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**Place-Responsive  
Education: Student  
perspectives**

A thesis  
submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements  
of

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# Place-Responsive Education: Student perspectives

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## Abstract

The importance of student perspectives in curriculum innovations is well established. Until recently accounts of adolescent male experiences during a place-responsive education (PRE) programme have not been extensively researched within outdoor education literature. This research aims to address this gap in our knowledge by investigating the following two questions:

- What are student perspectives of a PRE approach to an outdoor education trip?
- Is a PRE approach an appropriate pedagogy for senior level outdoor education in Secondary Schools in New Zealand?

A group of Year 12 and 13 (16 to 18 years old) male students, enrolled in a senior level outdoor education programme, were asked to give their perspectives on a PRE trip. This thesis utilised photo-elicitation interviews as a means to gain students' perspectives on their experiences. Students were provided with cameras and asked to take photographs to demonstrate what the trip was like for them. After the trip interviews were conducted with four participants. The interviews revealed seven themes which support PRE as a possible alternative to traditional pursuit-driven approach utilised in my school's existing programmes.

PRE is multi-disciplinary approach focusing on exploring local places to establish a connection for students, this connection is then available to encourage and engage students. The findings of this study showed students engaged and connected with local places in a meaningful way which increased motivation, personal and social development, and positive agency within the community of those on the trip. The students' interview comments supported the use of less risky activities, slow travel methods and the use of sensory exploration encouraged by PRE allowing them to learn from the situations in which they found themselves.

The use of photo-elicitation interviews as a research method for research with young males is discussed. Providing students with cameras proved to be an engaging and effective way for students to be a part of academic research.

This study contributes to the emerging literature on PRE within senior level outdoor education in New Zealand secondary schools, as well as to the role of student perspectives within research on curriculum innovation.

## Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to my father who will never get to see it as he died half way through the process. I am forever grateful for the many hours spent discussing my studies with you Dad and I loved the fact you were always interested.

I wish to thank all those educators who have shown an interest in me over the years, in your own ways you have encouraged, challenged and inspired me. I hope I have and will continue to also do the same for others as you have shown me.

Special thanks to my most recent educator Dr Mike Brown, when I first heard you speak I thought you had some crazy ideas and I did not agree with any of them. Oh how times have changed!

Thanks to the woman in my life Mum, Granny G, Jodi, Ruby, Mia and Cleo. You have allowed me time to chase my selfish dreams. It's probably time I put those aside and gave some time to you guys.

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## Chapter One: Introduction

After returning from every outdoor trip I sit down with the instructors that I have worked with and review the programme. Following a review of a white water kayaking trip in the Central North Island I was left wondering at the pedagogical approach we had used. We had driven from Wellington to Taupo, across to Napier and back down to Wellington over six days with two vans and a kayak trailer laden with equipment. We had fitted in at least two river runs per day, and there was little doubt the students kayaking had improved. However, during the review, on the side of the paper that had the negatives, or things to improve, for future trips the list was considerable. The programme had cost a lot of money, required highly skilled instructors to keep students safe on the river, and used enormous amounts of energy both on and off the water. A large amount of natural resources had been used on the trip, such as petrol and gas for cooking, as well as a considerable volume of equipment used for kayaking and camping over the six days.

But the real questions nagging me were pedagogical in nature; was this approach the best way to educate students? Was there more to outdoor education? Would anything the students have learnt on this trip relate to their normal lives? Other than learning how to kayak have I helped them to become better people? In thinking about these pedagogical questions I am reminded about a quote “It is not education, but education of a certain kind, that will save us” (Orr, 2004, p. 8).

This research is motivated by my personal experience as an outdoor educator, and stimulated by the quote from David Orr. Was the current pedagogical approach being used in outdoor education providing the best ‘kind of education’? Were there other pedagogical approaches available which needed to be explored and considered? Would the emerging pedagogy of place-responsiveness be a better fit for my outdoor education programme and for me personally?

Having gained my degree in Outdoor Education and qualified as a teacher I set out on a career in the outdoors confident in the knowledge that my training had been of the highest quality, based on theories that would make me successful as an educator. However over time this confidence has begun to erode as my teaching experiences have seldom matched up with the assumed benefits of the theories I had learnt. Initially I questioned my ability as an educator to effectively

deliver the theories that had been presented in my undergraduate degree such as the experiential learning cycle, challenge by choice, adventure based learning and goal setting. One of the central tenets of the education I had received was focused on critical evaluation. I had been encouraged to always challenge and question what I was doing and ask is this the best way to do this? Following several years of teaching the question most concerning me was; this is education, but is this kind of education as effective as it could be?

To me teaching will always be a moral undertaking, what I decide to teach or what pedagogical framework I operate from is based on what I believe. On the white water trip mentioned above we had run a fun and safe trip, teaching students many kayaking skills. However, by teaching using that paradigm I had potentially excluded many other valuable learning experiences. According to Fang (1996) teachers' beliefs are based on two assumptions; first that teachers are professionals who make reasonable judgements within a complex and uncertain community, school, and classroom environment; secondly that teachers' thoughts, beliefs and decisions guide their behaviour in classrooms. These assumptions are considered to be very important when considering outdoor education teachers' beliefs, both in the classroom and outside of it (A. Hill, 2010; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005). What I have determined as important enough to teach is a decision I do not take lightly especially when considering student safety and environmental well-being (Lugg, 1999). After the review of the above kayak trip I was convinced that my current outdoor education practice was unsustainable. How could I continue to teach units about environmental sustainability and hope for students to become more caring about the environment when I wasn't demonstrating a sustainable approach in my own practice?

Like Orr (2004) I believe that most education reinforces unsustainable values and practices in society. We are educated by and large to "compete and consume" rather than to "care and conserve" (Sterling, 2001, p. 2). Orr (2004) has suggested that most of our education is concerned with gaining knowledge and skills, and in general education privileges knowledge and development of skills as more important than other forms of education. It has been argued by Orr (2004) that secondary and tertiary education in particular, is compartmentalised and operates within independent domains unconcerned with the effect each domain will have on any other. Sterling (2001) refers to this type of education as *first order*

*learning*. He argues for *second order learning* which requires critical reflection and for an examination of values, more so than just gathering knowledge to gain superiority over others.

A number of writers have commented on how outdoor pursuits, and personal and social development outcomes are dominant themes within the outdoor sector, especially in the United Kingdom, United States of America and New Zealand (Lynch, 2003; Nicol, 2002a; Thomas, 2005a; Zink & Boyes, 2007). This privileging of outdoor pursuits as well as personal and social development over alternative learning outcomes, potentially results in the overshadowing of other curriculum imperatives, including those related to care for the environment or education for sustainability (Cosgriff & Gillespie, 2011).

In recent times the awareness of environmental concerns has grown, as has the call for environmental education and sustainability education (Cotton, 2006; Hanna, 1995; Irwin, 2008; P. Martin, 2004; Nicol, 2002b). The current guiding document in formal education is the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) which mandates for more education for sustainability across all subject areas. My experiences on the white water kayak trip, and other outdoor trips, has left me wondering if the traditional pursuits driven paradigm in outdoor education is promoting a sustainable approach, or just treating the outdoors as another resource to use and discard. Returning to the earlier quote by Orr (2004) I would argue that education requires more critical reflection and should be based on values which educate in a caring manner that is more environmentally sustainable.

If teaching is a moral undertaking then I believe we are required to educate in a certain way to improve the environment that we live in, or as Orr (2004) suggests by promoting education for sustainability. This thesis explores the emerging pedagogy of Place-Responsive Education (PRE) as an attempt to ascertain if this is an appropriate way to educate outdoor education students within the New Zealand Secondary School system. PRE is concerned with responding to the local environment by engaging students in what their local places have to offer and helping to establish a connection with those places (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). This connection to local places encourages students to respond and engage with them as well as getting students to care and respect those places that are significant to them (Brown, 2012). From a personal viewpoint I hope that PRE

will provide an alternative approach to outdoor education and answer some of the questions posed by my previous experiences such as those on the white water kayak trip.

## **The research**

This project has come about because of the desire to answer some of the questions raised by the critical evaluation into my own practice, as well as my increased awareness of literature that critiques existing outdoor education theory/practice. The current activity-focused outdoor education pedagogy employed at the college where I teach is potentially limited by some of the approaches employed in the teaching of “risky” activities, as well as the push for personal and social development (Brown & Fraser, 2009).

An examination of current literature shows evidence of traditional pursuit focused outdoor education programmes and a call for more holistic and contextualised pedagogies, which deliberately and explicitly centre environmental, place-based and sustainability education pedagogies (Brown, 2008; Cosgriff, 2008; Gruenewald, 2003a; A. Hill, 2008; Irwin, 2008; G. Smith, 2007). At its most basic the objective of PRE is to develop a love of the environment, to develop a love for the place we dwell in, its history and the bio-diversity that exists there (Penetito, 2008). According to Park (1995) a sense of one’s place is a basic and fundamental human need. The placement of PRE as a central pedagogy in outdoor education can be seen as one way to meet that basic human need as well as to prepare and equip students for the future.

The first aim of this thesis is to ascertain student perspectives of a PRE approach to an outdoor education trip. It is important to consider student perspectives when considering a new pedagogical approach as educators should be primarily interested in how students engage with and perform within any new setting. This is supported by Zink (2005) because the student’s perspective is often forgotten and not taken into account. The second aim of this thesis is to ascertain if a PRE approach is an appropriate pedagogy for senior outdoor education in secondary schools in New Zealand.

A review of literature shows a considerable body of writing focused on the concept of place within education (Baker, 2005; Gruenewald, 2003a; P. Martin, 2004; Payne & Wattchow, 2008; G. Smith, 2007; Stewart, 2008; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009; Wattchow, 2008). A focus on literature based around the concept of place by New Zealand authors (Brown, 2008; Brown & Fraser, 2009; A. Hill, 2008; Penetito, 2008; Townsend, 2011; Wattchow & Brown, 2011) shows that this thesis will be valuable because it will add to the emerging body of writing. The thesis is especially valuable when considering the limited amount of research carried out into PRE within the secondary schools in New Zealand. Examples include work by Brown (2012) and Townsend (2011) who comment on a programme to introduce PRE into two North Island schools in New Zealand.

### **The Structure**

The next chapter is concerned with a review of relevant literature on outdoor education. In order to better appreciate the current pedagogical approach of outdoor education a brief examination of the concept of education will be first. After the discussion on education the chapter continues with a brief history of outdoor education, especially within New Zealand schools. The purpose of this is to provide context for the current situation in outdoor education. This history will also contain an examination of the dominate themes or traditions within outdoor education in New Zealand.

A specific focus in the literature review is around the emerging pedagogy of PRE. It is argued that a PRE approach would be an effective alternative for the current activity focused pedagogy found in many outdoor education programmes in schools within New Zealand. In order to provide a balanced perspective on PRE potential weaknesses with the pedagogy will also be discussed.

The third chapter focuses on the Methodology and Methods the research has employed. It looks at the theoretical background that underpins the research as well as commenting on the ethnographic nature of the research. As PEI is the main source of data gathering, a discussion of this research method is included and the advantages and potential drawbacks associated with this research method are identified.

The fourth chapter presents the research findings. The presentation of data also provides a level of transparency so that readers can follow the reasoning and thoughts of the researcher. This is important as the findings are from interpretive research and are based on the interpretation of the researcher. The data is displayed in sections related to common themes that emerged from the interview process.

The fifth chapter discusses the implications of the research findings, and will comment on the essential findings that have emerged from this research project. The suitability of the PEI research method for this thesis will also be reflected upon. This chapter will link back to the research aims and present any key findings and conclusions that emerge.

The sixth chapter concludes the thesis and I make suggestions regarding further research related to this topic.

## Chapter Two: Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature that relates to the practice of outdoor education in New Zealand. In the opening section I briefly discuss the concept of education more broadly to provide a context for the discussion around why outdoor education has such an important part to play in the New Zealand education system. This discussion illustrates the importance of outdoor education in New Zealand, by including a brief history of outdoor education within the education system. The use of outdoor education in New Zealand schools will be explored and the claimed benefits of traditional pursuit focused outdoor education will be examined. Finally a look at PRE will follow with the argument made for the use of this as an alternative pedagogy for teaching outdoor education within secondary schools in New Zealand.

### Education

At this stage it is beneficial to look closely at the question “what is education” and “why is it important”? The purpose of this section is to highlight the links between education and outdoor activities. The word education is derived from the Latin word *educare* which means to ‘foster or rear’, and from *educere* which means to ‘draw out or develop’ (Sterling, 2001). Education at its most basic level can be seen as the process through which knowledge, values, and skills are learnt. However, education has generally been designed to meet the needs of the market, and driven towards a global version of mass learning (Sterling, 2001). The globalisation of education is concerned with theories, concepts, and the ideology of efficiency necessary to succeed in the work place (Orr, 2004; Wiesel, 1990). However, whenever education is discussed it is necessary to take into account the broader social view (Dewey, 1915). As market demands have increased education has been forced to accommodate this drive for more employable people (Orr, 2004; Wiesel, 1990). This has been at the expense of both the social (Dewey, 1915; Orr, 2004) and environmental viewpoints (Dewey, 1938/1966; P. Martin, 1996; Orr, 2004; Sterling, 2001). This economic driven education model seems at odds with the Latin words for education; especially as authentic learning aims to engage, educate, motivate and encourage participants not just make them consumers.

One of the central tenets of education is that teachers lead and educate from their own personal moral position (Lugg, 1999). There is a complex relationship between teachers' beliefs and their practice, which forms the starting point for all educators to operate from (Cotton, 2006; A. Hill, 2010; Taylor & Caldarelli, 2004). The decisions a teacher makes regarding programme aims, learning outcomes, skills and knowledge taught all reflect the beliefs, values and morals that person deems important (Penney & Waring, 2000). The choices of what to include or exclude in education is based on the teacher's values and beliefs as to what they deem as important. Five principles, or a moral framework for educators to operate from, which is especially relevant to outdoor education, has been suggested by Orr (2004):

1. All education should be environmental in nature.
2. The purpose of education is not to master a subject or knowledge.
3. Knowledge gained in education comes with a responsibility to be used for the good of the world, not just individual gain.
4. Knowledge is not truly gained until we understand the effect it will have on others and other communities.
5. The way we learn or the process of learning is just as important as what is taught.

The use of this suggested moral framework fits well with the Latin definition of education to 'foster, draw out and rear' students. If a teacher believes that environmental education is important then these principles mentioned by Orr (2004) provide a good framework to operate from. Environmental education is aimed at producing citizens that are knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve those interrelationships, and motivated to work towards their solution (Stapp, 1969). Another concept based on education for sustainability has recently risen to support environmental education (Sterling, 2001). Many educators prefer sustainability education to environmental education because it has a focus on the social and economic issues not just those environmental issues (Irwin, 2008). It is argued that by using a more sustainable education paradigm we will be better able to teach the values that will see our society care more for each other and the environment, instead of operating in the current system that promotes economic gain (Gruenewald, 2003a; Irwin, 2008; P. Martin, 1996; Orr, 2004).

Current trends in education are more focused on skill and knowledge acquisition and are constantly pushed to meet global market-driven demands. I would argue that education should be more holistic in nature and based on the teaching of values first and foremost. The next section provides an overview of the subject of outdoor education which seeks to provide a more holistic education perspective and as Orr (2004) comments integrate more of a sense of how things fit together.

## Outdoor Education

This section provides an overview of outdoor education in New Zealand, as it relates to this thesis, along with a brief historical perspective as to how it reached this existing position. The term *outdoor education* is used in this thesis in recognition of its nature as a multi-disciplinary field (A. Hill, 2010). Outdoor education entails a learning in and for the outdoors, and is capable of programme enhancement and development through outdoor experiences (J. Smith, Carlson, Donaldson, & Masters, 1972). It should be noted that as a teacher within a secondary school I have a focus on outdoor education in this context and will primarily comment on outdoor education from this perspective. I recognise this only provides a limited perspective, however I believe the influences of my beliefs and values have been tempered with a suitable level of critical analysis and professional judgement. It should also be noted that I recognise there are an extensive range of programmes currently being conducted that may have already addressed some of the critiques that I highlight. This section is intended only as an examination of underlying philosophy and practice and to comment on the values and principles, often accepted as common sense, which relate to the current educational paradigm (Boyes, 2000; Brown, 2008; Cosgriff & Gillespie, 2011; Hutson, 2008).

Outdoor education has the potential to educate in a different manner which can foster and draw out a love for nature and the environment, as well as develop the whole person to be better able to cope with the requirements of being a good citizen who is able to value and contribute to society (Boss, 1999). One of the difficulties with examining the state of outdoor education is the wide and diverse range of contexts that it encompasses (Boyes, 2000). Even the term outdoor education has varied definitions and does not seem to be easily packaged into one term. Some outdoor educators believe that there is inherent worth in outdoor

education experiences which requires no proof or evidence (Neill, 1997). The belief in the ability of outdoor education experiences to ‘speak for themselves’ in relation to educational goals and outcomes may, in fact, be a significant contributor to the general lack of understanding of outdoor education. The variety of definitions for outdoor education can be explained by the wide range of activities, philosophies, personal journeys and educational positions that people hold.

