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Freedom of the hills



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Abstract

This thesis has two main parts; the first addresses the nature of freedom as it is experienced in outdoor environments. The second part explores some of the ways in which these experiences can inform learning and outdoor education.

Recollections of freedom were gathered from people who have a professional involvement in the outdoors as writers, photographers, professional adventurers, instructors and teachers. They were chosen because of their deep commitment to sharing their ideas about the outdoors in a variety of ways. Further to that, stories of mountaineering from the New Zealand Alpine Club Journals were read to gather background material on the culture of mountaineering and how the meaning of 'freedom of the hills' has been constructed.

The research is based on Peile's (1994) ecological paradigm which has five main themes; holism, complexity, participatory, being and creativity. These themes underpin the ontological and epistemological foundations of the research and also provide the framework for synthesising the experiences of freedom.

The research explores the ways that freedom and learning are intertwined and concludes that there are structural difficulties in current outdoor education practices which limit freedom. The research suggests a more ecologically inclusive metaphor for learning based on the Nor'west storm, as one small step to resolving this dilemma.



Today I learnt what silence is,
It's never heard or seen
So how can it be known?
Emptiness so immense
It filled my mind.

The clouds descended
Isolating me from the jagged
horizon
A cocoon of damp and airy
cotton wool
Swirling



So full was my mind with silence
No words could enter
No image form
Unseen unheard
Alone

The sky was deep blue and air
sparkly, with awe-inspiring rock
pinnacles,
snow-clad peaks and an ice vista
floating on a mirage of mist.
And I moved in harmony; body,
mind, Antarctica.



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No thesis can be completed in isolation and this one is no exception. It has been an emerging work reliant on the thoughts and support of many people

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Chapter 1

Introduction - Freedom of the Hills

Wow, yesterday we cycled into Cook - Queen of the Desert. 2000 kilometres across the Nullabor and we decided on a mere whim to cycle a hundred kilometres up the road to Cook. The wind was at our backs the first time for about ten days. The wedge tails were circling and there was an unbelievable sense of freedom. No road trains, no food (well very little) no getting closer to our destination. It was a holiday within a holiday. The road was dusty and corrugated, but the cycling was pure joy. The umbrella came out as we tried to parasail our way up the road. We just couldn't stop smiling, we'd managed to get off the treadmill and just enjoy every moment - somehow we felt like we weren't just passing through. (JS personal notes)

I have often had an overwhelming sense of something so profound it takes my breath away and my whole body 'smiles'. On many trips and in many environments there have been moments when everything comes into focus, and nothing else matters; it is a wonderful sensation and I refer to it as a 'feeling of freedom'. I am not alone; friends, colleagues and students all talk about such moments. This feeling is one of the reasons so many New Zealanders open the door and head for the hills.

For many years, I have taught outdoor education and have noted the different responses of individuals to the natural environment. One positive response is what some refer to as 'freedom', which is often a combination of inspiration, awareness of the world and self. For many it is a time of heightened aliveness, a moment of

unrestricted joy. Cherry–Garrard, said that “exploration is the physical expression of the intellectual passion.” (1994: xciii). This research explores the nature of freedom as experienced in outdoor environments and its connections to learning and outdoor education. My thesis is that freedom is intertwined with learning, when learning involves a reaching out, an awakening of consciousness and a building of relationships with the world.

1.1 Freedom and learning

Kant (1784) supports the condition of freedom being an important aspect of learning when he says that enlightenment requires nothing other than freedom, while warning that “Everywhere there is restriction on freedom.” Taylor (1989) suggests freedom permeates everyone who is open to it and is a necessary condition for individuals to reach their full potential. Freire (1993) says that “Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.” He further describes freedom as “... the indispensable condition for the quest for human completion”. ‘Freedom of the hills’ is not just about mountaineering trips; it is a metaphor for profound experiences which lie at the heart of modern consciousness.

1.2 Freedom and education

While the links between freedom and learning are well supported, the links to education are more problematic. It is possible that some teachers believe that in giving the student freedom they risk anarchy, in that the students would not do what the educator wants, how they want it and when they want it. Even within adult education, there are some educators who wish to control student learning. However, Nietzsche (1983) refers to the role and importance of educators as liberators, when he says “...for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be. Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralysed: your educators can be only your liberators” (p. 129). Krishnamurti (1954) also suggests that by not giving a person freedom then the

entire point of education would be lost and the only thing left would be vocational training and the inculcation of social values and perspectives.

This research attempts to engage the emotions as well as the rational mind, and allow the imagination of the readers to expand into the gaps and co-evolve with the writing. Orr (1994) writes “We have emotions for the same reason we have arms and legs: they have proved to be useful over evolutionary time. The point in either case is not to cut off various appendages and qualities, but rather to learn to coordinate and discipline them to good use”. Freedom as it is experienced in the outdoors can stir the emotions through a level of engagement and involvement which is not easily ignored.



The Sky is blue

All around is air

I breathe

My voice is quiet

I float

Do bubbles ever burst?

Chapter 2

Methodology

The concept of freedom is somewhat elusive, as suggested by Hegel (as cited in Dudley, 2002) when he said “No idea is so generally recognized as indefinite, ambiguous, and open to the greatest misconceptions (to which therefore it actually falls a victim) as the idea of freedom.” This elusiveness makes it a challenging topic to research. It was therefore important to choose a framework which supported the research question. The framework selected combines two elements, narrative and an ecological research paradigm.

2.1 Background Reasons for Selecting the Methodology

Changes in scientific research have been generally slow and deliberate. The roots of traditional positivist research date back to the sixteenth century (Gale, 1979) and have continued to dominate research culture. Kuhn (1970), however, suggested that there are different and competing paradigms from which to view the world. Maykut and Morehouse say that a paradigm “... is the world view within which researchers work.” (1994, p. 4). Researchers with different paradigms see “different things when they look from the same point in the same direction.” (Kuhn, 1970, p. 149).

Currently, major research paradigms are Positivist, Post Positivist, Interpretive and Critical, (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The positivist paradigm is based on the belief that there is an external world of objects which can be measured and quantified in a search for an objective and definable truth. Post-positivist research, while searching for a ‘real’ reality recognises that it is imperfect and unlikely to be found. The interpretivist paradigm aims to understand the social world through rich detailed descriptions of lived experiences. It accepts that there are multiple realities and that research is conducted within social contexts. The Critical research paradigm holds that the epistemological foundation of knowledge is socially and historically validated by a dominant group, and the beliefs of that group need to be analysed to determine what knowledge has been oppressed. The basis of much Critical research

is the assumption that there are no neutral perspectives; everything has been shaped by social interest.

Peile (1994) suggests that there are two other emerging paradigms which he calls Ecological and Creative. These are based on an integration of ideas with the focus on encouraging more mutual, creative and non-exploitative relationships in research. Guba and Lincoln (2003) also suggest a further paradigm from their 1994 work which they have called Participatory, after Heron and Reason (1997) in which the researcher plays an integral part within the research. My personal beliefs draw me towards an ecological paradigm of life (Capra, 1982, Bateson, 1972, 1991). Research framed within an ecological paradigm is more focused on synthesising ideas from many traditions and disciplines, as it values connections and interrelationships; it does not revolve around individual action, but is a reciprocal process. The ecological paradigm does not displace pre-existing paradigms; it connects with them.

2.2 An Ecological Paradigm of Research

Ecological research as defined by Peile (1994) is systems based and holistic. It enables a dynamic development of ideas. It is also an emerging framework which enables method and content to develop together without being limited by established conventions. Its epistemological foundation is that knowledge arises from many sources. It is not just an intellectual exercise, but involves emotions, senses and physical activity.

*A maze of piercing, trackless, thrilling thoughts.
Involving and embracing each with each,
Rapid as fire, inextricably link'd,
Expanding momentarily with every sight
And sound which struck the palpitating sense,
The issue of strong impulse, hurried through
The riv'n rapt brain...
Tennyson 1829*

Research that recognises the world as dynamic, chaotic, non-linear and forever changing acknowledges that few issues can be addressed in isolation. Roy (2003) suggests that generally truth is not as interesting as “the complex and dynamic intercrossing of forces, intensities, discourses, desires, accidents, idiosyncrasies, and relations of power that produce those culminations.” (p. 1). The objectively understood single truth of a situation is not waiting for the researcher to find. Meaning is negotiated in a social context through the act of interpretation; it is not simply discovered (Schwandt, 2000). Ecological research enables the evolution of ideas as it involves a shift in thinking from hierarchies to networks, from objects to relationships, from the rational to the intuitive, and from linear to non-linear thinking. I believe that this research has started to integrate some of the aforementioned ideas. This is not easy. Many habits have been formed within a society that has generally privileged and taught the more rational and logical modes of thought..

Some basic concepts of ecological research include:

- **Holism** – Research recognises the big picture as different from the sum of its isolated parts. The researcher moves between the parts and the whole, as every part, is dependent on other parts, and all parts are dependent on the system as a whole. There is a flow of multiple interactions within the environment so it is important that research reflects that.
- **Complexity** – Complex systems interact in dynamic ways and can be seen from many points of view. Research must allow for many interpretations and recognise that constructs like freedom are constantly reforming. Interaction is understood to be random and complex and so analysis does not search for simple linear cause-and-effect, but enables a network of connections.
- **Being** – Accepting the lived moment involves the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of being human. Life is constant change and creation. So for research, reading is also part of the creation of ideas;

hence spaces, pauses and changes in style occur in the writing, to provide opportunities for the reader to interpret and create meaning for themselves.

- **Participatory** – The researcher is intimately connected to the participants, the environment and the question; the findings emerge and are co-created. The ideas are not structured in a hierarchical form, but expand out as new connections are explored.
- **Creativity** – Research in the past has generally searched for and tried to ‘discover information’. Creativity within research recognises the importance of imagination and creative expression to allow for the infinite number of meanings and possibilities.

There is no simple single way to acquire knowledge; it is complicated and complex (Davis & Sumara, 1997). We do not learn independently, in autonomous isolation, as some theories would have us believe. We are part of a larger ecosystem and our knowing emerges through the interaction of mind, body, community and environment. This co-emergence of knowledge, knower and environment is referred to as Enactivism. (Maturana & Varela, 1987; Varela, Thompson, & Rosch, 1991; Fenwick, 2001). The enactive approach enables knowledge to emerge in a dynamic and relational way.

The material gathered is more ‘subjective’ than ‘objective’ because the research itself becomes part of the research question. In ecological research, the researcher tries to minimise the objective separateness of researcher, participants and the question. Knowledge develops through the process of interaction between people and, for research that means a constantly enduring partnership between the researcher and the participants of the research. This recognition of partnerships also includes the reader. It is assumed that they will also add their own interpretations and hence be involved in the co-emergence of ideas.

Researchers immerse themselves into the study and this means that their personal values are integrated into the process. Creswell (1998) says that values are

embedded in the topic, in the way the topic is explored and in the researchers themselves. Researchers can confront this by reporting their values and biases.

Nothing is fixed; homeostasis involves a search for balance in a constantly dynamic environment. When the living moment is valued ahead of rational analysis or theoretical principles, then a new hierarchy of methods could be created. The ecological framework tries to avoid this by integrating many aspects in its attempt to build up a whole picture. The ecological paradigm is still emerging and so has less history, literature and convention defining its scope. To research freedom and its connection to learning requires the ability to expand on some common ways of addressing issues, and hopefully enable new connections to emerge.

2.3 Narrative

A story is a reconstruction of a personal experience which enables a depth of meaning to be explored. Explanations can often become stereotyped and dry and so need to be balanced with the richer descriptions of the participants' narrative voice. Ricoeur (1966), talked about describing what was happening as opposed to explaining it because "To explain always means to move from the complex to the simple" (1966, p. 4). He thought it made more sense to first describe the simple act and then to link it to the complexity of motivations, habits and emotions. This research has taken that approach.

Connected to narrative is the desire to explore human experience along with all its richness, inconsistencies and contradictions. Narrative sometimes exaggerates and highlights things in an attempt to strengthen the message. This exaggeration is deliberate, so that it can challenge the familiar and deepen understanding. However, that does not remove the need for rigour and critique.

Wolcott (1994) said that qualitative researchers need to be storytellers and storytelling should be one of their distinguishing attributes. Stories, like other forms of research, mediate knowledge; they are not accurate representations. Personal narratives are constructed by the individual from memories, but those memories are changed by new situations. They do however, allow for what Soja (2000) calls the "Thirdspace". The First space is the perceived or what can be physically

experienced. The Second space is the conceived or imagined reality or the mental map of a place; it is more subjective and is concerned more with thoughts.

Thirdspace is lived space; simultaneously real and imagined, actual and virtual, the experience of the individual and the collective. It is the actual life story. There is much that is unknown and unknowable and only when we have to explain our subjective experiences, do the first, second and third space separate. One way to explore lived experience is through the use of creative expression, as some experiences touch us so deeply that creative forms are sometimes the only way for the meaning to be expressed (Brearley, 2000).

Richardson (1994) suggested that the way researchers are expected to write, influences what they can write about. Eisner (1991) also says that the way we chose to represent the world influences what we can say and what we are likely to experience. Narrative offers the potential to make research accessible to more practitioners who generally have a distrust of academic texts and research.

Narrative is a broad field of inquiry with some overlapping epistemological foundations. One of the earliest foundations of narrative research was in literary criticism where the structure of the story was studied to determine its function. This strand was developed further into the linguistic theory of Saussure and a semiotic analysis of narrative. Ricoeur (1984) looked at narrative research through the reading of the text and seeing what could be interpreted from it. Constructivism explores narrative from the perspective of identity-development in which life stories do not simply reflect actual events, but actively shape the individual. Narrative is used in critical research, hermeneutic research, autobiographical studies, literary research and feminist studies. Its wide-ranging use is partly due to its ability to make connections to the self, others and society.

Narrative is becoming a popular research tool within both outdoor education and environmental education (Stolz, 2000; Keeble, 2003). However, popularity doesn't necessarily make it a sound or valid research method. Larson (1997) suggests that we need to take a careful look at narrative inquiry because it is more complex than many assume. She says that "... inquirers must become wide-awake to the many ways in which our methodological assumptions limit the stories that can be told

through personal narrative inquiry. Achieving greater insight into the life worlds of story-givers is critical if we are to tap into the power of personal narrative as an epistemological tool.” (1997, p. 456). She suggests that one way of overcoming this, is through a more dialogic approach, where open discussion helps the story teller untangle the complex meanings of their own lived experiences. Her article was a reflection on being interviewed for research, where, on reading the transcript, she became aware of its incompleteness. As a researcher, she became more aware of the assumptions made during the research through the frustrations of her own story not being told in the way she wanted. Narrative has at times been romanticised as a privileged way of knowing in itself; Larson makes it clear that it is not.

While narrative is used in this thesis to gather data, it is not extended into other areas of narrative research such as textual analysis and creative representation. It is important that the voice of the participants remains as much as possible in an unaltered form, because when the researcher re-describes the experiences, they are taken out of their original context. Rather than change the stories of the participants, I look for connections between their stories and mine and use my own experiences to explore the ideas. An example of this is that when Freda (a pseudonym of one of the participants who will be introduced later) recounted the following story; it resonated strongly with similar experiences of mine in the same area.

There are different degrees aren't there, but yesterday morning I went biking up on the hills at 7ish and err it was a beautiful sunrise, ... I was going up the Vernon track and the sun was pink when it started to come up and it stayed pink the whole time and when I got to the top of the track – and funnily enough there were two young teenagers sitting in their car looking at the sunrise and I thought that's quite neat while I've biked up here and enjoyed it the whole way these two people who you'd usually associate with driving their cars up and down Colombo Street have obviously come up here as well, just to enjoy the sunrise. But I enjoy the sense of movement on the mountain bike as much as anything.

My response was to describe similar feelings with the following words and images.

Christchurch sky

Today the air in Christchurch is thick
feels like, smells like
soot and fumes
should I just lie with my head in the exhaust
I am exhausted

Outdoors there is sky
Blue blue sky
how can I get there? Without exhausting
my energy quotient
Consequences block my route
Reason stops me
But my senses drive me out of my mind
the air suffocates the lungs
as I cycle to the blue blue sky
the pedals turn unwinding the tension
up up
floating on clouds

2.4 The Components of the Research

The research has three main components:

- Interviews
- Exploration of mountain literature
- Personal poems and stories.

This section explains why the following research components were selected and what their limitations are. It also identifies the ethical considerations. The process of how they fit together is told in Chapter 4.

2.4.1 Interviews

The styles of qualitative research interviews can be categorised as highly structured semi-structured or unstructured. Within these definitions the structured interview follows a set list of questions including several closed questions. Semi-structured interviews are “particularly suited to analysis that focuses upon meanings and perceptions because they allow concepts, terms and meanings to be defined by the subjects rather than predetermined by the researcher” (Davidson, 2001 p. 12). The unstructured interview enables the interviewee to set the agenda and dictate the topics. An integration of semi-structured and unstructured interview techniques was chosen for this research. Each interviewee was asked to share stories about their experiences of freedom of the hills or times when they felt constrained in the outdoors. After the opening question, the interviews progressed in very different ways as each participant had a very different story to tell.

2.4.1.1 Selection of participants

The participants were selected because of their professional involvement in the outdoors as writers, photographers, professional adventurers, instructors and teachers. All had travelled overseas, but were currently residing in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. They were chosen because of their commitment to sharing their ideas about the outdoors in a variety of ways. The use of specialists

could be seen as elitist, but if the ability to derive pleasure from outdoor experiences is an acquired skill or attitude, it makes sense to study those who possess and practise it.

2.4.1.2 Limitations of the interview process

One of the limitations is that this group are all very experienced in the outdoors and have travelled all over the world in the search for outdoor experiences. The stories they told were often about exotic locations which many people might never be able to visit.

All the participants were previously known to me and while that may have helped them feel at ease and share their stories, it also meant that they were connected in some way to a sub-group of outdoor specialists. The beliefs and opinions of this group, while they did not all know each other directly, could be more closely aligned than if they had been selected from a wider population.

The qualitative research interview gathers stories with the underlying assumption that the participant has information relevant and pertinent to the research. My opening comments and questions reflected that. There was no attempt to prove that experiences of freedom did or did not occur. My intent was to gather stories and I assumed that the stories were relevant.

The site, setting, time of day and atmosphere can also shape the stories told. The same people interviewed at different times and in different places may well have told different stories. The research conducted by someone else would also have gathered different stories. The interviewer also can only ever reach a partial understanding of the interviewee's viewpoint; everything is filtered through the researcher and his or her bias.

Once the stories have been gathered, the interviewer then tries to interpret meaning, and this has the added complication that participants rarely have a single response to a question. There is also a tendency for people to tell the stories they think the interviewer wants to hear and this could be exacerbated when interviewing acquaintances.

2.4.2 Mountain literature

Since the first edition in 1960, “Mountaineering: The Freedom of the Hills” has been the classic technical mountaineering text. The book describes the techniques of mountaineering not the freedom of the experiences. It is the title and not the content that this research has appropriated.

The sub-culture of the outdoors and mountaineering in particular has a rich literary tradition which focuses on the immediacy of the experience. The research involved reading many of the New Zealand Alpine Journals starting in 1892. The articles were not systematically analysed, but each journal was read quickly to get an overall understanding of the content then specific articles were read in more detail. The journals were not read in chronological sequence, but where possible were read decade by decade. The selection of articles was based around those that caught my interest because of the title, topic or style of writing. Even from this slightly random reading it was possible to get a feeling of the changing face of mountaineering in Aotearoa New Zealand through the decades.

Several other books were recommended by the interviewees, so I made an attempt to read them. The issue of freedom is very wide ranging and the background of mountain literature allowed the topic to be framed. It provided one of the lenses through which to explore freedom. The quotes selected give depth and background colour to the research with the intention of positioning it more specifically in Aotearoa, New Zealand.

We have it all to ourselves in this out-of-the-way corner of the world, ... climbing in New Zealand is destined to be a different matter than that of Swiss mountaineering, ...The want of guides here will always tend to develop a different type of climber, ...It remains to be seen whether this want or defect-if it be one-will be compensated for by the colonial training and the native independence of the colonial youth.
(Mannering, 1892, pp. 12-13)

2.4.3 Poetry and art

Several researchers have experimented with creative forms of expression including poetry, drama, sculpture and art (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Brearley, 2000; Richardson, 1997; Tierney & Lincoln, 1997). These different styles of creative representation not only encourage different levels of emotional engagement, but produce the research in their own right. Richardson (2000) talks about the process of writing as another method of inquiry and that it should not just be seen as the end product of research. She suggests that creative writing has an aesthetic purpose of its own which enables researchers to examine their own interpretations. Hertz (1997) suggests that researchers who are reflexive about their own knowledge can produce less distorted research accounts.

Most of the poems included were written in an intuitive manner to express some aspects of freedom which the academic writing was failing to do, although a few had been drafted earlier, whilst on trips to Antarctica and Australia. Poetry and visual representation can capture thoughts and emotions which elude other styles of writing because it is through form, rhythm and imagery, not definition or explanation that they can convey meaning. "Stories, like rhymed poems or songs, readily incorporate themselves into our felt experience; the shifts of action echo and resonate our own encounters—in hearing or telling the story we vicariously live it, and the travails of its characters embed themselves into our own flesh" (Abram, 1996, p. 120).

Poems and artworks, as part of research, do not always form a linear approach to constructing an elegant argument based on the collected data. They are interspersed throughout the research, but could be read independently of their positioning.

Gadamer (1989) believed that experience can not be studied from a neutral position. He thought that prior knowledge was needed and that the researcher should be involved and connected. I have climbed mountains, paddled rivers and have had outdoor adventures, so my own story is entwined with the stories of others. My personal experiences can not be ignored as they are part of me and how I interpret the world. Hence it is better to disclose and intertwine them in an open way rather than dismiss or disguise them.

Fourteen shades of grey

*I ran away
Crossed an old stone wall and climbed
and climbed
Looking out from those forbidden hills
The space extended beyond horizons*

*The stolen image intensified
What was just one became fourteen shades of grey*

*The slatey waters swirled and rippled never settling
Revealing the surface and nothing more
But I saw myself
Refractions of my soul
Restless*

*Letting the tide wash over me
Or tumbling in the surf
Does not cleanse like the mountain air
Sticky skin and tangled hair cling on*

*The sea still seeps from my eyes
when I am contained*

2.4.4 Ethics

A number of ethical guidelines were followed throughout this research study. The interviews conducted as part of the study required participants to recall stories and events in ways they might not have otherwise done. I avoided judgmental language and remained open to the information provided. The questions asked were open ended and attempted to follow what the participants were talking about rather than search for specific themes. This can be tricky as the questions are not vetted but emerge with the story. I completed a notification for Massey University Human Ethic Committee which was then evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk (Appendix A).

The study was explained to the participants verbally and in writing and participants completed a consent form (Appendix B). Participants were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could choose to withdraw from the research or change any of their responses when reviewing the transcript (Appendix C). The only changes that were suggested by the participants were minor correction of place names that I had misspelt.

Participants have been provided with pseudonyms in the report and some details modified to maintain anonymity. Original audio data is stored in a private residence and the data was personally transcribed and stored on a personal computer with password protection.

Chapter 3

What is Freedom?

Dudley (2002) says “Not only is freedom poorly understood, but we are falsely confident that we do understand it. This doubly unfortunate condition dissuades people from undertaking needed investigations into the meaning of freedom” (p. 1). This appears to be at least partly true, as there was little direct and specific research on freedom in the educational context. However, the philosophical, political, social and educational literature that discusses freedom is extensive, so my literature search was ecological in character, one article or book spawning interest others. It is recognised that there are inherent difficulties in this style of ecological literature search, as the ideas which are interesting to the researcher are the ones that stand out at the time. The same readings at different times would reveal different ideas and different themes. An ecological literature search can also be difficult for the reader to follow as it tends to circle and overlap itself at times, but then it also heads off on tangents.

There is a vast amount written about free will and determinism, positive and negative liberty, and autonomy and social anarchy. It is out of the scope of this thesis to review those debates.

3.1 Definitions and Origins

To start, I explored basic dictionary definitions and selected the following definition, given the usage example that followed it.

freedom noun

The condition or right of being able or allowed to do, say, think, etc. whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited

I felt such a sense of freedom, up in the hills alone.

(Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

However, Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) point out, that while most English speakers live outside of Europe and North America, the overwhelming majority of definitions and examples are drawn from England and the United States. This

cultural imperialism places boundaries on what is thinkable and hence what is known and privileged. This definition will be subject to that qualification.

According to Beabout (1998) the etymology of the word 'free' is from the Old High German *fri*, which stems from the Indo-European root *prijos* (dear, beloved) and has a connection with the Old English *frigu* (love) and *freon* (friend). While returning to the historic origins of words can lead to the assumption that there is a linear and meaningful history of human progress that is not the intention. The origin of the word is just one starting point in the exploration of freedom as a concept. The current usage of freedom is now more about choice and not being controlled, as the Cambridge definition suggests. However, there are educators like Krishnamurti (1996) for whom the word freedom implies love.

3.2 The Mixed Space of Freedom

There is an aspect of freedom which is somewhat intangible. This possibly relates to what has been described by Shotter (1993) as "knowing from within," Lefebvre (1991) as "mixed space," and Ricoeur (1966) as the connection between the voluntary and the involuntary. It is a merging of the known and not known; something which happens in the unconscious at a point between what is perceived and conceived. When it is examined and dissected it seems to disappear.

