Factors that enable, or challenge teachers and centre managers to support safe risk-taking for young children in early childhood outdoor environments

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements

for the degree of

Master of Education

(Early Years)

At Massey University, Manawatū

Aotearoa New Zealand.

Victoria Rachel Hanrahan

2018

Abstract

This qualitative research study investigated the factors that influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. The data collection methods included two phases; an online questionnaire with teachers and key informant interviews with three early childhood centre managers/head teachers. The data was analysed via thematic coding and reported under respective themes.

Teachers and centre managers play a fundamental role in allowing children to engage in acts of risk-taking. This can be challenging as there are many factors that either enable or inhibit a teacher's ability to support children to take safe risks. This study found that teachers and centre managers within Aotearoa New Zealand demonstrate a positive disposition towards risk-taking in the outdoors; however, their ability to promote safe risk-taking is fraught with tensions in relation to promoting risk while ensuring children are safe from harm. The main findings of the study are categorised into three sections; external factors that influence teachers' perceptions, professional factors that influence teachers' perceptions and the role of leadership.

Acknowledgments

The completion of this thesis would not be possible, without the ongoing support of my supervisors, Dr Karyn Aspden, Associate Professor Penny Haworth and Dr Tara McLaughlin. You all believed in me, even when I began to lose belief in myself. I thank you for your kindness, support, respect, encouragement and 'push' when I needed it.

I thank all the participants involved in this study, those who completed the questionnaire and the three key informants. The rich data that you all gave me, made this research possible. I am forever grateful for you giving up your time.

I thank former colleagues and current colleagues for your support and allowing me to talk with you about my research.

To my mum and dad, thanks for all your support and for always having faith in my abilities to complete this research study.

To my husband Phill and son Kingsley, you two are awesome! Thanks for always supporting me and constantly reassuring me that I would get there!

For Nana Dot

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Tables

Figures

Glossary

Kaiako	Teacher
Whānau	Family
Tamariki	Children
Te Whāriki	New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum
Kōhanga Reo	Māori immersion language nests
Whakamana	Empowerment
Kotahitanga	Holistic Development
Whānau tangata	Family and Community
Ngā hononga	Relationships
Mana atua	Wellbeing
Mana whenua	Belonging
Mana tangata	Contribution
Mana reo	Communication
Mana aotūroa	Exploration
Aotearoa	New Zealand
Ōtautahi	Christchurch

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Overview

This thesis reports on a study that explored what factors influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. The study focused on children aged three to five. Teachers' and centre managers' views around enablers and barriers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment were explored along with the influence of regulatory and policy compliance.

This investigation used a qualitative research design and included a two-phase approach. The first phase was an online questionnaire which drew on the perspectives of 40 early childhood teachers from a range of early childhood education (ECE) settings based in Ōtautahi/Christchurch, located in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. The second phase involved key informant interviews with three centre managers/centre leaders from centres in Ōtautahi, one from each of the three differing types of early childhood services, a Kindergarten, a privately owned service and a family and community based service. This chapter begins with an outline of the researchers background, followed by an overview of ECE in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand. A rationale for the study is then provided as a justification for the research aims and research questions. Finally, key terms are clarified and an overview of the thesis is provided.

1.2 Researcher Background

My background in ECE within Aotearoa spans 20 years working in private early childhood centres as a teacher, head teacher and centre manager, as well as within the tertiary sector as a lecturer in ECE. Through my work as a teacher and a lecturer, I developed an interest in play in the outdoors, specifically risk-taking in the outdoor environment. As a reflective practitioner, when teaching in the early childhood sector, I found myself at times reflecting on incidences in which I had curbed an outdoor risk-taking opportunity, due to fear of a child being injured, or fear of being in breach of the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008.* These reflections, along

with my earlier postgraduate study raised my awareness of teachers' and centre managers' role in supporting safe risk-taking in the outdoors. I believe that it is important to explore the perspectives and practices of teachers and centre managers working with children aged 3-5 to develop a deeper understanding of current factors that influence their ability to promote safe risk-taking in the outdoors and to examine this alongside existing research.

1.3 Early childhood education in the context of Aotearoa New Zealand

Early childhood education and care within New Zealand is available to children aged from birth to six, but is not compulsory. Children can attend primary school from the age of five, a common practice within Aotearoa; however, they do not have to attend until the age of six. A range of educational settings within New Zealand are licensed by the Ministry of Education to provide care and education for infants, toddlers and young children (these are outlined in more detail under key terms). All early childhood services are guided by the Early Childhood Curriculum *Te Whāriki*, a bicultural curriculum that is holistic in nature, allowing for diversity (Ministry of Education, 2017). The curriculum consists of mandated principles and strands that all licensed early childhood services must implement (Department of Internal Affairs, 2008).

In 2017 *Te Whāriki* was revised, twenty one years after its inception (Ministry of Education, 2017). The updated version of the curriculum gives more prominence to risk and risk-taking. The previous 1996 version mentioned risk only once, as a learning outcome for children (Ministry of Education, 1996). The current 2017 version mentions risk or risk-taking positively seven times, either in relation to what children should experience, or how teachers should support children to take risks.

1.4 Rationale for the Study

Recent research suggests that early childhood teachers may focus on compliance and regulations in outdoor education, producing a tension between aspects of accountability and their teaching pedagogy (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). Furthermore, Bown and Sumsion state that "there remains a paucity of research exploring teachers' perceptions and experiences of the early childhood regulatory

environment and the impact on their working lives..." (2007, p. 32). Gill (2007) argues that children need opportunities to explore risky play to enable them to manage risk and develop an understanding of safety.   This being said these opportunities are being restricted due to societal development and subsequent risk aversion (Gill, 2007). With the societal pressures, it can prove challenging for early childhood teachers to afford children significant resources and learning experiences that offer risk-taking (Stephenson, 2003). "Too often the concern to remove all hazards (situations where there is a danger of serious injury or death) from a playground can inadvertently also lead to the removal of all opportunities for risk-taking" (Stephenson, 2003, p. 35). It has also been argued that even though there is evidence to suggest there are benefits associated with providing challenging physical play experiences in outdoor education for children, "legislation and regulations in the early childhood sector are becoming increasingly restrictive and prescriptive" (Little & Wyver, 2008, p. 38). Fenech, Sumsion and Goodfellow (2006) suggest that putting these constraints in place impacts on a teachers' ability to draw on their own knowledge and experience. Investigations into the literature associated with this topic, identify that there is a gap in Aotearoa based research.

1.5   Research aims

Limited research exists on teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices in relation to children's risk-taking in the outdoors, especially within the context of New Zealand ECE. As adults' perspectives and practices directly impact on how they support children to engage in risky endeavours, it is imperative to investigate the views of teachers and centre managers. The aims of this research are to:

- Identify what teachers and centre managers view as barriers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment
- Identify what teachers and centre managers view as enablers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment
- Identify what impact regulatory and policy compliance have on teachers' and centre mangers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment

1.6   Introduction to key terms

This section provides an overview of key terms that are used throughout the study. Many of these definitions are specific to the New Zealand context and may be defined or described differently in various parts of the world. It is also acknowledged that some definitions are used interchangeably within New Zealand and research participants may provide different definitions based on their own experience and educational context.

Safe risk-taking. For this research, safe risk-taking is defined as an experience that challenges children's capabilities (Little & Wyver, 2008) promotes a platform for scaffolding the child's current skill level, provides a sense of excitement and/or trepidation but can also include possible accidental consequences, such as injury. Encompassed in this definition is the acknowledgement that safe risk-taking provokes feelings of trepidation, exhilaration and excitement (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012).

Teacher. The term 'teacher' is used to encompass all adults working with children in the New Zealand early childhood sector. These 'teachers' could be qualified, in-training or unqualified professionals working with children in an early childhood setting.

Head teacher. A head teacher is a teacher who teaches in the classroom with the children, but assumes a managerial role within the setting. This term is typically used in Kindergarten services.

Early Childhood Education. Early childhood education (ECE) refers to a range of educational settings that are licensed by the Ministry of Education to provide care and education for children. Within New Zealand there are a range of settings licensed by the Ministry of Education including teacher-led early childhood services and whānau-led services. Teacher-led services include Kindergartens and education and care services, while, whānau-led services include Te Kōhanga Reo, "a Māori immersion environment for tamariki and their whānau, and caters to tamariki from birth to school

age" (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 6). In this study, the participants came from teacher-led early childhood services.

Early childhood setting/early childhood centre/preschool. Early childhood setting, early childhood centre and preschool are terms used interchangeably. An early childhood setting is a setting that provides regular education and care of children under the age of six (Ministry of Education, n.d.).

Regulations. The regulations are the mandated regulatory requirements that all licensed early childhood settings within Aotearoa New Zealand must meet. The regulations are formally referred to as The *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* (Ministry of Education, 2008a).

Te Whāriki. *Te Whāriki* is the New Zealand early childhood curriculum, that all licensed ECE services within New Zealand must adhere to. *Te Whāriki* is a holistic, bi-cultural document consisting of the weaving together of mandated principles and strands. *Te Whāriki,* is made up of four *principles:* empowerment/whakamana, holistic development/kotahitanga, family and community/whānau tangata, relationships/ngā hononga and five *strands*; wellbeing/mana atua, belonging/mana whenua, contribution/mana tangata, communication/mana reo, exploration/mana aotūroa, that are woven together in the image of a whāriki (mat) (Ministry of Education, 2017). The curriculum includes a vision that states children are: "competent and confident learners and communicators, healthy in mind, body and spirit, secure in their sense of belonging and in the knowledge that they make a valued contribution to society" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 6).

1.7   Outline of thesis

The thesis is organised into six chapters. This chapter introduces the research, the researcher's background and a rationale for the research.

Chapter two provides a review of the literature related to safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, including current definitions of risk-taking. The research questions are presented at the end of this chapter.

Chapter three presents the qualitative research design used to guide the study and outlines the two-phase approach: questionnaire and key informant interviews. The method used to access and recruit participants is discussed, along with the development and dissemination of the questionnaire and interview tools. Validity and ethical considerations are also discussed, as are methods of data analysis.

Chapter four presents the findings of the questionnaire and key informant interviews, through identification and analysis of key themes derived from the data. The chapter presents the findings in ten sections: participant information, definitions/descriptions of safe and unsafe risk-taking, benefits/advantages of engaging in safe risk-taking, the impact of media on safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, the impact of legislation and regulations, supporting safe risk-taking, inhibiting safe risk-taking, teachers' beliefs about risk-taking, teachers' practices and risk-taking; and finally the role of leadership in safe risk-taking in the outdoors.

Chapter five presents a discussion on the main findings of the research in relation to the existing literature. The findings are discussed addressing the research questions. This chapter presents the findings in three sections: external factors that influence teachers' perceptions, professional factors that influence teachers' perceptions and the role of leadership.

Chapter six presents the conclusion of this research study. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed. The implications for practice and suggestions for future research are described.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Introduction

Engaging in safe risk-taking in the outdoors provides opportunities for children to learn how to manage risk and develop an understanding of safety, and their own limits (Gill, 2007; Little & Wyver, 2008). However, fear of risk can cause teachers to become risk averse and potentially overprotect children, which may result in children who are less prepared to cope with challenge and overly cautious towards taking risks (Madge & Barker, 2007). In this literature review I will firstly explore current definitions of risk-taking, before looking at risk-taking in the context of legislation and regulations and the relationship between risk-taking and *Te Whāriki*, the New Zealand early childhood curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2017). I then examine the benefits and challenges associated with risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Finally, various perspectives on the importance of optimal outdoor environments will be discussed, along with teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to risk-taking in the outdoors.

2.1   Defining risk-taking

Risk-taking in a general sense, is defined as "the act or fact of doing something that involves danger or risk in order to achieve a goal" (Merriam-Webster, 2017). The concept of 'risk' and how this is understood is subjective (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). Risk-taking can be defined negatively or positively and is influenced by individual perspectives and practices. However, predominately risk-taking has been viewed in a negative light in the current literature. Little, Sandseter and Wyver note that current definitions of 'risk' tend to be restricted to viewing risk in a negative light, hence leading to risk averse practices (2012). How parents define what constitutes an unsafe risk can significantly influence teachers' and centre managers' decisions, values and beliefs in relation to providing safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). When people who are not the child's parents are in charge, the accountability level can feel higher and ultimately impact on pedagogical practices and experiences offered that support risk-taking (Little, Wyver & Gibson, 2011).

More recently Brussoni et.al, (2015) believe that the term 'risk' is evolving from being viewed negatively as a term associated with danger, to a more optimistic view of 'risk' being defined in relation to positive opportunities. This view proposes that risk can be perceived as an activity or experience in which a child can identify a challenge and weigh up their approach to engaging with this experience. Furthermore "…risky play is defined…as thrilling and exciting play that can include the possibility of physical injury" (Brussoni et al., 2015, p. 6425). Nicol suggests that an "acceptable risk is where a child learns and develops from taking a risk, but not getting hurt in any way, i.e. physically, mentally or emotionally" (2013, p. 66). Risk-taking has also been defined as: "attempting something never done before; feeling on the borderline of 'out of control' often because of height or speed, and overcoming fear" (Stephenson, 2003, p. 36).

Risk-taking has also been conceptualised by considering various types of risk. A Norwegian study reported by Sandseter (2007) observed children aged 3-5 and categorised risky play into six categories "play with great heights; play with high speed; play with dangerous tools; play near dangerous elements; rough-and-tumble play; play where the children can 'disappear'/get lost" (p. 243). Greenfield's New Zealand study of children aged four also grouped equipment in line with Sandseter's categorisation of risk. Equipment that can support risk-taking in the outdoor environment was identified as bikes, slides, sandpit and swings (Greenfield, 2004). This study found that climbing was the most prominent and frequent form of risk-taking (Greenfield, 2004), supporting Sandseter's view that playing at height is a significant element of risky-play.

When children engage in acts of risk-taking, or use the type of equipment outlined by Greenfield (2004) to take a risk, the activity can provoke many emotive responses, such as, a feeling of trepidation, exhilaration and excitement (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). Mastering a challenge empowers a child and develops physical competency. Children need opportunities to be challenged and stimulated to develop physically and mentally (Sandseter, 2012). Viewing risk-taking through a positive lens has been viewed by some as an important pedagogical practice. For example, the positive benefits of risk-taking are more important than the limited detrimental effects (Taylor, 2015).

In summary, safe risk-taking is defined as an experience that challenges children's capabilities, promotes a platform for scaffolding the child's current skill level, provides a sense of excitement and/or trepidation but can also include possible accidental consequences, such as injury. A key mediating factor in managing risk relates to the context of current legislation and the way in which compliance and accountability requirements can shape risk-taking practices. The significance of relevant legislation is outlined in the following section.

2.2   Risk-taking in the context of Legislation and Regulations

The *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* (Ministry of Education, 2008a), *the Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008* (2008b), and *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017), outline a range of health and safety standards for ECE services to meet. In particular, Health and Safety Standards 12-18 (see Appendix Seven) have relevance to protecting the safety of children (Ministry of Education, 2008b). One such standard outlines that "Equipment, premises and facilities are checked on every day of operation for hazards to children" (Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 19). The regulatory requirements outlined, also state that records must be maintained documenting any incidents or accidents that occur in the centre for the purpose of identifying hazards that can be minimised. When adhering to the regulatory requirements, it is essential to look at the meaning of 'hazard'. Hazard as outlined by Stephenson, means "danger of serious injury or death" (2003, p. 40).

The health and safety standards evident in the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* also permeate wider than the physical setting itself. There are associated implications with regards to taking children on excursions. Fjørtoft (2001) advocates for the necessity of children's exposure to natural environments, however, the decision for excursions outside of the centre to occur can potentially be influenced by these regulatory standards. When staff take children outside the ECE setting there are many requirements that must be met. One such requirement is an evaluation of any risks. Furthermore, before embarking on an excursion, the health and safety standards embedded in the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*

state parents must be given notice before the excursion date and have provided written approval for their child's attendance at said excursion (Ministry of Education, 2008b). These prescribed regulations can act as limiters to children's exposure to natural environments.

In addition, New Zealand has recently seen the launch of the *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015*, which required implementation from the 4th April 2016 (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2016a). During the lead-up to the introduction of the new Health and Safety Act, there was much confusion around the responsibilities of schools and the implications should the provision of health and safety measures be found to be insufficient. This confusion resulted in a Wairarapa Primary School banning children from tree climbing (Jackman & Fallon, 2016). The rationale behind this specific health and safety ban was to ensure adequate risk-taking measures were in place and all possible hazards were identified and/or neutralised. The necessity of banning children from climbing trees was in response to predicting all possible eventualities to ensure one is not held personally liable. This outcome was deemed necessary due to the ambiguous nature of how much justification is required to clear a school or individual of liability (Jackman & Fallon, 2016). A school or early childhood service is required by law to identify any risks in the environment and make sure that adequate practices are established to manage these risks. The new law would mean that managers of schools or early childhood services could face personal prosecution, which could result in a fine of up to $600,000 if an injury occurs (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2016b).

Even with restrictions due to the regulated nature of ECE in Aotearoa, New Zealand, it is possible to use excursions as beneficial learning opportunities for children to engage in risk-taking in the outdoors. For example, Braithwaite (2014) demonstrated how the willingness of teachers can overcome the limiting factors enforced by early childhood regulations. Teachers in the setting where Braithwaite worked, focused on sustainability, leading the team to delve into the 'Forest School' approach. The teaching team worked with the Kindergarten Association Management to complete a detailed risk analysis to support a proposal for excursions to a forest. The proposal was lodged on the premise that children would attend 'preschool' in a forest setting one

day a week, from 9am for the day. Approval was granted, and teachers have identified that through these trips to the forest, children are engaging in risk-taking and building resilience. "More recent observations clearly show that the children have become more resilient, more likely to pick themselves up and carry on if they fall" (Braithwaite, 2014, p. 12).

New Zealand early childhood teachers are governed by regulations, licensing criteria, curricula, policies and procedures that guide their practice in relation to providing safe risk-taking opportunities for children in the outdoor environment. The tension arising from these regulatory restraints is the assumption that all risk can be managed to meet accountability requirements. The repercussion of this is the environment can become too safe and not stimulating enough to support children's learning and development (Sandseter, 2010).

