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Understanding Female Secondary School Students' Experiences of Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Despite ongoing developments to outdoor philosophy and practice, outdoor education continues to be a highly gendered space. More specifically, the notion that the outdoors is a masculine environment, requiring and reproducing qualities traditionally associated with being male, has meant many girls and women have struggled to find acceptance and validity in their outdoor experiences. A combination of gender socialisation, and inaccurate and biased portrayals of outdoor education and adventurers in Aotearoa New Zealand, have ensured many female participants feel out of place in the outdoors. While there has been an increase in the number of studies examining women's participation in outdoor recreation and education, the experiences of young women in school-based outdoor education programmes remains largely unknown.

This qualitative research is centred around the experiences of adolescent girls in secondary school outdoor education programmes. More specifically, this study considers young women's motivation for participating in outdoor education, the meanings they draw from their experiences, and the aspects of outdoor education that support and hinder their engagement in the outdoors. Focus groups, individual interviews, and participant observations were conducted with ten female senior students from three secondary schools in the South Island of Aotearoa New Zealand. A feminist phenomenological methodology was applied to this study, which enabled a critical and reflective analysis of the girls' experiences to occur. In accordance with the feminist aims of this research, which seeks to challenge the gender inequalities that exist in outdoor education, suggestions to theory and practice are made.

The findings of this research highlight the subjective and complex meanings girls assign to their participation, and the varied ways in which their school-based outdoor education programmes both support and challenge their involvement. Through their experiences, the young women had the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with their peers, teachers and the environment, and in doing so, many developed a deeper sense of self. The majority of the young women in this study felt supported in their programme and saw the outdoors as

a gender-inclusive space. However, while heartening, the findings of this study suggest girls continue to face ongoing challenges to their engagement, particularly surrounding the perception and practice of gender in the outdoors.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research explores the experiences of adolescent girls' in secondary school outdoor education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. The outdoors and outdoor education have predominantly centred upon the experiences and competencies of boys and men (Della-Longa, 2013; Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996; Prince, 2004), which is primarily due to a history dominated by male participation. However, various researchers have observed an increase in the number of female participants in New Zealand (Pinch, Breunig, Cosgriff, & Dignan, 2008; Sport New Zealand, 2015) and internationally (Boniface, 2006; Little, 2002; Loeffler, 2004a; Mozley, 2013). Outdoor education courses are argued to be an integral part of secondary schooling in Aotearoa New Zealand (Cosgriff, 2008; Lynch, 2006; Zink & Boyes, 2007) and while studies have been conducted that examine the nature of these programmes (Davidson, 2001; Lynch, 1991; McNatty, 2014; Taylor, 2014; Townsend, 2014), the experiences of adolescent girls who participate in outdoor education is generally not well understood by the outdoor or education sectors. This study focusses on young women's experiences, with the intent of aiding outdoor educators and practitioners to develop more gender-inclusive practices. More specifically, this research considers adolescent girls' motivations for participating in outdoor education, the meanings they draw from their experiences, and the aspects of outdoor education that support and hinder their engagement in the outdoors.

Scholars have investigated factors that prohibit females from participating in outdoor activities or developing skill and confidence to their full potential (Culp, 1998; Dingle & Kiewa, 2006; Henderson, 1992; Mozley, 2013; Warren, 1998; Warren & Loeffler, 2006), however few have considered why participating is valuable to women. This research gap is exacerbated by the distinct lack of youth voice in literature regarding outdoor education programmes (Boniface, 2006; Campbell-Price, 2012; Taylor, 2014; Zink, 2005). This is concerning, considering youth are one of the largest participant groups of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. As Brown (2012a) notes, "the voice(s) of students often goes unheard in outdoor education research...there is much to be gained from

listening to the experiences of students in informing curriculum design and implementation” (p. 111). Groundwater-Smith (2011) suggests, schools and educational researchers need to engage more critically with young people to ensure their voices are not only heard, but a commitment is made to “take their views seriously and be prepared to act upon them” (p. 52). Within this study, I aim to highlight the value that youth voice has in research by providing narratives of the adolescent girls’ views and experiences. This will assist in scrutinising the common misconceptions and gendered beliefs about young women’s participation in the outdoors, and identify ways outdoor practitioners, academics, students, and schools can work together to challenge the gendering of outdoor education and encourage the adoption of inclusive practices.

Since my introduction to formal outdoor education as a high school student in the early 2000s, the outdoors and outdoor education has been a significant part of my identity. It has helped me to connect with the environment and other people, and has also had a positive influence on how I see the world and live my life. As a female who has instructed, taught and participated in outdoor experiences, I am acutely aware of the challenges that girls and women may face in their participation in the outdoors. My experiences and observations of the maleness of the outdoor sector and the lack of support for females within it inspired me to conduct this research, with the aim of better understanding female secondary school students’ experiences of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand. In doing so, I adopt a critical feminist perspective with the purpose of creating space for young women’s lived experiences to be foregrounded, and then contextualised within wider trends in, and power relations surrounding, outdoor education and society more broadly.

Research purpose

This research investigates two overarching questions: What are adolescent girls’ experiences of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand? And how might outdoor education programmes be improved to better cater to the needs of adolescent girls?

These overarching questions are supported by the subsidiary questions;

- Why do adolescent girls participate in outdoor education and what outcomes do they experience?
- What influences adolescent girls' participation and level of engagement, in the outdoors?
- What meanings do adolescent girls draw from their participation in outdoor education?
- What aspects of outdoor education programmes support and hinder adolescent girls' participation in the outdoors and the subject?

The purpose of this study is twofold; to develop awareness and understanding of how adolescent girls' experience outdoor education; and to provide research-informed suggestions about theory and practice that may enable educators to more fully support their female students' involvement in the outdoors. By grounding this study within a feminist phenomenological framework I aim to challenge the masculinity of the outdoors by providing a conscious, reflective, and contextualized analysis of their experiences. Focus groups, individual interviews, and participant observations were used to collect the data. This qualitative mixed methods approach helped me to develop a deeper understanding of the girls' perspectives and experiences, by offering multiple opportunities for insight.

Not all adolescent girls have the inclination to participate in outdoor education or spend time in the outdoors, and those girls who do, represent a broad spectrum of needs and abilities. However, it is important outdoor practitioners identify the multiple and sometimes contradictory meanings of girls' experiences, to better understand their motivations and desires for participating. Within this research, I explore the perception and value of the girls' participation, the ways in which gender effected their outdoor experiences, pedagogical approaches, and the ability of their outdoor programme to support them as a young woman in the outdoors. To assist in providing a critical analysis of the young women's experiences in outdoor education, I draw upon contemporary

third-wave and postfeminist discourses. These perspectives provide a useful lens to consider how the gendering of outdoor education influenced the girls' in their participation, and to discuss the multiple and complex ways the young women negotiated their gendered perceptions and behaviours.

Setting the scene: Outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand

Outdoor education has a long and rich history in schools throughout Aotearoa New Zealand (Lynch, 2006). The scope of outdoor education within secondary schools has morphed from purely recreational beginnings, to encompassing more explicit educational goals, including the acquisition of personal, social and technical skills that support the development of young people (Zink & Boyes, 2007). In 1999 outdoor education was identified as one of the seven key areas of learning in the national Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). As outlined in this curriculum document, outdoor education intends 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" (p. 46). Subsequent updates to the national curriculum document (see Ministry of Education, 2007) have maintained the position of outdoor education within the Health and Physical Education learning area and broader education policy, and have resulted in further formalising its place within compulsory schooling (Cosgriff, 2008). In senior secondary school programmes throughout Aotearoa New Zealand, outdoor education is generally offered as an elective subject (although opportunities also exist through clubs and extra-curricular groups). Many programmes provide students with opportunities for adventure, and technical, personal, social and environmental learning; however, programme designs vary greatly between schools. For example, some schools integrate outdoor education contexts or skills in other courses (such as physical education, health, or education for sustainability), while other schools' offer outdoor education as a stand-alone subject (Cosgriff & Gillespie, 2011).

The diverse nature of these programmes has fuelled semantic debate regarding the terminology and design of outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand

(Boyes, 2000; Cosgriff, 2008; Zink & Boyes, 2007). However, outdoor education is defined in this research as “education in, for and about the outdoors” (Ministry of Education, n.d), and will refer to formal outdoor and adventure learning situations that commonly occur in schools and other organised groups. This includes elements of adventure, learning, recreational activities, personal and social development, and experiencing a variety of settings and locations. While adventure or outdoor recreation programmes may share similar aims and approaches to outdoor education, the former usually provide short-term courses in commercial or organisational settings (Boyes, 2012; McKenzie, 2000; Priest & Gass, 2005). While it is important to define key terms relevant to this research, this study centres on outdoor education in school settings, and therefore short-term courses are not the focus of this thesis.

Overview of thesis structure

This first chapter has introduced the research topic and suggests how the gendering of the outdoors influences the experiences of girls and women in the outdoors and outdoor education. I have also outlined how this study aims to reduce the current gap in literature surrounding adolescent girls’ experiences of outdoor education, by using youth voice and a critical feminist perspective to provide invaluable insights into this phenomenon. Chapter two is dedicated to reviewing the literature surrounding the research topic. In this chapter I draw on the scholarship from outdoor education and recreation, as well as other relevant fields including physical education and sport, to critically examine the philosophy and practice of outdoor education and the place of girls and women within it. The third chapter details my methodological approach of feminist phenomenology, as well as outlining the methods used to collect and analyse the research data. I also discuss the ethical considerations made in this research, which are particularly important as this study involves adolescent school students. Finally, I introduce the responding schools and participants. Chapter four is the first of three findings chapters, and discusses the phenomenological and subjective meanings of the young women’s lived experiences in their outdoor education programmes. This chapter considers themes surrounding identity, participation motivations and outcomes, and relationships with people

and place. Some of these themes are further developed in chapter five, where I examine how key social systems including peers, teachers and schools, influenced the girls throughout their experiences. The young women's gendered perceptions and experiences are also explored. Chapter six is the final findings chapter and is dedicated to discussing the ways the young women navigated the gendered environment of outdoor education. Here I draw upon third-wave and postfeminist perspectives to explain the complex and diverse ways the girls responded and spoke back to the gendering of their experiences. I conclude this thesis by reflecting on the key findings of this research, and consider how the outcomes of this study can be more widely applied by offering suggestions to outdoor theory and practice.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Over the past two decades, a range of scholars have examined women's participation in outdoor education, with many focussing on the unique challenges and constraints women face in the outdoors (Allin, 2000; Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Bell, 1996; Collins, 2000; Culp, 1998; Delay & Dymont, 2003; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Much of this work challenges the maleness of the outdoors and in turn, supports the participation of women in this space. However, several authors have identified a substantial gap in current literature surrounding the experiences of young women in outdoor education, and calls have been made to resolve this (Boniface, 2006; Budbill, 2008; Culp, 1998; Lynch, 1991; McNatty, 2014; Pinch et al., 2008; Scraton, 1994; Whittington, 2006).

In this chapter I critically examine literature relevant to adolescent girls' participation and experiences in outdoor education. Due to the paucity of literature, I draw upon relevant scholarship from sport and physical education to analyse key themes that are pertinent to my research. While providing distinctly unique environments and opportunities, sport, physical and outdoor education share common ground. The value of, and opportunity for, social interaction; the physicality of the experience; and the development of embodied identities and knowledge are aspects that unite these disciplines. It is important to acknowledge the existence of key structural differences and the influence this has on pedagogical techniques and participant experiences, however research findings across these related fields have relevance to understanding young women's experience of outdoor education.

I begin by considering the gendering of the outdoors and highlight how the outdoors has been historically and culturally constructed as a male-dominated space in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, and what this means for girls' and women's participation in outdoor education. I then draw on scholarship from the field of Physical Education, where girls' experiences have been afforded significant attention with some valuable parallels for this research. Key themes concerning the representation of female athletes and the

performance of gender in feminist sport literature are also discussed to help contextualise this study in broader discourses of the challenges facing athletic girls and women. This review concludes that the outdoors is a highly gendered space, which has significant implications for young women's participation in, and experience of, outdoor education.

The gendering of the outdoors

As noted previously, the experiences of young women in outdoor education has received limited scholarly attention. Much of the research examining the participation of females in the outdoors focuses on women and their experiences in adventure recreation and outdoor recreation programmes. However, although not necessarily a school-based context, literature from within these fields provide useful insights into the experiences of women and girls in the outdoors in the forthcoming chapters.

The gendering of the outdoors has been the target of academic and professional commentary over the past three decades (Della-Longa, 2013; Evans, 2014; Humberstone, 2000a, 2000c; Jones, 2012; Prince, 2004; Warren, 1996). The notion that the outdoors is a masculine space, requiring and reproducing qualities associated with being a particular type of male, is one of the key themes examined in this scholarship. In turn, the outdoors and outdoor activities are perceived as being unsuitable for women and place them at undue risk (Allin, 2000; Collins, 2000). This view is based on the notion that participation in outdoor activities require qualities such as strength, toughness, physical competency, and a mastering of self in the face of adversity, which have traditionally been linked with masculine, rather than feminine traits and identities (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Della-Longa, 2013; Little & Wilson, 2005). Fullagar and Hailstone (1996) suggest "the masculine model of knowledge in outdoor education relies upon the suppression of the feminine" (p. 23), with the male experience thus "universalised as human experience, promulgating a singular order of desire and sameness of identity against which women's difference is measured" (p. 24). As a result, the interest and capacity of women in the outdoors is disregarded. Furthermore, the value and meaning of women's

experience is frequently marginalised as many women do not identify, or are unwilling to associate with, traditional masculine characteristics

Prince (2004) provides valuable insight into the gendered nature of active outdoor pursuits in Aotearoa New Zealand, stating that the hegemonic nature of the outdoors here exists as a result of a complex history steeped in gender binaries, which have largely gone unchallenged. Notions of skill, risk and adventure, which are commonly associated with male interests and characteristics, are dominant discourses that have informed outdoor education philosophy and practice (Andkjær, 2012; Mikaels, Backman, & Lundvall, 2015). Similarly, Pinch et al. (2008) acknowledge that despite an increase in feminist scholarship in related disciplines, outdoor education is yet to make significant changes to the historical gendered nature of outdoor theory and practice.

Traditional notions of adventure have played a key role in shaping contemporary outdoor philosophy and programming. The belief that the outdoors can be used to develop particular aspects of a person's character are historically underpinned by practice in foundational outdoor organisations such as Outward Bound and the Scouting movement. Carter and Colyer (1999), and Newbery (2000) note the aim of many of these early programmes was to create adversity-resistant citizens who could triumph in challenging physical and mental circumstances. As a result, many of the instructional and programming strategies used risk and uncertainty to achieve these outcomes (Boyes, 2012; Ewert, 1989; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Programmes were designed for men, reinforcing the inaccessibility and inappropriateness of women in the outdoor space. Outdoor and adventure programmes followed this approach, and an emphasis on technical skill development and the use of risk for personal development became common place (Allin, 2000; Boyes, 2012; Brown, 2008; Cosgriff et al., 2012; Hill, 2010; Zink, 2003).

The pervasiveness of this philosophy is evident in outdoor and adventure programming currently in New Zealand and internationally, despite scholars calling for a shift in practice in recent years (Boyes, 2012; Brown, 2012a; Hill,

2010; Irwin, Straker, & Hill, 2012a; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). Fullagar and Hailstone (1996) examined the historical discourses of adventure and the outdoors and identified participant mastery was a highly regarded concept. Rather than focusing on the mastering of self and development of one's own capabilities, mastery is seen through the eyes of "technical imperialism in which the subject stands 'on' and thus above the earth, rather than being 'of' the world" (p. 24). This implies hierarchy, where one must dominate over another or the outdoor environment to achieve success. Although there has been a 'softening' in this view in recent years (McDermott, 2004), these qualities and achievements continue to be frequently associated with dominant constructions of men and masculinity, thereby suggesting men are typically more competent and better suited to outdoor life and activities than women (Cosgriff, Little, & Wilson, 2009; Little, 2002).

The marginalisation of women in the outdoors?: A feminist critique

Feminist scholarship has been instrumental in prompting critical consideration of the experiences of girls and women in outdoor education, and of the traditionally masculine hegemonic cultures that continue to influence professional practice (Jones, 2012; Newbery, 2000; Pinch et al., 2008). Feminist scholarship is concerned with illuminating and critically analysing the experiences of girls and women with the intent to create equal opportunity, recognition, and rights for all females (McCann & Kim, 2013).

The maleness of the outdoors has had a significant impact on the engagement of many girls and women in this space, which is particularly evident through the description of their experiences. Internationally and in New Zealand men have higher participation rates in many areas in the outdoor sector, including as participants and in instructor and management roles (Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Collins, 2000). Although women's participation in outdoor education has increased in some areas, comparatively they remain a minority (Carter & Colyer, 1999; Prince, 2004).

Women have expressed concern about the way others perceive their participation in the outdoors, and note how this has influenced the way they view themselves within this space. For example, a lack of relatable female role models has been identified as contributing to the subordinate positioning of women in the outdoors (Delay & Dymont, 2003; Whittington, 2006). In their study examining technical skill development of females in outdoor adventure, Warren and Loeffler (2006) identified that women frequently underestimate their potential to achieve in this space and when success occurred, they received less recognition compared to their male counterparts. Similarly, Little and Wilson (2005) found that women were less likely to identify with being an 'adventurer', despite being involved in activities that were deemed to be classified as adventurous, or had elements of adventure in them. These women's perceptions suggest real barriers, stemming from limiting gendered practices and beliefs, continue to exist for women in the outdoors.

Postmodern and poststructural perspectives have been prominent in recent feminist discourses both in the outdoor sector and more widely, particularly in regards to the way women respond and react to their gendered experiences (Crossley, 2010; Harris, 2004; McRobbie, 2011; Rich, 2005; Scraton, 1994; Thorpe, Barbour, & Bruce, 2011). These approaches are clearly evident in the examination of outdoor, physical activity and girl culture literature, as the focus moves away from inaccessibility (Anderson, 1996; Bell, 1996; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Culp, 1998; Henderson, 1992; Neill, 1997), to various forms of agency, politics and empowerment (Boniface, 2006; Cosgriff, 2011; Crossley, 2010; Fisette, 2011; Garrett, 2004; Pinch, 2003).

While authors have challenged the meaning and value of gender, the pervasiveness of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity are evident within outdoor and moving body scholarship, as new knowledge is regularly created within traditional hegemonic structures (Humberstone, 2000c). The perception and performance of gender strongly correlates to the creation and maintenance of power structures. Traditionally, power has been seen to be held and determined by masculine qualities and characteristics, and has been maintained

across a variety of disciplines. However, feminist work challenges this by suggesting women possess and exercise both their individual and collective power to transform their lives and redefine existing power structures (Budgeon, 2011b; Taft, 2004).

Various scholars have considered the constraints acting upon girls' and women's engagement in the outdoors. For example, feminist researchers in the 1980's and 1990's critiqued the inaccessibility of the outdoors, and identified an array of factors including family commitments and having fewer opportunities to join outdoor clubs and attend courses, prevented women from participating in outdoor activities. More recent work has addressed these same issues, suggesting they are an ongoing concern. In particular, consideration has been given to the use of gendered language (Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996; Jordan, 1996; Warren & Loeffler, 2006); preferential treatment of boys and men in outdoor programmes and in media reporting (Anderson, 1996; Culp, 1998; Pinch, 2003; Prince, 2004; Zink & Kane, 2015); a focus on activities associated with discomfort and risk (Estrellas, 1996; Humberstone, 2000b); and limitations associated with the hegemonic displays of gender (Bell, 1996; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Culp, 1998; Newbery, 2000; Pinch, 2007).

Although literature examining women's perceptions and experiences in the outdoors has provided invaluable insights and encouraged critical debate around this phenomenon, Little and Wilson (2005) question the way some research has typically been conducted. They raise the importance of employing methodologies that "truly [tell] the tale of the respondents" (p. 185). Many researchers have adopted a feminist framework, which not only enables women to study other women in a way that considers and values their perspective, but also allows emancipatory goals to be achieved through the research process (see Clarke & Humberstone, 1997). Scraton (1994) discusses the importance of these dual outcomes, and notes "feminist research is crucial to the development of knowledge about the experiences of different women and how women experience the social, physical, economic, political and emotional aspects of their lives...to inform policy and practice and thus improve the lives of women" (p.

258). Significantly, this ensures knowledge is produced to positively contribute to rectifying challenges faced by women and girls.

While adopting a feminist framework can add to the value of research around the experiences of girls and women, not all studies fully utilise this lens, or employ a critical enough stance. For example, in their discussion of gender categories and polarities, Carter and Colyer (1999) generate meanings and practice within existing patriarchal structures. While being critical of the meanings and performances of gender is essential, without positioning new knowledge within alternative paradigms, women will continue to be viewed as subordinate to men (Humberstone, 2000b; Pinch et al., 2008).

Feminist outdoor literature largely focusses on the experiences of women in outdoor recreation programmes. There have also been several studies that centre on women who work in the outdoors (Allin & Humberstone, 2006; Bell, 1996; Carter, 2000; Carter & Colyer, 1999; Jones, 2012; Newbery, 2000; Wright & Gray, 2013). These studies have provided a more detailed and holistic view of the experiences of women across all levels of outdoor engagement, and suggest similarities exist between the challenges female outdoor professionals face and those of their participants, particularly regarding gendered perceptions surrounding the competencies and validity of their participation in this field.

However, Culp (1998) notes that “although it is reasonable to posit a high degree of similarity in experiences of adolescent girls and women, research on girls begins to illuminate useful distinctions between the two populations” (p. 359). This is supported by Kroger (2007) and Porter (1996), who identify adolescence as a significant transitional period, whereby identities are developed, experimented with and cemented. While both girls and women may express multiple femininities across different contexts, this is particularly true for adolescent girls, and highlights the fluidity of identity construction, and the interaction between identity construction and a desire for social connection (Budbill, 2008; Fiset, 2011; Garrett, 2004; Jackson & Vares, 2013; Krane et al., 2013; Thorpe et al., 2011). Similarly, researchers of girl culture note the

difference in behaviours, values, and perceptions of adolescent girls from women (Hall, 2011; Hamilton, 2008; Jackson & Vares, 2013; Lipkin, 2009). Moshman (2011) identifies that adolescents and young people are particularly sensitive to external influences, including peer interactions, which can have both positive and negative effects on the development of self. These findings not only highlight the need for research that addresses the specific needs, desires and experiences of adolescent girls in outdoor education, but for critical consideration about generalising and applying research about women's experiences to those of adolescent girls'.

Commonalities certainly exist in some of pedagogical practices argued to support these two populations, including the importance of a supportive and inclusive environment; the opportunity to experiment with different behaviours; and to try new activities that they previously thought they could not do, or were made to believe they could not do (Prince, 2004; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). However, studies that specifically investigate young women's outdoor participation highlight notable differences. These include a greater reliance and emphasis on peer relationships, and a less stable and developed sense of self (Budbill, 2008; Culp, 1998; McNatty, 2014; Mozley, 2013).

Budbill (2008) and Porter (1996) propose the majority of studies concerned with adolescent girls take place in same-sex, outdoor recreation programmes. Again, links can be drawn between the fields of outdoor recreation and outdoor education, with the main notable difference being the aims of the programme. However, same-sex settings provide considerably different environments, and as a female outdoor leader noted, "it's really hard to pull off mixed gender programs so that it really works for girls...I think single gender programs for girls are a lot more effective" (Culp, 1998, p. 373). Similarly, adolescent girls in the same study felt "that although they would like to have boys around for the social aspect, they often would not participate fully if boys were present" (p. 374). This suggests group composition in outdoor programmes may facilitate different participant experiences and outcomes.

McNatty (2014) provides the most recent and relevant examination of this phenomenon, by exploring the experiences of adolescent girls in a same-sex residential school-based outdoor education programme in Aotearoa New Zealand. While the setting of this research provides a slightly different perspective compared with non-residential school-based outdoor programmes, the findings provide valuable insights into the complex ways in which young women learn, construct meaning, and develop their identities through their outdoor education experiences. McNatty (2014) identified that the majority of the girls in her study felt their outdoor education experience was a powerful and positive way to learn about themselves, develop their competencies and expand their perceptions of people and place. In particular, the ability to develop their self-confidence and independence, and form different and positive relationships with their peers were particularly meaningful to these young women.

Of relevance to my study is that the girls in McNatty's (2014) research acknowledged the limitations traditional gender roles had on their perceptions and engagement in the outdoors, despite being in a same-sex setting. Notably however, they saw their outdoor education experience as a positive way to challenge hegemonic gender expectations and behaviours, as they were able to attempt new tasks and skills seen as traditionally masculine, and were supported in identifying and developing their strengths and competencies as young women. However, while they noted a greater sense of freedom during the outdoor education programme in regards to their gender identity, they identified this was difficult to maintain once they had returned to their "normal life". This is significant, as it highlights the gendered barriers young women may face in their engagement in outdoors, while recognising the potential impact outdoor education programmes can have in empowering and supporting female participants in this space and in realising their capabilities and potential. It will be valuable to identify if such outcomes are replicated in co-educational settings. Although written 25 years ago, Lynch (1991) also offers valuable insights into the experiences of young women in outdoor education. Contrary to her hypothesis, the outdoor education programmes at the centre of the study were not male-centric, in so far as the girls were generally given equal opportunities and

support within the programme as their male peers. However, oppressive gender-related practices and behaviours still existed for the young women, particularly in relation to peer interactions, managing menstruation, and perceptions of their capabilities. I believe a particular strength of this research was employing a feminist framework, which enabled a critical and emancipatory examination of the young women's experiences. Not only was this lens effective in critiquing and challenging the patriarchal structures and hegemonic gender performances that were identified in the research, it also enabled suggestions for alternative, more gender-inclusive practices to be made. This reinforced the appropriateness of adopting a feminist perspective within my own research, as it highlighted the transformative and reflexive potential of this methodology.