Lefebvre (1991) suggested we should search for alternative ways of describing our experiences, rather than frame them within for example dichotomies like culture and nature, or mental and social space. He suggested that the world should be perceived not as 'text' but as 'texture' and should be explored and known through all the senses not just the eye. When we enter Lefebvre's mixed space, dualities dissolve into the rich descriptions of lived experience and so limited explanations can evolve into a deeper knowing. This opening into mixed space which is neither urbanised nor 'natural' neither inside nor outside enables the imagination to conceive of more possibilities because it is no longer constrained by trying to represent just what the senses perceive. It is an expanding circle of ideas.

And so feeling melancholy I survey my surroundings. Mountains. And the sound of a train. A train? I can hear something and Regan can too, so I'm not mad.

Then it hits us, rocks us like babies. Ever so gently in long slow waves. An earthquake. A pulse from within the earth. It goes on for what seems like a long time. Until the roar has disappeared and been replaced by silence Regan and I are completely awestruck and keep hoping for more to feel the power of it all over again. That's when things changed for me on this trip. (Morrison, 2002, p. 35)

This mixed space is concerned with the lived experience of freedom. This is more than an abstract concept; it is a conscious presence, and is shaped by doing and acting rather than thinking.

Ricoeur (1966) argues that the voluntary and involuntary dimensions of human existence are complementary, despite not always sitting comfortably with each other. The integration of what could be seen as opposites provides a moment where perception and conception merge, and a different level of consciousness is fleetingly achieved. There is often a degree of internal conflict, but he does suggest that it is that conflict which creates a distinctive identity and enables personal freedom.

After a lengthy consideration as to which was the whitest part of the map, we eventually decided on the Tutuko District, determined to the best of our ability to destroy its blankness. Some people euphemistically call this kind of thing "pioneering," an attractive term implying a service to humanity. But, to be truthful, it is exactly the reverse. It is destroying the romance of the untrodden lands, well knowing that by so doing you are depriving the rest of humanity of the same pleasure. (Byles, 1937, p. 50)

3.3 Autonomy

According to Greene (1988) current Western interpretations of personal freedom refer more to self-determination, than to connectedness or community. While she

writes from a North American perspective saying that to be autonomous and independent is the American dream, she adds that it is important to look for new ways of achieving freedom. There is also an increasing awareness that personal autonomy is perhaps not only unattainable, but undesirable (Taylor, 1979). Humans are embedded in a social context with traditions and values and it is difficult, if not impossible, to control those elements. To try and act in a totally autonomous manner also alleviates some of the positives that communal commitment provides.

Greene is also concerned that a focus on autonomy is linked to the ability to make rational choices which can exclude creativity, imagination and the exploration or consideration of many possibilities. She suggests that, human freedom “is the capacity to surpass the given and look at things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1988, p. 3). The ability to imagine what the world could be like is a necessary and often neglected part of education. When Greene speaks of freedom, she refers to it as spontaneity or the wide-awake stream of consciousness. Western philosophy often identifies consciousness with rational conceptual processes and the discovery of what is ‘out there’ and external to us, rather than allowing for the spontaneous production of events which are life itself.

Up there with my mountain buddy, the ridge drawing my footsteps along into the evening light, snow diamonds glinting in the slanting rays, clouds luminous with promise, a sense of enormous space and freedom, my soul seemed to be resonating with the song of the Universe. Life doesn't come any more real or precious than this. (Mellish and Pullan, 2001, p. 44)

3.4 Freedom and Society

Freedom, as a lived experience in the outdoors, though it has a strong connection with the visceral, immediate sensations, is still culturally and socially negotiated. The stories we are brought up with create expectations and focus our attention on certain aspects of the outdoor experience. The telling of stories is more than a recounting of facts. It involves the reformulation of ideas and the interpretation of experiences, which in turn contributes to the construction of society.

Szkudlarek (1993) suggests that education is about how individuals and communities form their identity and once again freedom is an integral element in that. He says that freedom is often defined in terms of not being oppressed, but that it should be more than that. He sees freedom as dynamic, and involving the creation of spheres of freedom for individuals and groups. These spheres can be created by blending into society (no one is watching) or by achieving a certain level of social status (having more control). The dynamic and complex nature of freedom suggests that focusing on one aspect imposes limits, and that only through hybrid ideas can it become more than freedom from constraint.

Marcuse (1978) sees the role of society as manipulating and controlling, and suggests that individual isolation is an important aspect of developing a critical political awareness. By removing oneself from the patterns and conventions of society, it may be possible to see it afresh. Marcuse discussed how the immersion and escape into art can create opportunities to see society from different perspectives. This is similar to the intense engagement experienced in many outdoor activities, particularly mountaineering. The ability to withdraw from some of the accepted social conventions enables a space to be opened, in which new and revolutionary thoughts can develop. There needs to be a break with everyday experiences, in order to see them with more clarity.

Life was simple. Time rich, we lived in the moment and breathed deep of the untrammelled wildness of the place. Everything made sense there; no waiting at red lights at an empty intersection, no bus-stop faces, blank as blotters, or senses dulled by the stink and din of a city. Our days were ordered by the barometer and what we could read into our charts not the signs that began 'Please refrain...'. Life was real and consequences swift. Ignoring a sign in the city could get you towed; missing a sign in the ice could get you killed. (Jones, 2004a, pp. 94-95)

Once a certain space has been created to view ideas and society in different ways, then it becomes possible to make choices and changes. However, Rajchman (1985) suggests that it is not enough just to look at everyday practices from a different point

of view, but that freedom occurs from the challenging of everyday practices that seem inevitable and permanent. He says that we are not born free, but born into relations of power and these everyday experiences require constant challenging and questioning. The degree of freedom available increases once people accept that change does occur and that they have the ability to influence it. However, relations of power and freedom are always shifting, and so it is easy to become once again entrapped in the new ongoing daily practices.

3.5 Positive and Negative Freedom

Berlin (1998) dichotomises concepts of freedom into positive and negative, while mentioning that there are more than 200 senses of it recorded by historians of ideas. Negative freedom refers to freedom from interference or oppression or to how many doors are unlocked. Positive freedom is more about the freedom to do something; to be able to make choices, but the way that Berlin describes it, suggests that these choices are more about collective control. This dichotomous approach to freedom did not fit comfortably within the ecological approach. However, Hirschmann (2003) helps to resolve it from a feminist perspective by suggesting that the division of positive and negative freedom may be useful for examining women's 'unfreedom'. She suggests a feminist theory of 'freedom' involves "Combining both positive and negative liberty elements in the idea of what constitutes a barrier means the line between internal and external cannot be clearly drawn; rather the two must be seen as mutually constituted and understood together" (2003, p. 201).

Freire (1993) analysed the way in which people can become trapped in oppressive cultures. When that happens the world is seen through a limited perspective which reduces the ability people have to play an active part in constructing the world. Freire thought that the role of the educator was to help people who were trapped in this way to become more aware of the world around them, and see it as something which they could actively influence. Ultimately, our perceptions and our senses affect the way we see the world. Therefore if we think we are free, we will see the world in that way.

The divisions between positive and negative freedom seem to be artificially drawn, as it is necessary to be free from some constraints, but also to know what is possible. Those possibilities may be forced on you by others, but they also lie within and are often only opened up by connecting with others. Hirschmann says that “Though freedom must be expressed by individuals, its conditions are made possible by community” (2003, p. 237). To pursue freedom to a point that an individual is no longer in contact or bound by any of the social rules of engagement with others could create a disconnection and isolation which could possibly create new constraints. There is however, an element of freedom which is not dependent on others. It has nothing to do with the outside, or with escaping from something. Neither is it dependent on others to do something; it is to do with having the space and confidence to be yourself.

3.6 Summary

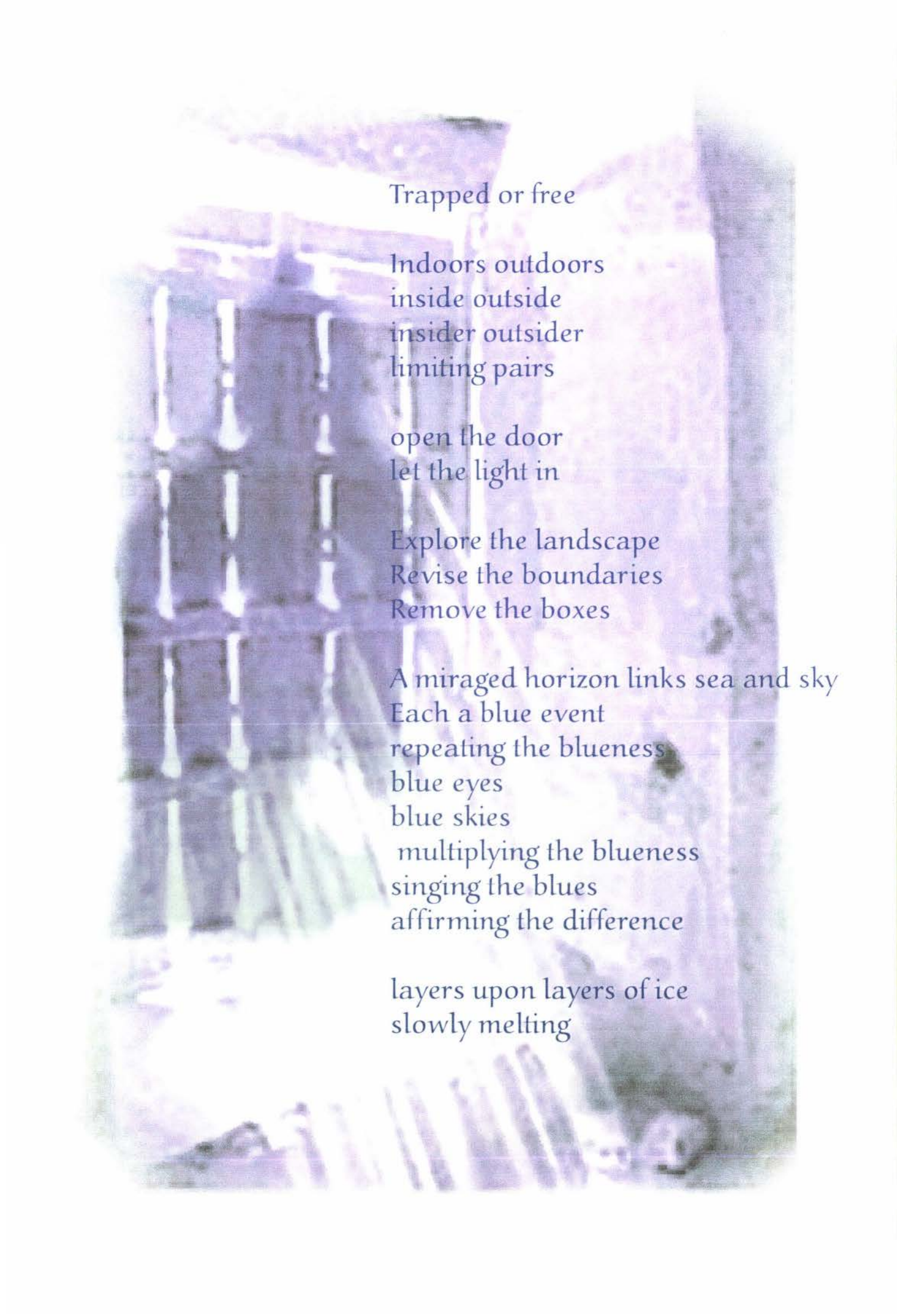
In summary, society places constraints on how freedom is experienced but it also provides openings for new experiences of freedom to emerge. Community and society can deliberately or unthinkingly create constraints, so it is necessary for individuals to critically reflect on their situation and to challenge habits and become mindfully aware. It is often through communication and dialogue with others that relationships form, which can support the development of an individual sphere of action. However, doing what we want to do for selfish reasons is often not free, because we are really just following patterns of conditioned behaviour without mindful attention to what is happening around us.

The freedom that comes from within is different, and is not dependent on, or related to, others. It is so personal that it can not be taken away. However, it is possible to give it away or let it drift away. To be free of personal desires enables an appreciation of others, which some call ‘love’.

While freedom is sometimes expressed as a goal, it really is more of a starting point and a movement, than an end point. Goals assume a certain linear trajectory of heading towards a point and of achievement and completion, but freedom enables an ‘expanding-away-from’. When freedom is expressed as a goal it antithetical, as it

can not be achieved; it escapes determination while remaining a determining force. These driving forces need to arise from within. They are not forced on us by others; they may well involve an acceptance of responsibility, but the rewards must provide a degree of intrinsic satisfaction.

Greene (1988) says there is always more, and that no field of study can ever be complete. Multiple perspectives open up possibilities and in that space we can pursue freedom. The space of possibility enables people to experiment, ideas to intersect, and new ways of seeing hearing and feeling to emerge.



Trapped or free

Indoors outdoors
inside outside
insider outsider
limiting pairs

open the door
let the light in

Explore the landscape
Revise the boundaries
Remove the boxes

A miraged horizon links sea and sky
Each a blue event
repeating the blueness
blue eyes
blue skies
multiplying the blueness
singing the blues
affirming the difference

layers upon layers of ice
slowly melting

Chapter 4

My Research Journey

I wanted to sit silently and quite still, and absorb through every sense the scene about me; to let my vision span a hundred peaks or rest contented on a single hill; to rejoice in that freedom I had never known; to draw from all about me a new virtue and a new strength.

(Smythe, 1950, pp. 6-7)

In order to plan an expedition into the unknown, it is important to select a team with different strengths and experiences, select an area which provides opportunities for exploration and then to go and see what is there. Once the landscape is observed, more plans can be made and excursions taken. This was how the research progressed. The team selected for the research had diverse interests, but all agreed that there was something that they called freedom when referring to outdoor experiences and fortunately they agreed to go on a journey of exploration with me.

To be an explorer is to not know where, precisely and concretely, one is going. (Vaill, 1996, p. 45)

The journey started by interviewing a group of people who shared their stories about experiences which they associated with feelings of freedom in the outdoors. The participants have all been given pseudonyms of early New Zealand climbers and explorers to mask their identity and on one or two occasions details have been slightly modified again to retain their anonymity. Rather than include brief descriptions of their backgrounds, which may reveal their identity, I let the participants introduce themselves with excerpts from their stories.

Freda :

Yes, absolutely yes, it really is a bit like a drug addiction thing that err, well it's good to recognize it, because when I feel like that I know I just have to clear my brain and get things back in perspective and I

know I can do that by going up the hill and its like a treat as well like a reward and its what I enjoy about my life here and that sense of well-being just needs topping up. It's not a particular conscious thing, but there is some stage when I'm riding that I get this inner sigh and I say to myself life is just wonderful and all that other stuff doesn't really matter at all.

Lilian:

I don't think I've ever felt such a sense of freedom sacredness and peace and this river of gold is running through this incredible arch and I'm sure this rock that you can climb over is pounamu it looks so green in the water and the reflections and the babbling of the brook is just stunning ... I certainly felt a spiritual connection to the land and when I've taken others there, they have too.

Katie:

There was this particular time when there was a beautiful ocean view, sunny day. I've got to have sun I love the sun and I don't know what day we were on maybe day 3 or about half way through and we were on a mountain bike leg and the mountain bike is the hardest thing for me and for most women but it was ... it wasn't too technical and I really felt free even though we were in a race it sounds really funny, (laugh) and we were totally fighting the clock at other points later, but at that stage we were just really enjoying the moment.

Andy:

When I solo in the mountains its usually just easy stuff, the Rome ridge Philistine traverse ... just hard enough to be a little unusual and daring ... you just travel so much distance you're free not confined by partners and ropes, but then it goes on so much longer though its not as intense you only have to concentrate for three minutes in rock climbing.

Tom:

... increasingly there are fewer and fewer places where you can go to be remote, where you can be uncluttered and if I take the uncluttered part is for me the freedom, then its going to get harder and harder and I know its going to be harder for me to let go the cell phone, I'm sure if we go into Pioneer we're going to take a cell phone. I climbed Tasman with a friend and I had my cell phone on the summit trying to call (my wife) just to – Yeah just to share something, that's interesting you want to share that moment, but in doing so you break the whole cycle.

George:

So we've been very lucky at every turn –what more freedom could anybody ever wish for than to be able firstly to take their partner and secondly to take their children to such special places. So that's been amazing. So every time we moan and groan about there's too much of this or too much of that and it doesn't all come free, any free-lance person or climber or professional climber as you know, gets worn out and doesn't know where the next dollar is coming from, but now we have enough confidence to realise that it will come...

Rob:

...some days the way the work was, – is that you're actually too tired to climb; does that make sense? So just being there was part of it, and if you got a climb done then that was good. I remember one day going up to Castle rock to go 'shunting' by myself and ended up just sleeping in the sun, it was like a winter's day, it was good enough just to be there.

Jack:

I think the freedom was ... the happiness and the freedom was just from the fact that it was obviously a beautiful, beautiful place and the fact that there was nobody around there was no rules ...there was no ... I was there on my own terms I could leave or stay whenever I wanted... that's so amazing and when you get down to it where are there places in the world that you can do that besides say your own home?- but there you're constrained by society.

John:

I could ski out into the wind a bit or pick when the wind was going to change and go out and get a tail wind both ways which was always good, my best shot was to get a kind of a wind just in a wind change really so that I'd get a dying wind on the way out and it would just turn around and I'd get one to come back with me...it was always very pleasing when I managed that, I don't think it's a feeling of great umm freedom, but its just that I could decide what I wanted to do so I suppose that's freedom...

Malcolm:

...so I can actually concentrate on myself and spend time re-energizing myself so umm often that freedom comes when I am away from those demands and so for example when I stayed here last time I went for a run in the hills so I was running in the hills and I felt incredibly free because there was just me and I knew that I was not going to be interrupted and so I did let my thoughts roam and be embodied.

As the participants shared their stories some of the dimensions of freedom as experienced in the outdoors were revealed. Each story was transcribed before the next story was gathered. Some had similarities but all were from a different mountaintop. While I have also relied heavily on the writings and imagery of

mountaineers' descriptions of freedom it should be noted that some of the respondents have interests in other outdoor areas; these include kayaking, mountain biking, adventure racing, and adventure travel.

Ten people shared stories directly with me about their experiences of freedom, these were taped and transcribed verbatim in order to preserve the respondents own language and emphasis. I gathered their narratives at home, at work indoors and outdoors. Some places were more relaxing for the story-teller; other spots were easier for the audio-cassette. Three of the contributors were women, probably not a totally accurate representation. I am very grateful to all those who participated in the research. It was a privilege to hear their stories and in doing so bonds of friendship and understanding developed. The teller changed in the telling, I changed in the listening and our relationship changed as new connections were made.

I also gathered stories from the New Zealand Alpine Journal; these were not just specific to issues of freedom, but revealed other interesting insights into the motivations and aspirations of mountaineers. Over the course of the study I read some of the key stories from most journals starting in 1892. The stories were not analysed in terms of themes or content, but were addressed in terms of a background wash on which to paint the picture of freedom of the hills as revealed by the interviewees. What emerged were the changing attitudes that the mountaineers had to the mountains and the general yet pervasive influence that society had on what they did and how they wrote.

The gathering of stories is just one part of research. Once they had been gathered and transcribed, the focus was on analysis. I began the search for connections and for themes which might reveal some of the dimensions or desires for freedom. I spent time with coloured pens and coding squiggles, dissecting and searching for clues. I read and listened to the stories multiple times. I started to give priority to this analysis. I'd entered into the world of academic research and I began to think there were conventions to follow. Only the stories that were shared after the consent forms were signed and the tape recorder switched on were considered. What about all the other stories I'd heard around campfires and in mountain huts? ...were they less significant because I hadn't recorded them? The value and significance of the

anecdotal story told over a cup of coffee and the research interview are really no different, but one is privileged and the other devalued. The ecological methodology I was operating within would suggest that both are of equal value yet certain conventions inhibit the use of the anecdotal, in this case.

I originally chose narrative for its ability to engage the personal and reveal the richness of their experiences, but I started to feel that I had to reduce this richness into impersonal parts. We are connected to the world and I hoped that stories would allow the complexity and wholeness to emerge. Bochner and Ellis (2002) says that to embrace the narrative study of lived experience, is to open ourselves up so that we don't merely analyse life, but also live it. I became involved in and engaged with each story as it triggered different reactions and responses in me. I had glimpses through the mist, but the picture of freedom was still very blurred, and there was always another hill to climb to get there.

I left the analysis for a while and went for a short walk to Mueller hut in the Aoraki Mt Cook National Park. The weather was stormy with scudding clouds and then lashing winds and driving snow. I stayed in the hut for a couple of nights, listening to the avalanches and wind. I then realised that the whole and the parts are connected, just as sometimes a single snow crystal can reveal much about the avalanche danger of an area so a single phrase or metaphor can reveal much about the concept of freedom. The avalanche, like freedom, is caused by factors much greater than a collection of snow crystals, beautiful as they may be.

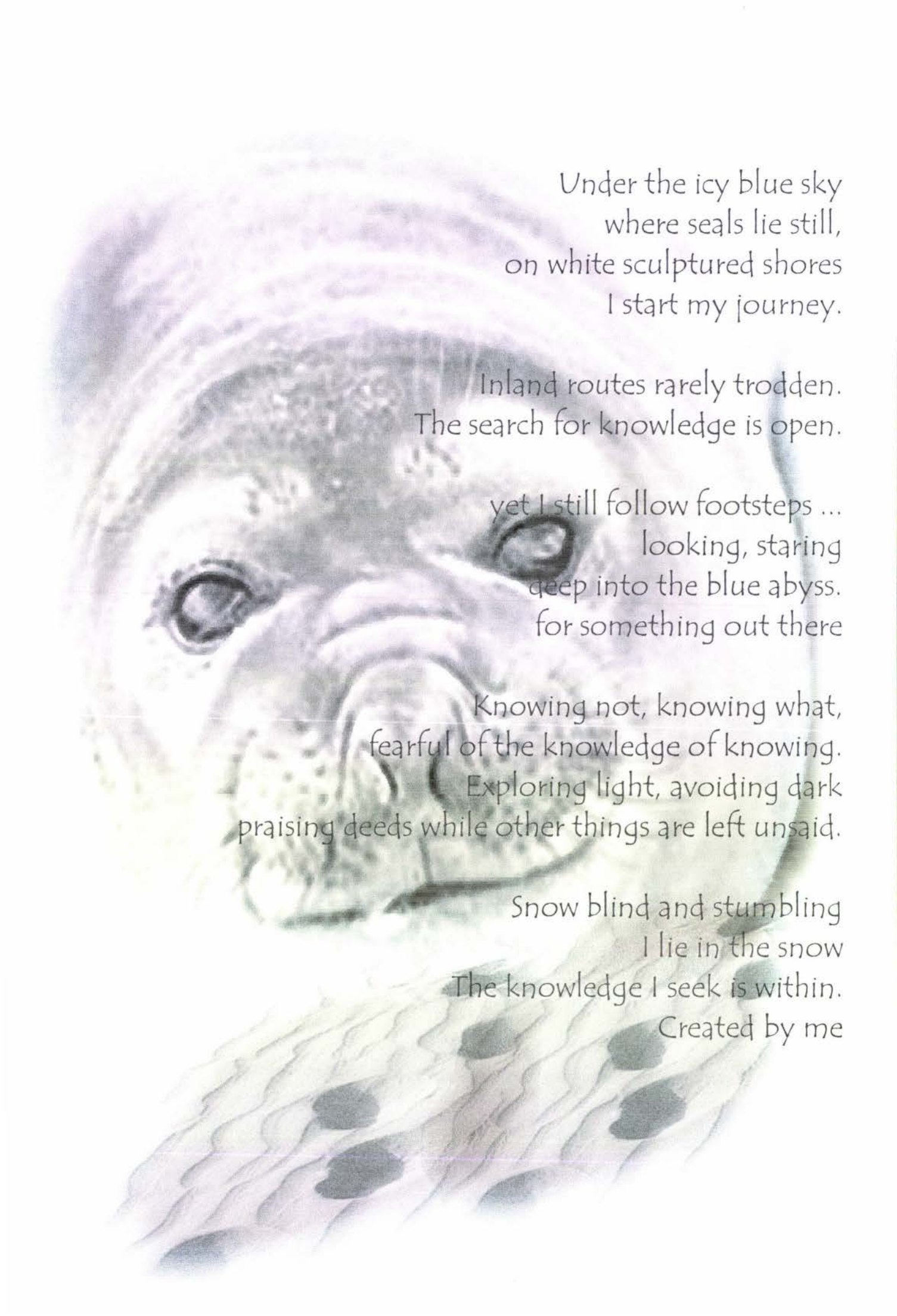
Whether I was looking at the stories holistically or at parts, different interpretations kept emerging. The themes emerged and then remerged in different forms. It was hard to separate and categorise. The creation of categories is in itself a constraining and limiting process. However over time, I noticed that the stories about freedom related very strongly to the original themes of ecological research and decided to synthesise them within that framework.

- **Holism** – The feeling of being connected to and living within environment. This came through in stories relating to the flow of satisfaction, calmness and sacredness.

- **Complexity** – Freedom is dynamic and was often more to do with moving towards it or away from it. This meant there was difficulty in pinning it down and talking about it, as it kept changing in different ways.
- **Being** – Accepting the lived moment within the physical, emotional, spatial and spiritual dimensions.
- **Participatory** – The connection and involvement with other people, the activity and the environment including responsibility and choice.
- **Creativity** - The emergence of something new, sometimes triggered by aesthetic moments. Allowing the imagination to open up and explore a world of possibilities.