### **Historical Perspectives**

From a historical perspective, teachers in New Zealand have been taking their students into the outdoors for many years in many different capacities. School excursions from as early as 1876 have been documented and outdoor education has been part of New Zealand education for over 150 years in one form or another (Lynch, 2003; Zink & Boyes, 2007). In the 1970’s outdoor education emerged in its current form, as a recognised educational practice especially in the school system (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). However it was not until 1999 that outdoor education gained an official place in the New Zealand secondary school curriculum when it became part of the Health and Physical Education curriculum (HPE) (Ministry of Education, 1999). A review of outdoor education, carried out prior to the introduction of this curriculum document, suggested that outdoor education was best described in three key strands; outdoor pursuits, environmental studies and personal and social development (G. Clark, 1976). The inclusion of outdoor education in the HPE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) can be seen as a major step forward for outdoor education within secondary schools in New Zealand and a significant move towards the development of outdoor education as a stand-alone subject (Boyes, 2000; Lynch, 2003; Zink & Boyes, 2007).

While the inclusion of outdoor education within the HPE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) was a major step forward it also influenced the direction that this subject would move forward in. The placement of outdoor education within the physical education syllabus was principally done because outdoor education was seen as a movement based activity, which has defined the subject in narrow movement and activity-based terms (Boyes, 2000; Payne, 2002). While the 1999 document detailed the direction for outdoor education within the HPE domain, the

more recent New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) also has the potential to further influence outdoor education in schools. The 2007 version of the NZC is less specific in regards to teaching domains or subjects and more focused on the preferred values within education. This more recent document pushes for a more holistic education that encourages schools to educate the whole student and be less subject focused. While the impacts of this newer curriculum document are yet to be fully realised I believe that it encourages and promotes a more place-responsive pedagogy. To date there has been only limited research into the impacts of the 2007 NZC document and the effectiveness of the move to a more holistic teaching approach within secondary schools. For this reason the influence of the earlier 1999 HPE curriculum document is seen as more relevant to this thesis from here on.

A closer look at the HPE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) states that outdoor education should set out to provide students with "...opportunities to develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe, and skilled in the outdoors, and to protect and care for the environment" (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46). According to Lynch (2006) there has been a focus within outdoor education in schools on outdoor pursuits with the aims of personal and social development being a recurring theme. The inclusion of outdoor education as one of the seven strands of learning in this document has been influential in the development of this as an area of teaching in secondary schools, informing many teachers programmes, aims and learning outcomes (Boyes, 2000; Lynch, 2003; Zink & Boyes, 2007).

Another influential document for outdoor education in schools is the Education Outside The Classroom (EOTC) document (Haddock, Sinnema, & Edmonds, 2009). This document is published by the Ministry of Education as a set of guidelines for schools wishing to take students outside of the classroom. While there has been little research into the influence the 2009 EOTC document has had on outdoor education within schools, studies dealing with power relationships can be used to identify possible issues. While not directly related to the EOTC document articles by Chisholm and Shaw (2004) and to a limited extent Jones (2004/2005) highlight the influence a set of guidelines introduced by a government agency have on outdoor practitioners. Chisholm and Shaw (2004) comment that a power relationship is often established by the released document

and can be seen to be influential on outdoor practices, and often used as a means of establishing levels of accountability.

From this brief historical perspective it can be seen that outdoor education has had a part to play in the education system of New Zealand schools for a long time. In the early days of development outdoor education was merely thought of as camping and an addition to the more formal education operating in schools. The inclusion of outdoor education as one of seven strands within the HPE curriculum in 1999 was a significant milestone in the development of outdoor education as a legitimate and stand-alone subject within the school curriculum. While helping to legitimise outdoor education as a subject the HPE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) has also provided influential in the direction that this subject area has moved into in recent times. Along with influences from historical roots in the United Kingdom the HPE curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) has helped define dominate themes such as pursuit based activities and personal and social development within schools (Boyes, 2000; Cosgriff, 2008; Zink & Boyes, 2007). The following sections attempt to unpack these dominate themes and look more closely at what relevant literature is commenting on about them.

### **Personal and Social Development**

A study into the state of outdoor education within New Zealand schools conducted by Zink and Boyes (2007) showed a focus on personal and social development through outdoor pursuits. Within specific New Zealand literature a number of commentators have identified the historical dominance of personal and social development learning outcomes in outdoor education programmes (Cosgriff, 2008; Lynch, 2006; Zink, 2003). Personal and social development benefits are often identified as chief outcomes in outdoor education programmes (Thomas, 2005b; Zink & Boyes, 2007). However, because these benefits are not unique to outdoor education, they provide only weak support for the place of outdoor education in a crowded school curriculum (McKenzie, 2000). Many outdoor education programmes promote outcomes such as trust, empathy, communication, and problem solving, social and personal responsibility and use these claims to justify and support assertions that outdoor programmes are successful. These personal and social outcomes seem to be generally accepted as beneficial, however there has been research which questions the assumption to

support their inclusion in programmes (McKenzie, 2000; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005).

Studies into the state of outdoor education in Australia (Lugg & Martin, 2001) and the United Kingdom (Nicol, 2002a, 2002b) showed the same focus on social and personal development. While the contexts of these studies are different to our own, common links with these countries, especially the historical link with the United Kingdom cannot be ignored. In the United States the focus on personal development through experiential education and the 'Project Adventure' push for high ropes and adventure based activities has also added weight to the inclusion of personal and social development within outdoor education programmes.

According to Cosgriff (2008) an overemphasis on personal and social development outcomes has had potential detrimental impacts for environmental concerns within outdoor education. This desire to include personal and social development outcomes in outdoor education has grown out of accepted practice rather than from a foundation of proven research and philosophy (Nicol, 2002b).

### **Risky Pursuits**

An examination of relevant literature (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Priest & Miles, 1999; Wurdinger, 1997) shows challenging and risky outdoor activities are extensively promoted as features of, and indeed selling points for, outdoor education. Research into New Zealand outdoor education has also shown an overemphasis of risky pursuit activities (Andkjær, 2012). These risky pursuits include such things as rock climbing, kayaking, ropes course activities, tramping, and mountain biking. Brookes (2002) observed that the United Kingdom traditions of activity based outdoor pursuits have influenced and shaped outdoor education practice in Australia and New Zealand. These traditions of challenging and risky adventures have become engrained in the accepted practice of outdoor education (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Zink, 2003). Many adventure education programmes are designed around challenge and the use of risky activities and many practitioners seem to accept that these should be included in adventure education, even though there is remarkably little research to support this (McKenzie, 2000; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005).

Notions of adventure and the constant exposure to the concept of ‘living life to the max’ are over reported in the media. Adventure is defined as an unusual, exciting, stirring, or remarkable experience, where the outcome is uncertain, sometimes accompanied by the perception of risk (Haddock, 1993). Often it is the perception of risk and adventure that is appealing for many outdoor activities. This perception of risk and adventure as ‘fun’ is an idea that is used to support the inclusion of risky pursuit activities in outdoor education programmes (Brown & Fraser, 2009). In the Adventure Experience Model (Priest & Martin, 1985), challenge through adventurous activities contributes to creating a state of anxiety, which once overcome, is seen as beneficial to the participants. In this model it is proposed that students should experience a balance of perceived risk and perceived challenge which will lead to a peak experience. The focus of this model is on matching the competence of a student with activities that they perceive to be risky. This assumption is flawed because each individual perceives risk in different ways according to their prior experiences and this is related to the context individuals find themselves in (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). A few authors in the outdoor sector have raised questions regarding the educational justification, as effective pedagogy, for the inclusion of risk in outdoor programmes (Beedie, 1994 ; Beedie & Bourne, 2005; Brown & Fraser, 2009; Wurdinger, 1997). An outdoor course that promotes a rock climbing experience over an exploration of the local park is seen as more adventurous and therefore more exciting and beneficial by society (Zink, 2003; Zink & Leberman, 2001). This view of outdoor education is based on the current high profile that is held in mainstream media of adventure (Zink, 2003).

### Assessment

Assessment has played a significant part in shaping outdoor education, especially within senior level secondary school programmes in New Zealand (Barnes, Clarke, & Stephens, 2000). Outdoor education has not been exempt from an increased focus on academic performance in secondary schools. Through this focus pressure has come to use measureable assessment tools (A. Hill, 2010) such as the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (NZQA, 2013). The most common assessment tools in outdoor education are Unit Standards and Achievement Standards (Hills, 2011). These are both standards-based assessment tools which focus on judging whether students have meet a pre-specified standard

(Hall, 2005). The subject of outdoor education is positioned under the Physical Education Curriculum within the NCEA framework and uses the achievement standards from this domain (Ministry of Education, 2007). The achievement standards used for outdoor education, within the physical education domain, generally focus on the objectives of skill development, risk management, personal and social development through the use of pursuit based activities (Ministry of Education, 1999). The other form of assessment, unit standards, have been largely developed by educational, professional or industry bodies (Peddie & Tuck, 1995) and are also based on reaching a pre-specified level of competency (Hall, 2005). The use of unit standards for assessment within outdoor education has been questioned for a variety of reasons, including issues of implementation and moderation, underlying philosophies and assessment mechanisms (Boyes, 2000; Cosgriff & Gillespie, 2011; A. Hill, 2010; Jones, 2004/2005; Williams, 2002).

The concept of assessment is a significant issue to be discussed when taking into account the current position of outdoor education within schools in New Zealand. Assessment is often seen as a driver of programmes (Barnes et al., 2000) and can significantly influence the direction, outcomes and pedagogical basis of many outdoor education experiences. There is a relationship between assessment, programme outcomes and pedagogy that can be a significant influence and highlight that assessment is not an isolated event (Barnes et al., 2000). Goals of many outdoor education programmes are closely linked to curriculum and assessment, and there is a need for teaching and learning practices to support these goals (Cosgriff & Gillespie, 2011). In outdoor education the assessment methodology is often based on the assumption that all outcomes can be specified and precise competency levels attained (Williams, 2002). However not all learning can be defined adequately enough to have a learning outcome attached to it. For example how do you define trust, problem solving, communication skills and critical analysis, in a narrow enough context to be assessed? Nor can any value, belief or attitude be given a pass or fail as in a NCEA achievement or unit standard. It has been argued that the intrinsic benefits of subjects like outdoor education are not taken into account in rigidly defined learning outcomes (Iles, 1995). As McGee (1997) observes there are aspects of human existence and knowledge that defy reduction into measureable parts, such as assessment criteria.

In concluding this brief examination of outdoor education the current trend of privileging adventure and risky pursuit driven activities, along with personal and social development outcomes has become the norm for outdoor education to operate within (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Wolfe & Samdahl, 2005). In a study into outdoor education within New Zealand Schools Boyes (2000) commented that the privileging of skill based pursuits had defined the direction of many programmes. This was supported by Cosgriff (2008) when she commented that the focus on personal and social development through risky activities had reduced environmental learning to the periphery. This then leads to the need for an exploration of alternative paradigms for outdoor education to operate from. An examination of literature related to this re-orientation of outdoor education practice shows a call for a more holistic pedagogical approach (Brown, 2008; Gruenewald, 2003b; A. Hill, 2008; P. Martin, 2004; Payne & Wattchow, 2008; Penetito, 2008). While each of these approaches have points of difference they all agree that outdoor education should be more focused on the environment through an acknowledgement of the place that people are living and recreating in, and be less concerned with risky and pursuit based activities.

### **Place-Responsive Education**

In order to get people to change something, you have to get them to think about it. In order to get them to think about it, you have to make it visible to them. One way to make the ordinary visible, curiously enough is to subtract it or interrupt it. (Postman & Weingartner, 1971 cited in Penetito, 2008, p. 6)

This quote suggests that we need to get students to think about issues that they currently face and might be of importance in the future. There is little doubt that environmental issues are one of the biggest problems currently facing society according to the World Meteorological Organisation (2013). Outdoor education has the potential to provide students with the chance to experience the environment and make “visible” the issues that exist now and which will continue to challenge them in the future. As mentioned earlier education at its most basic level is a process of learning knowledge, values and skills. According to Das (2008) the overall purpose of education is to prepare, equip and empower the next generation and whether that learning is at home, at school or in the community it

will mean so much more if students are actively involved in that future right now. Children possess minds that are primarily drawn to actual phenomena rather than to ideas about phenomena (Dewey, 1938/1966). One of the strengths of outdoor education is in its ability to allow students to experience the environment first hand; however is this enough? Is the current pedagogy providing enough opportunity for students to ‘think about’ and then ‘change’ those issues they are confronted with?

A review of recent literature shows a call for more holistic and contextualised pedagogies that deliberately and explicitly centre environmental, place-based, and sustainability education instead of the traditional pursuit and social development outcomes that currently exist (Brown, 2008; A. Hill, 2008; Irwin, 2008). Through carefully facilitated outdoor education experiences, students can develop an ethic of care for natural environments that may translate to environmentally sensitive or sustainable action (Jensen & Schnack, 1997). There is potential for outdoor education to enable experiential and tacit knowledge of outdoor settings which is important in developing affinity with particular places (P. Martin, 2004).

On a practical everyday level, there is little doubt that we know that different places are associated with different activities for example, our workplace, our home, or our local recreation centre (Relph, 1976). There is a relationship between the places we visit and the activities that we undertake there, whether this is based on an event or a certain time in our lives. According to Park (1995) “a sense of place is a fundamental human need” (p.320) and is based on experiences which are shared with appropriate activities.

When considering place it is important to ask the question what is here. What will nature permit us to do here? What will nature help us to do here? (Berry, 1987). At its most basic, the objective of PRE is to develop in learners a love of the environment, of the place where they live, of its social history, of the bio-diversity that exists there, and the way in which people respond and continue to respond to the natural and social environments. This is in stark contrast to current pedagogical practice commonly seen in classrooms throughout New Zealand which tends to be egocentric (individualistic), constructivist (participation of the learner in meaning-making) process-orientated, literacy-orientated, and motivated by linear recipes for progress (Penetito, 2008). Moving the focus away from what has been traditional outdoor pursuits (Payne & Wattchow, 2010) allows more

choice in the types of activities the outdoor teacher can call on to help provide the learning experiences for their students.

A search of place-based education reveals a large and ever growing amount of literature on the subject (Brown, 2008; G. Smith, 2007; Tooth & Renshaw, 2009; Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000). There is a growing recognition that place-based education may not always be responsive to the places they are operating in (Brown, 2012; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). An example of this could be a school property or residential centre that is visited every year by students for an end of year outdoor education camp. The camp property may be a significant place to students, and education occurs at that location, but is what is taught responsive to the place in which the camp is located? Another example could be a school outdoor education trip that drives for hours to a specific location to rock climb for a week. Once there the trip could be seen to be based in that location or place but not respond to it. By responding to the trip location staff and students would need to consider what the trip location has to offer, its features and limitations, and make adjustments accordingly. A place-responsive approach can be seen as more of a pedagogical approach and less about the visiting of a certain location. By incorporating historical, geographical and cultural knowledge as well as skill into our practice, we are able to use local places and to become more sensitive and thoughtful visitors. In this process we cover less ground, have less need to go to spectacular sites and spend more time enjoying our journeys and less time getting to these places (Slattery, 2001).

Some essential characteristics of PRE (Penetito, 2008) include:

1. It emerges from the particular attributes of a place. The content is specific to the geography, ecology, sociology, politics and other dynamics of that place
2. It is inherently multi-disciplinary and often promotes team teaching among educators and community resource people
3. It is inherently experiential, in many programmes this includes a participatory action or service learning component, and
4. It connects place with self and community. Because of the lens through which place-responsive curricula are viewed, these connections are pervasive. These curricula include multi-generational and multicultural dimensions as they integrate with community resources.

Place-responsive educators argue that by grounding education in the local community, students can see the relevance of what they are learning and therefore become more engaged in the learning process (Powers, 2004). The primary focus on this learning process is to encourage and enable students to feel safe and comfortable in places rather than feeling like a stranger with little or no attachment. This brings us back to the quote at the start of this section; how can we expect students to think about and make changes if they have no attachment or commitment to a place? Within PRE there is an emphasis on students engaging in real projects that are of value to the community. Powers (2004) reports that PRE shows positive results – improved perceptions of youth and adults toward each other, closer relationships between schools and government, lowered project costs, and increased community demand for student involvement.