Similar to Lynch (1991) and McNatty (2014), other researchers of this topic have called for further research to be conducted to ensure a more considered and comprehensive understanding of young women's experiences in same-sex and co-educational outdoor education is developed. My study aims to contribute to this developing body of research by not only exploring if, and what barriers young women face in their outdoor education participation, but also identifying aspects of their outdoor education programmes that are particularly meaningful, empowering and enjoyable to them.

Girls in physical education

Studies of adolescent girls in physical activity and physical education settings are much more prevalent than those focussing on outdoor education. One explanation for this is the role physical education has within compulsory schooling in many countries. In New Zealand, all children must participate in physical education lessons until they are year 10 (approximately 13 to 14 years old) (Ministry of Education, 1999). This has meant philosophies and pedagogical practices, as well as the experiences of young people in physical education, have been subject to more sustained critique and development. In turn, relevant insights into the experiences of girls in relation to physical culture and the moving body have been provided. This section considers relevant physical

activity and physical education literature and critically discuss findings applicable to the study of young women in outdoor education.

As with research exploring the experiences of girls and women in outdoor education, gender is a theme commonly identified in physical education scholarship. Specifically, the masculinity of physical education and the challenges girls face in their desire to be legitimised and considered in this space, are notable parallels. The confusion between sex and gender and the polarity of the male/female and feminine/masculine characteristics, creates a competitive rather than complimentary relationship between the two, with any alternative performances of gender frequently dismissed. Humberstone (2000b) suggests,

Western society is organised around the assumption that the differences between the sexes are more important than any other quality they have in common. When people try to justify this assumption in terms of natural differences, two separate processes become confused: the tendency to differentiate by sex, and the tendency to differentiate in a particular way by sex. (p. 23)

The categorisation of gender and the expectation of girls to maintain hegemonic expressions of femininity as they participate in physical activity, means many girls are 'turned off' physical education, or struggle to find a sense of meaning in their participation (Burrows, 2000; Reimann & Banks, 2014). The perceived maleness of physical education does not match traditional female gender stereotypes and expectations, Therefore many girls face a dilemma; either they engage in activities typically viewed as masculine and display the traits that enable them to have their participation recognised and legitimised, but which may exclude them from their peers; or they express their participation through hegemonic displays of femininity that are accepted within girl culture and wider society, yet less so within the cultural and social structures of the field they are attempting to enter (Petrie, 2004). This problem is not limited to co-educational physical education, and indeed it is important to acknowledge that girls-only classes experience similar, yet unique gender challenges as well (Hills, 2007).

Embodied identities and knowledge

Dominant societal views on the meaning of the body, which polarise the body against the mind and emphasise the value of physical appearance, contribute to the complex nature of gender power structures. The negotiation of power structures in physical (and outdoor) education is both complex and delicate, given how the body is often on display. Participants, particularly girls, can be acutely aware of the attention on their body, and the way they manage these situations is also the subject of scrutiny. Fissette (2011) and Garrett (2004) explore the impact of societal messages on what constitutes a 'perfect' representation of the female body (see Lipkin, 2009), and the way in which it should be used and experienced during physical activity. This typically means girls are expected to maintain their physical appearance and show lower levels of aggression and competitiveness compared to their male peers (Azzarito & Katzew, 2010). Mooney, Casey, and Smyth (2012) agree, and acknowledge significant limitations are placed on girls in their engagement in physical activity due to the narrowed view on what is considered an 'acceptable' performance of female embodied identity and knowledge.

Flintoff and Scraton (2001) identify that girls' awareness of judgements made by others about their body and its performance in physical education, is particularly heightened when boys are present. This causes girls to modify their academic and bodily expressions, to ensure their experience is recognised and valued (Porter, 1996). Bäckström (2013) defines this process of gender manoeuvring as "the manipulation of relationships between masculinity and femininity as patterned beliefs...[and in] brief moments of situated interaction" (p. 33). Thorpe et al. (2011) identify in their own experiences of physical activity, how redefining their existing behaviours enabled them to manage the masculine culture they were entering to ensure their position within the field was accepted. Similar negotiations occurred in the Swedish skateboarding community, where women skaters were more readily accepted by their male peers if they demonstrated masculine behaviours and values of toughness and aggression (Bäckström, 2013).

Beasley (2013), proposed the incongruence between physical activity/sport and femininity has meant that girls' "consider themselves to be less skilled in...physical education compared with males and report lower self-perceptions of ability and competence" (p. 36). This is a common finding in a range of studies that suggest girls are driven, or choose to, participate in physical education classes at lower or altered levels of engagement (Azzarito, Solmon, & Harrison, 2006; Reimann & Banks, 2014). Alongside this, a lack of understanding from educators about what girls' value and enjoy in their participation further excludes them from participating in ways that are meaningful to them.

Garrett (2004) and Hills (2007) offer an alternative position, stating that the opportunities that physical education offers young women can assist them in developing meaningful embodied identities and empower them to make positive life choices. Similarly, Fiset (2011), and Hills and Croston (2011) proposes that physical education offers "a potential context to educate students about their bodies and teach them how to deconstruct their perspectives and beliefs based on societal messages" (p. 180). This may be the case, however limited scholarship focuses on this aspect of girls' experiences, and from girls' perspectives, suggesting that many young women experience physical education as largely negative. Alternatively, research needs to investigate aspects of positive involvement and participation while simultaneously considering the challenges girls face, to ensure a more balanced view of young women's experiences is presented.

It is common for teachers in school programmes to spend time getting to know their students, and structuring lessons so that each individual, and the class collectively, are supported in their learning (Taylor, 2014; Townsend, 2014). However, research into the experiences of girls in physical education highlights that many girls still feel ostracised in their participation by their peers and teachers (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001). This indicates the need for teachers to invest time and effort into developing a nuanced understanding of how their female students make meaning of their experiences (Beasley, 2013). Not only this, but educators must actively support alternative performances of gender in the

classroom and at sites of physical activity and sport, so that girls are able to construct meanings that are comfortable for them, whether this sits within or outside of normative expressions of femininity (Budbill, 2008; Hills, 2006).

Girls in the spotlight

Many studies of young women in physical education are conducted using a feminist and qualitative framework. This is consistent with approaches adopted by researchers in outdoor education and highlights not only the crossover between these fields, but also the desirability of centring young women's perceptions and experiences in inquiry, and in undertaking research with emancipatory goals. In contrast, Flintoff and Scraton (2001) argue that while feminist research is vital in assisting educators and academics to develop a more holistic and reflective picture of the experiences of female students, "girls and young women do not want to be thought of as being a problem which needs special attention, and yet this is often how they are perceived" (p. 16). This view may stem from experiences where girls feel the actions taken by teachers to manage student gender differences or sexist behaviour primarily focusses on female students, instead of addressing the behaviours and perceptions of both boys and girls.

Flintoff and Scraton's (2001) article is an example of a limitation in education and outdoor research, where a lack of practical support is offered to educators in applying the ideas that are raised in the literature. Despite challenging educators to take positive steps to support female students in physical education classes, practical suggestions are largely absent in the literature (Hills & Croston, 2011). While researchers stress the importance of subjectivity and viewing respondents and students as a heterogeneous group, it could be argued that educators often prefer more concrete findings that readily suggest implications for practical application in their teaching programmes. This is particularly important to ensure that research is easily accessible and applicable to practitioners, and to forge strong connections between theory and practice and vice versa.

Studies that identify adolescent girls embodied identities and responses to physical education by focussing on structures surrounding, but not in the physical education class (see Fiset, 2011), undoubtedly contribute to a deepening understanding of this phenomena. However, the pedagogies and approaches applied by teachers during lessons, and the perceptions and reactions of students, may provide a more thorough and reflective picture that educators can more easily relate to and apply in their own setting. Consequently, whilst being wary of viewing all young women as a homogenous group, this research aims to provide educators with practical suggestions.

Sporting experiences

Scholarship about girls and women in sport also provides valuable insights into their experiences within wider physical activity and culture. Feminist thought and theorising that is embedded throughout the literature has enabled a critical and reflective examination of the topic and other relevant fields to be made, by critiquing normative gendered behaviours and perspectives and offering alternative paradigms. Feminist scholarship on women's moving bodies in various sporting contexts (Bäckström, 2013; Marfell, 2012; Pomerantz, Currie, & Kelly, 2004; Thorpe et al., 2011; Thorpe, 2007), representations of gender (Fiset, 2011; Pinch, 2007; Stone, 2010), power structures (Garrett, 2004; Holland-Smith, 2015; Lipkin, 2009) and multiple femininities (Jackson & Vares, 2013; Krane et al., 2013; Rich, 2005) offers valuable contributions towards a deeper understanding of young women's experiences in outdoor education.

Common themes that emerge between outdoor, physical education and sporting literature indicate that females are subject to significant challenges in their participation in comparison to males (Krane et al., 2013). The representation of females in sport, both in regards to the frequency and nature of publicity; the prejudicial treatment of girls and women in sport; and the value and perception of gender are pertinent to this study. The interconnectedness of these issues highlights the complexity of female sporting experiences, and the ways girls and women seek to negotiate and validate their participation within this space (Thorpe, 2007).

The representation of girls' and women's participation and achievement in sporting and mainstream media has been considered as contributing to the gendered and narrowed view of female athletes (Bruce, 2008a; Kane, 2011). There are strong parallels between the portrayal and representation of females in sport and women in outdoor recreation and education. A remark made by Humberstone (2000a), illustrates the prejudiced publicity female participants of outdoor pursuits receive in comparison to their male peers;

The media portray mainly men involved in risk-taking adventurous activities in the outdoors and generally represents them as 'heroes'. When women do engage in these activities, sometimes with fatal consequences, they are depicted not as heroines, but behaving inappropriately and selfishly. (p. vii)

Similarly, Anderson (1996) identified that "women's involvement in sport is socially sanctioned only when they participate in 'feminine' or 'sex appropriate' sports" (p. 15). Not only does this mean that women who participate in sports deemed 'un-feminine' (such as many outdoor, high risk or combat sports) receive little recognition for their participation and achievements, but it limits the perception that women have of their place and ability in sport and outdoor education.

Research considering girls' and women's sporting experiences has identified similar benefits, challenges and participant perceptions to those in outdoor and physical education scholarship. The categorisation and performance of gender is noted as being one of the most common threads throughout the literature. Many of the questions underpinning such projects focus on hegemonic displays of gender and how the maleness of sport impacts on females' perceptions and experiences in sport and physical activity (Burrows & McCormack, 2011; Clarke & Humberstone, 1997; Krane et al., 2013; Mooney et al., 2012). These questions produce valuable insights into the experiences of female participants, however it is less common for girls to be given the opportunity to comment on how any challenges they face could be resolved or managed. Undoubtedly there are particular challenges associated with youth research, surrounding power structures and ineffability (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012).

A range of scholars have discussed the impact discourses of masculinity have on the development of female sporting identities (see Bruce, 2008b; Cooky, 2009). Krane et al. (2013) have articulated the complexities and variances in girls gendered identities, noting that while “less active girls held ‘very strong stereotypical views’ concerning femininity...[and felt] being physically active would make them less feminine...”, girls who regularly participated in sport “believed they could be both sporty and feminine” (p. 78). While sport can assist women in feeling empowered to develop a gendered identity that transgresses traditional hegemonic ideals, as Krane (2001) argues, female athletes often feel trapped into maintaining a “heterosexually feminine appearance”, or participating in sports considered as ‘feminine’, such as dance and netball. Failure to uphold these norms can result in prejudicial treatment by fans, peers and officials.

Paechter (2006a) notes our gender identity is not fixed, and “while most, though not all, of us are men in male bodies and women in female bodies, how we understand ourselves as masculine and feminine varies according to time, place and circumstances” (p. 261). Many girls and women adopt multiple femininities as a way to manage their gendered identity and participation in certain physical activities. In her study of female skateboarders, Bäckström (2013) uses the concept, “gender manoeuvring”, to describe the way in which her participants performed multiple femininities. These different feminine identities enabled the girls to move fluidly between assimilating, or challenging gendered beliefs and practices. While these negotiations can be complex and contradictory, they not only enable female athletes to find greater personal meaning in their participation, but can assist in challenging limiting gendered perceptions and practices (Krane et al., 2013).

Conclusion

The experiences of young women in school-based outdoor education programmes remains largely unknown. Consequently, this review has drawn upon relevant fields of scholarship that have informed our understanding of various aspects of girls and women’s experiences in wider sport, education and

physical culture, particularly surrounding the challenges females face in legitimising their position within a traditionally masculine space. Despite there being a steady increase in the number of studies involving female participants in outdoor recreation and education, there remains a call for further work to be conducted to enhance and expand current understanding about the experiences of girls and women (Boniface, 2006; Budbill, 2008; McNatty, 2014; Pinch et al., 2008; Scraton, 1994).

This research aims to contribute to reducing this gap by examining the experiences of young women in school-based outdoor education programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand. As highlighted throughout this chapter, it is vital that girls are provided with the space to share their lived experiences, including positive and negative aspects, and that this occurs in ways that positions their voices at the centre of inquiry. As such, this research will adopt a feminist phenomenology framework and use qualitative methods that enable emancipatory intentions to be more fully realised. This research intends to provide educators with an insight into the experiences of young women, and identify how teaching and facilitation practices can be used to support their learning in outdoor education. While ensuring that individual thought and meaning is not lost, implications to practice will be outlined to assist in the development and application of outdoor education practices that better reflect the needs and desires of young women.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

In this chapter I describe the theoretical approach and research procedures that guide this study. Feminist phenomenology is adopted in this qualitative research project and is used to frame the experiences of young women in outdoor education. Idiosyncratic meaning and experience, and a critical analysis of gendered culture and behaviour typify feminist phenomenology studies (Garko, 1999; Simms & Stawarska, 2014). Adopting such an approach helped me reveal the variety of meanings that young women attribute to their outdoor education participation, and their negotiation of the gendered nature of these experiences.

Firstly, I outline the nature of feminist phenomenology and discuss how its application to this study is appropriate, and enabled the data to be critically analysed. I then explain how particular studies were significant to my own research and helped to inform the research design and ideology. Following this I discuss important ethical considerations when conducting research with young women and outline the efforts I made to ensure the study was responsive to their needs and understandings. Next I explain the data collection methods that were used with ten young women aged 15 to 17 years old, including interviews, focus groups and observations of outdoor education activities, and identify how these methods enabled rich and varied participant stories to be gathered. I then explain how 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' (IPA) was used to analyse the research data. Finally, I outline my research bias and identify how reflexivity was used throughout the research process.

Theoretical framework

Feminist phenomenology is an interdisciplinary approach that aims to provide critical and transformative insights into the lived experiences of girls and women. This approach draws upon the successful partnership between characteristics of phenomenology and feminist theory. Lived experience and individual embodied meanings are important in both fields of scholarship and provide a valuable point of overlap between these two perspectives. This methodology has been used to describe the experiences of girls and women, and not only provides a platform for their voices and experiences to be heard, but enables direct challenges to

traditional patriarchal structures within research and wider society to be made (Fisher, 2010). Despite origins being traced to the 1950s with the publication of Simone de Beauvoir's 'The Second Sex' (Simms & Stawarska, 2014), and being successfully applied by several researchers in the emerging field of scholarship on moving bodies (see Allen-Collinson, 2011; Chisholm, 2008), feminist phenomenology continues to be underutilised within contemporary research practices (Allen-Collinson, 2011). In this chapter I discuss the relevance of this methodology for outdoor and physical culture research, and particularly this project on young women's experiences of outdoor education.

As with feminism, feminist phenomenology is challenging to define (McRobbie & McCabe, 2012). While there are characteristics that are typical of this methodology, some feminists consider the intent of feminism is to enable it to be relevant and accessible to all women (Maynard, 1994). One way to highlight the common features of feminist phenomenological research, is by identifying the methodological aspects that have been borrowed from each of the individual approaches.

Phenomenological research is defined as "...the study of lived or existential meanings" and attempts to "describe and interpret these meanings to a certain degree of depth and richness" (van Manen, 1997, p. 11). As such, feminist phenomenology seeks to explore the meanings and essences of lived experiences (Simms & Stawarska, 2014). Max van Manen (1997), a prominent scholar of hermeneutic phenomenology, notes that it is important to realise that phenomenology cannot be used to show or prove something, however it can be used to reflectively ask what it is that makes up the nature of a lived experience. To this end, phenomenology is used to describe, not explain or justify experiences (Lester, 1999). The girls' experiences, as told by them, provide invaluable insights into this phenomenon. However, as critical researchers we must go beyond a description of our participants' lives, to enable a thorough and holistic examination of phenomena to take place. As such, I will situate and interpret the girls' experiences of outdoor education within the broader socio-cultural context and existing power structures.

In its exploration of lived experiences, phenomenology strongly correlates with the aims of feminist research, which seeks to describe the lives of girls and women and challenge the gender inequalities that exist in the social world. Cook and Fonow (1986) note “feminist research, is thus, not research about women but research for women to be used in transforming their sexist society” (p. 13). Throughout the literature review, I identified that girls’ participation and experiences in outdoor education has been given little scholarly attention. The maleness that exists in outdoor practices and culture has been acknowledged as having a significant impact on the engagement of many women in the outdoors. Calls have been made to reduce gender inequalities and create spaces and programmes that are more inclusive and responsive to the needs of girls and women (Culp, 1998; Mozley, 2013; Pinch et al., 2008; Porter, 1996; Whittington, 2006). This study seeks to create space for young women’s experiences in outdoor education to be heard, and provided a supportive research environment for them to identify aspects of outdoor practices and culture that both enable and hinder their participation.

The work by Budbill (2008) has many parallels to my own study and has usefully informed my thinking about the theoretical and methodological approaches that would be valuable for my research. Although concerned with the experiences of adolescent girls in a single-sex adventure recreation programme focussing on the development of mountain biking skills, Budbill’s in depth critical examination and consideration of girl culture and development is significant for explaining the perspectives and experiences of some respondents. Alongside this, Budbill (2008) adopted a feminist approach to highlight the complexity and gendered nature of the girls’ experiences, enabling the research to be presented and analysed in a way that effectively considered the phenomenon. This indicates the effectiveness of feminist research in describing the experiences of girls from an alternative perspective (than traditionally viewed through a male paradigm), and supports the application of a feminist framework within this research project.

Despite positively informing aspects of my own study, there were features of the research that raised concerns. Budbill (2008) employed qualitative and

quantitative methodologies, and although this enabled the data to be verified, it created tensions between individual and collective meanings of the girls' experiences. Although the author acknowledges the importance of not generalising the girls' experiences and ensuring they are not viewed as a homogenous group, aspects of data analysis contradicted this. For example, Budbill (2008) notes that "a minimum of 60% of participants needed to positively identify the theme in their interviews and/or qualitative survey responses occurrence rate to enable it to be recorded as a theme" (p. 63). It is necessary for data to be condensed in a way that makes it manageable for both the researcher and reader, however throughout this process individual and subjective meaning should not be lost to generality (Larkin, Watts, & Clifton, 2006; Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009). It is possible a range of girls' perceptions and experiences were not considered as they did not fit within the equation used to define meaning. This highlights the importance of selecting methodologies and methods that best suit the research questions, to ensure participants' voices are described and presented in ways that reflect the myriad of possible responses and meanings.

Humberstone (2000b) argues many publications concerned with gender in the outdoors fail to challenge hegemonic and patriarchal concepts and practices, as they are underpinned by traditional gender definitions and language. She suggests redefining what it means to a man or women, and breaking down the tensions that exist between them, is necessary to enable girls' and women to feel legitimised in their outdoor participation. Krane et al. (2013) note this is not an easy task, given it is difficult to "critique or transform the social structure without invoking traditional notions of feminine and masculine" (p. 82). Indeed, I too have struggled with this conundrum and question how I can effectively challenge the status quo in my work as an outdoor education teacher.

Maynard (1994) identifies three common features of feminist research; studying women from their perspective; recognising and acknowledging the researcher as part of the research project; and ensuring research practices embody a feminist ethic of care. This 'ethic of care' refers to the aim to create a more collaborative research environment and reduce the hierarchal relationship between the

researcher and respondents. In such research the participants are seen as 'experts' and 'owners' of their experiences and knowledge (Garko, 1999). This notion has been applied throughout this study by valuing the stories the girls have shared, and by listening without judgement.

Feminist, and therefore feminist phenomenological research, requires an intention to empower women and challenge gender power and relation inequalities. This means that research is not conducted solely for the sake of research, but rather the findings are used to suggest changes towards greater gender equality. In considering the emancipatory aims of this research, a critical examination of the girls' experiences has been conducted. The purpose of this is to identify outdoor education practices that support and limit their participation, and to provide suggestions that ensure that young women feel supported, valued, and catered for in their outdoor education participation.

Identifying and addressing the challenges faced by female participants of outdoor education is essential to ensuring emancipation and equality is achieved. Many articles and studies thus focus on examining the negative elements of girls' and women's experiences in physical culture. While it is necessary for research, particularly of a feminist nature, to examine the limiting practices and aspects of phenomena, a continued focus on the negative aspects of participation and experience may deny the recognition of the more positive elements that are critical to girls' learning and development.

Dignan's (2014) recent study of women's stories of joy in the outdoors, provides an alternative and insightful perspective on women's outdoor experiences by considering the positive features of women's engagement in the outdoors. She notes that many of the aspects of experience that brought joy to the women, "bear little relation to those advanced as desirable in most outdoor recreation literature and/or practice" (p. 108). Similarly, studies by Cosgriff (2011) and Prince (2004) show that women's experiences of the outdoors and outdoor education encompasses a wider range of desires, feelings and outcomes, which

are more easily identified when researchers provide women with the space to discuss their experiences openly and without judgement.

Transformative research

As discussed earlier in this review, a limitation of research conducted in the outdoor and physical culture fields is its lack of obvious applicability to wider practice. Several articles have been published that are accessible (in both language and type of publication) to educators and practitioners (see Delay & Dymont, 2003; Mozley, 2013; Warren, 1998). Carter (2000) and Pinch (2007) acknowledge the disconnect between theory/research and practice, and raise questions about the impact and reach of gender research and literature on outdoor education practices. Changes need to be made to the way in which research and new knowledge is shared with the entire profession, not just between those in academia. I will therefore endeavour to disseminate this research in ways that ensure it is widely accessible within the field, and while taking care not to over-generalise participants' meanings or experiences, provide details on the implications the findings have for practice.

Researching youth and working with young women

As I noted in the literature review, limited scholarly attention has been afforded to the experiences of young women in outdoor education both here in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally, particularly in ways that directly involve girls in data collection. Acknowledging this absence in current scholarship, this study prioritises the experiences of young women in outdoor education by providing insight into how they make meaning and respond to aspects of outdoor programming.

There is an implicit assumption that in studies of people's lived experiences, the voices of those at the centre of inquiry would inform, at least in part, the research findings. However, in the process of reviewing the literature, I found many studies are grounded in observations and perspectives from informed others regarding the participants' lived experiences (Allin, 2000; Barak, Hedrich, & Albrechtsen, 2000; Bruce, 2008b; Mitten, 1992). While it is common for

participants to be involved in some way throughout the research process, many studies place a greater emphasis on other types of data and data collection methods that do not require participant voice. For example, participant observations, and interviews with adults, are conducted to provide perspective on adolescent experience and engagement. Brown (2012b) identifies that “the voice(s) of students often go unheard in outdoor education research yet there is potentially so much to be gained from listening to the experiences of students...” (p. 68). Similarly, Brown (2012a), Campbell-Price (2012), and Zink (2005) acknowledge the underutilisation of participant, and particularly youth voice, in outdoor education research. This is common in research with young people, as researchers hold concerns regarding ethical considerations and the ability of young people to accurately and articulately describe their experiences (Loveridge, 2010).

Studies that have included authentic participant voice demonstrate the value and richness this perspective adds to the understanding of phenomena. Fitzpatrick's (2010) ethnographic study is particularly powerful and effective in describing adolescents' experiences in physical education. She dedicates the majority of her research to the voices of the young people she worked with, and the depth of their responses enables readers to gain multi-layered insights into their experiences. This emphasises how significant authentic participant engagement is, and how powerful it can be in both providing an in-depth examination of the subject and participants, and in engaging readers in the research as well.

Involving youth in research is essential to providing an accurate and reflective picture of their lives. This research provided young women with the opportunity to share their experiences in outdoor education, something which many had not formally been asked to do before. It is essential that girls feel valued and not patronised, “which can be implied by the researcher's concern to 'do something for' those being researched” (Morris, Woodward, & Peters, 1998, p. 221). Therefore, my listening and showing a genuine interest in the girls' stories aimed

to convey their opinions and experiences are of value, and are integral to the research project.

