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Teachers’ Beliefs and Practices in the Outdoor Classroom 1877-2007

A Tension Between Safety and Pleasure

Roslin Kaye Sullivan

Abstract

This thesis examines how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist (‘lay’) primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom. The non-specialist teachers’ approaches toward taking children outside the classroom are a product of general attitudes and beliefs about children’s safety. Beliefs and understandings of children’s safety as expressed through policy and school practice are explored both in current and historical contexts. This means this thesis is not about the commercial outdoor education industry. The thesis engages with the outdoor education literature around issues of safety in the outdoor classroom.

Inclusion of ‘outside the classroom’ activities as part of the educational experience, beginning with the 1877 Education Act, are traced up to New Zealand’s 1999 national curriculum and subsequent documents relating to safety and outdoor education. This thesis engages with the outdoor education literature. Changes in New Zealand’s educational outdoor safety policies are also presented as they contribute to non-specialist teachers’ approaches toward working with children in the outdoors. Children’s enjoyment of participating in outside-the-classroom activities provides a background against which the study occurs.

A social constructionist position is taken in the study. This is intentionally and respectfully distinct from empirical approaches to safety in education outside the classroom. In coming alongside these empirical approaches, this study’s social constructionist position provides another aspect of policy and practice: that of how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their outside the classroom practice. The social construction of safety is investigated through historical policy documents alongside teachers’ talk to highlight a tension that exists for non-specialist primary school teachers between safety, enjoyment and risk when working with young people in the outdoors. The teachers’ talk revealed understandings of safety are not static or discrete, but rather are part of a continual process of teachers’ interactions and teachers’ myths and rituals relating to the social context of the outdoor classroom.

This time-situated critical study contributes to understandings of the beliefs, practices and approaches of New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers when teaching in the outdoor classroom. Beliefs include overprotectiveness and that safety is available at the expense of some benefit. Both lay beliefs are common enough for the consequences to be worth investigating. The effects of safe practice and risk anxiety for these non-specialist teachers are presented. Both the negative and the positive effects of non-specialist teachers’ safety beliefs are examined through the document analysis and interview data to reveal the ongoing construction of their curriculum and pedagogy as an effect of social change. Understandings of safety, enjoyment, pleasure and risk are found to be dynamic constructs. The research exposes a tension between safety and enjoyment that primary non-specialist teachers experience and negotiate when interacting with children in the outdoor classroom.
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Foreword

My interest in this topic, safety and teachers’ outside the classroom practice, began after an amendment to New Zealand’s health and safety legislation in 2002 (enacted 2003). I had taught in New Zealand primary schools during the period from the early 1970s until the 1990s, and taken my classes on annual outdoor education ‘camps’. During my teaching time, while children’s safety was a consideration, there was little serious attention paid to the matter when organising outdoor camps. More important were the transport arrangements, parent helper numbers and planning the catering. But after the health and safety legislative amendment, teachers and school principals voiced concerns about the increased responsibility for taking children outside the classroom. Their apprehensions were that outdoor education activities would become too difficult to co-ordinate because of health and safety compliance requirements.

Non-compliance to health and safety regulations had featured in a number of high profile accidents that occurred prior to the legislative amendment during 2000 and 2001. Drownings on school camps, a cyclist’s death during a road cycle race and other serious injuries during organised recreational events, created high public interest in the matter of safety. In particular, the police investigations and prosecutions resulting from the accidents created uncertainty surrounding compliance issues for recreational organisations. There was further concern in the education community. Principals and teachers did not want to face police prosecution resulting from accidents during school outdoor activities. The alarm in the education community, due to media reporting and misinterpretation of changes to health and safety requirements, prompted the Ministry of Education to clarify schools’ position regarding the legislation.