In a study conducted by Stephenson (2003), that extended on observations from her prior research (Stephenson 1999), it was noted that regulations that govern outdoor playgrounds, influence teachers with regards to removing all potential hazards from the outdoor area to ensure children's safety. This study is significant as it was undertaken in Aotearoa, New Zealand, and involved observations of children aged 0-5 years, in a parent co-operative run centre (Stephenson, 2003). Furthermore, Stephenson states that the implications of a physical hazard can be so serious that the potential of injury can dominate teachers' decisions with regards to outdoor environment provisions. This tension can impede teachers' drive to provide enticing and physically stimulating outdoor environments that are conducive to risk-taking.

Another study conducted by Little (2017), in Australian early childhood education and care services, found that regulatory requirements, in particular those relating to heights and space were factors that impacted on teachers' ability to provide children with opportunities to engage in challenging play and take safe risks. Little also found that the regulations impacted adversely on the diversity of experiences offered, due to teachers' interpretation and subsequent enactment of said regulations.

2.3   Risk-taking and the New Zealand early childhood curriculum

The New Zealand early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996)*,* is a holistic, bi-cultural document. Rather than being subject driven, it looks at the child as a whole, particularly focusing on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, which takes into account all relationships and environments that impact on the child. The socio-cultural theories of Vygotsky and Bruner also underpin *Te Whāriki* on the premise that learning transpires through "relationships with people, places and things, mediated by participation in valued social and cultural activities" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 63)

The original 1996 version of *Te Whāriki*, supported the notion that risk-taking is beneficial to children's learning and development, and outlined that the curriculum should support children to develop "confidence that they can participate and take risks without fear of harm" (Ministry of Education, 1996, p. 52). *Te Whāriki* advocated for children to be afforded opportunities that challenge and develop their physical skills (Ministry of Education, 1996). However, *Te Whāriki* is a generalist and aspirational curriculum, and as such does not provide explicit guidance for teachers around provision of experiences that support risk-taking (Stephenson, 2003). Thus, the original 1996 version supports the concept of safe risk-taking, but does not offer pedagogical strategies to support teachers' practice.

Te Whāriki underwent significant revision during 2016, and on April 12th 2017, a revised version of the early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* was released. Of note was that risk-taking was given more prominence in this revised version. Teachers are provided with guidance surrounding risk-taking in the early childhood environment in the form of basic suggestions of activities that can support risk-taking. The 2017 early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* states that "the environment is challenging but not hazardous for toddlers. While alert to possible hazards, kaiako [teachers] support healthy risk-taking play with heights, speed, tests of strength and the use of real tools" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 30). There is a clear alignment between this statement in the updated version of the early childhood curriculum and Sandseter's six categories of risky play previously mentioned: "play with great heights; play with high speed; play

with dangerous tools; play near dangerous elements; rough-and-tumble play; play where the children can 'disappear'/get lost" (Sandseter, 2007, p. 243).

2.4   Advantages of engaging in risk-taking

Little and Wyver (2008) reviewed the literature from 1990 related to outdoor play, specifically in relation to urbanised western culture, particularly Australia. They drew on literature findings from a range of disciplines and concluded that experiences promoting physical risk-taking are vital as "exposing children to carefully managed risks support children's capabilities in learning about and assessing risk" (Little & Wyver, 2008, p. 35). Their review therefore supports the view that children need 'managed' opportunities to explore and engage in risky play as this will enable them to manage future risks independently and to develop an understanding of safety. When children learn, and refine the skill to self-assess and manage risk, they form a foundation for learning how to self-regulate in later life. Later research further affirmed that children who are provided with opportunities to independently engage in risk-taking during the early childhood years, develop confidence to assess and manage risks as they mature into adulthood (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012). Risk-taking during play has the potential to either end in positive consequences (successful mastery of skills) or in negative consequences (accidental harm). Providing that the accidental harm endured is not serious, either consequence provides children with opportunities to learn about risk-management and to put strategies in place for future risk-taking opportunities. Furthermore, children are also able to use their personal experiences to support their peers with understanding how to manage risk and stay safe (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike & Sleet, 2012). Exposure to negative consequences from engaging in risky activities, such as those resulting in failure, benefits children through acquisition of strategies to cope with failure, building self-resilience and developing self-confidence (Little, Sandseter & Wyver, 2012).

In particular, risk-taking in the outdoors is seen as providing potential for young children to build self-confidence. In reporting her 2003 study, Stephenson made links

to learning dispositions, which are a learning outcome of the New Zealand early childhood curriculum framework, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 1996). A learning disposition is defined as a habit of mind or patterns of learning (Ministry of Education, 1996). Carr, outlines five learning dispositions that are predominately used within early childhood documentation and assessment of learning: "courage and curiosity, trust and playfulness, perseverance, confidence and responsibility" (Carr, 1998, p. 12). Whilst risk-taking is not outlined as a significant learning disposition within this framework, it does however, fit within the learning disposition of perseverance and persisting with challenge or uncertainty (Stephenson, 2003). Persisting with difficulty could be seen as persevering with trial and error through risk-taking in the outdoor environment. In addition to this, Stephenson also believes that risk-taking in the outdoors provides opportunities for children to develop a disposition of personal risk-management (2003).

A reported positive outcome of engaging in risk-taking, is the immediate fun and exhilaration that can come from the experience itself. Enjoyment can also arise with the reward that comes with skill mastery. Even though risk-taking does not always end in skill mastery, the potential for injury and mastering fear still leads to a feeling of excitement and exhilaration. Sandseter's study demonstrated that children actively seek out risk-taking experiences regardless of associated fear and potential risk (Sandseter, 2007).

Active play is often associated with risk-taking opportunities. Being physically active also provides many health benefits for young children. Risk-taking in the outdoor environment is conducive to the health and wellbeing of young children, through the development and refinement of motor skills (Sandseter & Kennair, 2011). Rough and tumble play is believed to have positive outcomes for children in relation to holistic development, especially in regard to physical, social and cognitive development (DiCarlo, Baumgartner, Ota, & Jenkins, 2015). Physical activity that is undertaken that includes risk-taking is also seen as fundamentally important and can actively inhibit childhood obesity (Little & Wyver, 2008). A child who is physically active and pushes his/her own limits is more likely to enjoy the associated health benefits of their physical prowess.

2.5 Consequences of not engaging in risk-taking

As noted above, being exposed to safe risk-taking in the early years is often viewed as vital for young children. If children are not provided with sufficient opportunities to take risks in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre, boredom and lack of challenge can lead them to seek out their own risk-taking experiences (Greenfield, 2004; Stephenson, 2003), perhaps through adapting equipment in the outdoor environment or using equipment in an unsafe manner.

Risk aversion in ECE has also been viewed as contributing to dangerous risk-taking in adolescence; at its extreme engaging in criminal and reckless acts (Gill, 2007). If children are not engaged in risk-taking in early childhood and do not learn how to self-assess and manage risk then they may potentially lack these skills as they move into adulthood.

Views on risk-taking can change over time. In fact, risks that many adults experienced in childhood are now deemed unsafe for this generation's children (Hill & Bundy, 2012). It has been proposed that we are creating "a risk averse society, and the fear that we may be overprotecting our children and making them overly cautious and unprepared for challenge" (Madge & Barker, 2007, p. 20). Removing all possible dangers from an outdoor environment has the potential to result in a physical playground that protects children from harm, but may also remove all the challenges. If children are not provided with opportunities to engage in risk-taking in the formative years, they may, in later years, lack physical confidence (Stephenson, 2003).

When children are not given opportunities to engage in risk, due to adults' fear of children being harmed by minor injuries, there is also potential for children to become more fearful. As Sandseter and Kennair (2011) propose, if children are not stimulated by a sufficient environment that supports risk-taking they will not master their fear of the environment which could potentially lead to a future anxiety disorder.

Eager and Little (2011) identify that there is a growing tendency to remove risks prevalent in the environment, so as to subsequently remove any associated problems that the risk may present. The authors therefore coined the term risk deficit disorder (RDD) to describe this phenomenon. Whilst their article was not based on empirical research, their review of the literature suggests that, as adults, we rely on our skills to adapt to situations and master risks. One can only be successful in adaptation and mastery of risk, if exposed to risk-taking opportunities as a young child (Eager & Little, 2011). Little and Wyver (2008) agree that if adults limit children's opportunities to engage in positive risk-taking, they in turn impede children's ability to make decisions and judgements related to risk.

2.6   Optimal outdoor environments

Much literature supports providing outdoor environments that foster and drive children's innate curiosity. An optimal early childhood outdoor environment is said to offer variety that challenges children's physical abilities. For example, "Slopes and rocks, afford natural obstacles that children have to cope with" (Fjørtoft, 2001, p. 111). Various natural materials can therefore present opportunities for children to engage in risk-taking.

An environment that lacks a range of natural materials can be enhanced by the introduction of "loose parts" that afford opportunities to enhance children's play and learning (Fjørtoft, 2001; Spencer & Wright, 2014; Tovey, 2007; Wilson, 2012; Zamani, 2016). Loose parts are resources that present opportunities to adapt the outdoor environment, such as, cotton reels, tyres, pallets and wooden pavers. Fjørtoft (2001) states that an environment that is sufficiently resourced provides more scope for open ended and creative play opportunities. When resources can be used by children to adapt the physical environment, they are able to use these materials to create opportunities to take risks.

Providing adaptable resources in the outdoor environment is also seen as one way to utilise the environment as the 'third teacher' (Pairman & Terreni, 2001). Malaguzzi, the founder of the Reggio Emilia infant toddler centres and preschools, highlighted the

important role that the environment can have in enhancing or restricting children's learning and development (Rinaldi, 2001). Malaguzzi's work suggests that a well thought out environment has the potential to stimulate and engage children's curiosity. The value of the environment is observed within Reggio Emilia infant toddler centres and preschools. These environments are purposeful, inviting, learning environments appealing to children's curiosity and welcoming learning and discovery (Carter, 2007). A Reggio Emilia inspired outdoor environment is an environment that is aesthetically pleasing, resources are open ended, natural, interesting and engage the senses (Stonehouse, 2011).

Exposure to optimal outdoor environments provides plentiful opportunities to engage in play and take risks. A study conducted by Greenfield identified eight characteristics (see Table 2.1) associated with optimal outdoor environments, one of which was an environment "where children can run and be physically challenged in multiple ways all year round" (Greenfield, 2012, p. 46).

Table 2.1   Key characteristics of optimal outdoor provision

1	Where children can be alone or with others
2	Which invite and encourage a variety of opportunities/possibilities for learning and exploration in multiple ways
3	Which offer children choices, engendering in them a sense of ownership, contribution and responsibility for their own learning
4	Where children can run, and be physically challenged in multiple ways all year round
5	Which are well designed, resourced, maintained, and positioned
6	Which are aesthetically pleasing and inviting for both children and adults
7	Which provide contact with nature and the natural world, thus promoting a sense of belonging and an understanding of life cycles which foster sustainability
8	Which have features that are specific to that centre/community context

(Greenfield, 2012, p. 46).

This study was conducted in New Zealand, involving 46 teachers from 15 early childhood centres. Data was gathered via a questionnaire with five open ended questions. The findings identified two threads running through the eight established themes: relationships and opportunities. In particular, 'opportunities' resonates with

the provision of risk-taking opportunities. Teachers completing the questionnaire outlined that an outdoor environment that offered a various range of learning opportunities, through diverse resources and spaces constituted an optimal outdoor environment (See Table 2.1).

Many New Zealand early childhood settings are designed to meet the minimum ECE regulatory requirements of 5m^2 outdoor space per child (Pairman, 2012). However, this space requirement can still be insufficient and restrictive, as supported by a recent review conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2011). This review suggested that older children (over 3 year olds) attending an early childhood setting require an optimum average outdoor space of 7m^2, while the optimal outdoor space required for younger children (0-3 year olds) attending an ECE setting was significantly higher, at 8.9m^2 per child. It could be argued, therefore, that early childhood settings in New Zealand are restrictive in the sense that "although the design, layout and space in ECE environments influences children's learning, New Zealand's minimum standards for physical space compare poorly with other OECD countries" (Pairman, 2012, p. 21). A possible result of limited space may be the reduction of opportunities presented for risk-taking. For example, a recent study that focused on physical activity within early childhood settings in New Zealand, found that the most frequently reported barrier to the promotion of physical activity was that of limited space (Gerritsen, Morton & Wall, 2016). This study was conducted utilising an online survey within New Zealand, focusing on policies and physical activity. The study focused on the regions of Auckland and Waikato and included centre managers and head teachers of 237 services.

2.7   Teachers' perspectives and practices related to risk-taking in the outdoors

"Risks are not absolutes, there is no such thing as a risk in reality, only perceptions of risk" (Tovey, 2007, p. 101). The literature indicates that early childhood teachers and centre managers have an important role to play in the provision of optimal outdoor environments that afford safe risk-taking opportunities. Support for this is provided in the previously referred to study by Stephenson (2003). Stephenson's work provides examples of curriculum considerations made to support safe risk-taking. For example,

she stated: "the guard-rail on the top of the fort was there to prevent children falling, but they assessed that allowing children to traverse the fort, stepping around the outside of this, risking a fall of 1.5 metres to the bark chips below constituted a risk not a hazard" (Stephenson, 2003, p. 40). This suggests that when teachers and centre managers demonstrate a positive disposition to risk-taking, they can find ways to balance risk-taking with safety.

Despite the positive dispositions illustrated in Stephenson's study, actively supporting children's outdoor play, whilst managing the health and safety of the children in their care, can be fraught with tension as teachers balance provision of sufficient challenges with regulatory requirements (Gill, 2007; Greenfield, 2004; Sandseter, 2007). Associated societal pressures can also prove challenging for early childhood teachers to afford children significant resources and learning experiences that offer risk-taking. For example, during her keynote speech at the Kidsafe National Playground Conference, Greenfield (2004) discussed aspects of a research study she had undertaken involving three girls and two boys, aged between four years and four years 11 months. The children involved in the research study were encouraged to discuss their feelings about outdoor play via the support of photographs. In her keynote speech, Greenfield spoke about creating future play opportunities for children, and the need for teachers to reduce any significant chance of severe injuries from outdoor playgrounds whilst maintaining a balance by providing challenging opportunities to engage in risk-taking.

It has been argued that there are differences between the teacher's role in an indoor environment and that of the role they play in the outdoors. Tovey (2007) outlines that teachers may be more inclined to embrace the position of monitoring safety in the outdoors. "All too often the key phrases of adult talk which dominate an outdoor play area can be negative phrases, such as "mind out. Be careful. Don't do that. Take turns" (Tovey, 2007, p. 124). Therefore, suggesting that due to potential risk occurring in the outdoors, teachers feel the need to take a more active role in supervision rather than considering best pedagogical practice (Tovey, 2007). In contrast to the work of Tovey, an action research study conducted by Amy Nicol, involving eight parents, two

teachers and eight children, found that adults actively supported risk-taking in the outdoor environment (Nicol, 2013). The author found that adults used the strategies of supervision, support and encouragement to intentionally teach and support children to engage in risk-taking in the outdoors.

The literature suggests that the role of teachers and centre managers is imperative in relation to managing risk-taking in the outdoor environment. For example, a study conducted by Sandseter (2012) focused on teachers' perceptions and practices in relation to children's risky play within two Norwegian ECE environments. The data for this study was collected via semi-structured interviews involving seven early childhood teachers. Purposive sampling was used to select two early childhood settings, based on the amount of time afforded to children in the outdoor environment and the difference in approach to outdoor play. One setting was a kindergarten with fixed playground equipment, whilst the other setting was a natural environment that did not have a fenced outdoor area to contain the children (Sandseter, 2012). Drawing on the six categories of risk referred to earlier (Sandseter, 2007, p. 243): "play with great heights; play with high speed; play with dangerous tools; play near dangerous elements; rough-and-tumble play; play where the children can 'disappear'/get lost", the key findings illustrated that the early childhood teachers viewed outdoor environments as foundational for providing opportunities for children to engage in risk-taking (Sandseter, 2012). However, it was also noted that for outdoor environments to provide these opportunities, it is a necessity for teachers to allow children to engage in risky play. Sometimes this means teachers need to reflect on, and potentially broaden the boundaries for risk-taking that they apply, to ensure that they do not limit the children's opportunities (Sandseter, 2012).

Furthermore, the study by Sandseter found that teachers valued risk-taking as it provided benefits to support the development and learning of children in a holistic sense and afforded children chances to learn through experience and discover dangers for themselves, thus contributing to their own understanding of risk. In addition, the early childhood teachers in the selected settings for this study were found to not only have an awareness of risk-taking, but also permitted and encouraged children to

engage in risky play (Sandseter, 2012). Whilst the findings of Sandseter's study are interesting, as this research was conducted in Norway the findings may not necessarily be generalised to teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices within New Zealand, as different perspectives and regulatory environments may exist in each setting. In addition, the research questions in Sandseter's study focused more on how teachers evaluate risky play, rather than their perspectives on their actual practices. Sandseter also noted that limited research exists on teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to risk-taking, suggesting the need for more research in this area. This identified gap in research will be addressed in this study.

Whilst Sandseter's study focused on teachers' perspectives, Little, Wyver and Gibson (2011) conducted a study that focused on adult attitudes to risk-taking in Australia. The authors conducted their research using semi structured interviews with mothers and early childhood practitioners. Five early childhood services based in Sydney Australia, including 28 children and 17 early childhood teachers, participated in the study. Mothers who consented for their children to participate were invited to be involved in the study by being interviewed, or by being observed while visiting a park with their child. Twenty-four mothers agreed to be interviewed whilst 12 agreed to go with their child to a park. One father also completed a questionnaire, and another father went with his child to the park for observations. The study revealed that: "The regulations were identified as a key factor associated with practitioners' inability to provide challenging experiences for the children" (Little, Wyver & Gibson, 2011, p. 125). In fact, seventeen percent of the parents that participated in the study stated that they believed the centre regulations were too stringent, citing incident reporting for minor injuries as unnecessary (Little, Wyver & Gibson, 2011).