These then became the major categories for drawing and meshing the responses together. As with any merging of ideas into categories, there were aspects of the stories that fitted neatly within a specific theme while other aspects overlapped several of the categories, and some revealed the tensions and paradoxes between them.

The act of writing itself was also part of the research, part of allowing understanding to emerge. Further ideas and links occurred during the act of writing and editing of the research, and some of the poems reflect that. Yet despite all that was said and written, there was still a dimension of freedom that appeared elusive. The following trip reports are still just a part of the whole story; there still is an ineffable something else.



Under the icy blue sky
where seals lie still,
on white sculptured shores
I start my journey.

Inland routes rarely trodden.
The search for knowledge is open.

yet I still follow footsteps ...
looking, staring
deep into the blue abyss.
for something out there

Knowing not, knowing what,
fearful of the knowledge of knowing.
Exploring light, avoiding dark
praising deeds while other things are left unsaid.

Snow blind and stumbling
I lie in the snow
The knowledge I seek is within.
Created by me

Chapter 5

Trip reports.

One man may climb for love of the artistic and aesthetic in Nature, another to add to his knowledge in the matter of science, another from mere curiosity, being impelled by that strange desire which is inborn in us all – to see more. Even the child delights to be held aloft that it may attain a greater range of vision. Again a man may climb for the animal love of physical exercise, caring little or nothing for the strange and beautiful sights which meet his eyes in the world above the snow line. (Mannering, 1892, pp. 8-9)

In the mountains the journey is important; it has its roots in ancient heroic myths (Campbell 1973). Heroes and heroines venture out on voyages of discovery into unknown territory, where all sorts of problems are encountered, mentors, friends and enemies reveal themselves, but if and when they return; knowledge is shared with others. The trip report is a way of sharing the knowledge. It is not just a factual account it weaves in contexts and cultures; it shares lessons and learning, and builds on previous writing and similar experiences.

5.1. Holism - Freedom as a Connection with the Environment

The outdoors can allow for those special moments of freedom to occur when everything feels perfect and the mind, body and environment unite. Nature is not only defined by what it is, but by the reactions it generates. These holistic and unified occurrences bring joy and serenity.

Outstanding place with huge Tasman swells busting themselves at the base of the cliff 75 metres below, and whales and bird work-ups out to sea. Very cool- Actually quite cold, south facing, and so climbing in fleece most of the time, rapping in to climb the top 30 or 40 metres of the cliff. Some of the routes were totally unlikely, but somehow went free, with gear stuck in breaks and pockets. Gripping exposure.

Great to be in "the Zone", 1000 miles above the sea, with a pocket full of chalk... (Jones, 2004b)

Several of the respondents talked about such moments in their tales of freedom. They have similarities with what Greeley (1974) describes as mystical experiences. His research showed that mystical moments are quite frequent and that 45% of people who reported them said they were triggered by the beauties of nature such as sunsets or spectacular views. Nietzsche (1995) also talked about being connected to the whole and said "Such a spirit who has become free stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism, in the faith that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole--he does not negate anymore."

I had been paddling for about an hour or so on my own it was absolutely mirror calm, not a breath of wind, the odd penguin popping up here and there, absolutely phenomenal, and I could feel it coming like a wave of something, then just paddling along brimming with happiness at the whole thing and not wanting to be anywhere else in the world. (Jack)

The uncontrolled happiness and joy that can accompany these experiences seems to involve the whole body it goes deep to the pit of the stomach and then wells up and flows out. Jack talks about this in terms of 'waves' and 'brimming with happiness.' The stories that Jack told about Antarctica also resonated with me. The times when I had felt most connected with the environment were during my own trips to Antarctica. Those same feelings of being full of happiness were evident in diary entries I had made in the Pensacola Mountains.

Too much wind blown snow, another day in the tent listening to the wind, its kind of comforting just to snuggle down in the sleeping bags with not much to do. Read, snooze sked. ...When I woke it was quiet ...3.00am and light ...wow no wind today, no flapping and swooshing just spectacular mountains and rock spires in one direction and in the other space lots of it...flat white. The sky deep

blue the air sparkly and those rock pinnacles awe-inspiring. I wandered round just looking and breathing it all in smiling a mile wide because I was so full ... so full of something ... no one else was up it was like I moved in harmony with the whole of Antarctica inside me ... but not for long ... time to dig out the camp and get the sleds ready. JS- Pensacola mountains.

The fullness for me was definitely not in the head, but in the stomach and radiating out from there. Chuang Tzu (cited in Chang, 1963) suggested that freedom has no fixed boundaries; everything is inextricably intertwined and therefore has no independent, definable identity, that is meaningful apart from all other things. True freedom occurs when we have compassion for all things, because we are all one. Thus, when you are injured, I am injured too. From this depth of compassion comes the flexibility and creativity to achieve freedom.

How nature is perceived has changed over the years, in the early seventeenth century tamed landscapes of fields and orchards were the ideal components of landscape and mountains were scary and repellent (Macfarlane, 2003). The Age of Enlightenment reduced nature down to a science experiment which could be controlled and in the 1800's mountaineers often climbed to increase scientific knowledge about the world. The Romantics challenged that and attempted to close the gap between the observers and observed by re-establishing a sense of oneness with the world. How humans perceive nature remains confused, as sometimes there is a feeling of oneness while at other times there is a belief that humans are somehow 'above' what is called 'natural'. The experience of feeling free for some of the participants involves a connection, unity and integration with the natural environment; a moment which dissolves the barriers between self and the universe.

Upon the path, in the glint of mica and odd shining stones, lies the yellow and grey- blue feather of an unknown bird. And there comes a piercing intuition, by no means understood, that in this feather on the silver path, this rhythm of wood and leather sounds, breath, sun and wind, and rush of river, in a landscape without past or future time –

in this instant, in all instants, transience and eternity, death and life are one." (Matthiessen, 1998, p. 126)

5.1.1 The Sacred

The story told by Lilian about her experiences of freedom had a strong sacred element. Her stories had elements of being at one with the environment, but she also referred directly to the spiritual connection and being transported to other places, in more out of body experiences. Some freedom for Lilian involved leaving the body behind.

There are one or two places that I feel an absolute sense of freedom ...one in particular is by this magnificent huge arch ...you walk up a valley through some West Coast Bush and its like a tunnel really walking up the valley and the river is like a river of gold its just amazing, but where the real magic and freedom comes is at the arch itself you know its about an hour to walk and its quite enclosed through the bush and the trees and lichen ...and there is a little wall with a piece of rope hanging down and you go down into this hollow and its quite dark and you come out and I don't think I've ever felt such a sense of freedom sacredness and peace...I waded through the river and then climbed over onto the other side and once I was on the other side I could see these ferns which hang down ever so delicately hang down and there was a cavern and in the book the Power of One the guy goes into the crystal cavern and is taken back in time and that's what this place did to me just took me back and if I sit there long enough I could start astral travelling when I was in Ireland there were some old stones in a graveyard and I went and sat on one and it was like I went back in time. I get that sort of feeling in some special places I don't know if you've had it? (Lilian)

Bateson (1991, p. 267) said "one of the very curious things about the sacred is that it usually does not make sense to the left-hemisphere, prose type thinking...Because it doesn't make any prose sense, the material of dream and poetry has to be more or

less secret from the prose part of the mind.” Roberts (2002) suggests that “The capacity to experience the natural world as sacred is one of the ordinary privileges of being human.” (2002, p. ix). However, Adams (2002) says that while certain places like the mountains and the oceans may have a strong energy that evokes a spiritual response it is more through “...the simple act of being still inside and resting our minds, we come to know spirit in a very personal and direct manner.” (2002, p. 3). For many cultures the mountains have a special place in their spiritual cosmology as they are often believed to be the home to spirits or gods and the stepping off point into the heavens.

It is not just a private experience for Lilian but something she wants to share with others. Her openness to discuss such feelings combined with such a strong conviction helps others to have similar experiences.

I let them know that for me it's a very special spiritual place and I tell them that they will probably want to be alone and that they would need time there on their own to sit and allow the place to talk to them. (Lilian)

Maslow (1964) says “The very beginning, the intrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every known high religion...has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer.” (p. 19). He goes on to add that these older reports of supernatural revelation were in fact natural human peak experiences that happen fairly regularly as ascertained in his research. He found like Greeley (1974) that most subjects would report them. What began to interest him more was why some people did not report them. He suggested that completely rational, materialistic or mechanistic belief structures tend to associate such experiences with a lack of control or becoming too emotional or potentially unstable or even mad. Hence people who are overly rational may fight off and deny such experiences. He also suggested that for some religions, the objects symbolising the experience become more important than the experience itself. This can create tensions within certain religions as there are some who respond to the experience and others who respond to the material representations and rituals of the experience. Maslow (1964) postulates that this split goes deep into the heart of philosophy, with the split between the positivists and the

phenomenologists. Within research, positivists focus on the means, and on sharpening the tools of research while the phenomenologists look at experience as the primary data from which everything starts.

5.1.2 Transience of the 'peak-experience'

Many of these intense feelings of oneness were but fleeting moments, but they had a powerful impact and so participants tried to relive them.

I wandered off just doing my own thing. ... This was probably the first time it ever happened and I thought there was something wrong with me or something thinking why am I just walking around here feeling like everyone could go home now and this could be the end the end of everything and I am totally and completely happy and I started to realise that, appreciate that, that its kind of like a drug really and that to seek places and or things that brought out that emotion in me and because I don't well, don't seem to have much control over what makes it or when it happens. ... I haven't quite determined all the facets that make it happen yet, but it's very cool when it does. (Jack)

Whether moments of oneness were regarded as sacred or not, they were expressed as positive, and once the sensation had been experienced it was often sought by returning to similar places or repeating certain activities. These moments of ecstatic freedom are almost an archetypal need and if it isn't achieved in a legitimate way than it will sometimes be sought in an illegitimate way, often through the use of drugs.

The respondents enjoyed the experience and heightened senses and emotions that occurred, but interestingly none suggested that they had any long lasting effects. After a solo trip in the Southern Alps Vervoorn (2000) writes "There are moments when the configuration of the world and self seems perfect, when everything seems so rightly placed that it triggers an overwhelming sense of order and harmony, when the world appears perfect , whole and we understand our place in it" (p. 114). However, these moments of oneness are few and far between; as Vervoorn goes on

to say “Yet most of the time in mountain travel, mystical union is not only hard to achieve, it is dangerous to pursue” (pp. 114-115). Many outdoor experiences involve sore feet, heavy packs and soggy sleeping bags. Douglas (2002) writes “We’re in it for the freedom nature offers. To be surrounded by living things, to feel part of life’s patterns, that’s enough” (p. 24). He later adds that “We leave these marks on the land in countless ways, the marks of our passing, forming a thread that we cannot choose to abandon, the nature inside us” (p. 25).

I sort of kept looking for it more ... because it had already occurred a few times well those couple of times and I'm back in Antarctica a long way from other people its surely going to happen, There were other times when I thought perhaps its going to happen here and something transpired and it didn't, but there was this day and I wasn't even looking for it, but we were about two and half weeks into our trip, so I think there is something definitely tied to those feelings I can arrive in a beautiful place and have all those elements of no people no whatever – but if I don't feel either at home in the place or that the place has allowed me to be there then it doesn't seem to happen. (Jack)

For Jack, as for some others, the more intensely he searched for freedom the more elusive it became. To be free requires a certain letting go and searching puts the emphasis on freedom as an end in itself rather than a state of becoming free.

There seem to be different levels of intensity relating to these peak or flow experiences. Austin (1998) describes nine levels from ordinary waking states to the stage of ongoing enlightenment. He suggests that what he calls stage five, or a heightened emotional awareness without sense loss, occurs more frequently in natural outdoor settings and at times other than those devoted to seated meditation. He also suggests that such experiences are temporary, memorable but not transforming. This would match the stories told as no one suggested major life affirming changes had occurred. While these categories are somewhat arbitrary it does suggest that there are different levels and that some more intense feelings or changes to consciousness can be attained through practise.

There is this over-brimming happiness and just going, I'm just so happy, and then tears rolling down my face there was nothing more to do I had no more emotions to express it even to myself. (Jack)

The Zen masters have noted that there are some non-verbal indicators when a student reaches a new stage of enlightenment (Kapleau, 1988). He goes on to say that “when there is a deep penetration into truth, most people experience tears of joy” (Kapleau, 1988, p. 51).

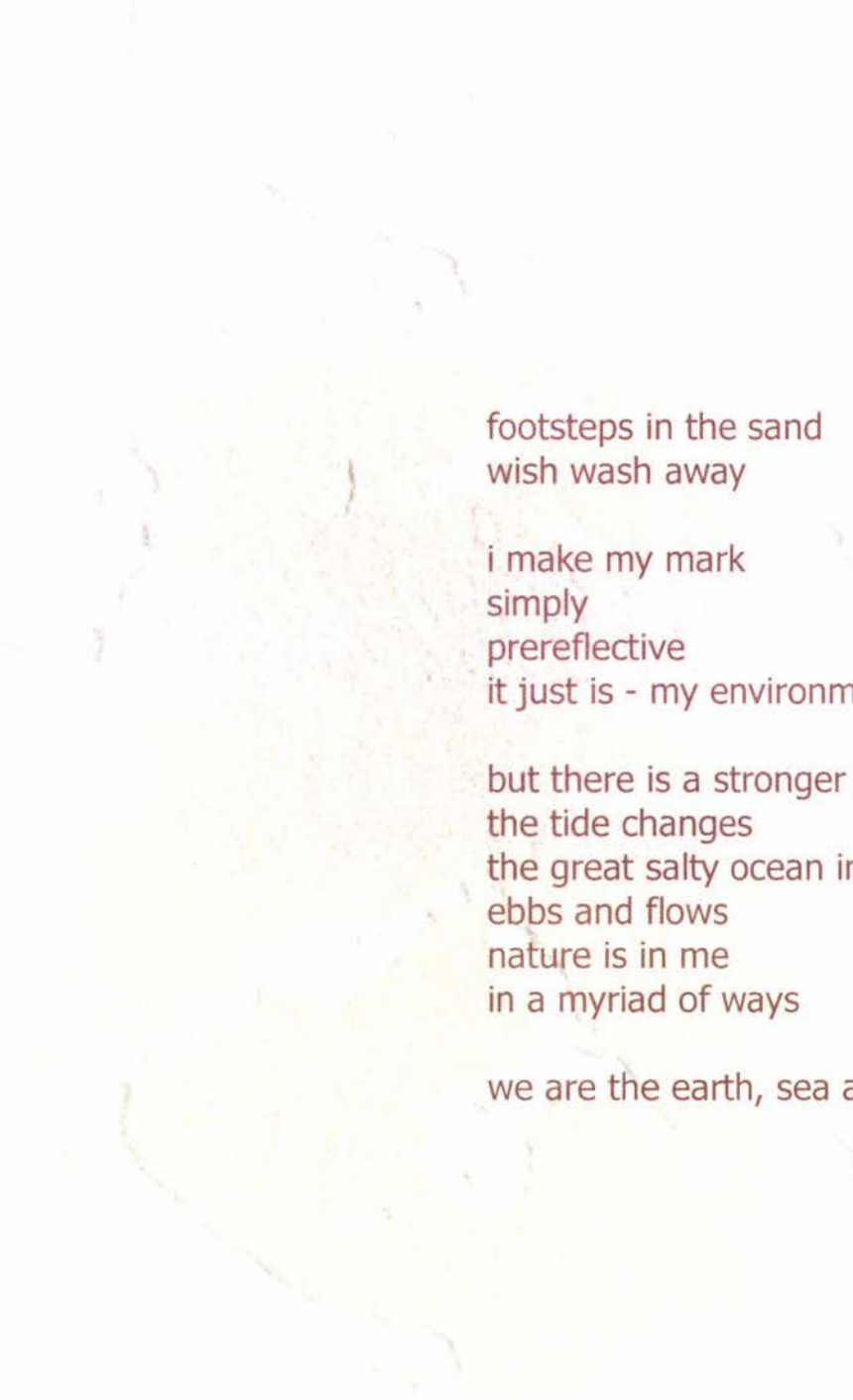
5.1.3 Solitariness

For most of the respondents this ‘oneness’ was more likely to occur when they were alone. “When we relate to the universe, it appears, there is little room for anyone else” (Vervoorn, 2000, p. 114).

It was just freedom just pull into an eddy and realise you are on this native bush river by yourself, no other noise no other people. I've soloed it 2 or 3 times, another time it was so low, but it just didn't matter I just went for a play in the top eddy... and it was such a great day that I just had to keep going, like just go and run it ...and I definitely think the Anatoki one was a massive sense of freedom; yeah because the boat feels so different cos if you're soloing I don't know why, but the boat feels different. (Rob)

Wherever and however, it occurred, the experience of being at one with the environment was an important aspect of freedom of the hills, emerging from the participants' stories.

Deeply rooted in every true alpine devotee is an indefinable “something” ever present, which elates his whole being to a balanced fullness transcending all physical consciousness: and so again and again he strives to attain the heights to drink the fullness of life and commune with the creator of life. (Newton, 1942, p. 154)



footsteps in the sand
wish wash away

i make my mark
simply
prereflective
it just is - my environment

but there is a stronger pull
the tide changes
the great salty ocean in my blood
ebbs and flows
nature is in me
in a myriad of ways

we are the earth, sea and sky.

5.2. Complexity and Simplicity

5.2.1 Complexity

When analysing data it is easier to notice the consistent themes than the contradictions, the discontinuities and the unspoken. But it was sometimes the hesitations that seemed to encapsulate freedom. Freedom is dynamic, it is hard to grasp because once caught it is no longer free. There is also a problem in writing down ideas involving movements, contradictions and fleeting nuances. James expresses the difficulty when he talks about trying to capture thought saying that it is “... like seizing a spinning top to catch its motion, or like trying to turn up the gas quickly to see how darkness looks” (1909/1996, p. 117).

5.2.2 Escape

Freedom is sometimes known in contrast to states of constraint. It was almost as if it was the movement, however small, of going from a state of security to a state of risk that created the sensation of freedom.

It could have been escapism I don't really know ...the other main memories I've got is err yes is soloing white-water rivers for freedom ... absolute freedom ... I'd just come off an injury and it was winter and the Anatoki was up so things had definitely been pretty slow and just totally knowing that I had to go and do that river not caring and that was an absolute err high err in sense of exuberance freedom it was just an incredible trip. (Rob)

However, freedom from constraint is never fully achieved, as other constraints emerge. Rojek (1995) says that to understand freedom it is necessary to place it alongside ‘unfreedom’ or restraint and that the feeling of freedom occurs only in relationship to constraint. While moving from security to risk was one dimension of experiencing freedom, there were also times when it was necessary to move from risk to security.

I was thinking about a time when I felt freest on a mountain and it was coming down Scott Creek after being on the east face of Sefton. What happened there was we had two nights on Sefton and the second night had been in a really bad place ... we really struggled to get away in the morning we had been struggling the night before and that morning to find Welcome Pass in the mist, when we found that and got down we got reorganized in Scott Creek ...everything out of our packs strewn around I guess we'd packed up in chaos ... then we were running down Scott creek I must have been so relieved to be free of that situation that we'd been in where we'd been struggling to stay alive in the mountains that I went down Scott creek and got to Douglas rock hut very early on and there is a bolt even then back in '71 in Scott creek where most people abseil, but I don't remember abseiling at Douglas Rock hut I was half a day ahead of everybody and that freedom was drawn out of relief after been locked in by a storm and it wasn't about being on the mountain or about choices all the decisions were made for us really and if they hadn't of been right we wouldn't have got of it. (Andy)

Benuzzi (1952) wrote an account of his escape from a prisoner of war camp in Africa. He planned to escape not to return home but to climb Mount Kenya. Even within the camp once he had started to make his plans to climb he felt free. The escape, the climb and the return to camp all added to the physical deprivations of being a prisoner of war, but the choice of taking control and fulfilling a dream was for him worth the increased hardships. Freedom for Benuzzi was achieved despite constraints and intense discomfort.

Some people also have the ability to achieve an inner escape from oppression and constraint. Freedom is often perceived to be dependent on outside influences, the freedom to do what you want, or buy what you want, or the freedom from violence, discrimination and incarceration, are all reliant on factors beyond our control. Frankl (1985) noticed that there were a few people in concentration camps whose understanding of freedom was more internal. These people had a purpose and a

deeper meaning in their lives which was independent of outside circumstances. This was a freedom which could be experienced, despite the fact that they were in living in brutal oppressive circumstances.

Testing situations can connect people to an inner strength. Csikszentmihalyi refers to times when different challenges help some people to extend themselves in skills beyond what they thought possible and even enjoy those moments. “Lost in Antarctica or confined to a prison cell, some individuals succeed in transforming their harrowing conditions into a manageable and even enjoyable struggle, whereas most others would succumb to the ordeal.” (1990b, p. 90).

... go out in bad weather and get wet and cold and miserable, but its what they remember and my daughters both remember it well; its the pushing through that helps that freedom, umm, its, umm, perhaps the realization that you've broken through a barrier. (Tom)

Some of the stories gathered mentioned the struggle as being an important part of freedom. Taylor perhaps explains it a little more when he comments about such a state “Complete freedom would be a void in which nothing would be worth doing, nothing would deserve to count for anything. The self which has arrived at freedom by setting aside all external obstacles and impingements is characterless, and hence without defined purpose” (1979, p. 157).

Even something more modest, like leaving the city can also create a sense of freedom. This is sometimes framed as escaping from ‘real life,’ from everyday life. Cohen and Taylor (1992) say that it is important to know how reality is being framed so that we know what we are meant to be escaping from and to. Escape to the outdoors can be escape from routine in search of excitement and adventure. The experiences and events that support our escape fantasies are those that get retold and are reinforced when we return. These escapes are often first imagined and then acted out. So, if we escape to the outdoors to experience freedom then we will create such a fantasy and if we escape for adventure then that is the story we will reference our experience to.

This escape motivation for outdoor enthusiasts is not new:

Perhaps it is our modern tendency to 'individualism' which makes the Alps so much to us... To habitual residents among the Alps, this absence of social duties and advantages might seem barbarizing, even brutalizing. But to men wearied with too much civilisation, and deafened by the noise of the great cities, it is beyond measure refreshing.

John Addington Symonds, 1880

While it is important for some to escape to the outdoors; it is important for others to escape from the outdoors. The participants I interviewed never mentioned this, but from my own observations, even students who enjoy outdoor activity often want to return home after three or four days because they require some of the luxuries and extra stimulations city life provides. Gates says "In an e-mailed dispatch from an American expedition last year, one climber reported watching the "Star Wars" DVD at 21,000 feet... On the way to and from the Sublime, Everest gets as boring as anyplace else, except more so" (2003, p. 38). The movement and experiencing of something new generated freedom, while routine and repetition creates feelings of constraint.

Describing aspects of freedom as escape from and to, enables freedom to be visualised as an opportunity for becoming-free rather than being represented as a fixed moment or goal. For the respondents the act of choosing to go outdoors was a moment of moving towards freedom; it involved following a passion. Few trips happen without dreams; those dreams are of peaks and passes, space, views which somehow block out the reality of soggy socks and biting winds. This is interesting because many of the stories told in the New Zealand Alpine Journals were about the pain and discomfort. It would appear that mountaineers have selective memories when planning trips. Freedom is often about the dream and less about living the dream.

...its just an amazing privilege to be able to pull those (books) out of a shelf and plan an entire expedition ... I've got that freedom in my

mind now to say I can do it and I really want to go to Mustang and go back to Ladakh and take more photographs and I can do that now. I got that freedom of spirit really in knowing that I can find the dollars somehow to go wherever I want. (George)

5.2.3 Resistance

The light dove, cleaving the air in her free flight and feeling its resistance against her wings, might imagine that its flight would be freer still in empty space. (Kant, 1781, p. 47)

Greene (1988) believes that freedom frequently involves resisting the world in some way and this resistance often leads to transforming or creating something different. Breaking the routine can create gaps in the sequence of the present in which it appears that choice is available. One image of an outdoor adventurer is someone who takes risks, is willing to be different and challenges the comforts of an easy and accepting life.

well I was working with the rules a wee bit and not so much breaking them, I felt those rules didn't necessarily apply to me, I was really only exercising what I normally do, the rest of society however, should conform to those rules, but they don't apply to me. (John)

Nietzsche also talks about overcoming resistance as a way of achieving freedom.

How is freedom measured in individuals and peoples? According to the resistance which must be overcome, according to the exertion required, to remain on top. The highest type of free men should be sought where the highest resistance is constantly overcome. (Nietzsche, 1895, p. 38)

5.2.4 Ineffability

The complexity of freedom makes it difficult to talk about it without referring to what it is not. It is like waves on the beach alternating with the troughs, impossible to have one without the other. The dichotomy of freedom and constraint adds its

own complexities as dichotomised thinking in itself is a constraint. This level of complexity requires a repetition and a reworking of ideas and themes because it appeared that as soon as some ideas were expressed, they changed.

This next collection of the participants' stories perhaps highlights some of the contradictions, uncertainties and hesitations which occurred as the participants relived and talked about freedom. To try and explain these stories would be tricky as explanations would simplify and limit them, rather than allow them to keep on emerging.

