribute to something I valued but at the same time remove some of the performance related pressure. In terms of a traditional educational career path moving from an instructing or teaching position to a management position would be considered a linear hierarchical move career wise. But at the time for me it was more of a survival move sideways. I didn't have aspirations to move up through management but to find a role I was comfortable with.

Several years later I returned to a teaching/instructing position at a tertiary institution. In the interim I had spent a significant amount of time climbing and mountaineering and I think this combined with more confidence in myself benefited me. At this institution I was working at a higher level and this brought challenges such as working with an all-male group of fit and able first year tertiary students. Some individuals within this group appeared to need the tutors to prove they were able to perform at high enough levels before they would give their respect and want to learn from you. Even if you have the technical skills and experience you still have to perform well enough for them to engage with you and this can be intimidating for instructors. In my perception this was particularly so for the women instructors.

Three of the women in this study discuss their experiences taking higher level National Body qualification assessments. Cath was assessed for Winter Mountain Leader award in Scotland. She "was really aware of that whole culture, I wasn't keen on doing it but I knew I wanted to do it... I'd heard about the Glenmore Lodge male Culture". Asked why she did the assessment she reflects that she was in the driven phase, and adds that she might subtly have wanted to prove that women could do it.

After the birth of my first child I decided to go for a higher level rock instruction award. At the time I knew that few women had gone for the award and I knew women who for several years had thought about doing it but were put off by the focus on level of climbing performance. There was only a small pool of male assessors for the award and the assessment had a reputation, among the people I knew, as coming down to your

ability to lead climb to a certain level. Finally, about a year and half after having my first child I decided I would do the assessment. There were three men plus myself on the assessment with two male assessors. All three of the men I knew could climb considerably harder grade climbs than I could. I was reasonably confident I could do what I needed to do in relation to the scope and requirements of the assessment but the whole time was worried I would be 'found wanting' if asked to climb certain 'harder climbs', but which other candidates could elect to climb. I passed the assessment. All areas of the assessment but one I passed easily, well above the standard, but I know that I only just scraped through the personal climbing part after being asked to climb a climb I didn't know at the limit of the level expected. At the end of the assessment I was acknowledged by the assessors as the first 'mum' to have done it.

Mel also had a challenging experience when going for a National body award assessment. Despite earlier in the interview talking about her confidence in her technical skills when in the assessment situation with certain assessors she felt "less competent and I had to perform to this model which I couldn't really get a clear picture about what it was that I had to be...or do... because it was just way too muddy". She took the assessment twice and got deferred from passing each time on different things and at the end still wasn't sure what she didn't measure up against. She went away from the experiences feeling not valued for the 'other' things she knew she did well.

Over the time she spent working as an outdoor instructor and educator Mel appears to have been developing her own understanding about outdoor education, and its value to people and therefore wider society. As her understanding and confidence has grown she has become better able to articulate this to others and have confidence in her own value and seek or expect acceptance of this. Her questioning of her value shows through in her description of her experiences going for the National Body level II Kayak award and the external pressures she was feeling with this. "I think the external pressure came from... was about... I saw it as justifying my position as an outdoor educator or an outdoor instructor at a Polytech to the likes of (names three NZOIA assessors)". At the same time she felt she was not being valued for the other things that she did bring,

*it was wishy washy, Oh she's a good educator but she can't... but really she's not a valued member of the outdoor instructor kayaking community because she hasn't got kayak II... it's like Oh well I'm safe in my eddy but do I have any value outside of that? Really?*

## **Gender and opportunity**

Cath's mentor had said to her early on "for you as a career if you're interested you'll probably get jobs because you are a woman". Coming from an older female friend already working in outdoor education, Cath found this empowering and it encouraged her towards following it as a career.

Mel had a very different response to this type of comment, as she passionately explains,

*There weren't many women and I was getting work because I was female often and there was a shortage of females at whatever level I was at.... And I'd just thought I was really lucky. But I didn't actually, when I stop and think about it when people often use the expression that you got the work because there was no other woman around I'd think Oh, well how undervaluing is that? Why aren't I given the work because I'm really good at what I do? Just because I've got (points at breasts), I can deal with tampons and periods that's why I was getting the work? What? I should have been getting the work because I was good.*

My own experiences and response to the opportunities for work as a women were more like Cath's and I remember using this argument myself in trying to explain to my parents that it was a viable path to pursue. It was my perception that if you were 'good' enough at what you did there were jobs around for women in outdoor education centres and that was where I wanted to end up working. For me at the time good meant that you could perform to a high enough level in the pursuits. That was always a part of the picture. I accepted the performance levels, considered them as being 'the standard' and set about being able to perform to them. I don't think at the time I thought about different ways of proving my competence I just accepted the dominant system. It wasn't always easy to measure up and I often felt not good enough or lacked confidence in my

abilities. Most of my involvement in outdoor pursuits as a young woman was in the company of men. It seemed normal; a few keen woman and lots of males.

## **Work Environment**

A recurrent theme for Fiona appears to be her work environment, including the group of people who are working in the same place and the atmosphere or culture that is prevalent. At key stages along her life journey Fiona makes reference to the nature of the other people in the environment. This starts when she is describing how and why she became involved in outdoor activities and Outdoor Education at University where she identifies that there had been “some really good people in the kayak club”, and again a few years later, after completing Teacher’s College and looking for jobs, she states that she moved to Christchurch because there was a group of kayaking women there and she wanted to be there so she could be involved with them and develop her kayaking skills. Later when employed at an outdoor centre Fiona mentions that

*there had been a really good group of people though that changed over time...changes, so that definitely had changed in the last year or so that I was there. It wasn't the same anymore as it had been and it had been really good for quite, a long amount of time... it wasn't the same atmosphere as we'd had for the first four years I'd been there it had changed a bit and there weren't the same, it was the people I think, so that's part of it as well.*

Again when talking about her experiences teaching in a Girl’s High School, after leaving the outdoor centre, and why it had been a really good place to be for a while Fiona comments on the good group of people working there at the time and when asked what made it a good place identified “I think it depends on who the people are that you are working with at the end of the day...and who the principal is and what’s going on so”.