Conducting research on, and with, young people presents unique challenges, and requires a considered approach (Basit, 2010; Budbill, 2008; Ennis & Chen, 2012; Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2010; Griffiths, 1987; Loveridge, 2010; McNatty, 2014; Morris et al., 1998). In conducting research with adolescent girls I encountered several ethical and moral dilemmas. My work as a secondary school teacher provided me with a useful insight into common behaviours and dynamics that exist in adolescent life, however managing these as a researcher was challenging at times.

Griffiths (1987) and Morris et al. (1998) articulate the dichotomy that I experienced as a feminist researcher of adolescent girls. As noted previously, feminist research calls for an inclusive, responsive and non-hierarchical research design that actively engages and acknowledges the voices of the participants. However, aspects of the academic process of research, such as the interpretation of data and the role of the researcher, can provide significant barriers for feminist researchers, particularly when working with young people. Acker, Barry, and Esseveld acknowledge this challenge, stating, "our commitment to bringing our subjects into the research process as active participants...forced us to realise that it is impossible to create a research process that completely erases the contradictions in the relation between researcher and researched" (as cited in Griffiths, 1987, p. 11). Partly these challenges are brought about as a result of the research design; a lack of time makes it more difficult to develop relationships with participants that enables a more conversational form of interviewing to take place.

This study was conducted over a reasonably short period of time (11 months); however, I was conscious of the impact my relationships with the participants could have on the data. Gaining access to the participant's world requires sensitive negotiation when conducting research with young people (Enright & O'Sullivan, 2012; Fitzpatrick, 2010; Loveridge, 2010). Hamilton (2008) identifies

that adolescence is a period where peer relationships are highly valued, and independence from adult authority is sought. Gaining access into an adolescent peer group, or into an individual's social or personal world requires patience, time and a willingness to be vulnerable (Griffiths, 1987). While the majority of the participants in this study were open and enthusiastic in their engagement in the research, time was a significant limiting factor in enabling strong and personal relationships to be developed with the girls. However, this was managed by maintaining a friendly and open, yet cautious approach when engaging with the participants. This was to ensure the young women were not put off by an overenthusiastic adult, and also to emphasise the power, value and knowledge they brought to the research.

For the majority of the young women I worked with during the study, this was their first experience of being involved in a formal research project. Therefore, time was spent early in the data collection period explaining the research process to the girls. At the introductory meeting I provided an overview of the research and highlighted the research activities the young women could be involved with. I also explained how their involvement would contribute to the research and what I would do with the data I gathered. The girls had the opportunity to ask questions, which several did. Although I was conscious not to overwhelm them or provide details that were irrelevant to their involvement, this process aimed to provide the girls' with a greater sense of awareness and control of their participation. This also helped me to develop a positive rapport with the young women, as it demonstrated a willingness to share information, and a desire to create an open and collaborative research environment.

As raised by Allen-Collinson and Leledaki (2014), and Griffiths (1987), young people, particularly in their first involvement in interview situations, can find it challenging to articulate their thoughts and feelings clearly. Ineffability is a symptom of many interview respondents, regardless of their age. Emphasising the value of personal meanings and descriptions was essential in supporting the girls, as was stressing to them that there was no 'right' answer or way of describing a situation. Delivering questions in age-appropriate language also

supported the girls in their articulation of their experiences. For example, the question “how did you feel about the outdoors before taking this class?” enabled the girls to respond using language that was most comfortable and appropriate for them. A pilot interview was also conducted with an adolescent girl who was not involved in the research. This provided valuable feedback on the language and style of questioning, and informed the final list of questions used in the research interviews.

The relationships the researcher holds with significant adult figures in an adolescent’s life can also influence the researcher-participant dynamic (Fine & Sandstrom, 1988; Lynch, 1991). While completing this project I was on study leave from my position as a practicing outdoor education teacher. However, the participating schools, teachers and students were aware of my roles as both a teacher and a researcher. This meant I had to be very mindful of my position as a researcher when conducting observations, to ensure I wasn’t called upon to demonstrate, supervise or contribute to class activities. However, despite reminding teachers about my researcher’s role, there was one instance where this was disregarded by one of the outdoor education teachers. During a caving trip I attended with one of the participating schools, a teacher I have a good relationship with and who knows my teaching and technical capabilities, asked me to assist students as they moved down a vertical shaft in the cave. This role required me to position myself on a small ledge and offer physical and emotional support to the students as they made their way down the drop. I was unwilling to take up this role, however as he asked me in front of the class, and the other teacher was not nearby, I felt obliged to help. I was acutely aware of how this role might compromise my relationship with the research participants by requiring students to trust me early in our relationship, and by undertaking a role that is commonly associated with authority and experience. However, it appeared not to have an adverse effect. In fact, as the students made their way down the shaft, three of the young women involved in the research introduced themselves to me. Later, the same outdoor education teacher asked me to fulfil another safety role, but I politely declined stating I would rather stay with the main group, which he accepted.

As noted by Fitzpatrick (2010) and Griffiths (1987), the moral dilemma surrounding who to show allegiances to is common in research with young people. Taking 'sides' with the teacher, or performing tasks that indicate authority or notable competence, may damage any relationship that has been established with a respondent. Excluding the situation just described, I was able to successfully manage my role throughout the data collection period by reiterating my position as a researcher, and by introducing myself and the reason for my presence, to the whole class before beginning an observation session.

Ethics

As previously mentioned, a feminist ethic of care was applied throughout this project. This was not limited to the data collection period, but rather integrated into the planning, recruitment and analysis stages as well. It significantly informed the design of the research, including emphasising the need for me to facilitate the establishment of a supportive and caring interview environment, which appeared to enable participants to comfortably and freely share their stories. This approach is pivotal to feminist research, where the needs and experiences of the participants are valued and integrated, and traditional hierarchal research relationships are de-emphasised.

Research procedure

Three schools were purposefully selected from the South Island of New Zealand¹. The precise research location is not included to ensure the schools' identities remain anonymous. A range of student demographics and outdoor programmes were desired to provide greater depth to the research, and therefore purposeful selection was deemed appropriate. The selection was dependent on the teacher interest/consent and the availability of classes and subsequent fieldtrips that matched the research schedule. I provide a brief description of the three schools, and the recruited participants at the end of this chapter.

Ethical approval was sought and gained from the University of Waikato for this research. The schools' principals were initially approached and invited to

¹ At the time of the study, the researcher was not teaching or employed at any of these schools.

participate by email, and were provided with an information letter and consent form. With their permission I then approached the outdoor education teacher to inform them of the research, to gain their consent to access the senior female outdoor education students in their classes, and to allow me to attend their outdoor education classes and fieldtrips. Following teacher consent being obtained, participant and parental consent was sought². This was achieved by conducting an information session for the female outdoor education students (no male students were present). As many of the information sessions were conducted during or directly following an outdoor education lesson, the outdoor education teacher was often present. However, they were a passive observer or occupied in another task, and I encouraged the teachers not to discuss the research with the students. This was to ensure the teachers had no influence on the students' decision to participate in the study. Following the information session, students were provided with information letters and consent forms (see Appendix A for participant information letter). Interested students returned their consent forms to the schools' student office for me to collect. Again, this measure was used to protect the students' anonymity, and to reduce the teachers' potential influence on their decision.

Initially I was seeking three to four female students from each school, who were enrolled in a senior outdoor education programme, to participate in a focus group. This open entry was designed to enable a rich set of data to be collected from the girls surrounding their experiences in school-based outdoor education. While the focus groups at the two co-educational schools were conducted with three to four girls, only two students were recruited from the all-girls' school. These two students appeared keen to protect their anonymity and therefore a focus group was not conducted. A mixed procedure of purposeful and self-selection was used to recruit two to four senior female outdoor education students from each school, to participate in an individual interview and several classroom and field-based observations. This mixed approach was employed as a result of the varied number of female students enrolled in outdoor education at each participating school. While allowing students to self-select their

² Parent/guardian consent was required in accordance with the University's ethics regulations.

involvement may have resulted in a limited range of participant demographics, the students that were recruited from each school appeared to fairly represent the female student demographics in their outdoor education class. However, it must be acknowledged that this research is unlikely to represent the voices of girls who are less engaged in their outdoor education participation, as it is possible they decided not to partake in the research.

Ethical considerations

The maintenance of participant confidentiality is essential in all ethical research, and this is particularly so when involving young people (Loveridge, 2010). Consequently, all schools and participants were assigned (or in four cases the participants opted to select) a pseudonym, which makes them unidentifiable in the research. Partially identifiable data, such as age and ethnicity, was collected with consent and aided in determining relationships within the data. The purpose of this data was to provide me with a greater understanding and appreciation of the influences on participants' perspectives and experiences. To preserve the anonymity of the participants, this information has only been included in this thesis to broadly describe the participant group.

Participants had the right to withdraw from the research project at any time until data analysis began. They also had the opportunity to decline to answer or partake in a research task during the data collection activities, with no ill effect. Respondents had the right to access and review any personal information and data collected during the research. It is common practice for participants to be given the opportunity to review the interview transcript and this is consistent with a feminist approach to research (Morris et al., 1998). The girls who completed an individual interview were given the opportunity to review their transcript and make adjustments. Five young women asked for a copy of their individual interview transcript, however no one made alterations. This process was not extended to the participants of the focus groups, as the University of Waikato's ethical procedures states that focus group participants can only read/review the transcript if all consent and are present. Due to structural and time constraints, a review of the focus group transcript was not offered. While

no participant expressed concerns regarding their personal dialogue or information raised in the focus groups, I encouraged the girls to discuss any issues they had with me, so they could be addressed.

One ethical challenge that arose during the research involved maintaining the anonymity of the participating schools. The outdoor education community in Aotearoa New Zealand is reasonably small, where many practitioners know each other, and word of mouth means topical issues and events spread quickly. When discussing my research with friends and other outdoor professionals, many were surprised, even amused, that I would not disclose the names of the schools involved in the research. While I reiterated this was to protect the research participants and their schools, it was difficult to manage their reaction; my close relationship with many of these people meant they expected me to share these details with them. Teachers from the participating schools also inquired about the other schools involved in the research. While I took all steps to protect the anonymity of the participating schools and participants, and reiterated the importance of this to the educators I liaised with at each school, I was unable to prevent any conversations they may have had with others about the research and their students' involvement.

Methods of data collection

A qualitative multimethod approach was adopted for this research, which included focus groups, participant observations and individual interviews. Having the opportunity to gain insights into the girls' views and experiences of outdoor education through multiple perspectives, is a strength of this research design, as it not only enabled me to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon, but also to conduct reflective and critical research.

Focus groups

The collective (and conflicting) meanings of a shared experience is valuable to social researchers, as individual meaning and thought alone cannot provide adequate insight into the social culture of a particular setting or experience (Zink, 2005). Kehily (2004), Loveridge (2010), and Marfell (2012) note that providing

space for discussion between research participants can facilitate the gathering of rich experiences and meanings that have been informed by social capital. I included focus groups in this research with the aim to gain a greater insight into the gendered meanings and perceptions of the outdoors, and aspects of outdoor programmes that support female participation, as collectively viewed by the participants. A focus group was conducted at the two co-educational schools, which lasted between 30-40 minutes. Three and four girls attended each session respectively, and the participants in each focus group were from the same outdoor education class.

Some researchers have argued that teenagers, and particularly adolescent girls, feel more comfortable talking amongst their peers (Culp, 1998). Further, allowing discussion between research participants and the researcher to take place aided in breaking down the traditional power structures that can occur in research interview situations, and aligns with feminist research methods (Griffiths, 1987; Maynard, 1994). To maintain confidentiality, students agreed to keep the other students' information or views private. This was achieved through employing a 'trust circle' agreement, whereby each participant was only allowed to share their own personal information with others outside of the focus group. During the focus groups I asked students about their previous outdoor experiences, their participation in the outdoor education class, and the perceptions they and others had of outdoor education (see Appendix B for focus group guide).

Observations

Observations "provide researchers with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities" (Kawulich, 2005, para. 8). In the instance of this research, observing adolescent girls in their participation of outdoor education provided me with essential insights into their experiences, including the causes of particular events, ideas or emotions experienced by the girls. It also informed the direction of the individual interviews and was a means for me to check the congruency of the data gathered from focus groups and individual interviews.

Observations involved me attending two fieldtrips or lessons with each group of participants, with the intent to observe the research respondents as they participated in their outdoor education class. I assumed the role of a participant observer, as I needed to actively engage with some of the outdoor education activities (such as mountain biking and caving). During the observations I was looking for the interactions between the participants and their peers, the teacher and the environment (Ohman & Quennerstedt, 2012). I was also observing participants' reactions to particular activities or events, to enable me to gather further understanding and insight into the complexities of their experiences, and identify the reasons they attributed to their perceptions and meanings in specific situations. I attended theory and practical sessions involving mountain biking, rock climbing and caving, in which the research participants were involved in a range of tasks and roles. For example, students completed independent and group theory work, delivered individual presentations, and were responsible for making group decisions and managing equipment. The research participants regularly worked with their peers and teachers, although these student and inquiry centred approaches appeared to occur more frequently when the classes were outdoors.

As a participant observer I had periods of passive observation, which ranged from observations at a distance with limited interaction with participants, to being fully engaged and involved with the students and the activity (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2010; Kawulich, 2005). Through completing observations, I was able to develop a positive rapport with the research participants, which assisted me to facilitate effective individual interviews with them. One of the ways I sought to reduce traditional research power structures with the participants during the observation period was by sharing my observation notes with them (Griffiths, 1987; Morris et al., 1998). Two research participants asked what I was writing during their observations, and I showed them my notes. The girls were surprised at my willingness to share this information, however my notes didn't disclose personal or revealing details about them, their classmates or teachers, but rather included subtle observations and a running commentary. After scanning the page, they seemed content with the information I had gathered and returned to

the task they were completing. Later in the individual interviews, one of the girls commented that it was interesting to read my notes and she thanked me for sharing them with her. I believe my willingness to disclose my observation notes with these participants assisted in reducing the traditional research hierarchy, and enabled me to develop a stronger relationship with these girls.

Interviews

Semi-structured individual interviews with ten young women were employed to enable deep and personal perspectives and meanings of the girls' experiences in outdoor education to be collected. Semi-structured interviews "...are well suited for the exploration of the perceptions and opinions of respondents regarding complex and sometimes sensitive issues and enable probing for more information and clarification of answers" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 330). Ennis and Chen (2012) identify that semi-structured interviews are a common and effective method used in phenomenological and youth research, although they note interviewing is not simple or unproblematic. Indeed, young people may find clearly articulating their thoughts and emotions difficult or challenging, and some may feel uncomfortable sharing personal information with a relatively unknown person. However, the majority of the participants in this research appeared relaxed and spoke eloquently during their interviews. Employing semi-structured interviews provided me with greater insight into the girls' experiences. In particular, I was interested in what aspects of their experience the girls saw as significant and the meanings they assigned to them.

Interviews took place on school grounds in a quiet and private space, during school time, and as soon after the observations as possible. They generally lasted between 25 to 50 minutes and were audio-recorded. Apart from the two participants from the all-girls school, the interviews were conducted with the same girls who participated in the focus groups. The majority of the interviews were conducted in the empty outdoor education classroom, however two of the interviews were completed outdoors. Holding interviews outside was very effective, and appeared to have a positive effect on the girls' participation as the conversations flowed easily. These participants commented that they enjoyed

having their interview outside as they felt more relaxed in that environment. I recommend researchers consider conducting interviews outdoors, particularly for studies of a similar nature, as doing so created a more comfortable and familiar interview setting.

During the interviews I asked the participants questions about their involvement and experiences in outdoor education. More specifically, questions focused on the girls' perceptions of outdoor education and women in the outdoors, social interactions and the portrayal of gender in their outdoor education class, aspects of their outdoor education programme, and the motivations and barriers influencing their involvement (see Appendix C for interview schedule). The interviews were often highly reflective, as many of the students raised ideas and concepts that appeared personally significant to them, which were not part of the interview schedule. Being flexible and open to discussing new and different ideas strengthened the relationship I formed with the participants, and enabled richer data to be collected.

Data analysis

Data analysis plays a pivotal role in research; it is the process of meaning making and promotes the sharing of new knowledge. Essential to reflective and trustworthy findings, is the approach used to manage and interpret the data. Consistent with feminist phenomenology, 'Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis' (IPA) was identified as an appropriate method of analysis for this study. It is worth noting here that I gave substantial thought to the decision to employ IPA, and also considered 'Thematic Analysis' (TA) for this study. However, due to IPA's intent to deeply analyse the idiographic meaning of individual participant's experiences, I considered it to be a more appropriate method. Additionally, Smith et al. (2009) note that IPA is not prescriptive method, and therefore I adapted the analysis process by combining it with aspects of TA to analyse the focus groups and observations, which ensured the data was analysed using the most appropriate approach.

IPA is an increasingly popular qualitative methodology that was specifically developed for psychological research (Osborn & Smith, 2008). It continues to be most frequently applied in this field, however it has also been used within sport and health studies (Darker, Larkin, & French, 2007). As identified by Reid, Flowers, and Larkin (2005), "IPA aims to capture and explore the meanings that participants assign to their experiences" and "...maintains some level of focus on what is distant (i.e.: ideographic study of persons), but...also attempts to balance this against an account of what is shared" (p. 20). This meant analysis committed to the nuances of individual thought and feeling, whilst also allowing a broader analysis to take place.

IPA focuses on phrases or events that stand out in the data and draws attention to particular meanings or essences of an experience. To achieve this the transcribed interviews and observation material were re-read several times, and themes were noted and examined to identify their characteristics and significance. A theme is described by van Manen (1997) as an aspect of the structure of a lived experience or phenomenon, that is a particularly essential or revealing statement about the phenomenon. Once the individual data sets were analysed, the identified themes were used to construct a master themes table, whereby the themes in each data set were recorded chronologically. This enabled patterns, similarities and differences between data sets to be identified, and master themes were revealed that were representative of the wider group. Finally, I translated these master themes into narrative accounts by providing verbatim extracts. Particular care was taken to ensure that assumptions and generalisations were not made, but multiple meanings or intentions of the theme were explored (Dankoski, 2000).

It is important to recognise that themes may share common elements, however they are still individually constructed, and often generalisations should not be made (Garko, 1999; Smith et al., 2009). This is also consistent with feminist studies, which suggests that research findings should not generalise female experiences, based on the commonality of sex (Budbill, 2008; Rich, 2005). However, as Smith and Osborn (2007) point out, grouping similar themes and

aspects helps to draw conclusions and develop a sound discussion of the findings. Doing this did not intend to devalue the participants' individual perspective, but rather highlight commonalities and differences. I also believe that presenting the data in an accessible way enables other outdoor educators to make greater sense of the impact that outdoor education programming can have on their female students.

Feminist phenomenology adopts an inductive research approach, whereby preconceived assumptions and theories are excluded or withheld throughout the research process (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Simms & Stawarska, 2014). This enables the data to be presented in its most 'natural' form, without being generalised or fitted against previous experiences, and is considered to be an essential part of phenomenological studies. As raised by Larkin et al. (2006), IPA requires the researcher to critically analyse their own assumptions and perceptions of the subject. In doing so, the researcher endeavours to 'put aside' their beliefs and consider the data from the perspective of the participants. This has also been referred to as epoché or bracketing. However, Chan, Fung, and Chien (2013) posit that it is humanly impossible "for qualitative researchers to be totally objective", but acknowledge it is necessary for researchers to be aware of and minimise the impact that they may have on the research (p. 3). Similar debates about bracketing exist in feminist research, however feminist methodology encourages researchers to engage with their own values and perceptions, as they are inexplicitly "part of the process of discovery and understanding and also responsible for attempting to creating change" (Kelly, Burton, & Regan, 1994, p. 28). This suggests there may be some inconsistencies between feminist phenomenology and feminist research. As Griffiths (1987) notes, adopting such a position can assist in deconstructing patriarchal knowledge and power structures, and consequently bracketing is often applied less rigidly in feminist research compared to other qualitative studies. This is the approach I adopt in this study. Additionally, while these tensions between using a critical feminist perspective and feminist phenomenology were difficult to manage at times, I believe that acknowledging and embracing my researcher bias enabled me to use my own experiences and understandings to critique the phenomenon more

effectively, and also consider how the research findings may be applied to my own lived experiences.

Towards reflexivity: Researcher background

I am a practicing outdoor education teacher and have taught adolescent girls at a single-sex secondary school for the past five years. My professional and personal experiences of the outdoors and outdoor education have shaped this study, and I inevitably bring biases to this work. Having attended and taught in female single-sex secondary schools, I believe outdoor education programmes offered in all-girl environments frequently present fewer gender-related barriers for young women in their participation. Despite feeling supported and valued as an adolescent girl in my school outdoor education programme, on entering the field as a tertiary student, and later as an instructor/teacher, I became increasingly conscious of my 'femaleness' and the gendered practices and perceptions of the outdoors. These observations motivated me to critically examine the gendered philosophies and practices of outdoor education, and challenge those that I perceived as denying and limiting girls (and to a lesser extent boys) participation, in both single-sex and co-educational settings.

My experiences, values and perceptions of outdoor education enabled me to connect with the research on a deeper level, as I was able to relate to some of the young women's experiences and consider their position from both a participant and practitioner perspective. However, I was aware of the influence I could have on the research process and respondents. Reflexivity is important in all research, however Dowling (2006) suggests reflexivity is particularly vital in feminist research "as the researcher identifies with the women she is researching and must therefore be constantly aware of how her values, beliefs and perceptions are influencing the research process" (p. 14). As this research is concerned with adolescent girls' experiences of outdoor education, and not my own, I decided to take a more moderated approach. This means that while I have extensively reflected upon my own experiences and perceptions of female adolescent experience in outdoor education, I have been aware of, and acknowledged, how these may have influenced my analysis of the data.

The responding schools and participants

This research involves three New Zealand state secondary schools located in the South Island. All schools were assigned pseudonyms; Clearmount and Gravity College are co-educational schools and Parkview High School is a female single-sex school. These schools are located in urban and semi-rural communities of moderate socio-economic standing (rated between decile four and seven, out of ten - see Ministry of Education, 2015). They also share similar student demographics in terms of ethnic composition, with 1-2% of students identifying as Pasifika, 16-19 % as Māori, 2-8% as Asian, and the rest largely identifying as Pākehā /New Zealand European.

Ten young women from the three responding schools were recruited for the study; nine of the participants identify as New Zealand European/Pākehā, and one identifies as Māori. All girls were enrolled in a senior outdoor education programme at their school and were between 15 and 17 years old. A brief description of each girl is provided below to assist readers in developing some sense of these young women.

Charlotte

Charlotte grew up on a farm and this helped to instil a love and appreciation for the outdoors. She feels a great sense of freedom in the outdoors and is active in her pursuit for adventure and challenge. Charlotte's family regularly spends time together in the outdoors and this helps to reinforce her love for, and identification with outdoor education.

Claire

Outdoor education plays a big role in Claire's life; her family is heavily involved in the outdoors, and her participation helps to increase her self-esteem and social confidence. While Claire indicated she was confident in her practical abilities, during classroom lessons she generally preferred to initially sit back and watch her peers.

Flo

Flo enjoys the social environment of her outdoor education class, and has a particular interest in botany and environmental sustainability. The year 2015 was the first time Flo had participated in outdoor education; while she was keen to continue with the subject, she was concerned about the impact it might have on the rest of her schooling.

Abigail

Outdoor education is Abigail's favourite subject at school. She has participated in outdoor activities since she was young, and both her parents are actively involved in the outdoors. While Abigail noted that being a girl in outdoor education could be challenging, she preferred to work in co-education groups.

Poppy

The outdoors has been a big part of Poppy's upbringing and her extended family regularly spends times together at their holiday house in the bush. She has a real passion for the outdoors, and isn't afraid to speak her mind or challenge the gendered behaviours of her male peers. School is important to Poppy and she is dedicated to maintaining good grades.

Miri

Having moved from another city, Miri noted there were significantly fewer female students in her outdoor education class compared to her previous school. While Miri enjoys outdoor education, she noted her small frame meant she found some of the activities more challenging than her peers. She has clear opinions about social expectations and culture and isn't afraid to voice them.

Gracie

Gracie clearly values her participation in the outdoor education class, and sees it as a way to become "a better person" and develop meaningful relationships with her peers and teachers. During our interviews Gracie expressed interest in becoming an outdoor instructor. She describes herself as the class clown, and aims to inject a lot of fun into her outdoor education class.

Marie

Marie was partly motivated to join the outdoor education class by the recommendation of her brother, who had enjoyed the subject when he was at school. Marie said she is always willing to try new things even when she finds them particularly scary or challenging, and believes outdoor education has improved her self-confidence.

Sally

For Sally, her participation in outdoor education is very meaningful, as it symbolises the personal transformation she has made. Sally indicated she was once incredibly shy and anxious, which was surprising because she exuded confidence and real zest for life. At the time of the research, Sally was interested in pursuing a career in the Army.