Rock climbing I find harder to associate with freedom because well in my early days I used to get really stressed agro swearing ... me, frustrated because I wasn't good ... me, so that definitely was not freeing ...just the opposite... and then later on not necessarily when I got better, but when I got a little bit better but I learnt how to relax and I could laugh at it, it was more freeing ...I don't know if I'd call it free it was just more enjoyable and I learnt how to laugh at myself and I guess that's freeing also. (Katie)

George - Just look around there's television, music they have no idea what silence is about, they're scared by it. No idea about how to spend a night on a mountain hut alone.

Jo - Yes some are scared by it

George - Outward Bound must have a perspective on that with the work they do putting students in solo situations. It must be pretty hard for some of those students, imagine what it must be like for those people who are not outdoor people they're thrown in there from the deep end it must be very hard for them, so different to what they're used to. I guess we're lucky knowing what the outdoors can offer. (George)

I was by myself with a dog and it was a completely different experience because the only person I had to converse with was myself

and I was err I enjoyed it and I enjoyed it thoroughly when I say thoroughly not as much and it was probably part of the reason I ended up resigning ... because I realised a lot of the work was with solitude so I was working doing a job on familiar ground, but I didn't have that relationship with people. I enjoyed the environment I really enjoyed being back in my familiar ground, but I sort of missed out on that people interaction and so I was free to roam where I needed to go ... well that's a contradiction in terms cos I actually had to go to certain places, but I was free to roam in my own time from place to place and it was fantastic, but the dilemma was that I'd gone from that culture of being with people in the outdoors and enjoying that aspect and getting a lot out of that and going this extreme environment and I didn't enjoy it as much. But having said that it was still a great experience so yeah I don't know if that's appropriate but that was one experience the kind of contrast. (Malcolm)

I think it's also the ability to focus and be free of other distractions. We did have some distractions though and on that trip the constraining factor is that a person had to get out by a deadline. We were very much constrained by that, having to get out, so we just headed down the Mueller never thought about not going. Once we'd left the Mueller glacier and headed up to Mueller hut...it was just hard and there were questions of whether we could find the hut or even get there... then we got separated and we were beat. Skis on was hard skis off I don't know...it was pretty good at the hut though but we didn't know if we'd make it. (Andy)

These stories reveal some of the difficulties in talking about what it means to be free and even in the telling of stories, there is a forming of ideas. As Dewey (1960) states, "We are free not because of what we statically are, but in as far as we are becoming different from what we have been" (p. 280).

Thus a person climbs on dangerous paths into the highest mountains in order to laugh derisively at his fearfulness and his trembling knees

... people have a genuine pleasure in violating themselves with excessive demands and then idolizing this tyrannically demanding something in their souls afterward. (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 137)

5.2.5 Simplicity

It was so calm, without a single thought, without a doubt. The tiredness and the stinging vanished. I made no conscious choice and the front points of my crampons seemed to guide me ... I can't remember having a single thought. I didn't think of thinking. I just indulged in the calm euphoria of thoughtlessness.

(Montasterio, 2004, p. 24)

There was another important issue that was evident in many of the stories and that was the uncluttering and simplifying of life. There appeared to be a need to return to the basics of life, and from that position it was easier to determine, what was important. There is obviously a tension here as to which category to discuss this in. How do the complex and the simple relate?

With the increase in fatigue comes a regression of conscious thought. Back to basics, moving up. Touching the rock and feeling that you are there and it is the only place you can be. It wears at you but gives at the same time, not like trading blows with a boxing opponent but more reaching a compromise, a point of stasis. For the time being. The beauty that surrounds in a position such as this never ceases to amaze me. It must be part of why I attempt fate and do it, a view to die for. I need to be in this position more often and think of it, analyse the complexity of something that is fundamentally simple. And therein lies the problem. (Hersey, 1999, p. 23)

Many of the respondents talked about the silence of the land, quietening the mind. In this state some respondents suggested that more awareness can be achieved. All the time we are receiving multiple individual pieces of information through our senses and while we are not always conscious of them they can overwhelm us. We are receiving so much information that that it is difficult to attend to just a few things.

Rosner says that the fundamental purpose of the Hellenistic schools of philosophy were to maintain “inner peace and tranquillity in a confusing and chaotic world” (2004, p. 213).

...the freedom part comes in being outdoors and it comes from the change in focus from the day to day clutter that goes on to just dealing with the basics when you're in the outdoors it frees you up because what I'm focusing on is being warm, hopefully being dry and having some food, so it reverts to basic needs and the longer you go away because it takes time to kind of sloth (sic) off the worries and the stuff that you take with you ... the truer that becomes and the more pure the experience. (Tom)

This quietening down of information may appear to be the opposite of complexity, but it is not; it provides opportunities to focus attention which in turn reveals the complexity of life. This focus dissolves the barriers between a perceived outer environment and the one inside us. Our senses are continuously picking up so much information, so quickly, that we are unaware of lots of it, but when the senses are more focussed and consistent then we pick up less interference and become aware of more.

By the end of the trip ... we'd paddle for a couple of hours and sit there, we were all blown away at how quickly the day would pass and we hadn't done a thing ... we had sat on a rock or laid on our thermarest and just stared at the sky and all thinking we'd go spare doing that sort of thing in town, the incredible power of being time rich, we could paddle and do our thing, but at the end of the day besides who was on dinner duty there was nothing else to do but in that nothing time you didn't do nothing, a legitimate exercise was to sit on a rock and think -how hard it would be in a city to sit somewhere and think. (Jack)

All parts of the body, including the separate neurons, have the capacity to learn and while these parts are not fully autonomous they are not simple mechanical


components of the whole either. It would seem that all aspects co-evolve in a dynamic dance with cells, people and social groups adapting to and affecting each other. Some of these ideas are hard to understand because traditional metaphors still tend to discuss the brain as being more like a computer which stores and processes data. Tom's following story highlights how ideas emerge.

I've had a whole series of expeditions into the Himalayas and the reason that I keep on going back is because of that freedom that it gives so for me the freedom is this uncluttering of my life, that I think is part of the thing that will keep me going back as a consequence, I guess and I haven't, these thoughts are still forming in my head as we talk, that the shorter trips are becoming less satisfactory in that respect and as such they are fulfilling another form of a need be it the pureness of perhaps going rock climbing like doing a weekend trip with RC its good but you're rushing in and out. You leave on a Friday night and you're going to be back on Sunday and you don't get a chance to unclutter, but you do get the actual physical activity - so there is a spiritual side and a physical side of what we're talking about. (Tom)

So the simplifying of lives can bring a greater awareness and consistency which enables more opportunities for the brain and body to work in unison. Many of the participants commented on the desire to clear the mind of some of the pressures of everyday life. This escape to a less busy place permits the mind to attend to fewer things but in a deeper way. It was not the freedom from thinking or the freedom from effort that was sought, but the freedom to focus on living life to the full.

I think of rock climbing in the same way, you do it and then a range of other things are available and once you do that, the next boundary that you break is so often going to be so much higher. I do remember that being a freedom thing too, if you push, I'm only just thinking his through, you operate in a comfort zone and when you break that comfort zone there is an incredible feeling yeah I think there is a real feeling of yeah - you recognize what you can do maybe that's a big

freedom there again. Which means that when you go off and do a climb now there is very little that scares me I remember going to Cook going into Empress and we were going to do the South Face of Hicks and I remember lying there and really getting gripped I mean I hadn't done any big faces around there and the next day we climbed the South face of Hicks and it was a huge lifting and we got back down and 2 days later we climbed the North face and I came back from that trip going wow its like well I can do that. Well that's a degree of freedom isn't it? - It changes your horizon of what you can do. (Tom)



Truth is in the telling, the rhythm and steps.

The breath, the air, the tiny ripple, say more.


The story is a tale an ever changing flow
of words of images and memory
which take your mind away.

Lock the door and seal your lips
go deep inside.

Search with care for hidden meaning
hide it with smudgy splotches
on pages bleached and faded,
where colours flow and blur the text
so thoughts are present but not revealed.

Let ideas be found and layers unfold.

Words blow like the sand,
covering tracks and hiding treasures
while shaping dunes anew.



5.3. Being - Freedom to Be

I walked in the night it was a full moon and there was snow on the mountains and lots of reflected light and I walked from one group who were camping near Whakapapa and walked around the mountain and up to the other group. They were camping just below the Crater Lake and that little brook that runs down by the side of the track was full of icicles and it was just sparkling. Walking in moonlight in those sort of conditions, the full moon and being on your own completely on your own ... I suppose it's what I try and do with the kids you know give them time on their own at night to get the feel of a place. Try and develop that freedom of the spirit that freedom to be themselves and have the time to just be in a place without distractions. (Lilian)

A dimension of freedom of the hills which some mentioned was the freedom to be. For the participants, being present in the moment, with heightened awareness of self allowed for the realisation of potential, together with the ability to be spontaneous. For some it was purely physical and for others it included psychological, social and spiritual elements.

...looking over the bow and driving along with the dolphins that's fun...we were vicariously swimming with them ...we tried actually swimming with them before ... they weren't too keen on it ...we got into our bathing suits and you have the rope out the back so one person is driving and the other person is holding onto the rope and you can see them coming kind of close but not so you could touch them. (Katie)

A mountain can be understood in many ways; as a geographical feature, as a conscious experience of being-there, or as a sublime aesthetic moment of imaginative inspiration. These ways of understanding the mountain can be described as objective, subjective and creative. In the objective way thought and reason are used to describe the objects and their relationships as external to us. This expectation

that there is an outside force which manipulates and subordinates us, can remove the element of being and reduce our life to doing. When a mountain is approached subjectively, then attention is reflected back to our own consciousness and meaning emerges through an intermingling of experiences and memories. This reflection is more than a representation of form; it is a creation of form through being with the mountain. It becomes a place with personal significance. The imaginative creative way also requires connection, but doesn't require being present in a physical sense. The environment is not a collection of objects that we observe; it is part of our being; part of our existence.

5.3.1 Being in Action

When travelling alone in the mountains, there is a necessary focus on movement. The mind immerses itself and the body in the task of getting it right and large passages of time and distance can go by with no conscious thoughts on anything but the next move. A smooth and fluid travel through the terrain becomes the reason for doing it-a timeless loss of self amongst the movement and the mountains-if you're lucky. (Vass, 2002, p. 25)

Vervoorn (2000) writes "When it comes to mystical understanding and union with the cosmos, I prefer the way of action to the way of contemplation, absorption of the self through purposeful action within the world in preference to reposing in meditation outside it" (p. 115). We connect with places not just visually, but with our body and the way we move and things we do. When we are able to move freely we are free.

John - Well I like flat spaces, deserts, flat areas in Antarctica where you have ideally the 360 degree view of nothing ... when I'm standing on the middle of the Ross Ice-shelf or in a desert in Australia when you can go in any direction that you choose ... go wherever you like it's a kind of a nice feeling ...and I like that.

Jo - Is that freedom?

John - yeah that's freedom for me.

Moving in an unrestricted way is part of being free; fences, signs, rules, and other controls can interfere with that. In the outdoors while some movement is restricted by the terrain, there is unlimited potential because as the terrain becomes more challenging, new and different ways of movement are tried. Edwards (1992) suggests that physical movement is so obvious and natural that it is possible to overlook the ramifications it has on spiritual and physical well-being. She explored the different movements involved in rock climbing and suggests that when we develop our ability to move in different ways then it has a direct effect on how we feel.

... when I was a full time student and playing in a band 3 or 4 nights a week I'd drive to Mt Thomas or Mt Richardson for a mountain run for two or three hours, on my own, so there was an aspect of freedom in that, the solo experience and the total freedom, freedom to go at your own pace, freedom to go where you wanted, to explore an area.
(Rob)

Doing and being are not separate. How we perceive ourselves is often dependent on what the body is actually doing. When we smile a lot we feel happy; it's not just that we smile a lot because we feel happy.

I feel free in the city on my bike, well I know that's not a natural environment, but when you said freedom I always consider either running or biking is my escape, my mode of discovery. I love to go for a run to get my bearings and look around. (Katie)

5.3.2 Ecstasy: A moment of being free.

Some dimensions of being free that the participants mentioned in their stories are similar to experiences that Laski (1961) researched and referred to as ecstasy. Laski describes two kinds of exercise which seem to promote feelings of ecstasy. Regular rhythmic movement such as walking, cross-country skiing, cycling and jogging and swift movement such as running or flying were identified as being triggers for ecstasy. The regular rhythmic movements appeared to create a hypnotic effect from

which it was possible to generate new ideas, while swift movement triggered ecstasy.

...its not a particular conscious thing, but there is some stage when I'm riding that I get this inner sigh and I say to myself life is just wonderful and all that other stuff doesn't really matter at all. (Freda)

Some of these sensations have now been attributed to endorphins which are released into the body by exercise. Endorphins which are produced naturally in the body bind to the neuro-receptors in the brain to give relief from pain. Some scientists believe that endorphin release is one reason some people pursue dangerous activities. While endorphin research explains some of the physiological responses between exercise and the feeling of well-being, it is possibly not the only reason.

Laski's research also suggested that a variety of triggers other than movement could induce ecstasy including poetry, art, nature and scientific discovery. She specifically noted that mountains allowed for a feeling of enhanced knowledge probably because people can see further by being high. These changed perceptions of looking at something from a different perspective increase knowledge and understanding about an area. Laski suggested that some other triggers may also induce corresponding emotions. Unrestricted movement and expansive views could trigger feelings of being free to explore new ideas and to think in unlimited ways.

...so the clutter in the brain does disappear so its definitely a nice sensation of focus and simplicity, but not such a strong feeling of freedom that seems to come when there is a view. (Freda)

5.3.3 Flow

For some participants being free also had strong similarities to 'flow'. Csikszentmihalyi defined flow as "The state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." (1990b, p. 4).

Many climbers comment on such feelings “At these times I am free of vertigo, even in the dangerous places; my feet move naturally to firm foot holds, and I flow.” (Matthiessen, 1998, p. 124).

There are many similarities between ‘peak’ experiences described by Maslow, ‘ecstasy’ experiences (Laski) and ‘Flow’ experiences. These types of experiences often have a momentary loss of sense-of-self, where the usual subject object distinctions break down and the individual becomes totally immersed in the present moment. Frequently these experiences occur in a natural outdoors setting as a result of intense physical and/or emotional challenge.

...then the buttress goes up for at least 6 pitches and I just remember a feeling in there when I led the 6 pitches or at least four of them. B (name deleted) was with me and it was one of those times when all the moves, when everything flowed. I don't remember it being particularly hard I don't remember it being particularly technical it was just pitch after pitch after pitch, I've never been able to capture that again. It's a long way to go to try to get those 6 pitches again, but that would be the only time that I think that I've ever been free when rock-climbing and I think it was more in the groove. (Tom)

Flow is usually experienced during activities which are not directed at achieving external goals such as work, but are pursued for their own sake. The activity focuses concentration in such a way that instead of analysing and calculating how to climb or paddle for instance, the movements become effortless and spontaneous; there is a sense of being in control without trying to be. Csikszentmihalyi says “...people become so involved in what they are doing that the activity becomes spontaneous, almost automatic: they stop being aware of themselves as separate from the actions they are performing.”(1990b, p. 53).

I've felt so on top of the game that even though I'm doing things that are quite hard for me ... It feels like you are an external observer manipulating a toy around thinking ... I remember one rapid in particular I got to the top of it and straightaway thought no way and

grabbed my boat and walked to the bottom ... Everyone else was in their boats ready to head off downstream and I said no I'm going up to do the run so I carried my boat back up and paddled this drop ... everything was so obvious and there so much time and ... it all it felt like a complete doddle ... From a physical mental kinaesthetic sense it was kind of like liberation. (Jack)

5.3.4 Challenge

The ability to exercise a level of control in a challenging situation also seemed to create an enhanced experience of being free. Usually during challenges and adventures the outcome is uncertain. For some people certainty is very appealing, but in striving for certainty, elements of spontaneity, creative innovation and openness to new experiences are lost. Enjoying challenge relates to increasing focus and mindful attention and not letting fear limit or constrain. One of the consequences of seeking out this feeling of being challenged is that as skills and experience increase the intensity of the challenge also increases. As Jack goes on to say ...

You get a heightened sense of importance with a higher element of risk, where the consequences of blowing it were much, much higher and more disastrous, so it would be much harder to focus that much energy and intensity on something that clearly wasn't going to do me in if I made a mistake. (Jack)

George perceived some risks as detracting from the mountain experience of freedom. He talked about freedom as being at peace in the moment and avoiding the unnecessary turmoil that is generated alongside high stress work, expeditions and dangerous situations.

...so I was increasingly nervous about some elements of the job in terms of risk that I didn't like and stuff like that. It was just that sometimes there was so much razzamatazz and so many people and so much noise be it at Scott base or aircraft or vehicles that it defeated the reason for me being in the environment and sometimes

you'd pinch yourself in the bum and say it wasn't that bad and here we are now totally on our own total silence beautiful camp beautiful place it's wonderful, but there is a lot of bullshit that goes with that as you well know and eventually I got to a stage of life I suppose where it was better handled by younger people and it was better that I moved on. So I got more and more selfish I suppose, to generate my own feeling of freedom and spirituality and peacefulness and silence is a very precious commodity on this planet. It's such a busy noisy world that's what I've stepped out of and tried to find. (George)

For others, risk, danger or near death experiences intensify an awareness of being free; becoming aware of mortality can put life into a different perspective. For some the fear of death almost stops them living a full life, while for others it helps them appreciate each day and make the most of it. The first choice is like a prison in which fears keep you locked up, and the second frees you up to the fullness of life.

In my worst moments of anguish, I seemed to discover the deep significance of existence which till then I had been unaware. I saw that it was better to be true than strong. The marks of the ordeal are apparent on my body. I was saved and I had won my freedom ...the assurance and serenity of a man who has fulfilled himself ...A new and splendid life has opened out before me.

(Herzog, cited in Bernbaum 2002, p. 153)

The consequence of pushing the limits is that people die in the outdoors whilst pursuing freedom, and leave behind friends and family. Coffey (2004) in her book "Where the Mountain Casts Its Shadow" refers to the taboo subject of climbing accidents that shatter lives and break the hearts of those left behind. She opens her book by saying "The world needs risk takers. They inspire, challenge and encourage. They set off sparks, igniting fires that burn long after their passing. They dare the impossible. But not without cost." (p. xix).

This total participation of being focussed on, and involved in, the experience was very important. The ability to risk life and be on the edge of life seemed to awaken people to its potential.

The virtue of Tao governs its natural way.

Thus, he who is at one with it,

is one with everything which lives,

having freedom from the fear of death.

(Lao Tzu translated by Rosenthal)

*I stared into space
memories
dreams*

*A wind swept canvas
shades of white emerging
shapes
light
shadows
ice fills my nostrils
cold and content*

*a tapestry of texture and flow
created from nothing with no one to see
but I do*

*I hesitate the path leads away
judge not for the circle is drawn
natures cycles are but future deeds and past events*

*the images swirl
the painting in the sky blows on*

5.4. Participatory – Others and Choices.

The stories the interviewees told of freedom of the hills included an element of freedom which involved participating with others, being part of team, even when that increased the level of responsibility. This at times appeared inconsistent, as solo experience was also valued as creating moments of freedom. This need for positive relationships and sharing of the experience can balance the tendency to choose a level of freedom which denies responsibility and that can at times result in a lonely existence. Another inconsistency was that in working and climbing with others the freedom to make choices was restricted. Choice was often mentioned as an element of freedom.

5.4.1 Others

I know that some of them really feel the spiritual nature of the rivers and they are not just there to go paddling but to appreciate the whole experience. It's what forms those bonds and draws them back. The trip they're planning this week is a repeat of the one we did in the seventh form some of those places were just so powerful and the whole group just got on so well together. (Lilian)

When activities are pursued with people seeking similar experiences and of a similar ability level, then freedom is enhanced because the team provides a degree of support. Humans are social and learn from and enjoy social interaction. Jack told a story about being stormed in and sharing a small tent with two others which stresses the comfort and satisfaction of being with friends even in serious situations.

... by day 6 or 7 AB (name deleted) said I can't believe that I'm just totally chilled on this whole thing the days pass so quickly I thought after the second day I'd just be going insane that I'd be tossing and turning and restless and all the rest of it but I just lie here. We'd all just lie there and hours would go by and no one would say a word and of course we'd have our little games of scrabble and other bits and pieces that we'd do other games or just chat, but there would be

long, long periods of time just lying there doing nothing because we were so packed in there. (Jack)

Mountaineers in various ways have created a culture of their own with accepted ways of seeing the mountains. This has not evolved through conscious teaching plans, but through the building up of common experiences. These experiences can be written about in books and journals or shared at different throughout the trip. After a particular climb when everyone is brimming from ear to ear on a mountain top the emotions and ideas are shared and intensified.

... its quite clear in my mind ... we were standing on the top of Tongariro just as the sun was setting and there was something spectacular about the sunset which was exceptionally pleasurable to be watching in itself, but the reason that that moment is so strong is that the group were quite overwhelmed by the whole experience and I think that while I was having my own response and enjoying that moment I was also enjoying the fact that they were so taken by that moment. Thinking about that now I don't know if that is really freedom not really a sense of freedom probably more something quite unique about that moment where they all had this strong appreciation and shared emotion ...they were standing on the top and were all quite linked up and singing and at times quiet and at times just standing quietly as well, but quite engaged together so there was a strong sense of unity amongst them ... there are times when it feels like it comes together and the connections occur and the whole thing is a positive experience. (Freda)

This desire to fit into the rhythms and conventions of others creates an area of contradiction within the concept of freedom of the hills. There are times when we need to adventure with others, but being with others means that we can experience increased levels of responsibility or loss of control. It becomes important who we choose to adventure with, as this significantly affects degrees of freedom. To go

climbing with a guide, means the client can become dependent, and the guide accepts greater responsibility.

Out in the mountains, in spite of the promise of the 'freedom' adventure promises, the contemporary guide of the tourist adventure choreographs the detail of the experience. My fieldwork observations reveal that this occurs by his or her selecting where to walk, when to stop to admire the view, how the group are positioned on and off the rope, how to walk and conserve energy, how to move around obstacles and so forth. (Beedie, 2003, p. 156)

A more equal sharing of the experience can help to enhance it, because there are opportunities for talking about it both at the time and later. Putting the experience into words for people who were not there can be very difficult, but reliving the experience with fellow participants keeps it alive for longer. Special experiences often create special bonds. For Malcolm and Katie the need to be with others was very important.

so I was working doing a job on familiar ground, but I was actually I didn't have that relationship with people so much and so much as I enjoyed the environment I really enjoyed being back in my familiar ground I sort of missed out on that people interaction. (Malcolm)

...the friend factor is quite high sharing those moments you can become better friends with someone in a shorter period of time because you go through real experiences if you want to call them that umm... there is a lot of emotion attached with it often the challenge frustration stuff and then the joy exhilaration of achieving things. (Katie)

The desire to share the experiences with the rest of the family was also noted as being important.

What more freedom could anybody ever wish for than to be able firstly to take their partner and secondly to take their children to a place like Antarctica. (George)

There is often a struggle between searching for our autonomous self and realising that it is only achievable in relation to the others. Fromm (1975) suggests that identity is tied to nature, clan, social or religious communities and that being part of a structuralised whole provides security, but removes some individual freedom. This loss of autonomy can be positive, when freedom is not merely perceived as being free of constraints, but to do with what is worth doing.

5.4.2 Responsibility

Responsibility can impose limitations on freedom and yet for others it is only through the acceptance of responsibility that freedom can be achieved. Kohák says that “It is that in claiming our freedom, we have rejected natural restraints without accepting the responsibility of self-restraint.” (1997, p. 6). Nietzsche (1895) suggests that freedom is the will to affirm and to be responsible for oneself.

It is necessary for individuals to acknowledge that choices and decisions are their own to make. Fromm (1975) says that positive freedom is the realisation of an individual’s potential, and that to reach that potential is the responsibility of the individual; there is no higher authority that will do it. This is difficult to do, as certain structures and beliefs within society suggest there is a higher authority and so some elements of identity are attributed to this other authority. A degree of dependence, rather than freedom, results from this belief in a higher force that determines and is responsible for who you become.

Antarctica helps me describe who I am and what I do a lot more than many other things I don’t describe myself as a mountaineer or a kayaker or a rock climber, but if I was asked to describe myself and what I do I try and slip in a mention about Antarctica and usually art. (John)

As well as responsibility to the self there is also responsibility to others. Fromm (1975) talks about feelings of powerlessness and isolation arising from the spirit of instrumentality which pervades so many of the interactions that occur between people. Personal relations between human beings have assumed the characteristics of relationships between things. Society has tended to position humans as instruments of purpose which in turn alienates and undermines the self. To go into the outdoors for pleasure, removes the economic motive, which enables the realisation of the group's potential without limiting it to task achievement. However, even this can be compromised when someone feels obliged to take on extra and unplanned for responsibilities as Jack discussed.

Certainly when I've been on trips either in the mountains or on the rivers when there has been someone else in the party who's having such a bad time with the whole thing either because they're out of their league or just having a bad day that I've ended up looking after them because it seems to be my lot. I mean that your whole operation and ability to look around and either just see the environment or do whatever is just so constrained cos suddenly your job becomes instructor or guide or whatever else when the trip might have been a perfect personal trip it feels quite obtrusive. (Jack)

Not all experiences in the outdoors are free of economic incentives. Apart from paid guiding and instructional work some expeditions are sponsored, which places a different responsibility on the group. Andy below talks about how different pressures can limit freedom.