After moving to Christchurch Fiona worked at a tertiary institution, returning to this job part time following the births of her two children until she reached the point, as she describes

*that it seemed like a lot of the really good people had left that it felt like I was working on my own a lot more by the end and it wasn't, I didn't enjoy it as much and*



*then (programme leader) also left and he had the... the whole creativity and the strings to draw all the environmental ed. stuff together really in that department and then once he left it kind of took all that with him. So yeah I guess that happens in a lot of places I think. And so I felt like I was working on my own a lot of the time in the end and I was just like Na, this isn't really what I'm into.*

Cath explains her position and experiences working with other women in outdoor education,

*I wouldn't define myself as a feminist but I'd define myself as feministic in my view because I look at things as a woman looks at things ... All along at the time, in my mind I still had the view that one day I'd get married and have kids ... that was there right from the start. So for me I wasn't going to be the feminist like there were people in the outdoors who weren't going to have (kids) ... that was their career and they were more feminist than feministic.*

*"I'm feministic in that I look at things the way women look at them. I'm into women being valued equally but I'm not a feminist because I'm still ultimately a woman who is playing the role of a woman in society, in that I'm a mother, I'm a wife, I'm a part timer...my whole life is...whereas I see someone who is strongly feminist possibly not choosing to be either of those things.*

Cath continues describing some of the women who had worked in the same residential centre as her,

*the feminist women I worked with ... they were very feminist, strong as well. They were anti male ... the things they did and the things they said ... it was an underlying theme and I didn't feel compelled to become close friends with them because it wasn't my way of seeing things ... I liked men, had a boyfriend, wanted to share my life with someone at that point ...I wanted to have kids right from the start so I didn't see men as being quite as bad as they were making out.*

## **The next step... crossing the watershed...**

*“Transitioning into the role of motherhood affects nearly all aspects of a woman’s life: her identity, priorities, responsibilities and interactions with the world” (Vejar, Madison-Colmore & Ter Maat, 2006, p. 17).*

## **Beyond Maternity Leave**

Cath discusses the issues of returning to work once you have children. She knew from the start that she would go back to part-time work, “there was no question about it, even before the baby...didn’t even think that I would consider going back full-time”. Cath discusses the difficulty in juggling the demands of two working parents for although Cath now worked part-time there were still times when she needed to go away for a few days at a time for work, “so we’d basically had the kids in preschool nine to five for five days a week which I wouldn’t normally like permanently”. Cath looked for strategies that would help reduce issues like this. One way of managing this for her was by modifying her teaching area and reducing the amount of practical activity teaching she was doing. For her this was a shift from rock climbing and white water kayaking to more focus on teaching how to teach. She comments that she said to her manager at the time “look this stuff suits me and fits into 0.6. I almost drove myself a niche right from the start, which I never really thought back on till now but I drove myself that niche”. For Cath the same drive to make things work for her and her family oriented priorities had an influence when the institution was looking at bringing in new programmes.

*Apart from the fact I really believed a degree was needed in New Zealand I just thought it was a great idea and was totally behind it. So I was in that space, it’s all subconscious, it’s all subtle reflecting on it, thinking yeah I was probably going oh if I get into this degree then I can get myself 0.6 job which just fits with the kids and the family and all those other things which are now more important to me and still contribute to the job...’cause I love my job.*

At the time of the interview in 2010 Mel was a full time mum at home with a four month old child and described her identity as being a mum “and maybe I’m looking at doing

some part time stuff next year". Mel had become pregnant whilst working for a tertiary institute in essentially what had been her goal job since she decided the work she wanted to do and who she wanted to be. She continued to work through her pregnancy and took maternity leave from just before the birth. During this time her partner obtained a new job in a different town and the family decided to relocate. Taking a step back from work has given Mel the opportunity to reflect,

*I didn't realise I was in the chase game until I had (child) and I stopped and stepped off and went Oh you know what? I was really stressed. What was all that about? What was all that rubbish about you know? Constantly these thoughts of developing and going down the NZOIA path and picking up level ones and then level twos and what am I going to do next and oh I need to be doing my Masters and I should be climbing grade 20s by now and why aren't I paddling grade five? You know I had no idea I was on that pressure train.*

Mel framed this feeling in terms of developing herself and a process of continual learning "oh I'm learning and developing myself and I really do enjoy that but I just realise how much that also that pressure was coming from externally and not just internally me wanting to do that". Mel had previously commented that she had felt she had had to work to prove herself and be accepted as an outdoor educator but now she adds passionately,

*being a mum is really busy and do you know what? ...I talked about stepping off that pressure train. So how much time I dedicated to keeping current, to where I felt I was current in outdoors you know climbing and making sure I was climbing twenty days of the year...I don't feel like I have the time. I mean I probably do but I'd have to really change what I do and I don't want to do that, I don't want that pressure I don't need that pressure to be keeping current and you know I've come away going I don't want that pressure to...I don't have to be like a man, that's what I've come away thinking. I don't have to. I don't have to feel like I have to perform at that level, and now I look at it, it is totally a masculine, male led performance. I don't want to buy into that s\*\*\* any more. I'm not interested. So you want to go and play little boy games? I'm having a really good time being a mum and my life is busy and stressful but I don't feel like I have to perform to somebody else's standards anymore.*

I found returning to work very challenging. I had little experiences of babies and with a restless one to learn with did find my introduction to motherhood very, very hard work. I took a short maternity leave and returned to work initially the equivalent of two days a week which soon increased to the equivalent of three days per week. From some staff I felt an expectation to be able to carry on as before and to not let children have an impact on my work life in anyway. I felt as though I was expected to behave in exactly the same way as I had before having children and be able to work without any restrictions from family on my performance. To be able to work I used a preschool childcare facility and while I was reasonably comfortable with this it did put timeframes on my day. I did need to be able to fit in with the Childcare Centre's hours. This might mean that I needed to finish a field trip at a set time in order to get back to pick my child up from day care and sometimes I felt like I was placing a major imposition on either the students or more often the other staff I would be working with. My perception of the message from some of the other staff was that I shouldn't be limiting the students learning opportunities in this way – no matter that it was the legitimate end of a normal working day – because I was putting a deadline on it and couldn't be flexible it always felt as though I was trying to cut the day short.

I felt similar experiences in not being able to commit to teaching classes either early or late in the day as with my husband away a lot with his own work commitments I had to make sure I could make preschool timeframes. Although working only part time the nature of the work and timetable meant that I needed to be flexible and couldn't work set hours every week. This had both advantages and disadvantages for me as a mother.

And that's just the practicalities of trying to make every day work – without the need to be fit enough, have spent enough time recreating at the activities such as climbing and had enough sleep to feel sharp enough to work in a risk environment with tertiary students. I found it wasn't a pressure I could sustain for a long time. I wanted to not have to go away – even days out in the field close to home became too big and challenging. I wanted a simpler work life that took less energy from me and made less demands on me.