Jinny

Jinny's involvement in outdoor education began when she first started secondary school. Jinny enjoys drama and this was evident in her classroom interactions, as she regularly spoke in different voices and acted out her experiences. While Jinny enjoys her involvement in outdoor education, and values the opportunities it gives her, she perceives her participation to be more of a hobby.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“I can get excited and be myself”:

Individual meaning and value in outdoor education participation

This first findings chapter examines the phenomenological meanings of the young women’s experiences in outdoor education. As noted earlier, phenomenology is concerned with the subjective and intimate details of experience. Despite participating in shared experiences, the girls constructed meanings that were of personal significance to them. Their process of meaning-making was often messy and complex, as illustrated by the number of initial themes that I generated from the individual interviews. In this chapter I aim to highlight the girls’ individual meanings of their experiences, balancing this with a wider commentary that identifies commonalities and differences in the perceived value and impact of their participation. Through the discussion and analysis in this chapter the follow research questions are answered:

- Why do adolescent girls participate in outdoor education and what outcomes do they experience?
- What meanings do adolescent girls draw from their participation in outdoor education?

Three main phenomenological themes were identified in the data. These themes address the role and construction of individual identity; the impact of developmental outcomes on the girls’ sense of self; and the relationships that were formed between people and the natural environment. Throughout this chapter the girls’ voices are interwoven with critical researcher analysis and relevant literature, with the aim of providing a deep insight into the nature of the young women’s experiences and meaning making.

Positive identity development

Identity development is a complex and dynamic process in which individuals and groups attempt to make sense of the world around them and their place within it. Irwin (2012) notes that “identity is the term used to explain who we are as individuals, communities, cultures and nations” (p. 151). Identity development is

considered a core task of adolescence, during which intense scrutiny of self takes place against a backdrop of cultural, social, political, and environmental circumstances (Kroger, 2007). For the participants in this research, outdoor education was a space where identity was demonstrated, developed, and negotiated.

For Claire and Charlotte, outdoor education and being outdoors was perceived as an innate part of who they were, which was attributed to their lifelong and committed participation. When asked when she first became interested in outdoor education Claire responded, “good question! I don’t know, I’ve been doing it all my life really”. Similarly, Charlotte explained, “my family is very adventure based...so I’ve been brought up around it. We all love it”. Both girls’ families were heavily involved in the outdoors, which meant they had frequent opportunities to participate in outdoor education. This reinforced the girls’ love for the outdoors and the integral role it had in their identity. In contrast, some of the other girls in this study had limited experience in outdoor education before their involvement in the class at school. However, this did not appear to have a negative effect on their sense of identifying with outdoor education. As Flo commented,

I knew that I always liked it – I never did any massive missions or anything like that, but I always knew that I liked it.

Being able to imagine the contribution that outdoor education could make to one’s sense of self, appeared significant in the process of these girls’ identity development. Klimstra (2013) suggests that “in adolescence, when individuals gain the cognitive capacities to engage in abstract thinking, they begin to search for sameness and continuation of self” (p. 80). For Poppy, Abigail and Gracie it was the perceived value and impact of their participation that was significant to their identity. Outdoor education gave them the opportunity to have fun, develop themselves, and use their skills in meaningful ways. Their participation enabled them to learn about their own capabilities and interests, which contributed to a greater sense of purpose and self-worth.

Through their engagement in outdoor education, six girls felt they had strengthened or reinforced their sense of identity, as their experiences affirmed the positive connection they felt between the subject and their sense of self. Sally identified that outdoor education had become an integral part of her identity and fulfilled a need or desire in her life:

I really, like if I had ever not taken it, like the one thing that I always think that – I can't imagine not having every week something to look forward to.

Sally's ineffability highlights the significance of outdoor education to her developing sense of who she was. For Claire, outdoor education was a space where she felt comfortable to express who she was, and noted "I'm happy, I can get excited and be myself". Having a positive environment that encourages young women to discover the many dimensions of themselves, is essential to their well-being and development (Krenichyn, 2005; McNatty, 2014). For these girls, outdoor education provided a space to explore and express who they were and wanted to be.

Participating in outdoor education also contributed to the development and awareness of other identities and personal attributes. Through outdoor education Gracie saw herself as someone who was "outgoing" and "willing to give things a go". She believed that these characteristics were essential to her participation in the outdoors, as well as in other areas of her life. Claire's experiences were less about developing specific attributes, and instead centred on her overall sense and value of self. She was able to be herself when participating in outdoor education and felt accepted in this space. Although she still struggled to find her place more widely within the school, outdoor education enabled her to manage this more easily:

I guess outdoor ed just helped me fit in and find more friends...I'm not as confident in most subjects and...I'm scared [people] are going to be more judgemental.

Several times throughout our interview Claire identified how she felt outdoor education enabled her to be “more herself”. Being in an environment where others shared her values and interests helped Claire to feel safe and supported to express herself. This is consistent with Smith, Steel, and Gidlow's (2010) findings, which identified secondary school students felt outdoor education provided them with a safe space to be vulnerable and reveal more of themselves to those around them. Claire also believed her outdoor education class was less judgemental compared to her other subjects. Although it is unclear what caused this, the combination of the emphasis on the ‘group’ in her outdoor education class, the effect of having shared values and interests with her outdoor education peers, and the particular cultural nuances that existed in the class, appear to be important. Claire’s experience reinforces the potential of outdoor education to be a learning area that supports adolescents in strengthening their sense of worth and identity, and in transferring these feelings to other times and spaces.

Tensions and challenges in identity development

Identity development is not a straightforward process, and for several girls in this research outdoor education challenged their evolving sense of self. In particular, girls’ perceptions of outdoor education, and how well they believed they fitted this preconceived image, appeared to cause tension. Sally strongly identified with outdoor education, however this was challenged when she considered her identity against her own and others’ perceptions of outdoor education. She hinted at these tensions when talking about her decision to take the subject:

Um, the thing is I wasn’t going to take it [outdoor education] in year 11 and then when I told them [my friends and family] they all looked at me like I was *nuts*! Cause I was the most unsporty person there!...[But] I really enjoyed it, and then I was like ‘I’m definitely not going to take it in year 12!’ And then I took it in year 12! (Emphasis original)

While Sally frequently stated the important role outdoor education played in her life and identified with many characteristics she associated with the subject, she also questioned her identity, as she felt other aspects of who she was did not

align with her outdoor participation. Jinny and Marie also expressed a perceived mismatch between their sense of who they were and the 'typical' outdoor education participant:

Kinda?! I dunno, I've got the talking part down!...Hmm, I wouldn't see myself as a typical outdoorsy person! But I do enjoy outdoor ed. (Jinny)

Not really! I mean sort of, but I don't see myself as particularly brave, or I'm not the most confident person. Yeah, just outdoor ed people tend to be very outgoing though. (Marie)

As noted by McNatty (2014), identity "includes not only who you think you are and are capable of, but also who others think you are", and is often related to the narrow view of what constitutes as 'appropriate' female behaviours (p. 5). This is mirrored in the above comments; the girls had a sense of what they were expected to be like in outdoor education and this conflicted with their own experiences and perceptions of themselves.

Identity is not a static or singular concept but is continually shifting as a result of changes in circumstances and experience. A person may experience multiple dimensions of their identity at one time and move fluidly between them, depending on the requirements of a situation or their role within it (Stets, 1995). Gracie and Sally provided examples from their outdoor education experiences where they simultaneously managed their multiple identities and consciously altered the meaning and emphasis of these:

...We wear make-up in our own time...but we're not like 'ewww, no I don't want to touch it!' We can pretty easily switch between personalities and be like 'mountain' [said in a deep masculine voice]. (Sally)

Dilley and Scraton (2010), and Little (2002) argue that women are not powerless in their ongoing search for identity, which suggests these girls demonstrated agency in their negotiation of their outdoor education identity. However, at times the young women felt they were unable to manage the tensions that

existed between their multiple senses of self. Claire in particular, saw her identity as an “outdoor ed’er” and a school student as conflicting:

I like enjoy it [outdoor education] the most but then – and focus on it a bit much. Because we can’t get merit or excellence, so to endorse I need to focus on other subjects. But if we could I probably would [focus on outdoor education more]. (Claire)

Influenced by the maintenance of the mind/body dualism regarding the value of particular knowledge, learning and experience, practical subjects such as physical and outdoor education are commonly marginalised in secondary school education, both in Aotearoa New Zealand and internationally (Culpan & Bruce, 2007; Kudláček, 2009; Paechter, 2006b). In the comment above, Claire refers to her need or desire to “endorse” in her subjects; typically, endorsement (a higher level award indicating academic excellence) is only awarded in traditional ‘academic’ subjects such as Mathematics or Geography. As a result, some students feel pressured to, or need to for entrance into tertiary study, focus on more traditional ‘academic’ subjects, even if these subjects are personally less meaningful or enjoyable to them. This shows a hierarchising of subjects within the current school system in Aotearoa New Zealand; the prioritising of subjects of the ‘mind’ and the marginalisation of subjects that involve the moving ‘body’, including outdoor education, which some of the participants in this study found problematic.

Claire and Charlotte expressed a desire to engage more fully and reinforce their identity with outdoor education, but were held back from doing so by self-imposed and structural factors. Charlotte appeared almost unwilling to let herself enjoy and embrace her outdoor identity, as this conflicted with who she and others thought she should be. For example, in speaking about future career decisions she noted she “loved the outdoors so much”, yet pondered whether she needed to “get that career where you sit behind a desk” or could actually pursue working in the outdoors. This dilemma seemed to stem from the perception that having a career in the outdoor sector was less acceptable or valued compared to other types of work. Charlotte attempted to negotiate this

by dividing her time between the different dimensions of her identity and other her personal and school commitments, but seemed to be left feeling dissatisfied. Identity conflicts and incongruences can have negative effects on an individual's self-esteem and mental health. Mann, Hosman, Schaalma, and Vries (2004) suggest this is particularly poignant for adolescents, as they frequently seek approval and support from peers and family members in their identity development.

Developing individual competency

Outdoor education provided the girls with an opportunity to develop various aspects of themselves, such as their feelings of self-worth, technical ability in outdoor activities, and perseverance. The young women saw these outcomes as particularly meaningful and regularly referred to the impact their increased levels of competency had on their outdoor participation and lives. Budbill (2008) notes adolescents seek experiences that enable them to build on their individual assets and capacity. For many of the girls in this study, outdoor education helped to fulfil this need. Not only did they hold the belief that their participation was of value to them, but they thought anybody would benefit from engaging in outdoor education. As Flo said "I think it's a subject that everyone *should* do because everyone will get something out of it" (emphasis original). The young women often referred to the outcomes of their participation as "skills", although this term was loosely applied and included technical (activity-related), personal and social competencies. Marie noted being able to demonstrate competency was not only reliant on her technical ability, but the belief that she was capable of performing the skill.

Abigail, Claire and Gracie not only saw their outdoor education participation as relevant to their current lives, but could also envisage how the skills they learnt could be used in the future. Claire's comment was illustrative of this point, and noted her skills were applicable to a range of situations:

It teaches me a lot of skills that I'm going to use later in life. Even stuff like social interaction, basic maintenance on bikes and stuff that you are always going to use, even just common sense.

Whittington (2006) and Culp's (1998) research into the outdoor experiences of adolescent girls also found that young women believed the skills learnt on their outdoor course were transferrable to other areas of their lives.

An increase in self-reliance and independence was often referred to in conversations involving technical skill development. Many adolescents are occupied with gaining independence from authority figures and testing their capabilities in situations where there is reduced adult input (Collins & Steinberg, 2006). Poppy saw the outdoor education class as a way to increase her skills so that she was able to participate in the outdoors independently. Jinny shared this desire and wanted to be able to "go places outside of class and know what you are doing as well, not just having to have an instructor with you". Similarly to the women in Boniface's (2006) research, the young women in this study felt the skills they learnt also contributed to greater autonomy in other areas of their lives. Sally felt she would struggle to develop the skills and confidence to do things independently without her participation in the outdoor education class. This is a significant point as it suggests that for these young women, outdoor education was perceived as being of value across situations and time.

While it is essential that all students are given the opportunity to develop their technical competency (Warren & Loeffler, 2006), many of the skills the girls referred to in their experiences were centred around those that could easily be applied independently and in a range of situations. Zink (2004) notes that opportunities for students to demonstrate personal responsibility and independence are rare in technical and pursuit-focused programmes. The girls' experiences indicate that spending time developing solid foundation skills, such as navigating in a range of weather conditions and making group decisions, is likely to be more empowering and meaningful to participants than developing

competencies in areas where ongoing supervision or technical support is required.

Outdoor education frequently requires students to interact with their peers in situations that necessitate tolerance and vulnerability. Developing skills to effectively manage these interactions was considered by the girls to be an important part of developing competency in outdoor education. Miri and Claire occasionally found the outdoor education class socially overwhelming. However, Miri did note that developing her social skills enabled her to enjoy the class more, as she was able to negotiate challenging situations more easily and with greater confidence. As Gracie noted, these skills were seen to be valuable and transferrable to other areas of life:

People skills are so important. If you're going for a job you can't be someone that...hasn't got good people skills, unless you want to be behind a computer.

Despite the differences in the girls' social experiences, Miri, Claire and Gracie pursued and valued the opportunity to develop their social skills. These findings are consistent with those identified by McNatty (2014), where young women described themselves as being more confident and capable to interact with a wider group of people as a result of their outdoor education participation. Clearly, social competence is not only seen as a desirable and necessary attribute by young women, but outdoor education is perceived to be a suitable context in which it can be developed.

Self-belief and success

It is widely acknowledged outdoor programmes have the potential, and frequently do contribute to and support, the psychological development of participants (Anderson, Schleien, McAvoy, Lais, & Seligmann, 1997; Davidson, 2001; Quay, Dickinson, & Nettleton, 2002; Thurber, Scanlin, Scheuler, & Henderson, 2007). The participants of this study identified their outdoor education participation had an overall positive impact on their mental and emotional development and well-being. While positive outcomes did not always

eventuate, experiencing and overcoming mental and physical challenges, and learning how to support both themselves and their peers through their outdoor education experiences, were regularly cited as being the main contributing factors to increased levels of resilience and mental capacity. These outcomes clearly link to the vision and intentions of the Health and Physical Education curriculum by providing opportunities “to develop personal and social skills” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46), and also by extending learning in relation to the underlying concepts and holistic notions of well-being (Ministry of Education, 2007). The key competencies outlined in the New Zealand curriculum including, “managing self, relating to others, [and] participating and contributing” (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 12), also appear to be targeted.

Several students in this study expressed the desire to become “a better person” and develop or further enhance positive aspects of themselves. Self-improvement, as Flo and Gracie exemplify, was often related to being confident, open to trying new things and extending capabilities past what was initially thought was possible:

Oh, just giving everything a go and tryna find something that really, that...that you really love I think...And sort of getting to know yourself as well and, you know, your strengths and weakness and what you need to work on. (Flo)

Well obviously the experiences but I think just being a better person. Like being more open to trying new things and open to talking to people and willing to step out of my comfort zone and give things a go, even though it might be hard or it might not be something I want to do. (Gracie)

Outdoor education was seen to be an enjoyable and constructive way to achieve these goals. Central to this perspective was the experience of success and achievement; achieving something that was perceived as difficult or uncomfortable produced strong positive emotions that in turn, reinforced the strengths and capacity of the individual. Gracie felt a great “sense of achievement” from completing a task, particularly when she “did it all by

[her]self". As suggested by Garrett (2004), the opportunity to demonstrate competency through achieving goals and tasks, resulted in a sense of empowerment that was relished by the girls. It is worth noting here that while the girls were encouraged to share a wide range of experiences during the interviews, the young women primarily recalled those involving positive outcomes and emotions. While this may indicate their experiences were overwhelmingly positive, it may be that they were unwilling to share more challenging or negative stories with me, as this may have increased their sense of vulnerability, or because such experiences were less meaningful to them compared to positive ones.

The types of achievements the participants referred to in their interviews covered a range of activities, settings and engagement levels, as the following descriptions illustrate:

And also, like tramping – the next morning waking up and knowing that you've got through the night. It's a weird feeling that you've done it – it's not like it's a big achievement but you've done it! You've manage to sleep and...the tent hasn't fallen down or it hasn't leaked or... (Gracie)

I think...the other day actually...caving, because I'm also very scared of that. And that was pretty memorable...because I was pretty proud of myself that I actually did the squeeze! You know, it was a cool moment for me! (Marie)

Although it would be easy to assume that a significant challenge or event needs to be overcome to produce strong and lasting positive emotions surrounding a person's capabilities, simple successes were often just as memorable or meaningful for these girls. Recognising and celebrating achievements, which may appear to be insignificant to others, appeared to be a vital step in helping the young women feel good about themselves. Erkut, Fields, Sing, and Marx (1996) suggest that "...particularly among females, who tend to attribute their achievements to external factors or good fortune rather than innate ability, success does not guarantee high self-esteem" (p. 54). While the young women in

this study appeared to see themselves as being central to their achievement, it would be unwise for educators to assume this is always the case. Ensuring that participants feel accepted for who they are, and for their particular achievements, appears significant to supporting enhanced self-esteem (Mitten, 1992; Reasoner, 2010).

Self-belief creates, and is a result of success. Embodying self-belief was an important contributing factor to the girls' achievement, and positive self-talk and imagery was often used as a strategy when faced with a difficult task. The girls felt this increased their likelihood of success. Verbalising self-belief was also used by Sally to 'convince' herself and others she was capable of achieving an activity:

It's one of those things where you tell yourself you can do it and in your head you're like 'I can do it!' And then you tell everyone you can do it – you can do it! (Sally)

But you just think that you *can* actually do it, so yeah. Sort yourself out and get to the top, or finish this, or whatever you're trying to do... (Poppy – emphasis original)

This demonstrates that self-belief can have a positive and desirable effect on an individual's perceived and actual competence. Encouraging and teaching students to apply strategies such as these, may help adolescents to have a stronger sense of self-belief, which does not rely on external support in their pursuit of success.

Claire's experiences of achievement played a different role in the development of her self-esteem than for the other research participants. As noted previously, Claire's identity was strongly tied up in her outdoor education participation, with it having a marked impact on her overall sense of self-worth and competency. Claire saw outdoor education as her "...time to achieve well, try my hardest and pretty much make the best memories I can". She was aware of her capacities in the outdoors as a result of the achievements she had made and been recognised

for. These related to the development and performance of technical skills, as well as her ability to open up and interact more confidently with her peers:

I think it has made me...I guess because I wasn't in a great space before I came here [to Parkview High School] and I got into this [outdoor education] in the beginning of year nine, it kinda opened me up and made me happier. And then I acted better at home and around other people.

While Claire's success in outdoor education reinforced her ability and acceptance in outdoor education, it also contributed to her overall sense of self-worth. She was able to fit into school more easily by having confidence in herself to make new friends. Marie and Sally experienced similar transferrable outcomes, saying participating in outdoor education had helped to increase their general confidence:

I used to be the most unconfident person in the world – I couldn't talk to anyone I didn't know!...I think outdoor ed's *really* helped with my confidence. (Sally – emphasis original)

For the girls in this study, developing their mental capacity and fortitude was generally associated with experiencing fear, challenge or hardship. All of the students described challenging experiences where they had learnt a lot, although several commented that at times during an activity they felt overwhelmed or scared. As Brooks (1998) notes, the development of resilience is reliant on participants feeling a general sense of empowerment or reward. The young women felt that they possessed, or were capable of developing, attributes that enabled them to persevere during challenging activities. This is consistent with Whittington, Aspelmeier, and Budbill (2015), who found outdoor recreation programmes were capable of contributing to increased levels of resilience in adolescent girls. However, as Dingle and Kiewa (2006), and Estrellas (1996) suggest, the presence of too much fear or challenge can be counterproductive in helping young women learn to manage themselves in challenging situations. This is important, as it highlights a delicate and reflective approach may be useful in providing opportunities for girls to develop their resilience and competency.

Indeed, Marie noted the fear she experienced during some of the practical activities reduced her ability to perform a task or enjoy herself.

Relationships with people

Outdoor education and recreation was frequently used by the participants as a way to connect with their family and friends, including those who were not in their outdoor education class. Poppy talked about going on “big cousin tramps” with her 12 “outdoorsy” cousins, while Claire felt she got to know people who she “hasn’t actually talked to before” really well through outdoor education. Sharing their enjoyment of the outdoors with others and experiencing an activity together, was identified as a good way to create meaningful and intimate relationships. The girls described these connections as being deeper than the relationships they formed with classmates in other subjects. As Gracie commented, in turn this meant “you kinda feel, like at the end of last year I felt like I didn’t want to leave my outdoor ed class”. A participant in Loeffler's (2004b) study identified that the “distraction free environment” and necessity for high levels of trust and cooperation between participants, meant outdoor education experiences were conducive to developing strong and positive relationships. This sentiment was shared by Jinny, who felt a great sense of responsibility for her peers’ safety:

Yeah, just...and you get friends out of it as well. Cause people, well they kind of *have* to trust you when you’re belying them [cause] they could quite possibly fall to their death! (Jinny – emphasis original)

To Jinny, trust was ‘forced’ upon her class through the demands of the activity. Although this could suggest a lack of participant control, Jinny’s description of her role in this situation appeared to be one of power and responsibility, demonstrating that vulnerability can create opportunity for personal growth and relationship development. While Jinny felt empowered in this interaction, it would be unwise to assume this is typical of her experiences, or those of other outdoor education students.

Forming and developing relationships through shared experiences were not limited to those involving peers; establishing relationships with teachers was also noted by the girls as being a valued and desirable outcome of outdoor education participation:

Yeah, and they [the outdoor education teachers] try and connect to us.
(Jinny)

And you don't, I don't feel like I'm as connected with any other class as I feel I am with my outdoor ed class. And like I'm not as connected with my teachers as I am with Mr K... (Gracie)

Many of the young women in this study, particularly those from Granity College, treasured the strong relationship they had with their outdoor education teacher. They identified their relationship with Mr K was very different to those they had with their other teachers; the young women felt Mr K treated them more like an equal and the relationship was founded upon mutual respect, trust and care. Shooter, Paisley and Sibthorp (2012), suggest these attributes are typical of the relationships that frequently develop between outdoor practitioners and their participants. Clearly, outdoor education provided the girls with opportunities to develop a range of relationships that are meaningful, and to also fulfil the desire to form deep personal connections with others. Of course it is important to recall that the young women in this study self-selected their participation and their experiences will certainly not represent all female students in outdoor education classes.

The impact of a safe and supportive community is significant to positive relationship development in outdoor education (Bandoroff & Scherer, 1994; Sammet, 2010; Shooter et al., 2012). The sense of being part of group that shares your values and accepts you for who you are is powerful. Different girls shared the significance of this in their own way:

With my class it's sooo much fun!...Even though it's hard...you get a lot of support from people in your class, even if you're lagging, everyone is

going to wait for you. Which is cool to know that they aren't just gonna race off and leave you behind. (Abigail)

I love having moral support and that's probably the best thing ever...
(Sally)

And everyone was like there for you, and *everyone* was supporting *everyone*. And everyone was getting on so well and no-one was left out and oh! [Overwhelmed by positive emotion] Just the feeling of being a team... (Gracie – emphasis original)

Being a member of the 'outdoor ed' class provided a space where the students could participate in their shared interests together, and this helped to reinforce and validate these aspects of themselves (McNatty, 2014). But more than that, belonging to a group where a common understanding existed between members, created more instances where the girls felt unconditionally supported. As discussed in the identity section of this chapter, being able to express your identity, without fear of ridicule, is invaluable to an individual's emotional and spiritual well-being. For these young women, outdoor education was a learning environment that typically supported and nurtured their sense of self.

Contrary to other research, not all of the girls in this study were motivated to participate in outdoor education by social factors (Boniface, 2006; Loeffler, 2004b; Sammet, 2010). As discussed earlier in this chapter, outdoor education often requires frequent and intimate social interaction. Both Claire and Miri identified that outdoor education could be socially demanding, and at times they found this challenging. Claire commented she was "really awkward when meeting people and getting to know people". Furthermore, a major influence on the girls' emotional and behavioural response to social interactions in outdoor education correlated to the size of the group they were working with:

Yeah, some people did leave [the outdoor education class]. And so that's good, cause last year, last year you couldn't really have one on one time, cause it [the class] was a little bigger. (Miri)

Smaller groups allowed the girls to get to know people on an individual basis and this helped to strengthen their peer relationships, leading to increased feelings of comfort and trust. Many educators are aware that students enter their subject with varying levels of social confidence and competence, and adapt their programmes to suit. Despite this, Miri and Claire's experiences serve to remind us of the social challenges some individuals may face in their participation. Considering things like group size, activity progression, and providing students with the opportunity to choose their level of social engagement in an activity, may assist students who find these aspects of outdoor education overwhelming.

Relationships with the natural environment

In the same way that a desire to develop human relationships was expressed, the young women identified that becoming familiar with and developing a connection to the natural environment was a goal of their outdoor education participation. Charlotte "liked being in nature" and felt it was an inherent and assumed part of her outdoor education participation. While for Abigail and Jinny, outdoor education provided them with a chance to explore their local place and see things they hadn't previously:

I feel like seeing an area is like really important... (Abigail)

The majority of internationals [students] have seen more of New Zealand than I have...Yeah, like I'm so jealous of them. It sucks! (Jinny)

Developing an understanding and appreciation of the natural environment appeared to help Abigail and Jinny reinforce their sense of identity as New Zealanders (see Straker, 2014), and enhanced their outdoor education experience. Furthermore, Claire and Charlotte described how their experiences in the natural environment gave them a sense of freedom. The 'freeness' of the natural environment, where there were few perceived barriers encouraged internal freedom; the ability to do and be what they wanted. Charlotte noted "I feel free. Not restricted as much. Which is definitely what I like, cause being brought up on a farm you can do whatever you want almost". For these girls the outdoors was a liberating space, and was seen to be oppositional to the indoors

environment (Straker, 2014), in both its physical character and the opportunities it presented.