Andy -I thought there might be a couple of things of interest, one of which and it's a bit surprising is when I wasn't feeling free and it is when we went to the Cordillera Blanca. I was 23 years old and we were on Mt C and it was dangerous with all the loose snow and we stayed on it for a few more days than we intended to and I think we resolved or I certainly resolved then never to get committed with sponsorship to a climb cos that's what was holding me back. So there we were on what maybe ought to have been the most striking example

of freedom in my life climbing, this big near vertical mountain and in actual fact it was not. It was totally out of condition and very dangerous but we stayed on it because of sponsorship.

Jo - Did you feel you had to do it?

Andy - We still didn't, we only got about half way. It was like we were imprisoned. We were on it for about seven days.

Jo - just because you felt obliged?

Andy - We'd shot our mouths off about doing it. We raised the money by saying we'd climb it and really we shouldn't have even started. The whole face was so out of condition we were at our limit. It was good to get off.

The responsibility of looking after others can also be a limitation, particularly in educational settings.

So I think that I feel constrained when I'm instructing. I'd use the word constrained because I don't think I could feel free relaxed and really enjoying things to the fullest because always at the back of my mind, not just safety, but safety would be the main reason, you know making sure that nothing went wrong and watching the emotional safety and physical safety, but also analysing - was that a good activity to do? and what are we doing next? and how does that fit with the time? and is everyone involved? I'd be thinking all those things that go along with that so the constraint would be the responsibility factor. So I'd find it hard to be free even though its beautiful weather and beautiful people and everything I'd still feel slightly constrained because I'm still looking after them. (Katie)

Freedom does not remove responsibility, in some ways responsibility is an integral part of freedom. Denying responsibilities can sometimes result in the loss of freedom, especially when it is the denial of taking on personal responsibility to live

life to the full. For certain dimensions of personal growth it is important for both students and instructors to be responsible; neither should be in the position of blaming the other. However, with the increasingly high repercussions of blame which are placed on the instructor in the event of an incident, it becomes less possible to devolve responsibility to students and greater expectations are placed on the instructor to deliver safe experiences.

5.4.3 Choices

My first act of free will shall be to believe in free will ...believe in my individual reality and creative power.

(William James, 1870, as cited in Menand, 2002, p 219)

Choice involves options, to be able to make a choice demands that there are alternative decisions which can be taken. Whether humans are able to choose at all is a longstanding philosophical debate between proponents of free will and proponents of determinism. Free will relates to a central autonomous self who makes choices without coercion; determinism denies that free will is possible because every decision is determined by the consequences of prior experiences, society or an all-powerful deity. Believing in higher authorities, fate and destiny removes the responsibility to take control and places individuals in positions of dependence on external circumstances. Belief in self as an agent capable of free will supports the ontological position that there is no future unless it is created by the actions of the present.

Sartre (1956) suggested that the freedom to choose is an essential part of being human. While pure choice is possibly very rare, as there are frequently imposed limits either by self or society, some people act as if there are no choices at all. This may be partly due to the fear of making the wrong choices, but it can also be the result of not seeing the options because of a closed or fixed position. Experienced mountaineers appreciate that they must keep an open mind, and be observant of changes in weather and snow pack no matter how subtle, making choices about their plans as new information is received. In the mountains, it can feel as if there are more choices available, partly because the initial decision to go outdoors is often

without a purpose or a need; it is just a love of going outdoors. Neulinger (1981) said that perceived freedom is one of the defining criteria of leisure, and defined perceived freedom “as a state in which the person feels that what he/she is doing is done by choice and because one wants to do it” (p. 15).

*Go wherever I like ...without having to stay on someone else's road
and it's just a small aspect of freedom but it's one that I like (John)*

If someone becomes locked on a plan, purpose or idea, then the mind becomes imprisoned just as the body is, when it is locked in a room.

*You feel so time liberated when you make a decision like that which
seems so ludicrous to someone who doesn't have a reason to be there
or wait for this one intangible thing for the chance that sunrise might
come good. It's cool because you made that decision and then it
might be a complete dud the clouds come over or the cloud that was
there doesn't make it optimal. I don't feel violated that nature has
conspired against me to make a cloudy dull morning that's the nature
of it I'll come back another day at least I know its here now and I
know what's a good time. (Jack)*

Freedom for Jack involves being able to make choices which others may not have the time or desire to. It creates a specialness and independence. The choice may involve a work project, but it still seems like a luxury to have the time and the knowledge to make a decision.

Choices that the participants made relating to work, lifestyle, partners and solitude helped to enhance that feeling of freedom. These choices extended beyond the outdoor experiences and into other areas of their lives. This transfer into many elements of life was seen as both an important and positive element.

*I have the freedom now to call the shots in that I get more offers than
I can take, so I have to weave a path through those because
sometimes they overlap and you can't do both if they overlap so I
pick the one that is going to environments I particularly want to*

photograph ... I have developed a freedom in choosing where I go and that is amazing when you consider how difficult Antarctica was to get to 25 years ago, and now here I am now saying I can pick and choose and that's pretty amazing. (George)

One of the biggest freedoms for me was moving out of salaried employment and out of management. I know that's not really about freedom on a mountain. While I do need to earn a certain amount of money, I'm pretty free to choose what I do each day and make my own decisions and that's good. (Andy)

Choice is also connected to how we see ourselves as subjects and objects. From within, or as a subject, it usually feels as if many of the decisions made in a day were made out of choice. From an objective position it can seem as if circumstances dictate the decisions. The ability to be totally connected with the outdoors creates a feeling of being both in nature, and yet out of it at the same time; as though we are created by events external to us and yet create these events. This fast-looping and confusion of perceptions means that it difficult to separate the subject from the object so we become both. Earlier there was reference made to seeing a mountain as either a subject or an object, with the dizzying illusion of spinning it is possible to see ourselves as both subject and object. In some ways this balances the argument between proponents of determinism and free will; as an objective part of nature choices are determined for us, yet when we subjectively create and emerge with these events we are free to choose.

and the perception—at this altitude extremely moving—that these two hands I see before me in the sun, bracing the basket straps, hands square and brown and wrinkled with the scars of life, are no different from the old hands of my father. Simultaneously, I am myself, the child I was, the old man I will be. (Matthiessen, 1978, p. 180)

5.4.4 Participatory

Participation means being there and being involved. Involvement includes being with others and balancing personal wants with the needs of others. It involves

acquiring knowledge and making informed choices. Shotter (1993), when he was talking about possibilities for the future said that involved participation was better than detached observation.

So on to my core value: freedom. Freedom to be me. By that I do not mean a lack of responsibility. Quite the reverse, as I believe personal freedom brings with it a great deal of responsibility. But freedom from constricting attitudes, self defeating doubts and fears. Some would say oneness. Some of you will no doubt know that feeling, when on top of some hill, whether got there by struggle or not. The really great thing is to bring that feeling into everyday life. (Hart, 2002, p. 113)

**Alone
A space
Pristine
Clean
Clear and white**

**A place to create
a dream of freedom
No cares
No worries**

**Empty of life
Empty of people
Everywhere to go
But nowhere to visit**

**Hold me
Lean on me
Enfold me
Blanket me in calm
so I may see beyond
and love**

I am who I am with others

5.5 Creativity – Inspiration and Aesthetics

Every landscape is, as it were, a state of the soul and whoever penetrates into both is astonished to find how much likeness there is in each detail.

H. F. Amiel, 31 October 1852 (1913)

There were elements of creativity that emerged from the participants stories, some of these have already been touched on in the previous sections under the themes of holism, complexity, simplicity and being. While this section makes connections with those it primarily focuses on inspiration, spontaneity, and the aesthetic and sublime elements of freedom of the hills.

Creativity occurs when the mind empties in some way and leaves it open to a flood of new ideas.

Upward I went, move after move. The higher I went the more my mind focused on the present. Gone were the regrets of the past or the worries of the future only now was of concern. (Kennedy, 2003, p. 45)

5.5.1 Inspiration

We drove up to this lake which was so special it had a kind of sediment in it and it was the blues and greens of that painting (points to a painting on the wall) it was incredible so eerie; there was a kind of mist or steam rising up from it. I asked my sister what it was and she said that it was when the air temperature dropped below a certain point then it was the start of the fall and the freezing of the land and water. As I sat there it was really spectacular and literally before my eyes the trees started to change colour even as I sat and watched them they literally turned to gold and those bronzy reds. It was truly amazing to see it all happen. (Lilian)

McDonald (2002) says in the introduction to the book *Extreme Landscape* “The eloquent responses by the authors of this book are living proof that mountains are a truly inspirational landscape-” (p. xiv). The stories told by the participants equally confirmed that.

Outer Mongolia has a big landscape and there were definitely times in that you felt very free and I think it was partly the landscape the nature of the landscape. The landscape there is just huge; when you can see tomorrow then you know that's a long way away ... the landscape imposes a type of freedom. (Tom)

The outdoors is sometimes seen as a place to gain inspiration and allow for creative thoughts to occur. Macfarlane (2003) comments that Keats is reported to have imagined himself on mountain peaks when he had writers block and that Shelley's emotions were stirred by the mountains. Freda also talked about the outdoors being a stimulus for creative moments.

I seem to let my mind chase around on little ideas and not be constrained on where those ideas go, but to wander off on a few tangents and think about how those might work and sometimes it can happen at home, but most easily it can happen by going out and being in an environment that allows me to let the mind go to a few more places or tangents and rather than try and force those thoughts its just letting your mind take up those thoughts and I don't know, but its like letting the ideas spring to mind they obviously come from somewhere or something, but like I said before, if I'm going biking up the hill then ideas just seem to flow in and out of the mind and for me it seems to be a useful way of thinking about different things and developing some creative input into a lesson or my structured approach which I've already established ...I definitely don't get that creativity from sitting down in front of a piece of paper writing it I can do the framework like that, but I can't do the creative stuff so well so its about finding some relaxation or recreation time to engage

in it and most easily its about doing something a of a more physical nature ... (Freda)

Macfarlane (2003) says that during the Romantic era the mountains became a ubiquitous icon of freedom and emancipation where one was guaranteed spiritual or artistic epiphany. He says “The mountain–top and the viewpoint became accepted sites of contemplation and creativity: places where you were brought to see further both physically and metaphysically.” (2003, pp. 159-160). The mountaineering culture in Aotearoa New Zealand had some of its origins in the Romantic era, and so these stirring accounts of freedom and creativity still impact our present views of the mountains. The experiences that the mountains generate have been in some ways influenced by the writers and poets that preceded us.

All the fundamental imagery of the world would be impossible without landscape. The human journey, the search for meaning would be inconceivable. Landscape is then a condition of the possibility of everything. Without landscape there would be nowhere. Without a where there would be no thing. (Wickwire, 1998)

There is still a strong inspirational tone within the writings of some mountaineers and outdoor people and while this can be criticised for being out of touch with reality it does offer a style of language for talking about what is often so difficult to express.

5.5.2 Aesthetics

Csikszentmihalyi defines an aesthetic experience as “an intense involvement of attention in response to a visual stimulus. The experiential consequences of such a deep and autotelic involvement are an intense enjoyment characterized by feelings of personal wholeness, a sense of discovery, and a sense of human connectedness” (Csikszentmihalyi & Robinson, 1990a, p. 178). He relates aesthetics to aspects of flow which were discussed earlier.

I wandered off over a ridge and around into the next basin which was a really nice kind of a spot and just sitting up there in the beautiful weather and we'd already been out for a couple of weeks so it

already felt like a long way from anywhere and there were a couple of people around the ridge but we were the only people around for a long way and in those, in that time and it was the second time so I'd already had this kind of feeling so I'd never really felt such an over, over like an over brimming sense of happiness and freedom, freedom is another word I've thrown in there, but certainly happiness or contentedness, its how I thought about it at the time. It was so overpowering at the time somehow that I just cried because there was nothing else to do. I was already smiling or grinning as wide as you could possibly grin and the mouth wouldn't work any more, but there is absolutely no reason for it and it was just purely the fact that I was as happy as a sandboy in a large pile of sand, and its really quite hard to explain it to people, because I don't think I've experienced it before, where there is this over-brimming happiness and just going – I'm just so happy and then tears rolling down my face, there was nothing more to do, I had no more emotions to express it, even to myself. (Jack)

The aesthetics of the specific place often relate to the space and the views. When these are expansive it enables some people to think more laterally. Macfarlane says that “Great height gives you greater vision: the view from the summit empowers you.” (2003, p. 156).

Well I like flat spaces, deserts, flat areas in Antarctica where you have ideally the 360 degree view of nothing and I have liked being on ships but in big oceans, but in general you can't find a spot on a ship where you can stand and turn around and not see anything at all on the 360 degree turn, you always have part of the ship in the way ... I've always liked the idea that I can be a lateral thinker and that I can move my thinking around things in ways that other people don't normally do so in terms of that same analogy that you can move in any direction rather than be restricted to paths and roads and whatever I think that certainly works for me. So most of my art

career, I haven't felt the need to do what other people have done. ...I'm far better to work in obscure areas where there is no competition whatever where there is, well not where there is no competition, but there isn't an established canon of belief as to how things ought to be. (John)

While the landscape and special places are important sources for aesthetic experiences Slinger and Rudestam (1997) in their research on risk taking found that high risk sports also involved aesthetic elements:-

A third, unexpected motivator that arose in 38% of the interviews was what can best be defined as an aesthetic consideration. "I do it because it is aesthetically beautiful," said one. "It's like an art," said a second. "The aesthetics, the rhythm," said another. A solo climber stated that he did not use ropes because it interfered with the dance-like quality of climbing, while another said that he was motivated by the movement of climbing. A kayaker said, "What motivates me is the state I enter into. There is a real clarity and heightened senses—both physically and of the mind. The risk is completely out of my mind. I am connected and in it. All my senses just feed in". (1997, p. 367).

5.5.3 Cultural aesthetics

Berleant (2002) suggests that the ways in which the environment is experienced involve not only the senses and other physiological factors, but also cultural influences because we perceive through the modalities of our culture. "The perception of snow, of rain, of distance ... are discriminated and identified according to the paradigms and categories embedded in our cultural practices" (p. 8). The aesthetic appreciation that we develop relates to our cultural paradigm.

What a panorama of loveliness met our delighted gaze! How our spirits rose at the majestic sight! Right below us stretched the great Dobson Valley, with Lake Ohau away at the far end of it, and further still Ben More Range in Otago. Then turning to the north-east, a

scene of grandeur never to be forgotten was revealed; we stood spell-bound for the minute. (Moodie, 1893, p. 206)

Laski (1980) also suggests that triggers which promote aesthetic responses are culturally driven and tend to go in and out of fashion. Mountains were fashionable in Greek antiquity as sources of knowledge, insight and ecstatic experiences ... “But for the British, to climb mountains to have ecstasies at the top became fashionable only with the Age of Sensibility” (1980, p. 117). Macfarlane (2003) says there is little evidence to suggest that beautiful views held any aesthetic appeal before the eighteenth century. He goes on to say “Quite the opposite in fact; until well into the 1700’s, travellers who had to cross the Alpine passes often chose to be blindfolded in order to prevent them from being terrified by the appearance of peaks.” (2003, pp. 145-146).

While aesthetic ideas change over time, different cultures also develop different appreciation of what is pleasing and aesthetic. The desire to travel and explore different ways of living opens up ways of viewing our own cultural beliefs.

That freedom in going to an environment I wanted to go to like Bhutan ... generating the peace of mind to be with local people and not using mechanised transport ... being on foot on skis with dogs on yaks, camels, horses ... and that to me is a total freedom. (George)

To break out of some of the cultural constraints of how things are perceived is important element of creativity. There are some remote places which allow for this to occur and these spots can open up opportunities for challenging the way that the world is perceived.

I enjoy being creative and coming up with new ideas ... in places like Antarctica it's quite easy because it's close to being a place where there is the least amount of influence from the rest of society. There's no real indigenous social heritage and history that says how people ought to react or behave. Antarctica has less history than anywhere else, so while it's still a very pervasive thing because a person by

themselves in Antarctica will still respond to their histories and the rules, at least it gives a base line. (John)

5.5.4 Spontaneity

Spontaneity is something which arises from natural feelings without constraint or planning. The Romantic Movement amongst other things recognised and valued spontaneity, the subjective experience, and a reaching beyond what is clear and known toward visions and possibilities.

... that its kind of like a drug really and that to seek places and or things that brought out that emotion in me, and because I don't well—don't seem to have much control over what makes it or when it happens. So I don't feel it's a façade that I put on so I can tell a cool story about crying in the outdoors when there's no one there because it just suddenly happens and I have this overwhelming sense of joy and I just settled into the fact that it happens when it happens. (Jack)

Many examples of freedom of the hills mention spontaneous and breath-taking reactions to the scenic beauty of some sites. A spectacular landscape can overwhelm the conscious mind and allow for a sense of connection or oneness to develop. It is not so much the beauty, but more what that beauty leads to. This change in consciousness can lead to a creative moment as the emotional self unites with the rational. Fromm says that "...positive freedom consists in the spontaneous activity of the total integrated personality" (1975, p. 222).

The outdoors encourages spontaneity as the hectic pace of modern life may inhibit it. Matthiessen says "My head has cleared in these weeks free of intrusions - mail, telephones, people and their needs - and respond to things spontaneously, without defensive or self-conscious screens" (1998, p. 112).

I didn't have to bother about the phone, I didn't have to bother about so many dishes or something like that, so that was a way of leaving behind what was happening to you in the city it was a way of leaving the baggage behind and so when I went into the hills I felt far freer I

was free from that and the nice thing is that I knew nothing was going to interfere with my thoughts I could just be myself. (Malcolm)

Spontaneity enables each moment to have meaning. It requires an openness to what is around and what is present. There is no longer a need to wait for something or search for something. Life does not need to be a search for second-hand meaning, but a making of something at every moment.

5.5.5 Sublime

Macfarlane (2003) talks about sublime mountains as being hectic, intimidating and uncontrollable, inspiring both pleasure and terror.

I can tell you about a couple of places that I've been in that have felt over whelming, you know scary and not and not umm free, oh I suppose that's the thing. We crossed over the col between Barrier and Crosscut into the upper err into the upper Marion behind Sabre and just sitting in there and there is this big, big cirque wall and we had actually done a climb coming out the top end of that. ...and I remember sitting in the cirque feeling somewhat overwhelmed by these big walls and feeling the need to sit with my back to the walls just to avoid being scared. (Tom)

The sublime refers to striking grandeur and the power to provoke ecstatic or terrifying moments; it is often encapsulated in nature, particularly mountains or other desolate and striking landscapes. The notion that all nature is positive and can result in the emergence of creative imagination has been challenged over the years. An important challenge comes from the artists like Baudelaire who suggest that nature is not in fact good, but can be ugly and messy and that art is somewhat higher than that and comes instead from what is manufactured. There are also many poets, writers and artists who represent the ordinary and banal in their work.

Kant (1790/1951) believed that poetry was also an instance of the sublime. He thought that the sublime also related to the mind making sense of the intangible aspects of the world. That a sublime moment was when the gap between what can be

known and what can be said is resolved through artistic expression. This style of expression can take many forms and is not restricted to poetry; music, painting, sculpture and photography can all help express the ineffable. The search for and production of this creative form also offers an element of freedom.

because of my growing appreciation of the subtleties of light and interplay of shapes and things I see more, there is so much beauty in those things and so my appreciation has grown and my patience is limitless because that's the end in itself... just looking at it and thinking this is going to be really good at sunset or tomorrow morning at sunrise and having the freedom to be able to make an unstressed or unpressured decision to stay and wait ...wow its great
(Jack)

5.5.6 Creativity-Final note

The beauty, focus and excitement that the outdoors offers, can challenge what is constant and often constraining in our lives and open up body and mind to new possibilities and perceptions. The mountain and other expansive landscapes allow for a sense of mystery and wonder to enter our lives. They are independent of the human control. They remain unpredictable and the sense of danger challenge and awe which surrounds them stimulates the whole person.

We had lived on the ragged edge of that land, between relentless ocean and implacable ice. But, like the twilight hour between darkness and day, it lacked the harshness of either and yet was somehow more than both – a zone of unforgettable beauty and dramatic change. To live out of a kayak, surrounded by nature at its most elemental, with nothing but your skill and love for what you are doing, is to experience life stripped bare. What remains is the essential core of living: friendship, endeavour and the beating heart of the wild.
(Jones, 2004a, pp. 112-113)

Brain stored memories encoded with
sensation
Replicate habits of ancestral cells
The natural world within regenerates

A convergence of time
Warped by perception
Dislocates.
Fighting thrashing
A gaps open
Difference deepens
Unruly power restless for conformity
Casts its web

entangled
trapped
I sink

in stillness
my quiet becomes my freedom

Chapter 6

An Interlude: Mountaineering in Aotearoa

Hills peep o'er hills, and Alps on Alps arise!

Alexander Pope, 1709.

6.1 The Hills and Mountains

“Freedom of the Hills” ... this research is predominately about freedom, but what of the hills...what part do they play in all this? A hill is generally not as high as a mountain, but is still elevated from the surrounding land, it is often more rounded and less craggy than a mountain. We can ‘head to the hills’ or even be ‘over the hill’ but for this research the term hill is really just a metaphor for an outdoor site with space and atmosphere for a person to recreate in. Many of the stories and references relate to rivers, valleys, the sea and the bush, but the mountains do appear to have a stronger connection to the feeling of freedom for the participants.

... when I think about freedom all of the times relate to the mountains and of being up high with a view. Being able to look down on an expansive view... and it doesn't even need to be a stunning view it's just that the space in some way, in some subconscious way, adds to the openness and feeling of freedom. (Freda)

Different cultures and different people have different relationships with the land. One element of this research has been to explore freedom of the hills from the perspective of mountaineers, as expressed in the articles in the New Zealand Alpine Club Journal. The landscape of Aotearoa affected its people long before 1892, when the New Zealand Alpine Journals first appeared. Geologically Aotearoa New Zealand formed some 600 million years ago, after a volcanic eruption on the border of a continental shield composed of Antarctica and Australia; when those two continents were part of Gondwana. Since then it has been folded, altered, covered with sea and pushed up again, as it is continually pressured by the moving crust below. The islands became isolated from the major land masses around 80 million

years ago developing a unique blend of flora and fauna (Thornton, 1985). Fromm (1975) said “The emergence of man from nature is a long-drawn out process; to a large extent he remains tied to the world from which he emerged; he remains part of nature – the soil he lives on, the sun and moon and stars, and trees and flowers, and animals, and the group of people with whom he is connected by the ties of blood.” (p. 28).

Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) was rich in natural resources when the Māori people arrived from Polynesia around the 12th Century. “Māori land tenure was not a matter of exclusive titles to separate pieces of land. It was a complicated structure of customary rights governing who had the rights to use the land’s various resources and when.” (Evison, 1993, p. 8). The sea, the mountains and all other features of the landscape were not owned, but certain places had extra significance because they yielded valuable food and mineral resources or were the burial grounds of their ancestors. The ancestral lands are regarded with deep veneration and every part of the land was named, not only the larger mountains and rivers but each hill and stream and valley. While naming can be seen as a selfish activity of controlling and ownership for many Māori it was not about ownership, but about a deeper connection with the land, it was part of who they were. During the colonisation of New Zealand in the 1800’s the loss of land did not only bring deprivation because they were cut off from mahinga kai (food sources) and other resources, but spiritual anguish because it was a loss of their ancestors. (Evison, 1993). While Māori legends tell of ascents of Ngauruhoe and Taranaki by the time Europeans came to Aotearoa most mountains were regarded as tapu. When James Bidwill climbed Ngauruhoe in 1839 there was considerable anger at this breaking of the tapu (Langton, 1991).

From the beginning of colonisation Aotearoa New Zealand was framed as a natural paradise; a place to escape to. In another reality Aotearoa New Zealand has been, and is still being, fought over, mapped, renamed, stolen, sold, cultivated and exploited. For many years traces of Māori culture were systematically removed and replaced by a veneer of European society. However, the picture postcard image of a clean green country is still prevalent and has become the accepted reality of many.

Hughes (1993) said “It is a country associated with national parks, scenic beauty, wilderness areas, beautiful deserted beaches, green pastures and a friendly population – an image which is carefully cultivated in tourism brochures and in our trade promotions.” (p. 4). To experience freedom of the hills is somewhat dependent on the cultural conventions and image makers of a particular time and place. In Aotearoa New Zealand the current dominant image makers of outdoor freedom have a Western European origin.

Much of the renaming and reclaiming of the land came from the exploits of the explorers and climbers. The journals of the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) recount many epic stories of these expeditions as adventurers ‘conquered’ mountains and then named or renamed them.

I arrived in the colony in January, 1855, and in September of that year started off with my friend Mr Tripp to “find Country” for sheep farming, and not taken up. To do this it is necessary to go out of known country. We chose the Rangitata, and I have never regretted it. We went up as far as Forest Creek (so named by us), about 25 miles above Peel Forest, set fire to all the rough grass etc and returned to Christchurch. ...(of course I use all the names as now on the Government map, but in those days names were none until the early settlers, ourselves among number, gave them.)