There are many potential benefits to a place-responsive approach to outdoor education; it teaches us how the world works and how we fit into it (Gruenewald, 2003a); it can shape our identities (Wattchow & Brown, 2011); it can enrich learning for individuals and communities (Wattchow & Brown, 2011); encourage a connection to nature (Woodhouse & Knapp, 2000); allows for teaching in a multidisciplinary approach (G. Smith, 2007); and encourage students to learn about and care for their community (McInerney, Smyth, & Down, 2011). It should be made clear at this stage that it is not assumed these benefits are in any way exclusive to PRE and not available from other pedagogical approaches. The real strength of PRE is in the meaningful manner in which many benefits can be gained from such an integrated pedagogical approach. Some of these could include (adapted from Brown, 2012; E. Smith, Gidlow, & Steel, 2012; Townsend, 2011):

- Because a PRE approach is less focused on risky pursuits or activities there is less need for specialised skills or equipment, this then encourages staff and students to utilise the skills and knowledge that they already have. Teachers can facilitate the process, become co-learners and brokers of community resources and learning experiences.
- The removal of experts to instruct and less specialist equipment will mean a reduction to the cost of trips, activities and programmes.
- The emphasis on using local environments instead of preferred adventure sites that are often a long way away will result in a reduction of travel

costs; also this reduced travel time means more time spent actually undertaking activities.

- Students and teachers become more familiar with local places of significance so are more able to re-visit them with friends and family. Often these places are already a significant location to families of the students as they may have already visited them.
- Provide students with opportunities to plan and display leadership skills, where responsibility and consequences can be connected, without the intervention of “the expert” to ensure safety. For example students can enjoy the chance to set their own pace and select food to cook as well as actually cooking it, within imposed boundaries.
- The challenge is often physical in nature rather than technical (walking verses white water kayaking) and allows students to set their own level of challenge.
- The activities are often self-propelled and provide a sense of achievement in the completion of the task; also students can gain a sense of pride from completion of a whole journey under their own steam.
- The notion of a journey and moving towards a known destination provides comfort and motivation, especially as many may have already visited those destinations. The nature of a ‘journey home’ to school while not always possible provides a sense of belonging and returning to another place of significance for students.

However while the practical benefits are considerable it is the other benefits that are the real positives of a PRE approach. There are opportunities provided to students because of the familiarity or connections that already exist from visiting local places (Brown, 2012). According to Beames and Ross (2010) the chance to explore connections to places of relevance to students everyday lives and aids learning opportunities.

Another benefit of a PRE approach is the chance to discover and appreciate new places that are close to home that students may have not known existed (Cameron, 2001; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Visiting places using a slow pedagogical (Payne & Wattchow, 2008) approach (such as cycling, walking, and sea kayaking, sailing) allows students to encounter and interact with these local places and enable a different experience. This experiential aspect of learning is a potential

strength of outdoor education and is central to the development of place-responsiveness. As mentioned earlier it is one of the roles of an educator to foster and rear a respect for places so that they are better able to care for those places and other similar spaces.

While not solely the domain of PRE, social interaction is an important aspect that is enhanced by a place-responsive approach. One of the significant benefits of outdoor education is the chance to socially interact with others (E. Smith, Steel, & Gidlow, 2010). Zink and Boyes (2007) found that students identified the chance to interact with each other between activities as a highlight of outdoor trips. A PRE approach is often less activity focused and allows students more time to interact which is of significance to students (Brown, 2012).

In a PRE approach the nature of challenge is framed differently, when considered compared to traditional activities of outdoor education. Recent critiques of the educational value of risky adventurous activities in outdoor education have questioned the concept of risk (Brown & Fraser, 2009). A PRE approach moves away from highly orchestrated outdoor pursuits (in which the risk is managed by instructors) to a more real-life challenge that encourages students to analyse and manage the situation themselves.

A PRE approach to outdoor education can take a wide range of forms. One of its primary strengths is that it can adapt to the unique characteristics of particular places, and in this way it can help overcome the disjuncture between school and children's lives that is found in too many classrooms (Orr, 2004). Because of the very nature of PRE it responds to what the local environment has to offer, and therefore it is not possible to set a generic programme or list of activities to operate by. There are however some key principles with which to operate by and design a programme around (adapted from Wattchow & Brown, 2011):

1. *Being present in and with a place*: this requires slow moving forms of travel which allow students to develop a relationship with a place and provide the chance for them to become familiar and comfortable in that environment. Time is taken to allow students to experience the sights, sounds, smells and textures of the environment. A PRE programme allows the time and space for experiential learning to really take place as students become fully immersed in that place.

2. *The power of place-based stories and narratives*: PRE draws on stories of the geological, historical, cultural and significant events that are related to the places that are visited. Stories can then emerge through the engagement students have with places, and also the use of stories from previous visits can be beneficial. The emphasis is on stories with content that cannot easily or readily be instructed or summarised, but is more effectively delivered in the place it is concerned with.
3. *Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places*: this is a combination of the above two. Outdoor educators can thoughtfully and tactfully combine experiencing particular places with the study of those places. This can mean prior studies of places to be visited, or repeat visits so students can become apprentices to a place. This key principle is also a significant one for the educator who returns to the same location year after year, what is different? What can I learn here? In this way apprenticeship is for all to take up not just the students.
4. *The presentation of place experience*: this requires a more critical interpretation of the places visited. How has the place you are visiting been viewed in the past instead of how it is viewed at the moment? How has the knowledge of the place been presented and to whose advantage is it? For many this critical evaluation is the hardest area to apply. Secondly the presentation of the experience from the actual trip is crucial. Learners should be encouraged to create interpretive works inspired by the place, be this through art, notes, photographs and so forth. These can then be taken back home or school and continually reflected on.
5. *Focus on Community* (this principle is an addition to the four identified by Wattachow and Brown (2011): This principle has a twofold purpose and can be better understood by utilising the concept of social capital (Beames & Atencio, 2008; Putnam, 1995). The central idea of social capital is that social networks have value and that these can have benefit to individuals as well as groups (Beames & Atencio, 2008). An individual can have physical capital (a house or car) or financial capital (money) but only a group or community can have social capital (Putnam, 1995). In PRE there can be an integration of outside community agencies into the programme through community groups and sources. This can take many forms such as visits from speakers, resource sharing and so forth. The importance here is

the need to encourage and develop links with the students and the wider community. This is referred to by Putnam (1995) as bridging social capital and is developed through the relationships existing between people in different social groups. The second aspect of community in PRE is the focus on the community being created on the trip with the students and staff. The group on the trip is in itself forming a community, and the creation of a positive community group creates a deep sense of belonging and attachment for those on the trip. According to Putnam (1995) this internally generated dynamic within a particular group or smaller community is called bonding social capital. The assumption is that modelling of a healthy community on a PRE trip will enable students to practice and gain skills to become socially aware and contribute more to their home communities (Beames & Atencio, 2008; Mitten, 1999).

While this thesis is advocating for a change to PRE pedagogy, instead of the traditional pursuit focused paradigm that exists in New Zealand, it does by no means suggest PRE is without its own barriers. As with all emerging pedagogies it is important to consider potential issues and barriers that may occur in the instigation and operation of a PRE approach. It would be unwise to assume that a move to PRE pedagogy in outdoor education will not in turn bring about its own set of questions and potential shortcomings. This next section is aimed at identifying some potential barriers that may occur in a PRE programme, it is not assumed that all barriers have been identified, nor even that I have become aware of them all either.

First it would be advantageous to discuss potential theoretical barriers before discussing more practical ones. Perhaps the most significant barrier in implementing a more place-responsive pedagogy for educators will be the response by the institutions that these programmes may operate within (Gruenewald, 2005). Institutes of learning are increasingly accountable for their performance and results, especially in relation to funding (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). Educational policy and practice is progressively linked to the need for institutions to demonstrate quantifiable and statistically comparable results, and usually these results are in the form of test scores (Gruenewald, 2005). This is a significant barrier for a PRE pedagogical that seeks to provide a more holistic approach to education. During a PRE trip if a student does not feel a connection to

‘place’ is that a pass or fail? How does a PRE teacher/educator reconcile the need of the institution to have quantifiable results with the pedagogical needs of PRE?

Education is segmented into the spaces represented by classrooms, and regulation of time which creates isolated and disconnected experiences for all students (Orr, 2004). This reinforces the assumption that school is a placeless endeavour which in turn creates another significant barrier to PRE (Gruenewald, 2005). PRE is guided by principles that encourage holistic education through experiences in significant places and times, which is the opposite of the timetabled, isolated and highly structured nature of many learning institutes.

On a more practical note there are others barriers to PRE, including:

- Time pressures for already busy teachers and educators struggling to include imposed educational policies and procedures. A PRE approach requires time and energy to implement, especially in regards to trips away (Townsend, 2011). One of the key principles of PRE is around the use of place-based stories and narratives which need to be researched prior to trips away. Historical, geographic, cultural and significant event information about a place being visited needs to be gained prior to leaving and this can take significant time. Students can be asked to research this information to save time, but the establishing of a framework for students to operate within in this situation can also be time demanding.
- One of the central tenants of PRE is the link to community support, through organisations, clubs and access to resources. This rallying of support from outside community sources is important for the long term sustainability of PRE programmes, and can be seen as time consuming and difficult (Gruenewald, 2005).
- Due to the perception of the desirability of adventure activities a move from these could be viewed as less appealing by students and parents. The inclusion of pursuits such as rock climbing and kayaking can be highly attractive, especially to adolescent students in a secondary school. If these types of risky adventure activities are dropped from programmes then does the programme run the risk of being perceived as less fun?

- Finally the issue of assessment needs to be considered, especially within senior secondary school. As already commented the available assessment methods are weighted towards easily comparable criteria that are not suited to a PRE approach. While there are assessments available that can be used in PRE these will require adaptation and reformatting to become useful. The practical implications of creating a year-long school course with enough viable assessment opportunities needs to be considered. Assessment also needs to be considered from a pedagogical perspective given the issues raised earlier regarding the need for accountability within an institution.

As little research in New Zealand secondary schools has been conducted on PRE (Brown, 2012; Townsend, 2011) then potential weaknesses within this approach can only be speculated. This section has been an attempt to identify some potential barriers within this emerging pedagogy. It should by no means be considered a complete list more as a work in progress.

## Chapter Three: Methodology and Methods

This chapter defines the methodology and methods that I have used in this thesis. The use of a qualitative research approach is discussed, along with an explanation of Photo-Elicitation Interviewing (PEI) and how this method is used in the thesis to answer the research questions. Firstly it is important to understand the viewpoint that informs this research project in order to provide a perspective and context for the research findings. As Gratton and Jones (2004) point out, by undertaking research you are more likely to develop a better understanding of what research actually is instead of merely reading about it. Understanding the research process can provide stability and direction, and is very important to producing quality findings (Crotty, 1998).

Research does not take place as an individual act but is conducted within a broader social context (Sparkes, 1992). In the case of this project I am influenced, in the main, by the social contexts of both the outdoor education and teaching communities. As a researcher I also arrive to undertake this project with a distinct personal belief system, based on experiences gained throughout life. This project is interpretive by nature and centred around the field of outdoor education. The selection of an interpretive research paradigm leads to the use of appropriate methods and techniques for research, in this case a method known as Photo-Elicitation Interview.

### Qualitative research

Before talking about the actual research method it is advantageous to look more closely at the research methodology. Qualitative research deals with what is hard to count and often based around social phenomena (Locke, Silverman, & Spirduso, 1998). While there are many different approaches to qualitative research they share an interest in a deeper understanding of the research object or event. Qualitative research methods try to discover new hypotheses rather than testing assumptions taken from known theories; they explore new phenomena and describe them intensively and from different perspectives (Neuman, 2005). There are several prominent approaches in qualitative methodology, such as grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, hermeneutics, phenomenology, or action

research. According to Scholl (2008) there are some common aims of these research methodologies:

1. Qualitative methodology seeks to gain an understanding of the social world.
2. All knowledge and the process of gaining it are context-bound and relative to this context. The researcher's methods and tools for gaining knowledge are not considered neutral but establish, develop, and affect the research context.
3. Research outcomes can be characterised as being dynamic knowledge in an epistemological sense; that is the research methods have to be open, flexible, and adapt to the research question(s).
4. The procedure of qualitative research is primarily inductive with the aim of the study being to gain a better and deeper understanding of the research issue.

There are various characteristics of qualitative research which make it ideal for use in this thesis. Firstly it is holistic in nature, looking more to understand a social phenomenon rather than to establish how it differs from other social contexts or situations. According to Scholl (2008) qualitative research is advantageous because it is case orientated and in this thesis this is limited to a specific occurrence which has the aim of understanding PRE as an alternative approach. Secondly qualitative research is field orientated with the field being the natural setting. This is especially appropriate for this thesis because a PRE trip is not something that can be studied anywhere but in its natural settings in the field. Typically in qualitative research there is considerable time spent by the researcher working within the context of the related field (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2010). Thirdly qualitative research is descriptive with the written results often containing quotations to illustrate and substantiate the findings. This also fits well with my thesis, especially as there are photographs and interview comments used within the results to support my findings and discussion. Finally qualitative research is interpretive by nature, it is attuned to the fact that research is a researcher-subject interaction and that it is concerned with the different meanings that actions and events carry for different members (Hennink et al., 2010).

The purpose of all qualitative research is in understanding some part of the human experience (Donalek, 2005). Within this broad paradigm of understanding, research questions guide the researcher to particular research methods. Prominent methods in qualitative methodology are participant observation, in-depth interviews, narrative interviews, qualitative content analysis, discourse analysis, conversation analysis, and social scientific hermeneutics (Neuman, 2005).

There are some common weaknesses of qualitative methodology (Scholl, 2008):

1. Excessive subjectivity in observations
2. Imprecise language in descriptions
3. Vague descriptions of the research design
4. Unwieldy and voluminous reports
5. Cost and time overrun
6. Un-ethical intrusion into personal lives

According to (Scholl, 2008) there are also significant strengths to qualitative research, such as being holistic and emphasising contexts which the research has taken place in. This is important for my thesis because I am interested in the students' perspectives within the context of the PRE trip. Secondly qualitative research is beneficial because of the strong commitment to descriptions of teaching that it allows. This thesis takes place within the context of outdoor education and teaching, therefore a research approach that has a commitment to describing the teachings of PRE will allow me to establish the appropriateness of this as an alternative teaching pedagogy. The third reason to use qualitative research is in the opportunity to get the most from field-work interpretations. By attending the trip as an observer I hoped to gain the most value of any interpretations which I could get from the trip and students on it. Finally the use of qualitative research enhances the utility of using PRE in applied practice within education. This is important because while my main aim is to complete this thesis, I am also interested in the application any learning from this research will have for outdoor education.

While there are many qualitative research methods there are two major types; participant observation and in-depth interviewing (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). There is information gathered for this thesis by observation but it is intended to

only provide context for the in-depth interviews which are to be the primary source of data generation. The next section will discuss the use of qualitative interviewing and why this was chosen for this thesis.

## Qualitative Interviews

The qualitative interview is used in a broad range of qualitative research projects. It is used in case studies, in action research, in grounded theory studies, and in ethnographies. Rubin and Rubin (2012) comment that qualitative interviews are like night goggles, “permitting us to see that which is not ordinarily on view and examine that which is looked at but seldom seen” (p. vii). Myers and Newman (2007) suggest that the qualitative interview is the most common data gathering tool in qualitative research. Qualitative interviewing is not simply gathering spoken information from participants, it should also include observation of body language and verbal clues (Marshall & Rossman, 2010). This is important for this thesis as gathering extra information, aside from the interview data is crucial to providing context to allow me to make my own interpretations. A qualitative research interview is a shared journey. The resulting description is not simply the student's elicited recall of experiences on the trip, but a co-created work emerging from the interaction between researcher and participant (Donalek, 2005).

According to Fontana and Frey (2000) there are three main types of qualitative interviews:

1. **Structured interview.** In a structured interview there is a complete script which is prepared beforehand. There is no room for improvisation. These types of interviews are often used in surveys where the interviews are not necessarily conducted by the researcher.
2. **Unstructured or semi-structured interview.** In an unstructured or semi-structured interview there is an incomplete script. The researcher may have prepared some questions beforehand, but there is a need for improvisation. The interviewer is usually the researcher.
3. **Group interview.** In a group interview two or more people are interviewed at once by one or more interviewers. This type of interview can be structured or unstructured.

For this thesis I chose to use semi-structured interviews. Traditionally the practise of conducting semi-structured interviews was that interviewers were expected to refrain from sharing information about themselves and to restrict themselves to asking questions and providing probes, in order to avoid biasing the research process (Knox & Burkard, 2009). However, recent literature has redefined the interview process as a more active and co-constructed interaction (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). The strength of the interviewer-participant relationship is perhaps the single most important aspect of a qualitative interview (Adler & Adler, 1998). It is through this relationship that all data is collected and data validity is strengthened (Kvale, 1996). My prior relationship as a teacher at the same school the students came from was an important aspect when thinking about qualitative interviewing. Previous contact with students as well as attending the trip as an observer helped with forming more effective relationships, especially with those who would be doing the actual interviews. In addition, the quality of this relationship affects students' self-disclosure, including the depth of information they may share about their experience of the PRE trip (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

In using open-ended qualitative interview questions as many details as possible are gathered, and allows for the students to answer from their own point of reference (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982). This is important for this thesis because of the primary aim to ascertain student perspectives. The interview process was designed to allow students the opportunity to express their opinions and talk about their experiences on the PRE trip. The same questions were asked of each student but room was left to pursue in more depth particular areas that were of interest (C. Hill et al., 2005). The structure in semi-structured interviews serves as a guide, a foundation on which the interview is built but one that allows creativity and flexibility to ensure that each student's story was fully uncovered (DiCicco - Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

As with all research methods qualitative interviews are not without their potential pitfalls and problems. Some of the potential issues with semi-structured interviews are (Myers & Newman, 2007):

1. Artificiality of the interview - The qualitative interview involves talking to someone who is often a complete stranger; it involves asking students to

give or to create opinions under time pressure. This issue is less of a concern in the case of this project because as a teacher at the school the students came from I was known to the students before the trip and of course attending the trip as an observer gave me more chance to develop a relationship with students.