## **Mothers working with other women - “It’s all stories isn’t it?”**

Cath reflects on her experience joining the team of staff she currently works with which was made up of two other women and six men. At the time she joined two of the men had young children and in both cases the mother was at home looking after the children. The other two women did not have children and one was very unlikely to do so. One of these women, Cath explained, was a senior staff member

*she hadn’t had kids so ...my perception and it’s all stories isn’t it, her perception of me might have been to do with me having kids and therefore a point of difference if you like. ‘Cause (peer) especially with all her research is very feministic on the whole looking at the female view of things and I really like that but initially when we worked together I didn’t see that side of her...I saw her as being more career focused because she’d done this that and the other.*

Cath comments on her perception of being one of the first women working in New Zealand outdoor education to have children. The other women she had met through work since arriving from the UK had not had children and didn’t appear likely to in the near future. So apart from the woman on maternity leave whose job Cath had filled for a year she did not have any role models of women working in outdoor education in New Zealand. In contrast, Mel the youngest woman in this study had observed several women she knew through employment in outdoor education in New Zealand become mothers. Mel commented that she saw the women’s career paths bend sideways once they had children. The traditional career model is of a continuous linear path which progresses hierarchically. The sideways bend Mel observed reflects a change in what the women were doing. Each of the women had continued to work but had moved to part time work and changed the duties in their work lives to accommodate being a mum. By the time Mel had her child she was aware of women already out there creating their own pathways who acted as role models.

## **Influences on decisions**

### **Relational**

For all the women in this study there appear to be a complex interaction of factors influencing moves between employment. Cath’s moves between jobs seem to be triggered by a relational event. For example a desire to move either to be in the same

region as, or to move away from a boyfriend acts as trigger to look for work in another location. The option taken though then moves Cath along her path with career job or step. For example when her boyfriend's contract finished at the residential outdoor centre where they were both working and he decided to move to another area in order to complete his teaching probation time, Cath looked for jobs in the same region and found a secondary school position.

For the next move, "yes school was good but at the time the boyfriend thing wasn't going so well ...it just wasn't right for some reason". Cath had the opportunity to move to another part of the region and take up a peripatetic job. This was a seconded role for one year with the security of her school based job to return to at the end

So although Cath had what she had described as a dream teaching job which she could go back to at the end of her three years in the seconded role, a relational influence of a boyfriend located a distance away encouraged her to look around for other opportunities and during this period a 'career move' job came up and Cath opted to go with the career move rather than move closer to her boyfriend.

The next step for Cath also shows a relational influence with decisions made trying to balance a complex web of issues. Her boyfriend, now husband after getting married whilst still living three hours drive apart, came from Aotearoa New Zealand. He had now been in the UK for six years and his father in Aotearoa New Zealand was unwell. At about this time an enquiry came to Cath's workplace from a tertiary institute in Aotearoa New Zealand that was looking for assistance in setting up an outdoor education programme. Cath took the initiative to ask whether the institute was interested in an exchange and ended up being offered a one year position at the organisation with her own employer giving her a one year leave and position to return to. This gave the couple an opportunity, "when we moved here, I moved here partly because I wanted to explore New Zealand and all the rest of it but partly because it gave him the chance to be near his dad and for him to be home". When asked whether Cath was thinking about her own career with this move she responds, "it was easing off the career thing. It wasn't where it is now, where I think my family, but it was tying in with him. Initially my career was me, me, me".

## Shifting Priorities

After having children different issues seem to become important for the women in this study. These include issues such as being in a good place for kids to grow up and for partners work needs, changes to employment conditions so the mum can be home for kids after school. Changes in work content so there is less risk involved for the women's wellbeing or so they don't need to be away from home as much. Motivation for work may be driven more by a need to earn money to contribute to the household or by a desire contribute to something or to have social contact. Cath explains some of the issues for her;

*time factor was one thing but it was more the emotional factor of not wanting to put myself in a position which would compromise my place as a mother...so that's why the white water kayaking and stuff went out the window. I didn't want to drown. Orienteering's fine. Mountains are borderline...tramping is fine. Although you can come into trouble tramping I think the experience I've got is enough I won't get into much trouble tramping and you choose your tramp don't you. Multi-sport events easy 'cause it's all managed so all those kinds of things.*

Cath summarised her thoughts stating "and for me it probably annoys me a little bit that those what I call more female friendly and mother friendly activities aren't valued as highly as the ones here in New Zealand, compared to the UK".

Mel commented

*when I had (child) I lost lots of confidence in doing stuff so things like going to a walk with (child) on a beautiful day...was quite a scary thing. So I don't know how I'm going to feel. I have done no outdoor recreation other than pushing the buggy around the hills since I had (child) or even since I was heavily pregnant and couldn't really do stuff. And I just don't know what it's going to feel like so I don't know about attaching myself to that outdoor identity anymore because I'm not sure if I get in a kayak and I'm sitting on grade two water am I going to be really scared? And well I may be, I don't know so how can I call myself an outdoor educator or?*

Asked how she did see her identity at the moment Mel commented that she was "going through a bit of a funny thing with that at the moment", and "I probably don't quite know how I identify myself at the moment". Mel and her husband and new baby had

recently moved to a small town where her husband was taking the role of primary school principal whilst Mel stayed home as mum with new baby. Mel discussed her thoughts as she adjusted to being called the 'Principal's wife' "which is kind of weird because we've always been on kind of equal... but now I'm the Principal's wife and it feels strange and it kind of makes me feel thank goodness I held on to my name [when she got married].

Mel made these comments just four months after the birth of her child and it would be interesting to know if she will feel like this when her child has grown older and become more independent or whether she has another shift in her confidence again. Earlier in the interview Mel had indicated she might be interested in doing part-time work the following year and when asked how she felt about the different options she could be involved in she replied

*I have a really strong desire to be in the bush. I'm comfortable I think with taking students in the bush...into summer alpine conditions, not necessarily on heaps of snow, but patches of snow that would be completely fine. I'm not sure about white water kayaking anymore...In rock I think I'd probably be OK but I just worry about...I would want to be doing a whole bunch of climbing before I felt comfortable taking students. I probably know the rope stuff, it probably hasn't changed quite so much but my confidence on being on the rock I would just want to have some mileage under my belt before I felt comfortable taking students...mmm and I don't know about the kayaking...*

Fiona's interest in kayaking, the activity which had been her passion, had been declining before she had children. She and her partner had started to spend more time skiing. Fiona commented that she hadn't skied much after their first child but after the second "we were like right it's winter, this is good snow, let's go skiing". Skiing appears to have worked for Fiona and her partner in much the same way as Cath and her husband went orienteering. The nature and location of the activities make it possible for the family to go and then the parents to take turns looking after the children and participating.