(Acland, 1892, pp. 22-23)

6.2 Mountaineering in Aotearoa.

The term mountaineering generally refers to climbing mountains which have alpine characteristics as well as high elevation. This contrasts with tramping, trekking and hill-walking which are more associated with moving in the outdoors in a variety of non-alpine terrains. The history of mountaineering as an activity not related to work or necessity began in Europe in the 1700’s. Mount Blanc was climbed for the first time in 1786 by scientists and this link to science and discovery was an important element for many decades. Macfarlane (2003) describes this era saying “...no respectable mountaineer would scale a peak without at the very least boiling a

thermometer on the summit.” (p. 16). He goes on to say that the imaginative potency of mountaineering took hold in the 1800’s and around the turn of the nineteenth century mountains frequently became ‘objects of obsession’ within the minds of certain climbers. It was in 1892 that the New Zealand Alpine Club was formed. The first journal described the Alpine Club as “merely a band of enthusiasts, who for sundry reasons love the mountains, and love to climb them and explore their fastnesses.” (Mannering , 1892, p. 8). It should be noted though, that many climbers are independent and rejected the more conservative systems of the NZ Alpine Club, hence many adventures are not recorded but remain as personal memories.

The early years of the Alpine club were about a few elite climbers and explorers venturing into unexplored territory and claiming first ascents. Fyfe (1894) wrote about the first ascent of Malte Brun. “I stood on the lowest point of the peak, and Malte Brun was virtually conquered”. However, along with this spirit of conquering there was still a respect and awe for the environment. Fyfe goes on to add “The view was very grand, composed as it was of the most sublime objects, blended with or divided from each other in every variety that could gratify the eye and charm the imagination” (p. 261). There was also an element of the intrepid adventurer who would understate their own exploits while glorifying the environment.

My only chance was to beat those rocks down to the glacier ... The couloir was very steep, the snow hard, and by lying flat on my back, I simply went down as if falling through the air. The small schrunds I do not remember crossing at all, for it was impossible to keep my eyes open. Coming quickly to my feet, I turned round just in time to see a whole shower of small stones bury themselves in the snow, and one or two larger pieces roll right to my feet. (Fyfe, 1894, p. 262)

The New Zealand Alpine Club started with a flourish of endeavour by an elite few. The early writings in the journal were poetic, and celebrated the pioneering spirit and grandness of the environment more than the articles written in the mid 1900’s.

Oh! the utter loveliness of dawn at that elevation; the roseate hues tinting first the peak of Aorangi, and then colouring peak after peak,

the light of day gradually creeping down, while we were in deep shadow below. Words cannot picture it, but who that has once seen can ever forget? (Maxwell, 1894, p. 346)

As compared to this more prosaic snippet taken from the 1959 Journal.

There was no view from the top, only cloud above and below us, and we descended into the murk via the Cameron face... A hectic dash to the car park and we were back in town by 10.30. (Cowie, 1959, p.61)

In 1896 interest declined and for 25 years the Journal was not published.

It has been put forward as a theory that where a country has lately been colonised the succeeding few generations lack the pioneering instincts of their forbears, but that later the love of freedom and adventure again asserts itself. Whether the theory is justifiable or not, it at least affords a ready explanation of mountaineering history in New Zealand. (Sim, 1933, p. 129)

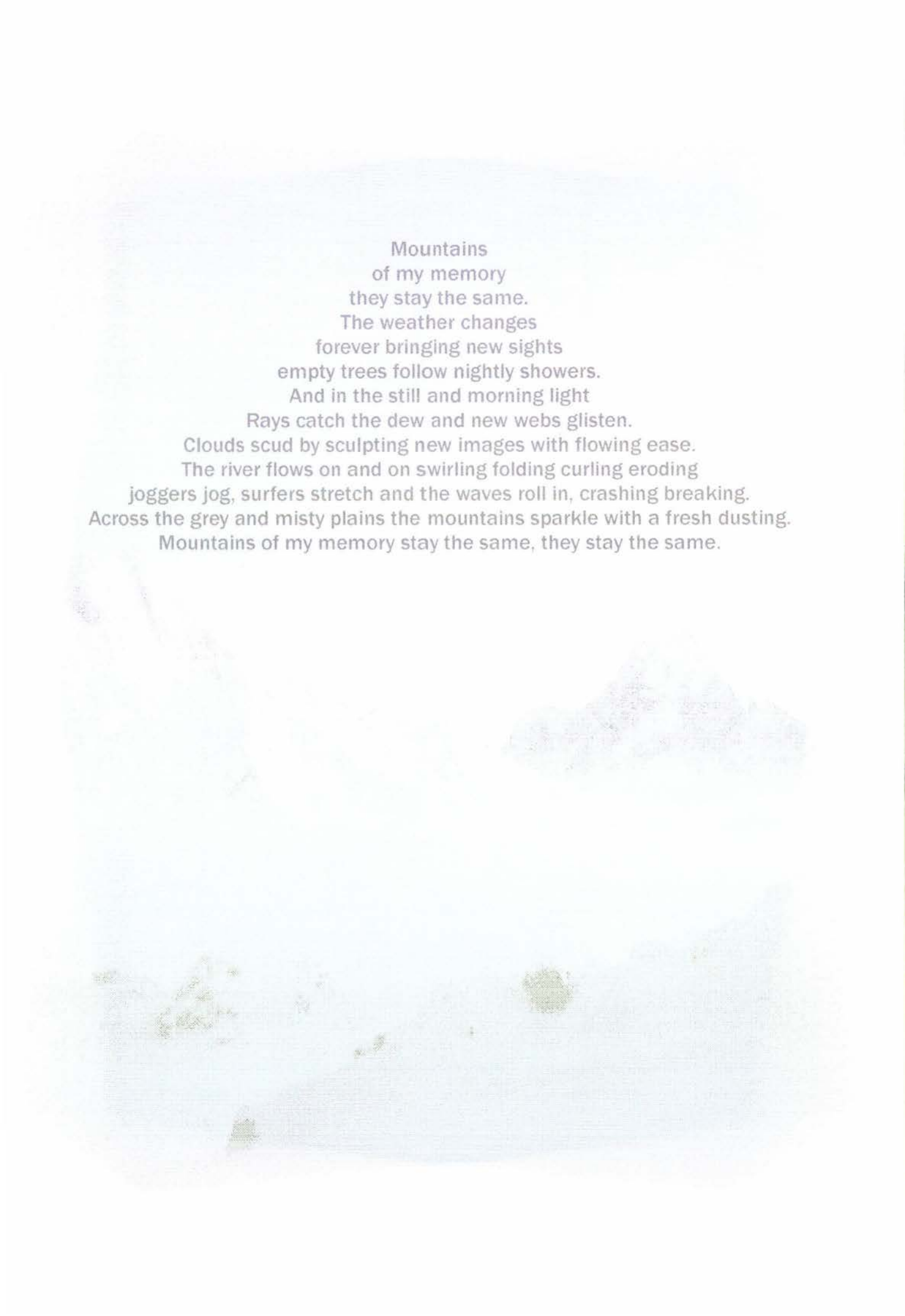
The First and Second World Wars challenged some of the benchmarks of colonial society and many of the men who returned from these wars started to search for the New Zealand of their dreams. It was not surprising then that the writing changed from the pompous and vainglorious to the more down to earth and factual accounts. During this period there was a move from mountaineering being an elite activity done in the company of paid guides, to one of more general participation, and done with friends. The emphasis of the Alpine Club was on building huts, opening up areas, printing route guides, so that more people could enjoy the mountains. In the 40's and 50's the New Zealand Alpine Journal was dominated by brief trip reports focusing on who was in the party, what route was climbed and how quickly they returned to the car. However, in 1962 the editor J.G. Wilson called for a return to more literary writing, suggesting that climbing was more than a physical thing and that it surely involved feelings more profound than longing for rest or beer; which seemed to be the tenet of the writing at the time. It seemed to work and by 1967 more poetry and different styles of writing were being printed in the Journal. In

recent years the Journal has encompassed a wider variety of activities including rock-climbing both indoors and outdoors.

Recently mountain-going has become very popular. Macfarlane says “An estimated 10 million Americans go mountaineering annually, and 50 million go hiking. Some 4 million people in Britain consider themselves to be hill-walkers of one stripe or another. Global sales of outdoor products and services are reckoned to be \$10 billion annually and growing.” (2003, p. 17). Climbing is becoming an economically driven enterprise, as different groups chase sponsorship, clients or ownership of the scenic resources. Transport needs have increased with more people flying in to the huts or participating in heli-skiing or heli-trekking ventures. In order to pursue climbing interests, mountaineers have participated in practices that encourage greater numbers of people into the mountains. This in turn means that some of the values of peace, solitude, escape and freedom are being eroded by the growing commercialisation of the mountains. When environments are shaped to meet our needs then the ability to experience them without other agendas intruding becomes compromised.

Access to the natural environment in Aotearoa New Zealand has generally been available. There is a large proportion of land set aside as conservation estate and by international standards the population is low. However, some of this access is being compromised by tourism promotion, foreign ownership, changing legislation, indigenous land-rights and unsustainable farming practices particularly in the high country. As in other parts of the world, pressure is being placed on sites of scenic beauty and access is being restricted and charged for. What used to be free for all is now becoming the domain of those who can afford it. It may be that the mountains of Aotearoa New Zealand will again become the preserve of the elite.

For you who have never visited Alpine scenery or enjoyed the pleasures of mountain life and climbing, what a tremendous treat lies in store! Seize the first opportunity that offers, to enjoy this chiefest of all pleasures abounding in your most favored land of New Zealand.
(Maxwell, 1894, p. 350)



Mountains
of my memory
they stay the same.
The weather changes
forever bringing new sights
empty trees follow nightly showers.
And in the still and morning light
Rays catch the dew and new webs glisten.
Clouds scud by sculpting new images with flowing ease.
The river flows on and on swirling folding curling eroding
joggers jog, surfers stretch and the waves roll in, crashing breaking.
Across the grey and misty plains the mountains sparkle with a fresh dusting.
Mountains of my memory stay the same, they stay the same.

Chapter 7

Freedom and Learning

Thought, I love thought.

But not the jiggling and twisting of already existent ideas

I despise that self-important game.

Thought is the welling up of unknown life into consciousness,

Thought is the testing of statements on the touchstone of the conscience,

Thought is gazing on to the face of life, and reading what can be read,

Thought is pondering over experience, and coming to a conclusion.

Thought is not a trick, or an exercise, or a set of dodges,

Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending.

DH Lawrence, 1932, *More Pansies*, Thought

The first part of the research investigated the nature of experiences that people referred to as ‘freedom of the hills’. In many ways this was a metaphor for some of the profound experiences which lie within the person, not just a rational and controlled inner sense, but the centre of what is. It is freedom that is not just experienced in relationship to others, but involves what happens through attention, openness, active engagement and a belief that we are the authors of our own freedom.

The second stage explores the ways in which those experiences connect with learning and education. To keep a manageable size, I firstly outline some assumptions about learning, then synthesise some of the ideas of freedom and learning within an ecological framework, and finally address the connections with outdoor education as opposed to education in general.

7.1 Some Assumptions about Learning

DH Lawrence (1932) suggests in the opening quote of this chapter that learning is more than reworking old ideas; it involves the welling up of new ideas and wholly attending to experiences. When learning is limited to acquiring bits of information, then the freedom to explore new ideas is not required. For this research I have focussed on aspects of adult learning that involve the expansion and creation of ideas rather than the gathering of facts.

7.2 Holistic Learning

Thought is a man in his wholeness wholly attending.

DH Lawrence, 1932, *More Pansies*, Thought

Holistic learning involves the body, mind, emotions and spirit connecting intimately with the environment. The journey towards freedom often involves integrating self into a state of wholeness, rather than striving for a self image which is distinct and separate from the whole. We are part of the world and not spectators. There is no objective reality outside of ourselves – whatever is ‘real’ includes us – we are embedded in our own reality. Dewey (1960) was one educator who stressed the importance of the relationship between the knower and the environment.

Davis, Sumara and Luce-Kapler (2000) suggest that there has been a shift in the understanding about learning, along with a change in the concept of thinking, “Rather than casting thought as a phenomenon that is about the world, thinking is recognised to be part of the world” (pp. 63-64). Learning is no longer seen as a taking in of a reality that is external to the learner. Thoughts are not outside, waiting to be grasped and understood, but inside, often in the unconscious. There is a co-evolution which transforms learners and their surroundings. This more dynamic and organic way of thinking about thought embeds learners within the environment.

7.2.1 *The spirit*

When the participants talked about the freedom of being at one with the environment, some implied a ‘spiritual’ dimension. Spirituality has many differing definitions, but for this discussion it represents a moment of intense awareness. The

interrelationship of environment and spiritual feelings is well documented in a variety of anecdotal literature (Adams, 2002). However, a body of research on this topic is also developing. One such piece is the qualitative inquiry of Frederickson and Anderson (1999) who explored wilderness experiences to see if they were a source of spiritual inspiration and discovered, among other findings, that participants felt being in 'bona fide wilderness' played an important part in their spiritual growth. Heron (1993) suggests that spiritual aspects are a part of learning to be a whole person, and that requires "dipping down into the deeper reaches of yourself in order to integrate with them" (p. 92). While the moments of 'spiritual/freedom' were often fleeting, the participants were keen to repeat them. Capra suggests that such feelings of belonging to the universe "can make our lives profoundly meaningful" (2003, p. 60).

When the body and mind are one, then the whole thing, scoured clean of intellect, emotion and the senses, may be laid open to the experience that individual existence, ego, the "reality" of matter and phenomena are no more than fleeting and illusory arrangements of molecules... There is only a pearly radiance of Emptiness, the Uncreated, without beginning therefore without end. (Matthiessen, 1998, p. 91)

Western thought has tended to focus on, and privilege, the capacity to reason and comprehend. However, supporters of holistic learning suggest that while detailed rational analysis may lead to precision, the wider perspective is lost. Wolf (1990) postulates that freedom occurs through reason and thinking; that it is an inner freedom and hence can occur without connections to the things outside us. However, Saul (1992) says that reason has separated itself from emotion, intuition, spirit and experience and has reached an imbalance, where the importance and value placed on reason obscures other ways of knowing. Wolf (1990) does, however, concede that while ...

Many people, and particularly many philosophers, are likely to identify their deepest selves with their faculties of reason. ... there are some who trust their hearts more than their minds, and it is not

incoherent for a person to care deeply about something and yet to be uncertain as to whether she thinks the thing she cares about is good.
(1990, p. 31)

Krishnamurti (1954) was an educator who believed that the cultivation of the total human requires the awakening of intelligence and the ability for individuals to discover truth, meaning and values for themselves. This relates to the learning Rogers (1994) calls intrinsic learning, a very personal internalising of information or events. Many educators find it difficult to allow students to select and focus only on their intrinsic desires. Even within adult education, there are structures and protocols which control what is taught and how to teach. Rogers and Krishnamurti both suggest that it is important for a person to have the freedom to make their own connections and learn about what interests them.

The magic of surfing is surfing itself – you, your board, the wave and that moment in time, backlit turquoise waves, hanging out with friends, the life, the soul. (Grimer, 2003, p. 90)

7.3 Learning – Complexity and Simplicity

Learning is complex: it does not follow a simple linear path. There is always a lot going on, and much is unpredictable. The more complex the experience is, the more opportunities there are for engaging with it. Maturana and Varela (1987) talk about the 'bringing forth of the world' through the very act of living. The participants brought forth their ideas about freedom through the very act of speaking. They did not have succinct and simple explanations, but their stories revealed elements of freedom through their contradictions and paradoxes. Freedom is created by individuals through their actions, beliefs and stories; when they believe they are free, then they become free.

When I drive to work at the moment it's just as its getting light, and I have the sea on my right, and then can look down to the mountains and Cook and it has this rosy flush. I mean where could be better? It really opens up your spirit and you can be yourself. That for me is freedom being yourself, just being allowed to be yourself not having

to be someone else. I just love it here cos no one knows me or expects me to behave in a certain way. I really can be who I want to be and the sea helps me. (Lilian)

Another approach to learning has been to simplify the content by compartmentalising it into subjects with clear boundaries. While this can help in the memorisation of facts, it has limitations when learning involves the development of ideas and relationships. When education becomes too prescriptive and formalised, it can constrain both teachers and students. Teachers and students lose control of instructional design and decision making, which undermines their ability to meet the diverse range of needs present in complex settings. The result is to focus on students developing a knowledge base which is easy to assess and hence measurable, when in fact there is so much more learning that could be encouraged.

A paradox of freedom is that it requires constraints as it is sometimes realised through the challenge to, or abandonment of, constraining attitudes and practices. It is also sometimes necessary for people to let go of patterns, habits and fears which have defined their self image. This can be difficult as often we are not aware of the habits that have formed us and that in some ways constrain us. Usher, Bryant and Johnston, (1997) suggest that it is better for teachers to both challenge and critically reflect on practice, than to do what has always been done and teach the way they were taught. It could be argued that for educators to be able to do that, they need the complete freedom to develop their own practices. However, certain elements, which emerged from the participants' stories, suggest that constraints can produce resistance, and that resistance is a strong motivational drive for change. Hence, providing too much freedom in learning could be self defeating as it is easy to become complacent and accepting. Remaining complacent can mean that conditions of 'un-freedom' gradually inculcate practice and they are not always recognised, particularly when restrictions are added in small incremental ways. It is therefore necessary for educators and students to be reflexive and self critiquing.

The participants also talked about escaping from the pressures of society to relax and recharge themselves. This creates opportunities to attend to simpler aspects of living, and address some issues without the bombardment of media rhetoric. This

time away from society enables them to live within the natural world without being swamped by ‘busyness.’ It provides opportunities to look inward, and realise that often the only restrictions truly existing are inner ones.

Rain and low cloud kept me holed up in the Forbes Bivvy for two and a half days sleeping, reading and recharging my batteries.
(Leppard, 1999, p. 36.)

7.4 Learning and Being

I feel great gratitude for being here, for being, rather, for there is no need to tie oneself to the snow mountain in order to feel free...I am here to be here, like these rocks and sky and snow, like this hail that is falling down out of the sun. (Matthiessen, 1998, p. 110)

The adventure of being mindful in learning involves the awakening of consciousness in order to live an abundant life. Much education is still premised on the belief that thought is an activity which is separate from other aspects of being in the world; that thought should come before action as in the statement ‘think before you act.’ That thoughts can control how we feel and what we do. However, from a more phenomenological point of view, thought is actually embodied and not separate or distinct from action itself.

Nietzsche (1967) uses a metaphor of lightning to express this unity of thought and action.

If I say “lightning flashes,” I have posited the flash once as an activity and a second time as a subject, and thus added to the event a being that is not one with the event but is rather fixed, is, and does not “become.”—To regard an event as an “effecting,” and this as being, that is the double error, of interpretation, of which we are guilty. (p. 289)

Lightning is the actual flash – without the flash there is no lightning. Without thinking, there is no person; thinking is what we do when we talk, write, touch, feel

and experience life. Thinking is profoundly personal and can not be separated from who we are.

7.4.1 Being in the body

Understanding the body and its lived experience is important for the development of self knowledge. The world is touched, smelt and experienced with all the senses working together. It is grasped multi-sensually. Abram says that "...If we ignore or devalue sensory experience, we lose our primary source of alignment with the larger ecology" (1998, p. 15). The processes of perception and cognition are combined to such an extent that our sensual impressions of the world result in different interpretations for different people.

Physical movement is so basic that it is often overlooked in relation to learning and knowing. Hannaford (1995) says that "the human qualities we associate with the mind can never exist separate from the body" (p. 11). How we breathe and move can reveal a lot about our feelings, moods and attitudes. Certain body-movements can also affect the way people feel about themselves and their surroundings. Learning follows a similar path; the spectacular, sustained effort, or unexpected consequences all focus the body and mind to attend to the moment. Running, cycling, skiing and climbing, the air flowing past the body, all provide a different level of connection and awareness of what is around. To cycle along a section of road frequently driven helps in the realisation that there is much that goes by unnoticed. The way people notice or fail to notice the environment influences who they become.

You have to be alongside them and pointing things out; getting them to stop and look and feel the place. I'm always stopping on tramps and getting them to look and slow down, they sometimes just don't see things, they just don't see them without someone showing them. When the moon is out and you get the moon reflecting on the water, it's all pretty special and magic. (Lilian)

However, too much attending to the immediate surroundings and observing what is 'out there' can position the person as a tourist – always watching, never fully being in the moment.

Shotter (1993) presents a strong case for knowing in terms of the lived experience or a knowing from within. A lot of the knowledge of lived experience is not available in books and texts: it is submerged in people. Even they don't consciously know it; it is just part of them. To gain an understanding of this tacit knowledge requires not only asking different questions of different people, but also travelling, working and conversing with them in familiar places.

I'd do probably at least a weekly trip out to the A-frame and back. I'd usually have a work excuse ... I'd have to go and do this to maintain the route or some other thing, but really it was just the pleasure that I got from going out there and being by myself, on a very familiar route that I'd see change a little bit, and I'd rearrange a bit and redo the flags, and I felt kind of umm ownership in a way. (John)

7.4.2 Being and 'self-development'

The research stories indicate that the outdoor environment is often a site for experiencing 'flow and moments of ecstasy which can help promote an increase in self-awareness. Rob talks about why he enjoys taking people into the outdoors, and relates it to creating opportunities for experiencing the moment, as well as the personal-development students gain from those experiences.

... so they can experience everything it gives, the challenges, freedom, skills, you know – adventures, etc on one day it can be all of the above, or some of the above, or one of the above. A sense of accomplishment and to keep learning new things ... and definitely about breaks from whatever, their working lives, their student lives; it could even be their party lives you know. They may realise that it offers more than alcohol and things. I mean some of the feelings you get from the outdoors if they could bottle it, it would be a pretty amazing drug wouldn't it? – and I don't mean adrenalin, that's a different aspect, more the peak experience stuff. (Rob)

Gould (1988) suggests that self-development is at the heart of freedom, but emphasises that it is important for the individual to take responsibility to do the

developing. However, the values of individual self-development can also encourage students to blame themselves when they fail, just as they can congratulate themselves if they succeed. Education is promoted as an effective way of changing personal status and image, but there can be many political and social factors which prevent that from being possible. Failure as a result of the way that society functions can still result in a loss of self-esteem which diminishes a sense of being and creates a sense of powerlessness.

John Rawls (1971) describes self-esteem as a 'primary good' in democratic societies, and that most teachers have a professional interest in developing self-esteem. A certain amount of positive self-esteem is necessary to be present and focussed in the moment. Without an acceptance and confidence in who you are, it would be difficult to be joyful and free. Self-esteem does not need to be split into high and low, where high equates with good, and low with bad. A more integrated view relates self-esteem with a reasonably accurate perception of oneself. An over or under-inflated concept of self will always place restrictions on how one lives in the world.

If educators try to develop self-esteem, then the responsibility of doing so can be removed from the individual. The individuals' experiences become devalued when they do not match those of the educator. Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler, however, reveal the complexity of this issue when they say "The path of learning can never be determined by the teacher. However, the path of learning is dependent on the teacher." (2000, p. 66).

Nietzsche describes the role of educators when he says...

...for your true nature lies, not concealed deep within you, but immeasurably high above you, or at least above that which you usually take yourself to be. Your true educators and formative teachers reveal to you what the true basic material of your being is, something in itself ineducable and in any case difficult of access, bound and paralysed: your educators can be only your liberators.
(1874/1983, p. 129)

7.5 Participatory Learning

Shotter suggests that ‘participatory knowledge’ (1993, p. 7) is gained through what people actually do; that learning occurs through actions, cultural relations and the practical contexts in which people live. Meanings are constantly negotiated as individuals participate with the world. Regulation and rationalisation of wilderness areas are currently a major cultural and political concern in Aotearoa New Zealand. Each culture has invested customary meanings in places, and these have developed over time through usage, imagination and memory. King (2003) suggests that over time, both Māori and Pakeha have adapted their lifestyles so that they are no longer the same as “the cultures of origin” but that they have changed to reflect “the contemporary homeland” (p. 516). Haskell (1999) suggests we are always part of the context and hence co-evolve through participation with the landscape.

Participation involves learning from and with others. Thayer-Bacon (2003) says “we do not begin our lives as independent, self-reliant autonomous knowers.” (2003, p. 8). Humans are social beings who develop a variety of long and short-term relationships with others. Thayer-Bacon suggests that it is important to trust others because we are social beings who learn from others. While much of what we think is influenced by others, each person has a unique set of lived experiences and hence can put their own perspective on issues. Knowing is something which develops as people have experiences with others and the world around them. The sharing of experiences with others opens up new perspectives and hence new interpretations and meaning. This links with Haskell’s ideas of co-evolving.

Overall a great trip, successful in terms of goals achieved and great fun, and most impressive of all, despite having to spend five days of enforced idleness in close company we were all still good friends at the end. (Broadbent, 2004, p. 39)

Because learning does not occur in isolation, some ideas can be manipulated by society. In Gramsci’s (1971) analysis of society, the school was one of those everyday practices that played a part in the ideological hegemony in which individuals are socialised into maintaining the status quo. He believed that education

was one way in which the population was kept in its place, but that it also had transformational possibilities if critical self awareness and critical social awareness were developed. For this to happen, a level freedom is required for the individual to be “allowed to do, say, think, whatever you want to, without being controlled or limited.” (Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary)

One way to become aware of our own social influences is to travel, live alongside and listen to voices from other cultures and belief structures. For example, many Western European cultures have ontological foundations which separate humans from nature. There are other cultures which perceive the world to be alive, and that humans and nature are interconnected and mutually dependent in an intimate way. The concept of a separate self is perceived to be an illusion in some eastern and indigenous cultures, and creates barriers to full participation with nature. Opening up to these differing beliefs frees the mind from some of its perceptual limitations.