Furthermore, Little et al. claimed that in the study described above, the children observed mainly participated in low risk activities, due to the equipment in the centres and the playgrounds offering limited potential for risk-taking (2011). They therefore suggested that, whilst this might stimulate the children at first, it could eventually become mundane, causing children to use the equipment in ways that result in more risky behaviours (2011). However, this study was not representative of the wide range

of differing playgrounds available in early childhood settings. It is also interesting to note that the majority of parents were females, which could be a limiting factor with regards to seeking a broad range of societal perspectives. Little et al. do, however, state that issues related to safety regulations are an area worthy of further research in relation to teachers' perspectives and practices (2011).

Coleman and Dyment (2013) conducted research to investigate teachers' perspectives of physical activity and policies and practices that can limit or enable physical opportunities in the outdoors). This study was conducted in Tasmania Australia, utilising qualitative interviews with 16 teachers from four early childhood centres. The findings showed that teachers demonstrated positive perceptions in relation to the value of physical activity in ECE; however, centre policies related to safety in the outdoor environment did limit teachers' pedagogical practices. A limitation of this research was the fact that the centres participating in this study all fell under the same organisation, hence the same management. This highlights the need for further research to garner a range of centre managers' perspectives. Furthermore, there were only a small number of participants, meaning that it would be difficult to make any generalised statements in relation to ECE in general. These limitations are addressed in the current study, as described in the chapter that follows.

2.8   Research Questions

To address a gap in the literature, the study is guided by the following research questions:

2.8.1   Research Question

What factors influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre management perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment?

2.8.2   Sub-questions

- What do teachers and centre managers view as the barriers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment?

- What do teachers and centre managers view as enablers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment?
- What impact does regulatory and policy compliance have on teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment?

Summary

This literature review began by defining risk-taking, and providing insight into what this might constitute with regards to young children. Even though many authors have investigated outdoor risk-taking in ECE, it appears that there is currently insufficient research surrounding teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices in relation to safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Furthermore, research surrounding teachers' perspectives and practices has been conducted internationally and only minimally within New Zealand. However, there is little existing New Zealand literature that looks at the perspectives and practices of both teachers and centre managers. The release of the revised early childhood curriculum *Te Whāriki* has highlighted the importance of risk-taking for young children within Aotearoa New Zealand. Since the inception of this thesis, there have been some recent cases in the media that have reinforced this as a timely and important topic of research. Therefore, the present study seeks to explore what factors influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment.

Chapter Three: Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

This chapter outlines the qualitative methodological approach which has been utilised to examine New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. The chapter begins by discussing the key features of qualitative research and how these guided the design of this study and the questions that this study sought to answer. Data collection methods are discussed next, including the online questionnaire, directed at Early Childhood Teachers, and the key informant interviews involving ECE Service Managers. How both sets of data were analysed is then described. The validity of the study and relevant ethical considerations are outlined next. Finally, a summary is provided of key points in the chapter.

3.1   Methodology

This research study sought to examine early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. It was decided that qualitative research was the most appropriate approach for this study, as it would capture information related to the experiences, beliefs and perspectives of teachers and centre managers. A qualitative research design was therefore viewed as relevant to answering the research questions (see end of Chapter Two) as it is a useful approach when wishing to explore and investigate participants' personal experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). Qualitative research enables the researcher to consider various possibilities and individual perspectives, rather than being constrained to a statistical approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). A qualitative approach can also use narration to communicate research insights gleamed from individuals in the context of their everyday practice and actions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

The qualitative design of the present study focused on teachers' and managers' individual perceptions, meaning-making and values related to risk-taking in the outdoor early childhood environment. In gathering participants' views on the topic

under investigation, open-ended questioning was used, and subsequently interpretation of the findings was informed by the researcher's own experiences (Creswell, 2014).

As a qualitative researcher, I was guided by a constructivist approach to support me in seeking out early childhood teachers' and managers' individual meanings and perspectives in the context in which they work. Constructivism supports qualitative research through utilising open-ended questions that ensure participants can share their opinions and understandings (Creswell, 2014). Constructivists therefore believe that the resulting "concepts and theories are *constructed* by researchers out of stories that are constructed by research participants who are trying to explain and make sense out of their experiences and lives" (Corbin & Strauss, 2015, p. 26).

3.2   Research Design and tools

This research study used a two-phase qualitative approach, beginning with an open-ended questionnaire distributed to early childhood teachers followed by key informant interviews with centre managers/head teachers.

It will now be explained how these tools enabled the researcher to understand more about the factors that influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment.

3.2.1   Open-ended questionnaire

Open-ended questionnaires are helpful for gathering data from a large number of respondents as they offer more scope for participants to elaborate on their answers (Mutch, 2013). An open-ended questionnaire was selected to elicit information from teachers in the sector (see Appendix One), in order to gain depth of detail. The questionnaire was designed as open-ended, as it is suggested by Corbin and Strauss that participants presented with a structured questionnaire are more inclined to only answer the questions being asked (2008), which may limit the rich qualitative data that gives more depth of understanding. The questionnaire was designed as an online

qualitative tool to gather insights about teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to risk-taking. An online administration of the questionnaire was the preferred method, due to ease of access and speed of delivery, to a considerable number of potential participants (Knussen & McFadyen, 2010).

The qualitative questionnaire employed open-ended questions and included visual media for photo-elicitation. Photo-elicitation was embedded as a data gathering tool within the questionnaire as photographs are essentially open to interpretation, allowing multiple meanings to emerge through the viewing process (Schwartz, 1989). Photo-elicitation was employed as a provocation with subsequent questions based on the photograph (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). This further enabled the collection of rich data, to gain a deep understanding of how individuals interpret children's risk-taking (Mutch, 2013).

The questionnaire was constructed using the online platform, Survey Monkey, and included 18 questions (see Appendix One). The first five questions were general questions, aimed at gathering information about the demographic details of the participants. These questions included, gender, age range, qualification and type of early childhood setting currently working in.

The next section of the questionnaire focused on risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment and contained 11 questions. The first question in this section explored teachers' understanding of safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment and asked teachers what safe risk-taking in the outdoors meant to them. Question two offered the following definition of safe risk-taking: "Safe risk-taking is defined as an experience that challenges children's capabilities, promotes a platform for scaffolding the child's current skill level, provides a sense of excitement and/or trepidation and includes possible accidental consequences, such as injury." It then asked participants, in light of this definition, to provide some examples of safe risk-taking that might take place in the outdoor environment of their early childhood setting. Question three asked teachers to outline any acts/experiences that they would deem to constitute unsafe risk-taking in the outdoors, while question four asked

what teachers saw were the benefits of providing opportunities for safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Question five focused on the impact of media, by asking teachers whether recent media coverage of significant incidents in the outdoor environment of early childhood centres had influenced their beliefs and practices around risk-taking and if so, how. Question six focused on the enablers and barriers to supporting safe risk-taking, by asking participants what factors they believed supported or inhibited them to provide safe risk-taking opportunities for children in the outdoors. Question seven asked teachers to describe a time when they felt they were over-protective of a child/children and limited safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, and to elaborate on what influenced their decisions in their described situation. Question eight explored teachers' perceptions of unsafe risk-taking by asking participants to describe a time when they felt that an experience in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre became unsafe, and their subsequent response to that situation. Question nine explored the impact of regulatory requirements by asking teachers to answer yes/no as to whether the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* and other regulatory requirements influenced the way in which they provided safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre. A comment box was provided so that participants could elaborate more. Question ten explored teaching strategies and practices by asking teachers to rate their use of a range of strategies and practices using the following scale: never, rarely, sometimes, very often and always. Finally, question eleven asked teachers to rate their level of agreement for a total of seven statements related to safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting, using the following scale: strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree and strongly agree.

The final section of the questionnaire focused on an examination of outdoor environments. This section included a photograph of an outdoor environment (see Figure 4.1, p. 40) and asked two questions in relation to the image: 1a) what opportunities do teachers see in the environment depicted in the image for children to engage in safe risk-taking and, 1b) what concerns might teachers have about the environment depicted in the image in relation to safe risk-taking. Finally, the closing

question asked teachers for any further comments they would like to make in relation to risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment.

"Designing a good questionnaire can be a skilled and challenging technical activity" (Mutch, 2013, p. 114); therefore, the questionnaire underwent an iterative process of development and testing prior to administration with participating teachers. The research questions were continuously referred to during the design stage to ensure the questionnaire remained aimed at specifically answering the research questions. The questionnaire was designed in consultation with research supervisors and piloted with those working in ECE and subsequently refined. Key changes made from the piloted questionnaire included adding a rating scale to a question that asked teachers what teaching strategies they use in the outdoor environment and providing examples of the teaching strategies. Furthermore, two questions were merged together to make one that focused on what factors support or inhibit teachers' practices. Mutch (2013) confirms that trialling a questionnaire before dissemination to research participants helps to ensure clarity of questions and avoids questions being ambiguous.

3.2.1.1   Dissemination of the questionnaire

A private email address set up solely for the purpose of research was used to email ECE and care services, inviting teachers to participate in the study. This initial email included a clear statement surrounding ethics and the expectations and rights of participants (see Section 3.6 and Appendix Two). Within the Ōtautahi region, there were 335 early childhood centres that were invited to participate. A proportion of these centres fell under an umbrella organisation, sharing the same licensee, hence the same email contact. Using details provided in the publically available database; Education Counts, a total of 238 emails were sent either directly to individual centres or to a licensee/contact person acting for multiple centres. The questionnaire was open to participants from the start of April until the beginning of May 2017. A total of 40 early childhood teachers submitted a completed questionnaire.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview

For this study, interviews were semi-structured and aimed at eliciting a management perspective on factors that influence teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices in relation to supporting children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Semi-structured interviews are defined as interviews which include some topics that have been chosen based on the literature, however the presentation of the topics is not structured (Corbin & Strauss, 2015). These interviews utilised open-ended questions to ensure a rich conversation could unfold (see Appendix Three). Semi-structured interviews allow the interviewer to support the participant by conversing as opposed to questioning (Drever, 2003). The questions were selected for their flexibility and suitability for a small-scale research study.

The interview utilised questions focused around key pedagogy and practices related to risk-taking in the outdoors noted in the literature. Broad questions were developed, along with possible prompts, to allow the interview to be flexible and responsive. The interview was designed in consultation with two research supervisors and was peer reviewed by an ex colleague working in the early childhood industry. Interviews were held individually and participants were offered the opportunity to meet face to face or by telephone; since participation could be affected by distance and work commitments (Mutch, 2013). However, in the end, all three interviews were held face to face. Two interviews were held at the participant's early childhood service, while one was held at a private location. Interviews took approximately one hour each, were audio recorded and then transcribed. For the full interview format, please see Appendix Three.

3.2.2.1 *Implementation of the interview*

A purposive sample was used for this phase, as I approached centre managers that I knew through my own professional connections, with the intent of finding participants from appropriate and diverse settings. Potential centre managers were contacted initially via a phone call to gauge interest and then a follow up email was sent if the centre and centre manager/supervisor was willing to find out more and consider participating. If potential participants confirmed willingness to participate, a further

email was sent outlining the study, including an information sheet (see Appendix Five) and consent form (see Appendix Six). Upon receiving completed consent forms, interview times and procedures were confirmed with individual participants. Face to face interviews were set and conducted with all three centre managers.

3.3 Participants

The following section outlines information about the study participants for both phases of the research.

3.3.1 Questionnaire participants

The potential participants invited to complete the questionnaire were early childhood teachers who were currently working in a licensed, teacher led, early childhood service. These teachers were all working in the province of Canterbury, South Island of New Zealand. The region of Canterbury was chosen due to the uniqueness of access to a range of early childhood settings, such as city services and rural services, potentially unavailable in other New Zealand provinces.

The Education Counts database was accessed for retrieval of openly accessible information regarding ECE and care services within the Canterbury region of New Zealand (New Zealand Government, 2016). A total of 335 education and care services, within the Canterbury region were listed on the database. The aim for the present study was to ensure a wide variety of perspectives, while also ensuring data analysis would be manageable as the questionnaire was qualitative in nature. As there were only 335 eligible centres listed in the Canterbury region, all centres in the region were invited to participate in the study. The Education Counts website offers public information regarding contact information for licensed early childhood services. All centres listed in the Canterbury area were sent an e-mail inviting them to participate in the study.

The invitation to participate in the study was open to all teachers working with children aged 3-5 in the identified centres, including unqualified teachers, and teachers

holding a recognised initial teacher education qualification. Forty early childhood teachers, participated in the questionnaire. All 40 participants' responses were included in the study as all participants completed the majority of the questions, although some chose to skip questions that required an example, which they may not have been able to provide.

3.3.2   Interview Participants

To access the views of ECE managers on safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, key informant interviews were employed. Three ECE service managers, one from each of the three differing types of services, a Kindergarten, a privately-owned service and a family and community based service, were approached to participate. The potential participants for the key informant interviews were selected intentionally, via purposive sampling (Mutch, 2013). The prerequisite for selection was that services catered for children aged 3-5 years old, provided ample access to the outdoors, operated at least 6 hours per day, and were on a 3-4 year review cycle with the Education Review Office (ERO) (Education Review Office, 2013). All ECE service managers were qualified, with a minimum of a Diploma of Teaching (ECE), and held a full teacher registration. Due to the researchers' prior role in ECE tertiary provision, she had considerable knowledge in relation to potential centres within New Zealand. This knowledge guided the identification of nine possible services to contact for participation (i.e., 3 for each service type). Within each service type, centres were randomly ordered and contacted for possible participation. The first three (one from each service type) to reply with interest and complete the applicable consent forms, were accepted for the study. Participants were a centre director/owner operator from a private setting, a head teacher from a Kindergarten and the third participant, a head teacher from a family and community based service. All three managers/head teachers were from centres within Ōtautahi.

3.4   Data analysis

Thematic coding suits qualitative analysis as it enables the researcher to form categories grounded in the data (Mutch, 2013). For this reason, the two sets of data

(questionnaire and interview) were analysed via thematic analysis. These findings are outlined in the following chapter.

3.4.1 Open-ended questionnaire

Questionnaire data was exported from Survey Monkey into both a pdf and an excel spread sheet. Both formats included all the data from the questionnaire. The excel spread sheet was set up with different tabs for each question and exported for ease of thematic coding. The raw data from each question was systematically examined for key concepts. During this first phase of analysis, as outlined by Corbin and Strauss, "there is always the concern: "Am I interpreting the data correctly?" Am I being true to the data?" (2015, p. 66). To alleviate this concern, key concepts emerging from the first question were looked at in consultation with research supervisors and coded. The initial coding process highlighted significant statements that were of interest, or reoccurring concepts. As recommended by Mutch (2013), the data was reiteratively examined to look for patterns emerging from the coding to subsequently develop into themes. Themes were highlighted on the exported excel document utilising the different coloured highlighting options available with this software.

During the analysis, relevant key quotes related to emerging themes were also highlighted, but also those in contradiction of the majority findings.

3.4.2 Semi-structured Interview

The interview transcripts were created as Microsoft word documents and stored as one file for thematic analysis. As with the questionnaire, a thematic approach was used to analyse the data from the interviews. Data was analysed and themes emerging from the data and in relation to relevant literature were hand-written on the right margin of the word document. The data was revisited many times, enabling summarising and subsequent pulling together of key themes (Punch, 2009). As with the questionnaire, key comments were highlighted. Many of the responses from participants traversed themes.

3.5   Validity

Validity, as it relates to qualitative research, means ensuring that the research is trustworthy and credible (Mutch, 2013). As an internal validity assurance, the key informant interviewee responses were audio-recorded and subsequently transcribed. The questionnaire was piloted so that feedback could be sought regarding the clarity of the questions, the success of the online platform and administration aspects of the questionnaire.   The use of dual data collection methods (questionnaire and interview) ensured triangulation of data. In triangulation of data both sets of data are brought together during analysis (Punch, 2009). Both sets of data were brought together in the discussion chapter.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

To ensure that participants or the researcher were not subjected to any harm, Massey University protocols were followed with regards to ethical considerations (Massey University, 2015). The Massey University screening questionnaire was completed online, indicating that a low risk ethics application would be appropriate for this study. The screening questionnaire was submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) and was returned with approval, as low risk, on October 9th 2016 (see Appendix Four). The nature off the study was such that full disclosure was possible, and there was limited potential for harm. The main ethical issues requiring consideration in this study were, gaining access to participants for the online questionnaire, gaining consent for participants completing the informant interview, or the online questionnaire, anonymity of participants and the use of photo elicitation (Prosser & Loxley, 2008). How these issues were handled is detailed below.

Information about the early childhood centres approached to participate in the online questionnaire was openly available via Education Counts, a website offered by the New Zealand Government. The confidentiality of the participants completing the questionnaire was protected as the questionnaire was anonymous and participants' identity was unknown to the researcher. Additionally, Survey Monkey was set up to ensure that it did not store the participants IP address in the questionnaire results

(Knussen & McFadyen, 2010). Participation was voluntary and all participants in the questionnaire responded to an invitation email to participate (see Appendix Two).

The identity of the three key informant interviewees was known to the researcher. Although the nature of the questions were not expected to subject the participants to any pain, stress, fatigue, emotional distress, embarrassment, cultural dissonance or exploitation (MUHEC, 2016), no identifying information has been included in this study for the three key informant interviewees. As outlined by Corbin and Strauss (2015), confidentiality of participants is essential, therefore pseudonyms were used for the interview participants throughout the research to ensure participant anonymity was upheld. The key informant interviewees were also provided with an information sheet (see Appendix Five) and consent form (see Appendix Six) to ensure they were duly informed about the study and were able to give voluntary and informed consent to participate.

An email account was specifically set up so that the key informant participants could return any relevant information (such as consent forms) and be reassured that this would not be accessed by anyone other than the researcher, as recommended by Mutch (2013).

As Canterbury was selected as a chosen area for this research study, it was important to acknowledge the relationships within ECE services throughout this community. This necessitates the need to take care with ensuring participants anonymity is not disclosed through any identifying features, either of the individual or the setting itself.