## Place

Cath talks about a big shift/swing she made after being in Aotearoa New Zealand for a while. Her 'place' had always been in the Lake District in UK and when she came for to Aotearoa New Zealand for the year long position her intention was always to go back home. When she left the UK Cath was thinking

*I'll come back to this place because I love this (UK) home and this is where I am and belong. Once I got here something about New Zealand got under my skin differently, it wasn't just the outdoor scenery it was the people and it was the attitude to life, it was the fact there's no nukes...*

This became an emotional time in the interview for Cath, thinking about the shift she made at this time in her life and which she described as a very significant event for her

*I didn't feel so strongly until I'd come here (about nuclear power and environment) and I'd seen or got a different feeling about life. It's very hard to...and that's made a big swing for me. It was like if I'm going to have kids I want to have them here. That was definite. So despite all my attachment in the Lake District, it was like I'm not going to have my kids growing up there.*

In this chapter I have explored the participants' narratives of their lived experiences in outdoor education and drawn out threads from each of their journeys. My interpretation of the narratives will have been shaped by my own experiences, the context of this research and my reading of the wider literature. Acknowledging this I have drawn together threads and highlighted ideas and issues. These are discussed further in the next chapter, chapter six, in relation to my reading of the wider literature.

## Chapter 6 Discussion

### Starting out

Three out of the four women in this research had significant experiences in the outdoors during their school years, either through family or education. Two of these three women had decided prior to leaving secondary school that they were interested in pursuing outdoor education as a work option in the future but first they went to University and to Post Graduate teacher training. This pattern supports the findings of Whitmarsh et al. (2007) who identified two main patterns of encouragement during the childhood years which could influence the work direction and paths chosen later in life. Women who entered female dominated careers such as teaching or social work received strong messages during their childhood that these were suitable careers for females. On the other hand women who entered what the authors describe as gender neutral careers, received support and encouragement from significant people outside their family. This encouragement may come from mentors or educational staff and provide the message that other careers are suitable for women.

Cath, at several times during the interview mentions her parents when talking about decisions she made. For example when making her decision to go to University to study for a degree followed by Teachers College and subsequently when referring to career choices made whilst navigating her way through her journey working in outdoor education. Cath also refers to a woman mentor she met prior to leaving school who already worked in outdoor education. This mentor supported Cath's interest in working in outdoor education and encouraged her to go to the particular Teaching Training College which prepared people for working both in the school system or to go into residential outdoor education centres. By opting for this College Cath was able to both follow the path she was keen to try into Outdoor Education whilst also satisfying parental encouragement to become a teacher. My own experience at this stage is very similar with encouragement coming from the two different sources, mentors from outside my family supporting a future working in outdoor education whilst family expectations were for going to university and may be teacher training afterwards.

Findings gathered from Lu and Sexton's (2009) study of career progression for female managers in the construction industry "indicated that parents have a monumental influence on the career choice of their children" (p. 132). Cath's and my own experiences correspond to the first stage of their age-related career progression model, Compromise, which they propose has a parental relationship context.

The third woman in my research, Fiona, did not decide to follow a path towards working in outdoor education until at university herself. She became involved with the university kayak and tramping clubs and attributes her inspiration to want to work in the outdoors and become an instructor to her experiences with these clubs and the people she met through them. Although she did not have a clear idea of what the job was she was drawn to wanting to find work in the outdoors. As she comments "it was all kind of these funny decisions that you make based around your interests really". Zmudy, Curtner-Smith and Steffen (2009) described the process of acculturation for people as

the shaping of their perception of careers in adventure and what is involved in instructional delivery due to their exposure and experiences in adventure education and outdoor pursuits (e.g. with family or teachers, in non-formal settings such as camps or formal school settings) prior to entering any formal training" (p. 119).

This process of acculturation can be seen occurring for Cath, Fiona and myself throughout our childhoods.

In contrast Mel's decision to work in outdoor education, and acculturation, originated from her experiences as a tertiary student on a one year long outdoor education course. Mel reflected that during this year she felt as if she had found her place and taken off. She also described feeling a part of something and that for the first time she "had genuine relationships and friendships with some people. I'd actually got to know somebody and it was not superficial". In the work of Elliot, Kao and Grant (2004 as cited in Gibbons, 2011) this is described as 'mattering' or having the perception of being a significant part of the world we are in and being noticed and valued. Part of Mel's decision to become an Outdoor Education instructor was driven by her desire to "let

other people have that (experience) in their lives because it was so valuable to me". This ties in with the concept of the desire to pay it forward by helping others (Gibbons, 2011).

Whilst still at school Cath met a young woman competing in the same National Team who became a significant role model and mentor for her. This woman, several years older than Cath, was already working in a residential outdoor education centre. Lu and Sexton (2010) identify that role models /mentors have a "critical role in providing support for women" (p. 134). Murrell and Zagenczyk (2006, as cited in Lu and Sexton 2010, p. 134) "argue that people are attracted to others whom they believe are similar to themselves in terms of attitudes, behaviours, goals or status and they are motivated to make themselves similar to these individuals through observation and learning". Cath experienced this herself during her high school years and also acknowledges that she subsequently became a role model for her own students. She recalls a recent visit from a student she had taught in school many years previously "and she (the ex-student) said I remember when you started doing this with us and that made me want to do this...so it was like how I'd seen (mentor)...She'd sort of seen what I did and she got into it".

### **In the work place**

All of the women in this study showed an awareness of the normative measures of competence applied in outdoor education which are based around physical speed, physical strength and technique (Lugg, 2003). Fiona identified that it was her technical ability which allowed her to perform to a high standard in her pursuits. She also acknowledges that she wasn't physically strong and so had to rely on another aspect, indicating an awareness of the significance of physical strength in the measures of performance. Cath identifies that it was her high level of fitness and her image as a tough fit competitive person which gave her credibility and acceptance working amongst predominantly male teachers during her time in the advisory role.

Cath identified that she would modify her approach depending on the activity she was involved with. If it was one she was very confident of her ability in, she would use a feministic approach and assert ways of teaching that would accommodate females and

males. She knew that she already had the acceptance from the males and was confident. With other activities, such as kayaking, in which she was less self-confident, Cath would focus on the teaching side using her strengths in this area rather than high level physical pursuit's performance. This corresponds with Woodward (2000) who discusses choosing how to prove her competence when teaching windsurfing, a pursuit in which she noticed there were few other women participants at the time. "Sometimes I chose to try to prove my competence using the criteria associated with the dominant discourse, at other times to press for changes as part of resisting those dominant discourses"(p. 37).

Mel also discusses her use of different approaches when working with male students to ensure her acceptance as an instructor and minimise barriers to teaching and learning. Initially she would adopt a more competitive approach to establish her competence against the measures of physical performance. Once established she was able to swap to a less competitive mode of interaction with her students and switch to a wider range of delivery methods.