2. Lack of trust - As the interviewer can often be a stranger, there is likely to be a concern on the part of the interviewee with regard to how much the interviewer can be trusted. This issue is also less of a concern because of my situation of being known to students. However the nature of my role as teacher and researcher could have brought about other trust issues. Mainly that of a potential abuse of the power dynamic that exists within schools of teacher and student.
3. Lack of time - The lack of time for the interview may mean that the data gathering is incomplete.
4. Constructing knowledge – Interviewers may not realise that they are actively involved in the construction of the data (Fontana & Frey, 2000). This is especially pertinent with the power dynamic that exists as a teacher and student. During the interview students and teacher/interviewer are constructing knowledge and this could have been influenced by the power relationship that exists. Donalek (2005) supports this by commenting that distribution of power between the researcher and participant is a subject of much discussion.
5. Ambiguity of language – this is related to interviewing adolescent males. I have found that they often have a ‘language of their own’ and this can be very ambiguous or hard to understand. In reading the interview comments in the research findings those who are not familiar with this language may find it hard to understand what students have said.

My approach for this thesis was influenced by my reading on ethnographic fieldwork. Researching with an ethnographic sensibility allowed me to enter into deeper discussions with students in the interview process because I was familiar with the field trip under investigation (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007). This approach appealed to me because it provided a context for the interviews that would later be conducted. The focus of this thesis is on the experiences of students when introduced to a different pedagogical approach for an outdoor

education trip. Thus an ethnographic lens allowed me to not just observe student behaviour, but to experience the culture that emerged from this particular research trip. An ethnographic sensibility appealed because it allowed me to attend the trip in order to experience and better understand PRE as a pedagogical approach, not just from a research perspective but also from the viewpoint of a teacher.

## Method

I have chosen to use the Photo-Elicitation Interview (PEI) method for this study because of the age of the participants. Photo-elicitation interviews are part of a wider group of visual research methods used in sociology, social psychological and education studies (Banks, 2002). The PEI method is an adaptation of the traditional in-depth research interview. It was first described by Collier (1967) and has been used to conduct research in many areas, for example education, community health, psychology and sociology (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; C. Clark, 1999; M. Collier, 2001; Loeffler, 2005). Photographs can be seen as tangible images which are the medium through which visual research methods can show understanding of the social world (E. Smith, 2008). The use of photographs to record experiences is seen as highly attractive to adolescents (E. Smith et al., 2012). The photographs provided a different and unique way for participants to communicate experiences from the research trip. The participants in this research project were aged between 16 and 18 years of age and come from an all-boys secondary school. Young males often find it hard to communicate their experiences, especially in a formal setting of an interview (E. Smith et al., 2012). It was hoped that the use of photographs from the trip would be a more effective way to engage and encourage students to talk about their experiences. While looking at the photographs of the trip both researcher and student were able to share the experience and create a shared understanding of that experience (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). This enabled me to better interpret those experiences, which are seen as a crucial component of ethnographic research (Sparkes, 1992). Another benefit of this approach is the improvement in the validity of the research. A shared understanding of trip experiences, through the photographs enabled me to comment on the data with more confidence and validity (Reason & Rowan, 1981). The use of photographs in the interview process helped participants to:

1. Stimulate and refresh memories of the trip (Loeffler, 2005).

2. Allow me to hear about and see visual cues to parts of the trip that I was not privy to (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).
3. Show the reality the student perceived from their perspective (J. Martin & Martin, 2004).
4. Reflect on experiences that were ‘triggered’ by the photographs but not directly related to them (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

Previous research has shown limitations and difficulties in conducting research with children and adolescents (Adler & Adler, 1998; Thorne, 1993). Interviewing children and adolescents is seen as especially problematic according to C. Clark (1999) who commented on the following challenges:

- The level of linguistic communication
- The cognitive ability of participants
- The setting of questions and answer in the interview situation
- The power dynamics of an adult interviewing an adolescent

The use of photographs as central to the interview process can mitigate these challenges by providing participants with a clear and tangible prompt. This is especially so with the male students of this research project as they find the use of an object (the photographs) to talk about their experiences, far more comfortable than a ‘sharing of feelings’. According to Clark-Ibanez (2004) the use of PEI produces data that goes beyond that normally gathered from an oral interview. The participants are able to reflect on related but indirect associations with the photographs themselves, and this process allows more meaning from the photographs than otherwise may have been uncovered in face-to-face interviewing. The images in the photographs don’t contain new information, but allow meaning to be triggered for the students in the research (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). This is of significant benefit to this thesis as one of the central tenets of PRE is the ability to trigger student’s prior knowledge and experiences.

Another important benefit to PEI is in the ability to capture experiences of participants in the research. This research project is specifically interested in the experiences of the students on the trip. The photographs are not the focus of this project; instead it is the meaning and significance attributed to the image by the students that is of interest to me (Carlsson, 2001; Pink, 2001). The use of PEI

provides an insight into the experiences of participants from their viewpoint as it is concerned with the subjective meaning of the images taken by them (Clark-Ibanez, 2004).

According to J. Collier and Collier (1986) the images used in this process can be taken by either the participant or the researcher to stimulate a conversation between the two parties. The main benefit of this approach is to redefine the power relationship between the two parties, because the interview focus is on the photographs rather than the research participant (Harper, 2002). This is of significant benefit to this thesis as I am a teacher at the secondary school which the students come from. Within any school there is an established power dynamic between a teacher and student. To gain quality, in-depth data from the interview process the traditional power dynamic that exists between a teacher and a student needs to be reduced as much as possible and PEI enables this to happen (Harper, 2002).

There is nothing inherently interesting about photographs; they only act as a point of communication between researcher and participant (Clark-Ibanez, 2004). It is important to keep in mind that the photographs are not the main focus of the PEI method; instead they provide a means to facilitate the actual interview process. In the case of this research the photographs provided an indication of the student's experiences throughout the research trip.

As with all research methods in use, there are weaknesses in PEI that need to be considered. Photography is a socially regulated activity and not everything that can be photographed will be, which can have an impact on the nature of the data that is produced (Harrison, 2004). Adolescents are more likely to take photographs as a tourist would rather than document the activities (Harrison, 2004). This will mean they may record the 'happy, sunny weather' experiences and not the times when things are hard or not so nice. Generally the content of photographs associated with the trip rarely included reference to negative experiences. In their research into adolescent experiences of an outdoor education camp E. Smith et al. (2012) found the majority of the images taken were social in nature for example in portrayal of people, friends, families. They also mentioned that in the absence of specific direction students did not voluntarily take images of aspects of camp they did not like.

Another potential weakness of the PEI methodology could exist in the tension between those students participating in the research and those who are not, as for logistical reasons only four students attending the research trip participated in the PEI. Those students not participating in the research could have influenced the choice of image taken by those who were involved. In the research by E. Smith et al. (2012) it was noted that some students had ‘surprise’ photographs on their cameras that they had been unaware of and many took photographs when directed to by non-participants, even if they did not want to.

The choice of content to be included in photographs can be problematic because of the desire to self-censor on the part of the participant (E. Smith et al., 2012). As with other similar self-reporting data collection methods the act of self-censorship remains a problem (E. Smith et al., 2012). Choices such as what to take a photograph of and when to take them can impact the data gathered. With regard to this particular project the nature of the researcher’s role as teacher of the students could have also impacted on the choices made. Students could have chosen what to, and what not to, take photographs of knowing that it will be later seen by me.

On a more practical level potential weaknesses in the PEI methodology also need to be considered. The cheap disposable cameras used might not have worked as intended and neither the students nor I would know this until the trip is over and the photographs had been developed. The cameras were not waterproof or built to be used in the outdoor environments they were subjected to. Not only could damage have been done to the cameras, but the inability to use them in certain situations could have impacted on the types of photographs taken. These limitations may have resulted in students not having taken photographs because the cameras were not waterproof or had poor flash ability.

## **Participants**

The participants of this research project came from the year 12 students in the outdoor education class at the College where I teach. The College is an all-boys high school with a religious affiliation which is located in an urban setting of a city in New Zealand. This class was chosen because they were new into the outdoor education programme for 2013. Another reason for choosing this class was the structure of the current outdoor education programme which can be more

easily adapted to a PRE approach for the research trip. There were 31 students (consisting of 26 year 12 and 5 year 13 leadership students) which are divided into two classes that is based on a mixture of Achievement and Unit Standard credits at level two in the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) (NZQA, 2013). Students within the classes came from a variety of ethnic, socio-economic and academic back grounds.

The research trip was voluntary and had no assessment criteria attached to allow students to choose their own level of participation. Approval for this study had been given by the Rector of the college and ethical approval had been granted by The University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. All students were invited to participate in the research project and supplied with information sheets and consent forms about both the trip and the research project. The research project consent forms were handed into the school secretary who selected four participants to be involved. Two remaining consent forms were kept by the secretary in case one of the original four decided to not attend the trip, or to pull out of the research project. In order to make the selection of students as random as possible the college secretary placed the names of all students who wished to be part of the project in a 'hat'. The first four names drawn out were those selected to be involved in the research project. Then two more names were drawn as the back-up participants.

At the start of the research trip instructions were given on the use of the cameras to the four participants. Expectations regarding appropriate use of the cameras while on the trip were also outlined. To provide some direction for the students on what to take photographs of participants were told the following hypothetical scenario (adapted from E. Smith et al., 2012):

“Pretend you are going to show your family and friends what it was like to go on this trip. I am interested in what this trip was like from your view point. These photographs may be of anything you like, as long as they show what this trip was like for you.”

Advice was given on the pacing of taking photographs so that all parts of the trip could be covered over the three days. No other direction was given regarding what to and not to take photographs of.

## Interviews

The photo-elicitation interviews were conducted in the second week following the trip. The film from the disposable cameras was developed immediately after the trip and interview times arranged with the students according to their availability and the occurrence of appropriate outdoor education classes. To minimise any preconceived ideas I did not view the photographs before the interviews. All the interviews were recorded using an iPad with a recording application.

In following the PEI research method the interviews followed a semi-structured approach going over the photographs to review the trip, with the photographs being used as the central element of the review. There was no formal interview schedule; instead students choose the photograph and the order in which they would talk. Traditional interview skills of listening carefully to students narratives of photographs and prompting them to expand on those narratives were used.

The interviews were arranged into three stages (adapted from E. Smith et al., 2012) and conducted by the researcher. Stage one of the interview was an opportunity for the student and I to view the photographs as neither of us had previously viewed them. Stage two saw the student spread the photographs out and provide a commentary or story about each one; the order was determined by the student. If needed the student was prompted by questions like “tell me about this photograph”, “what is happening in this photograph” and “tell me why you choose this photograph”.

The third stage of the interview was semi-structured and required the students to select five photographs to match/talk about each of the five written statements below (adapted from E. Smith, 2008):

- ‘This is my favourite photograph of the trip because....’
- ‘This photograph from the trip makes me feel....because....’
- ‘This photograph of ....shows what the trip was like for me best because....’
- ‘What I liked most on the trip was....because....’
- ‘What I liked least about the trip was....because....’

This stage is placed at the end of the interview process to prevent the semi-structured nature of the questions from influencing the student's earlier more open discussion in stage two. The five statements were adapted from the work of E. Smith (2008) so they would relate to the aims of this research project, concerning student perspectives of a place-responsive outdoor education trip. The statements were kept open-ended and unrelated to the aims of the research into place-responsive education to gain unsolicited comments from students. At the conclusion of the interviews the students were given a set of the photographs to keep, with the remaining set kept by the researcher for use in the thesis and possible future publications.

As well as the PEI the researcher organised and attended the place-responsive trip. The purpose of this was two-fold. First to allow the researcher to observe the students and record those observations which would later be used to provide context for the interviews. Secondly the opportunity for the researcher to discuss with other staff and evaluate the effectiveness of specific activities within the programme, because this trip will be repeated in the following years as part of the overall outdoor education programme. The research trip was based on five key principles which are adapted from Wattchow and Brown (2011), for more detail and explanation of these principles see the previous literature review section on PRE.

- Being present in and with a place
- The power of place-based stories and narratives
- Apprenticing ourselves to outdoor places
- The presentation of place experiences
- Creation of and strengthening of community

I transcribed the audio-recordings of the interviews then analysed them using a hermeneutic approach (Arnold & Fischer, 1994). Within hermeneutics research two components exist; data production and data analysis (Patterson, Williams, Watson, & Roggenbuck, 1998). In the case of this thesis the interview data was analysed using a hermeneutics approach which allowed for an exploration of individual students interviews at an idiographic level to help identify themes which could then be meaningfully organised, interpreted and presented (Patterson

et al., 1998). Studying interviews at an ideographic level allowed for observations of the minute details within the interviews to then help construct an overall picture of not just each interview but the four interviews as a collective. One of the main reasons for this approach was to help understand the personal experiences of students on the trip which could then be used to reflect broader cultural views (Thompson, Pollio, & Locander, 1994). This approach fitted with my desire to understand student experiences and then be able to make possible connections with the broader views of the outdoor community.

After reading the interview data several times a preliminary understanding was gained and common themes identified, which was then used to investigate and further research relevant literature. It should be noted that due to my reading around the area of place-responsive education previously the themes did not simply emerge, my personal experiences and knowledge influenced the ideas, themes and concepts found in the interview data (Richards, 2009). I then read literature related to each potential theme to help me better understanding what that theme was actually about. The reason for looking at each potential theme in more depth was two-fold. First the literature provided a better understanding of each potential theme so I was able to re-read the students interviews to check the actual reliability of the original identified themes. Secondly reading literature related to each theme helped me to better understand the implications of all of the interviews as a whole (Patterson et al., 1998). Following this 'part-whole' analysis a table was generated to help develop a nomothetic (across individuals) understanding of the data beyond the unique experience of each individual (Patterson et al., 1998). Once a relatively stable set of themes was identified a sample of the original interviews and the identified themes was sent to my research supervisor to independently check. In the interests of time and simplicity only two of the interviews were sent to be checked. In consultation with my supervisor this led to a merging of the original themes into fewer and broader themes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

This thesis has been granted ethical approval by The University of Waikato Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. Information forms which

outline participant selection, requirements of participation in the research and trip details can be found in appendix A. Consent forms were required from students who wished to participate in the research, as well as from the College Rector. Copies of these can also be found in appendix B.

Potential harm to students from the research was identified as an ethical issue because of the perceived power relationship with me also being a teacher at the college the students attended. Potentially compounding this power relationship further was the fact I may have previously taught students who would attend the trip. To mitigate this issue I was on a study leave for the school year when the research was conducted so had no direct day to day influence over students; also the research trip was planned with no assessment attached to remove any fear that I could affect students gaining or not gaining grades because of their participation in the research.

The identification of students in photographs taken on the trip was another potential ethical issue. To minimise this potential issue students who are clearly identifiable in a photograph needed to give consent (via a written consent form) to this photograph being included in the research as well as any subsequent publications. Copies of this consent form are in appendix F. Students participating in the research were given a set of the photographs they took during the trip to keep. There was the potential for these photographs to cause harm (especially in social media) if used inappropriately. The College has a policy regarding electronic media which all students must sign; the participants of the research are bound by this overriding code of internet conduct.

The research trip was conducted in accordance with the Safety Action Plan (SAP) of the college outdoor education department. This SAP complies with the Education Outside The Classroom (EOTC) Safety Guidelines (2011) which are written by the Ministry of Education as a governing document for EOTC (Haddock et al., 2009).

Another possible area of conflict was with me planning and running the trip as well as being the researcher, this could have meant more significant emphasis placed on certain parts of the programme to signal to the participants of the research what I deem as more or less important. In order to maintain perspective and distance two contracted instructors were asked to carry out the bulk of the

instruction and student management, under my overall guidance. This meant I directed the programme, but had limited opportunities to directly influence students in what to take photographs of, and what parts of the programme I deemed more important than others. To further minimise the influence I had over the students during the trip students were encouraged to comment in the interview phase on anything they thought was important without actually knowing what the overall aims of the research were, thus reducing bias to 'please' the teacher and influence the data.

In conclusion an ethnographic research methodology known as Photo-Elicitation Interview (PEI) was used to gather data for this thesis. Ethnographic research methods such as PEI were ideally suited to this thesis because they allowed me to observe and become involved as a participant in the community of students and staff that attending the trip. The use of PEI as a data collection method was well suited because it allowed students to capture images that represented experiences they had on the PRE trip, and to then help the male adolescent students to discuss those experiences in more depth during the interviews.