Summary

This qualitative research study utilised key informant interviews with early childhood service managers and an online questionnaire with early childhood teachers in the province of Canterbury in New Zealand to gather qualitative data. The questions for the interviews and the questionnaires were refined in consultation with research supervisors, peer reviewers and a pilot questionnaire. Ethical responsibilities were maintained throughout the entire research process and respondents' anonymity was

preserved. The following chapter now outlines the data collected across the two phases of the study.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

The findings reported in this chapter are presented in relation to the two phases of this study. In the first phase, early childhood teachers teaching within the Canterbury district of New Zealand were invited to participate in an online questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted predominately of open ended questions, providing the opportunity to capture a range of teachers' perspectives relating to safe risk-taking. These findings were analysed and collated on a thematic basis, to highlight those ideas most frequently mentioned by teachers. A second set of data was collected from three key informants via interviews. The key informants were Centre Managers or Head Teachers working in a management role within an early childhood setting in the Canterbury region. Findings from this phase are also presented according to key emerging themes.

The first section of this chapter provides information about the participants of the study. Following this, results are reported in sections based on themes represented within the data. The findings for each section are reported using the same structure, results from the questionnaire and then results from the interview, to allow for comparison between the two data sets.

4.1 Participant information

The questionnaire was distributed to 335 early childhood centres, and a total of 40 teachers chose to respond. The demographic data collected in the questionnaire (see Table 4.1) indicated that 29.73% of respondents held an Undergraduate Diploma Qualification, while 48.65% held a Bachelor's Degree. The remaining participants held a Graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE) (13.51%) or a Bachelor of Teaching (Primary/Secondary) (8.11%). Two teachers were currently studying towards an initial teacher education qualification. All respondents identified as female. This reflects the predominance within Aotearoa of female early childhood teachers in ECE.

Table 4.1   Questionnaire respondents: Demographic Information

		% of Respondents
Qualification	Undergraduate diploma qualification	29.73%
	Bachelor degree	48.65%
	Graduate Diploma of Teaching	13.51%
	Bachelor of Teaching (Primary/Secondary)	8.11%
Gender	Female	100.00%
	Male	0.00%
Age of teachers	Under 25	5.00%
	25-34	20.00%
	35-44	27.50%
	45-55	35.00%
	Over 55	12.50%
Type of early childhood service	Privately-owned education and care centre	56.41%
	Community-based education and care centre	35.90%
	Public Kindergarten	2.56%
	Rudolf Steiner Kindergarten or Education and care centre run by a charity	5.13%

4.2   Definitions/descriptions of safe and unsafe risk-taking

Participants in the questionnaire were asked to explain their understanding of the concept of safe risk-taking in the outdoor early childhood environment, and provide examples of safe risk-taking within a specific outdoor environment. Almost half of the participants (42.5%), indicated that safe risk-taking was about providing opportunities for exploration. For example, Participant 15, commented that safe risk-taking is "giving children freedom to explore their environment without intervention from an adult. This may mean undertaking something that is potentially dangerous but will never be likely to result in serious injury" (Questionnaire, Q6).

While exploration was viewed as critical, some teachers identified that this freedom must be in the context of a safe environment and sufficient space. Teachers defined safe risk-taking in a range of ways, with just over one quarter of participants (27.5%) commenting that a safe environment was a fundamental component of safe risk-taking. This is demonstrated in the response of Participant 20, who defined safe risk-

taking as "providing an environment which minimises serious risks (e.g using mats) but challenges children and allows them to take risks" (Questionnaire, Q6).

To ensure shared understanding of the term safe risk-taking, after seeking the participant's views, the following definition was provided in the questionnaire: '*Safe risk-taking is defined as an experience that challenges children's capabilities, promotes a platform for scaffolding the child's current skill level, provides a sense of excitement and/or trepidation and includes possible accidental consequences, such as injury*'. Based on this definition, participants were then asked to provide some examples of safe risk-taking that take place in their outdoor environment. Common responses included jumping, climbing, obstacle courses and the use of real life tools, all of which are common experiences in early childhood settings. As outlined in Table 4.2, 'jumping from heights' was the most common example of risk-taking noted by participants. Examples included "jumping off our obstacle courses i.e. the big cable wheel" (Questionnaire, Q7) and "children jumping from metre high boxes on to mats [and] choosing to fall from monkey bars or single bars" (Questionnaire, Q7).

Table 4.2   Perceptions of safe risk-taking in the outdoors

Examples of safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment	Number of participants
Jumping from heights	17
Climbing	14
Tree climbing	12
Obstacle course	12
Bikes	9
Real life tools	9
Monkey bars	8
Swinging	8
Big boxes	7
Balancing	6
Rope swings	6
Ramps for bikes	5
Heights	4
Sliding	4
Ladders	4
Climbing frames	4
Hanging upside down	4
Moveable equipment	3
Jumping	3
Ropes	3
Loose parts	2
Mud pit	2
Climbing wall	2

The final item in the questionnaire included an image (Figure 4.1) to elicit participants' thoughts around the safe risk-taking opportunities present within a specific early childhood environment. Participants were asked to comment on what opportunities they saw in the environment presented in the image, for children to engage in safe risk-taking.

Figure 4.1   Outdoor environment

(Terreni & Pairman, n.d., p. 12)

Results shown in Table 4.3 indicate that participants identified multiple opportunities for safe risk-taking, even in this one image. The most frequent response (24/38) found climbing the tyres to be the main opportunity present, although the opportunities for balancing and sliding were also noted. Participant 21 wrote that an opportunity

present within the environment depicted in the image was "climbing from tyre-to-tyre (testing balance), learning about speed" (Questionnaire, Q17). Elements of risk related to height and speed were themes that were also identified: "climbing, jumping, clambering, stepping, balancing, crossing (all at height), speed" (Questionnaire, Q18).

Table 4.3   Opportunities for safe risk-taking presented within Figure 4.1

Opportunities	Number of participants
Climbing tyres	24
Balancing	15
Swing bridge	13
Sliding	13
Stepping posts	11
Climbing	10
Climbing slide	7
Steep/fast slide	5
Playing together	4
Climbing tree	4
Speed	3
Height	3
Sliding from height	2
Spatial awareness	2

As in the questionnaire, the three key informants who were interviewed were also asked to provide a definition/description of safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Two participants provided a definition that focused on children being able to challenge themselves, for example, Jane commented that risk-taking is "anything that pushes a child outside what they feel comfortable with or what they are familiar with that just pushes them just that little bit further."

Whilst not directly disagreeing with the idea that safe risk-taking involves children challenging themselves, Jo took a more conservative view: "Risk-taking for me, in my opinion, would be that it's activities that have the potential to be harmful or dangerous and they may result in a positive or a negative outcome."

Participants were then asked what acts/experiences they would deem as unsafe risk-taking in the outdoor environment. As indicated in Table 4.4, over a quarter of questionnaire participants (11/40) indicated that unsafe risk-taking was related to a

lack of supervision, for example "where children are not supervised by teachers or where teachers are not aware of what children are doing" (Questionnaire, Q8).

Table 4.4   Perceptions of unsafe risk-taking in the outdoors environment

Unsafe risk-taking in the outdoors	Number of participants
Lack of supervision	11
Height without adequate soft-fall	9
Child's level of development	6
Extreme height	5
Bad planning	4
Inappropriate equipment	4
Lack of teacher awareness	3
Not implementing health and safety checks	2

A further theme to emerge was the need to take into account the *child's level of development*. Some participants felt that examples of unsafe risk-taking were linked to the individual child's level of development: "anything beyond a child's ability and capabilities - this differs for each child and what is unsafe for one is not unsafe for another due to abilities and skills" (Questionnaire, Q8).

Referring to Figure 4.1, participants were asked to comment on any concerns they may have with regards to safe risk-taking within the environment depicted in the image. As indicated in Table 4.5, falling was the main concern outlined by ten participants (10/38). One participant stated that they were concerned for "children slipping and falling down tyres" (Questionnaire, Q18). One participant also saw the tyres as a concern commenting that there was "irregular spacing between tyres when climbing" (Questionnaire, Q18).

Table 4.5   Concerns for safe risk-taking presented within Figure 4.1

Concerns	Number of participants
Falling	10
Gradient of slide and lack of soft-fall	7
No safety rails	4
Supervision/visibility	3
Condition of slide	3
Gap between slides	3

The slides were also noted as a concern within this environment, in particular the condition of the slide, the gradient of the slide, the lack of soft-fall, and the gap between the slides. Some participants were concerned by the overall condition of the slide and the maintenance and upkeep of this specific piece of equipment. This was noted by three participants, with one participant commenting that "the slide looks in disrepair" (Questionnaire, Q18). Also of concern was the gradient of the slide and the lack of support or soft-fall at the end of the slide. This was identified by a small number of participants (7/38). One participant wrote: "the steep incline of the slide and what appears to be a significant drop from the bottom of the slide to the ground below … could cause injury to children" (Questionnaire, Q18).

A concept raised by the centre leaders, but not teachers, was that unsafe risk-taking in the outdoors can occur when you don't know the children well. Two of the key informants commented that it is important to have an awareness of individual children's capabilities in order to guide decision-making. Whilst they both agreed that knowing the children's capabilities is important with regards to safe risk-taking, they each provided a different rationale for this. Jane reflected on the importance of protecting the children if she wasn't yet sure of their abilities; for example, when a child is "about to jump out of that tree and I actually don't know whether you are capable of doing that." Anne's view suggests she was aiming at supporting the child's desire for challenge whilst being mindful of safety, even if she wasn't yet sure of the child's capabilities.

4.3   Benefits of engaging in safe risk-taking

Questionnaire and interview participants were asked for their views on the benefits of engaging in safe risk-taking. Results indicated that there are a wide range of benefits associated with safe risk-taking in the outdoors, and that safe risk-taking was generally viewed positively in the right context.

Safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting was seen by participants as resulting in many associated benefits for children. As indicated in Table 4.6 over a quarter of participants (13/40) believed that a benefit for children who

engage in risk-taking is gaining *confidence* in their own skills, abilities, understanding of limits and problem-solving. One participant wrote: "Children develop confidence and experience in knowing their limits and sometimes can push past these … to develop to the next level" (Questionnaire, Q9).

Table 4.6   Benefits of safe risk-taking

Benefits	Number of participants
Confidence	13
Learn own limits	11
Problem solving	10
Risk-management	10
Agency	10
Learning to challenge capabilities	9
Working with others	8
Extends learning	7
Self esteem	6
Sense of achievement	5
Learning how their body works	5
Resilience	3
Holistic development	2
Perseverance	2
Exploration	2
Empowerment	2

The development of *agency* was also evident across teachers' responses as an important benefit of risk-taking: "Safe risk-taking allows the children to take responsibility for their actions by assessing the situation, by considering their capabilities, by problem-solving a safe way to attempt the challenge and to have a sense of achievement of overcoming their initial fear and/or reluctance" (Questionnaire, Q9). Agency, as viewed by the participants, focused on children having control and the ability to make decisions and solve problems within their exploration, supporting a growing resilience. Ten respondents (10/40) commented on agency as a benefit of engaging in safe risk-taking outdoors.

Another noted benefit was that safe risk-taking in the outdoors was seen to contribute towards children learning how to effectively manage their own risk-taking. Comments indicate that participants (10/40) viewed *risk-management* as a key benefit of

promoting safe risk-taking in the outdoors for children aged 3-5. "Children learn about risks and also consequences. Allows them the basic foundation to know that they can hurt themselves but also builds confidence and skills to minimise this" (Questionnaire, Q9).

The idea above was further developed by one participant who believed that exposure to safe risk-taking in the outdoors could not only support children to manage their own risk, but could also be transferable to other areas of life: "Risky play gives children the opportunity to extend their limits and learn life skills. Success and failure provide children with the motivation to try again and work out different ways of doing things" (Questionnaire, Q9). Another participant believed that if children were given opportunities to independently engage in safe risk-taking in the outdoors in their formative years, then they would develop skills to support them in their later years: "children that are allowed to fully explore in childhood are known to be better at setting own boundaries and recognising own limitations later in life" (Questionnaire, Q9).

The theme of risk-management was reiterated by all the key informant participants. Interviewees all felt that children needed to be exposed to opportunities to engage in safe risk-taking in order to develop and refine skills needed to support them to successfully manage and navigate these risks. For example, Anne commented "I think it just nurtures problem solving, creativity, you know, their imagination, questioning, investigating, resourcefulness, resilience."

The concept of risk-management was further acknowledged by Jo who noted that the lack of opportunities for children to manage their own risk could in fact lead to inappropriate risk-taking. She believed that children needed to be exposed to risk to learn how to successfully manage risk themselves. She felt that if children weren't given these opportunities then they would seek out risky play above their capabilities or a risk deemed to be inappropriate. "I think it can assist children in learning how to manage risk. …Some children are just like, got to push it a little bit further and if you

don't let them do that then I just think… it then leads to perhaps inappropriate risk-taking" (Jo).

It was interesting to note how leaders perceived that providing opportunities for children to manage their own safe risk-taking could be catered for within an early childhood setting. Jane provided several examples of how children were provided with opportunities to set up their own learning experiences that would foster their engagement in safe risk-taking. It was evident that children were aware of the availability of resources they could use to ensure that the risk was made safe. In this environment children were encouraged to manage their own risks, captured in the following example:

> We have … lots of different equipment that they can do different things with, that they can set up for themselves and manage for themselves and take their own risks. … They often will call out: 'I need a mat cos I wanna jump off here,' or 'I wanna do tumbles' (Jane).

Alongside the benefit of risk-management, two of the key informants also reiterated that agency was a key benefit of engaging in safe risk-taking. This theme of agency aligns with the early childhood curriculum as outlined by Jane:

> Well, … Te Whāriki talks about children … gaining confidence and …
> yeah, making their own decisions and their own choices. …I often say
> to my students don't give them a choice if there's no choice, but when
> there is a lot of choice give them lots of choice (Jane).

This was also affirmed by Anne who believed that it is important to trust children and let them make choices; if children are given a level of agency they would make their own choices and would cease to engage in an activity if they felt unsafe:

> It's about the trust that we instil in them and that's to trust themselves
> and listen to their own bodies and hearts and minds about … if they're
> going to take a risk. If you just sit back and watch … if you give them a
> choice … when they get to a certain point they usually stop if they're
> not ready (Anne).

4.4   Media and safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment

In 2016, within ten days of each other, the media reported on two incidents where children were either injured, or died in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting in New Zealand. To determine the influence of such cases, participants were asked to identify whether recent media coverage of such significant incidents had influenced their beliefs and practices around risk-taking in the outdoor environment. As illustrated in Figure 4.2, the questionnaire results show that, overall, the majority of participants indicated that the media coverage of these incidents had not had any impact on their beliefs and practices (80%).

Figure 4.2   Influence of recent media coverage
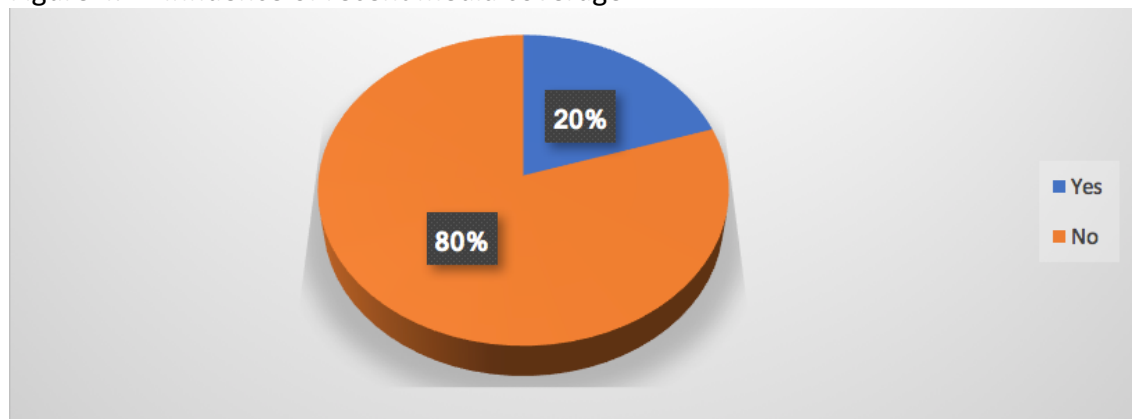
Whilst 80% of questionnaire participants indicated that the media had not influenced their beliefs and practices, comments provided suggest that the cases did have some bearing on practice. One participant noted that "a tree falling down in the preschool in the North Island is not something anyone could foresee but I have checked the tress [sic] in our outside environment" (Questionnaire, Q10). Findings suggest that such incidents served to heighten awareness of possible risk; for example, "yes very aware of ropes in the environment" (Questionnaire, Q10), while another commented that the impact had resulted in a "review of our workplace health and safety practices" (Questionnaire, Q10). One participant also noted that the media has influenced parent concerns about risk: "A small amount of negativity from parents often due to media"

(Questionnaire, Q11) and that these views had impacted negatively on her ability to provide risk-taking opportunities.

All three key informants agreed that recent significant incidents reported in the media had an impact within their setting in the immediate time thereafter, as highlighted in the following example shared by Jo:

> Yeah it did. I guess the one that stood out for me was the incident with the wee guy and rope, … up north. …At the time, on our fort we were using ropes. …We talked to the teachers … and they agreed that maybe we should just, in light of what had happened, take it down and encourage the children to perhaps use the ropes in a different way (Jo).

Jane drew on another incident in the media where a tree had fallen, landing on, and injuring children, commenting that:

> Recently, when a tree fell down, the [Kindergarten] Association sent out this email saying, 'Can you please check all your trees there?' And we've had a cabbage tree that a big branch had come down in the holidays in a big storm, and a couple of years ago the guy said 'Oh it's got a bit of a crack in that cabbage tree. I'd keep my eye on that if I was you.' So, as soon as I heard that, I went out and I checked and I thought 'Oh, can I see a crack there or not,' so I got the Association to come over and have a look and they said it actually needs to go to the arborist, and so they took out our tree (Jane).

4.5   Impact of Legislation and Regulations

As noted in Chapter 2, ECE within New Zealand is mandated by a range of legislative and regulatory requirements. Legislation and regulatory requirements are put in place to support and guide teachers' enactment of the curriculum. Questionnaire participants were asked to indicate whether the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations, 2008* and other regulatory requirements influenced the way in which they provide safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment. As shown in Figure 4.3, almost three quarters of participants (74%) noted that regulatory requirements do

influence the way in which they provide safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment.