In the conclusion to their article 'Factors that Influence Women's Technical Skills Development in Outdoor Adventure', Warren and Loeffler state that "technical skill development continues to be a significant gatekeeper of adventure education" (2006, p. 116). Most outdoor education instructional jobs in Aotearoa New Zealand desire or require employees to hold the relevant National Body awards. Attaining these awards requires attending and passing an assessment process. Building on Warren and Loeffler's notion that technical skills development is a gatekeeper it follows that the assessment process, the criteria selected and standards they are measured against together with the people doing the measuring can be considered the gatekeepers. In the outdoors, "outdoor education practice is still embedded in a traditionally male oriented culture" (Lugg, 2003, p. 33) and "the majority of outdoor education leaders are men" (Neill, 1997 as cited in Lugg, 2003, p. 33). This has created, as Lugg describes it, "the problematic nature of the notion of competence in outdoor education with its normative emphasis on physical strength, speed and technical expertise (2003, p. 2).

After the birth of my second child I decided it was time to challenge the gatekeepers and prove that I should be accepted as a rock climbing instructor at tertiary level by achieving a specific award. I got through the gate and then decided I didn't need to do it anymore. In many ways I did what Mel describes as playing the chase game by attaining the higher level rock climbing award. I didn't need the award in the sense that I was already employed to work at that level but I felt a need to prove my right to be there. Whether it was to prove to myself, to certain of my peers at work, to students or the assessors and wider outdoor education community I remain unclear.

Mel challenged the gatekeepers twice trying to achieve a higher level award only to be turned back each time. Her frustration grew each time as she struggled to understand what the standards she was being measured against were and why she was coming up short. During the interview Mel expressed her frustrations;

*I've come away going I don't want that pressure to...I don't have to be like a man, that's what I've come away thinking. I don't have to. I don't have to feel like I have to perform at that level, and now I look at it, it is totally a masculine, male led performance. I don't want to buy into that s\*\*\* any more. I'm not interested. So you want to go and play little boy games? I'm having a really good time being a mum and my life is busy and stressful but I don't feel like I have to perform to somebody else's standards anymore.*

Woodward expresses similar sentiments from her experiences teaching windsurfing, "I, along with other women, had struggled with the tensions between acting 'like a man' so as to be accepted, or acting 'differently' and being marginalised" (2000, p. 37). Stepping back after the birth of her child removed Mel from the position of tension.

Cath also challenged the gatekeepers when she went for an assessment in Scotland. Asked why she chose to do this assessment when she "was really aware of that whole culture...the Glenmore Lodge male culture" and whether it was to prove that women could do it, she answered that

*again I was in the driven phase...it might have subtly been there (to prove women could) but it was part of my plan to get these qualifications and once I was there walking up that hill behind this guy and he turned round...man waiting for the men*

*and he looked at me. He said 'oh so you're fit enough for this are you? It was really awful.*

Cath continued to tell her story of the pressure she was constantly under during the assessment for being a woman and sums it up "I'd got the fitness and the navigation helped me through but the culture was...oh it was...yeah... not many other women wanted to go and put themselves through that".

Lugg suggests "women who wish to work in the outdoor education field have to find ways to work within this culture or try to change it meet the needs and strengths of women as well as men" (p. 1). A dilemma for women wishing to challenge the dominant paradigm is whether to try to create change from inside the culture or from the outside. Should women stay outside the culture and refuse to be measured against the normative standards or should they challenge from the inside having proved their 'right' to be there through gaining the currently 'accepted' awards and then working for change from the inside.

When Cath was asked whether she had accepted the measures of competence in outdoor education and got on with being competent within those measures, she responded

*I'd say it's a shame but I'd say that's what happened and I'd say that's what I've done but I'd also say that I've actually had a stab at trying to...may be not challenge it but trying to just put out some other things...nah rather than challenging it's been putting things out there. I'm kind of one of those...I don't get on a soap box...I just do this and this and this and so I push buttons to do what I believe in that are sort of challenging but they're not standing up on a soap box.*

Mel also comments on trying to create change through her experiences teaching white water kayaking.

*kayaking is such a funny place in New Zealand but you know by changing people's perception about a woman kayak instructor...I felt like men often doubted my ability, because I was a female...my ability to actually teach them stuff...and it took me a lot*

*of hard work to feel like I could actually get through to them and develop a relationship and a rapport and they would actually appreciate my way of doing stuff and they would be actually be learning off me and I had to do that by stepping into that really masculine 'try and do this! Bet you can't do this!' competitive type of model.*

Through doing this Mel felt she could gain acceptance and then she could work to create change through modelling different approaches. Both Mel and Cath in these examples appear to be trying to promote change from the inside, as already accepted outdoor instructors.

### **Shifting priorities & transitions to different life stages**

Reflecting on her move from the UK to Aotearoa New Zealand Cath observes "it was easing off the career thing. It wasn't where it is now where I think family but it was...it was tying in with him, so initially my career was me, me, me". Cath identified how in the early stages of her career "I was career driven during all those times and driven to improve in the orienteering, driven to put Britain on the map and have some results that did well". As she got older the importance of other facets of her life grew and her priorities started to shift

*My career was me, me, me and me helping others I definitely had that as well. I like this job because I help others but he (husband) was just doing his job too... and when we moved here I moved here partly because I wanted to explore New Zealand and all the rest of it... but partly because it gave him the chance to be near his dad and for him to be home. He'd been in the UK for 6 years so it was time for him to be in his own place for a while.*

Although Cath identified herself as being driven in her own career the decisions involved in her moves from job to job through her career appear to be influenced by personal relationship factors. A move to be in the same area as a boyfriend or a move away from a boyfriend might trigger the move to look for a new job but then the job itself is considered. This illustrates the integrated nature of work and life for Cath. Her decisions aren't made by considering career moves in isolation or personal issues alone but by looking for a solution that will accommodate both elements in her life. At times she favoured the personal facet at other times the work facet, such as the decision to take a



new position at a Teacher Training College even though it meant living a three hour drive from her husband.

As several authors have commented women are relational (Hapern, 2008, Cabrera 2007, Mainiero & Sullivan 2005). "Career decisions were normally part of a larger intricate web of interconnected issues, people and aspects that had to come together in a delicately balanced package" (as cited in O'Neil et al., 2008, p. 729). Women also value connectedness with others and will put aside their own needs for the needs of others. This may be caring for children or elderly parents or putting their spouse's work needs before their own and follow their spouse when their job requires that they relocate (Cabrera, 2007). Lu and Sexton's (2009) age related career phase model suggests that the personal relationship context becomes more prominent as a woman enters the mid-career stage of Pragmatic/Developmental Endurance. This also ties in the with the Kaleidoscope career model which suggests that in the early stages of her career a woman is more focused on Challenge and the desire for a job which satisfies her needs for development in her chosen work area or career. As she moves towards mid-career other facets of life shift into more prominent positions and the focus becomes Balancing the many integrated parts of her life (Mainiero & Sullivan, 2005).