I was alerted to this situation in 2004 during an informal meeting with some of my former primary school teacher colleagues. In earlier times some of these colleagues had accompanied me on school camps; we reflected that these activities had been the most remembered and enjoyable of our teaching times. One colleague remarked that he would refuse to take school camps in the future because of the changes to health and safety legislation. It was this discussion that prompted my research. As it proved, my colleagues were mistakenly informed about the meaning of the legislative changes for their outdoor education practice. Further, there was confusion about health and safety legislation and teachers’ personal liability under the legislation. The teachers in discussion spoke of the
possibility of losing their homes should they be found liable for an accident during outdoor camps. It was these concerns that were addressed by the Ministry of Education on their website, and with the 2003 release of health and safety guidelines ‘Safety and EOTC – a good practice guide for New Zealand schools’. The ministry’s website (www.tki.org.nz) noted that if principals and boards of trustees followed the guide, they would “significantly reduce the chances of an incident occurring (and, therefore, being prosecuted)”.

This was quite a different policy environment from the one in which I began and practiced my teaching. This investigation began after New Zealand’s health and safety legislation was amended in 2002, and the release of the Ministry of Education’s safety guidelines in 2003. The study takes a retrospective view to trace the developments in safety, and outdoor education, teacher practice and policy. A timeframe places a boundary around the investigation, so events that have occurred in New Zealand’s outdoor education environment since 2006-2007 data collection are not included in the study. I do however, from the vantage point of 2013, draw on recent material as it pertains to the historical relevance of the study.

A further point, although there is no universal outdoor education prescription (Wattchow & Brown, 2011), there is a distinction made in New Zealand between ‘education outside the classroom’ (EOTC) and ‘outdoor education’. EOTC covers any education that takes part outside the classroom (e.g. museum trips, zoo trips, school camps). ‘Outdoor education’ is more specific. It is a key area of learning in the New Zealand Health and Physical Education curriculum and uses the natural environment in developing students’ skills and understanding of the outdoors. At times I will use both terms somewhat interchangeably, but will be specific when necessary, acknowledging any literature.
1 Introduction

The safety of children is a paramount principle of New Zealand’s school EOTC programmes. The principle, which underpins teachers’ practice when taking children outside their classrooms is explained in terms of the inherent risks of outdoor activities; the potential for harm to children necessitates the paramountcy for safety precautions. Children’s safety is an accepted aspect of New Zealand’s contemporary school outdoor education practice. This is unsurprising for reasons, such as for example, children’s vulnerability and their need of protection. Shifting understandings about children over time partly explains the current requirements for safety precautions and protective systems for school children.

Debates about children’s safety were particularly strong in the 1990s and early 2000s, and the associated arguments can still fruitfully be applied to the forces that shape teachers’ safe practice when engaging with students outside the classroom. Key theorists argued that modern western societies are characterized by heightened risk consciousness and increasing emphasis on the value of safety. According to Furedi (1997), a culture of safety and associated risk aversion permeates all aspects of western life with negative effect. For children in particular, Furedi (1997, p. 12) claims that protecting them against risk reduces their opportunities for experimentation, representing a waste of human potential. The “safe child” is reflective of the pervasive risk anxiety of modern life.

A particularly intense anxiety about children and safety establishes children as objects of social concern (Scott, Jackson, & Backett-Milburn, 1998). There are very real consequences for children’s lives from adults’ risk anxiety (Scott, et al., 1998). Adults’ risk anxiety constructs children as vulnerable and in need of protection, thereby subjecting children to constant surveillance. For Dixey (1999), parental anxiety serves to increase adult supervision, which limits children’s lives and reduces their autonomy. One consequence of parental concern about physical harm to children is the reduction in their outdoor play (Clements, 2004). More recently, critical attention and anxiety has been directed at a generation of ‘cotton wool’ children who are protected from risk and denied opportunity for activities that potentially have dangerous outcomes (Furedi, 2006; Humberstone & Stan, 2009).

Children’s safety when taking part in activities outside of the classroom also sits within broader debates about modern risk society. Beck’s (1992) risk society can be characterised by constant attention to global risks, and the pervasive monitoring affecting the sense of
managing the self and others (Scott, et al., 1998). Inability to manage the greater fears of contemporary global crises such as nuclear armament or global warming contributes to increased, but more controllable concerns about children’s safety (Katz, 2008). In the smaller, more manageable sites of formal education in New Zealand and Australian early childhood and welfare settings, intensified social concerns about children’s vulnerability are evidenced by extreme regulatory measures and risk-averse systems (Brown & Sumssion, 2007; Fenech, Sumssion, & Goodfellow, 2006; 2008). It is a paradox that, although children are objectively safer now than they have ever been (Gleave, 2008), there has been a growth in safety initiatives and policies that attempt to ensure safety for children (Waiton, 2004).