### **Research trip**

To provide context a brief outline of the trip and the activities conducted are included. The trip was conducted over three days, starting and finishing at the college. A total of 10 students participated on the trip with one year 13 student and the remaining students all year 12. Staff consisted of an instructor and one teacher, both of whom were known to the students, plus myself as researcher. The staff had met before and I had outlined the trip programme and how this related to the research aims. I was responsible for the overall running of the programme, however the other two staff ran the individual activities throughout the trip so I could observe and take notes.

#### **Day 1:**

Students and staff met at school for an introduction to the trip and expectations on behaviour were outlined.

- Wild food trail: students walked to a nearby park tasted and collected various vegetables and herbs, as well as being told what they could be

used for. This happened in a 90min walk from school to a prominent lookout over the city.

- Story time: while looking out over the city students were told a Māori myth about a Taniwha that had formed the surrounding harbour and topography.
- Local food challenge: students were given money and told to walk to a supermarket in town to purchase the ingredients for cooking the evening meals. Students were given 90mins to buy all the ingredients they needed and were instructed to only buy local or New Zealand made product. When students returned a discussion was held about local food and food miles.
- Sailing: students next moved to a sailing club in the city to receive instruction on how to sail a yacht. They had a 30min classroom session on safety and sailing basics before being kitted out for sailing. Students then sailed the yachts (with minimal input from yacht club instructors) across the harbour to a bay on the opposite side to the city which took 90mins.
- Tramping: students gathered their bags and walked for about 90mins to the overnight camping location. Along the way we stopped at a lookout to view the city we had just come from, and some stories about the WW1 defences that they city had built were told. About half way through the walk we left the track and used natural navigation to find our way to the campsite.
- Camp set-up: upon arriving at the campsite we took a look around and the students were split into groups responsible for different parts of the camp setup. The set up included a fire pit with wood gathered; tent fly's set-up; and a tarpaulin over the fire to create a central meeting area.
- Dinner prep: students had to cook for the group by using the open fire. Once again little instruction was given. Those not preparing dinner had free time. This took 3 hours from getting the fire going until eating
- Sit-spot: this activity required the students to pick a spot in the bush they could sit at and have some time alone to think and reflect. Upon return to the group students had to describe what they had heard and what it was like sitting in the bush in the dark for 20mins.
- Story-time: as a review for the day students had to tell a story that represented the highlight of their day.

## Day 2:

- Sit-spot: the day was started early with a return to their sit spot and a chance to observe their surroundings in the light of the day.
- Bush wander: we went on an exploration of the area with a wander through the bush. Each student took a turn at the front of the group leading wherever they wanted to go. They were encouraged to be creative, and adventurous with the route they led. This activity had no time frame, direction or end in mind, the group just wandered for about 2 hours.
- Rubbish: students had been given a rubbish bag to collect the rubbish so far on the trip. This was compared to the staffs rubbish bag and a discussion was held about the quality of food eaten and the amount of rubbish the students had collected in one day, a discussion was also held regarding the relative years each item would take to bio-degrade.
- Bare feet stroll: students took off their socks and shoes and were led on a short walk around the area, exploring the sensual feelings of going bare feet. 60mins
- Free-time for 90mins
- Dinner, sit spot and story time as night before

## Day 3

- Early morning sit spot as yesterday
- Breakfast and pack up camp site
- Mountain Biking: students biked along the Coast road to a historic lighthouse. We had lunch and a discussion about the light house
- Trip wrap up: students had a final sit-spot and story of the trip before getting back on the harbour ferry and returning to the school.

## Chapter Four: Results

This chapter highlights significant findings from the data gathered in the Photo-Elicitation Interviews (PEI). The chapter is structured around seven main themes that emerged from the student interviews. Student interview comments and a selection of the students' photographs are included to add context to the data.

### Theme 1: Stories

One of the consistent themes that emerged from the interviews was the value of stories during the research trip. Stories were told on the trip in three different applications, each with a distinctive intent and therefore outcome. Firstly stories were told in significant locations to help engage students and deliver knowledge, such as the following mentioned by a student.

*So the view from the top of Mt Vic, that was pretty cool ....your story was pretty cool about the Taniwha [Māori mythological creature]and just you could see how clear a day it was at the top, you could see everything.*  
[Interview 3]

This comment shows the potential benefit of using stories to help engage students at a specific location (in this case the top of Mt Victoria). On the top of Mt Victoria students gathered to lookout over the city, harbour and surrounding area. Here a Māori myth was told regarding a Taniwha (monster) and how it created the harbour and the surrounding formation of the land. The harbour is shaped like a fish hook and this was often referred to during the trip by instructors to help reconnect students with the place they were currently at, as well as where they had come from. Stories were also used to deliver knowledge at specific locations. For example student 2 mentioned.

*Umm, oh about the bunkers on the South Coast that only fired one shot, I didn't know that, it kind of sounds a bit funny that they put so much effort into something that never ended up being used.*

[Interview 2]

The information about the fortifications was delivered looking back towards the entry of the harbour a story was told to students about the bunkers that were built before the war to help defend the city. Instead of the students being told about the bunkers in terms of dates and times a story was told about only one shot having

been fired during the whole time the bunkers and guns were in use. The telling of a story is different from a simple oral recital of information. Stories are carefully chosen words which are intended to capture the attention of listeners, they comprise the need to translate not just knowledge but experiences and intuition into words and images that appeal to the intended ordinance (McDrury & Alterio, 2001). As the student later reflected during the interview, this story helped him to retain the knowledge about the bunkers in a more effective manner. This type of story is predetermined and is often more likely to result in reflective learning according to McDrury and Alterio (2001). During the trip these predetermined stories were used to deliver information about history, both European and Māori, as well as cultural and environmentally based narratives. The way a story is told reveals the tellers perceptions of the event and enables listeners to get a sense of who is involved and what roles they may have played. Stories are usually carefully located in time and place. Revealing what happened, how and why it happened, fills out the richness of the event (McDrury & Alterio, 2001). In the case of this particular story about the Taniwha it was crafted in a response to the place we visited on the trip; Mt Victoria. After constructing the initial trip route I visited places along the route to gather information about each location. Having visited the lookout on the top of Mt Victoria and being able to see the whole of the city and harbour I went in search of information that was related the location and what could be seen from there. From the information and knowledge gained I was able to craft a story which I hoped would engage students related to the Taniwha. This crafting of the story involved a sifting and sorting of a significant amount of gathered information to meet the needs of the audience it would be delivered to. The process of this sifting and sorting also lead to the inspiration to use that location and story as part of a metaphor to use throughout the trip as a constant link to remind students that they were indeed in familiar places for them in and around the city. In this way the predetermined stories of the Taniwha, and others, were used to capture students attention and encourage engagement with places they visited.

The second application of stories on the trip was in the daily story-telling session at the end of the day. This application of story-telling was included in the programme to encourage student reflection and to encourage the role reflection plays in education by engaging students to learn more about themselves (McDrury & Alterio, 2001). Sitting around the fire students were asked to tell their story of

the day to the rest of the group. This method is similar to review or debrief sessions commonly used during many outdoor education trips, however on the research trip the context of telling a story, or story-time, was used instead. In the following interview comment the student remembered their story told during this story-telling session.



FIGURE 1: EEL CAUGHT DURING FREE TIME

*Umm they were down there [Gollans Stream] for a couple of hours trying to get eel's and stuff, I'm not really that keen on seafood or fishing or anything, but I thought it was pretty cool they managed to catch something. I would probably have a go at it but give up after an hour and a half it just doesn't interest me to keep throwing the hook at something that doesn't want to get it. Umm but yeah, it was pretty cool that they managed to catch it and gut it and cook it and it was still wriggling around even when it was headless.... Yep I tried a bit it just tasted like fish, fish and chips fish to me. I just thought it was cool that we could come out in the bush and we made our own fire and we made our own hooks and stuff and managed to get our own food.*

*[Interview 2]*

Story-time was used to share students' experiences, such as that mentioned above, and allowed students to encompass more holistic perspectives, value emotional

realities, make sense of experiences and encouraged self-review (Alterio, 2003). While the student did not participate in the catching the eel in the above story he was able to share in this experience and the story-time allowed him to express his feelings and make sense of the experience in front of his peers.

Frequently these stories are often more spontaneous in nature and the motivation to tell a story comes when students experience emotions such as anger, frustration, elation, pride, sadness and joy. Spontaneous stories are therefore an ideal teaching and learning tool because they take seriously the need for students to make sense of their experience's (Bishop & Glynn, 2003).

The last application of stories on the trip was in the less formal chats or discussions held with students during the trip. This less formal story time while spontaneous in nature was also a deliberate ploy during the trip. The establishment of a central fire pit, with a tarpaulin covering it, positioned in the middle of the tents was instigated to provide a location for students to relax and be involved in story-telling in a less formal manner. There was a concerted effort by the staff on the trip to sit by the fire and tell personal stories from previous experiences. As one student comments:

*Oh I kind of enjoyed the stories I just kind of, it provided some insight into what was around us, and it was kinda cool just listening and relaxing and hearing what you guys [instructors] had to say.*

*[Interview 2]*

Story-telling when it is used in a thoughtful, reflective and formalised manner has significant possibilities for teaching and learning (McDrury & Alterio, 2001). During the trip stories were used in a variety of ways to help students to share and process their experiences as well as encourage self-reflection and value emotional realities. The importance of using stories to help with connection to place has been discussed elsewhere (Baker, 2005; Stewart, 2008). It is important to remember that in this research trip stories were deliberately used to help students connect to place and to provide a sense of community where students can begin to make sense where and who they are (Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

## Theme 2: Exploration of local places

In place-responsive education the use of local places to recreate and explore is a central tenet. The use of local places during the research trip allowed students to be present in and with a place, prompting students to connect with the places they visited so that their engagement extended beyond simply knowing the names of places, to include a personal approach of relating to the land. In planning the trip consideration was given to two strategies to allow students to explore local places. The first strategy was to visit local places that students may have been near on a regular basis but not taken the time to explore. This strategy was based on the desire to show students what was essentially in their back yard that they may have not been aware of. In the interviews students commented on the surprise and pleasure they gained from not taking a van and driving off to a location, but rather simply taking a back pack and walking away from the College.

*It was pretty cool because it [the start of the trip] was in walking distance from school and you could just come out of all this like craziness of Kilbirnie [suburb which the College is in] and just jump straight into the bush. And it just started to become quiet....*

*[Interview 3]*

*Yeah I wasn't expecting to set off like that...umm I thought it was pretty cool I was expecting us to drive, like I was thinking like Kaitoke or something that was fairly close by, and then when we just walked off I just really had no idea what was going to happen.... so it's kind of weird just walking off from school... it was quite enjoyable though.*

*[Interview 2]*

Another component of the strategy to explore local places was in the use of activities to slow students down and allow them time to actually gain a relationship with that place. As the following quote suggests:

We cannot come to know a place by rushing in and rushing out. I imagine their spirits are refreshed and their time is quiet pleasant. I know they learn a great deal. But what do they see? I believe there are some things that can only be seen if you stay awhile. (Meyers, 1989, p. 112)

An example of one of these activities used to promote this relationship with the land was on the bush walk away from the College at the start of the trip. Students were shown and encouraged to taste wild foods that were available as we meandered along the track. As the following interview comment suggests:

*A lot of good times, to start off with the walking through Mt Vic with, just picking up the greens the grasses and all the natural vegetables, you know that Steve [instructor] showed us...it was just good to know what you can see in your back yard.*

*[Interview 3]*

The interview comment and photograph below are other examples of when an activity (the walk up and over to our eventual campsite) was designed to help students to connect to the places they had visited. At the location in the picture students not only took a rest from the walking but also had stories told to them relating to what could be seen from the lookout.



FIGURE 2: LOOKOUT ON WALK UP AND OVER TO GOLLANS STREAM

*...just having a rest, you could see the whole of Wellington, just everything really, it was really, really cool. You can see how nice the weather was and how hot the sun was....but the spot had awesome views...the whole of Wellington, just the harbour with the sun like glowing on it, you could see*

*everything like glistening. You could see way over the other side of the harbour and you could see Mt Vic were we started, went to first*

*[Interview 3]*

The second strategy used to help students connect to place was to show them what was available to them recreationally so they could be encouraged to recreate later in those places. As the following comment suggests providing recreation opportunities close to home for students with limited resources, skills and transport choices can really promote a connection to place.

*And just like seeing all the stuff you can do around Wellington that is not really out of the way at all. So that's like just showing myself around my new home and all of that...because we are moving out to Eastbourne to rent for a little bit, so that's close to Butterfly Creek [where the research trip camp was based] and I reckon I will go in there to just get out of the city for a while*

*[Interview 1]*

The idea that exploration of local places is engaging for students is substantiated by similar research conducted by Brown (2012) who commented that some students recognised that this might be the start of an on-going relationship with places with which they were not familiar, and that given the accessibility of the places that it would be possible to return on other occasions. An exploration of local places is not a journey away to remote destinations, guided by modern technology and distractions, but rather a journey to allow students a chance to gain a sense of belonging to the land (Baker, 2005). According to Beames and Ross (2010) assisting students to understand more about the world which they live in is arguable one of the educator's primary tasks. As the above students comments suggest it would seem that the PRE trip allowed them to see familiar places in a different light.

### Theme 3: Slow travel encourages a different perspective



FIGURE 3: SAILING IN THE WELLINGTON HARBOUR

*It was a bit weird [sailing in Wellington Harbour] umm like I have kayaked into the Island in Island Bay, and you don't really recognise it from there. Wellington kind of coming down the motorway is a similar perspective from being at Petone [suburb in Wellington] or something so you have kind of seen that angle before, but not that much; it's a bit weird looking at it from that angle*

*[Interview 2]*

Another of the dominant themes to emerge from the interviews was the slow travel methods used and how that allowed for different perspectives to form. As the above comment suggests sailing on the harbour provided a different perspective for a student who is familiar with other aspects of the place they call home. Instead of travelling by car, van or bus the PRE trip allowed students to encounter places at a slower pace which then enabled a different perspective to unfold. On the trip students walked, sailed across the harbour and went mountain biking around the Pencarrow Peninsula allowing them to gain access to places they may have already visited but rushed through (Brown, 2012). This slow travel allowed students to pause or dwell in places for more than a fleeting moment and,

therefore, encourage them to become attached and receive meaning from that place (Payne & Wattchow, 2008; Wattchow & Brown, 2011).

This pedagogical approach of slow travel was emphasised by a number of activities which were mentioned by those interviewed as highlights of the trip. One of these activities was a slow ‘wander’ through the bush, leaving from the campsite, with no set destination or time frame attached to it. Students took turns leading the group in a type of follow the leader activity. No instructions or restrictions were placed on the students as to the direction they could go. Students commented in their interviews that this mode of slow travel really added a different perspective to the trip.

*...we just disappeared into the flax grass stuff, you ended up walking through it and the person in front just disappears...it changed heaps, we went from all these leaves on the ground and all rocky, and then we clambered into some like wet stuff and then we went through some massive maze of vines, which was quite crazy to navigate. And we came down to the creek and followed that for a bit, just beside the creek, and that was a bit damp, and that came into lots of green stuff like ferns and stuff*  
[Interview 3]

*We went for a walk in the bush with Steve [instructor] leading at first, and then each time someone else would go forward and lead the walk. And this bit was [in photo] I'd just finished my leading, and this was a log that had fallen over, and I saw it and there was like an entrance way so I crawled under the log. And it went along a bit and then when it came out there was like these vine things hanging over it, and it looked real cool when people were coming out of it*

[Interview 1]

These comments show that the slow travel methods allowed students to really encounter places in a different manner and provided students with a different perspective. Instead of just going walking through the bush and not paying attention to their surroundings this ‘slow wonder’ allowed the students to really engage with the land. One interesting point to note from these interview comments is the highly descriptive language that is used, as related to the first

theme of story-telling, students are telling a very emotive and vivid story of their slow journey through the bush.

#### **Theme 4: Senses to encourage connection to place**

The five senses of sight, smell, touch, hearing and taste can be used to enhance learning opportunities in outdoor experiences. Outdoor educators, with their preference for learning about the outdoor world experientially, have a powerful advantage over other subject areas to awaken long dormant sensory experiences of nature, and use those experiences to learn (Auer, 2008). To encourage students to connect to place in a more emotive and sensual manner is central to developing place-responsiveness (Brown, 2012). During this research trip a significant effort was made to run a programme that would allow students to connect to the places visited with the use of the five senses. This deliberate programming called for two different strategies to be used. The first strategy was to give students the chance to connect to places by using all of their senses. As can be seen from the following comments connection through the use of their senses was a particularly dominant theme.

*Yeah that was one of the highlights too because it just felt way different to anything I have ever really done before. Like how Steve [instructor] said you could feel things around you, it was like that and I guess when you are living in the city you don't ever kind of see what your body can do I guess, so that was good*

*[Interview 4]*

One of the activities that were mentioned by those interviewed as a very real sensory experience was the barefoot, blindfolded walk through the bush, back to camp at night, with only the sound of a pot lid being struck to follow.