## **Motherhood**

Once a woman becomes pregnant she starts the transition towards motherhood and negotiating her way through the discourses prevalent in wider society.

A mother might ask herself, is a good mother a selfless woman who puts her child first and lives through her children in some sense, or is she economically active, productive as well as reproductive, and forging some sense of an identity outside of her mothering role: or can she be both? (Raddon, 2002, p. 395).

The women in this study all became mothers for the first time during their 30s, at a stage in their lives when they were well established in outdoor education. "Motherhood is widely considered to be a watershed in the careers of professional women, particularly those working in male-dominated occupations" (Ranson, 2005, p. 145). Or as

Ranson also comments the problem is that if a woman becomes a mother their “conceptual cover is blown” (2005, p. 146). It becomes difficult for a mother to put the needs of the job first when they are also attempting to meet the expectation of the intensive mothering discourse and put the needs of their child and family first. Trying to balance these conflicting expectations I now realise added to the stress and challenge I felt on my return to work and especially on my return to rock climbing instruction after the birth of my first child. Not only was it difficult to regain the personal performance and fitness levels required but I found managing the long days out at a rock climbing site with the needs of fitting into the childcare centre hours challenging. Although using full days of childcare the timeframe of a ‘day’ created deadlines within which the workday had to fit. My perception was that adhering to these restrictions caused other staff to question my commitment to the job and my students. “The outdoor industry is an occupational area where many jobs involve long, irregular hours and/or residential work” (Allin, 2004, p. 1). It also has a strong organisational culture with a community of like-minded people and “considerable mistrust of the concept of a professional outdoor leader who doesn’t hold true to the values that outdoor education has traditionally taken as its ethos” (Barnes, 2006, p. 24).

This I perceive to contribute to the issues faced by women such as myself who may have entered the workplace as conceptual males, accepting the dominant paradigm and claiming a gender neutral workplace that women had the right to be in on our own merit. Then, when going through the transition to motherhood, these women meet a mismatch between the two discourses of good worker and good mother. This resonates with the findings of Levine et al. (2011) in their investigation of why early-career women physicians leave academic medicine. Levine et al. (2011) reported that it is not one factor in isolation which causes a woman to leave, rather there is a combination of contributing factors and when a woman reaches a point where she realises that there is a discrepancy between her own priorities and views for success and those of the institution this may be the turning point after which she decides to leave.

Finding myself in the position of struggling to balance work expectations for teaching and higher level study with being a mother of two young children I looked around for ways to redress the balance in my life. Not wanting to stop working, for both and

economic and professional reasons, I looked for options that would let me manage my workload. An opportunity arose for me in the direction of taking on a greater organisational and management role when our Head of School left. This, combined with increasing my teaching of theory based courses and decreasing practical instruction allowed me to develop a more manageable niche for myself. Cath similarly created herself a niche, specialising in a narrower area of teaching than she had been doing previously with less practical activity instructing. As Cath said “I drove myself a niche right from the start... I drove myself that niche”. In creating niches for ourselves both Cath and myself are effectively exerting our own agency to create a viable work load for ourselves. Grant-Vallone and Ensher propose that women do not only have the opportunity to opt in or out of work but that there is a third option where women may opt in between and in their “sample of highly educated women, we found that opting in between was a key strategy that they used to stay in the workforce” (2010, p. 338).

Fiona’s path, after crossing the watershed to motherhood, could also be described as opting in between. At the end of each period of maternity leave, following the births of both her children, Fiona returned to the same job at a tertiary institution. Eventually institutional changes in the work environment there combined with her shifting priorities and desire to live to her values such as being home after school for her children, encouraged her to leave her job. Economic realities however meant that she still needed to be earning some money and moving to relief school teaching provided her with the flexibility to earn an income yet still be able to be home after school with her children. This shift sideways fits with Smith’s (2011) suggestion that women exert their own agency, negotiate the constraints on their lives and shape alternate , non-linear career paths, that allows them to work towards balance in work and non-work life.

Cath and I can also be seen exerting our agency to create niches for ourselves within our workplaces. In discussing her choices Cath identifies that she is passionate about outdoor education and wants to “contribute to the broader outdoor education community... I’m not interested in heads of department of any of that I just want to teach”. In creating her niche Cath is using her agency to make a positive career choice to teach and define her own work path. My own niche could be seen as following a more

linear type career path with progression from teaching to a management role. From my perspective however I was making a move sideways. The move had nothing to do with progressing up a hierarchical path. I was making a positive move away from teaching, which I find exhausting and practical instruction, which demands time away in the field, and towards a role which I find easier to balance with the my other life roles. Creating this niche I see as exerting my agency to create a manageable workload rather than as a move to progress along a linear career path.

Like Fiona, Cath also makes reference to the need to earn money, “that helps”. All the women in this study are highly educated and have reasonably high earning potential compared with many women in society and as a consequence probably have more choices open to them. Many women do not have the choice of leaving employment as economic realities and family situations mean many women need to continue earning income.

Mel comments on her frustration of the perception that she got work because she was a woman rather than on her merits of ability and later on her growing perception of the unfair masculinity of the assessment system for National Awards.

*It is just so masculine the more I think about it, the whole kind of concept of the assessment model. As a woman with a child there is no way I could sit an assessment. Where am I going to get two days, I'm breast feeding right now but I couldn't get assessed because I can't spend two or three very long days away from my son, because it doesn't meet my needs to be able to feed him and take care of his needs.*

If women such as Mel, before having children, already perceived these National Awards to be gatekeepers to progression in the workplace and a feeling of being valued, then the possibility of trying to match the needs of being a mother with taking the assessment only seems to compound this.

## Confidence

As mentioned previously all of the women in this study appear to be very aware of the normative measures of competence in outdoor education based around physical speed, strength and technique. Traditionally these are considered masculine attributes but they have become the normative performance measures in outdoor education. All of the women in this study indicate that their sense of confidence is linked to an awareness that they measure up against the competence standards. As Mel comments

*I was always pushing myself to learn more and develop my physical performance really so I knew after that I got really good at doing stuff and I had a level of doing stuff then I got to a point where actually felt really confident in my skills level and my ability to actually be able to perform stuff.*

Cath adds “my confident self as a woman is being able to run around those orienteering courses at age 50 and wop all those male students”. She also carries on, “it would be very interesting to know if, whether I couldn’t still do that what it would be like” hinting at the important link between confidence and competence for these women. Any factor which may cause an actual or perceived, drop in competence can result in accompanying drop in confidence. In the example above Cath is questioning the effects of aging but crossing the watershed to motherhood can also cause women to question their confidence. I felt this following the birth of my first child and Mel articulates her experience. “When I had (her child) I lost lots of confidence in doing stuff so things like thinking about going for a walk with (child)... on a beautiful day was quite a scary thing”. She then adds “so if I have such a big confidence shift in just being able to go for a walk around the streets or in the bush what am I going to like on the water or on the rock and am I going to be able to remember stuff because it’s been a year probably since I’ve been actively involved”. As Ranson (2005) suggests when women cross the watershed to become a mother their conceptual cover is blown. They can’t work as a man and if, as appears to be the case, confidence is linked to competence, this can have a significant impact on their confidence at work.