Risks to children’s safety are presented as more serious than those for adults. It is “beyond debate” that children should be protected from harm, and potential risks should be taken very seriously (Scott, et al., 1998, p. 691). But the dangers that threaten children’s safety can also result in social panics about children. Social panics can ensue when children’s safety is threatened by, for example, supposed sexual abuse in early childhood centres (Jones, 2004) or as victims of street crime in America (Furedi, 1997). There is general recognition, in contemporary times, that the dangers attention is focused toward, are in part generated (Hilgartner, 1992) and sustained by mass media (Gill, 2008; Glassner, 1999; Sachs & Mellor, 2003).

Media panic about the dangers of children’s outdoor play activities has contributed to a decline in children’s participation and in children’s ability to negotiate and manage risk. A large scale project in England, ‘Play England’, challenges the media’s creation of social panic toward children’s risk-taking and suggests there is a disjunction between child safety and social concerns (Gleave, 2008, p. 5). The project concludes with the importance of adopting a new approach to risk assessment in children’s lives. The challenge is supported by Gill (2008) to embrace a philosophy of resilience toward the presence of risk in children’s lives.

Studies in the sociology of risk and childhood illustrate changing attention to children’s safety and increasing protection of young people in modern times. The safe child debates have been prominent in some aspects of education, particularly in early childhood education, and in relation to children and protection, and in the area of safe teacher practices, yet little attention has been applied to safety discourses as they relate to children’s experiences outside of the classroom. This thesis examines how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by
New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom.

Children’s enjoyment of participation in outside the classroom activities has long been recognised as an important aspect of New Zealand’s primary school education outside the classroom (Dowling, 1978; Lynch, 2006), so as well as investigating safety policy and practice, the place of pleasure in outside the classroom activities provides a background against which the study occurs.

The study is also located in the wider social environment of the ‘risk society’ and safe child debates. Non-specialist primary school teachers’ beliefs and understandings of children’s safety as expressed through policy and practice are explored both in current and historical contexts. The research will contribute to understanding the beliefs, practices and approaches of New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers when teaching in the outdoor classroom. As well as researching teachers’ beliefs about safe practice, the effects of risk anxiety on their safe practice are presented. Further, the notion of a tension between safety and enjoyment that primary non-specialist teachers experience and negotiate when interacting with children in the outdoor classroom is examined.

1.1 The value and worth of the child

Safe children are central to New Zealand’s primary school teachers’ EOTC practice. The current emphasis on children’s safety in EOTC is in part a reflection of western societies’ understanding of the value and worth of children. There is a considerable body of literature devoted to children in all areas of modern life from child care and welfare, family life, schooling and play in outdoor environments. The reasons for the shifting importance of children in western society have been explored in historical studies of the child. These studies of childhood offer insight into the shifts that have occurred in children’s welfare and safety, and suggest forces at play during historical periods. Work from historical studies provides indications as to why children’s safety has emerged as a significant focus. Ariès (1962) historical study of childhood in particular illustrates the changing social importances of children.

Ariès’ book, Centuries of Childhood (1962) introduced the idea that childhood was a modern concept to challenge the established view that concepts of the child, youth and adolescent had not changed over the course of history. Ariès (1962) suggested that in medieval society,
children were not seen as different from adults. Once children could live without their mothers, they belonged to adult society. It was the social and political changes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that shifted attention toward the younger members of society. The period of childhood, regarded as a time of infant ‘coddling’, became a time where children needed safeguarding and reforming (Ariès, 1962). Education of the young became the instrument of social initiation (Ariès, 1962, p. 369). Family changes from the 17th century onwards, made the child’s place a more central one within the family, and by the 18th century, new codes of family life meant mothers focussed their attention on the care of their children (May, 1997). A new preoccupation with children and their health and well-being became a central feature of family life.