*So we went out into the bush in just shorts with no shoes or shirts or anything. And then Steve [instructor] gave us the blindfolds and he put us in a line, then he went back to the camp and started beating on the pot lid, and we just had to make our way through the bush following the sound of the pot lid...I liked feeling like in touch with the bush and stuff, and like not being*

*able to see it sort of made your feel a part of it, you would just feel something and recognise that as a tree*

*[Interview 1]*



FIGURE 4: NIGHT WALK WITH NO SHOES

The second strategy used on the trip was to use the exploration of senses as a learning opportunity because this effected how places where encountered by students. This notion of experiential experiences is an important one within outdoor education. In its simplest form, experiential learning means learning from experience or learning by doing. Experiential education first immerses students in an experience and then encourages reflection about that experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking (Lewis & Williams, 1994).

*One of the major memoires I had was seeing as we went bare foot, I decided to go bare foot for the rest of the day, and just lying by the fire with my feet by the fire, they got like pretty burnt so then I was walking on the bush and stuff and they got real sensitive. It was just like I have not got very tough skin*

*[Interview 1]*

In the above quote an example of experiential learning is evident and the advantages of sensory perception in outdoor education can be seen directly through the students comments about going bare feet for the day (Auer, 2008). Using our senses to connect to a place is a dynamic and personal way to assign value to that place. Sensing place is the continuous development of a personal connection to a particular place that evolves from spending time there (Baker, 2005). While not exclusively the domain of PRE the results of this research suggest that experiential sensory experiences are a significant benefit to come from a place-responsive pedagogy. The student's interview comments suggest a link between activities that require the use of the five senses in experiential learning such as this:

*Umm I realised it was actually quite helpful having the blindfold on because you kind of see stuff when you are in the dark, and what's that and if you had your eyes open you would be looking for stuff and stuff you weren't looking for would jump out at you and freak you out.... Umm just like using my feet a lot since I couldn't see the ground in front of me I kind of had to feel, like at one point I had to walk over a little fallen log and it was only like that high off the ground, but I thought the ground was going up so I thought I could stand on the log and keep walking forward then I kind of curled my feet around it and realised it wasn't flat it was just a log. Umm so it was kind of, I had to listen to the drum the whole time to find out where to go and I was surprised how accurate I was and that I was following it, umm so it was kind of hands and feet*

*[Interview 2]*

As mentioned while experiential education is not the sole domain of PRE this research would suggest that use of place-responsive activities that involve sensory exploration are an effective way to teach students how they connect to places.

### **Theme 5: Opportunities provided by familiarity with the environment**

This theme suggests there are opportunities for students provided by familiarity; a familiarity with the environment as well as a familiarity with the activity being conducted in that environment. The visiting of local places on the research trip was based on the notion that having student's familiar with their environment provided more chances for a connection to develop (Baker, 2005). The following

photograph and related comment suggest this student was both familiar with the environment and the activity.



FIGURE 5: MOUNTAIN BIKING ALONG THE PENCARROW COAST ROAD

*Umm that's the view back to Wellington [looking at photograph] from I think that might be Devils gate there, I wasn't sure if we were far enough around to see it...it was like kind of typical New Zealand, Wellington rugged day... umm yeah that kind of sums up Wellington a bit...yeah just like the crazy sea and stuff that just goes everywhere and the sand in the middle of the road and stuff*

*[Interview 2]*

According to Vorkinn and Riese (2001) to improve an understanding of, or concern for the environment, students are best served by visiting that which is familiar to them. An attachment to a place involves care and concern for the place which implies that individuals with a strong familiarity to an area probably will oppose environmental degradation of that place. On an individual level, place attachment is expected to develop through personal experiences with the physical environment (Proshansky, Fabian, & Kaminoff, 1983).

*I have been on top of Mt Albert, where there is a bunker, and I have walked up there and its quite cool just to sit up there, and around in Miramar [suburb in Wellington] the Fort Balance I think, umm my brother has done stuff up there with cadets so I just went up there and explored the bunkers with my Dad...yeah so I have just played in and around them and they are pretty dark and covered in graffiti and smell like piss and stuff*

*[Interview 2]*

The above student comments show that familiarity with the environment and personal experience of the location has led to a connection to that place, and while it may be difficult to prove that this may lead to environmental action it is hoped that through this care for the environment may emerge.

Opportunities provided by prior knowledge of an activity can also help with gaining a familiarity with the environment. Students hold prior knowledge in many areas or domains when they go on a trip. This prior knowledge is a result of learning experiences that students already possess and demonstrate a wide variety of incoming knowledge, experience, and interest, and this diversity strongly influences what and how students will learn from their experiences while on a trip (Falk & Dierking, 2000). As the following comment suggests this student has prior knowledge of building shelters (an activity that students had to do on the trip with minimal input from the instructors) and this familiarity with the activity potentially allowed him time and space to connect with the place we were setting up camp not to be “freaked out” as he mentions because it was a new experience.

*I joined cadets when I was 13 and they do a lot of trips out into the bush and stuff.... Yeah! We went up a place called Harris Hill in Nelson and we made like survival shelters and stuff. And they played mind games with us in Nelson cause they liked to have a bit of fun. So they made us think that we were up there sleeping in our survival shelters with no like sleeping bags or anything, and no food. So we like made them real good, and then they gave us our bags in the end...it was like thinking that we were really going to be out here, and it freaked us out thinking okay we are actually going to stay out here the night*

*[Interview 1]*

This student's comment highlights the role that familiarity, both with the environment and the activities being undertaken, has played in the experiences had on the trip. That sense of familiarity provides a comfort to students which also more effectively allows learning to happen.

### **Theme 6: Development of community**

One of the themes, and also a potential benefit, of PRE is in the development of community, both within the group going on the trip and when the group is in contact with outside community agencies. Students on the trip formed a temporary community that fostered inclusivity, and this was highly valued from the student perspective (E. Smith, 2008). As the student comment below shows the activity to visit a local supermarket and gather the ingredients for cooking our evening meals helped to foster a sense of inclusivity as well as assist in the development of a sense of community within the group.

*Firstly we went off as a group and found all the vege's and stuff. Then we got to the meat and we had a little problem finding the right amount of meat so we made two groups, one to stay and try and get the meat while the other one went off and got all the other packet stuff.... It was easy with these guys because they actually listened not just wondered off somewhere*  
[Interview 3]

The trip was designed to ensure that students would feel as if they belonged to a community by including activities that required students to gain a sense of belonging, a sense of autonomy and self-control as well as a chance for social interaction. Students had responsibilities within the group such as buying the food, cooking for each other over the fire, setting up a certain part of camp - for example the tent fly to sleep under, the fire pit and wood collection. As the following comment shows this student valued other community members' skills:

*I helped tie the main rope [set up of tent fly] that went along and some of the pegs ... umm Tim and Andrew I think it was ... umm it was a bit hard finding a space to put it in the first place, and I didn't really know how to tie the knots but Tim did so, yeah*

[Interview 4]

Recent studies in the field of adventure education have centred on the sense of community that is nurtured when students share a sense of belonging (E. Smith et al., 2010). Outings, as brief as one day, have been shown to increase participants sense of belonging (Arnould & Price, 1993; Bannister, 1996). This sense of belonging is fostered when students feel valued and see that they have a part to play in the success of the community.

Another area of community development came from the emphasis within the programme of opportunities for members of the group to make their own choices. The following comments show that students noticed and appreciated these chances to have some control over their choices.

*....umm it's kind of nice being like in charge, because of year 7 & 8 camp you just do what you are told and you go to bed when you are told and do all that stuff and it's just controlled....Yeah like you suggested we should start dinner but you kind of left it down to us and you didn't say it was going to take three hours ....yeah it was nice to be able to decide, so like what you wanted to happen still ended up happening but it just felt like we had more control in the decision making process*

*[Interview 2]*



FIGURE 6: COMMUNAL FIRE PIT

Giving students choices before, during, and after a trip may enhance their feelings of self-determination and intrinsic motivation (Brooks & Young, 2011). The chance for students to have choice in a programme is not without risk, especially with teenage boys. The development of an effective community through an education programme is related to participants' perceptions of learning relevance and personal empowerment during the programme (Sibthorp & Arthur-Banning, 2004). Students on this PRE research trip were given, within boundaries, as much freedom to choose as was possible. Wherever possible students were given as little instruction and advice as was deemed necessary and the remainder of the decisions were left to the students to choose for themselves.

*And everything's at your own pace, like we didn't have dinner until 8 o'clock and that was fine and no one complained, umm you go to bed when you are tired and you eat when you are hungry and then you kind of just...yeah it was a lot more old school kind of than lunch is at 12:50, morning teas here, you go over here*

*[Interview 2]*

The social and interactive experience of the PRE trip provided an ideal opportunity for students to interact socially, both as individuals and within a group. In this situation students often described these social processes as a chance to bond or becoming closer with their peers (E. Smith, 2008).

*.... I just knew that everything was about to come to an end, so it just felt like, everything just felt like a good experience and then you came to the end and it felt like you just didn't want it to end. It signalled the end of the trip*

*[Interview 3]*

*....I quite enjoyed it, we just sat around talking, ate some nachos and just hung out, cause a lot of people on that trip I don't hang out with at school, so it was kinda nice getting to know them a bit more. Like I know who they are because they are at my school and I take classes with them, but I just don't really talk to them at lunch*

*[Interview 2]*

As the above comments suggest the PRE trip was beneficial in developing a sense of community with the students and staff. A PRE trip allows students to have experiences which promote a healthy community development. Students commented on the development of a sense of belonging, autonomy and social interaction provided by the PRE trip.

### **Theme 7: Positive experiences through personal challenge**

One of the most dominant themes to emerge from the interviews was the notion of positive personal challenges. The PRE trip programme deliberately tried to provide opportunities for students to have positive experiences through personal

challenges and to allow them to manage their own levels of risk. The interview comment and photograph below show an example of an activity that allowed students to personally challenge themselves without the need for a pursuit that has high levels of risk.

*...the sit spot we had done the night before I was really scared because I am not that great with the dark. But when we went out there [to do activity on the second night] I was like fine with the dark, I was quite excited and stuff and thinking this was pretty cool. And I got better with the dark and just accepted it, but yeah at the start I wasn't that cool and calm...*

*[Interview 1]*

Importantly, the quality of an experience is related to both the perceived challenges of the experience and the individuals perceived skill level in dealing with the challenge inherent in the experience (Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005).

*Well it was quite outside my comfort zone I've never done anything like that before....Like when he [Steve instructor] took our torches off us that was the big thing, like that was my way of finding my way back to the camp and he took it off me, umm so that was kind of the big thing of being out in the bush, like it was only 100 to 150m away from the camp but like we were facing a straight line to the camp but the track was all windy, so we had to go in a straight line to get back. Umm and yeah it was just quite weird*

*[Interview 2]*

In order to provide positive personal challenges three strategies were used when programming the PRE trip. The first strategy employed was to provide real-world challenges in which personal decisions could be made which would have real consequences for students, such as this comment made during one of the interviews.



FIGURE 7: ON WALK UP AND OVER TO GOLLANS STREAM

*....so I would have packed my bag better because I just kind of shoved some group gear in there and it was just a bit uncomfortable, so I would have packed better and I would have packed a lot lighter. Umm so that walk over the hill on the first day was fairly uncomfortable just because I didn't have my pack sorted....like my back was getting a bit sore with stuff poking into it, umm and it was a bit heavier than I probably would normally bring on a tramp*

*[Interview 2]*

This student's comments highlight the learning that is available when individual actions and experiences have real consequences. The programme had a significant emphasis on students getting the minimum instruction and direction needed to complete tasks. If the consequence of student action was not seen to cause significant risk then it was allowed to occur so that students could learn for themselves from their actions and decisions.

The second strategy used to create opportunities for positive personal challenges was in allowing students to manage their own levels of risk. There is a convincing case for moving away from outdoor programmes full of risky pursuit-driven activities, and instead advocating for more local, and broad adventures that involve placing responsibility firmly on the shoulders of the participants (Beames

& Ross, 2010; Brown & Fraser, 2009). Furthermore, taking responsibility for risk management and its consequences are fundamental means through which young people can perform a socially competent identity (Beames & Ross, 2010). On the first day of the trip students were given money to purchase food to cook an evening meal for everyone on the trip, including the staff. As the comment below shows this allowed students to manage their own risk, financially in regards to the money, and to take responsibility for the meal they would produce:

*Umm something [supermarket shopping] I had not really done before, and just getting all the different ingredients and going in and out of the isles, yeah...it was kind of hard to like work out the prices because we had only \$80, and we even went over that by \$3 so that was quite hard*

*[Interview 4]*

Finally students were given an opportunity to meet personal challenges in the structuring of the whole trip programme as a journey or adventure. The notion of going on a journey in the outdoors is not a new one. Educational theorist John Dewey (1938/1966) proposed educating students through a curriculum rich in real-life experiences and adventures. In PRE the concept of a journey, an exploration into the unknown is an important part of the pedagogy. Adventure journeys represent one aspect of outdoor education in that there is a desire to explore the unknown and return with new insights (Straker, 2004). As the following comment suggests students valued the notion of a journey and the mystery of often not knowing where they were going.

*....it felt like a never ending journey that kept on going. That was a good thing umm because we got to experience all these new things and the new things we haven't done around Wellington in your home town...it just flowed really nicely from one activity to another. And you weren't telling us what we would be doing next until we were just about to do the activity. And that added a sense of adventure, like you didn't know what was going to happen but you knew you were going to enjoy it*

*[Interview 3]*

The word 'explore,' comes to mind as a way to describe the process of journeying in PRE and fits well with the notion of student learning (Loynes, 1996). A journey

involves discovering something new whether it is mental or physical. Settings matter in education; we adapt our behaviour according to where we are (Straker, 2004). The wilderness is an important site for the adventurous journeys in outdoor education, but there are also other places to go which are more accessible and local which fit better with PRE.

*Yeah good thoughts, I enjoyed it a lot as a trip. I just liked getting out of school and stuff and doing some outdoorsy stuff. I learnt to like not knowing what was going on and stuff, like usually I like to know what is happening and what's next. Yeah I kind of accepted it because I thought well we are not going to get told stuff anyway so I might as well start enjoying not knowing and stuff. And it kinda got like cool thinking what's happening next the mystery and all that*

*[Interview 1]*

*...yeah kind of like not knowing what we were going to do next even though we didn't know what we were doing on the second day you kind of knew it was going to be close to the site [campsite]*

*[Interview 4]*

One of the more dominant themes to emerge from the interview data was that of positive experiences through personal challenges. The PRE trip was programmed with three strategies in mind, firstly to provide real-world challenges, secondly to allow students to manage their own levels of risk and finally to go on a journey or adventure into the unknown. The intention with all three strategies was to operate a trip that was responsive to the places students encountered and to remove the contested notion of risky pursuit-driven activities currently being used in outdoor education. Student's interview comments suggested the effectiveness of this approach for having positive experiences when focused on individual personal challenges.

This chapter has analysed the seven themes that emerged from the interview data. The seven themes were explained and discussed and used student interview comments, as well as some photographs, to provided context to the analysis. The following chapter takes these themes and provides a discussion of them.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The previous chapter presented the findings from the photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) and I will now turn my attention to the significance of these in regards to my research questions. In order to assist with the discussion of the research data this chapter has been structured into three parts. Part A addresses the main research objective to ascertain student perspectives of a place-responsive education (PRE) trip. Part B addresses the second research objective to ascertain if PRE is an appropriate pedagogy for senior level outdoor education in Secondary Schools in New Zealand, and discusses the results within the context of the current outdoor education literature, much of which was reviewed in Chapter Two. Finally Part C reflects on the use of PEI as a research method to investigate the outdoor experiences of young people.

This thesis was largely driven by a personal dissatisfaction with the traditional outdoor education pedagogy used in secondary schools in New Zealand. I decided to undertake an investigation into the emergence of place-responsive pedagogy to see if it would be an effective alternative to the pursuit driven approach used to achieve personal and social development outcomes that are commonly used in outdoor education within many secondary schools in New Zealand. Of particular interest to me was what my students would think of this change in approach. I also wanted to plan and operate a PRE trip to see for myself how this would work, to further help with my decision making processes for making possible changes to my programme in future years. Because I teach at an all-boys college the prospect of gaining quality in-depth interview data was identified early as a potential problem. So the use of photographs to elicit more quality in the interview process was an attractive proposition.

### Part A:

The primary objective of this thesis was to ascertain student perspectives of a place-responsive education trip. The findings would suggest the students' experiences of the PRE trip were positive. When analysing the interview comments seven themes emerged that signalled students supported a more place-responsive pedagogy. I will now turn attention to discussing how the research findings relate to the five principles of PRE discussed in chapter two. As a brief recap these principles called for students to be present in and with place; the use

of place-responsive stories and narratives; a need for students and staff to apprentice themselves to the outdoor places they would visit and the need to represent place experiences (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Additionally calling on the work of Beames and Atencio (2008) a focus on community was added to the four principles above. To provide a structure for this chapter the seven themes from the interview data will be discussed by using the five principles of PRE as a framework. This is done to link the literature, around PRE in chapter 2, with the practical applications found in the research.