As described by Cosgriff et al. (2009) in their analysis of women's relationships with nature, the participants' meanings were "heavily embedded in the sensation and the sensory rather than the abstract or conceptual" (p. 25). It was the girls' embodied experiences in the outdoors, where they were able to connect body and mind with nature, that provided a sense of comfort and empowerment. The potential of time in nature to promote well-being has been widely noted by researchers (see Blaschke, 2013). Indeed, the feelings described by Claire and Charlotte indicate that being and doing in the outdoors added meaning to their lives. School-based outdoor education programmes that enable students to engage with the nature environment may have significant positive outcomes for their health and well-being.

Being in the outdoors provoked a range of embodied responses from the students. For some it was elementary, where the environment caused participants to feel alive and refreshed; while for others their reaction was more complex:

Being outside, having fresh air, getting your heart pumping [laughs].

(Charlotte)

Last year when we went to [the mountain], the snow was probably up to my waist and it was like, sort of blizzard wind. It took ages just to get to the hut but it was pretty but not pretty...Yeah, the snow was all powdery – amazing but not amazing! (Miri)

Engaging with and experiencing nature, in all its forms, was important to Miri and helped to deepen her relationship with the environment, but as the comment above illustrates, at times this was complex and contradictory. Miri's ability to manage herself in the challenging conditions altered the meaning she gave to both her relationship with the environment and her overall perception of

it. This highlights the subjectivity of meaning-making and the impact experience has on this process.

The girls' relationships with nature were not just limited to the more 'superficial', such as an appreciation of beauty or use of the environment for pleasurable activities. Indeed, Flo and Charlotte described their relationship with the environment as being core to their sense of self and they cared deeply for the places they visited. This feeling is referred to as having a 'sense of place' and is often developed through frequent and intimate interaction with a specific environment (Stewart, 2003). Charlotte spoke of her enjoyment at "blending into the natural environment and...not causing any destruction", and acknowledged that when she was familiar with a place, it was like she knew the "path off by heart! It's like 'oh yeah, that tree!'". Jinny's embodied knowledge of a particular setting was evident in her musings about her local beach, "oh yes!...What's the tide? How about you get the book – nah, it's alright, it's high tide!". While not all of the young women in this study expressed such a strong desire to connect with the environment, it appears that outdoor education offers students the opportunity to engage with the natural environment in ways that may bring about a positive and meaningful relationship with it.

These findings draw parallels to the place-responsive work of Brian Wattchow and Mike Brown (2011). They propose that experiencing a specific place regularly, through a variety of means, and in different conditions can help people to develop a deep understanding about what is in that place, what meaning that place has (both collectively, and personally) and how that place is related to, or is different from other places. With this understanding comes a sense of care and responsibility; Charlotte's first comment is indicative of her desire to nurture her existing relationship with the natural environment, whilst causing no harm to it. Flo also expressed an intense need to reduce the human impact on the environment. Although Miri's relationship with the environment reminds us this is not a certain, or straightforward process; Jinny, Flo and Charlotte's experiences reinforce that outdoor education can and does play a significant role in

supporting young people to develop a positive relationship, attitude and behaviour towards the environment.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the phenomenological significance and impact outdoor education participation had on these young women's lives. There were aspects of individual significance, however in examining the girls' experiences it became apparent that there were commonalities running through them. Reflecting upon the questions surrounding the motivations, outcomes and meanings that these adolescent girls construct through their participation, it is clear that outdoor education provides significant opportunity for growth and fulfilment. The answers to these questions have been embedded and discussed throughout this chapter, and will be extended in subsequent chapters.

I expected that identity and the influence of outdoor education participation on the development of identity would arise throughout this research, however the extent of this was surprising. The girls' varied experiences demonstrates outdoor education can act as both a positive and negative context for identity development. While the ability of several young women to successfully negotiate their identities through their outdoor education participation suggests positive social change, deeper analysis indicates that challenges and complexities still exist for many girls in their pursuit of a strong and valid sense of identity. It is important for girls to feel their identity in outdoor education is valid, and can co-exist with other aspects of their lives. Schools and outdoor educators play a pivotal role in supporting adolescents to develop a strong and coherent sense of self (Beyers & Çok, 2008; White & Wyn, 2004) and the findings of this research encourage practitioners to reflect on the potential contributions and impacts outdoor education can have on the development of students' identities.

Outdoor education provided these young women with the opportunity to experience successes that were meaningful and relevant to them. Additionally, multiple links were identified between the outcomes of the girls' experiences and the intentions of the national, and Health and Physical Education

curriculums (Ministry of Education, 1999, 2007). For example, participating in outdoor education enabled the girls to work towards personal goals and helped them to actualise the person they wanted to become. While many identified the real and perceived transfer of these skills to other areas of their lives, Brown's (2010) caution that evidence of transfer is often vague and empirical suggests further examination of this aspect of their experiences is required. Despite this, the girls' experiences clearly demonstrate outdoor education's capacity to positively contribute to young women's development and emotional well-being.

Forming and developing relationships were an important aspect of the young women's experiences in outdoor education. These relationships added value and meaning to their participation. While aspects of these findings were not unexpected or uncommon, several key findings developed from the data. The social challenges that some girls face in their participation in outdoor education, and their ability to manage and negotiate these, needs to be considered by educators in curriculum and pedagogical decision making. The outdoor education class also provided these young women with the opportunity to develop deep, trusting and supportive relationships with each other and their teachers. Belonging to a community that shared core values and interests had a positive effect on the girls' identity and sense of worth. The desire to become familiar with and develop a connection to the natural environment was identified by many girls. Experiencing place in a range of contexts and conditions enhanced their relationship with the environment and contributed to their enjoyment of outdoor education. These girls' embodied experiences in nature made them feel 'alive' and as their appreciation and knowledge of places grew, several students identified a deep sense of care and responsibility towards these places.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“I come back from camp...and I’m like ‘why do we live like this?’”:

The impact of social systems on experience

In this chapter I discuss the impact social systems have on outdoor education experiences. Here I draw on Bronfenbrenner's (1979) understandings of social systems as representing those social settings and contexts that influence the individual, including peer groups, teachers and schools, and broader societal influences such as popular culture. A feminist phenomenological lens is used to analyse the subjective and intersubjective aspects of the young women’s experiences in outdoor education. In particular, this chapter will examine how social systems and gender constructs influence the nature and outcomes of their participation. As identified earlier, feminist phenomenology is concerned with describing the lived experiences of girls and women and challenging traditional patriarchal structures that exist within their lives (Fisher, 2010; McRobbie & McCabe, 2012). Using this lens assists in providing critical insights into the young women’s outdoor education experiences, in respects to the following research questions:

- What influences adolescent girls’ participation and level of engagement in the outdoors?
- What aspects of outdoor education programmes support and hinder adolescent girls’ participation in the outdoors and the subject?

During data analysis it appeared that three major social systems influenced the girls in their participation of school-based outdoor education. As such, this chapter is presented in three sections which consider the influences of 1) peers, 2) teachers, programme design and schools, and 3) wider societal perceptions. Within each section I examine and critique aspects of the girls’ experiences as influenced by these social systems, including the girls’ perceptions of challenge and competition, peer interactions, valued characteristics of the outdoor education subject, and the construction and performance of gender. While some of these concepts were raised in the previous chapter, they were predominantly considered from an embodied/phenomenological perspective. In this chapter I further extend these ideas by examining how the immediate and broader social

context influenced the girls' experiences, and their understandings of themselves and the world around them.

Peer influences: Complexities and contradictions

As identified in the first findings chapter, having the opportunity to develop and practice their individual competencies was particularly meaningful to the young women. Whittington et al. (2015) identify the significant role peer relationships have in enabling young women to overcome challenging situations and achieve more than they thought possible. For Miri and Claire, knowing that other people believed in their capabilities helped them to take positive risks, persevere and successfully negotiate the challenges they faced:

It also makes you [more] confiden[t], if you know people will support you even if you can't do it...I was struggling to get up the next bit [of the rock climbing wall] and everyone started to encourage and help me...I got a little bit further! Further than I would have. (Claire – edited for clarity)

Claire and Marie saw aspects of outdoor education as competitive and were motivated to extend and better themselves by internally competing with their classmates:

Trying to beat everyone means that we push ourselves...By trying to beat everyone else, even if you are just doing it subconsciously, you are pushing yourself to achieve better, so therefore you will do better.
(Claire)

This sentiment was shared by Marie, who noted that competing against classmates "kinda makes you want to do more". For these girls, competition was not seen as negative or intimidating, but instead was used as a tool to increase opportunities for self-development. However, this was not the case for all of the young women; Sally who was in the same class as Marie at Granity College, felt that competitiveness did not exist nor had a place in outdoor education. Dingle and Kiewa (2006), and Warren and Loeffler (2006) note competition can have a negative impact on women's engagement in outdoor education, particularly the development of technical skills when experienced in a co-educational setting.

However, the findings of this research provide an alternative perspective, which may suggest that when framed positively (that is competition for internal rather than external reward) and when girls feel empowered in their experiences, competition can act as a motivator and tool for personal development.

While all of the young women in this study recalled stories where their peers had a positive influence on their experiences, at times the dominance of male students in the co-educational classes limited the girls' opportunities for engagement. For example, Jinny and Poppy explained:

In this class the guys tend to do a lot. Like if you're going to go walking up those [hills] they'll be like 'yep, I'll take that pack'. Like a lot of the girls are like 'nah nah, it's alright, I've got it' but the boys are like 'nah' and they'll just take it off your back and walk it up. They participate a lot!
(Jinny)

And one of us girls, we'd be more than happy to do it [light the fire] but that's just something that they'd [boys] like to do. Yeah, well it's like well 'if you all wanna do it that's fine by me', I'm not going to come in and go 'no! I want to do it!' [said in a demanding feminine voice] (Poppy)

The girls' behaviour expressed in these quotes is consistent with the view that "women are socialized not to outperform men and thus inhibit themselves, rather than emasculating a man" (Mulqueen, 1992, p. 4). Prince (2004) and Whittington (2006) note girls quickly learn that in order to be accepted and valued by society, they must adhere to social norms, which denotes male superiority. Jinny's attempts to assert herself were overpowered and while frustrated, she appeared to accept the outcome as inevitable. Similarly, Poppy's interest in lighting the camp fire was diminished by the boys' overt enthusiasm and she was unwilling to challenge them, as she saw this as an overreaction and not in the class's best interests.

In the few practical situations where the girls successfully rejected the boys' assistance and completed a task alone, or with other female students, they expressed a high level of satisfaction and empowerment:

We were left to sort it out [a broken tent pole], and so then we had to use like our initiative and problem solving, and we wrapped up this cloth with some tape and made it all work. And like, the boys were like 'oh do you need help with that?' type thing and we were like 'no! We've got it, we've got it!' (Gracie)

Being able to demonstrate their competency, without male support, helped the girls identify and reinforce their ability and strength, and encouraged them to seek out similar situations (Culp, 1998; Whittington, 2006). Budbill (2008) encourages educators to consider the impact gendered assumptions and behaviours have on girls' outdoor participation and to support them in recognising and valuing their strength as a woman.

At times, male students resisted female leadership or dominance. For example, during a caving trip with Granity College I observed the following interaction:

Gracie volunteered to be the back leader of the group, where she was tasked with checking no-one was behind her to ensure everyone got out of the cave safely. Mr K explicitly told the group no-one was allowed to be behind Gracie, however when the group began moving three boys positioned themselves behind her. She seemed undeterred by this and instead when counting the group would turn around and check that the boys were still behind her.

Although subtle, the boys' behaviour could be seen to be indicative of their unwillingness to accept Gracie's leadership position or a desire to maintain some level of power and control about where they positioned themselves in the group. While Gracie managed the changes to her role effectively and showed confidence in her ability to fulfil the task, her acceptance of the boys' behaviour could be seen to be indicative of the normalised dominance of the male students.

Despite some instances where male students challenged the girls' participation, there were many times when the boys' support was welcomed and appreciated by the young women in this study. Poppy felt being in a co-ed class was valuable because boys and girls:

...think differently, so it's cool to be able to have the different ideas. Cause some of the ideas the boys come up with would have never occurred to me. And vice versa.

Similar to the female respondents in Humberstone's (1990) research, Marie felt the boys were "a big part of how confident we get as a class", and Gracie was adamant outdoor education would not be the same without male students. Indeed, while some boys acted in ways that restricted the girls in their participation, there were many situations where positive and inclusive interactions with male students were observed. Poppy described a particularly significant relationship she had with a male classmate, who actively supported her in resisting gender stereotypes:

Daniel would say 'no actually, Poppy can do this! What are you on about!' He knows that I'm perfectly capable of doing things...If I haven't asked for help, I can do it myself! And he helps them [boys] realise that.

This is important, as it identifies that male students may not only be aware of gender inequalities but may endeavour to actively challenge or reject them. Delay and Dymont (2003) discuss the important role male participants and educators have in discouraging sexist language and behaviour. Daniel's support reinforced the value of Poppy's actions and clearly demonstrated his disapproval of the boys' attitude and behaviour. This example highlights the effectiveness peer role-modelling can have in developing gender consciousness within participant groups.

According to four of the young women in this study, other female students can also have a limiting effect on their participation and development in outdoor education. As Hills (2007) suggests, girls are often expected to support each other and unite in solidarity when exposed to male dominance or harassment,

and failing to do so can result in fractured relationships and a real sense of betrayal. In their junior outdoor education classes, Poppy and Abigail recalled they were often 'forced' to pair with other female students, who were unwilling or lacking the confidence to interact with male students:

Abigail: Well the boys split off and –

Poppy: Well, see it didn't usually, or it didn't necessarily bother me who I worked with, but often it was the other girls who were like 'we have to stick together', but if they're away it's like well I've only ever worked with you, so I don't really know the rest of the group!

While Poppy and Abigail were willing to support their female peers, this limited their opportunity to form relationships with other classmates and to further develop and challenge themselves.

Having male peers was particularly significant for Abigail who generally found it easier and more enjoyable working with boys because "you've got to get on with it", and she found girls "more hesitant and they're got to see someone else do it first". Conversely, the girls at Granity College said having female friends in the class was pivotal to their participation. Marie noted:

...you want to be with someone else, and I think that a lot of people in this class even, wouldn't have taken it if they hadn't had someone or known someone in this class.

Culp (1998), and Flintoff and Scraton (2001) found girls were more likely to engage in outdoor and physical activities with other female friends. It could be assumed having a greater number of female than male students in the class (like at Granity College), would reduce the girls' reliance on same-sex peer support, as it demonstrates female acceptance and validity in outdoor education. However, these findings suggest otherwise and highlight the complex, and at times, paradoxical nature of gender interaction in outdoor education. While many young women may be intimidated or restricted by the traditional maleness of outdoor education, girls who are more self-assured may benefit from interacting and participating with male students. Being aware of student preferences, and

where possible having flexible gender groups, may help to create an environment where all participants feel safe and can thrive (Paechter, 2006a).

Culp (1998), and Hills and Croston (2011) argue co-ed and single-sex programmes offer students different possibilities. Mixed classes are seen to enable girls to physically compete and develop relationships with male peers, while all-girl programmes are more likely to offer greater opportunities to learn skills and roles usually performed by boys. Miri and Claire felt that participating in single-sex environments would enable them to express their competency and interest more freely:

I would probably try more stuff in an all-girl group. Just cause I wanted to be better than them [laughs]! As girls want to be. But in a co-ed group you can't - I dunno, it would just be weird I reckon. (Miri)

This comment illustrates the limiting effects gender stereotypes have on some young women in their outdoor engagement. Lynch (1991) identifies the dilemma girls face in deciding to demonstrate their ability and knowledge when it may exceed boys, as this can compromise their relationships with them. Single-sex programmes have been identified to reduce such barriers and offer girls greater opportunity for development (Budbill, 2008; Culp, 1998; Garrett, 2004; Mitten, 1992; Mozley, 2013; Whittington, 2006). However, other scholars have challenged the effectiveness of single-sex courses in addressing gender inequalities and hegemonic definitions of masculinity and femininity (Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Hills & Croston, 2011). Regardless of the gender composition of their class, educators need to ensure a positive and inclusive group culture exists that enables all participants to feel valued, accepted and able to achieve their best.

Educational influences: Teachers, programming design and school perceptions

As outdoor education is the central context in this research, it is not surprising that schools had a significant influence on the young women's experiences in the subject. In this section I discuss the influence that schools, teachers and outdoor education programming decisions had on the girls' participation, and analyse

how these systems supported and hindered their experiences in outdoor education.

School perceptions of outdoor education

Many of the young women in this study were purposeful in their engagement with the outdoor education as a subject, not only because they enjoyed it, but as Abigail described, “outdoor ed” gave her a “brain break” and a chance to participate in physical and interactive learning. Rynehart (1994) identified similar findings and noted that one reason female students valued outdoor education was because it provided them with the opportunity to escape their normal school routine. This is interesting, given the girls in this study reported that many female students selected ‘traditional’ subjects and were put off outdoor education because of its perceived lack of academic value. Kudláček (2009) and Paechter (2006b) argue the binary positioning of the mind and body, which prioritises theoretical learning over the embodied, has meant physical subjects such as outdoor and physical education are often undervalued in the curriculum. This mind/body dualism, coupled with hegemonic gendered stereotypes, has been proposed as a reason fewer young women view practical subjects like outdoor education, as a viable and worthwhile choice (Barbour, 2004).

While many of the young women and their families saw value in their outdoor education participation, the students felt the wider school was less supportive or acknowledging of the contribution it made to their lives. Several of the girls commented that outdoor education was perceived to be an ‘easy’ subject and that other subject teachers had less than favourable opinions about it:

I mean, when a lot of people are doing subject selection they [the teachers] go ‘well why don’t you do PE instead of outdoor ed – it’s like the same thing really’. But it’s *sooo* different! (Poppy – emphasis original)

...For some teachers the kind of annoyance overrides the ‘oh they’re out doing a school activity, they’re still learning things’. (Abi)

Everyone's always like 'you should only take it if you want to have a career in it'. I'm like 'actually no! I want to take it for fun'. (Sally)

These perspectives challenged the young women in their engagement in outdoor education, with some of the girls questioning the validity of their experiences. Flo commented that school was all about "learning and development", however it appears the learning experiences outdoor education provides are less accepted or valued compared to those in other subjects. As this research has highlighted, the girls' experiences in outdoor education provided them with powerful and meaningful learning experiences and positively contributed to their development and well-being. Schools failing to fully acknowledge the contribution outdoor education may make to meeting curriculum objectives, as well as students' learning and development, is problematic. Given that some girls feel unsupported in their participation, other young women may be discouraged from participating in the subject, or schools may reinforce common misconceptions, including the view that outdoor education is only appropriate or of value to those considering it as a career. While similar findings have been identified in physical education research and literature (see Fissette, 2011; Garrett, 2004; Hills, 2007; Rynehart, 1994), to date there is no known research that explores the value and perception of outdoor education within the wider school community. Developing a better understanding of this may assist in identifying factors that perpetuate negative or inaccurate perceptions of outdoor education.

Programming influences: Experiential and environmental learning

The experiential nature of outdoor education increased the perceived value of the girls' learning and contributed to a greater sense of understanding and awareness:

I think that you automatically get to know more with things...like caves – like I'd never been in one before and when you go into that sort of thing you, not even if anyone tells you, you just learn how things are formed or whatever. Yeah, but not necessarily *how* things are formed but what they look like and what they feel like... (Marie – emphasis original)

Using all the senses and being able to see how concepts existed and applied in the 'real world' contributed to a greater level of engagement for most of the young women. Gracie noted that combining theory and practical learning was effective and helped her to develop a deeper level of understanding. Overall she felt that classroom or theory learning was relevant, however Abigail was uninspired by "bookwork", and commented that it was "so boring! Like the questions aren't even engaging questions!" Flo agreed although noted her lack of motivation for theory work was not because she did not "like learning stuff" but that it was "just really tedious". Experiential and practical pedagogies are commonly associated with outdoor education (see Campbell-Price, 2012; Cosgriff & Thevenard, 2012; Quay, 2005), and were valued by the young women in this study. However, Marie and Abigail identified this kind of learning generally took place outdoors, and they expressed a desire for these pedagogies to be utilised inside the classroom as well. Creating an engaging and inspiring learning environment, regardless of the physical settings, may assist students in achieving greater levels of comprehension, appreciation and development.

Outdoor education not only enables participants to develop their outdoor knowledge and skills but also challenges and expands their perspectives (Quay, 2005). Specifically, it was the 'camps' or extended periods away from 'civilisation' that were meaningful to the young women in this study, as it gave them the space to reflect upon their lives, values and behaviours. As Flo commented:

But whenever I come back from camp I just sorta always look around and I'm like 'why do we live like this?!'...I do love the lack of technology [on camp]. It's awesome and not knowing what the time is is really cool. Just sort of eat when you are hungry and sleep when you are tired...I just love the basic, just the basicness of the food and stuff. And there is no sort of, superficialness isn't there with your friends and stuff. It's not about who's got the flashiest shoes and stuff. I mean there is still an element of that with the gear you use but it's just those stupid things just aren't part of it, which I really quite like.

Being in an environment where there were fewer distractions and stimulants made Flo consider the materialism and structure that existed in her everyday life. She gained a sense of peace from spending time in the outdoors and noted her values had shifted as a result. Similarly, Gracie's involvement in the subject helped her to appreciate and value the opportunities she had and she was deeply moved by her experiences in new wilderness environments:

It's crazy! Like, it's so cool but it's crazy to think! That so many people like haven't seen that [place] and we experience so many things that people who are like old and dying and stuff have never ever done before!

As Loeffler (2004b) and McNatty (2014) suggest, remote and wilderness settings can be very powerful for participants. This can help young women to discover new aspects of themselves and what is of importance to them, away from the material pressures of daily life.

The notion that outdoor education facilitates learning in, for and about the outdoors has been suggested to be embedded in outdoor education philosophy (Cosgriff et al., 2012; Cosgriff & Thevenard, 2012; Lugg, 1999). While learning 'in' and 'about' the outdoors is generally accepted and practiced, the existence of learning that occurs 'for' the outdoors environment has been challenged (Wattchow & Brown, 2011). The girls from each school provided a range of examples where direct learning about the environment had taken place:

He [Mr N] was there with just a bunch walking at the back with him...man they learnt a lot on that walk, just about the different plants and their scientific names and their Māori names as well, and what the Māori used it for. (Abigail)

This environmental learning generally related to naming and recognising plants, animals and land formations, and being taught about the cultural and historical value of specific sites.

The girls enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the natural world and Sally and Flo recognised the impact their experiences in nature had on their perspectives of, and behaviour towards the environment:

Kinda like if you drive past a river you are like ‘wow, pretty, a river’. But when you’re *in* the river, you put like feeling in... (Sally – emphasis original)

I think some of the things like they would realise how they are hurting the environment, or because they’ve seen how it used to be. Like a lot of people live in cities and towns and they don’t *know*. They’ve only talked about it, which is nowhere near as effective as like going somewhere. (Abigail – emphasis original)

The power of outdoor experiences to motivate sustainable and caring behaviours towards the environment was discussed in the previous findings chapter and has been acknowledged by outdoor practitioners and researchers (McNatty, 2014; Quay, 2005; Sandell & Öhman, 2010; Stewart, 2003; Taylor, 2014; Thomashow, 2002). Charlotte reported that through outdoor education she “also learnt how to respect nature and not just destroy every living thing in our path”, however further discussion revealed this learning centred around “picking up rubbish” and “cleaning out the hut for other people”. While teaching these behaviours to students is important, the opportunities for rich and meaningful environmental learning appears to be underutilised. This sentiment was shared by many of the participants, who expressed a desire to learn more (deeply) about the outdoors:

Well I think we experience nature really good...but I think we should, wish we did learn a little more about it! (Sally)

Yeah, cause it’s [sustainability] is quite important, cause actually that issue [environmental damage] is going to override every issue soon and there’s not going to be anything else if we don’t figure that one out. (Flo)

While a curiosity about the environment fuelled many of the girls’ request to learn more, Flo, Charlotte, and Abigail in particular were motivated by their

concern about the negative effect humans had on the earth and the impact this would have on their lives.

Many outdoor educators value environmental learning and integrate it into their programmes (Hill, 2010), however the girls' comments suggest that teachers may not be maximising the potential for impactful environmental and sustainability learning. Irwin, Straker, and Hill (2012) and more recently Irwin and Straker (2014), have challenged educators to integrate practices that inspire participants to live sustainable, healthy and positive lives. They suggest place-responsive and socio-ecological pedagogies can assist in achieving this. The findings of this research support the use of these methods and suggest moving beyond seemingly 'fundamental' concepts of environmental care, such as not littering, to teaching approaches which critique aspects of unsustainable human behaviour and consider realistic alternatives, is necessary to satisfy the interests of many environmentally conscious adolescents. Doing so, may give outdoor education greater authority to claim that it makes a contribution to educating 'for' the environment and contributes to the development of citizens who are committed to creating a sustainable world.