Notions of innocence and protection can also be traced back to this period in time through artworks. Religious paintings of the 17th century began to represent the infant Jesus, and for Ariès, ideas of devotion and guardianship of children are embodied in these artworks. Children or youth presented as angels are linked to this time. This view expresses the innocence and weaknesses of childhood, and as a consequence, the duty of adults to safeguard children (Ariès, 1962, p. 329).

Similar pictures of the changing conceptualisation of the child emerge from other analyses. In New Zealand, Dugald McDonald (1978) suggests four separate time periods to encapsulate the dominant attitudes of different times. Beginning with New Zealand’s colonisation, he suggests the initial period where the child was a chattel of parents (1840-99), then to a period where the child was of value to the nation (1900-44). This period was followed by one where the child was regarded as a psychological being (1945-1969) who could be worked upon to become a well-adjusted adult, and finally in McDonald’s framework, the child is acknowledged as a citizen (1970 onwards) with distinctive rights to protection in law. Changes in New Zealand’s socio-political environment, such as for example the first Labour government that increased attention to education and social services, shaped these understandings of the child.

More recently, Zelizer’s (1985) study of the nature of childhood in America between 1870 to the 1930s suggests that changing social values of children led to what she defined as the ‘priceless child’. Such a child has no economic value but is emotionally priceless. Zelizer (1985, p. 10) links the decline in child mortality toward the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th to the deepening of emotional bonds between parents and children. Her
work is pertinent to my study in relation to children’s accidental deaths. For Zelizer, the responses to the accidental death of a child are a measure of the extent of ‘sacralization’ of the child’s life.

Until the 18th century in Europe, a child’s death was not a major event, nor one that generated intense anxiety. May (1997, p. 26) refers to the “infant corpses…in the gutters of London” to illustrate how social expectations of the value of children’s lives have changed. Death via the dead body was a common sight in the 18th century; disease, malnutrition, and in New Zealand, drowning (Moran, 1999) contributed to children’s high death rates. The commonplace nature of children’s deaths meant that often their deaths were not reported to authorities, and it was not until New Zealand’s 1896 Infant Life Protection Act that procedures for reporting infant deaths were tightened (May, 1997, p. 44). The death of the young became socially and morally unacceptable.

In America too, at a similar the time in the mid-19th century, the loss of a child became a communal event of sorrow. Zelizer (1985, p. 27) notes that the “domestic grief of all parents for the dead child was gradually defined as a public concern”. This was particularly the case when children were the victims of accidents. As children’s mortality rates improved because of better medical care and welfare, children’s accidental deaths were not in keeping with a society committed to child welfare (Zelizer, 1985).

Accidental deaths in contemporary society too have an impact on the public, particularly with the range of media available for disseminating information. Community awareness of children’s deaths, accidental or otherwise, is heightened by media attention. In cases of child deaths from abuse for example, the deaths “touch a deep vein of public emotion” (Connolly & Doolan, 2007, p. 2). Tragic deaths are presented relentlessly for public attention. Child accidental deaths during school time similarly draw intense public interest, yet are relatively rare in New Zealand. Outdoor education and EOTC statistics show a similar incidence. Yet while children’s deaths are infrequent in primary school outdoor education (Davidson, 2004), even one child death focuses societal attention towards children’s safety. As noted in one unintentional child injury report, child injury is a serious health issue which has significant economic, social and emotional impact and for many parents, “the grief of losing a child unexpectedly can take decades to heal and for many it never does” (Alatini, 2009, p. 14).
1.2 Keeping school children safe

The safe child reflects those societal values and attitudes prevalent at different historical times. Notions of care and protection accompany the ‘safe child’ of modern life. More recently studies suggest increasing vigilance toward protection of the vulnerable ‘safe’ child. Dixey’s (1999, p. 55) study shows that an effect of parents’ perceived danger of public places is their “eternal vigilance” of children, by subjecting them to constant surveillance. Connolly and Doolan’s (2007) work in New Zealand on maltreatment deaths of children known to child protection services, offers an important view on the effects of increased attention towards the safe child. Surveillance of children results, for social workers, with more complex procedures and protocols, yet Connolly and Doolan argue that these procedures do not guarantee child safety. Alison Jones’ (2004) work on sexual abuse highlights similar effects for school teachers when keeping children safe.