In this chapter I have discussed threads and issues drawn from the participants’ journeys through employment in outdoor education. All of the women show a clear awareness of the normative measures of competence present in the dominant discourse of outdoor

education in Aotearoa New Zealand through the last decades, and worked hard to achieve them. An assuredness of their competence in activities seems to be linked to their confidence to work as outdoor educators. The transition to motherhood does appear to have been a watershed in the work lives for all of the participants with the three women who returned to work following maternity leave all returning to modified or adapted roles. In doing this the women appear to have exerted their agency to shape their lives. In the next chapter I draw together the discussions and draw my concluding thoughts together with some recommendations for the future.

## Chapter 7                      Conclusions

### *“You are the first mum to have done it!”*

So acknowledged the assessors in the final summation at my NZOIA Rock climbing level II assessment, a feat I achieved in early 2004 some eighteen years after NZOIA was founded as the National Body for outdoor instructors in New Zealand. Not the first woman with the award as there had been a few women involved right from the start, but the first *mother*.

*being a mum is really busy and do you know what? ...I talked about stepping off that pressure train. So how much time I dedicated to keeping current, to where I felt I was current in outdoors you know climbing and making sure I was climbing twenty days of the year...I don't feel like I have the time. I mean I probably do but I'd have to really change what I do and I don't want to do that, I don't want that pressure I don't need that pressure to be keeping current and you know I've come away going I don't want that pressure to...I don't have to be like a man, that's what I've come away thinking. I don't have to. I don't have to feel like I have to perform at that level, and now I look at it, it is totally a masculine, male led performance. I don't want to buy into that s\*\*\* any more. I'm not interested. So you want to go and play little boy games? I'm having a really good time being a mum and my life is busy and stressful but I don't feel like I have to perform to somebody else's standards anymore.*

Mel's passionate outburst towards the end of our interview conversation eloquently highlights many of the impacts women experience as a consequence of entering the outdoor education workplace as conceptual men.

I had set out to explore women's experiences working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand but as my research progressed I realised that I was going to need do more than that. My reading of the literature together with reflections on my lived experiences sparked a growing awareness and concern about the gender neutral discourse which seemed to occur in outdoor education. If women enter outdoor education denying the existence of any gender differences, accepting and working to the normative measures

of competence based on physical strength, speed and technical ability they are effectively working as men and entering the workplace as conceptual men. Whilst this may work effectively in early work life when women decide to have children they are suddenly faced with the situation of having their conceptual cover blown. It is difficult to work as a 'man' whilst pregnant or with young children. The societal constructs associated with good mothering, commonly the "selfless mother' who places her caring role before everything else in her life, in effect giving full-time attention to her children" (Raddon, 2002, p. 394) conflicts with those of the ideal worker who is able to prioritise work before everything else.

The focus of the research shifted and while I still explored women's lived experiences of working in outdoor education I did so with the intent of uncovering issues and impacts resulting from the women's approach to work in this environment. My review of the literature in Chapter Two outlines the gendered historical background of outdoor education in the New Zealand context. This has resulted in an environment and culture in which competence is determined through normative measures based on physical strength, speed and technical expertise. Snitow proposed that women who have "internalised the gender neutral discourse are in fact not entering the workforce as women but as "conceptual men" (1990, as cited in Ranson, 2005, p. 146). Lugg (2003) argues that "women in outdoor education should not have to 'act like one of the boys' [sic] in order to gain acceptance and recognition for their achievements"(2003, p. 11). I wondered whether my participants had entered outdoor education as 'conceptual men' and whether they had acted 'like one of the boys' or could be seen by others to have done so.

My findings suggest that women in this study had entered as conceptual men and, during at least the early stages of their career, could be perceived as acting like 'one of the boys' as they demonstrated their competence. They were measured against performance standards based on masculine traits and appear to have accepted this and worked to achieve it through maintaining high levels of physical fitness and developing good technical skills ability. As Cath reflected, she was career driven and the focus was "me, me, me" during the early phase of her work life. O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005) term



this the 'Idealistic Achievement' phase, with focus on personal success and satisfaction in their career.

All of the participants appeared to be progressing through similar stages with regard to their employment focus as they got older. Early on there is a focus on developing their own pursuit related skills and a drive to achieve the positions they wanted to work in. The drive appears to shift after a period of time and moves towards rebalancing aspects of their lives. When making employment related decisions growing emphasis was placed on relational influences such as being in the same location as a boyfriend or partner. In this sense the women appear to be following the pattern proposed by O'Neil and Bilimoria (2005).

The second of the age related phases is termed Pragmatic Endurance and as the women moved towards this, relational influences start to increase in importance. Once a woman has a child they have to address the conflicting discourses of good worker and good mother. Ranson suggests that at this point women who have entered the workplace as conceptual males discover their "cover is blown" (2005, p. 146). As highlighted in Mel's quote at the start of the chapter, "being a mum is really busy". It takes a lot of time to be a good mother but it also requires a lot of time to be an ideal worker and this creates a mismatch of expectations. Women's priorities and values associated with the different roles come into conflict and faced with this mismatch between their priorities as a mother and the priorities of their workplace they faced a potential turning point.

Smith (2010) argues that women are able to exert their agency to negotiate constraints on their lives and the women in this study can be seen to have done this. Three women returned to their workplace after their first period of maternity leave but prior to their return all had negotiated changes to their duties. These changes created a reduction in time spent instructing practical pursuits and an increased focus on the more theory based subjects. These changes allowed the women to negotiate the measures of competence and avoid the expectations of many field trips away from home and long days out in the field. After the births of their second children these women appear to have again exerted their agency and made choices which help them negotiate the

competing discourses of good mother and ideal worker. Two of the women exerted their agency to create niches for themselves; in my case with a move to organisational and management work and with Cath a positive choice for teaching, her passion. The third woman made a positive choice to leave her position in response to a change in the work environment and move to relief teaching as this let her balance her priorities more effectively.