Programming influences: Notions of freedom, risk and challenge

Outdoor education teachers play a major role in facilitating and supporting developmental outcomes for participants. Many of the young women felt empowered in their participation because their teachers gave them the freedom to experiment with new ideas and behaviours:

The teachers have got it. Like I think they have a pretty amazing balance of like safety, and keeping us safe and educated and all that. But also letting us go a bit as well. I mean we can have our own experiences...rather than like keeping us in a little box. (Flo)

Louv (2013) argues the modern world offers young people few opportunities to test their capabilities and take positive risks. Young people may feel restricted in play and their exploration of self and this can have a negative impact on their physical, emotional and mental development (Brown & Vaughan, 2010). As Flo's

comment suggests, the outdoor education teachers in this study created an environment where the girls appeared to feel free to test their capabilities. Jinny, Poppy and Sally relished the opportunity to challenge themselves and noted that having the support of their teachers, and trusting in their teachers' capabilities, was essential to ensuring they felt comfortable to accept greater self-responsibility:

I just kind of think of the reality of it, like I'm like 'I'm not going to die'.
Yeah [laughs] and if they're teachers and they're taking us up there
they're obviously trained and they've done it plenty of times before...
(Sally)

While teachers work hard to gain trust from their students, the significance of trust on student achievement is often overlooked (Shooter et al., 2012). Establishing trust is not unproblematic, indeed Lynch (1991) suggests teachers who exhibit doubt in their own capabilities can limit the development of students' self-confidence. Sally's comment provides a valuable reminder of the important role trust has in student-teacher relationships and the impact this can have on participants' learning.

Experiencing and overcoming challenges in outdoor education played a pivotal role in the development of these young women. The use of risk in the facilitation of challenge has been highly contested in the outdoor education sector in the last decade (see Barak et al., 2000; Berman & Davis-Berman, 2005; Brown, 2008; Brown & Fraser, 2009), and Dingle and Kiewa (2006) argue that the presence of "too much fear can inhibit both learning and performance" (p. 47). Marie's definition of challenge was closely associated with risk, as she often felt "scared" and "anxious" during experiences. However, contrary to Marie's perspective and experiences of challenge, Flo, Sally, and Charlotte felt that challenge was an essential element of outdoor education:

Um, cause without challenge it's not a very fun subject. (Flo)

If it wasn't challenging there really wouldn't be a point! (Sally)

The girls felt challenge was stimulating and a good way to learn about themselves and develop their competencies. Davidson (2001) reported similar findings in her study of young men's experiences of outdoor education. Engagement with risk and challenge has traditionally been associated with the interests and actions of men. However, similar to some of the respondents in Humberstone's (1990) research, the young women in this study rejected this position by not only seeking and engaging in challenges, but valuing it as method of self-development.

This finding indicates the girls' outdoor education programmes may have managed risk in a way that enabled the young women to maintain a greater sense of control. Brown and Fraser (2009) argue, it is important educators reconsider the use of risk (real or perceived) in outdoor programmes and learning, as deemphasising this element may facilitate more meaningful and empowering experiences for students. The findings of this study support this assertion; while the young women valued the opportunity to challenge themselves, the presence of fear and risk appeared to reduce the positive aspects and outcomes of their experience.

Gender: Teachers and programming decisions

Teachers' beliefs about gender are evident in programme design and implementation (Shimon, 2005). It has been argued that the perceived masculinity of the outdoors and outdoor education has resulted in many programmes centering around the interests and competencies of men (Dingle & Kiewa, 2006; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). At times, there was some evidence of this in outdoor activity programming. For example, my observation of one of the mountain biking sessions provided some insights into the impacts of pedagogical decisions on girls' learning and enjoyment. During the ride, the boys in the class enthusiastically commented on how much fun they were having, and appeared very confident and competent in their riding ability. While Poppy and Flo said they enjoyed the practical lesson and their body language reinforced this, they seemed less confident and enthusiastic, and chose to ride at the back of the group. Flo, who was usually very confident in outdoor education activities,

became less and less sure of herself as the ride progressed, and several times asked “are we going down that track? Can we just go down that [track] instead?” Similar sentiments were echoed by Miri, who commented she did not enjoy tramping “that much” because she was “a really small person”, and the weight of the pack was challenging for her carry.

While scholars have argued biological differences tend to dominate conversations about gender and learning, and believe this reinforces limiting and problematic gender expectations and perceptions (Bell, 1996; Crosswell & Hunter, 2012; Holland-Smith, 2015; Pinch et al., 2008), it is important teachers consider students’ individual needs as much as possible in their programme design and implementation. As a practicing teacher I acknowledge the challenges differentiated learning present and do not underestimate the time and effort it takes teachers to develop lessons that cater for all of their students’ needs and abilities. However, it is essential that in the traditionally male-dominated space of outdoor education, young women are given appropriate time, support and feedback to develop their skills and confidence.

Outdoor education teachers were also seen to have a direct effect on the opportunities and experiences of young women through their management of gendered behaviours exhibited by the students. Flintoff and Scraton (2001) identified students were more likely to be successful in their gender management when they had good relationships with their teachers.

I like how the teachers aren’t gender biased at *all*. Like if there is a tough job to be had, and a girl picks up the bag you know, they don’t like act differently, they just see us all as equal type thing. That’s really good!
(Jinny – emphasis original)

Forming a strong relationship with their outdoor education teacher was important to the young women in this study, regardless of their teacher’s sex. However, Flo and Sally also felt it was important young women had realistic and accessible female role models in the outdoors, as it helped them to realise their potential and strength. Of the seven outdoor education teachers practicing at

the responding schools, only one of them was a woman. Flo commented that being taught by Miss C “was good”, particularly on trips as she seemed to understand the girls better and “looked out for them”. Poppy and Abigail added that Miss C did not put up with the boys’ “shit” and was quicker to reprimand them, compared to their male outdoor education teacher. Having a teacher or instructor of the same sex can help female students to feel more comfortable and supported, due to the perception of ‘natural’ gender relatability and understanding (Budbill, 2008; Carter & Colyer, 1999). While true in some circumstances, it did not appear to be a significant issue for the girls in this study as many reported having close and supportive relationships with their male teachers.

Menstruation challenges

Issues about menstruation are notably absent in outdoor education and recreation literature, including those concerned with the experiences of girls and women. This is surprising given that many girls and women will inevitably menstruate while participating in outdoor education. For the young women at Granity College, menstruating while on outdoor education trips posed significant challenges for their participation and engagement. In particular, their lack of knowledge around effective and safe management strategies, and the seemingly limited consideration given to toileting facilities, created anxiety for girls:

Sometimes it’s like ‘heeyyy, is there like running water and toilets where we’re going?’, and they’re [teachers] like ‘nah, there’s not, you can just go in the bush’. And it’s like ‘nah, I can’t!’ [sighs] (Jinny)

Like I suppose last year...I think it was the kayaking camp term one and Mum was like ‘oh, so you’ve just got to remember to keep it in a plastic bag and didididi and change your like...’. Cause guys don’t know! They don’t know anything about it and I was like ‘but there’s not going to be a toilet Mum!’ And she was like ‘oh, I know but you have to!’ (Gracie)

Lynch (1991; 1996) and Rynehart (1994) identify many girls and women are put off participating in the outdoors when they have their period. Similarly, there are

cultural and religious practices surrounding menstruation that may alter girls' and women's participation in physical activities in particular settings. For example, some Māori tikanga (practices/customs) mean that girls and women are unable to swim during their periods (see Legge, 2012). While Jinny, Marie, Sally, and Gracie did not alter their participation, they expressed frustration at their teachers' ignorance and lack of consideration towards the management of menstruation. Gracie was particularly strong in her belief menstruation was natural and was nothing to be embarrassed about. Her position challenges ideological male dominance, which forces women to conceal what is a natural biological occurrence (Lynch, 1991). Gracie felt it was part of the teacher's duty to support girls in dealing with menstruation and suggested they "need to be really open about it" and talk with female students about appropriate strategies before attending camp. This finding shows that a lack of consideration for the impacts of menstruation can negatively influence the engagement and learning outcomes of female students. Given this is a pedagogical issue, practitioners need to consider the implications menstruation has on female experiences outdoors, teach young women safe and effective management strategies, and engage in open and appropriate dialogue about it, to help students feel safe and supported in their participation.

Wider societal influences

In this section I discuss how societal views surrounding outdoor education, gender, and physical appearance and competency played a role in shaping the young women's experiences in outdoor education. In particular, the prevalence of hegemonic gender perceptions, and the ways in which media reporting and popular culture contributed to the reinforcement these views, presented significant challenges for girls in their participation in a subject traditionally considered to be masculine.

Gendered perceptions of outdoor education

As discussed earlier, many of the girls and their peers saw outdoor education as a "non-academic" subject. This was viewed positively by the young women in this study and contributed to the perception outdoor education was a relaxed,

fun, and interactive subject. While this motivated some of the girls in their decisions to participate, Poppy noted this was unusual for many female students, who commonly chose academic subjects. Although all of the young women were aware of traditional gender expectations and the masculine image of outdoor education, this did not deter them from participating, nor were they motivated to participate in the class as an act of rebellion. Instead their decision was based upon factors relating to the perceived enjoyment or benefits of their involvement. Claire thought many girls' decisions to select 'academic' subjects was partly influenced by the "common stereotype that's been around for ever...how girls should be more academic and not in the bush doing something, or [should be] at home". Despite attending an all-girls school, Claire felt girls were limited by traditional gender stereotypes that implied outdoor education was an inappropriate subject choice, due to its association with masculine characteristics and male participants. Rynehart (1994) noted similar findings and suggested gender role socialisation meant young women 'voluntarily' chose educational pathways that led to caring and sedentary careers.

Zink and Kane's (2015) recent analysis of New Zealand outdoor recreation media found there had been minimal change in the number of women depicted in photographs over an 11 year period. They suggest these findings show "who is seen in the outdoors and whose participation is valued" (p. 80). Indeed, Marie commented:

This is not always the case but um in the workforce as a guide or instructor, it's very often males that are the people that go into that sort of area of work.

Marie's year 12 outdoor education class at Granity College had twice the number of female than male students. While outdoor education may be a more acceptable and gender inclusive choice for girls at Granity College, female participation in the wider outdoor sector remains less visible and accepted. It appears the outdoors continues to be viewed as predominantly male in nature and participation (McNatty, 2014).

During the research the young women had the opportunity to share their views on how outdoor educators could best support girls in the outdoors. Marie, Sally, and Claire thought developing people's understanding about outdoor education was the best way to increase girls' participation in the subject:

I'd probably get someone who has experienced it to say something at course selection and talk about it, and be like 'look, when you're one of the girls, you're just one of the guys. (Sally)

Just keep promoting it [by putting] more notices out about it and getting more people to speak in assembly. (Claire)

Both of these comments suggest girls chose not to participate in outdoor education because of a lack of interest or awareness. Such a position however, overlooks the impact gender can have on participation by suggesting individual choice and agency are the only factors impacting people's decision making process (Lynch, 1991). Sally's comment is also noteworthy; by suggesting females who participate in the outdoors emulate their male peers, she unwittingly reinforces the outdoors and outdoor education as being masculine, which in turn may reduce some girls' desire to engage with it.

Abigail suggested that introducing outdoor education to younger children may encourage more girls to participate because, "kids don't really care [about gender], so if they wanna do it, they'll do it. And growing up they won't see anything wrong with it". Abigail clearly articulates her belief that gender awareness increases with age and suggests offering outdoor education to children whose self-consciousness is not fully developed, may be one way to condition people to view the outdoors as gender-inclusive (Clark, 2013; Lipkin, 2009). However, her comment also implies changes to the gendering of the outdoors relies upon girls' behaviours and attitudes, instead of challenging wider gender meanings and practices. Della-Longa (2013) and Lugg (2003) note educators play an important role in helping young women feel secure in their participation in school-based outdoor education programmes. However, ensuring the wider outdoor sector recreates the supportive environment these

young women experience in their school programmes, may well be essential to both their continued participation and to inspiring more girls and women's outdoor engagement.

Physical competence and appearance

The perceived masculinity of outdoor education meant many of the girls believed they lacked the characteristics and qualities necessary to participate in the subject. Having inadequate outdoor experience or knowledge, being unable to keep up with the class during practical activities, and not seeing themselves as 'tough enough' were concerns shared by many of the girls. This created considerable anxiety for Sally who felt "everyone would all be sitting there like grunty" and would be "like yes, I know this, I do this all the time!" Warren and Loeffler (2006) suggest that male standards of competency mean women and girls often question the validity and appropriateness of their participation.

The presence of male students appeared to increase the perception outdoor education was an 'extreme' subject more appropriate for men, as issues surrounding participant 'requirements' were not raised by Charlotte and Claire, who attended the single-sex Parkview High School. Interestingly, after joining the class, seven of the girls in this study felt their initial perceptions were incorrect; physical ability played an insignificant role in determining their success in outdoor education. Instead, mental and emotional characteristics were seen as far more valuable:

But some people would think that it's [outdoor education] way above them and they couldn't do it. Like an outdoor ed'er is this fit amazing person but it's just really not! It's just someone that wants to give it a go really. (Flo)

I know that people who take outdoor ed are not necessarily the fittest or the strongest but its more about, well I *know now* it's more about attitude and um your ability to cope with those sort of, those outdoor situations. (Marie – emphasis added)

Through their experiences the girls learnt they possessed the physical capacity to participate in outdoor education, and recognised the value and importance of 'non-physical' qualities. However, these young women continue to perceive the outdoors and outdoor education as predominantly the domain of men, requiring hegemonic masculine traits such as strength and risk interest, despite having experiences that contradict this perception (Little & Wilson, 2005).

Arguably, this is problematic as it suggests that although some practices may be becoming more gender inclusive, there appears to be ongoing disconnect between what girls are experiencing in their outdoor education classes, and the messages other young women and men are receiving. Developing a better understanding of how young women share stories of their experiences and the weight this is given against other forms of information, may enable educators to recognise participation trends in their school, and could assist in developing strategies to mitigate any inaccurate perceptions students may have of outdoor education (Lupaschuk & Yewchuk, 1998).

Conclusion

Outdoor education provided many opportunities for the young women to learn about and develop aspects of themselves, and form meaningful relationships with people and the environment. As the girls' experiences suggest, peers, schools and teachers, programme design, and wider societal views on gender and outdoor education influenced the girls' in their participation in school-based outdoor education. The interaction of these social systems created a unique learning environment that both supported and challenged the girls' participation in the subject.

Outdoor education offered the girls new experiences that were usually inaccessible, due to the high cost and need for specialist skills and equipment. Jinny and Abigail valued the experiential nature of outdoor education and believed it enabled them to develop a deeper understanding of their own competencies and expanded their perspective of the world around them. While students learnt valuable insights about nature and local outdoor places, Flo and

Sally expressed a desire to learn more deeply about the environment. This research supports the inclusion of place-responsive and socio-ecological pedagogies in outdoor education (see Irwin et al., 2012), to enhance students' knowledge and connection with the environment.

During data analysis it became apparent the girls' experiences were extensively shaped by gender, through interactions with peers and teachers and wider gendered perceptions. This was particularly noticeable in the co-education schools. The findings of this study identify that all of the girls felt secure and empowered in various aspects their participation. Having opportunities to identify and celebrate their strength and capabilities as a young woman, and form positive relationships with teachers and peers, contributed to positive developmental outcomes and a sense of belonging. However, limiting gender stereotypes and assumptions continue to present considerable challenges for the majority of young women in this study.

Peer interactions, predominantly with male students, presented significant barriers to their opportunities for learning and development. While not unexpected, a co-education environment was observed to more consistently reproduce traditional gender roles, compared with single-sex settings (Culp, 1998). Teachers addressing issues of menstruation, male student domination and challenging hegemonic expressions of femininity and masculinity will help to increase the validity and value of girls' participation in outdoor education. As illustrated in this chapter, young women respond in varied and personal ways to gender stereotypes, behaviours and practices, which prioritise young men's participation in outdoor education. While some girls accept and reproduce such gender norms, others are critically aware of ongoing gender constraints and actively resist these practices in outdoor education.

CHAPTER 6: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

“People just think that more guys would take outdoor ed than girls...which isn’t true”: Navigating the gendered environment of outdoor education

In this final findings chapter, I discuss how young women navigate and speak back to the gendered environment of outdoor education. As identified in the previous chapter, gender played a significant role in girls’ experiences and the meanings they ascribed to them. Outdoor education both empowered and challenged the girls’ gendered identities and behaviours. Here, I expand on these ideas and consider how young women respond to the gendering of outdoor education and the impact this has on their participation. Third-wave and postfeminist perspectives are used in this chapter to critically analyse the different ways the young women responded to the gendering of their outdoor education experiences. Third-wave feminism acknowledges the existence of gender inequalities, and uses the body and female empowerment discourses to negotiate and challenge, albeit in complex and contradictory ways, the dominant patriarchal paradigm (Snyder, 2008). While postfeminism shares similarities with third-wave feminism in that women are seen as powerful agents of their own lives, postfeminism assumes that we are now living in a gender equal society, which denotes feminist thought and action as historical and redundant (Budgeon, 2011a; Pomerantz et al., 2004). Interestingly, the participants in this study revealed both third-wave and postfeminist sentiments in our discussions of gender inequalities and strategies for negotiating such issues in outdoor education. These feminist perspectives are also useful in helping to bring to the fore the emancipatory goals of this study, by identifying and challenging hegemonic and patriarchal practices that continue to persist in outdoor education (Cook & Fonow, 1986).

Gender identity construction and negotiation is a complex and dynamic process. This is reflected in the diverse, and at times contradictory nature, of the girls’ gendered understandings and behaviours. Many of the gendered practices in outdoor education are a consequence of wider gender stereotypes and assumptions. However, gender practices are also learnt and constructed within

local communities (Paechter, 2010). Indeed, the girls' perceptions of what it meant to be female or male, and consequently ideas about femininity and masculinity, were influenced by their school community and outdoor education programme.

Three main themes relating to gender were identified in the data and form the sections of this chapter. These themes focus on gender perceptions and identities; female empowerment in outdoor education; and girls' rejection of gendered norms. I also consider the differences that exist between the three responding schools in respect to gender, including the level of engagement the girls demonstrated towards their involvement in this research. All of the research questions are considered in this chapter, as many of the concepts discussed underpin the nature of young women's experiences in school-based outdoor education.

Gendered perceptions and identities

From birth, children are conditioned to think and behave in accordance with cultural practices, behaviours and interactions relating to their biological sex (Clark, 2013; Lipkin, 2009; Paechter, 2010). Social norms in the Western world have created a gender dichotomy, in which men are commonly perceived as being/doing masculinity, and women as being/doing femininity (Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). Newbery (2000) notes defining femininity and masculinity is difficult, because "they are used in extremely varied ways across academia and popular culture" (p. 8). However, femininity is frequently associated with words such as nurturing, passive and weak, whereas terms like active, independent and experienced are often linked with masculinity (Anderson, 1996; Clark, 2013). In this section I consider how the young women made sense of the gendered world around them, and identify the perceptions they held of male and female participants in outdoor education.

Perception of gender in outdoor education

Girls' perceptions of female participation in outdoor education is informed by their understanding of what it means to 'do girl' and how well this aligns with the

nature of outdoor education (Pinch, 2007; Schmalz & Kerstetter, 2006). All of the young women in this research showed a high level of gender awareness, which was demonstrated through their clear articulation of gender roles and expectations, and observed in the way they managed their behaviour during outdoor education lessons. Despite finding personal meaning and acceptance as a young woman in outdoor education, seven of the participants still perceived the subject as inherently masculine. Marie and Sally felt there were two standards of outdoor participation, which were dependent on sex. In explaining this further, Marie thought there was not “as much pressure for girls to be super into” outdoor education, and instead it was seen as more of a “hobby or something you enjoy”; whereas boys had to really “love the outdoors”.

Warren and Loeffler (2006) note girls are often socialised to view themselves as subordinate to boys, particularly in physical activities, where so-called ‘masculine’ traits are practiced and valued. This may mean girls have been limited by gender stereotypes that assume females are less engaged or competent than males in the outdoors (Della-Longa, 2013; Lugg, 2003). When asked how others perceived her involvement in outdoor education, Gracie commented people were often surprised but complimentary, because she was one of the girls “willing to go out there and *do it*” (emphasis original). Gracie’s comment suggests people continue to perceive female participants as an anomaly, requiring ‘extraordinary’ mental and physical strength to participate in activities viewed as inherently masculine (Newbery, 2000).

Gender stereotypes played out in the girls’ experiences and meaning-making about outdoor education. In particular, the perception that boys were naturally competent and girls were more interested in maintaining their appearance, was held by six young women. For example, Flo and Abigail commented that many of the boys in their class were “quite sporty” or “really fit”, irrespective of their experience or motivation. Although Miri and Poppy resisted and challenged aspects of hegemonic masculinity and femininity in their own participation, they applied traditional gender stereotypes to others, chastising girls who were interested in wearing make-up and maintaining their appearance. This is a

noteworthy point, as these girls' comments suggest they perceived outdoor education as a largely male domain, in which qualities such as strength and toughness, commonly associated with boys and men, are valued over so-called 'feminine' traits (Humberstone, 2000c; Newbery, 2000). The fluid and contradictory nature of Poppy and Miri's attitudes and behaviours towards gender stereotypes are typical of third-wave feminist sentiments, which tend to favour individual agency over collective political activism (Budgeon, 2011a; Snyder, 2008). In this way, the girls' saw themselves as vital to their own empowerment and seemed ignorant to, or dismissed, the possibility that other young women may struggle, or are unwilling to reject hegemonic gender performances.

The prioritising of what has traditionally been constructed as male attributes and behaviours in outdoor education was particularly evident when discussing the girls' preferences between co-educational and all-female groups. Eight of the ten participants identified they would prefer to stay in their current education setting. The co-educational students were especially critical of the single-sex environment, believing these girl-only programmes would offer fewer opportunities for adventure, fun and development:

They'd probably be a bit safer, but not saying [girls] are boring but it would probably be a bit more boring. Like going up the same passageway of [a] cave, waiting for everyone to do it... (Jinny)

Marie: That would suck [being in an all-girl group]!

Gracie: Eh, no! That wouldn't be good.

Marie: Co-ed would be better.

Despite experiencing and supporting the place and power of females in the outdoors, this view did not extend to groups absent of boys. Although the girls recognised and embodied characteristics deemed valuable to outdoor education participation, their existence appeared to be attributed to the actions or presence of men (Lugg, 2003).

Somewhat paradoxically, six of the young women from the co-educational schools perceived girls in single-sex settings as more likely to uphold traditional gender interests. They also altered the perceived meaning and value of behaviours between the single-sex and mixed-sex environments (Allin, 2000). For example, these young women viewed cooperation as a valuable trait in co-educational settings, however when performed in an all-girls group they believed it suggested passivity and conformism. This can make it challenging for girls to manage their gender identity and behaviours when moving between contexts, as the positive performance of gender in one setting, may be rendered inappropriate or undesirable in another.

The influence of media on gender construction

The girls' gendered understandings of the outdoors were clearly influenced by the media. Little and Wilson (2005) identify the significant role media plays in gender socialisation, which typically reinforces masculine perceptions of outdoor education. During the interviews I asked participants about the images and people they associated with the outdoors. Overwhelmingly, the girls' initial comments related to men and characteristics associated with traditional discourses of masculinity, frequently using words such as "extreme" and "active" to describe their vision. Abigail's first image was of a male participant and she expressed her frustration at this, noting she should know better because "*I'm a girl and I do outdoor ed*" (emphasis original). Sally also pictured a male but later added "*I might have first imagined a boy...but I can also easily imagine a girl right beside him*" (emphasis original). Despite their own involvement, which reinforced the appropriateness of female participation in outdoor education, pictures of men completing daring and difficult activities outweighed images from their personal experiences.

Conversely, Flo was very purposeful when describing her gender-neutral image of outdoor education, stating:

I have lots of images...I just see someone on a mountain I guess, with a pack on, looking proud of themselves. I don't see anything too extreme...just [someone] having a good time in the outdoors.

Not only did Flo reject the maleness of the outdoors, but challenged it's perceived extremeness. In articulately and explicitly rejecting Flo was very articulate when answering this question and appeared to consciously reject traditional images, suggesting an acceptance of female participation in the outdoors. However, her response to this question was atypical compared with the other participants. This suggests media reporting of the outdoors in New Zealand, and women's experiences in particular, have done little to disrupt hegemonic meanings of femininity and masculinity in outdoor education (Bruce, 2008b).

Zink and Kane (2015) note media is not passively observed but actively shapes what we know and understand about the world. Indeed, these young women were privy to the impact media had in reinforcing traditional gender stereotypes in outdoor education. Like Flo, Claire felt the subordinate positioning of females in the outdoors was a result of gender stereotypes, which suggested that "guys are more out there and outdoorsy", and girls "like sewing". Interestingly, although Abigail noted these were "old" perspectives, she felt society still lived this way. Sally and Marie made similar comments regarding the prevailing images of historical femininity, and Charlotte commented:

The whole stereotype of girls, that girls always need to be...shopping and cooking and all that.