Prevailing approaches to children’s safety are evident in social and education policy. Tracing New Zealand policy initiatives for children’s safety, illustrates gradual state intervention in family life, children’s health, physical and emotional safety, and school safety. Current safety policy in education is indicative of the extent of recognition of the need to protect, and keep, the child safe.

Keeping school children safe reflects the societal focus on child protection, but the child outside the classroom, requires greater attention and care than the child inside the four walls of the classroom. The outdoor environment is deemed less safe, consequently the outdoor child requires greater levels of protection against risk and danger. School safety policies indicate the levels of attention toward children’s safety and illustrate that safety is of paramount importance in outdoor education, but this has not always been the case. Formalising safety in outdoor education is a relatively recent phenomenon, and the thesis tracks the appearance of safety in the education policy documents.

The risk-management systems approach adopted in school education outside the classroom draws on current understandings of safe practice, understandings developed in fields other than education. Occupational health and safety research for example directs such understandings of school safety. Safety is understood in terms of hazards or harm, and such language defines what it means to be safe, and in the practices of providing for safety. Safety as understood in the occupational field is accepted in schools’ practices outside the classroom. Common understandings of safety are based on preventable hurt or injury (Oxford
English Dictionary, 2009). In recognition of the complexity of meanings however, this study takes a social constructionist approach and asks two questions. The first is “what is the meaning of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers?” and the second “what are the effects of their understandings about safety in the outdoor classroom?”

Rather than focusing on safety, outdoor education research tends to foreground curriculum design and effectiveness (Voight, 2004), the value of outdoor education experiences (Smith, Steel, & Gidlow, 2010), skill development and acquisition (Magnussen, 2010) and outdoor learning and pedagogies (Foran, 2005). This research engages with the outdoor education literature and acknowledges the complexity of arguments in the field of understanding safety and the effect in relation to outside the classroom practices. A study of published papers in three outdoor education journals from Australia, UK and USA showed that the greatest proportion of research in the field is on teaching and teacher issues, programme design and programme outcomes. The study showed that environmental matters, safety or risk management were of less interest to outdoor education researchers (Thomas, Potter, & Allison, 2009, p. 27). The authors, editors of the three journals, were a little surprised that risk and safety management did not feature more strongly (combined 6% of total papers) given the Western focus on safety. Through a social constructionist approach (Burr, 2003) this thesis explores the social influences on how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom.

1.3 Understandings and meanings of safety

The notion of safety is defined in relation to risk and, in relation to a person, safe means “not exposed to any hazards ... and free from hazards” (Part 1, Section 2, New Zealand Department of Labour, 2003). From the Oxford English Dictionary (2009), safety is “the state of being safe” exempt from hurt or injury and free from danger. Another common definition, derived from multiple online sources defines safety as a “condition of being protected against physical, social, spiritual, financial, political, emotional, occupational, psychological, educational or other types or consequences of failure, damage, error, accidents, harm or any other event which could be considered non-desirable” (Wikipedia, 2011). This definition covers all possible likelihood of damage, and situations where harm might occur. But what it means to be safe hinges on how ‘safety’ is given meaning.
There are multiple ways of giving meaning to safety. As the thesis investigates safety in New Zealand primary school EOTC policy and practice, it is necessary to address the question “what is safety?” in that context. Safety understood in fields other than education contributes to teachers’ understandings. Questions about safety often relate to how to develop safer practices, and ask “how is safety understood?” This study addresses these questions with reference to non-specialist primary school teachers’ outside the classroom practice.

Research in the field of ‘safety’ has taken many pathways; occupational health and safety, industrial systems approaches, organisational or scientific approaches to safety measurement. The approaches taken here are to improve personal, systems or organisational safety, to manage risk and protect life. For these bodies of research, safety and risk are linked as safety is understood in relation to risk. A relationship between risk and safety can be multifaceted depending on the particular perspective taken. New Zealand’s health and safety legislation for example, introduces safe workplaces as those that are hazard or risk-free. The promotion of safe workplace environments currently follows risk management approaches that include risk calculation, hazard reduction or risk factor assessment.