Figure 4.3   Influence of the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, and other regulatory requirements
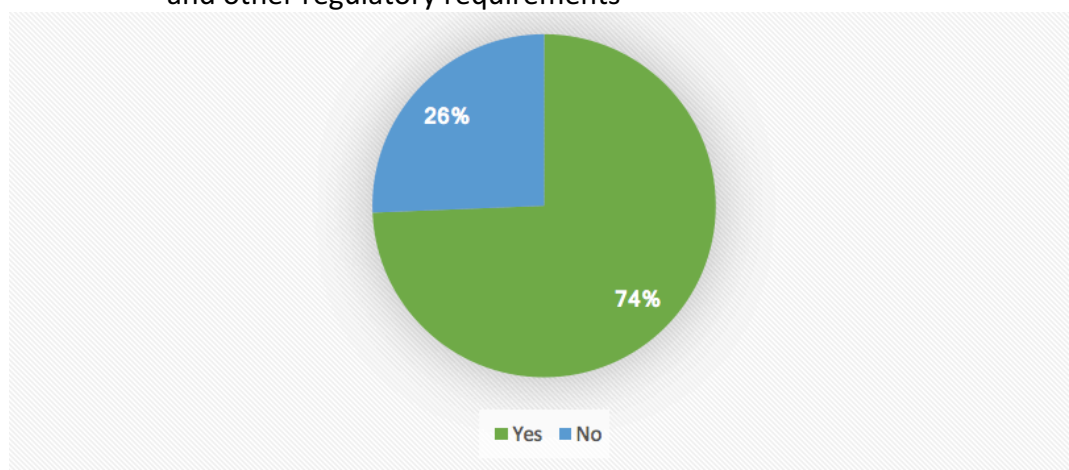
The importance of *accountability* was frequently noted by teachers, with regulatory requirements seen to play an important role, as noted by one respondent: "When the Ministry visited our centre they got me to sign an attestation form to say that the centre provides safe structures and equipment for the children to use as I think they were surprised [by] the risks that we offered to the children" (Questionnaire, Q14). This sense of caution was affirmed by participant 33, who stated that "the rules and accountability are quite stringent. But there is a lot to be said for common sense, correct ratios and adequate supervision" (Questionnaire, Q14). Regulations were also viewed as a deterrent to safe risk-taking: "the regulations inhibit as children lose the ability to self-assess risk as environments have already defined parameters" (Questionnaire, Q11).

When asked about whether regulatory requirements influence the way in which they as centre leaders provided safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoors, participants' views were divided. One participant was strong in her view that regulatory requirements were there to protect teachers and children and should be strictly adhered to. When discussing how the regulations impacted on the build and operation of a new centre she commented:

> I think it depends on… who from the Ministry of Education will come out to
> licence you, because they might have their areas of expertise or areas that they

feel really passionate about. It could be health and safety, it could be your

policies or it could be the outdoor area (Jo).

In contrast, the other two participants viewed the regulations as being there to guide

practice and govern decision making, but at the same time valued being flexible in

their application. Anne commented, "they're there, they're a guideline and we can

manipulate slightly. For the children's benefit" (Anne), while similarly Jane indicated

that:

We kind of push that a little bit so … the regs say it's [safety mat] gotta be around

each piece of equipment, but if they're joined it doesn't have to be; so, if we've

got two things quite close together I'd say, put a plank … and a couple of mats

and you're right you're meeting the regs now (Jane).

4.6   Enabling safe risk-taking

When questionnaire participants were asked to outline any key factors that support

their ability to provide safe risk-taking opportunities, there were two clear themes that

emerged: *good staff to children ratios* and *team work*. *Good staff to children ratios*

were highlighted as a key factor, in that they allowed for effective supervision and

teacher participation in specific activities: "Enough staff for the outside ratio so that a

teacher can extend on a risk-taking activity without having to try and supervise all the

area" (Questionnaire, Q11).

The second theme to emerge was *team work*. Four participants felt that effective

team work was a critical factor in supporting their ability to promote safe risk-taking

opportunities within the outdoor environment: "We work so well as a team there are

no limits to what we can provide for children in terms of well managed risk-taking"

(Questionnaire, Q11). Furthermore, the comment that "teachers who work as a team,

who know the benefits or challenges, allow children to make their own choices and

talk to them of what they want" (Questionnaire, Q9), suggested that team work was

critical in facilitating the potential benefits identified above. However, shared team

expectations were essential to negotiate, as one teacher noted they had been

overprotective of children with regard to risk because of "different opinions within the team, [and] needing to accommodate this" (Questionnaire, Q12).

All three key informants confirmed that team work was an essential key factor in supporting teachers to provide children with safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoors. Jo highlighted team work in relation to having shared values: "What helps with it [team work] is a shared value and understanding on the type of curriculum and opportunities we want to extend to children here" (Jo). Jane commented that risk-taking was promoted most often "when we have all our staff on board and we don't have relievers" (Jane), because the teachers knew the capabilities of each individual child. This was also captured by Anne who stated: "I think it's about not eliminating risks but managing the risk. Knowing the children, knowing their capabilities" (Anne).

Results from the interviews also identified that moveable or adaptable equipment was a supportive factor in providing safe risk-taking for children in the outdoors. "There's not a lot of fixed stuff there. Yeah, the platform is fixed, the swings are fixed and the tree of course is fixed; but all the rest is boxes and frames and stuff that we can move around" (Jane).

4.7   Inhibiting safe risk-taking

A range of factors can act as inhibitors to the provision of safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting. When questionnaire participants were asked what inhibited their ability to provide safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment, four key themes emerged: *teacher's attitudes, parents' attitudes, regulations and/or health and safety guidelines* and *management within their setting.* One theme to emerge, as identified by five participants (5/39) as shown in Table 4.7 was the significance of *teacher's attitudes.* These attitudes are influenced by their own prior experiences.

Table 4.7   Factors that inhibit safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment

Factors that inhibit safe risk-taking	Number of participants
Regulations/health and safety guidelines	6
Teachers' attitudes	5
Parents' attitudes	4
Management	3

As one teacher noted, "having a team that is on the same page would have to be the biggest factor. I have some teachers who think things are just too dangerous, whereas I'm a bit of thinking … "What's the worst that could happen?" (Questionnaire, Q11).

Four participants (4/39) also commented that *parents' attitudes* could be an inhibiting factor with regards to providing safe risk-taking opportunities. For example, one participant commented that practice can be inhibited by "the perception by parents and other teachers that something is unsafe that I see as risk-taking" (Questionnaire, Q11).

Some participants (6/39) viewed the *regulations and/or health and safety guidelines* as a hindrance with regards to providing safe risk-taking opportunities: "Unfortunately, the regulations have made it more difficult to offer challenging set-ups, particularly for those children who are more physically able" (Questionnaire, Q11).

Finally, a small number of participants (3/39) believed that *management within their setting* can inhibit their safe risk-taking practices: "Management can inhibit as they are increasingly safety conscious. Accidents can influence practice" (Questionnaire, Q11). These participants all agreed that management were concerned with children being injured within the centre and therefore on occasions limited the risk-taking opportunities able to be presented to children within the centre environment.

Key informants highlighted differing themes from those mentioned by questionnaire respondents. Themes to emerge from the interviews were; *previous injuries, bubble wrapping' children with additional needs* and *accountability.*

One key informant (Jo) commented that if *a child had been previously injured at their centre* this would impact on their ability to promote safe risk-taking opportunities and that she would be more inclined to stop this child taking safe risks and perhaps be more protective.

> The thing is we are providing a service and people are paying - you know, for that service – so, if they are saying I am feeling really concerned about the fact that Johnny slipped on the edge of the sandpit the other day and he got quite a nasty bruise, then you would be very mindful of the sandpit again (Jo).

However, Anne's view was that nothing inhibits her practice when it comes to allowing children opportunities to engage in safe risk-taking in the outdoors. When asked what inhibits her ability to promote safe risk-taking she stated: "I am just so trusting and I just, I always see the good and the positive rather than looking for - some people you know already will be like thinking about the hazards or what could go wrong" (Anne).

Another factor that can act as an inhibitor to providing safe risk-taking opportunities is '*bubble wrapping' children with additional needs*. Jane commented that at first, she had inhibited risk-taking opportunities to protect a child who had additional needs.

> We had a little boy at Kindergarten who had Down Syndrome and so he really didn't know the limits and boundaries of what he could and couldn't do. …We didn't want to be in a situation where he took risks, and so we … did [bubble wrap] initially … until we developed that idea of what he was capable of (Jane).

Linked to this, was the theme of a*ccountability*. Both Jane and Jo agreed that being in a management position brings with it a level of accountability. This could at times hinder their ability to provide safe risk-taking opportunities. For instance, Jane commented "I don't want him cracking his head open on my watch thank you" (Jane).

4.8 Teachers' beliefs about risk-taking

Teachers' beliefs about risk-taking contribute to the provision and support of safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoors. To gain an understanding of teachers' beliefs in relation to safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, participants were asked to rate their level of agreement to a range of statements using the following rating scale: strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, strongly agree. Results are presented in Table 4.8.

Table 4.8   Teachers' beliefs about safe risk-taking in the outdoors

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Giving children the opportunity to navigate risk-taking is an important part of early childhood experiences	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	15.00%	82.50%
Children's safety is more important than exposing children to risk	5.00%	37.50%	27.50%	22.50%	7.50%
Young children need the opportunity to explore and test themselves in safe risk-taking acts	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	23.08%	76.92%
My teaching colleagues and I share similar views in relation to safe risk-taking	0.00%	20.00%	15.00%	40.00%	25.00%
I am concerned that I am over-protective of children in relation to risk-taking in the outdoor environment	22.50%	60.00%	12.50%	2.50%	2.50%
I follow centre management guidelines and policies in relation to safe risk-taking	0.00%	0.00%	2.50%	47.50%	50.00%
I find it difficult to determine safe risk-taking versus non-safe risk-taking	35.00%	50.00%	7.50%	7.50%	0.00%

Note: Not all respondents answered all questions

Results from the questionnaire indicate that overall, participants believed safe risk-taking was an essential component of ECE within New Zealand. As indicated in Table 4.8, 82.50% (33/40 participants) strongly agreed that 'giving children the opportunity to navigate risk-taking is an important part of early childhood experiences.' In addition to this, 76.92% (30/39 participants) strongly agreed that 'young children need the opportunity to explore and test themselves in safe risk-taking acts.'

Findings from the key informant interviews indicate that teachers' beliefs and attitudes contribute to their ability to promote safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment. All three leaders indicated that they themselves are risk-takers and that this makes them more inclined to let children take safe risks. Jo commented: "I probably am a bit of a risk-taker when it comes to children's play, like I like to see them challenge themselves" (Jo).

Anne also identified herself as having strong beliefs about risk-taking, with a positive disposition towards promoting safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment. One example she discussed in detail was when the children were using swings/hammocks, made from large pieces of fabric held up with ropes. Even when this experience got risky, Anne continued to allow children to participate in this outdoor risk-taking activity.

> …So some of the children love to spin and so we've started getting
> children that spin, spin, spin, and then the next minute they're vomiting;
> but they just get off they take themselves to the sink; they vomit and they
> go back for some more (Anne).

The leaders also agreed that teachers' beliefs and attitudes impact on their ability to promote safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Jane commented about the differences in attitudes to risk-taking by stating that "I think maybe some of the other staff were a little bit more over-protective than I was" (Jane). This was affirmed in the swing/hammock example given above when Anne conversed with a staff member who wished to curtail or change the risk-taking practices occurring. Anne commented:

> It's interesting because a teacher said to me today, 'Aw I don't know, do
> you think we should take it down, or shall we tie it or like the children be
> timed?' I said, 'Well, every child is going to be different' … There's two
> children that do it all the time and once they've vomited once they don't
> do it again (Anne).

4.9 Teachers' practices and risk-taking

Early childhood teachers use a range of teaching strategies or practices when working with children. Of particular interest in this study was identifying if there were any specific teaching strategies or practices that were given more prominence in relation to safety and risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Participants were asked to use a rating scale (never, rarely, sometimes, very often, always) to indicate how frequently they used a range of teaching strategies or practices. As reflected in Table 4.9, almost all the participants (38/40) rated playground safety checks as an important aspect of practice that they always use to support safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood service.

Table 4.9   Participants use of teaching strategies

Teaching strategy	Rating				
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Scaffolding	1	0	4	13	22
Modelling	0	1	4	18	17
Instruction	1	2	14	12	11
Co-construction	0	2	13	15	10
Negotiation	0	4	13	15	8
Intervening	0	7	15	10	8
Directing	3	6	13	8	10
Supervising	0	1	1	13	25
Encouraging	0	0	0	15	25
Supporting	0	1	8	14	16
Playground safety checks	0	0	1	1	38
Communicating	0	6	4	12	18
Intentional provision of resources	0	0	5	18	17
Intentional planning of the environment	0	2	5	16	17

The influence of health and safety practices was also reflected when participants were asked if the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, and other regulatory requirements influence their practice in this area. One participant wrote that an "awareness of the regs influences daily teaching practice" (Questionnaire, Q14). In comparison, another participant stated that they only sometimes carry out health and safety checks.

Centre leaders agreed with the teacher participants that *playground safety checks* were an important aspect of teaching practice to support safe risk-taking. A key concept highlighted by Anne was the fundamental importance of knowing the outdoor environment and any potential hazards present. She noted that if you know the outdoor environment well, then there should be no need to restrict safe risk-taking opportunities. "We know this environment really intimately … and we know the children. It's not about eliminating the risks, it's managing the risks" (Anne).

While the importance of physically checking the outdoor environment was a practice held in high regard, so too was that of *fostering reflective thinking*. Throughout all three interviews, examples were provided that focused on the use of questioning to foster reflective thinking about the risk-taking opportunities and safe practices. As the key informants were in leadership roles, encouraging reflective thinking was a way of empowering and mentoring staff with regards to safe risk-taking practices. This was effectively captured by one participant who commented:

> If I think something is a little bit risky I might say "how are we going to manage this?" Maybe that might be a little bit too high, maybe we could just move it over that way two feet or … you know had you thought about what happens if? (Jane).

A final theme to emerge from the key informant interviews was the practice of *intentional teaching* to safeguard children engaging in acts of risk-taking. This practice focused on supporting children's knowledge and skills in relation to a range of concepts that would help keep them safe. As Anne described:

> Our children … might start to want to rearrange it [the outdoor environment] how they want it, so again we talk to the children. I see that you're wanting to… let's have a look how we can make it safe for everybody (Anne).

4.10   The role of leadership in safe risk-taking in the outdoors

Key informants were recruited to elicit a management view of safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood environment. These views were sought to

provide a differing perspective than those in a teaching role. This section outlines some of the specific findings to come from a management perspective.

Centre managers or head teachers have different expectations attributed to their role in comparison to early childhood teachers. One such expectation relates to the level of *accountability* they hold. Teachers' accountability has been accentuated since the new *Health and Safety at Work Act (2015)* was introduced, and is felt keenly by centre leaders. "We all have such a sense of responsibility … it might fall back on me if something terrible did happen" (Anne).

Jo further discussed the importance of keeping relevant documentation up to date that aligns with and supports the new *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015*. This was held as fundamentally important to Jo, with regards to her commitment to tamariki/children and whānau/family. This was captured when Jo commented: "I think there is an obligation as a centre manager or particularly a centre owner, that you know, you keep up to date with all that documentation" (Jo).

Leaders suggested that one way to counteract the pressures associated with a high level of accountability was to engage in dialogue with whānau. As indicated previously by questionnaire participants, parents' views on risk-taking can inhibt teachers' ability to promote risk-taking opportunities within the ECE environment. One participant discussed the importance of talking with parents and educating parents rather than being influenced by parents views.

> Yeah, yeah, cause the society that we live in today is to wrap our children up in cotton wool and so we do see parents - they just hover over their children all the time and yeah. ...When our parents are here ... we try and role model to the parents; so some children they'll be swinging on the swing like really high, or they'll be asking for a push and you'll say 'Aww do you push them that high?' and you know, or 'Do you like them to climb that high?' (Anne).

Along with engaging in dialogue with parents, interview participants discussed the value of engaging in *pedagogical dialogue* with staff. This was an important aspect of leading opportunities for risk-taking in the outdoors. All three participants discussed the importance of effective communication with staff regarding safe risk-taking in the outdoors. This was effectively captured by one particant in particular who commented:

> No I think it's about having conversations with teachers and I think it's about lots of aspects of the curriculum that you make sure that you are having that dialogue with teachers (Jo).

Summary

The findings presented in this chapter show that overall, participants view risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an ECE setting as a positive practice. Teachers believe that safe risk-taking provides opportunities for; exploration, knowing and testing ones' limits and attempting a challenge. Furthermore, teachers demonstrated an understanding of the critical role that they play with fostering and supporting children to engage in risky play.

However, teachers' perceptions and practices could be influenced by a range of external factors, such as, concerns about parents' perceptions, colleagues' attitudes and outdoor education equipment used to support risk-taking in the outdoors. Professional factors, such as teachers' previous experience with children being injured, regulatory requirements, and recent significant events reported in the media can inhibit teachers' practice, whereas knowledge of children, team work and leadership can enable teachers to facilitate safe risk-taking. The following chapter will explore and discuss the significance and implications of these findings in more detail.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Introduction

Findings from this study suggest that teachers' attitudes towards risk-taking are one of the most important factors in supporting safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Risk-taking can be restricted due to a teacher's individual perception of how dangerous or risky the play is. Attitudes towards risk-taking can have an impact on the support offered to children with regard to fostering their willingness to undertake what might be deemed by some to be risky play in the outdoor environment of the early childhood centre. Findings from the present study also provide valuable insight into factors that either support or inhibit teachers' and centre managers' ability to provide opportunities for children to engage in safe risk-taking in the outdoors.

This chapter discusses the main findings that were outlined in chapter four, in relation to relevant research literature. The chapter is divided into three sections: external factors that influence teachers' perceptions, professional factors that influence teachers' perceptions and the role of leadership. These sections address the key research questions:

What factors influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre management perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment?

> What do teachers and centre managers view as the barriers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment?
>
> What do teachers and centre managers view as enablers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment?
>
> What impact does regulatory and policy compliance have on teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment?