### **Being in and present with place**

Being in and present with a place is a PRE principle that calls for students to develop a relationship with a place and become familiar and comfortable with that place. As Beames and Ross (2010) suggest helping students to understand more about the place in which they occupy is arguably one of the most important tasks of every educator. In order to do this student's first need to explore and become familiar with those places they occupy. The interview comments suggested that this was achieved with the emergence of three themes. The first of these was for students to explore local places, both those which had been previously visited and those that students may not have been aware of. Student's comments revealed the surprise and pleasure gained from visiting these local places. Another theme which emerged supporting the principle of being present in and with a place was that of the use of the senses to encourage a connection to the places. Throughout the trip activities were carried out which enabled students to use all of their five senses of touch, sight, smell, hearing and taste. One particular activity was mentioned a number of times in interviews which enabled students to engage those senses. This activity required students to walk barefoot and blindfolded through the bush at night with only the sound of a pot lid being struck to guide them back to camp. Students commented on how they needed to feel their way through the bush with only sound to guide them and that this enabled them to feel or feel connected to the bush they were in. In the case of PRE sense is not just about the physical senses, but is also about the felt sense of a place (Cameron, 2001). This is supported by Wattchow and Brown (2011) who comment that the student's whole body is the centre of learning, and that this cannot be separated from connections to place. Activities like this allowed the students to connect with the places they visited in new and different ways and enabled them to feel present

in and with a place. The final theme to support students in gaining a connection to place was that of slow travel. In PRE the use of slow travel methods is about shifting the focus away from the activity to the experience gained from the places students move through. A slow pedagogy is about allowing for time to be spent in places so that students can listen and receive meaning from that place (Payne & Wattchow, 2008). While individual modes of transport (such as sailing, mountain biking and walking) were often mentioned by students the notion of slow travel was mentioned as adding to learning for students and how they encountered places.

### **Power of stories**

The second principle of a PRE trip is a call for the use of stories and narratives to help with connection to place. Stories were used on the trip with a variety of outcomes which all served to use the power of those narratives to engage and teach students. Stories were used in different applications from the more predetermined stories about the history or geography of places we visited to the more spontaneous ones that emerged from discussions around the fire and during daily story-telling sessions. When used in this more predetermined manner stories can be used for teaching and learning in a thoughtful and reflective way (Clandinin & Connelly, 1998; McDrury & Alterio, 2001; McEwan & Egan, 1995; Pendlebury, 1995). And according to Alterio (2003) less formal and spontaneous stories can help students make sense of experiences and encourage self-review. The interview data identified stories, both predetermined and spontaneous, as an emerging theme. It should be noted that story telling is not a frivolous activity (Brown, 2012) but needs to have real thought placed into it, including what to tell or not to tell students, and significant time spent to research and find information for some of this story telling. While stories were identified as a dominate theme this is an area that I found particularly challenging and one which will require significant effort for many educators to master and then begin to use to its fullest.

### **Apprenticing ourselves to place**

The next principle of PRE is in the need to apprentice ourselves to outdoor places. This can be carried out in different ways. The first is for us as educators to become learners to place-responsive education as a teaching concept and in a

more practical manner to become apprenticed to the places visited. While not part of the interview data this is significant for those wishing to use a PRE approach. My apprenticeship in the places we visited on this trip started eight years ago when I first moved to Wellington. As I have spent time here I have been to local places for many reasons, some places I have visited multiple times. Having identified the route for the trip I specifically spent more time at those places that I was to visit during the trip. These visits to the places we would travel to during the trip became sites I was apprenticing myself to. Each time I visited and researched these places I gained a deeper connection to that place, which I was able to then pass onto my students through the programme on the trip.

The second distinct way of apprenticing ourselves came from the students themselves, who identified opportunities provided because of the familiarity of the environments they visited. According to Proshansky et al. (1983) students can, through interaction with the physical environment, develop memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes and values related to that environment. This interaction in a PRE approach is best served by providing students with a familiarity to the environment. Students commented in their interviews that this was evident in both their familiarity with local places they visited and the understanding that comes from doing activities that they were also at ease with. For students this apprenticing to a place was achieved through familiarity to the places they had visited before, as well as a deliberate attempt through the trip programme to immerse students in the places we stayed. There was time given at each place visited for students to become familiar and comfortable with the environment they found themselves in. This was supported by slow travel methods, activities based on what each location had to offer and time given to experience those places visited. All of these strategies allowed both students and staff to stay in place, not rush through and experience all that was available, thus allowing time for people to become familiar and comfortable with those places.

### **Representation of place experiences**

The representation of place experiences as a principle of PRE was the most difficult one to apply and see emerge within the student interviews. This principle requires more of the educator than the student. It is meant as a challenge to

examine how the places we visited were used in the past and how they are viewed at the moment.

Perhaps the most obvious example of this during the trip was in the story time around the fire at the campsite. This story time was focused on two differing strategies during the trip. First a formal story time at the end of each day allowed for students to present their own place experiences. Students were never limited in what their story of the day would be about, only guided in the appropriate way to tell and deliver their stories. While not readily evident from the interview data it was my observation that student's presentation of their stories improved over the trip and really highlighted their own experiences. The second strategy regarding story time was for staff to be aware of opportunities to engage students throughout the trip with their own personal stories and experiences. While these opportunities came at many different times the fire in the centre of the campsite provided an ideal place for these to happen and my observation was that the majority of these captured moments were around the fire. The stories or experiences used in this less formal manner had two main aims (these aims were discussed by the staff prior to the trip); firstly to engage students with real life experiences which would be considered beneficial or of learning value. The second aim was to use previous personal experiences of the staff to directly challenge student thinking in regards to how the places we were in were currently and had previously been used. This challenging was to help student to critically evaluate how the knowledge of a place is being used and to whose advantage this was. As a principle I suggest that this is the hardest of all and requires greater exploration. This principle was not mentioned in any student interview comments but was evident in my observations. For example during free time on day two a couple of students set about trying to push over dead trees and when questioned about this later they could not see anything wrong with their actions. I observed the instructor trying to then question the students in such a way as to get them to think critically about their actions in regards to letting nature take its course and challenging the students to not be destructive and to try and think about nature as not something to conquer. I would suggest that with my own personal lack of understanding in this area it would be hard to expect students to comment on it.

## Community

The last principle of PRE is in the focus on community. According to (Beames & Atencio, 2008) the outdoors is a powerful medium for exploring the nature of community. In the context of the PRE trip the focus on community was two-fold. First there was the community that formed between the members of the participants on the trip, secondly the need for interaction with the wider community before, during and after the trip. While development of community within the participants on the trip is not solely the domain of PRE what is different from the traditional outdoor education pedagogy is the emphasis on the link with community outside of the trip participants. The student interviews mentioned a strong link with a sense of belonging among participants and the chance for social interaction. While these social dynamics can be found in most groups that travel away I believe this was strengthened by the place-responsive nature of the trip. The emphasis on place within the whole of the trip was more conducive to positive social dynamics than when students are rushing from one activity to another. The community focus of PRE also calls for more use of community groups and less importing in of knowledge and skills as is the case in traditional pursuit driven outdoor education. In contrast to traditional outdoor education the staff who attended the trip were all well known to students. This helped with the social dynamic and was often commented upon in the student interviews. Students appreciated the prior relationships established with the staff and commented that it often felt like they were allowed more autonomy because the staff knew and trusted them. The use of staff known to the students also helped to diminish the concept of expert knowledge and power being used by outside contracted instructors. Staff on the trip were not seen as experts who stood along but more as members of the community who could be called upon to offer advice if needed. The strength of this approach is in considering all members of the group, both students and staff, as having skills and knowledge to contribute.

Place-responsive education is an emerging pedagogy that places emphases on learning in local places that are familiar to students, on running activities that help students connect with the places they visit, and on travelling in a slow manner to allow students time to connect. The main objective of this thesis was to ascertain what students thought of a trip run on PRE principles. In the interviews conducted after the trip seven themes were identified which provided insight into the student

perspectives. These themes show that students' perspectives on PRE are positive and align with, and support, the principles of PRE.

### **Part B:**

The second objective of this thesis was to ascertain if PRE is an appropriate pedagogy for senior level outdoor education in secondary schools in New Zealand. The interview data supports PRE as an alternative that is worth pursuing and I believe that student's positive experiences show that this approach meets the learning needs of senior school students. Students interview comments help to affirm the appropriateness of PRE within a senior school outdoor education setting such as; risk management, adventure, the notion of challenge in a journey and the experiential nature of the learning that occurred on the trip. Before I discuss these further it would be worth noting that the results do not represent 'an average' student perspective (as there is no such thing as an average student), but they do provide an understanding of what the students actual experiences were while on the trip (E. Smith, 2008). It is not possible then to draw conclusions about the extent to which these perspectives represent the experiences of all students who attend a PRE trip or programme.

The current New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) (Ministry of Education, 2007) mandates for a more holistic education model. The vision for this document wants students to be connected to land and environment, actively involved in the social, cultural, economic and environmental well-being of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 10). Several of the themes to emerge from the student's perspective would suggest that a PRE model would fit well within this vision especially the need to connect to land and the environment. Also one of the principles of the NZC is to promote community engagement so the curriculum has meaning for student's wider lives and includes support of their families and communities (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 11). This also seems to validate a more PRE pedagogy and the theme to emerge from the PEI on community is a very good fit for this.

Perhaps the most compelling support of change to PRE pedagogy comes in the form of suggested effective pedagogy within the NZC. The curriculum suggests

the following forms of effective pedagogy (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 34-36):

- Create a supportive learning environment: Students learn best when they are able to be active and visible members of the learning community.
- Encourage reflective thought and action: Reflective learner's assimilate new learning and translate thought into action.
- Enhance the relevance of new learning: Teachers stimulate the curiosity of their students and challenge them to use what they have discovered in new ways.
- Facilitating shared learning: Students learn as they engage in shared activities and conversations with other people including family and people in the wider community.
- Making connections to prior learning and experiences: Teachers deliberately build on what their students know and have experienced.

Earlier (chapter 2) the notion of risk and pursuit driven activities was questioned in the outdoor education context (Brown & Fraser, 2009; Zink & Leberman, 2001). Within place-responsive pedagogy an emphasis is applied on activities that are not deemed to be highly risky and which allow students to make their own decisions in regards to what is unsafe or not for them. Students are all individuals with different previous experiences and risk management skills, and that no blanket risk management strategies will suit all within a group. The research trip was planned with this in mind, operating activities that did not have high levels of risk and which put the decision making onto the students as much as possible. The interview data had a number of references to this and showed that students appreciated not just the less risky activities but especially the opportunities to make their own decisions regarding those. The notion of adventure was also identified as a contested one in the literature review. Instead of using high risk adventure to make outdoor education 'fun' and operate on the concept of 'just do it' a PRE approach calls for a moderation of this idea (Beedie & Bourne, 2005). In the interview data students made comment at the 'mystery' of not knowing where they were going, and the notion of adventure as discovery of local places. These comments suggested that students still had fun and gained benefit from a PRE approach which moderated risky activities and notions of adventure.

One of the other themes to emerge from the student perspectives was that of a community focus while on a PRE trip. The positive comments from the students regarding social interaction, sense of belonging and freedom of choice within the PRE trip would suggest that this is a more organic and natural way to encourage social and personal development than the traditional paradigm.

My findings suggest that a PRE approach would be an effective pedagogy and given the support for this from the students' interview comments it would seem the answer to the second research objective; 'is PRE an appropriate pedagogy for senior level outdoor education in secondary schools in New Zealand'?, is yes it is!

### **Part C:**

Finally this section will reflect on the use of photo-elicitation interviewing as a research method for adolescent male secondary school students. The quality and depth of information gained from the interviews would suggest that this approach was a successful one. According to Clark-Ibanez (2004) research using children and adolescents is more effective when a PEI approach is adopted because the use of photographs in the interview process reduces the strangeness of the interview, and participants engaged without hesitation. This is supported by E. Smith (2008) who conducted PEI with school students attending school camps in New Zealand. My observations support this as the interviews were often tactile, as photographs were held, pointed to, compared, turned over, and passed between the students and myself.

The photographs the students took revealed, from their perspective, a number of interesting points to be considered. An interesting point to emerge from PEI was that taking photographs is a social phenomenon, especially so for the adolescent boys in this research. Students often said they took photos "just for fun", or of things that "looked cool", but mostly to aid memory and their behaviour seemed focused on immediate social communication (Schiano, Chen, & Isaacs, 2002). As the two comments below indicate photographs were taken to often show significant others what the trip was like.

*This one [picture] of the sailing boat, I just thought I should take it, because then I could show people what we did ....I took this one [picture] of where we were sleeping to show like Mum and stuff what it was like...umm I enjoyed it, yeah it was good I was comfortable and I was warm so that was good*

*[Interview 4]*

From a more pragmatic view, the level of engagement, in regards to the taking of photographs, often mirrored the student's level of personal engagement during the activities on the trip. When students were engaged in a particular activity the taking of photographs was not considered, and often the camera was forgotten.

*That [the plant tasting and gathering activity] was like really engaging me....so the camera was completely out of my mind with taking photos, because I was in there learning and stuff*

*[Interview 1]*

The converse also applies with a significant number of photographs taken when the students were bored and not engaged in the activities.

*Here's some more sailing ones [student took 11 photos of the sailing] quite a lot on the boat actually cause...umm I think its cause... I don't now I got pretty bored, so it was something to do, take pictures....I think cause we were doing stuff earlier in the day so it wasn't really on my mind that the camera was there. But then on the boat it wasn't really anything to occupy me with, so it was like okay I'll use the camera*

*[Interview 1]*

While the engagement levels of students is not a focus of this research it needs to be noted because it has affected the distribution of the photographs, and thus the effectiveness of PEI as a research methodology.

One student used the camera given to him in a different manner to the other students focusing on the aesthetic nature of photographs taken on a film camera when compared to the quality of a digital camera. He made significant mention throughout his interview about the 'grainy' nature of the photographs. While he was still capturing his experiences on the PBE trip the images of those

experiences were manipulated by a higher priority (in his mind) of the aesthetic nature of film photographs versus digital photographs.

*Yeah, and they all came out like differently to what I thought they would because it's a film camera and I've got a digital camera and its different, yeah ....I guess there is, it's kind of washed out, the colours don't look as realistic and were its dark there like grainy kind of, and I like the look of that because when I edit my photo's I sometimes try and make them look like a film camera. Yeah it's kind of like experimental; you don't know how it looks after you have taken it.*

*[Interview 4]*

The physical limitation of the environment and the cameras on the trip was also a limiting factor on the nature of experiences captured. The cameras had limited flash capacity to capture night activities, and no zoom ability.

*Umm some of the things like with the walks we went on the second day I didn't bring the camera.... and I was kind of glad I didn't have it because it was not heavy but it was bulky in my pocket*

*[Interview 2]*

The pacing or grouping of photographs over the whole trip had a significant impact on the data gathered. Students used a variety of self-regulation strategies for how many photographs to take during the trip. One student had a calculated amount to use each day and stopped taking photographs on the first day once that limit was reached.

*I wanted to take like no more than 9 [pictures] a day, because there was 27 [pictures on the disposable cameras]*

*[Interview 4]*

Another student got 'carried away' with taking photographs on the first day of the trip and then tried to strictly moderate the remaining photographs for the entirety of the trip.

*...when we like arrived at the Butterfly Creek and stuff I tried to get in to like actually taking photos of the stuff we were doing rather than*

*forgetting about it, and then we were having like a sit down or something and remember the photos....probably because I wasn't thinking of rationing the photos then, I was just like let's take some photos. Yeah then I realised I needed to slow down and start taking photos with more meaning. But then at the same time with the stuff I was then doing I wasn't thinking of the camera at all*

*[Interview 1]*

The other two students held back on taking too many photographs on the first couple of days because they did not wish to run out. The end result of this was in a taking of multiple photographs on the final day just to use up the photographs left.

*Umm on the last day I had 15 photos left to use or something and six hours to take photos so I just took two photos of some things, but of slightly different things to use them up a bit*

*[Interview 2]*

While these issues, on face value, would not affect the interview data, they had subtle but significant effect on the recollection of activities from the trip. For example no student took photographs of the senses walk at night on the last night of the trip. And only one photograph was taken of the barefoot walk, sit spot and plant identification walk at the start of the trip.

The actual interview process also produced some points of interest. Perhaps the most interesting was in the language that was used in the interviews. The students each had their own idiosyncratic styles and these took some time to adjust to, both during the interviews and later in the transcription of the recordings. Overall it would be my observation that as I adapted to the language that the adolescents used I became more successful with engaging and encouraging more in-depth answers to questions. This is significant because as mentioned by Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) ethnographic research methods revolve around a shared understanding by the interviewer and the participant.

Another interesting point from the interviews came about because of the unstructured nature of the first stage of the interview process. In this stage students talked about each photograph they had taken but did so in any order they

wanted to. This later created difficulty in the analysis phase as looking for common themes from the four interviews was problematic. As each student commented on their photographs in a different order there was little commonality in the four interview transcripts which make initial analysis difficult. This was overcome by using a spreadsheet to insert individual comments into, and this then became the point which the themes started to emerge in a more cohesive manner.