A number of studies in different settings have developed theories of how the meaning of safety is understood by human participants. Lloyd and Roen (2002) for example, in their fire safety study, argue against the approach that safety knowledge is a pre-existing entity. Rather than defining safety as an absence of accidents, or as a retrieved form of knowledge, they employ a model where knowledge about safety is situated within social practices. The move from a risk factor approach toward understanding how knowledge is enacted in social situations provides a constructionist account to understanding safety.

For safety to be considered more than a measurement of risk factors or reduction of accidents, a social context approach is taken. Rochlin (2010, p. 1549) for example, argues from a position of high technology workplaces, that reliably safe organizations represent “more than avoidance of risk or management of error”. For Rochlin, in recognition of the role of agency, cultures of safety are dynamic and intersubjectively constructed. A social constructionist approach to understanding safety is supported by research into risk and safety perceptions. Douglas and Wildavsky’s (1982) early work on risk took the position that individual perceptions of risk and safety are based on the world views that individuals hold. Further, perceptions of risk and danger and safety are social processes; some areas of risk and safety have more focus of attention than others.
Jones’ (2004) work in child abuse alerts us to this in the matter of child safety where social consent keeps the safety of children in the forefront of attention. Using Douglas and Wildavsky’s (1982) notion that society produces the concerns worthy of attention, other research concentrates on the media’s construction of fears and dangers (Glassner, 1999). Davidson (2008), agreeing that news media emphasise certain aspects over others, clearly demonstrates the way in which the New Zealand media, for a specific incident where three mountain guides were killed, constructed mountaineering as a deadly activity, and mountains as ‘killers’. How objects are constructed as dangerous or not, is a result of a collective framing of risk, and as a consequence, of safety. Hilgartner (1992) argues that the construction of risk objects occurs in specific arenas though social processes involving social and technical networks. He argues that while media play a role in constructing risk, they are only one point in the network (p. 51). The construction of risk, and safety, is an ongoing process where networks of understanding are built around the concepts. How meaning is given to safety, is a product of social networks of understanding, that is, socially constructed meaning.

1.4 The social construction of safety

That safety is socially constructed emerges from studies informed by relativist perspectives. Lupton (1999) in particular, from her work on risk, highlights different theoretical positions, and argues for her own position as informed by social constructionism. Lupton (p. 29) argues that risk is never objective or knowable outside individuals’ belief systems, and meanings of risk are continually constructed intersubjectively within social contexts. Similar positions can be taken specifically when researching safety. Turner and Gray (2009) for example argue that quantitative approaches to organisational safety de-contextualise ‘safety at work’ and neglect the ‘lived experiences’ of participants within the workplace. Hilgartner (1992, p. 41) argues against an ‘out there reality’ and supports a social construction of complex networks of risk and harm.

The process of constructing a risk object begins with a definition then linkage to some form of harm. Hilgartner argues that the building networks task is a rhetorical process. The example used is that of constructing certain motor vehicles as ‘dangerous’, so the car becomes a risk object. Construction of dangerous objects is similarly considered by Simpson (1996) arguing that safety and danger are socially constructed. She does not dispute that objective danger exists, for example in the situation of shark attacks on swimmers, but argues
that perceptions of safety and danger are products of intersubjectivity. Her argument is pertinent to this study because it recognises that there are many ways for situations and objects to be dangerous, but the designation of something as safe ignores all the ways it may be dangerous (p. 551). There is literature that identifies the increasing restrictions on human activities as they are designated as unsafe. Lupton and Peterson (1996, p. 87) recognise this in the field of human sexuality where, since the HIV/AIDS\(^1\) epidemic, sexual behaviour is deemed risky.