Results from this research affirm that there are tensions for teachers in relation to promoting risky ventures and protecting children's safety. However, this study found

that, overall, early childhood teachers in New Zealand have a positive disposition towards risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting. These findings support the contention that teachers believe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting is an important component of early childhood education and care.

5.1 External factors' that influence teachers' perceptions

The present study found that there were several external factors that either inhibited or enabled teachers to promote safe risk-taking for young children in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting. External factors teachers reported were: concerns about parents' perceptions, colleagues' attitudes and outdoor education equipment used to support risk-taking in the outdoors.

5.1.1 Concerns about parents' perceptions

When promoting risk-taking in the outdoor environment, one inhibiting factor identified was parents and their attitudes towards risk. Teachers felt that they restricted safe risk-taking opportunities because they felt concerned about parents' (whānau) beliefs surrounding risk-taking. What some teachers felt were optimum opportunities for engagement in safe risk-taking in the outdoors, were viewed by some parents as unsafe and potentially hazardous. Even if the teacher's views differed from whānau, they sometimes still failed to resist the pressure imposed by whānau, aligning their practice with parents' wishes, and curtailing the learning experience for the children. This is reflected in other research studies that have found that parents' attitudes can cause a tension between the provision of risk-taking opportunities and the need to protect children (Little, 2010; Little, 2015; Little & Wyver, 2008; Little, Wyver & Gibson, 2011). Furthermore, parents' fears around child safety may have become more prominent, fuelled by an increase in concerns from the general society (Brussoni, Olsen, Pike & Sleet, 2012). These fears held by parents can impact teachers in both overt and subtle ways, resulting in a tension between ensuring children's safety and providing for, and allowing children opportunities to engage in risky ventures (Sandseter, 2012).

The key informant interviews added a new perspective on the rationale for restricting risk-taking because of parental concerns. Key informants commented that the responsibility of leadership can at times inhibit practice, as the level of accountability acts as a deterrent to consistently promoting risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment. As Kennedy (2009) states, "Child care professionals have a duty of care to children which is enshrined in regulations and other mandated requirements" (p. 10). This duty of care to children and their parents can therefore sway both leaders' and teachers' decisions with regards to allowing children access to materials and equipment that support risk-taking in the outdoors.

Alternatively, findings show how one head teacher's in-depth knowledge of the children, and specifically of young children in general, enabled her to engage in conversations to subtly educate parents around safe risk-taking in the outdoors. She used these insights as 'teachable moments' with parents to raise awareness of the importance of engaging in risky play outdoors. As previous research has noted, "communication between staff and parents is the key to promoting the benefits of risky activities" (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 20). In accord with the findings from the present study, Bento and Dias (2017) in their Portugal based study found that:

> If professionals explain to the parents why it is important to play outside and make an effective effort to get them involved and satisfied, possible negative reactions related to fears about children getting sick, dirty or injured will be progressively solved (p. 159).

5.1.2   Colleagues attitudes

Results from this study indicate that variances in colleagues' perceptions, can create external pressure, impacting on teachers' willingness to support safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Both teachers and leaders indicated that it can be more challenging to support children's risky play if teachers in a centre have differing views towards risk-taking, and do not have a shared philosophy. Even when teachers demonstrated a positive disposition towards risk-taking, some participants outlined that they felt

challenged about promoting risk-taking if their fellow colleagues viewed such activities as too dangerous.

A key finding in resolving conflicting perspectives among teachers was the importance of a positive disposition towards risk-taking by centre leaders. All the key-informants advocated for supporting safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Interestingly, these participants reported that they viewed themselves as 'risk-takers' and demonstrated joy in seeing children engage in and self-manage risk. This insight is supported by Dietze, Pye, and Yochoff (2013) who believe that risk-taking is fostered by adults who support, advocate for and facilitate healthy risk-taking. The leaders also shared their positivity with colleagues. Although there was tension around how to allow children to engage in risk-taking whilst also protecting them from harm, key informants saw this as an opportunity to support staff with developing a positive approach towards risk-taking through reflection on practice. These leaders demonstrated confidence with regards to children's' ability to self-manage risk, and were articulate about the benefits for children engaging in and managing risk. They were, however, aware of fellow staff members' anxiety towards children harming themselves and therefore engaged in dialogue with staff to ascertain reasoning behind decisions to restrict children's risky play.

5.1.3   Equipment

The condition of equipment present in the outdoor early childhood environment was also identified by participants as an important external factor that influences teachers' perceptions about safe risk-taking. In the photo elicitation section of the questionnaire, participants identified concerns about equipment being in disrepair and identified that this would inhibit their ability to allow children to use equipment to engage in risk-taking, due to safety concerns. In particular, teachers reported that they felt concerned with the condition and maintenance of equipment in the outdoor environment. This concern is supported by a recent study conducted by Olsen and Smith (2017) who found that "maintenance of toys, manipulative objects, and playground equipment is critical in order for children to have quality experiences during play outdoors" (p. 1062). It is interesting to note that Olsen and Smith's study

looked at play equipment in 61 early childhood centres in United States, and found that only 43% of the outdoor equipment was in good condition. Within New Zealand, the *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and Care Services 2008* outlines that; the equipment, premises and facilities should be checked every day for hazards to children, with emphasis on "the condition and placement of learning, play and other equipment" (Ministry of Education, 2008b, p. 19).

Centre leaders also talked about the affordances offered by equipment to support risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Leaders felt that loose parts or moveable/adaptable equipment that were open-ended and available to children could be utilised by children to support their ability to engage in safe risk-taking opportunities. Leaders favoured 'loose materials' such as, wooden boxes, cable reels, ladders, large rocks and logs, over fixed equipment, as they presented a range of ways to adapt the environment and were able to be used creatively by the children with little to no support from staff. This conclusion is supported by Tovey (2007) who pointed out that "an outdoor environment needs to have a multitude of loose parts such as logs, small boulders, plant materials, or building materials, such as blocks, crates, boxes, ladders, planks, tyres, tarpaulins, blankets and so on for transforming. In this way, children can construct and create their own environments" (p. 74).

5.2   Professional factors that influence teachers' perceptions

The present study found that professional factors can either inhibit or enable teachers to provide safe risk-taking opportunities for young children in the outdoors. Those professional factors that teachers reported as inhibitors of safe risk-taking included: teachers' previous experience with children being injured, regulatory requirements, and recent significant events reported in the media. In contrast, teachers' knowledge of children, team work and leadership could enable teachers to facilitate safe risk-taking.

5.2.1 Overprotection of children due to teachers' previous experiences with children being injured

A desire to overprotect children who had previously had an injury at the early childhood setting, emerged from the key informant interviews as an inhibitor to the promotion of risk-taking with participants commenting that on occasion they inhibited children's ability to engage in risky play because the child had previously been injured at the centre. This is consistent with other literature that found teachers can feel apprehensive and hesitant in letting children engage in risky play for fear of accidental injury (e.g. Tovey, 2011; Wyver et al., 2010). For example, it has been found that the "perception of children as injury prone can lead to constraints being placed on their behaviour, particularly behaviours associated with free play" (Wyver et al., 2010, p. 268). All key informants also commented that they found themselves overprotecting children, if they did not know them well, or were not yet aware of their capabilities. Whilst these concerns contributed to inhibiting acts of risk-taking, teachers' desire to protect children was not unfounded. The new *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015,* holds individuals accountable for the safety of those within the workplace. If an individual does not keep a child safe from risk of a serious injury they can be held personally accountable and fined for these actions (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2016a). This tension will be discussed further when looking at the impact of regulatory and policy compliance on teachers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment.

5.2.2 Regulatory requirements

The *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, and other regulatory requirements, were identified by participants as a factor that both inhibits and enables teachers' ability to support safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Some teachers felt that the stringent nature of the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, inhibited their ability to foster safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Teachers felt that the regulations specified a range of constraining factors, such as, the height of equipment and the spacing requirements between equipment, that contributed to predefined environments. Participants believed that these parameters limited children's ability to

self-manage risk. The impact of a regulated environment is well documented in regards to the provision of challenging experiences for children (Little, 2010). An Australian based study conducted by Bown and Sumsion (2007) reported that teachers found early childhood regulations hindered their teaching practice and impacted on their professional practice, ultimately diminishing their passion for teaching. Furthermore, Little (2017) found that "opportunities for risk-taking in play are likely to be restricted when teachers defer to the advice provided by regulatory authority assessors" (p. 10). This is due to regulatory requirements being overly prescriptive and protective, limiting risk-taking to low level risk-taking.

However, in contrast, many early childhood teachers in the current study felt that the accountability provided by the ECE regulations actually served to encourage them to ensure children were kept safe in the outdoors. Participants described the regulations as a supporting factor to guide their practice and protect children from potential harm. As shown in a study conducted by Maynard and Waters (2007), teachers worry about children being hurt and the possibility of the teacher being held accountable and even facing legal action. Therefore, following the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* and other regulatory requirements limits the possibility of any personal liability. Teachers demonstrate a genuine ethic of care that is tied to their professional identity and regardless of regulatory requirements (or fear of being held responsible) want to ensure children are safe.

Van Rooijen and Newstead (2017) explored ways to develop practitioners' capabilities to assess risk. They found that "in responding authentically to children's needs, professionals are often required to take risks themselves, frequently finding themselves in situations where they must make choices without being able to predict or even control the results of their interactions" (p. 954). In the present study, it was interesting to find that while centre leaders were acutely aware of the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, they acknowledged the concept of pushing these boundaries to benefit the children's learning. Having a sound knowledge of these regulations appeared to enable these leaders to use their pedagogical knowledge and personal understanding of the regulations to benefit the children's

ability to engage in acts of risk-taking, and to support their staff to do so. These participants were aware that this could lead to the possibility of being personally held to account; however, they were able to articulate the reasons why their actions were important in the development of young children's ability to engage in, and manage risk.

5.2.3   Influence of media reporting on significant incidents in the outdoors

With the growth of social media and online platforms, media reports about accidents in ECE are easily accessible and quickly shared. The impact of the media surrounding children's play in the outdoors has been well documented in regards to influencing adults fears for children's safety (Gill, 2007, p. 21; Little, 2015). However, overwhelmingly the findings of the present study demonstrated that teachers felt that the recent events reported in the media did not have any direct influence on their ability to promote risk-taking in the outdoors. When being questioned about the impact of the media, 80% of questionnaire participants noted that the media did not have any impact on their teaching practice. Interestingly, however, 28.13% out of this 80% proceeded to comment further regarding the media influence. In fact, some participants appear to have been more influenced by the media than they initially thought. Their further comments indicated that reporting from the media had made them more aware of the potential of risk and raised their awareness around risk assessment and children's safety.

Twenty per cent of questionnaire participants noted that the media did directly influence their practice, with one participant commenting that incidences in the media had prompted a review of their workplace health and safety practices. Other participants commented that the media had raised their awareness, with one participant commenting that they are now very aware of ropes in the environment. This is directly related to a report in the media surrounding an incident within a New Zealand Early Childhood setting, involving a slide and a rope, that resulted in the death of a four-year-old child (Davies, 2016). Media reporting on this incident has meant that early childhood settings within New Zealand are aware that a child using a rope and a slide died within an early childhood setting. In direct response to this reported

incident, Worksafe New Zealand released a document to support early childhood leaders and teachers, focusing on how to avoid strangulation. WorkSafe New Zealand states:

> Children will often use toys and play equipment in inventive ways. This may include taking a rope or cord (or toys that include a rope or cord) onto elevated play equipment such as a slide or platform. Children may also move the position of ropes that are part of the elevated play equipment. In both situations, there is a risk that the rope or cord may become caught around the child's neck resulting in the risk of strangulation (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2017, p. 1).

This example illustrates how New Zealand media directly impacts on ECE and influences risk-taking practices as well as contributing to policy updates or additions.

5.2.4   Teachers' knowledge of children

Both teachers and centre leaders emphasised the importance of knowing the children and their families as key in promoting safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Participants commented that they can more readily support children to engage in risk-taking if they know the children well and have a sound awareness of their current capabilities. Teachers in the current study also highlighted the need to have sound knowledge of the children in their care in order to be able to support safe risk-taking practices. Many teachers who completed the questionnaire commented that they would inhibit children from taking a risk in the outdoors, if they did not have a sound knowledge of the child and their family. Their concerns for children's safety therefore stopped them from allowing children to engage in risks due to not yet having an awareness of their skills and capabilities, and their ability to judge and self-manage risk. This is in line with what Little, Sandseter and Wyver (2012) have said about teachers and risk-taking - "that observation of the children's play was a key to providing appropriate support for children's risk-taking" (p. 306). In the current study, leaders also supported the teachers' view.

5.2.5   Teachers' understandings of the benefits of safe risk-taking

Overall the questionnaire respondents demonstrated a positive disposition to supporting risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Their knowledge and

understanding of the various benefits associated with safe risk-taking supported them to see the value in allowing children to engage in risk-taking ventures. Findings suggest that teachers believed that engaging in safe risk-taking gave children a sense of 'agency' and confidence, in line with Stephenson (2003) who found that young children need opportunities to engage in risk-taking to develop confidence in their physical abilities. The teachers' role in empowering children and developing their sense of agency is a concept reflected in the New Zealand Early Childhood Curriculum, *Te Whāriki* (Ministry of Education, 2017). The principle of Empowerment/Whakamana, reflected in *Te Whāriki* supports the notion of empowering children to learn and grow. Through exposure to acts of safe risk-taking, children are provided with opportunities to learn and develop to their potential. Furthermore, self-management of risk or self-regulation was another benefit referred to by participants. The present study supports the position that "Kaiako [teachers] have an important role in encouraging and supporting all children to participate in and contribute to a wide range of enriching experiences. These expand the children's competence and confidence and, over, time enable them to direct their own lives" (Ministry of Education, 2017, p. 18). This is supported by Gill (2007) who outlined the importance of children being exposed to opportunities to explore risky play to enable children to self-manage risk.

5.2.6   Team Work

Teachers indicated that effective team work is a key component in supporting them to provide opportunities for children to engage in safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Teachers affirmed that having a supportive team, and working well together, ensures that there are fewer limits to provision for children in terms of well managed risk-taking. Furthermore, a healthy team culture, where staff share the same view of risk-taking enables teachers to promote safe risk-taking in the outdoors. An example of how effective team work supports teachers to promote safe risk-taking provided, was that of swapping supervision of certain activities if a teacher initially assigned to this learning experience feels out of their comfort zone. This also demonstrates the importance of staff working together and knowing each other's strengths and areas of

discomfort. The importance of collaborative practice with regard to outdoor play is highlighted by Bento and Dias (2017) who note that a level of collaboration among professionals is essential to promote quality outdoor learning experiences. The current study highlights the benefits of collaborative practice in the promotion of safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment.

Centre leaders also affirmed that effective team work is key in provision of safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoors. Key informants illustrated the importance of shared values and a shared understanding in relation to risk. Leaders also felt that sound curriculum knowledge across the teaching team supported teachers to work together, advocating for safe risk-taking in the outdoors. New, Mardell and Robinson (2005) refer to the concept of a 'risk rich' early childhood curriculum that views children as capable and confident, and seeks to test their abilities and develop their skills.

Leaders also acknowledged that safe risk-taking didn't occur in the environment if they didn't have their full team of staff on board. One centre leader commented that if you have one of your permanent teachers away this could be detrimental with regards to risk-taking in the outdoors. There are two factors at play here: firstly, the reliever is not familiar with the equipment and how the children are able to engage with the equipment, therefore preventing the children from any form of risk-taking; And secondly a reliever may not fully understand the importance of supervision and how the equipment is used, placing the child in danger of unsafe risk-taking. This finding adds to the existing literature on this topic and has implications for teachers' practice, which will be identified in the final chapter.

5.3   The role of leadership

Centre leaders highlighted specific leadership practices that they implemented to support safe risk-taking in the outdoors. Leaders highlighted the importance of an optimal environment for safe risk-taking and acknowledged their role in educating and supporting staff.

5.3.1   Educating staff

Findings from the present study particularly highlighted how centre leaders place importance on supporting, and teaching their staff to understand and provide for risk-taking in the outdoors. All three key informants appeared to take a distributed approach to leadership (Rodd, 2013) and effectively mentored staff to further develop their understanding about the provision of safe risk-taking in the outdoors. One way that centre leaders fostered staff development around risk-taking was to empower them to set up the outdoor environment and use reflective questioning to ascertain the teachers understanding of what they have provided and how they had ensured that children would be safe. Leaders also found that this was a good opportunity to refer to the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008* to support staff development. One leader commented on how she would engage in a discussion with a teacher around an aspect of play that they had set up, knowing herself that it was unsafe, and draw from the regulations to support her stance.

A strong thread through the interviews, was the importance of engaging in dialogue with staff. All three leaders found it important to have pedagogical conversations with staff surrounding risky play and the outdoors. These conversations were used to support and scaffold teachers' learning surrounding risk-taking. This could mean supporting a staff member who was providing unsafe risks or supporting a teacher who was being over protective and 'wrapping the children in cotton wool.'

All key informants responded that they, or their teachers, have not attended any specific professional development around risk-taking in the outdoors. Despite this, internal professional development was offered when there was an expectation that the centre leaders delivered pertinent information to teachers and shared any new requirements affecting ECE. An example of this was the introduction of the new *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.* As this new Act affects all workers, teachers; as well as centre leaders, are also required to have a sound understanding of their role (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2016a). Under the *Health and Safety at Work Act 2015,* teachers are classified as 'workers' and are said to be best placed to ascertain if there are any safety issues within the setting (WorkSafe New Zealand, 2016c). Therefore,

teachers need support from leaders with regards to risk-assessment and risk-management. The key informants interviewed were aware of the accountability level placed on them with regards to risk-taking in the outdoors and demonstrated a positive disposition towards leading a centre culture of supporting children to engage in acts of risky play.

5.3.2   Optimal outdoor environments

Throughout the interviews, key informants discussed aspects of an optimal outdoor environment for young children. The value of the environment as key to providing opportunities for children to take risks has been widely reported on (Greenfield, 2011; Sandseter, 2012; Tovey, 2007). Aspects of an optimal environment, as outlined by centre leaders, included space, equipment – such as bikes, different surface levels, trees that support climbing, different materials/textures and moveable equipment. Results suggest that provision of an optimal learning environment supports teachers and leaders to more effectively provide for, and support children to engage in risky endeavours.