Media stories and images are increasingly covering girls and women's sporting and outdoor experiences, which has contributed to a rise of new femininities that value female strength, athleticism and physical achievements (Azzarito, 2010; Bruce, 2015; Daniels, 2012). Despite this, the young women in this research appeared to express more traditional sentiments of femininity that suggested females who participate and succeed in these pursuits possess 'unnatural' masculine characteristics (Anderson, 1996; Bruce, 2008b; Prince, 2004). It is essential educators disrupt these lingering and limiting gendered perceptions of the outdoors as a masculine space. One strategy for doing so would be supporting and facilitating opportunities for young women to share their outdoor education experiences with the wider school community, so that

the value young women draw from outdoor experiences and their capabilities in the field is made evident. Similarly, educators directly teaching students about gender and social construction could usefully support students to develop the critical analysis tools to consider the gendering of their own lives, and the world around them. This may also assist other young women and men to develop a more realistic perception and understanding of outdoor education as being not only appropriate for the 'extreme' or 'elite' but accessible to everyone.

Gendered identities

Forming one's identity is a complex and dynamic process that continues to be shaped by the world around us, however various researchers suggest such identity work appears to be particularly important during adolescent years (Klimstra, 2013; Kroger, 2007). Gender forms a significant part of an individual's identity, and as with other aspects of self, is influenced by our circumstances, life experiences (Paechter, 2006a) and dominant ideologies (Humberstone, 2000c).

Azzarito et al. (2006) and Charlebois (2011) note girls and women are often trapped within a "double-bind", where attempting to rewrite gender definitions in one context, can isolate them from another. The complex, and at times, contradictory nature of gender negotiation was evident in the way the girls altered the meanings they assigned to traits and behaviours. For example, there were times when the girls simultaneously accepted and rejected hegemonic expressions of femininity:

We [outdoor education girls] get shit from a lot of people outside of outdoor ed...Like the one day we wear a dress to school, we get shit for wearing a dress...I think they see us as more masculine girls. (Abigail)

There are all the girls that are like 'ehhhh, nails', and well, oh I care about my nails but not enough to be like 'I'm not doing outdoor ed'. (Gracie)

As these girls' comments illustrate, negotiating their gendered identity was not straightforward, particularly as the meanings assigned to 'girl', and 'outdoor education' often conflict. Gracie and Abigail appeared to be flexible in this

respect, acknowledging that wearing a dress or make-up did not affect their participation in outdoor education, and believing their feminine identity could coexist with displays of physical strength and competency. However, similar to the passionate female skateboarders in research by Pomerantz et al. (2004), Gracie was keen to distance herself from other 'make-up wearing' girls, who she depicted as ultra-feminine, dramatic and feeble.

While it is important to note that wearing a dress or make-up does not define femininity, Abigail and Gracie used these practices as a way to highlight their female identity and challenge the masculinity of the outdoors. In this way, the girls' responses to the management of their gendered identities expressed 'girl power' or third-wave feminist sentiments, in that they were using their bodies and physical appearance to challenge traditional gender perceptions and stereotypes (Baumgardner & Richards, 2004; Taft, 2004). The contradictions in their attitudes and behaviours indicates gender identity development is complex, and despite challenging traditional stereotypes, hegemonic perceptions of gender continue to prevail.

Unlike Gracie, Poppy and Miri challenged society's preoccupation with female beauty and saw outdoor education as a space to break away from such limited conceptions of gender. However, girls who failed to reject this meaning of femininity were viewed with disdain and frustration (Rich, 2005):

It's the ones that get up an extra half an hour early to do their make-up in the morning. It's like 'honey, you're just going to sweat it all off in the first hour'! (Poppy)

Girls would rather wear make-up and short skirts. You don't really see any girls [in the] outdoors. I think it's quite sad really...you don't need [make-up]. It's uglier in my view and a waste of money. (Miri)

The gender dichotomy is clear in these examples; while Poppy and Miri actively rejected the value that hegemonic femininity accords places on a women's appearance, they simultaneously reinforced females' inferior social position by prioritising hegemonic masculine performances. Similar findings were noted by

Newbery (2000) and Thorpe et al. (2011), who identified women who embodied (ultra) femininity in physical activities were ridiculed by female peers and were perceived as weak and uncommitted. Contrary to challenging the meaning and position of females in the outdoors, embodying stereotypically masculine traits arguably reinforce the status quo.

Empowering participation

Empowerment is a concept used to describe the self-determining and liberating actions performed by individuals or communities, which enable them to represent their interests and control their own lives (Drury, Evripidou, & Van Zomeren, 2015). As Karl (1995) notes, empowerment can be defined in one way as “a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, to greater decision-making power and control, and to transformative action” (p. 14). Despite facing a range of gender-related challenges in their participation, Sally, Charlotte, Gracie, and Marie identified outdoor education enabled them to demonstrate and reinforce their competency as young women. Charlotte was able to practice her bike mechanic skills, which were normally performed by others, while Sally eagerly embraced the challenges presented to her while caving, demonstrating confidence and competence. Gracie felt a great sense of empowerment from teaching her peers, as this indicated she possessed a high level of understanding and ability:

When we have the new international [students]...we can teach [them]!
Cause we've got the skills to be able to tell and help them.

In describing their experiences, these young women exclusively referred to their own capabilities; no comparisons were made to other students. The girls also appeared self-assured in their abilities and recognised they were central to their own success and achievement. Lugg (2003) notes it is vital young women's abilities and achievements are not compared to those of boys; instead their capabilities need to be attributed to their individual strength and progress. She argues this may enable girls to having more meaningful and empowering experiences and assist them in find their place in the outdoor sector.

However, Budbill (2008) and Leupp (2007) suggest young women can feel liberated when given the opportunity to prove their capabilities in roles and activities traditionally associated with men. This was reflected by five of the girls in this study, who were able to challenge traditional gender norms, while gaining a sense of their capabilities as young women. While this may be true for some participants, gender-inclusive environments are likely to provide greater positive outcomes for all participants. Similarly, ensuring girls are given equal opportunities to challenge and develop themselves and experience success, may help them to recognise and celebrate their personal strength and ability.

The nature of outdoor education was seen to offer participants the opportunity to challenge gender stereotypes. Sally felt outdoor education enabled her and her peers to “be themselves” and behave in ways alternative to what was commonly expected. Sally noted a change in her peers’ demeanour, particularly in the male students, when the class participated in certain outdoor activities:

When we’re in the cave, everyone’s just...they’re not trying to be cooler than other people. [Instead], it’s like ‘I’m actually scared to go through there, can you help me’ kind of thing. So I like the honesty in it.

Newbery (2000) suggests that doing outdoor activities can reduce the pressure for participants to perform in prescribed ways, enabling them to express themselves more freely. Leupp (2007) and Lynch (1991) agree, noting some adventurous or nature-based activities can assist participants to ‘try on’ different behaviours. Sally’s example suggests this is more likely in novel situations, where gender roles and expectations may be less embedded. This was also evident in the boys’ behaviours, whose usual ‘tough’ and ‘staunch’ attitude was destabilised in the cave environment. Few students had been in a cave before and were particularly reliant on their peers for support and this appeared to encourage more vulnerable and honest peer interactions. It is important to remember that gender is about girls’ and boys’ behaviours and perceptions, as gender meanings are always relational. Therefore, teachers’ pedagogical approaches to both boys and girls behaviours play a major role in disrupting traditional and limiting gender ideals performances. Educators using a range of

outdoor environments in their programme, and encouraging students to experiment with and use a variety of skills and attributes commonly associated with the opposite sex, may help students to embrace more fluid and dynamic ways of 'doing' girl and/or boy.

Being female was also considered to be a valuable asset in the outdoors for Sally, the only student to raise this concept. Sally indicated she "loved" being a girl in outdoor education and "almost felt bad for the boys", who she believed faced greater gender-related barriers to their participation than girls did. This view centred upon the belief that although it was often "physically harder" for girls, they were able to freely express their emotions. Sally felt this was vital to her enjoyment and success in the class:

My friends are like 'I can help you with this' and if someone's scared we just genuinely say 'look I'm about to shit myself, just help me through this'. But the boys are [like] 'I've gotta stay tough'.

These views mimic traditional gender stereotypes based upon essentialist biological assumptions, which have been discussed throughout this research. For Sally, the empowering aspects of expressing her emotions, superseded any physical 'disadvantages' she experienced. On several occasions she noted boys were "faster and stronger" and she had hurt herself trying to keep up with them. Despite this, she saw herself in a more powerful and advantageous position than them. Sally's comments are reflective of third-wave feminism and girl-power discourses, where although gender inequalities may be acknowledged, girls are seen as having power to successfully negotiate such behaviours, and take charge of their own lives and decisions (Budgeon, 2011b). Similarly, notions of individualism and personal responsibility are cornerstones of third-wave feminism, which generate more inclusive and flexible definitions of feminism (Snyder, 2008; Taft, 2004). Although Sally's outdoor education experiences required her to perform to male standards of competency, she chose to ignore this, and instead focussed on her ability to assert her power and control by playing upon hegemonic expressions of femininity.

Although Sally indicated women didn't need "special treatment" to achieve as well as men in the outdoors, she did acknowledge that it could sometimes be useful:

Like it sounds weird but I always love being a girl cause you get – at the same you *hate* special treatment, sometimes you love it ya know.

(Emphasis original)

Her comment highlights a double standard of participation, suggesting girls needed additional support to reach the boys' level of competency. Like the young women in Pinch's (2007) study, which examined the gender structures in an outdoor adventure education programme for adolescents, Sally played on traditional ideas about girls needing extra help and "special" treatment, and in doing so used her socially-ascribed subordinate positioning as a female to assert control in the performance of some physical tasks. This process has been described as "gender manoeuvring", whereby participants manipulate the interactions between femininity and masculinity to redefine gendered behaviours. Participants can use this process to manage the repressive culture they are part of (Bäckström, 2013).

While the circumstances of Sally's empowerment may raise concern, as it they suggest the existence of practices that favour boys' abilities and reinforce traditional gendered ideas about female competency, Sally was able to negotiate her gendered position in the class, such that being female became an asset, not a barrier. This highlights the paradoxes that exist in some cases of female empowerment in the context of outdoor education. However, Aronson (2003) suggests the assumption that young women can feel empowered by manipulating their perceived inferiority, is reliant upon individuals having robust skills and confidence to successfully negotiate and disrupt limiting patriarchal structures.

Some of the participants were empowered by rejecting and overcoming hegemonic meanings of gender. The majority of the girls challenged gender stereotypes indirectly through their decision to participate in outdoor education

(Budbill, 2008), whereas fewer challenged gender norms more overtly by directly addressing sexist behaviour (Pinch, 2007). Abigail, Claire, and Gracie identified the masculine 'image' of the outdoors and described experiences where gender expectations and roles had limited their participation. However, they rejected the notion the outdoors was inherently a 'man's domain'. Sally and Poppy believed adolescent girls had inaccurate perceptions of outdoor education and felt they could rectify this by using their own participation to demonstrate the validity of females in this space:

I think it's important [girls'] see what we do, see how we respond to [outdoor education] and realise that we can do it. (Poppy)

I have previously discussed the gap that exists between more dominant discourses of outdoor education and the young women's experiences. While I predominantly referred to the role the media, schools and educators can play in challenging these misconceptions, the above example illustrates the desire and willingness of young people to assist in this cause (Bäckström, 2013). By sharing their stories with others, young women can help to create greater awareness of the nature of outdoor education and female participation within it. This is a point I come back to later on in this chapter.

Jones (2012) suggests women have two approaches available to them in their rejection of the dominant gender paradigm; they can "stay outside the culture and refuse to be measured against normative standards...[or] challenge from inside having proved their 'right' to be there" (p. 80). Reflecting once again upon Bäckström's (2013) notions of 'gender manoeuvring' within snowboarding culture, it could be argued that the likelihood for long-lasting change in specific groups and wider outdoor education practice, is more probable with direct and 'internal' actions. Examples from Sally, Gracie and Charlotte's experiences support this notion, whereby a direct rejection caused positive adjustments to peers' behaviours. Poppy was particularly active in her management of the sexist behaviour performed by her male peers. She recalled several accounts where she challenged the boys in group tasks because they had reduced her

opportunity to demonstrate and develop competence. During one activity the class had to 'piggyback' each other across a 'lava pit':

And [the boys] were like 'oh we'll have to get Poppy across first'. And I was like 'why?! I'm perfectly capable of piggybacking one of you!' And they all kind of stopped and were like... 'oh yeah! That's right!' It's just that initial 'she's a girl, we have to get her across, out of the way first, and then we'll sort out the rest of us'. And it's like 'NO!' I'm probably better at organising the rest of you lot than you are!

This is a very powerful example of gender manoeuvring, in which Poppy not only challenged the boys on their behaviour, but also asserted her ability to perform skills they perceived as more 'masculine' or only appropriate for men. Although Poppy identified the boys were surprised at her response, they did not resist. It is difficult to predict whether such successful and impactful outcomes would have eventuated if someone external to the group had attempted the same thing. However, Poppy's example illustrates the impact group culture can have in enabling participants to challenge traditional gender stereotypes and redefine the meaning and value of gender (Delay & Dymont, 2003).

Rejection of gender

The negotiation of gender is not a straight forward or simple process. Many of the girls experienced a sense of empowerment in their participation by achieving things they initially deemed out of reach and by actively challenging gender stereotypes. However, there were instances where the girls also accepted and reproduced hegemonic behaviours and practices in outdoor education. In this section I discuss the ways in which some of the young women rejected gender, by dismissing its existence and influence, excusing others, and blaming themselves for sexist behaviour. I also draw on postfeminist theory to assist in explaining how the young women rejected and negotiated gender in their outdoor education experiences.

Postfeminism is situated upon the belief that gender equality has been achieved, and therefore feminism is deemed unnecessary and old-fashioned (Braithwaite,

2002; Harris & Dobson, 2015). This position suggests that historical feminist action has ensured “girls have attained all the power they could ever want, and there is nothing left to be done”, which has resulted in the downplaying of gender and a dismissal of current feminist perspectives and identities (Taft, 2004, p. 72). Budgeon (2011b) suggests this has meant (typically middle-class) girls and women tend to deny the existence of sexist behaviour, as greater emphasis is placed on generational, rather than gendered identities and behaviours. These ideas provide a useful lens to examine the young women’s behaviour in outdoor education. By locating such behaviours within a broader context of gender changes, it is possible to identify where new strategies are being developed and employed by adolescent girls seeking to negotiate their position in everyday society. Moreover, it suggests how broader popular cultural discourses that focus on girls’ empowerment and successes may be misleading young women into falsely believing they have achieved gender equality, and in doing so they do not see, and are not willing to struggle against, ongoing gender inequalities.

Acceptance and apathy

Throughout this research the participants at the co-education schools described situations where male students limited their opportunities and interactions in the class. Similarly to the findings of Pinch's (2007) research, Gracie, Marie and Poppy noted boys frequently underestimated the girls’ capabilities and therefore took a more active role during activities. However, the young women were quick to point out the boys behaviour was unintentional and a result of wider societal views:

Some boys do it, just a couple – it’s not a conscious thing where they go ‘oh, she’s a girl she can’t do it’, but there is a subconscious element; ‘because she’s a girl I’ll do it’ you know...or I’ll offer to help her. (Flo)

Flo: It’s not a sexist thing, it’s more like a ‘gentlemanly’ thing.

Poppy: Yeah, or a big brotherly thing...

Flo: It’s still kind of annoying but they mean it in the best way possible...It’s just what society’s taught them.

Poppy: It’s just how their brains work (laughs).

The girls' believed their male peers behaviour was involuntary and the boys were ignorant about the impact it had. Despite being aware and having an understanding of gender stereotypes and the ways these could limit girls throughout their lives, the young women were willing to excuse the boys' behaviour (Azzarito et al., 2006).

Green (as cited in Lugg, 2003), and Lynch (1991) also reported female participants spoke highly of their outdoor education experiences, despite their stories indicating gender inequalities existed. Jorgenson (2002) suggests women may choose to deny the presence of sexism to enable them to "blend in" with the gender status quo, as they believe it will increase their acceptance in the field. Flo and Poppy's comments suggest they saw the boys' gendered behaviour as inevitable and a consequence of both innate male behaviour and societal influence. This implied the boys were acting unintentionally and therefore the girls were less willing to challenge them (Jowett, 2004). However, by taking this approach they unwittingly diminished their effectiveness in rejecting patriarchal structures (Thorpe, 2005). This is an important point for educators to note, as it indicates young women and men may need assistance in recognising that although sexist behaviour can occur as a result of individual ignorance, such behaviour is harmful, inappropriate, and needs to be addressed.

Miri struggled with the male dominance in her class and at times felt socially isolated. However, she believed the lack of female engagement in outdoor education was a consequence of girls' attitudes and behaviours. In Miri's eyes, young women were their own "worst enemy" by succumbing to hegemonic gender stereotypes, which limited their desire to participate in the outdoors. Instead she felt girls were preoccupied with wearing "make-up and short skirts", and commented "you don't really see any girls [in the] outdoors. I think it's quite sad really...". While meaning to encourage other young women to reject limiting gender constructs and participate in outdoor education, Miri believed their inability to do so was no fault but their own, and portrayed them as weak and powerless.

Rich (2005) identified a similar paradox in her research of young women engaging with different feminist discourses and noted,

women do not account for the gendered structures that might prevent 'girlie-girls' from taking part in sport, and rest the blame for their lack of participation on the individual. However, by drawing on...ideas about femininity and passivity...they implicitly invoke gender binaries. (p. 502)

Although occasionally limited by the gendered practices, Miri believed she controlled the outcomes of her participation. She simultaneously challenged and reinforced hegemonic notions of femininity including those related to female appearance, while showing obvious disdain for girls who embodied particular forms of femininity and failed to exercise their personal agency. Miri's experience reinforces the contradictions that may exist for young women in the construction of their gender identities, and how this can influence their interactions and experiences in outdoor education (Crossley, 2010; Rich, 2005).

Does gender matter?

For many of the girls in this study, gender was perceived to be insignificant in their outdoor education experiences. Although their stories seemed to indicate otherwise, the young women believed factors such as personality and social relationships had a greater impact on their participation than gender. Similar to findings in research by Pomerantz et al. (2004) on female skateboarders, Gracie, Sally, Abigail and Poppy felt that whether you were a boy or girl didn't "really come into it" and they were unwilling to prioritise female participation over males. Sally's comment was typical of this perspective, in which she reflected "it's all about the different characters you know...It doesn't matter whether they are a girl or boy...it just really depends on the actual person and not their gender". This is noteworthy given all of these young women identified aspects of their participation that were directly affected by their sex and the social constructions of gender. As Bäckström (2013) suggests, rejecting the value and impact of gender, and instead emphasising other personal characteristics, may be seen by the girls as a way to redefine the value and meaning of gender.

However, Lynch (1991) suggests the girls' position may indicate a lack of 'feminist consciousness', in that "they expect outdoor education to be similar to the patriarchal order imposed by gender society", and therefore do not recognise oppression (p. 106). Many of the girls were aware of gender inequalities in the outdoors and challenged patriarchal behaviours and practices. However, it is unclear whether their actions were a response to isolated cases of personal injustice, or intended to contribute to collective gender resistance. None of the participants identified themselves as a feminist, and their gendered talk, which generally 'downplayed' the existence of gender inequalities, could be seen as indicative of a desire to distance themselves from feminist attitudes or behaviours (Budgeon, 2011b). As Aronson (2003) notes, girls may be unwilling to prioritise female participation, for fear of being labelled a feminist, which often carries negative connotations.

Feminism is generally defined as a political and social movement that works to create equal opportunity, recognition and rights for all - spanning across sex, gender, age and ethnic groups (McCann & Kim, 2013; Pinch et al., 2008). Crossley (2010) and Rich (2005) note historical perceptions of feminism, such as those that portray women as extremist or 'bra-burning man haters', means feminism can be inaccurately associated with notions of female dominance and aggression, and a disregard for men. Similarly, many people view feminism as an outdated movement because women appear to have "limitless opportunities in their education, careers and personal lives" (Crossley, 2010, p. 129; Griffin, 2004; Scraton, 1994). Sally for example, did not see the need for, or relevance of feminism, as generational changes denoted the acceptance of female participation in outdoor education (Braithwaite, 2002):

[Outdoor education] used to be a boys' subject...[but] our generation's very accepting...so I definitely think it's more accepted as a co-ed subject. If you tried to tell a girl that she can't do what a boy can, you're probably going to have claw marks on your face!

Sally's comment highlights the complex and contradictory nature of gender negotiation. Although she recalled stories where male students had limited her

participation in outdoor education, her ability to assert herself and participate in things that were historically unsuitable for girls, outweighed the challenges she faced. This may identify a level of ignorance or unwillingness to acknowledge the role gender plays in her experiences, and in other people's decisions to participate in the outdoors (Rich, 2005).

The girls' perceptions of gender were also observed through their engagement in this research. There were clear differences in the gendered meanings and behaviours between each school, including the variation in the number of participants recruited, which I consider may be related to gender. At the co-educational schools (Clearmount and Granity College) the research was introduced to approximately four to six girls and four were enlisted at each. However, while approximately 40 students were introduced to the research at Parkview High School, only two were recruited. This was particularly surprising to me, and although the low recruitment rate at Parkview High School may indicate that I presented myself, or the research, in a way that was unappealing to the girls, I got the impression these young women felt my research topic was uninteresting or of little value. This sense was increased in subsequently noting Claire and Charlotte appeared particularly keen to conceal their involvement, which could be due, in part, to peer pressure influencing some of the girls in their decision to engage in the study. Although I deemphasised the gendered focus of the research during the introductory session, it is possible the young women did not see gender, or being a girl in outdoor education, as a topic worthy of discussion. Given the reactions of both Claire and Charlotte, and the non-participating students at Parkview High School, some girls may have sensed the research was inherently feminist, and therefore were keen to distance themselves from the study, for fear of being associated with feminism and feminist activity.

These observations may also suggest the girls at the co-education schools saw greater value in the research and were able to identify benefits from their involvement. Arguably, these young women were exposed to hegemonic gender stereotypes and expectations more frequently than Claire and Charlotte, due to

the presence of male students. This may have influenced their desire to contribute to the research, as they more readily recognised limiting gender roles and practices in outdoor education; participating in the study may have been another way to challenge this. It also gave the girls an opportunity to share their stories, which as Griffiths (1987) suggests, can help young women to increase their perceptions of self-worth, as such opportunities can be rare in mixed-sex schools.

It is possible the young women at Parkview High School believed gender was not an issue in their outdoor education class because as Thorpe (2005) notes, “sex segregation can make gender concerns ‘appear to disappear’” (p. 94). While all of the participants in this study described the limitations gender had on their outdoor engagement, Claire and Charlotte only identified instances that had occurred outside of their school programme. This may indicate single-sex outdoor education does indeed pose fewer barriers to girls in their participation (Culp, 1998; Mitten, 1992; Mozley, 2013; Whittington, 2006). While I can only speculate as to why so few young women from the girls-only school took up the opportunity to participate in this project, I believe this point is important as it illustrates the need to understand the school culture, and particularly the gender rules, norms, and perceptions of feminism popular among the cohort. Doing so, can allow a better understanding of young women’s similar and different interpretations of, and responses to, gendered practices, behaviours, stereotypes and assumptions within outdoor education, the school and their lives more broadly.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the ways in which young women interpret and navigate the gendered environment of outdoor education. While the girls’ initial comments suggested gender was insignificant, deeper analysis of their stories challenged this viewpoint. The girls attributed a wide variety of meanings to both sex and gender, which were fluid, complex and highly situational.

Not dissimilar from findings of female participation in sport (Bäckström, 2013; Bruce, 2008b; Clark, 2013; Green & Singleton, 2006; Krane et al., 2013; Thorpe, 2007), and physical education (Azzarito et al., 2006; Beasley, 2013; Fisette, 2011; Flintoff & Scraton, 2001; Garrett, 2004; Hills, 2007), gender socialisation has ensured many girls and women feel less competent and respected in the outdoors compared to men (Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Jinny and Gracie recognised their own abilities and achievements, however these seemed incomparable to the boys 'natural' outdoor ability. This perception is reinforced by the media, which focusses on 'extreme' outdoor education, relegating female participation to the margins and portraying them as 'extraordinary' or 'masculine'. As Flo noted, this has increased the gap between outdoor education's image and reality, turning many girls off the subject. It is vital educators provide opportunities for young women to share their experiences with their peers, as this will enable people to develop their understanding of outdoor education, and increase the validity of females in this space (Little & Wilson, 2005).

There were many contradictions in the girls' gendered talk and behaviour. This was particularly evident in the way they both challenged and reinforced hegemonic gender performances. Whittington (2006) argues outdoor education and recreation can be a powerful way for girls to challenge hegemonic beliefs of 'ideal' femininity. This sentiment was shared by Gracie, who felt empowered when she learnt others accepted her 'make-up free' self. Some of the girls adopted a 'girl power' attitude, in which they played upon traditional notions of femininity, particularly in regards to their appearance and physical competencies, to challenge limiting gender stereotypes and practices in outdoor education (Bäckström, 2013; Snyder, 2008). Poppy valued her physical competency and took steps to ensure she had equal opportunities for development, by challenging her male peers sexist behaviour. However, there were instances where the girls unwittingly reinforced hegemonic practices and behaviours, or contradicted their own gender perceptions. In attempting to encourage more girls to participate in outdoor education, Sally suggested female participants were 'honorary' boys (Newbery, 2000). Similarly, girls who failed to

exercise their individual agency and challenge hegemonic femininity, were viewed with disdain and pity. Several young women also expressed postfeminist perspectives in denying the existence of limiting gender behaviours, or by rejecting the impact gender had on their outdoor education experiences. This view may be partly fuelled by the negative historical images associated with feminism, and the belief that outdoor education is now a gender-equal subject (Aronson, 2003; Pomerantz et al., 2004).