... after going into the Himalayas for 25 years there is definitely an element that rubs on you that is spiritual, and I definitely think that the power of these people that are living and working in the mountains from the poorest of poor peasants through to the professional trekking and mountain guides, it's got a lot to teach us. So I'm totally fascinated by that in my own reading and in being with these people. I think again it's to do with slowing down and dealing with genuine value and belief systems that we are gradually losing in the west because of the speedy nature of our commercial world.

(George)

7.6 Creativity and Learning

Knowing anything in its deepest sense means knowing how to be creative with it. (Eisner, 1991)

Creativity requires leaving behind old patterns of thought and letting the new ones emerge. This can be done in incremental steps, pushing out the boundaries of what is common practice or through spontaneous and intuitive leaps of imagination. In places of special significance, or at times of intense focus, the level of consciousness changes, awareness increases, and the mind empties sometimes allowing for those intuitive leaps. When there is an aesthetic connection with the world, there is both a delight in perceiving and relating to the scene, and a certain level of detachment, which enables it to be viewed for what it is, rather than in an instrumental way (Fudge, 2001).

Travellers in the polar region find something there that no one else has found on earth a strange mysterious beauty that inspires many of them to become artists. (Willis, 1999, p.1)

Ideas do not have an independent existence: there are multiple realities and interpretations. The individual is not separate from what they perceive; reality is being constantly co-created between the individual and the world. Each experience is a new learning opportunity and it feeds back into what is already known. We are always changing what we know. This constant renewal of infinite possibilities is creation.

Wild, untouched, sublime,
space unconfined
views of tomorrow, today.

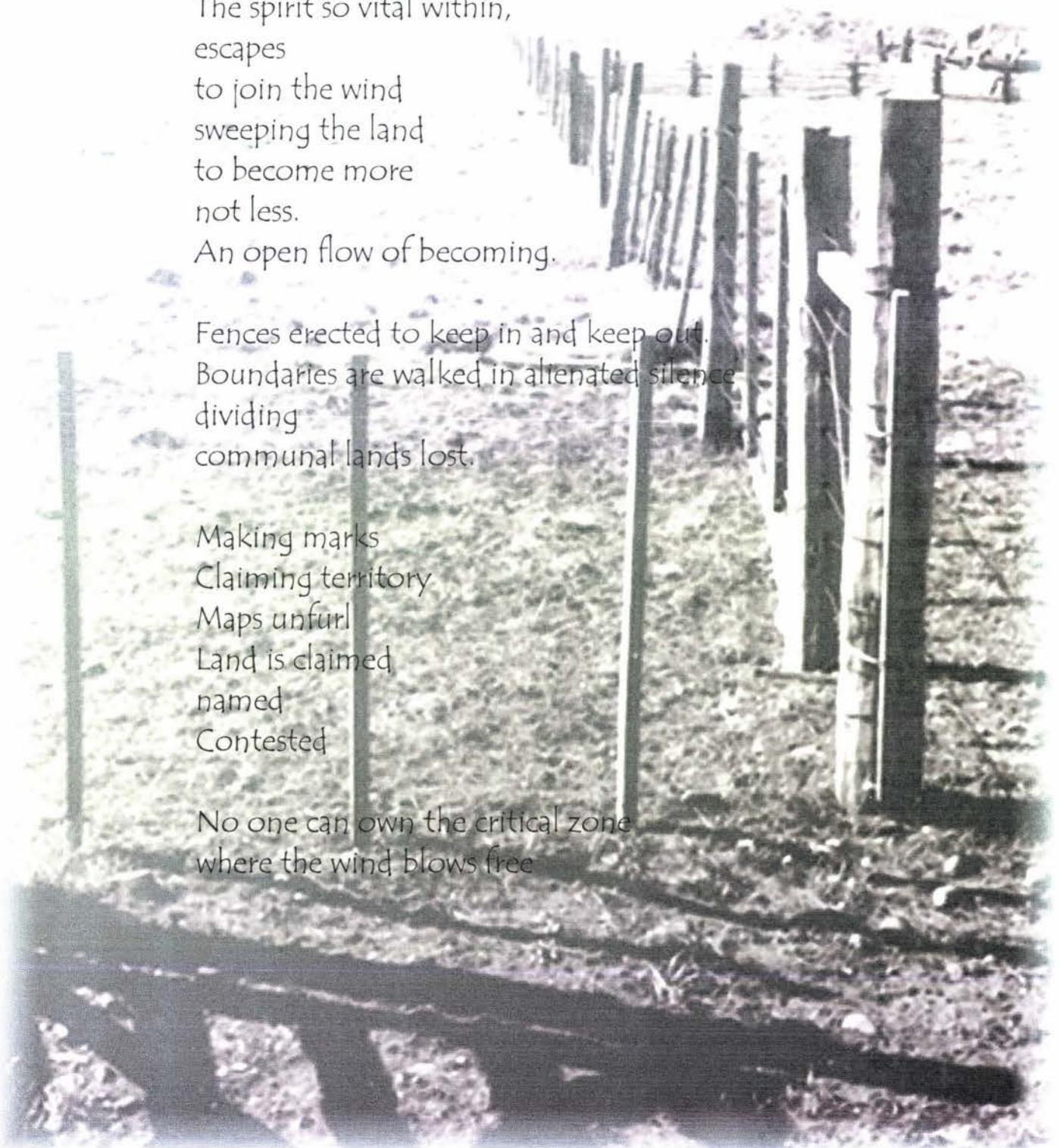
Vacant space
empty - yet so full of infinite possibilities.
opens the mind,
extends dreams.

The spirit so vital within,
escapes
to join the wind
sweeping the land
to become more
not less.
An open flow of becoming.

Fences erected to keep in and keep out.
Boundaries are walked in alienated silence
dividing
communal lands lost.

Making marks
Claiming territory
Maps unfurl
Land is claimed
named
Contested

No one can own the critical zone
where the wind blows free



Chapter 8

Freedom and Outdoor Education

One should live on mountains.

With blessed nostrils do I again breathe mountain-freedom. Freed at last is my nose from the smell of all human hubbub!

(Nietzsche, 1891)

This chapter explores some of the complexities of integrating freedom into the practice of outdoor education. While the interviews did not directly question the participants about their educational practices, several of the participants mentioned the connections and disconnections that outdoor education has with freedom. The issues raised in the interviews have not been structured around the five themes used in the earlier chapters, but as specific concerns which overlap these themes.

This research has shown that for some people, certain dimensions of freedom are experienced in outdoor settings. However, it is not always easy to teach others about freedom. In general, the structure of education within Aotearoa New Zealand does not lend itself to promoting many of the aspects of freedom that the research has raised. This is not just a problem for New Zealand. Bourdieu (1973), for instance, is sceptical about the potential for any educational system to transform. He believed that schools reproduce existing social relations, rather than promote change, by accepting without question the attitudes and behaviours that are ingrained in language and the instinctive responses of the people to situations, events and power structures.

8.1 What is Outdoor Education?

Contemporary literature on outdoor education emphasises concepts such as: education in, about, and for the outdoors; empowerment and self-development through adventures; problem solving and decision-making; leadership and teamwork; and building an increased awareness about the environment. Higgins (2003) suggests that while there are many reasons as to why there can be no single

definition of outdoor education, in order to progress the debate, the intention of outdoor educators can be summarised as the "...promotion of aspects of personal, social and environmental education through direct (adventurous) experience out-of-doors" (pp. 134-135).

Priest and Gass link outdoor education more directly with experiential education and state that:

Outdoor education follows the experiential philosophy of learning by doing. It takes place primarily, but not exclusively, through involvement with the natural environment. In outdoor education, the emphasis for a subject of learning is placed on relationships concerning people and natural resources. (1997, p. 17)

Kiewa (2003) also acknowledges the ongoing debate, and proposes the following definition as suggested by a colleague Innes Larkin: "Outdoor Education is the process of applying learning models in, about and for the outdoors. The goal of Outdoor Education is to develop profound and comprehensive understandings of ourselves, and our relationships with the diverse biophysical, social and cultural environments we live in." (p. 12). She goes on to say that outdoor education is a dynamic process and that it would be a backward step to have a definitive description.

Boyes (2000) recognises that outdoor education is becoming used in different ways and suggests that "... we need to interpret outdoor education in a broad sense as critical outdoor education, maintaining the physicality of the experience while optimising the opportunities to understand people's relationships in and with the outdoors" (2000, p. 85).

This collection of definitions covers the current trends in the UK (Higgins), Australia (Kiewa), USA (Priest and Gass), and New Zealand (Boyes). What is common to them all, is the assumption that the outdoor environment in someway enhances learning about oneself, and about relationships with others and the environment.

8.2 The Complexities of Integrating Freedom into Outdoor Education

8.2.1 *The new and exciting*

It's great when you do new trips, things for the first time, first ascents ... there's usually a lot more going on then, there's a lot more planning, more new systems to think about and higher risk. I mean there's always higher risk when you doing something on-sight. (Rob)

The new, the challenging and the different are important elements for alerting the senses, and heightening awareness. Usually we are not aware of something until something happens that focuses our attention on it. If we take breathing for example, we just do it until we gasp in amazement at an awesome view, or pant whilst climbing up a hill, or choke as we learn to snorkel. Outdoor education uses these new and different elements to awaken attention and engage people in learning.

Samdahl (1988) suggested that a sense of freedom arises through opportunities to do something different and break the routine. It creates opportunities to escape from the expectations and responsibilities which seem to mount up in day to day life. Walsh and Golins (1976) suggest that travelling to new venues is essential because an unfamiliar physical environment helps students gain new perspectives. Changes in routine enable habits to be noticed and challenged. Escaping the familiar and visiting new locations can provide “the freedom to experiment with new psychological strategies or a fresh sense of identity” (Kimball & Bacon, 1993, p. 26).

There can also be some pedagogical limitations when the focus is just on the new and exciting. Higgins (2003) suggests that there is a trend in outdoor education in the UK towards high excitement, high thrill activities, which require little effort or responsibility on the part of the student. This emphasis on the new, unusual and exciting is used to provide students with instant gratification and is generally conducted in safe environments where little or no responsibility is devolved to the students. The situations appear to be risky but are in fact very controlled.

8.2.2 Gender issues

While outdoor education enables new and different opportunities, these opportunities are not always equally available as gender, class, age and culture impose their own constraints. Everyone has constraints however: the way work, leisure and non-work are structured can limit the quantity and quality of women's outdoor experiences to a greater extent than men. For many years women have been expected to take on a greater nurturing role within the family, and that has limited their available leisure time. The traditional role of women has been to stay at home while the male goes out on adventures.

We left the hut again at eleven o'clock next morning for the bivouac, the ladies arranging to fill in the next two days with flower painting, sketching and sundry little excursions. (Dixon, 1894)

I wasn't being self-sacrificing by staying at home while he was exploring. I had my freedoms too. I usually had some creative thing going. Having four daughters... in those days you couldn't buy clothes cheaply so I made all the children's clothes. (Dorothy Pascoe as cited in Cawley, 2004, p. 108)

While the above examples are from previous generations, it still appears that the outdoors is visited more frequently by men. In the latest New Zealand Alpine Club Journal (2004), fifty of the sixty authors were male. Katie also discussed some gender issues:

... if someone says oh girl pushups I get really offended they're not girl pushups they're just pushups on the knees but if someone said girls aren't as strong as guys then I'm totally in agreement there. If they said you throw like a girl, well it depends what mood I'm in, I might even let it go because in general guys do throw better, so I guess that's freeing in some ways just me becoming fine with some things and some things I'll let pass and others I'll call up on. (Katie)

Outdoor education is sometimes seen as being inclusive and egalitarian, but it originated from values based on privilege and patriarchy. Humberstone (2001) refers to some of the hegemonic struggles in outdoor education and says:

Men involved in risk-taking adventurous activities in the outdoors are generally represented as 'heroes'. When women engage in these activities, sometimes with fatal consequences, they are depicted not as heroines, but behaving inappropriately and selfishly. This was the case for Alison Hargreaves, the British climber who having climbed a number of Himalayan peaks tragically died on K2 in 1995. The media were scathing of her for depriving her children of their mother. (p. 36)

Some schools and tertiary institutions still promote values of conquering, challenge and physical strength in their outdoor programmes, which often privileges male participants and places women in a more dependant role. If freedom became a more important component of such programmes then such hegemonic practices may be challenged and the range of activities adapted to reflect the needs of all participants.

8.2.3 Outdoor education and society

As well as being perceived as different, dangerous and exciting, outdoor education and outdoor recreation has also been accepted as being a defining element in Aotearoa New Zealand culture. "Many New Zealanders have a strong relationship with the outdoors and over half of adult New Zealanders use beaches, rivers and lakes for leisure." (Environment Waikato). This acceptance enables it to reach a wide clientele and also creates some space to non-conform. But as Szkudlarek (1993) suggested, individual spheres of freedom can be created by blending into society, which means no one is watching quite so closely. This balance between conformity and difference is difficult to maintain, as so often what is perceived as radical, gradually gets absorbed into the mainstream. Grimer explains how this occurs when he says "The procedure is simple – take something niche, complex and dangerous (therefore sexy) and sanitise and condense it into a simple palatable

version- a bite-sized mouthful that can be fed to the mainstream and back to the people who invented the culture in the first place.” (2003, p. 90).

To promote opportunities of freedom through the use of new environments and exciting activities requires educators to carefully consider the wider implications. While the actual trip may be the highlight, a careful build up of skills well before the trip is required so that some of the responsibility is devolved to the students. It may also be more practical to organise trips to different locations which are closer to home, so that costs don't prohibit participation. Achieving a balance between taking people to new areas and passing on the responsibility can be tricky as Tom explains:

What we try and do is take away any issues they have about umm doing any of the organising, but that just means they are uninvolved, when people come on a trip like ours what they're abdicating is control. They're saying here's my money give me a good time, and I'm going to trust you to do that for me, but these are intelligent people and you've taken away, umm. (Tom)

8.2.4 Experiential education

Outdoor education has a strong focus on experiential learning following the Kolb (1984) model, based on the premise that people don't learn from experience alone, but from the reflection on experience which helps to construct a deeper level of understanding. This enables students to be free to develop in their own unique way, building on their previous experiences.

I suppose it's what I try and do with the kids, you know, give them time on their own at night to get the feel of a place. Try and develop that freedom of the spirit, that freedom to be themselves and have the time to just be in a place without distractions. (Lilian)

However, I have noticed that there is a trend in outdoor education to overly simplify this constructivist reflective model of experiential education. Learners are provided with a challenge in which they directly participate; they then reflect on the activity and apply some of the knowledge gained to the next challenge. The outdoor

educator delineates a programme of outdoor activities, designs the learning outcomes and coordinates what is acceptable in the reflection sessions. Hovelynck (2001) suggests that in the ideal situation there is enough freedom for individual learners to construct their own knowledge based on their own experiences, but often their learning is tightly controlled and directed by the educator. Brown (2004) also suggests that it is necessary to examine the facilitation role of leaders in order to understand how students are enabled and constrained in learning from their experiences. He suggests that the leader frequently controls, directs and dictates the 'right way,' which results in a single outcome and the students experiences are validated against that. Facilitation can be problematic when it places constraints on the relationship between someone's learning and their own perceptions of their experiences.

... we were trying to make it as close as possible to real tramping in a wilderness experience, to hear the birds enjoy the bush enjoy the views, on their own terms not on ours and not polluted by a group of 20; for whatever that means, whether its noise pollution or just personal space. (Rob)

Experiential education focuses on the learner constructing knowledge rather than the teacher delivering knowledge. Each individual will experience events and activities differently depending on their previous experiences. When individual constructions of the experience are dismissed, in favour of the educators over-riding outcome, then students can become uninterested. This intrusion into, and dismissal of, personal experiences is usually done with the best intent, but often relates to business practices promoting effectiveness. Positive attributes are team participation, clear communication skills and highly focussed success drives which lead to economic gain, corporate advantage and a degree of conformity. When educators use and intervene in the experiences of others, they are rarely neutral with regard to outcomes.

Another criticism of relying on the Kolb model of experiential education to direct outdoor education practice is its focus on the individual as an independent and autonomous learner. There is little emphasis on the co-emergence of knowledge

through connections with the environment and others. Some current research in outdoor education is examining modes of learning based on these ideas; in particular ‘embodied knowing’ (Haskell, 1999, 2002), ‘complex knowing’ (Higgins, 2001) and ‘generative knowing’ (Loynes, 2002).

8.2.5 Vocational education

Jobs in outdoor recreation, adventure tourism and outdoor education offer some exciting lifestyle opportunities for people not wanting to live in cities or work indoors. These jobs can allow people to visit and live in some spectacular areas. The ability to follow a career which integrates leisure interests was seen as an element of freedom by some of the participants.

While I do need to earn a certain amount of money, I'm pretty free to choose what I do each day and make my own decisions and that's good. (Andy)

For all that, photography is very very draining. It's much harder than mountain guiding in my opinion ... you're always waiting for the next dawn, the next sunrise; it makes it endlessly fascinating. (George)

Vocational training methods and programmes aim to prepare individuals to be competitive in the global market. This has led to education which is driven by concepts of functionality, determined by standards and qualifications. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this style of education has been adopted by many outdoor programmes, often driven by funding criteria which at times impinge on ‘educational ideals’. However, the funding and training opportunities have also meant that some excellent programmes have been developed which try to balance educational values with skill and knowledge-development.

A large amount of the funding is directed through the Industry Training Organisations (ITOs), and they strongly promote technocratic reductionist styles of teaching (Codd, 1997) which focus on the measurement of small discreet units of knowledge within a highly regimented auditing system. Only observable and

assessable skills, information products and performances are recognised. As a result, the number of assessments in the outdoors has increased for school students, adult students, outdoor participants and outdoor educators. In general, this removes intrinsic motivation and reduces the amount of freedom experienced. Education which encourages the expansion and creation of ideas requires a broad focus, to allow for emotional learning and the development of values, and these aspects can not always be measured and assessed, so they are sometimes left out.

The auditing expectations of this economic rationalist model of education delivery (Dumble, 2003) have lead to a proliferation of forms and plans, these in turn reduce spontaneity and remove the focus away from the experiences of the learner. This increase in the number of forms and assessments appears to be happening with little resistance from those who work in the field. However, if the assertions of some of this research are true, when sufficient freedoms are lost, then resistance will occur and new ways of being free will be sought.

Well I try to encourage people to develop their own path in how they instruct and so to assess to some kind of a national standard always has a conflict of interests. (John)

Foucault (1977) used Bentham's panopticon as an architectural symbol of surveillance and discipline; a tower in a prison which could see everywhere, but it was not possible for those on the outside to see in; so they never knew when they were being watched, but assumed they always were and adjusted their behaviour accordingly. Foucault says surveillance is the key to control and we apply this surveillance to ourselves and others. Foucault describes how we willingly accept and internalise limits on how we behave. In outdoor education there is talk about freedom, but in practice there are regulations, controls, operating procedures, industry standards and assessments (Dumble, 2003).

8.2.6 Colonisation

Outdoor education, in Aotearoa New Zealand, started in the colonial era (Lynch, 1999) and many of those values are still embedded in current practice. For example the initiative activities, physical discipline and leader training which originated from

the army and navy still dominate many outdoor programmes such as Outward Bound. This level of discipline contradicts some of the rhetoric of freedom which is also prevalent in outdoor education.

The colonial influence also impacted on the early exploits of mountaineers and explorers. Mountaineering history like much of the history of Aotearoa NZ was written in a way that valued the wealthy explorer, the leader and the conqueror, not the Māori guides, and some of this has transferred into the value system of outdoor education.

The whole expedition took about three months but a great deal of time was wasted in camps owing to bad weather and to the Māori's habit of loafing at any place where birds and eels were present.

(Harper, 1921)

Many programmes also have a pedagogy that values Pakeha concepts of time, individual achievement, and competition. Brooks refers to a similar practice in Australia when he says that Australian outdoor education "...has been dominated by neo-colonialist understandings of 'the bush', in which particular locations are seen either as empty sites on which to establish social or psychological projects or merely as examples of more abstract realities such as 'the environment'." (2002, p. 405).

Outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand has the potential to develop a more bi-cultural pedagogy. There are some instances of this happening but there is still work to be done in this area.

8.2.7 Safety

While outdoor educators often place a special value on the freedom of natural environments in their own recreational pursuits, they often detract from that value, through the practices of outdoor education. Kiewa suggests that "traditional climbers fear that their activity might become appropriated by everyday society through the adoption of practices that render it relatively safe." (2002, p. 148). In order to maintain a degree of risk they have adopted a strict code of practice, and resist the introduction of additional safety features that outdoor educators sometimes require

for their students. This can lead to conflict. In Christchurch recently some additional fixed protection, in the form of expansion bolts, was added to some beginner climbs to make them safer. These bolts were removed by a group of traditional climbers.

The fear of legal action has generated some systems which are more designed to alleviate blame than to improve safety. Often it seems that some of the systems are indeed generated and perpetuated by outdoor educators; 'OutdoorsMark' is a recent example of this. It is an extensive safety auditing system designed and administered by outdoor professionals. Under such an auditing scheme the activity described by Rob, to enhance the freedom of students, might not be acceptable practice.

We were letting them go away in small groups of three to four, totally contained with their packs and their food. It was important in terms of giving them group freedom and individual freedom... there was (sic) no constraints that really mattered. (Rob)

The longer trips and often more adventurous activities that occur in outdoor education do require a level of care and support. Students will not experience freedom if they are too fearful, so some supervision and technical support is required to maintain physical and psychological safety.

...those moments were quite free cos you don't have too much to worry about and the sailing is quite straightforward and the weather just determines what's going to happen the next day. ... when things are pretty controlled, if you can use that word, then freedom is possible. (Katie)

When placed in positions of responsibility, outdoor educators watch and protect others, they encourage disclosure of feelings and they assess and encourage the group members to watch and care for each other. The outdoor educators also place expectations of performance on themselves through fitness-training, personal-development, assessments and developing professional standards. No educator wants a student to come to harm while in their care.

The experience of the outdoors also changes dramatically, down to its very core, for professionals who are responsible for others. While recreationally the outdoors can offer a place to relax and be removed from responsibilities and daily pressures, this is not always the case for outdoor educators. Katie explains what happens when instructing in the outdoors:

So I think that I feel constrained when I'm instructing, ...I don't think I could feel free relaxed and really enjoying things to the fullest because always at the back of my mind ...is making sure that nothing went wrong and watching the emotional safety and physical safety, but also analysing; was that a good activity to do? and what are we doing next? and how does that fit with the time? and is everyone involved? I'd be thinking all those things that go along with that so the constraint would be the responsibility factor. So I'd find it hard to be free even though its beautiful weather and beautiful people and everything I'd still feel slightly constrained because I'm still looking after them. (Katie)

If instructors are feeling constrained, then they will pass those messages on to participants, and equally when participants are fearful, they influence other group members. Not everyone enjoys the outdoors: Bixler, Carlisle, Hammitt, and Floyd (1994) collected examples of negative reactions from students on school trips into the outdoors. Students disliked the outdoors because of a general fear of the outdoors and the dark; fear of wild animals, insects and spiders; disgust at the dirtiness of the environment; and discomfort from weather extremes. Much of that fear is generated by the constant talk of safety and the media's obsession with accidents in the outdoors.

8.2.8 Outdoor Pursuits

I would think the better that you are in terms of not having to be worried about things like going the wrong way or tipping upside down when you don't want to – that would take a lot of the – it would take you closer to that feeling of freedom, but to get that good you

have to put in so many hours and so its self perpetuating, you put in more hours so you get good and feel better about it, you love it more, so you're closer to that freedom anyway... it doesn't just mean that good people will feel free kayaking – and I don't feel free in a kayak either, kayaking is probably my least freeing activity.

Jo - Why do you think that is?

Fear, frustration, yeah! You know its funny when people are going ... 'get in there' and that kind of thing and you kind of want to and you kind of don't because they're telling you to. (Katie)

The activities, challenges and adventures of outdoor education play a significant part in creating feelings of freedom. Rhythmic movement and sensations of speed have been noted as triggers for ecstatic occurrences. However, Brooks (2002) critiques some pursuit-based outdoor education on the grounds that many pursuits encourage rational analysis through control, conquering, observation and detachment.

Programmes that focus on the skill-development of individuals to paddle more challenging rivers and climb harder grades, do not build on concepts of learning from and with the environment, but are more embedded in a rational and reductionist world. The world is seen as an object, upon which a specific human activity can be focussed.

Once again a balance is needed, and this can be achieved when educators critically reflect on their practice and programmes. Too much focus on learning skills can be detracting, but activities which are fun and stimulating are still necessary, as most of the participants spoke about the physicality of the experience as being a crucial dimension in their experiences of freedom.

8.2.9 Commercialisation

Alongside the growth in tertiary outdoor education programmes is the rapid growth in the general participation and the commercialisation of outdoor activities (Booth and Peebles, 1995; Dumble, 2003). Increased usage also brings with it some regulations and controls. In order to maintain some of the values of wilderness trips,

and not damage delicate ecological systems, restrictions have been placed on access to certain areas. The Milford Track in Fiordland has restricted numbers through a booking system and, in the United States, some of the more spectacular trips, like boating the Colorado Grand Canyon, have been booked out up to twenty years in advance. To climb in the Himalayas also requires payment of a peak fee which for some of the more popular mountains can be in excess of \$100,000.