Ropeik and Gray (2002) too argue that much in the world is constructed as dangerous; asbestos, X Rays or the consumption of red meat amongst others. They provide a ‘risk meter’ to determine levels of risk for each danger to help assess safe practices. Franklin (1998), Glassner (1999) and Kemshall (2002) argue that safety has become a preoccupation in a world where the notion of safety underlies all human activity and risk is to be avoided. Kemshall (2002) claims, from her analysis of welfare social policy, that modern society has become risk-averse.

In another turn, Ungar (2001) claims we cannot always be safe and we cannot ensure that the world is safe. It is a post-apocalyptic claim by Ungar that institutions are failing to provide control and security, and it is unrealistic for the guardians of public safety to provide no-risk assurances. Simpson (1996) too argues, that for the state of safety “there is always the possibility that danger lurks unseen” (p. 551).

This position is evident in non-specialist primary school teachers’ beliefs about their outdoor practice. The space outside the classroom is believed unsafe with the possibility of serious harm to children or teachers. All practicable steps must be taken to ensure no harm occurs to staff or students during outside the classroom activities (Ministry of Education, 2003). That the outdoors is dangerous and requires attention to safety is captured in the Ministry of Education statement “The degree of risk inherent in many EOTC activities makes effective safety precautions necessary” (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 7). For non-specialist primary school teachers, this presents the outdoors as risky and children in need of protection.

1.5 **Danger and the outside classroom**

There are greater dangers outside of the classroom than inside. The danger of taking children outside the classroom, the harm that could result, and the need for safety precautions is

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\(^1\) Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
expressed in school safety policies. Unsafe practices are identified for teachers to be aware of. In 2003 New Zealand’s Ministry of Education (2003b) identified three unsafe acts; specific practices that could cause injury, participant’s unsafe behaviour (smoking, alcohol and illegal drugs), and unsafe act/s by participants. Outside the classroom was identified as dangerous by reference to New Zealand’s 1961 Crimes Act to note that an EOTC activity is a dangerous thing if there is danger to human life (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 34). Other than the identified situations, there are also participants who are considered a danger to the activities. In the 2003 document, all adults are required to be responsible for safety; it is “critical” (p. 27) to the safety of activities for all adults to have appropriate skills, experience and qualifications. Untrained adults, parents and other volunteer helpers are positioned as dangerous because they can be “unpredictable” and could sabotage “completely” the safe outdoor learning experience (p. 11).

There are other aspects of the 2003 Safety in EOTC document that focus on other risks. For example, there is the need for a traumatic incident plan (p. 39), mention of deaths, trauma counselling, psychological safety, and emergency preparedness for dealing with imminent dangers (p. 39). A health profile that must be completed for all participants at EOTC events refers to the danger of children’s emotional anxieties about heights, darkness or small spaces (p. 61).

Yet taking children outside the New Zealand classroom has not always been designated as risky, dangerous or unsafe. Traditionally, out of the classroom activities have been enjoyable, with direct meaningful experiences to enhance children’s learning. Self-growth, development of interests and skills, altruism and contribution featured in 1970s outdoor education programmes (Dowling, 1978). One comment from Dowling highlights this approach – the child will “find a deeper sense of serenity, inspiration and spiritual well-being as he becomes aware of the beauty, the majesty and the exquisite order of the natural surroundings” (p. 17). In 1978, outdoor education was considered to have tremendous potential for young learners.

1.6 Learning in the outdoors

Taking children outside the classroom for positive learning experiences is one aim of school outdoor education. Both the learner and the natural world are important. Contemporary definitions of outdoor education include the idea of an active learner in the natural world classroom. New Zealand’s definition draws on one used in America since 1958 where outdoor education is simply “in, about, and for the outdoors” (Plummer, 2009, p. 246).
Another currently accepted New Zealand definition highlights the importance of the natural environment for “teaching and learning” (Boyce & Zink, 2005, p. 29). Learning in the outdoors is a tradition in New Zealand schools where nature studies, physical activity and health teaching have long been part of the informal curriculum.

Outdoor education, since 1999 has been part of New Zealand’s national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). The development of outdoor education to a curriculum area began during the 1970s and 1980s. In 1973 New Zealand’s National Parks Authority commissioned a survey on the educational use of national parks. The report identified outdoor education as those parts of the school programme that involved some activity by children outside the school buildings (Dowling, 1978, p. 22). The report further highlighted the importance of learning through experiences of “wild places and wild things” (p. 23). According to Lynch (2006), at this time active children, having new experiences in outdoor environments was the Department of Education’s curriculum plan.