In the present study, having a range of outdoor equipment and resources was viewed as helpful by centre leaders to support children to play at height and speed. This is in line with 2 of the 6 categories of risk outlined by Sandseter (2007); 1) Play with great heights 2) Play with high speed. Environments that are planned with elements of risk, will be engaging to children and provide opportunities for children to actively seek out and engage in risk. This finding links with leaders' comments in the current study on ensuring availability of a range of loose materials or moveable, adaptable materials to support children's innate curiosity to engage with the outdoor environment. Provision of a range of loose parts, such as large wooden boxes, ladders and safety mats also affords opportunities to enhance children's play and learning and provides opportunities for children to engage in risky play, as supported by Fjørtoft (2001). The caveat noted by both teachers and leaders was that the outdoor environment must be well-maintained and frequently checked and reviewed to ensure it is fit-for-purpose and of suitable quality.

Summary

This study identified a range of complex factors that influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre management perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. These factors fit into three categories: external factors that influence teachers' perceptions, professional factors that influence teachers' perceptions and the role of leadership. These factors highlight tensions as well as supports for teachers and centre managers in relation to promoting risk-taking while protecting children's safety. However, ultimately, teachers in this study believed risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting was an important component of the early childhood curriculum.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the factors that influence New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre management perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. The study offers new insights as to teachers' beliefs about the barriers and enablers to supporting children's risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting, as well as the potential impact of regulatory and policy compliance on teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices. The study used a qualitative research design and included a two-phase approach; an online questionnaire with teachers and interviews with centre managers of early childhood settings, which captured perspectives that have had limited attention in the research literature. Other studies focusing on risk-taking in the outdoors have examined aspects of safe risk-taking, however this study presents a broader, and more holistic picture of safe risk-taking practices in ECE, and the complexity of issues at play. Results showed that participants demonstrate a positive disposition towards risk-taking in the outdoors; however, specific factors function to enable or inhibit their ability to enact this in practice. Findings indicate an inherent tension between balancing the benefits of risk-taking with the ethic of care to ensure children are safe from harm in an early childhood setting, and the need for this tension to be explored and negotiated with key-stakeholders, in particular teaching teams and families. This chapter outlines possible implications for practice, the strengths and limitations of the study and offers some suggestions for future research.

6.1   Implications for practice

To support and foster safe risk-taking in early childhood outdoor environments, early childhood teachers need to optimise their outdoor setting to ensure it affords opportunities for children to engage in safe risk-taking. Implications suggest that change is needed from the level of daily practice, through to centre leadership, and beyond to the highest levels of policy and legislation.

6.1.1 Practical recommendations for teachers

- Optimise the outdoor environment by including/or introducing a range of moveable equipment/loose parts that children can independently use to create safe challenges within the environment

- Provide sufficient challenges within the outdoor environment for children to engage in safe risk-taking and learn how to self-manage risk

- Provide an environment that offers safe risk-taking opportunities for children to play at heights, play with speed and play with dangerous tools/real life tools

6.1.2 Practical recommendations for centre managers/head teachers

- Adhere to the *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*, taking care to ensure that playground safety checks remove hazards that may result in serious injury or death, but not removing all challenges and opportunities for children to engage in safe risk-taking

- Foster and develop effective team work; exploring beliefs and practices to establish shared beliefs surrounding risk-taking in the outdoor environment

- Engage in pedagogical dialogue with kaiako around safe risk-taking practices in the outdoor environment

- Converse with whānau, to develop a shared understanding of the constitution of safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment

- Mentor staff around safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment and how to enact this within the curriculum

- Provide specifically designed professional development to support safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment and to increase understanding of the benefits of promoting safe risk-taking

6.1.3 Practical Recommendations for policy makers

- Review the current requirement of qualified staff within an early childhood setting. This currently is mandated at 50% (Ministry of Education, 2008a), which can limit knowledge and skills in relation to safe risk-taking, as well as shared pedagogical understanding

- Fund the provision of specifically designed professional development to directly target the topic of safe risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment

and to support teachers to address the tension that they may feel in fostering risk and keeping children safe from harm, especially in light of recent cases in the media

6.2   Strengths and limitations of the study

The researcher chose to select participants from Ōtautahi, South Island of New Zealand, for both the questionnaire and the interview, and as such this research study may not be indicative of the wider teaching population. Furthermore, as only three early childhood service managers' views were obtained in the interview phase of the study no generalisations on the perspectives of all centre managers/teachers can be made. However, the findings still offer some valuable insight for consideration.

As the questionnaire was offered to a range of services via the contact details available on the Education Counts website, it is likely that those who chose to participate were interested in risk-taking as a topic, and thus may be more positively oriented. Furthermore, as the questionnaire invitation went to just one primary contact in an ECE setting, it was reliant on this person sharing the invitation to participate with teachers in the centre, and thus access to some potential participants may have been limited.

As the questionnaire was not delivered face to face, it was assumed that participants would understand what the question was asking of them, as supported by the careful design and piloting process. However, the findings suggested that the design of question six was ambiguous. Teachers were asked to comment on what factors supported or inhibited them in providing safe risk-taking opportunities for children in the early childhood outdoor environment. However, not all participants clearly identified whether the factor they were describing was an enabling or inhibiting factor. Answers that were not able to be categorised were not used, so as to avoid incorrect interpretation from the researcher and to remain true to the research.

A particular strength of this research study, was the use of two phases of data gathering. The first phase of data from the open-ended questionnaire was used to

refine and strengthen the subsequent design of the key informant interviews. Eliciting information from both teachers, and centre managers also strengthened the relevance of the study for the New Zealand context. Furthermore, the iterative review process that both research instruments went through, strengthened these tools, resulting in rich, detailed comments from the participants.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

Recent research into promoting risk-taking in the early childhood environment highlighted a potential disconnection between teachers' espoused perspectives and what eventuated in practice (Little, 2017). To add to the findings of this study, further research could be undertaken in Aotearoa New Zealand, utilising observations of teachers practice, to examine in more detail the alignment between how teachers view their teaching, and what this actually looks like in practice.

This research briefly touched on the benefits of providing safe risk-taking opportunities for young children in ECE outdoor environments. It would prove useful to conduct a more detailed study within Aotearoa that investigates the benefits of risk-taking in the outdoors, including the impact of such experiences over time. Worthy of further research could be the concepts of agency and self-management of risk.

Final Reflections

This study has taken me on an insightful journey into the complex factors that enable or inhibit teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices towards risk-taking in the outdoors. I have discovered that teachers struggle with having to balance the tension of fully protecting children from harm, whilst supporting children's agency by empowering them to engage in challenging outdoor play that supports safe risk-taking.

This study has highlighted to me the importance of engaging in pedagogical dialogue surrounding safe risk-taking as a foundation to creating a shared understanding of safe risk-taking. This foundation then enables centre managers and teachers to support and enhance risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment for children,

ultimately supporting children to learn how to self-manage risk now and as they mature into adulthood.

"The more risks you allow your children to make, the better they learn to look after themselves" (Roald Dahl).

References

Bento, G., & Dias, G. (2017). The importance of outdoor play for young children's healthy development. *Porto Biomedical Journal, 2*(5), 157-160. doi: 10.1016/j.pbj.2017.03.003

Bown, K., & Sumsion, J. (2007). Voices from the other side of the fence: Early childhood teachers' experiences with mandatory regulatory requirements. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 8*(1), 30-49.

Braithwaite, D. (2014). 'One nearly landed on my finger': A forest kindergarten in rural New Zealand. *New Zealand Journal of Teachers' Work, 11*(1), 3-16.

Brussoni, M., Olsen, L. L., Pike, I., & Sleet, D. A. (2012). Risky play and children's safety: balancing priorities for optimal child development. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 9*(9), 3134-3148. doi: 10.3390/ijerph9093134

Brussoni, M., Gibbons, R., Gray, C., Ishikawa, T., Sandseter, E., Bienenstock, A., … Tremblay, M. (2015). What is the relationship between risky outdoor play and health in children? A systematic review. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public health, 12*(6), 6423-6454.

Carr, M. (1998). *Assessing children's learning in early childhood settings: A professional development programme for discussion and reflection.* Wellington: New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Carter, M. (2007). Making your environment "the third teacher." *Exchange,* (176), 22-26.

Coleman, B., & Dyment, J. E. (2013). Factors that limit and enable preschool-aged
children's physical activity on child care centre playgrounds. *Journal of Early
Childhood Research, 11*(3), 203-221. doi: 10.1177/1476718x12456250

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and
procedures for developing grounded theory.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Corbin, J. M., & Strauss, A. L. (2015). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and
procedures for developing grounded theory.* London, England: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods
approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Davies, M. (2016, November 18). Child dies at Auckland childcare facility. *Newshub.*
Retrieved from http://www.newshub.co.nz/home/new-zealand/2016/11/child-
dies-at-auckland-childcare-facility.html

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2018). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research.* Los
Angeles, CA: Sage.

Department of Internal Affairs. (2008). *New Zealand Gazette, 116,* 3047-3092.
Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

DiCarlo, C., Baumgartner, J., Ota, C., & Jenkins, C. (2015). Preschool teachers'
perceptions of rough and tumble play vs. aggression in preschool-aged boys.
Early Child Development and Care, 185(5), 779-790. doi:
10.1080/03004430.2014.957692

Dietze, B., Pye, K., & Yochoff, A. (2013). Risk-taking at the crossroads: Bringing it back
into the lives of children and youth. *Relational Child & Youth Care Practice,
26*(4), 32-35.

Drever, E. (2003). *Using semi-structured interviews in small-scale research: A teacher's guide.* Glasgow, Scotland: Scottish Council for Research in Education.

Eager, D., & Little, H. (n.d.). *Risk deficit disorder.* Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/1479806/Risk_deficit_disorder

Education Review Office. (2013). *He pou tātaki. How ERO reviews early childhood services.* Retrieved from http://www.ero.govt.nz/Review-Process/Frameworks-and-Evaluation-Indicators-for-ERO-Reviews/He-Pou-Tataki-How-ERO-reviews-early-childhood-services

Fenech, M., Sumsion, J., & Goodfellow, J. (2006). 'The regulatory environment in long day care: A "double edged sword" for early childhood professional practice'. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 31*(3), 49-58.

Fjørtoft, I. (2001). The natural environment as a playground for children: The impact of outdoor play activities in pre-primary school children. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 29*(2), 111-117.

Gerritsen, S., Morton, S. M., & Wall, C. R. (2016). Physical activity and screen use policy and practices in childcare: Results from a survey of early childhood education services in New Zealand. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health, 40*(4), 319-325. doi: 10.1111/1753-6405.12529

Gill, T. (2007). *No fear: growing up in a risk averse society.* London, England: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

Greenfield, C. F. (2004). 'Can run, play on bikes, jump the zoom slide, and play on the swings': exploring the value of outdoor play. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood, 29*(2), 1-5.

Greenfield, C. (2011). *Outside is where we need to be: A guide to providing optimal outdoor environments in early childhood settings* (2nd ed.). Manukau, New Zealand: Manukau Institute of Technology.

Greenfield, C. F. (2012). Characteristics of optimal early childhood centre outdoor environments: Spaces and places in which children and adults want to be. *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education Journal, 15,* 42-60. Retrieved from http://www.childforum.com/research/2012-nzrece-journal-articles/885-optimal-early-childhood-centre-outdoor-environments.html

Hill, A., & Bundy, A. C. (2014). Reliability and validity of a new instrument to measure tolerance of everyday risk for children. *Child Care, Health & Development, 40*(1), 68-76. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2214.2012.01414.x

Jackman, A., & Fallon, V. (2016, March 24th). Primary schoolkids banned from climbing trees because of liability fears. *Stuff.* Retrieved from http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/education/78238496/primary-schoolkids-banned-from-climbing-trees-because-of-liability-fears

Kennedy, A. (2009). I'm not scared! Risk and challenge in children's programs. *Putting Children First (National Childcare Accreditation Council), 3,* 9-11.

Knussen, C. & McFadyen, A. (2010). *Ethical issues involved in using Survey Monkey.* Glasgow, Scotland: Caledonian University. Retrieved from http://www.gcu.ac.uk/media/gcalwebv2/gsbs/content/downloads/Survey%20Monkey.doc

Little, H. (2010). Risk, challenge and safety in outdoor play: Pedagogical and regulatory tensions. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education 4*(1), 3-24.

Little, H. (2015). Mothers' beliefs about risk and risk-taking in children's outdoor play.
Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 15(1), 24-39, doi:
10.1080/14729679.2013.842178

Little, H. (2017). Promoting risk-taking and physically challenging play in Australian
early childhood settings in a changing regulatory environment. *Journal of Early
Childhood Research, 15*(1), 83-98. doi:10.1177/1476718X15579743.

Little, H., & Wyver, S. (2008). Outdoor play. *Australian Journal of Early Childhood,
33*(2), 33-40.

Little, H., Wyver, S., & Gibson, F. (2011). The influence of play context and adult
attitudes on young children's physical risk-taking during outdoor play. *European
Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 19*(1), 113-131. doi:
10.1080/1350293x.2011.548959.

Little, H., Sandseter, E. H., & Wyver, S. (2012). Early childhood teachers' beliefs about
children's risky play in Australia and Norway. *Contemporary Issues in Early
Childhood, 13*(4), 300-316.

Madge, N., & Barker, J. (2007). *Risk & Childhood.* London, England: The Royal Society
for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce (RSA).

Massey University. (2015). *Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and
evaluations involving human participants.* Retrieved from
http://www.massey.ac.nz/massey/research/research-ethics/human-
ethics/forms-and-procedures.cfm

Maynard, T., & Waters, J. (2007). Learning in the outdoor environment: A missed
opportunity? *Early Years, 27*(3), 255-265. doi: 10.1080/09575140701594400

Merriam-Webster. (2017). *Dictionary.* Retrieved from https://www.merriam-
webster.com/dictionary/.

Ministry of Education. (n.d.). *Starting a centre-based ECE service*. Retrieved from
https://www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/running-an-ece-
service/starting-an-ece-service/starting-a-centre-based-ece-service/what-is-an-
early-childhood-education-and-care-centre/

Ministry of Education. (1996). *Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o
Aotearoa*: *Early childhood curriculum.* Wellington, New Zealand: Learning
Media.

Ministry of Education. (2008a). *Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008*.
Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Education. (2008b). *Licensing Criteria for Early Childhood Education and
Care Services 2008 and Early Childhood Education Curriculum Framework.*
Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Education. (2014). *Choices.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Ministry of Education. (2017). *Te whāriki: He whāriki mātauranga mō ngā mokopuna o
Aotearoa*: *Early childhood curriculum.* Wellington, New Zealand: Author.

Mutch, C. (2013). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started.*
Wellington, New Zealand: New Zealand Council for Educational Research Press.

New Zealand Government. (2016). *Education Counts.* Retrieved from
https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/home

New, R.S., Mardell, B., & Robinson, D. (2005). Early childhood education as risky
business: Going beyond what's "safe" to discovering what's possible. *Early
Childhood Research & Practice, 7*(2), 1-21.

Nicol, A. (2013). Risk: Risky to take or risky to ignore? *Te Iti Kahurangi: School of Education E-Journal, 1,* 66-77. Retrieved from http://edjournal.manukau.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/119942/08-Nicol-student-final.pdf.

OECD. (2011). *Encouraging quality in early childhood education and care (ECEC): International comparison: Minimum standards.* Retrieved from http://www.oecd.org/education/school/48483436.pdf

Olsen, H., & Smith, B. (2017). Sandboxes, loose parts, and playground equipment: A descriptive exploration of outdoor play environments. *Early Child Development and Care, 187*(5-6), 1055-1068. doi: 10.1080/03004430.2017.1282928

Pairman, A. (2012). The relationship between the physical environment and learning: A blind spot in New Zealand early childhood education discourse? *New Zealand Annual Review of Education, 21,* 21-45.

Pairman, A., & Terreni, L. (2001). *If the environment is the third teacher what language does she speak?* Retrieved from http://spotidoc.com/doc/741536/if-the-environment-is-the-third-teacher-what-language-doe

Prosser, J. & Loxley, A. (2008). *Introducing visual methods*. National Centre for Research Methods & Economic and Social Research Council. Retrieved from http://eprints.ncrm.ac.uk/420

Punch, K. (2009). *Introduction to research methods in education.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage.

Rinaldi, C. (2001). Infant-toddler centres and preschools as places of culture. In Making learning visible: Children as individual and group learners. In Giudici, C., Rinaldi, C., & Krechevsky, M. (Eds.), *Making learning visible: Children as*

Individual and group learners. (pp. 38-47). Cambridge, MA: Project Zero Reggio Children.

Rodd, J. (2013). Leadership in early childhood: The pathway to professionalism. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Sandseter, E. B. H. (2007). Categorising risky play: How can we identify risk-taking in children's play? *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 15*(2), 237-252. doi:10.108013502930701321733

Sandseter, E. B. H. (2010). *Scaryfunny. A qualitative study of risky play among pre-school children.* (Doctoral dissertation, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Trondheim, Norway). Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ellen_Beate_Hansen_Sandseter/publication/236986868_Scaryfunny_-_A_qualitative_study_of_risky_play_among_preschool_children/links/0c96051c40862d6561000000/Scaryfunny-A-qualitative-study-of-risky-play-among-preschool-children.pdf

Sandseter, E. B. H. (2012). Restrictive safety or unsafe freedom? Norwegian ECEC practitioners' perceptions and practices concerning children's risky play. *Child Care in Practice, 18*(1), 83-101. doi: 10.1080/13575279.2011.621889

Sandseter, E., & Kennair, L. (2011). Children's risky play from an evolutionary perspective: The anti-phobic effects of thrilling experiences. *Evolutionary Psychology, 9*(2), 257-284.

Schwartz, D. (1989). Visual ethnography: Using photography in qualitative research. *Qualitative Sociology, 12*(2), 119-154. doi: 10.1007/BF00988995

Spencer, K. H., & Wright, P. M. (November 2014). Quality outdoor play spaces for young children. *The National Association for the Education of Young Children,*

69(5), 28-34. Retrieved from
http://www.naeyc.org/yc/files/yc/file/201411/YC1114_Quality_Outdoor_Play_
Spaces_Wright.pdf.