We were crossing passes and camping in the same places as Mallory, but we realised that, over the hill in the Rongbuk, there were 250 climbers all going up the North Ridge of Everest and 250 people going up Cho Oyo and in the next valley 200 going up Shishapangma. So in three mountains on three routes there was 400 – 600 climbers and yet for us there was nobody else for thousands of square miles of mountain. So from the Chinese point of view it's a very easily managed and for them bizarre form of tourism that they are making money out of and it's just, there's all these climbers on the same route like sheep and yet there's 1000s of beautiful mountains that you can actually get permission for. (George)

The increase in commercialisation and participation has resulted in developments in the technology of gear and clothing, some of which have made working in the outdoors a lot more pleasant. However, these latest advances in equipment are no longer seen as a luxury because to be outdoors without them, in Aotearoa's unstable climate, is seen by others as foolhardy and irresponsible. For outdoor professionals' if the technology exists and is not used, then it is perceived that the trip is not as safe as it could have been. The result is that there is more dependence on technology, which makes it harder for individuals to develop connections with the natural environment. Radios, satellite phones and global positioning system (GPS) are now becoming necessary safety tools for educators, and failure to carry them can result in censure (MSA, 2002).

8.2.10 The natural environment

I could stay there for hours just sitting and letting the place in. That's why I want to take other people there so they can feel the spirituality of the land. (Lilian)

Holistic freedom is the acceptance of being part of, and not separate from, the world. However, some outdoor education trips strongly promote the environmental ethic of 'leave no trace'. Leaving no trace of a visit may be environmentally sustainable, but it does not help to build up enduring relationships because it is treating the environment as if we are not part of it.

While outdoor education should not promote ecologically unsustainable practices, opportunities should be sought for people to develop a more intimate relationship with the environment. An activity such as building and living in snow shelters encapsulates a living within the environment, and a more intimate knowledge of the properties of snow can be learnt. The using of an unusual material for constructing a basic shelter helps connections to be made with the land. Snow is an ideal material to use for building a relationship with the land as it can be manipulated, yet it doesn't transform the landscape for more than a season. The inclusion of activities, which help to develop a more intimate connection, can offer students the possibility of experiencing a dimension of freedom; one that occurs when there is a letting go of self and an acceptance that the world is alive and interconnected.

I kept wondering how that expansive emptiness could evoke such a sense of completeness. (Tronstad, 2004, p. 88)



Unavoidable
flashy images
of excess
Cities in crisis
Fragmenting
Held together by simulations

Speed sensations drive us
Headlong through alleys of light
Panoramas of neon
The colour of want
Projecting the image
Subjecting the body
To a race against nothing

Instant gratification
thrills
Superficially satisfies
the need

Be still
Become

LAS
VEGAS
CLUB

GLITTER
GUR

COUNT

Chapter 9

Reflections

*Man is a thought–adventurer. Man is more, he is a life–adventurer.
Which means he is a thought–adventurer, an emotion–adventurer,
and a discoverer of himself and of the outer universe. A discoverer.*
DH Lawrence, 1923, Kangaroo.

9.1 Reflections on Research

Sometimes when I'm out in the hills I try and take a photograph of a particular image that I have already seen in another place at another time. In that search I probably miss other better photographic opportunities because they are less familiar. Being prepared to apprehend the unusual is not always an easy task. Unfortunately it is a common practice to filter out things which are unfamiliar, and just search for patterns which can be more easily recognised. To become aware of more patterns means being open to more learning. It can be scary at times though; the familiar is more comforting. Usually my photographic image from a mountain top doesn't encapsulate the place very well anyway, and many of my photos are reminders of what is 'out there' rather than of my experience. The image frames the spectacular and misses the living, the being, the flaws, and the mundane trivia that made the journey up there so special. In some ways the written research thesis does the same. It doesn't encapsulate the research journey; merely some superficial aspects of it.

Addressing education, research and freedom through the ecological concepts of holism, complexity, being, participation and creativity provided a useful structure for ideas to grow and evolve. At times the categorisation seemed contrived, while at other times it seemed too open ended to be meaningful. It is not surprising that freedom could be framed within the ecological concepts the research was using, as methods tend to produce the realities they describe. Different methods would inevitably produce different results. This creation of multiple worlds seems to reflect different realities, not just the same reality from a different perspective. It is part of the creation of ideas.

Researching in an ecological manner was interesting. It encourages multiple tangents and unusual connections to be made. However, in this approach there are no neat answers to the research questions, only more questions to be asked, more research to be done and more connections to be made.

Working within the ecological framework is part of the bias I brought to the research. On reflection, it was not innocent or without an agenda; it was part of a desire to seek balance in the world and promote values different from some prevalent values in current New Zealand society; a world which values multiple realities yet strives towards mutual understanding.

The outdoors provides opportunities for people to engage with life in a very vital and holistic way which some refer to as freedom. DH Lawrence (1930) suggested that we have lost connection to the natural world and in doing so have lost the ability to know things through the emotional forces of life.

Blood knowledge... Oh what a catastrophe for man when he cut himself off from the rhythm of the year, from the unison with the sun and the earth. Oh, what a catastrophe, what a maiming of love when it was made a personal, merely personal feeling, taken away from the rising and setting of the sun, and cut off from the magical connection of the solstice and equinox! This is what is the matter with us. We are bleeding at the roots, because we are cut off from the earth and sun and stars, and love is a grinning mockery, because, poor blossom, we plucked it from its stem on the tree of Life, and expected it to keep on blooming in our civilised vase on the table.

(DH Lawrence, 1930)

The mountains provided an interesting environment to explore freedom and encouraged the participants to share some of their exceptional experiences of freedom. The context of mountaineering provides a language for exploring freedom through stories and descriptions rather than seeking explanations. It also provided a link to my work as an outdoor educator.

This research helped me to reconnect with some of the emotional forces and recognise the importance of freedom in relation to learning and life. One of the privileges of research is that in becoming engaged with the topic, it forced me to reflect on my practice, and observe the trends of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. It is easy to become so involved in the doing and efficiencies of teaching outdoor education that it is possible to forget the purpose and meaning of what is being taught. Through this research I realised how important freedom was for learning, and how narrow some aspects of education, even outdoor education had become. For me, the research was positive, as it helped to define one of the purposes of my education philosophy, which is to strive to improve the quality of life for myself and others. That quality relates to an inner freedom and living a joyful and meaningful life which is not dependent on material circumstances.

stories of stories

Stories are born in the sky,
Dust in the cosmos,
Embers in the stars.
Dreams in the twilight.
Echoes from the past.

Creation yet another tale
for other times
and places..

Now stories tell of development and control,
Myths of expansion in a finite world
Adventures of heroes not heroines
From steel and rail
and sooty streets
the mountain summit rose majestically, Piercing the sky
Glorified and reified
Each colour and hue a picture postcard
...It was...It was....
More natural than nature

Imitate and replicate.
The story of what we do
is more than who we are.

Chapter 10

Recommendations, links to practice and a metaphor

The purpose of this research was to open the dialogue of freedom, and deepen an understanding of it as a concept which has links to how we live, and specifically how we learn. Stories of the participants' experiences of freedom have been interwoven, so the reader may engage in what it is like to be free. The stories reveal the differing levels of intensity associated with feeling free, the activities and other stimuli which generate such feelings and the possibilities freedom can provide.

The research showed that freedom is like a pendulum swinging between security and risk; responsibility and solitude, stillness and movement; and self and community. It remains intangible and ineffable. Part of the difficulty is that some people sense freedom only in relation to an outside force; a struggle, a fight, a release from responsibility. Others sense freedom as more internal, the development of an inner purpose and meaning for life, independent of what others are doing; where there is no freedom 'from', just freedom to be.

However, as well as describing freedom, it is also a necessary part of ecological research to advocate for change. Rajchman (1985) says that freedom occurs from challenging everyday practices that seem inevitable and permanent. This research has already helped me to be more open about experiences of freedom with others, and to promote them as an important part of why I take students into the mountains. It is hoped that the research will also help others to increase the emphasis placed on the value of freedom, to value its qualities and develop a language which encapsulates it.

This next section develops ideas from the research and makes recommendations that could contribute to the practice of outdoor education. A metaphor is also proposed as a way to change how learning is understood. However, as this research was contextualised within Aotearoa New Zealand it would be foolhardy to generalise beyond this country.

10.1 Recommendations for the Practice of Outdoor Education

The practice of education that I am most familiar with is adult outdoor education within a polytechnic college, hence most of the links made reflect connections to that practice. As a lecturer in the professional practice of outdoor education, it is possible for me to introduce students to many of the recommendations presented here, in the hope that they too will challenge some of the educational trends which limit individual opportunities to experience freedom.

The recommendations that emerged from the research are that:

- The pedagogy of outdoor education should match its purpose. For the purpose of developing an inner confidence and mindful awareness, students should have more freedom to make personal connections and develop their own learning outcomes. Acceptance of this principle may well challenge some programmes which have highly prescriptive learning outcomes with tightly designed assessments.
- Different styles of assessment be developed which students determine for themselves. This requires a level of trust and choice which is not always prevalent in education institutions, but it would have the added benefit of allowing students and educators to reclaim a degree of autonomy. The development of models of based around self-assessment may well help individuals to develop personal responsibility.
- The overall aims and purposes of outdoor education be examined. Both philosophically and pedagogically outdoor education has some positive attributes, but at times these can be lost when the focus is on entertainment and excitement. The different learning methods, of field trips, group work and challenge activities, available to outdoor education, can engage students and open up opportunities for them to reach their potential through the expansion and integration of ideas.
- Facilitation models be developed and refined to encourage questioning and individual responses, opening up opportunities for growth and learning,

rather than being driven by principles of efficient businesses. This will require challenging some of the current language around facilitation such as 'processing the experience' and 'frontloading' and introducing different ideas and language like 'co-emergence' and 'co-creation'. The facilitation skills of bringing things to the attention of students are not being questioned here.

- Freedom be recognised as an important element of outdoor education and not just left in the basket of assumptions never to be explored. Excessive safety management introduces structures and policies which insidiously remove responsibility of the individual, and promote the culture of blame. A change in the primary dialogue of outdoor education from safety to freedom would encourage the integration of responsibility and care. This requires accurate information to be disseminated around safety expectations, as well as challenging the commentaries which have instilled a culture of fear based around the potential of litigation.
- The experience of freedom in outdoor settings be adapted to the needs of the individual. When people are not comfortable, or are totally dependent on someone else for survival, then it is difficult for them to experience the feeling of freedom or personal responsibility. While wilderness and high alpine areas were seen by some as heightening the element of freedom, others reflected that it was the shorter local trips which contributed to their well-being. Sequencing and progressions need to be available so that individuals can build up the necessary skills and attitudes to participate in the organising and control of outdoor experiences.
- A range of activities be researched and developed to provide opportunities to explore the physical elements of freedom. Opportunities for repetitive rhythmic movement and for speedy or adrenalin moments can enhance the feeling of freedom. The activities should offer levels of challenge and endurance so that a degree of self-discipline can also be developed.

- Outdoor education be expanded to incorporate knowledge about the environment and an understanding of ecological balance within its pedagogy. This requires a living within the world and a deeper appreciation of the world as a place to share with other forms of life.
- Language and metaphors for learning be developed which allow a greater appreciation of emergent and creative knowledge. Concepts such as freedom and learning mutate over the eras and need to be re-evaluated to fit the current contexts. Ideas must be critiqued and created simultaneously for them to remain meaningful.
- Education be more than vocational training. The challenge for education is to integrate some vocational ideas with values of freedom, so that the quality of life may be improved for some people. This can be done through increased critical reflection, community, open-ended dialogue, humility and awareness of other cultures. 'Freedom of the hills' provides the opportunity to step aside from the strong currents of society which sweep incessantly along to reflect, contemplate, critique and create alternatives.
- The mountains be recognised for their potential to offer the experience of freedom as well as a range of other cultural, physical, spiritual and ecological opportunities. The New Zealand Alpine Club, and other mountaineers, could take a stronger advocacy role in promoting these values and in maintaining ease of access, so that many New Zealanders have the opportunity to explore some of the aspects of freedom of the hills discussed here.

10.2 Recommendations for Further Research

This research widened the dialogue of freedom by looking at dimensions of freedom as experienced in the outdoors, but it is not a completed project. There are many other links that could be followed. It is therefore recommended that more exploration on this topic be done using a variety of methodologies and philosophical foundations.

In general, society appears to be trending towards increased complexity so further research within an ecological paradigm is also recommended. How research is approached is important, because it not only reflects and describes society, but has the potential to transform it. With the potential of transformation, it is important to consider the world that it could make. Ecological concepts represent balance, respect and living within a world of finite resources. It is hoped that further work in this research paradigm may add more understanding to how it can be effectively achieved.

As with many research projects, many more questions are raised than answers given. Throughout the project many avenues were partly explored, but time restraints demanded a refocusing back to the central theme and context.

Ideas noted down for further research questions include:-

- What are the different cultural responses to the outdoors? What does freedom of the hills mean to other cultural groups?
- How is freedom incorporated into indoor and outdoor educational practices?
- What, if any are the different gender responses to freedom, risk and performance?
- How do city based/urban dwelling folk perceive freedom of the hills?
- In what ways do natural environments engender an aesthetic and creative response in people?
- What are the fundamental, philosophical grounds of outdoor education?
- What are the social and political contexts that define outdoor education within the curriculum?
- What are some of the current outdoor education practices and activities that enhance freedom or limit it?

10.3 A Metaphor for Learning

Some of the earlier recommendations alluded to the need for different metaphors of freedom and learning. Metaphors provide strong images for representing complex ideas which are otherwise hard to contemplate. They can provide a new perspective which enables further creative and possibly unpredictable ideas to emerge (Peile, 1994). A lot of the ways we view ourselves are dependent on the metaphors that we use; they direct how we act and think. The concept of learning is frequently linked to a computer, but this limits learning to the acquisition and manipulation of data. A more ecological metaphor presented here is one based on the Nor'wester; a storm which develops as it crosses the Southern Alps of New Zealand. On the west coast it brings torrential rain and yet on the east coast it is accompanied by hot dry winds. Viewed from these different locations one would perceive the storm in dissimilar ways; just as a person's epistemological view of the world would affect how they saw learning. The storm continually changes as it moves across the country, each element of the land affecting it, and it responds by creating itself anew.

Somewhere a depression is forming; somewhere learning is happening. The Nor'wester combines inevitable forces with other random events. The Coriolis force, the sun and the currents move relentlessly on. Yet each depression is different; there is an element of chance or a random event which provides its uniqueness.

The orographic winds lift the air up and over the Alps cooling the air and condensing the water droplets. A positive educator can do likewise, encouraging the learner to rise up to new levels and as they do so their learning and experiences change and become more accessible to the conscious. Each drop of water is like an idea. Some drops have little or no effect while others cause bridges to be washed out and trees uprooted. Some small storm events can have massive effects while other larger storms can have minimal affects. Some drops will flow west to form a sweeping powerful yet short-lived torrent. There are many fads and fashions which are similar, making sweeping but generally unsustainable changes. Other drops freeze on the upper reaches of the mountain and slowly change. Others fall on the east and flow out over the plains to get trapped by dams and sediment. Some form tributaries which converge into the major river systems which irrigate the

Canterbury plains. It's not possible to predict what each drop may become, just as it is impossible to know what each idea will become.

The Nor'west storm is forever changing, it can not be contained, and each event within the storm cycle is different. Each aspect is a creative moment as it travels over the land. The clouds form, release water and reform. Each drop of water and gust of wind emerges from the storm in some new way. Learning too involves the creation of new ideas and a building of relationships with the world. The storm builds on other events; it does not travel in isolation, but is affected by other atmospheric conditions and in turn influences new weather patterns.

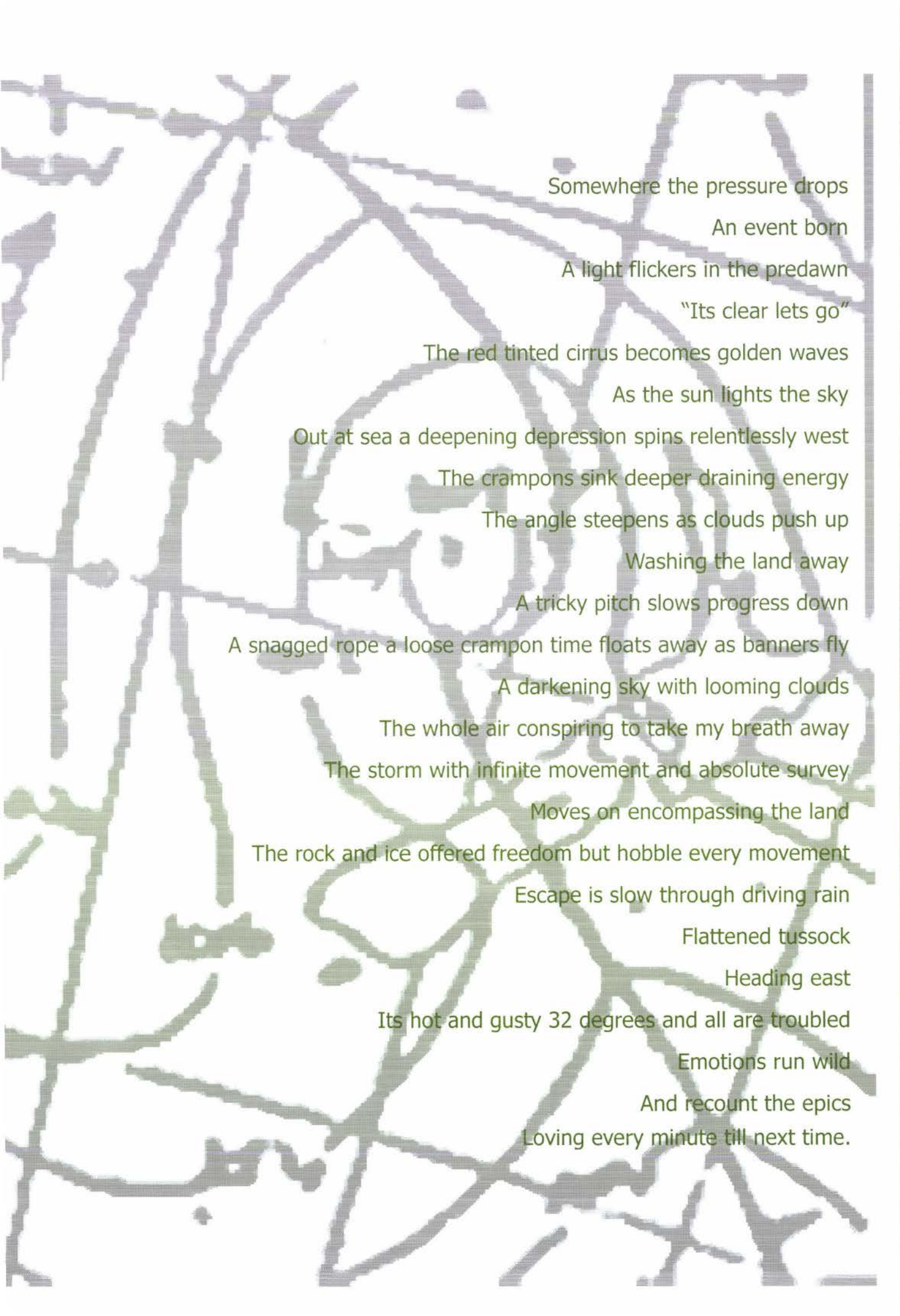
Learning is not done in isolation. It connects with what is possible and with other ways of being and knowing. The West Coast, exposed to the heavy rains of the Nor'west storm, has steep fast flowing rivers and gorges prone to floods and frequently used by extreme kayakers to test their skills. This type of water creates a culture and a community of kayakers and the way the water flows places parameters on the style of paddling that co-emerges. While the skills are transferable, they arise from the interplay of the environment and the kayakers, created in the moment of need. Localised communities of knowledge emerge.

Weather observations and assessments try and predict what the storm is capable of, but while they provide a general trend they do not accurately ascertain all the nuances and differences. The isobars are a schematic of the depression, but as the Nor'wester comes into contact with the land it reforms, each element reacts with the land and creates a specific response from within, it is not fixed by the plan. It responds to the environment. The storm of learning also has a centre, a core, from which the ideas and forces emanate. The rain and wind become integrated with the land, sometimes challenging it, at other times nurturing it, but always influencing it; just as the vortex of possible ideas and experiences becomes one with the learner.

The storm has an elemental force which drives it across the land and all who experience it are affected by it. While it may not be possible to change the passage of the storm from west to east, it is possible to wear a rain jacket, stay inside, or build a dam. Ideas too can be adapted, resisted and challenged; because some people

are swept away by an idea doesn't mean that everyone has to be. The fact that it is possible to influence learning is important for creativity. Transformations require the ability to think and do something to change the natural course of events.

The nature of a storm is ecological, it is encompassing and interconnecting, complex, dynamic and creative. It has the potential to create and erode. Freedom within learning can also create and change the shape of ideas. It is not trying to reach a goal or an end point; it is just part of the flow of life. As the storm blows itself out across the east another is brewing somewhere. There is an incessant change and creation of new events. As more storms occur and the metaphor is explored on deeper levels more connections and disconnections will form. The metaphor of the storm will mutate, but hopefully expand the conception of learning into something more organic than the mechanistic metaphor of a computer.



Somewhere the pressure drops
An event born
A light flickers in the predawn
"Its clear lets go"
The red tinted cirrus becomes golden waves
As the sun lights the sky
Out at sea a deepening depression spins relentlessly west
The crampons sink deeper draining energy
The angle steepens as clouds push up
Washing the land away
A tricky pitch slows progress down
A snagged rope a loose crampon time floats away as banners fly
A darkening sky with looming clouds
The whole air conspiring to take my breath away
The storm with infinite movement and absolute survey
Moves on encompassing the land
The rock and ice offered freedom but hobble every movement
Escape is slow through driving rain
Flattened tussock
Heading east
Its hot and gusty 32 degrees and all are troubled
Emotions run wild
And recount the epics
Loving every minute till next time.

10.4 Concluding Remarks

Conclusions are difficult to write without rewriting the whole document. They are also troubling because they bring closure to a journey which is a long way from its destination. It's akin to retuning from a climbing expedition where no peaks were climbed, and for no other reason than it was important to be somewhere else.

The research was based around those special moments that mountaineers experience, but are recounted with a distant stare and the occasional mumble.

Why did you do it? It was a difficult question to answer because I felt those who needed to ask the question wouldn't fully understand my reasons. (Jones, 2004, p. 112)

Research is partly revealing and partly concealing. What becomes easy to focus on is revealed, examined and described. There is a tendency for research to look at the more measurable and tangible aspects and ignore some of those extra elements that transform some outdoor experiences into something special. It is important for ecological research to identify the lived meaning of the participants, but also to reflect back on itself and realise that in some ways it also influences those meanings, illuminating some ideas but shutting the doors on others. Hence, research methods are also productive in that they create some of the research itself and indeed some of the realities of life. What we do and how we learn determines the reality of what we can know.

As the research progressed it became evident that the closer I thought I was to finding the essence of freedom the more ineffable and unattainable it became. Freedom is not a destination, but occurs in the movement from security to risk and also in the movement from risk to security. I experienced freedom in the research process as initially I took some risks and challenged certain academic conventions, and I experienced freedom again near the end of the writing process when I followed advice and returned to the security of conventional writing.

The more we engage in dialogue about freedom and challenge what is meant by it, the more the general understanding about freedom will increase. There is often a

propensity to treat freedom as if it can be won in a battle, rather than consider what it means to be free, and how striving for it determines our identity and maybe limits the very freedom we seek. It is no wonder that conflicts continue in Iraq and Afghanistan, when freedom from potentially oppressive regimes was given by an external force, without due consideration of what was been given or how it would be maintained. The forcing of freedom on people is in itself oppressive. While freedom can not be given, this research has demonstrated that at least for some, it is an intrinsically motivating purpose for life and learning, to be encouraged whenever and however possible. Dialogue relating to freedom of the hills is just one small instance of doing that.

Through all the challenges I enjoyed the search and particularly the company of my participants. I never quite reached the peak, but the journey is unforgettable. The mountains may hold many secrets but even more lie within the lived experience of climbing.

The final quote goes to Mitchell who says:

Whatever we find in the mountains we took there in the first place. In the end the mountains do not care what experiences we make of them. They are nothing but wrinkles on a shifting crust, frozen water upon water, dust upon dust – nothing – until men and women come and give them meaning. (1983, p. 225).

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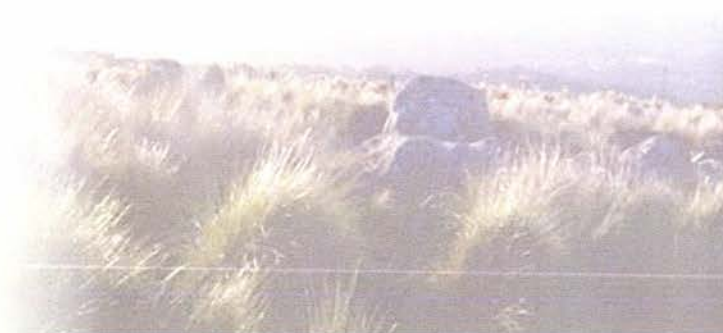
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Photographic essay - Freedom of the Hills



Theoretic knowledge, which is knowledge about things, as distinguished from living or sympathetic acquaintance with them, touches only the outer surface of reality.
William James (1909/1996, pp. 249-250)

Appendices