The use of PEI for this thesis has identified some advantages and disadvantages when using this method to ascertain adolescent male perspectives. My observations and findings would suggest that this approach could be successfully used within the outdoor education research domain more regularly. The challenge seems to be not in the application of the PEI method but in perhaps accepting that student's perspectives are important! As Zink (2005) points out maybe the issue of 'student voice' needs to be given more validity instead of being discounted. On reflection, of the PEI methodology and the whole thesis, I would encourage more researchers to seek student perspectives as what they say is important.

## Chapter Six: Conclusion

This chapter has two main purposes; to offer concluding remarks and to highlight limitations of the research as well as making recommendations for future research. The purpose of this thesis has been to: 1) ascertain student perspectives of the emerging pedagogy of place-responsive education (PRE); 2) ascertain if a PRE approach would be an appropriate pedagogy for senior level outdoor education in secondary schools in New Zealand. The findings from the research highlight that students' perspectives are positive towards this approach of teaching outdoor education within senior level outdoor education in New Zealand secondary schools. There were seven themes which the students identified as benefits which support the inclusion of a PRE approach in outdoor education.

Another objective of the research was to ascertain if a place-responsive pedagogy would be appropriate as an alternative to the traditional pursuit-driven pedagogy that is common within senior level outdoor education within schools. Traditional approaches to outdoor education within some secondary schools are based on risky pursuit activities and promote social and personal development as key benefit (Brown, 2008; Cosgriff, 2008; Lynch, 2003). The findings from this thesis would suggest that social and personal development are also significant within a PRE pedagogy but without the need for the risky pursuits-based activities. Findings would also suggest PRE pedagogy is potentially more beneficial in relation to environmental and sustainability education than a traditional approach.

Upon reflection the quality and depth of interview data would suggest that PEI was successful in engaging and encouraging the students during the interview process. The advantages identified within the research would also suggest further exploration of this method within the wider outdoor education sector would be beneficial.

The thesis research was based around a three day trip using PRE as a pedagogy underpinning the programme design. Using an ethnographic research method of PEI a sample group of student's within an existing outdoor education programme at a secondary school in New Zealand were chosen to go on the research trip. This trip was designed around five key principles of place-responsive pedagogy (adapted from Wattchow & Brown, 2011):

1. Being present with and in a place

2. Using the power of narrative to held with connection to place
3. Apprenticeship to place
4. Presenting place experiences
5. Development of community

The randomly chosen students were given disposable cameras and asked to take photographs during the three day trip. Later interviews were conducted using those photographs as a central part of the interview process. The research findings support these five principles of PRE and would advocate for the inclusion of this pedagogy within senior level outdoor education within New Zealand secondary schools.

### **Research limitations**

This research has two main limitations the first of which is inherent in all qualitative work, that of the lack of ability to make more generalised statements which might be universally applicable across different contexts. With the use of PEI as a qualitative research method the data gathered is not meant to represent ‘an average’ student (Patterson et al., 1998) within the New Zealand secondary school system. Therefore it is not intended to be used to represent the experiences of all outdoor education students within a school outdoor education course. Instead the experiences and findings of this research are representative of the actual students who attended the PRE trip. Thus the findings need to be treated as only an indication of what is possible within a PRE approach.

The second limitation is that of the number of students interviewed. Only using four students’ places a significant limitation on the data gathered. Additionally the students who attend the school represent a certain profile determined by the location and special character of the school they attend. While the students were randomly chosen to take part in the research these two factors limit the sample pool that the students were originally chosen from. Of the potential 30 students who could have gone on the trip, and been available to be research participants, only 10 actually chose to. My observation is that the current assessment driven climate within the New Zealand school system had an impact on those students who choose to attend the trip; because there was no ‘credit value’ attached to the trip they did not see the value in the trip. This limited the sample pool to students

who either did not care about the amount of credits attached to the trip, or to those who already enjoyed the outdoors and would have gone on any trip away.

Finally my skills and lack of research experience can also be considered a limitation. When starting out on this thesis I had never conducted a thesis and had limited experience with conducting interviews. The quality, time and depth of interview data improved over the course of the four interviews. While not solely related to my interview abilities this improvement could be linked to a growth in skills and experience during the process.

From a more pragmatic perspective the skills of the staff on the research trip is also a limitation. While we all have similar philosophies regarding PRE we have limited experience in actually conducting trips and activities within this pedagogical framework. When creating the trip programme I had little in the way of direction (except that which I had read about in research) and felt I was 'making it up' a lot of the time.

### **Recommendations for outdoor educators**

While one of the purposes of this research is to gain a Master in Sports and Leisure I am an educator first and foremost so wished to have some tangible benefits come from this work. Using PRE pedagogy to teach outdoor education within senior outdoor education is in my opinion more effective than the traditional pursuit-driven approach currently being used in many programmes throughout New Zealand. Some of the significant benefits to this approach are:

- The reduction of risk level in activities has the potential for more educational benefit. Students who are more comfortable and not on the edge of their comfort zone are better able to cope with and learn from the situations they are placed in. Additionally reducing the risks means more decision making can be placed on the students' shoulders. They then learn how to manage their own risk rather than abdicating responsibility to the expert instructor who has already minimised the risk present.
- From a pragmatic view point running less risky activities also means less reliance upon 'expert instruction' being introduced to a programme. This will then reduce cost and the reliance on expensive equipment that often

comes with risky pursuits. Additionally the benefits to using staff on programmes that the students are already familiar with is very beneficial. On a trip staff that are known to students have many benefits, in a relational sense which a newly introduced outside instructor does not have. There is also the significant benefit when linking learning on a trip back to student's school lives, especially if the staff on the trip is the same as those back at school.

- While only my opinion and based on little more than four student interviews I believe that a PRE approach has more educational benefits than the traditional pursuit-driven approach. I am not advocating throwing the 'baby out with the bathwater' and not going climbing, kayaking, tramping etc. Just a more thoughtful approach that uses a PRE pedagogy questioning all that we do and what is the best for our students.

In conclusion this thesis has found that with thoughtful application PRE pedagogy can be successfully interwoven into a senior high school outdoor education programme. I would hope that all outdoor educators ask the most basic of questions "is this the best way to educate my students?" My experience is that a PRE approach is more effective when educating students in, through and about the outdoors. I hope that outdoor educators will further develop the ideas contained in this thesis and look to make PRE a more integral part of outdoor education programmes. I would also hope that some of the ideas presented in this thesis are taken up and extended by other researchers looking to improve place responsive education.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

Information sheet and consent form for students and their parents/caregivers

Place-Responsive Education: A student perspective

Research project for a Masters of Sports and Leisure

Researcher: Mr Chris Taylor

#### **For students:**

You have received this letter because you are in the OE202/OL303 outdoor education class at ..... Mr Chris Taylor (Teacher in Charge of Outdoor Education) is carrying out a research project as part of his Masters in Sports and Leisure, at The University of Waikato. This project will take place during the outdoor education trip dated the 8 to 10 May.

With your permission you will be asked to take photographs on the trip using a disposable camera supplied by Mr Taylor. When the photographs have been developed an interview will be conducted. The photographs will be used as a review of the trip and act as a reminder of the things that happened. The questions will provide the data to be used in the research project. This interview will take between 40 – 60mins and will be conducted at school during an outdoor education period at a suitable time as organised between yourself, your teacher and Mr Taylor.

Participation is your choice – you don't have to participate, but it would be great if you would be prepared to help. You will have the right to withdraw at any time up until you have reviewed and approved the transcripts of the interviews. The findings from this research will help to make changes to the outdoor education programme for coming years, making sure the student perspective is the main component to any changes that may happen.

**If you would like to help, please sign the consent form on the next page and return to Mrs ..... (Rectors Secretary) by Monday the 06 May 2013.**

#### **For parents/caregivers:**

It is important to me that you are made aware of the request that I have made to your son. In addition to gaining their permission I also require yours to allow them to participate in the research. Agreeing to take part in this project (or not take part) will have no bearing in your son's results or credits for the trip. The consent forms will go to Mrs ..... (The Rector's Secretary) and she will select those who are to participate. I will be unaware of those who applied and as I am currently not teaching at the College can have no impact or influence with any grades or assessments you son may do throughout the year.

Please sign the consent form on the next page if you agree to your son participating in this project. The findings from this project will appear in my Master's thesis and may also be used in other publications such as academic journals, presentations, newsletters, etc.

Ethics approval has been granted from The University of Waikato, Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee and compliance with the university's ethics regulations will help protect the identity of your son. An electronic copy of the final thesis is required to be placed on the University Of Waikato digital repository to be available for access through the library. Your son will not be named at any time. You and your son will be offered the chance to view the interview transcripts to identify any inaccuracies.

Please feel free to contact me if you require any further information

## **Appendix B**

Information sheet and consent form for College Rector

Place-Responsive Education: A student's perspective

Research project for a Masters of Sports and Leisure

Researcher: Mr Chris Taylor

Dear .....

I am writing to request your permission to conduct a research project with a selection of students from the OE202/OL303 class (only four students will be selected to participate from those that apply). This project will be part of a Master's Thesis in Sports and Leisure at The University of Waikato. The chosen students will be asked to take photographs on the trip, then when the photographs have been developed an interview will be conducted. The photographs will act as a review of the trip and allow the students to better answer the interview questions. The questions will provide the data to be used in the research project.

With your permission and consent I am hoping to work with four students and record their interviews for this project. The following is a suggested schedule for this project:

- Week 10 of Term 1 meet with students to outline trip requirements and explain research requirements.
- Week 1 of Term 2 consent forms will be handed into Mrs ....., who will select four students to take part and notify me of the identity of those students only.
- May 8 to 10 trip to take place
- Photos to be developed
- Week 3 of Term 2 the students will be interviewed during their OE202/OL303 class (with permission of the current OE teacher)

The students will be offered the chance to view the interview transcripts and correct any factual inaccuracies or perceived misrepresentation. When the project is completed you will be offered a copy of any/all publications relating to this project. The findings from this project will be disseminated through the thesis document and professional journals, conferences, newsletters, etc. It is hoped that the findings will provide at least an opportunity for professional development within the College and valuable opportunities to showcase the College and its programmes.

The use of a pseudonym will protect the participants of the research from being identified in any material. The College will not be named in the thesis or any subsequent publications.

If you are happy with this and give permission for me to interview the students please sign the consent form on the next page and return it to me. Thank you in advance for this and if you have any questions please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor Dr Mike Brown.

## Appendix C

If you would like to help, please sign the consent form and return to Mrs  
..... (Rectors Secretary) by Monday the 06 May 2013.

### Student consent form

- I agree to be interviewed at College by Mr Chris Taylor at an arranged time that is suitable for everyone.
- I understand that this is my free choice to take part in this project and I can withdraw at any time up until I have approved my interview transcript.
- I agree to take photographs on the trip and that these photographs may be used in the final research findings and further publications after that.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded but that the use of a pseudonym will protect my identity in any material gathered from this project.
- I understand that I have a responsibility to only use the photographs of the trip in an appropriate manner and not use them in any way that may be harmful to my classmates, teacher and the College.

Name:

Date:

Signature

## Appendix D

### Parent/caregiver consent form

- I agree to let (son's name) \_\_\_\_\_ be interviewed at College by Mr Chris Taylor at an arranged time that is suitable for everyone.
- I understand that the Rector of the College has given permission for this research project to take place.
- I understand that this research project complies with the University of Waikato Ethical guidelines which are tasked with the protection of all parties.
- I agree to my son taking photographs on the trip and that these photographs may be used in the final research findings and further publications after that.
- I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded but that the use of a pseudonym will protect my sons' identity in any material gathered from this project.
- I understand that the material gathered from this project may be used in a published master thesis and other academic publications and conference presentations.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

Both parent/caregiver and student need to agree to allow them to participate in this project.

NOTE: Regardless of the number of consent forms submitted to participate in this research ONLY four students will be chosen to participate. In order to make the selection of students as random as possible the College Secretary will place the names of all students who wish to be part of the project in a 'hat'. The first four names drawn out will be those selected to be involved in the research project, a following two names will be drawn as back-up to the original four chosen.

Thanks for your assistance in this matter

## Appendix E

### College Rector Consent Form

I consent to Mr Chris Taylor conducting this research project with the students in the outdoor education programme. It is accepted that informed consent is required from students and parents/caregivers of those involved in the research project in order for them to be involved. I understand that permission for this project can be withdrawn at any time, up to final publication of the thesis document, by myself as a representative of .....

It is understood that all efforts will be made to protect the identity of students and the College within any publications resulting from this research project. That approval has been sought from The University of Waikato's Ethics committee in relation to this research, and that this research will comply with those requirements as required by the committee.

I understand that photographs taken on the trip may be used in publications related to this project but that no names of students or the College will be used to identify them. Any student who can be identified in a photograph will be required to give written consent for them to be included in the research.

Name:

Position held:

Date:

Signature:

## Appendix F

### Photographic Consent Form

I \_\_\_\_\_ (participant's name) consent to any photograph that identifies me being used in this research project and any subsequent publications. It is accepted that my name will not be used anywhere within the research material. It is expected that any photographs used will be done so in an appropriate manner by the researcher, and that he will not make copies of these photographs available to anyone else.

Date:

Signature:

## Appendix G

FIGURE 8: PLACE-RESPONSIVE EDUCATION TRIP PROGRAMME

<b>Day</b>	<b>Activity</b>
Wed	<p>Meet at school, Trip introduction and expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expectations – Have an adventure together, going into public, culture</li> <li>• 4 students taking photographs revealed and instructions given on camera use</li> <li>• Day pack and what is needed in it (food, drink, warm cloths, water, gear, etc.)</li> </ul> <p><b>Mt Vic food trail walk (SP)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On Mt Vic a good long look around (where is your house?)</li> <li>• Story of Taniwha and creation of Wellington Harbour</li> <li>• Instructions for New World (2 groups cooking one night each, local or NZ food only, nothing processed, cooking in 2 pots over fire)</li> </ul> <p><b>Split into two groups to buy local/NZ food from New World then meet in Waitangi park to discuss local and unprocessed foods.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Go over group choices and why</li> <li>• How easy was it to get local and unprocessed food?</li> <li>• Where was the cheap stuff? And where is it from?</li> <li>• What is wrong with exported/processed food?</li> </ul> <p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p><b>Sailing session to Eastbourne (Van over to Days Bay)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Breath and observe</li> </ul> <p><b>Change and pack for tramp in to campsite</b></p> <p><b>Students to set up tent fly's, communal tarp and fire (PC)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Group discussion about set up and positioning of facilities</li> <li>• Small groups (toilet, tent fly's, tarp and fire pit)</li> </ul> <p><b>Sit spot (What can you see?)</b></p> <p><b>Cook dinner and clean up (SP)</b></p> <p><b>Marshmallows and stories (very casual)</b></p> <p><b>Sit spot and story of the day (what can you hear, and story of day)</b></p>
Thurs	<p><b>Sit spot (What is different this time of the day? What can you feel?)</b></p> <p><b>Breakfast and clean up and tidy up</b></p> <p><b>Wander through the bush (SP)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep noise to a minimum, slow stroll only</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow the leader, each student have a turn leading</li> <li>• No set direction just wander</li> </ul> <p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p><b>Rubbish discussion (CT)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Get students to bring any rubbish they have with them</li> <li>• Talk about amount of wrapping and time to decompose</li> <li>• Compare with our rubbish</li> </ul> <p><b>Barefoot stroll (PC)</b></p> <p><b>Steve and plant ID (SP) or chill out</b></p> <p><b>Dinner prep and light fire (SP)</b></p> <p><b>Cook dinner and clean up</b></p> <p><b>Night sense walk (SP)</b></p> <p><b>Sit spot and story of the day</b></p>
Fri	<p><b>Early morning sit spot</b> (Soak it up as we will be moving on)</p> <p><b>Breakfast and pack up campsite</b> (leave no trace/walk around with students)</p> <p><b>Walk out to Days Bay</b></p> <p><b>Pack van and change</b></p> <p><b>Biking along Coast road to lakes</b></p> <p><b>Off Bikes and walk to light house</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NZ first light house commissioned in 1859</li> <li>• Mary Bennett NZ first and only woman lighthouse operator</li> <li>• Had five kids and looked after the place when her husband died</li> <li>• Story of getting water</li> </ul> <p><b>Bike around Lakes</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maori occupied the area (madden heaps, etc.)</li> <li>• Karaka tree groves with seeds you can eat and carvings on some of them</li> <li>• Planted wheat to sell to first people who lived in Wellington area</li> <li>• Fresh water lakes which are ranked in the top 2 for diversity and water quality in NZ</li> </ul> <p><b>Lunch</b></p> <p><b>Bike back to Eastbourne</b></p>

	<p>Final sit spot and story of the trip</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Make some kind of art for story of trip</li></ul> <p>Bike to ferry, return bikes and unpack van</p> <p>Ferry back to town</p> <p>Trip review with SP and PC</p>
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