Jones (2012) and Newbery (2000) suggest women should not have to become 'conceptualised' men to have their participation accepted and valued by society. Baumgardner and Richards (2004) agree, noting we "shouldn't have to make something masculine in order to make it valued by society. In fact, we should bring feminine things into masculine spaces", and should not "preserve these feminine traits just for women" (p. 63). Reducing and blurring gender binaries by problematising the assigning of particular traits, dispositions, capabilities, and opportunities to specific sexes and valuing the performance of all traits across a range of contexts, may help to bring this change about.

Della-Longa (2013) and Lugg (2003) emphasise the role educators play in not only helping to increase the gender-consciousness of participants, but in challenging inequalities present in the hidden curriculum. Creating environments that encourage young women to experiment with different gendered behaviours and expressions, can help them to challenge the current hegemony of outdoor education. In doing so, girls and boys may find greater personal meaning and value in their identity in the outdoors.

The last three findings chapters have identified the varied and complex meanings young women assign to their outdoor education experiences. The subject provided them with the opportunity to form meaningful relationships with peers, teachers and the environment, and in doing so, develop their sense of self. Increasing their physical and social competency was a significant motivator and outcome for the girls in their participation, and they valued the opportunity to attempt novel and challenging tasks. Many of the young women felt supported

in their programme and saw the outdoors as a gender-inclusive space. While heartening, the findings nevertheless suggest girls continue to face ongoing challenges to their engagement, particularly surrounding the perception and practice of gender in the outdoors. The young women employed a variety of strategies to manage their experiences, however their teachers played an important role in enabling them to successfully overcome barriers and find meaning in their participation. In the subsequent chapter I will reflect on the key findings of this study, and consider how practitioners and academics can work together to challenge and reconstruct gender in outdoor education.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

As I noted in the literature review, the outdoors and outdoor education have predominately centred upon the experiences and competencies of boys and men (Fullagar & Hailstone, 1996; Prince, 2004). The perceived masculinity of outdoor education, and the existence of practices which favour and reproduce hegemonic gender performances, has ensured many girls and women have struggled to feel acknowledged and accepted in their engagement of outdoor education. This research has examined adolescent girls' experiences of school-based outdoor education, and considered if and how their programmes are supportive of them as young women in this space. The findings of this research highlight the subjective and complex meanings girls assign to their participation, and the varied ways in which their programmes both support and challenge their involvement in outdoor education. While this research is phenomenological in that it emphasises and values individual thought and experience, during data analysis it became apparent there were themes common between the participants. While some of the findings are expected and consistent with other research, there are aspects of the girls' experiences surrounding the meaning and manipulation of gender in the outdoors, that provided new and different perspectives. In this chapter I reflect on the key findings of this study, and in accordance with feminist methodology, consider how the ideas raised in this research can be more widely applied by offering suggestions to outdoor practice and future research.

Key findings

The developmental potential of outdoor education has been widely acknowledged by academics and practitioners (Anderson et al., 1997; McNatty, 2014; Quay et al., 2002; Whittington et al., 2015). Indeed, the majority of the young women in this study were purposeful in their decision to participate in the subject as they believed it offered invaluable opportunities for learning, self-discovery and growth.

One significant finding of this research relates to the construction and negotiation of identity. For Abigail and Charlotte, participation in outdoor education not only formed a significant part of who they were, but reinforced valued aspects of themselves. Outdoor education also helped the girls to make sense of who they were and feel accepted by others, as they were able to apply themselves to different tasks and have their skills and attributes recognised and validated by their peers. As Klimstra (2013) notes, having a sense of belonging is significant to identity development and mental well-being, and this research demonstrates the ways in which outdoor education can positively contribute to an individual's developing sense of self. However, the girls also described experiences where their participation in outdoor education challenged their identity. In particular, this related to the perceived mismatch between preconceived images of outdoor education and the girls' identity (Little, 2002; McNatty, 2014). This made it challenging for several of the young women to fully engage in the subject; for example, Sally questioned the legitimacy of her participation as it was at odds with how she and other people perceived her. While the girls attempted to negotiate these tensions in their identity development, the pervasiveness of limiting perceptions of outdoor education and who should participate, were at times difficult to manage.

Similar to the perceived benefits outdoor education could have on their developing sense of self, the girls saw their participation in the subject as an enjoyable and legitimate way to improve their social, personal and technical competency. Collins and Steinberg (2006) note that many adolescents are occupied with increasing their independence and testing their capabilities. Certainly, for the majority of the young women in this study, becoming self-reliant in the outdoors and in their wider lives was important. Overcoming challenges and experiencing success was identified by five of the girls as having a key role in developing their self-belief and competence (Garrett, 2004). Similarly, Abigail felt outdoor education offered more authentic and valuable learning opportunities due to the practical and interactive nature of the class and pedagogies used, and the applicability of the learning to her wider life. Although Brown (2010) questions the occurrence of learning transfer, the young women

placed a high value on the learning that occurred in their outdoor education class, as they saw it as applicable to other times and contexts. However, the findings of this study indicate a disconnect between broader school perceptions of outdoor education as a subject and the reality of the girls' experiences. This meant many of the young women questioned aspects of their involvement, as they felt their school did not accept or value the learning they gained from their participation in outdoor education.

Developing social competency and forming strong connections with their peers and teachers was an important aspect of the girls' participation in outdoor education. A desire to belong to a community and feel accepted for who they were, was particularly meaningful. For Claire, outdoor education provided a safe and inclusive space, where she felt comfortable to "be herself", and this helped her to interact more confidently with her peers. This sentiment was shared by several other girls, who felt the nature of outdoor education meant people had to rely on each other more, which enabled deeper relationships to form (Loeffler, 2004a). However, contrary to other research (Boniface, 2006; Sammet, 2010), not all of the girls placed a strong emphasis on the social aspects of their participation. Indeed, there were times when Claire and Miri felt overwhelmed by the social demands of their programme, and consequently they preferred to work in smaller groups where they could manage their interactions more easily.

For Charlotte and Flo, it was not just human relationships that were important, but also those they formed with the natural environment. As Louv (2013) posits, modern society has altered the way people engage and regard the environment; in the developed world the opportunities people have to engage and form meaningful relationships with the natural environment has reduced significantly. Like many of the other girls, Abigail felt outdoor education not only provided people with the opportunity to connect with and learn about their local place(s), but was effective in motivating them to live more sustainably (McNatty, 2014). Being outdoors also facilitated different embodied experiences, and helped the young women to reflect on the world around them and their place within it. While this research identified the presence of environmental learning within the

participants' programmes, the young women's stories indicate their desire for deeper environmental learning, particularly surrounding environmental sustainability. Such learning aligns fully with the visions and intentions of contemporary curriculum policy in the subject area of Health and Physical Education, and with the New Zealand curriculum more broadly (Ministry of Education, 1999, 2007).

The findings of this research indicate outdoor education is not a gender-neutral space. The evidence of hegemonic gender perceptions and performances were evident in all three schools, however similar to Culp's (1998) assessment, single-sex and co-educational environments offer students different gendered experiences. While it appeared that the young women in this study who attended co-educational schools faced more gendered barriers to their outdoor education participation compared to the single-sex participants, it seemed they also had greater opportunities to directly challenge and redefine gender perceptions and behaviours (Hills & Croston, 2011). The results of this study suggest both male and female students can have a limiting effect on young women's participation in the outdoors, by placing narrowed gendered perceptions upon each other that can alter or restrict girls' and arguably boys' opportunities to fully engage in activities. Many of the gendered barriers the young women faced centred around the perception that the outdoors and outdoor education is inherently masculine. Social conditioning ensured that many of the young women in this study perceived their skills and achievements as inferior to boys, who they saw as being naturally competent in the outdoors (Mulqueen, 1992; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Sally and Abigail felt this view was reinforced by inaccurate and biased media reporting, which frequently portrays the outdoors as an extreme environment and one requiring personal traits that are commonly associated with boys and men. While this did not appear to affect the research participants in their decision to engage with outdoor education, many noted this perception often turned other girls off the subject.

Despite describing experiences that indicated they were limited by gendered stereotypes and behaviours in their participation of outdoor education, the

majority of the girls felt valued and supported in their programme. They saw outdoor education as a constructive way to challenge hegemonic gender performances, and recognise and reinforce their competency as a young women in the outdoors (Leupp, 2007). However, during the research it became clear that the young women's attempts to manage the gendered tensions in their experiences were complex, and at times, contradictory (Azzarito et al., 2006; Jorgenson, 2002; Newbery, 2000). Indeed, there were instances when the young women simultaneously rejected and reinforced patriarchal power structures and practices. For example, although Sally and Miri were active in encouraging other girls to participate in outdoor education, they unwittingly reinforced the maleness of the outdoors, by suggesting performances of femininity were undesirable or incompatible with outdoor education participation.

While Abigail and Miri acknowledged the impact gender had on their participation, the majority of the young women downplayed the role of gender. In this way, many of the girls expressed third-wave or postfeminist beliefs. Marie echoed a postfeminist stance when she noted that while outdoor education used to be perceived as a boy's subject, she believed that girls and boys were now equally accepted. Marie was active in encouraging other girls to participate in outdoor education, however she generally appeared unaware or unconcerned with the limiting gendered aspects of her experiences and largely operated within traditional gendered norms. Conversely, several of the other young women challenged the gendering of their experiences by playing on traditional notions of femininity to assert their power and strength as young women, which is more representative of third-wave feminist action. None of the participants identified themselves as a feminist; indeed the low number of participants recruited from the all-girls school may suggest these young women were unwilling to be associated with feminism or feminist research (McRobbie & McCabe, 2012), or perceived the research as obsolete and unnecessary. However, similar to research conducted by Pomerantz et al. (2004), which centred on young female skateboarders, although the girls actively disassociated themselves from feminist ideals, many inadvertently engaged in feminist action, by challenging traditional gender stereotypes and working to ensure their

experiences in outdoor education were as valued and accepted as those of boys and men.

As these findings highlight, adolescent girls draw a wide range of meanings from their participation in outdoor education. Many of the girls cherished their involvement, as it provided them with invaluable opportunities to learn about and connect with different people and places. While aspects of their participation in outdoor education presented complex challenges, regarding social interaction, identity construction and gender negotiation, the majority of the young women felt their outdoor education programme supported them as a young woman in the outdoors, and helped them to actualise the person they wanted to become.

Implications to outdoor practice and theory

In this section, I consider how the findings of this research can be more widely applied to outdoor programmes and research that involve adolescent girls. As Garko (1999) notes, feminist phenomenology is concerned with idiosyncratic meaning and individual experience, and therefore sweeping claims should not be made. In presenting the following suggestions my intention is not to generalise young women's experiences of outdoor education or view them as a homogenous group, but rather consider how the findings of this study can encourage practitioners to reflect on their own philosophy and practice. Conducting this research has prompted me to extensively evaluate my own teaching experiences and practice, and in doing so I recognise the gendering of my work and the ways in which I support and unwittingly hinder young women's experiences in outdoor education. In presenting these suggestions, I hope to inspire positive changes to outdoor education theory and practice, which ensures young women feel accepted and validated in their participation, and encourages greater gender equality in the outdoors.

Suggestions to practice

Despite challenging traditional gendered perceptions of the outdoors and outdoor education through their own participation in the subject, the young

women in this study, and society more broadly, continue to view the outdoors as inherently masculine. In particular, these understandings relate to extreme images associated with outdoor activities, and the perceived attributes required to participate in outdoor education, which are typically associated with boys and men. This disconnect between the perceptions of outdoor education and the reality of the girls' experiences not only effects the girls' sense of validity in this space, but other young people's decision to engage with the subject. Central to disrupting these limiting perceptions and gendered stereotypes are the opportunities that teachers and schools provide young women to share stories of their experiences with the wider school community, irrespective of the sex composition of their school or outdoor education programme. Through doing so, there may be greater recognition that girls and women are not only capable of achieving and fully participating in the outdoors, but can be successful in their engagement without having to act as 'honorary' boys (Newbery, 2000). The girls in this research felt that speaking about outdoor education in assembly and putting up posters around the school, would increase the subject's exposure and develop people's understanding of "what outdoor education is really like". However, I suggest that a more critical approach needs to be taken to ensure typical gendered perceptions associated with risk, adventure, and physical competency aren't reinforced. For example, encouraging girls to talk about all aspects of their participation, such as concerns they may have had prior to their involvement and how they managed these, may help other girls to more easily see the value and validity in their engagement in outdoor education.

Although participants may feel supported in their outdoor education class, as did the majority of the young women in this research, many still struggle to successfully negotiate the gendered aspects of their experiences. Teachers creating pedagogical space for young women and men to feel accepted for who they are may assist in challenging traditional gender stereotypes that persist in outdoor education. Similarly, encouraging participants to experiment with different behaviours and attitudes, may not only help to indicate the validity of so-called 'female' and 'male' qualities in outdoor education, but demonstrate that these attributes are not fixed to biological sex. The young women in this

research identified the impact teacher and programming approaches had on their experiences, and the level of acceptance they felt within the class. Reflecting on the different pedagogical methods that are employed in outdoor education, and considering what gendered messages these are sending to students, may be a necessary starting point for practitioners in identifying the presence of gendered outdoor practices. In supporting this, and as previous studies have proposed, it is important teachers incorporate images, stories and activities that demonstrate the strengths and holistic capabilities of women in the outdoors; role-model gender-inclusive language and behaviour (Delay & Dymont, 2003); and celebrate students' alternative gender performances (Hills & Croston, 2011). Such practices could assist in critiquing dominant gender structures and encourage more inclusive practices in the outdoors.

The four young women from Granity College identified the challenges involved with managing menstruation in the outdoors. While I acknowledge that some teachers and students may find this topic difficult to discuss or possess inadequate knowledge about menstruation and appropriate management strategies, it appears that a failure to consider the impact menstruation can have on female participants may negatively affect girls' experiences in outdoor education. This topic has been afforded little attention in outdoor practice and literature (see Lynch, 1991; Lynch, 1996; Rynehart, 1994), however it is important that all practitioners take steps to set up processes that assist young women in managing their periods while in the outdoors. As Gracie made clear, menstruating is a natural process, and teachers should and need to be open and sensitive in discussing it with their female students. To my knowledge there are few resources available that specifically discuss female menstruation in outdoor education or the outdoors, however there is a plethora of information that is widely accessible regarding general menstrual care and hygiene. Employing the help of other instructors and educators (for example, health teachers) to assist if necessary, and considering the facilities available to female students while on outdoor trips, are important steps for teachers to take to ensure the young women they teach feel comfortable, safe, and supported in outdoor education.

Developing an understanding of, and relationship with, local places and the wider environment was a valued aspect of many of the girls' outdoor education experiences. While it appeared that the participants had the opportunity to experience a wide range of places and learn about basic environmental education and sustainability concepts, half of the young women in this study expressed a desire to learn more deeply about nature and environmental sustainability. The past decade has seen an increase in the development and integration of socio-ecological pedagogies (such as place-responsiveness and Education for Sustainability) into outdoor education practice and philosophy (Irwin & Straker, 2014; Wattchow & Brown, 2011). While many academics and practitioners value and welcome this development (Hill, 2010), it appears such approaches are not being utilised to their full potential, or to the depth some students desire. Additionally, socio-ecological approaches tend to place less emphasis on risk and high-end outdoor pursuits, and instead focus on deep learning and student centred experiences. Becoming independent and self-reliant was a significant goal for many of the young women in this study; adopting socio-ecological approaches may assist students to develop these aspects of themselves, as participants are able to take greater control of their learning and are more likely to be able to replicate their outdoor education experiences in their own lives. Employing these pedagogies may also help to better actualise the vision and intentions of the Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999; 2007), in respect to students developing the critical thinking and action skills necessary for contributing to their own and others well-being, as well as that of the environment.

Implications for theory

This research has provided valuable insights into young women's experiences of school-based outdoor education, and has aimed to reduce the gap in literature that exists on this topic. However, as with all research there are limits to this project, particularly surrounding the number of participants involved and the amount of time dedicated to collecting data. While robust and sound findings were produced, it would be valuable to conduct this research with a larger number of participants, from a range of secondary school programmes across

Aotearoa New Zealand, as this would provide greater insight into the phenomenon and may identify trends or ideas of particular significance. While the participants in this study generally reflect the demographics of other female outdoor education students at their school, and of student populations in the wider research area, they represent a rather narrow demographic group who typically identify as Pākehā/ European and middle class. It would be valuable to consider the experiences of girls who identify with other socio-economic backgrounds and/or ethnicities including Māori (Townsend, 2011; Townsend, 2014), Pasifika, and visiting international students. These student groups are often underrepresented in outdoor programmes and research, and offer invaluable perspectives and insights for understanding girls' experiences in outdoor education.

As I noted in the methods chapter, feminist phenomenology is a reasonably contemporary methodology and although it has been successfully applied to moving bodies and outdoor research (Allen-Collinson, 2011; Chisholm, 2008), it continues to be underutilised by researchers within this field and more widely. This methodology gave me an appropriate and effective lens through which to examine the young women's experiences. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach of phenomenology and feminism enabled me to focus on the subjective and idiosyncratic meanings of lived experiences, whilst positioning them against wider social and cultural structures. Employing feminist phenomenology presented unique challenges surrounding the engagement of young women in feminist research and authentically integrating a feminist ethic of care. However, this perspective enabled the gathering of rich data, and helped me to reflect upon my personal and professional outdoor experiences and identify positive changes I can make to my own practice. For these reasons I encourage other researchers to consider adopting this methodology in their work.

Final thoughts

This study has explored adolescent girls' experiences of school-based outdoor education in Aotearoa New Zealand, and has illustrated the valuable contribution this school subject can make to young women's lives. While not unexpected, the

participants of this research drew varied and complex meanings from their involvement in outdoor education, which highlights the idiosyncratic and subjective nature of shared experience (van Manen, 1997). The girls were primarily motivated to participate in outdoor education as a result of the perceived benefits it could offer to their developing competencies and sense of self, and the fun, interactive and stimulating environment the subject provided. They highly valued the opportunities their programmes gave them to learn about themselves, their peers and the world around them, and described some of their experiences with joy and reverence.

It appears that girls are not only influenced by their family, peers and school community but wider societal values and expectations, particularly surrounding ideal gender stereotypes and performances. It is positive that the majority of the girls in this research felt supported as a young woman in the outdoors and outdoor education, and perceived individual traits such as being socially confident and having a positive and willing attitude, as more significant to their participation than gender. However, the girls' stories indicate that many young women continue to face challenges to their engagement in a typically male-dominated activity (Della-Longa, 2013). While some of the girls used their participation in outdoor education as a way to challenge limiting gender perceptions and inequalities in wider society and their outdoor education programme, the findings of this research suggest practitioners need to take a very active role in challenging and redefining the gendering of the outdoors. In particular, it is important girls' do not feel limited in their experiences; educators can help to manage this through their programme design and implementation, by considering both the competencies female students bring to an experience and the gendered barriers they may face in their participation. Additionally, supporting young women to feel comfortable to freely express themselves, and encouraging and celebrating female and male students' alternative gender performances may help to reinforce the value and validity of female participation in outdoor education. This may ensure adolescent girls not only feel supported in their experiences, but perceive the outdoors as a gender-inclusive space.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A – Participant Information Letter

Understanding Female Secondary School Students' Experiences of Outdoor Education in Aotearoa New Zealand

Dear Student,

My name is Sophie Watson and I am a Master of Education candidate at the University of Waikato. Thank you for showing an interest in participating in this study. The decision to participate is entirely yours – you do not have to participate, however your help would be greatly appreciated.

Project aim:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of young women who participate in secondary school outdoor education programmes. In particular, I am interested in hearing about the experiences you have had in your outdoor education class and what you enjoy and dislike about the subject. I am also interested in learning about what your views are on the outdoors and the impact it may/may not have on your life.

I have been an outdoor educator and instructor for the past nine years and my experience in this role and the observations I have made of my students and participants motivated me to undertake this research project.

What can you do to help?

As part of this study you have the opportunity to participate in several activities – please read the details of each activity before deciding whether you would like to participate.

Focus group interviews: I am looking for 3-6 students to participate in a group discussion. This will take place at school and during a lunchtime. The session will last between 30-60 minutes and I will ask the group questions about your outdoor education class, the reasons why you participate in the outdoors and your views of people who participate in outdoor education. This session will be audio-recorded so I can transcribe (write down) what we talk about and analyse it.

Individual interview: Three to four students are required to participate in an individual interview. I will select students from those who put their names forward. This will be based on a range of criteria, but my aim is to ensure that I capture the voices of students from diverse backgrounds, interests and experiences. Again, this will take place at school and during a lunchtime (the interview will last approx. 30-60 minutes) and will be audio-recorded. During the interview we will talk about your experiences in the outdoor education class, how you view the outdoors and the impact outdoor education may have on your life.

Observations: If you give consent to participate in an individual interview and are selected to participate, then you also have the opportunity to be involved in participant observations. This means that I will observe you 1-2 times during your outdoor education class or during a fieldtrip (this may be overnight). The purpose of

these observations is to give me better understanding about your outdoor education experiences and the activities you are involved with. You don't need to 'do' anything when I observe you, just participate as you normally would.

Participant rights:

If you choose to participate in this study you have the following rights;

- Refuse to answer any question or withdraw your participation in the research at any stage, without any negative effect;
- Withdraw your data (what you have said in the interview/notes I have made during observations) up until data analysis commences on August 15, 2015;
- Ask any further questions regarding the research, or the requirements of your participation during study;
- Review the transcript (write-up) of the individual interview (if you participate in this activity) and make changes to it;
- Have access to the final research report when completed.

I will also ensure that your personal details and data is protected and that other people will not be able to identify who you are in the research report. I will do this by assigning you a pseudonym (false name) and I will not share your information with other people (including your parents and teachers), unless you give me permission to do so.

The information gathered in this study will be used to write my Master's thesis and will mainly be read by university students, researchers and academics. It is likely that this information will also be used to write magazine and journal articles and to give conference presentations.

If you would like to participate in the study please return the consent form, signed by both you and your parents/caregivers to the School Office by _____.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, either now or in the future, you can contact me or my research supervisor.

Thank you,

Sophie Watson (Researcher)
University of Waikato Master's Candidate
Email: xxxx@xxxxx.xxx
Ph: xxx-xxx-xxxx

Marg Cosgriff (Primary Supervisor)
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Appendix B – Focus Group Guide

Focus group questions could include, but are not limited to the following:

Participation:

- How do those close to you (ie: friends & family) view OE and your participation in it?
 - What influences them to see it this way?
 - How does this make you feel?
- How did you feel about the outdoors prior to taking this class?
 - Do you feel differently after taking this class? If so, please explain.
- Who would you recommend OE to? Why?
 - Can any kind of person take OE?

Programming:

- What things do you enjoy & dislike about OE at school?
- What do you think you have gotten out of OE?
- What would make the OE class better for you?
- What things come to mind when I ask you about the image that outdoor education has? Where does this image come from?

Meanings:

- How do you think your outdoor education class is different from your other classes?
 - What things are different?
 - Which is more important to you? Why?
- What do you think the essential elements of outdoor education are?
 - What makes outdoor education the way/what it is?
- Do your OE experiences carry on into your everyday life? How?

Gender issues:

- How would you feel if boys & girls were in separate outdoor education classes? (co-ed)/ How would you feel if boys were in your outdoor education class? (single-sex)
- Do you think you are treated differently in the outdoors/outdoor education class because you are a girl? How/Why?
- Do you think females experience outdoor education differently to males?
 - In what ways? Why?
- What can outdoor education teachers do to better support young women in the outdoors?

Appendix C – Individual Interview Schedule

Interview questions could include, but are not limited to the following:

Participation:

- When did you first become involved in the outdoors?
- Why do you take outdoor education (OE) as a subject at school?
- Will you continue to be involved in OE/the outdoors in the future?
 - Why/in what way?
- What kind of feelings do you commonly experience when you are participating in OE?
 - What things make you feel that way?

Programming:

- What were your expectations of the outdoor education class?
 - Have these matched up with what has really happened?
Why/How?
- What are your thoughts on nature in outdoor education?
 - Do you think this is a good level in your class?
 - Is it important that nature is included in OE?
- What are your thoughts on challenge in outdoor education?
 - Do you think this is a good level in your class?
 - Is it important that challenge is included in OE?
- What would you like to get out of OE?
- What do you think you have gotten out of OE?

Meanings:

- What value/priority do you place on your participation in OE?
- Have your OE experiences caused you to think differently or make changes in your life? If so, please explain.

Gender:

- What would be some differences in how you would feel about trying something new or challenging in a group with boys, or just girls? Why?
- How does it feel to be a female participating in OE? (How does OE make you feel as a female?)
- Do you think there is a perception among some in New Zealand society that the outdoors and outdoor activities are better suited for boys and men?
 - If so, what do you think contributes to this way of thinking?
 - If so, how did/does this perception influence your feelings about outdoor education? If not, why do you think this?

Perceptions:

- What is your perception of a person who does OE?
 - What are they like? (Activities/attitudes)
 - Do you see yourself like this? Why?
- Has this OE class influenced your perception of the outdoors? How?