Stephenson, A. (1999). *Opening up the outdoors: A case study of young children's
outdoor experiences in one childcare centre.* Wellington, New Zealand:
Institute for Early Childhood Studies, Victoria University.

Stephenson, A. (2003). Physical risk-taking: Dangerous or endangered? *Early Years,
23*(10), http://dx.doi.rog/10.1080/0957514032000045573

Stonehouse, A. (2011). The 'third teacher' – creating child friendly learning spaces.
Putting Children First, 38, 12-14.

Taylor, Y. (2015). Rethinking risk taking in the playground. *The First Years: Ngā Tau
Tuatahi. New Zealand Journal of Infant and Toddler Education, 17*(1), 39-43.

Terreni, L., & Pairman, A. (n.d.). *Developing playgrounds in early childhood
environments.* Retrieved from
https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Starting-
an-centre-based-ECE-service/DevelopingPlaygroundsGuide.pdf

Tovey, H. (2007). *Playing outdoors: spaces and places, risk and challenge.* Maidenhead,
England: Open University Press.

Tovey, H. (2011). Achieving the balance: Challenge, risk and safety. In J. White (Ed.),
Outdoor provision in the early years (pp. 86-94). London, England: Sage.

Van Rooijen, M., & Newstead, S. (2017). Influencing factors on professional attitudes
towards risk-taking in children's play: A narrative review. *Early Child
Development and Care, 187*(5-6), 946,957. doi:
10.1080/03004430.2016.1204607

Wilkinson, R. (2015). *Risky play in Icelandic preschools* (Unpublished master's thesis, University of Akureyri, Akureyri, Iceland). Retrieved from https://skemman.is/bitstream/1946/21910/3/Risky%20play%20in%20Icelandic%20preschools%20RACHEL.pdf

Wilson, R. (2012). *Nature and young children: Encouraging creative play and learning in natural environments* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

WorkSafe New Zealand. (2016a). *Legislation*. Retrieved from http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/worksafe/about/legislation

WorkSafe New Zealand. (2016b). *Introduction to the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 – Special Guide.* Retrieved from http://www.worksafe.govt.nz/worksafe/information-guidance/legal-framework/introduction-to-the-hsw-act-2015/special-guide

WorkSafe New Zealand. (2016c). *Implementing the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015: A guide for early learning centres.* Retrieved from http://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Ministry/Initiatives/Health-and-safety/ECE/Implementing-the-Health-and-Safety-at-Work-Act-2015-guide-for-els.pdf

WorkSafe New Zealand. (2017). *Managing strangulation hazards on play equipment.* Retrieved from https://construction.worksafe.govt.nz/about-us/news-and-media/managing-strangulation-hazards-on-play-equipment/

Wyver, S., Tranter, P., Naughton, G., Little, H., Sandseter, E. H., & Bundy, A. (2010). Ten ways to restrict children's freedom to play: The problem of surplus safety. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood, 11*(3), 263-277.

Zamani, Z. (2016). 'The woods is a more free space for children to be creative; their imagination kind of sparks out there': Exploring young children's cognitive play opportunities in natural, manufactured and mixed outdoor preschool zones. *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning, 16*(2), 172-189. doi: 10.1080/14729679.2015.1122538.

Appendices

Appendix One: Online Questionnaire

Please click next to proceed to survey

Early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment

General information about you

1: Please select your gender

○ F

○ M

2: Please select your age range

○ Under 25

○ 25-34

○ 35-44

○ 45-55

○ Over 55

3: Do you hold an initial teacher education qualification?

○ Yes

○ No

○ Currently studying towards an initial teacher education qualification

4: If you answered "Yes" in question 3, please specify below

○ Diploma of Teaching (ECE)

○ Bachelor of Teaching (ECE)

○ Graduate Diploma of Teaching (ECE)

○ Bachelor of Teaching (Primary/Secondary)

○ Graduate Diploma of Teaching (Primary/Secondary)

5: What type of early childhood centre are you currently teaching in?

○ Education and care centre (privately owned)

○ Education and care centre (community)

○ Te Kohānga Reo

○ Kindergarten (public)

○ Kindergarten (private)

○ Other (please specify)

Risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment

1: What does safe risk-taking in the outdoor early childhood environment mean to you?

2: For the purpose of this study, safe risk-taking is defined as an experience that challenges children's capabilities, promotes a platform for scaffolding the child's current skill level, provides a sense of excitement and/or trepidation and includes possible accidental consequences, such as injury.

In light of this definition, what are some examples of safe risk-taking that take place in your outdoor environment?

3: What acts/experiences would you deem to constitute 'unsafe risk-taking' in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre?

4: What do you see as the benefits of providing opportunities for safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre?

5: Has recent media coverage of significant incidents in the outdoor environment of early childhood centres influenced your beliefs and practices around risk-taking?

○ Yes

○ No

If so, please describe

6: What factors support or inhibit you to provide safe risk-taking opportunities for children in the early childhood outdoor environment?

> [ ]

7: Can you describe a time when you felt you were over-protective of a child/children and limited safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment? What influenced your decisions in this situation?

> [ ]

8: Can you describe a time when you felt that an experience in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre became unsafe? How did you respond?

> [ ]

9: Do the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, and other regulatory requirements influence the way in which you provide safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre?

◯ Yes

◯ No

If so please describe

> [ ]

10: Referring to the teaching strategies and practices listed below, please rate your use of these to support safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood centre

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Scaffolding (e.g., Supporting a child in the Zone of Proximal development. Assisting a child who is learning to balance on an elevated skinny beam by holding their hand and slowly removing this scaffold when they are ready to do this unaided).	○	○	○	○	○
Modelling (e.g., providing cues or modelling how to do something, to support a child in the outdoor environment)	○	○	○	○	○
Instruction (e.g., directly instructing a child who is at risk of injuring themselves in the outdoor environment)	○	○	○	○	○
Co-construction (e.g., actively involving yourself in children's outdoor play)	○	○	○	○	○
Negotiation (e.g., negotiating with a child around safety in the outdoor environment)	○	○	○	○	○
Intervening (e.g., directly intervening to prevent a child from harm in the outdoor environment)	○	○	○	○	○
Directing (e.g., providing explicit instruction and intervening when there are safety issues)	○	○	○	○	○
Supervising (e.g., closely watching while children make their own choices and freely explore)	○	○	○	○	○

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Very often	Always
Encouraging (e.g., encouraging a child who is nervous about engaging in an act of risk-taking by being positive and praising the child's efforts)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Supporting (e.g., intervening to provide physical or verbal support to a child)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Playground safety checks (e.g., completing playground safety checks to identify and remove any potential hazards)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Communicating (e.g., talking to children about possible risks and hazards)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Intentional provision of resources that offer challenge (e.g., loose parts, natural materials	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯
Intentional planning of the environment (e.g., setting up a challenge in the outdoor environment that is just beyond what a child can already do easily by him/herself)	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯

Other (please specify)

[   ]

11: Please rate your level of agreement to the following statements in relation to safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly Agree
Giving children the opportunity to navigate risk-taking is an important part of early childhood experiences	○	○	○	○	○
Children's safety is more important than exposing children to risk	○	○	○	○	○
Young children need the opportunity to explore and test themselves in safe risk-taking acts	○	○	○	○	○
My teaching colleagues and I share similar views in relation to safe risk-taking	○	○	○	○	○
I am concerned that I am over-protective of children in relation to risk-taking in the outdoor environment	○	○	○	○	○
I follow centre management guidelines and policies in relation to safe risk-taking	○	○	○	○	○
I find it difficult to determine safe risk-taking versus non safe risk-taking	○	○	○	○	○

Examination of outdoor environments

1. Please look at the following image and answer the questions below

Image one

Source: Terreni, L., & Pariman, A. (n.d.). Developing playgrounds in early childhood environments. Retrieved from https://www.education.govt.nz/assets/Documents/Early-Childhood/Starting-an-centre-based-ECE-service/DevelopingPlaygroundsGuide.pdf

1a) Referring to image one, what opportunities do you see in this environment for children to engage in safe risk-taking?

1b) Referring to image one, what concerns might you have about this environment in relation to safe risk-taking?

2: Do you have any further comments that you would like to make in relation to risk-taking in the early childhood outdoor environment?

Many thanks for participating in this study, your contribution is valued!

Appendix Two: Initial email invitation to teachers inviting participation in questionnaire

Kia ora

My name is Vikki Hanrahan and I am a Masterate student studying with Massey University. I am currently completing a Master of Education endorsed in Early Years. My supervisors are Drs. Tara McLaughlin and Karyn Aspden.

I am currently undertaking a research study that aims **to examine New Zealand early childhood teachers' and leaders' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment of early childhood centres.** I would like to invite you, and teachers in your team to participate in this research by completing the questionnaire which can be found by following the link below. I would be extremely grateful if you could share this email with all the early childhood teachers working in your service with children aged 3-5. The online questionnaire should take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.

If you are the primary email contact for many centres, please distribute this email to all the centres and teachers you are responsible for.

The link to the questionnaire is

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XYZFSNC

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to risk taking in the early childhood education outdoor environment. Teachers within the Canterbury region, who are currently working with children aged 3-5, are being invited to participate in this questionnaire. The results of this questionnaire will be used alongside data from three interviews with centre managers. Together, both sets of data will inform the results of this research.

If you have any questions about the study at any stage, you may contact me directly on the following contact details;

Researcher: Vikki Hanrahan

Alternatively you may contact my supervisors on the following contact details;

Research Supervisors:
Tara McLauglin: T.W.McLaughlin@massey.ac.nz
Karyn Aspden: K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz

Thank you for your time.

Nga mihi
Vikki Hanrahan

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 named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher or supervisors, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix Three: Semi-structured Interview Questions

Code name of participant:

Date:_____

Location:_____

Start Time:_____

End Time:_____

Interview conducted by: _____

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. In this interview we will be looking at questions related to safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment. Your perspective as a leader in your centre is very important and will be used alongside teacher's views in this study. As we progress through the interview, please tell me if you would like me to repeat any questions.

Before we begin, do you have any questions about the study?

Interview Questions (semi-structured)

1. How would you define risk-taking?
   a. Can you give me an example?
   b. When do you believe risk-taking is safe and when is it dangerous?

2. How do you feel about the role of safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment in regards to children's learning?
   a. Can you tell me about any advantages of allowing children to take risks in the outdoor environment?
   b. Can you tell me about any disadvantages of allowing children to take risks in the outdoor environment?
   c. Can you give me any examples of when safe risk-taking is most likely to occur?
   d. Can you describe the teacher's role in facilitating safe risk-taking?

3. As a leader in this service, what is your role in relation to risk-taking?
   a. In what ways do you currently promote safe-risk taking?
   b. What, if any, protective measures do you implement for the setting in relation to risk taking?
   c. How do you view an optimal outdoor environment for safe risk-taking?
   d. Can you tell me about any centre policies that guide teachers in relation to safe-risk taking?

e. Have you/the team engaged in any professional development and or discussion in relation to this area?

4. Have you heard of any cases in the media surrounding the outdoor environment, and if so, have these had any impact on your centre practices?

5. Has the implementation of the new Health and Safety Act had any influence on your centre practices in relation to risk-taking in the outdoor environment?

6. As a centre manager can you describe a time when you perhaps felt you were over-protective of a child/children and limited safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment, or directed teacher/s to be over protective? What influenced your decisions in this situation?

7. As a centre manager, what ways do you see that teachers' perspectives and practices impact on their ability to promote safe risk-taking opportunities in the outdoor environment?
   a. What helps?
   b. What restricts?

8. In what ways do the Education (Early Childhood Services) Regulations 2008, licensing criteria, centre policies and Te Whāriki influence the way in which you and your team provide safe risk-taking opportunities for children in the outdoor environment?
   a. Can you tell me what helps?
   b. Can you tell me what restricts?

Thank you for giving up your time to answer my questions. I will transcribe the interviews and then provide you with a copy of the transcription so that you can verify its accuracy. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you feel would be beneficial for my study or anything else that you would like to add?

Appendix Four: Ethics

Date: 09 October 2016

Dear Vikki Hanrahan

Re: Ethics Notification - **4000016827** - **Examining New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre managers' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment.**

Thank you for your notification which you have assessed as Low Risk.

Your project has been recorded in our system which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

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

If situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your ethical analysis, please go to http://rims.massey.ac.nz and register the changes in order that they be assessed as safe to proceed.

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 in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz. "

Please note, 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 complete the application form again, answering "yes" to the publication question to provide more information for 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

[signature]

Human Ethics Low Risk notification

Dr Brian Finch
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Appendix Five: Interview Information Sheet

(Document has been redacted to remove participants name)

Examining New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre leaders' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment

Information Sheet for Interview Participants

22nd August 2017

Kia ora

My name is Vikki Hanrahan and I am a Masterate student studying with Massey University. I am currently completing a Master of Education endorsed in Early Years. My supervisors are Drs. Karyn Aspden and Penny Haworth.

I am currently undertaking a research study that aims to examine New Zealand early childhood teachers' and leaders' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting. Risk taking and the protection of children have become contested issues within New Zealand as there are diverse views surrounding whether we should be protecting children from harm, or providing opportunities for children to engage in safe risk-taking in the outdoor environment of an early childhood setting.

I wish to invite you to participate in this study. I am interviewing three centre leaders/supervisors from differing teacher-lead service types. If you consent to participate in this study, you will be interviewed about your perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment. I anticipate the interview will take between 30-40 minutes and can be conducted at a time and location that best suits you.

In addition to interviews with centre managers, I will distribute an online survey to early childhood teachers in the Canterbury region, to explore teachers' perspectives and practices in relation to risk taking. The results of the interviews will be analysed along with results from the questionnaire, to inform the study and to gain an understanding of current beliefs and practice.

All data obtained for this research study will be securely stored in a locked cabinet and on a password protected computer. Data will only be used for the purpose of the research study outlined in this information sheet which include the submission of my thesis and any resulting publications. Pseudonyms will be used to protect your anonymity throughout the research study and no identifying information will be used in the thesis or resulting publications. Should you wish to obtain a copy of the project findings, this can be arranged via email.

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate you have the right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;

- withdraw from the study prior to the submission of my thesis with no penalty. If you choose to withdraw from this study, I will remove any information relating to you;

- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;

- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview;

- upon request, be given access to a summary of the findings from the study when it is concluded.

If you have any questions about the study at any stage, you may contact me directly on the following contact details;

Researcher: Vikki Hanrahan

████████████████

Alternatively you may contact my supervisors on the following contact details;

Research Supervisors:
Karyn Aspden: K.M.Aspden@massey.ac.nz
Penny Haworth: P.A.Haworth@massey.ac.nz

If you understand and agree to take part in the study, please complete and sign the consent form attached.

Yours sincerely

Vikki Hanrahan

Vikki Hanrahan

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 named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher or supervisors, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix Six: Interview Consent Form

<div align="center">

MASSEY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

TE KURA O TE MĀTAURANGA

</div>

Examining New Zealand early childhood teachers' and centre leaders' perspectives and practices related to children's risk-taking in the outdoor environment

Date: 30 July 2017

<div align="center">

Consent Form for Interview Particpants

</div>

I have read the participant information sheet and I have had the details of this study explained to me. I understand that I am able to ask questions about this study at any time.

1. I agree/do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.

2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

By signing below, **I agree to participate in this study, under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.**

Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

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 named in this document is responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researcher or supervisors, please contact Dr Brian Finch, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 3569099 ext 86015, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Institute of Education

Cnr Albany Drive & Collinson Road, Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand **T** 06 356 9099 www.massey.ac.nz

108

Appendix Seven: Health and Safety Practices Standard: General

Health and Safety Practices Standard: General

HS12	Equipment, premises and facilities are checked on every day of operation for hazards to children. Accident/incident records are analysed to identify hazards and appropriate action is taken. Hazards to the safety of children are eliminated, isolated or minimised. Consideration of hazards must include but is not limited to: • cleaning agents, medicines, poisons, and other hazardous materials; • electrical sockets and appliances (particularly heaters); • hazards present in kitchen or laundry facilities; • vandalism, dangerous objects, and foreign materials (e.g. broken glass, animal droppings); • the condition and placement of learning, play and other equipment; • windows and other areas of glass; • poisonous plants; and • bodies of water. **Documentation required:** A documented risk management system.
HS13	The temperature of warm water delivered from taps that are accessible to children is no higher than 40°C, and comfortable for children at the centre to use.
HS14	Water stored in any hot water cylinder is kept at a temperature of at least 60°C.
HS15	All practicable steps are taken to ensure that noise levels do not unduly interfere with normal speech and/or communication, or cause any child attending distress or harm.
HS16	Safe and hygienic handling practices are implemented with regard to any animals at the service. All animals are able to be restrained.

HS17	When children leave the premises on an excursion:
	• assessment and management of risk is undertaken, and adult: child ratios are determined accordingly. Ratios are not less than the required adult: child ratio;
	• the first aid requirements in criterion HS25 are met in relation to those children and any children remaining at the premises;
	• parents/caregivers have given prior written approval to their child's participation and of the proposed ratio for:
	    1. i regular excursions at the time of enrolment; and
	    2. ii special excursions prior to the excursion taking place; and
	• there are communication systems in place so that people know where the children are, and adults can communicate with others as necessary.
	When children leave the premises on a regular or special excursion, the excursion must be approved by the Person Responsible.
	Documentation required:
	A record of excursions that includes:

- the names of adults and children involved;
- the time and date of the excursion;
- the location and method of travel;
- assessment and management of risk;
- adult: child ratios;
- evidence of parental permission and approval of adult: child ratios for regular excursions;
- evidence of parental permission and approval of adult: child ratios for special excursions; and
- the signature of the Person Responsible giving approval for the excursion to take place.

HS18	If children travel in a motor vehicle while in the care of the service:

- each child is restrained as required by Land Transport legislation;
- required adult: child ratios are maintained; and
- the written permission of a parent of the child is obtained before the travel begins (unless the child is travelling with their parent).

Documentation required:

Evidence of parental permission for any travel by motor vehicle. In most cases, this requirement will be met by the excursion records required for criterion HS17. However, services that provide transport for children to and/or from the service must also gain written permission from a parent upon enrolment.