This research also provides an insight into some of the challenges and costs the women encountered as a result of entering the gendered space of outdoor education as conceptual males. Despite working alongside men doing the same job with the same expectations there were some gender related issues experiences. The feeling of having to 'prove' your competence is one of these. Mel comments that she felt she had to work "really, really, really hard on a personal level to perform and then to be really valued as an outdoor educator I had to be a high performer in pursuit areas". I also make comments about my perception of the culture, "being able to perform at a high enough standard didn't feel as if it was enough. I felt I should always be striving for harder more difficult grades climbed and paddled, faster at biking, steeper skiing. Weekends and after work time should be spent going on challenging trips participating in the pursuits and pushing to harder grades". Mel also describes her awareness of the feeling as if she was in the chase game.

*Constantly you know these thoughts of developing and going down the NZOIA path and picking up level ones and then level twos and what am I going to do next and I need to be doing my Masters and I should be climbing grade 20s by now and why aren't I paddling grade five?*

Challenging the gatekeepers of competence, the assessors of the National Body awards was another impact for these women. Cath put herself through a gruelling assessment in Scotland, one attempted by few women at the time due to the male gendered culture that surrounded it. After the birth of my first child I finally decided it was time to take the assessment for a higher level rock climbing award. Having previously been put off by the reputation of the award I decided I didn't really have anything to lose now I was a mother, and became the first mother to do it. Mel tried twice to pass a kayak

assessment but each time struggled to understand what standards she was being measured against. She came away feeling undervalued as an outdoor educator.

My observations suggest that most women working in Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand would fit into the first stages of their work life or career, O'Neil and Bilimoria's (2005) Idealistic Achievement phase. There seems to be few mothers and/or women past this phase. Lu and Sexton (2010) identified that role models and mentors are an important source of support for women and that people are attracted to others who they perceive to be similar to them. With a lack of mothers visible working in outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand this also creates a lack of potential role models and mentors for younger women. It is not only the presence of women however that is needed to create change. If the visible older women have internalised the gender neutral discourse and support the continuance of the current measure of competence and expectations this will maintain the status quo in outdoor education workplaces as it is. The process of undertaking this research has also provided insights into the experiences women have had from which ideas for change may be generated.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In Chapter One I noted that Lugg (2003) suggests that "women who wish to work in the outdoor education field have to find ways to work within this culture, or try to change it to meet the needs and strengths of women as well as men" (p. 1). The women in this study appear to have been successful at finding ways of working within the culture present in Aotearoa New Zealand. The second challenge is to find ways to try and change it to suit both men and women. To work towards this there is a need to do more research on the gendered environment of outdoor education. To date there has been a limited amount of research into practitioners' experiences of this environment from either a male or female perspective.

The issues associated with the gendered environment of outdoor education need to be raised with organisations working at National Body level, such as NZOIA, and training institutions such as the tertiary providers. This will provide opportunity to determine

whether there is awareness of the gendered nature of the environment and the experiences women have had working in it.

A theme that has come through in this research is the struggle the respondents had with achieving higher level National Body qualifications. Their experiences were all different but three women discussed negative experiences that they had had. Research is needed to explore this phenomenon further to determine if there is widespread unease about these awards throughout outdoor education and whether there is a gender difference in the responses.

This research was based on a study of a small group of participants, all of whom had children and could be considered to be in a mid-‘career’ phase. All were white, well-educated and been successful working in outdoor education. Exploration of the lived experiences of a wider demographic of women would provide a clearer picture across the wider outdoor education environment in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Further research needs to explore the direction and focus of development at National Body Level to determine whether any of the issues or impacts identified in this thesis are included and being addressed. This will highlight whether there is a need to advocate for a greater awareness and understanding of the experiences of women and promotion of actions for changes.

A key action needed is to promote dialogue throughout outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. This needs to be encouraged at all levels, through articles in peer reviewed journals and non- peer reviewed newsletters and magazines as well as online forums and any other suitable avenue. As a mother still working in outdoor education in my mid-career I need to find ways to overcome my natural reticence to this and if I am not only to meet Lugg’s first challenge of finding a way to work within the culture but to meet the second of challenge of working to find ways to change it for both men or women (2003).

As discussed in chapters one and two of this thesis outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand has become a strongly contested space with socio-ecological discourses challenging the traditional outdoors-as-learning and outdoors-as-adventure versions. This research has explored women's experiences within the gendered environment of the adventure paradigm but how and where women fit into the contemporary contestations has not been investigated. Redefining outdoor education towards a socio-ecological perspective does not necessarily mean a redefining of the gendered environment or that the measures of competence associated with activities will be re-evaluated. A move away from an adventure discourse may shift the focus away from activities being central yet if participants are to be taken in the bush, out on rivers, lakes, the sea then the 'leaders' will still need to be deemed 'competent' and be accountable. This thesis seeks to close the gap in understanding between women's experiences and the gendered environment of the dominant adventure discourse of outdoor education. It also provides insights of women outdoor educators' experiences crossing the watershed to motherhood.

## **Recommendations**

- Research the wider outdoor education field in Aotearoa New Zealand to explore why there are few mothers working beyond the watershed to motherhood. This should consider the reasons why mothers choose to leave and choose to stay in outdoor education.
- At both National Body level and tertiary training courses promote increased emphasis on measures of competence based on ability to instruct or teach and ability to work with people to ensure these are valued alongside measures of personal performance.
- Encourage the national body to evaluate its assessments for the different awards – encourage a shift in the paradigm underlying these – less focus on the normative criteria of physical speed, strength, technical ability.
- Promote inclusion of mother friendly assessment strategies. A survey of both their own membership plus the wider outdoor education community would help to determine the concerns and needs of mothers as a specific group.
- Mentors and role models are important to people entering outdoor education yet if there are fewer women in mid to later career stages there will be a

shortage of these. This situation will only change if more women stay involved with outdoor education into later stages of their work lives.

- Research the implications for women resulting from a redefinition of outdoor education towards a socio-ecological perspective.

## **Appendices**

### **Appendix 1 Massey University Low Risk Notification**



MASSEY UNIVERSITY

2 July 2010

Anna Jones  
8 Charles Street  
Prebbleton  
CHRISTCHURCH 7604

Dear Anna

**Re: The Experience of Being Women in Outdoor Education in New Zealand**

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 2 July 2010.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

**A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:**

*"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.*

*If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail [humanethics@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethics@massey.ac.nz)".*

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)  
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and  
Director (Research Ethics)

cc Dr Marg Gilling  
School of Educational Studies  
PN900

Prof Howard Lee, HoS  
School of Educational Studies  
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Massey University Human Ethics Committee  
Accredited by the Health Research Council

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