In New Zealand, outdoor education was considered by educators during a Physical Education teachers’ refresher course in 1974 when this definition was produced: “Outdoor education is a range of learning experiences designed to reinforce the development of abilities which help pupils understand the world about them and their place in it” (Stothart, 1993, p. 11). Earlier definitions were less to establish a distinct curriculum area, and more to reinforce the value of outdoor experiences for establishing relationships with the natural world.

The term EOTC (Education Outside the Classroom) was introduced in 1980 by the New Zealand Director-General of Education in support of learning in the outdoors (Stothart, 1993). The term EOTC maintained a broad focus of the outdoors to enhance learning in other curriculum areas (Hill, 2010). A decade later, specific curriculum space for EOTC occurred with release of ‘Anywhere, Everywhere: EOTC Curriculum Guidelines’ (Ministry of Education, 1992). The space outside the classroom was officially recognised as an important site for teaching and learning.

This was followed in 1999 with the establishment of outdoor education as a key area of learning in the Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). According to Cosgriff (2008), the 1999 document was the most detailed curriculum statement and has not been bettered in later documents. Outside the classroom learning, active participation and environmental well-being are highlighted in the 1999 statement where outdoor education remains ‘in, about and for the outdoors’.
In, about and for the outdoors encompasses a wide range of school outdoor activities in New Zealand. The most frequent outdoor education activity is school camps. Other activities include day trips, visits to the rocky shore, sports trips, swimming and tramping trips (Boyes & Zink, 2005). The huge range of available activities offered to New Zealand children provide for a multitude of learning activities. Students may for example, experience surfing, caving, bike riding or overseas travel. These are different experiences than those of the past, yet some features are unchanged. Basic ideas of exploration, experience, challenge and safety, while having shifting significances, remain in school outdoor education, but risk and safety have greater prominence and get more attention than in earlier times. There is another recent phenomenon, the emergence of pleasure, thrill and exhilaration in outdoor activities.

1.7 Children’s enjoyment in the outdoor classroom

For New Zealand children, enjoyment and fun are important aspects of learning in the outdoors. There are indications that children gain pleasure from outdoor experiences whether for recreational or educative reasons. The embodied nature of outdoor experiences (in New Zealand and elsewhere) contributes to children’s pleasure. Children are ready participators in outdoor activities if they experience pleasure and enjoyment (Hemming, 2007). Lived experiences provide a powerful intensity (Foran, 2005) that cannot be recaptured through talk or memory (Wattchow, 2004). Outdoor experiences connect students to the beauty of nature and enhance relationships with others (Loeffler, 2004).

Pleasure is not highlighted as an aspect of school outdoor education, yet pleasurable, challenging, risky activities are commonly sought after by young people - particularly when, as consumers, they are targeted by outdoor activity providers to participate in exciting adventures. The thrill of being outdoors in risky ways, according to the enthusiasts, challenges both the body and the mind. Breivik (2007) argues that risk-taking is an element of pleasurable activities when safety cannot be assured. Evaluations of safety or risk must have some part to play in what constitutes challenge, says Breivik, after all, people don’t want to die from uncontrolled risk. While this is a concern of teachers who must consider children’s safety in outside the classroom activities, pleasure is a compelling aspect of outdoor pursuits particularly in New Zealand where many outdoor activities currently encompass thrill and excitement.

There are also indications that children's ways of experiencing outdoor pleasures help shape their adult understandings of pleasure. Thompson, Aspinall and Montarzino (2007) argue that
pleasure being outdoors is linked to positive childhood outdoor experiences, and those who frequented open spaces as a child, were more likely to do so as an adult. Thompson et al. (2007) also suggest that frequent childhood visits to open spaces develop positive emotions about the outdoors. The claim made is that a bond with nature developed in childhood continues into adulthood.

Learners can have multiple forms of relationships with the natural word with different effects. For example, a connection with nature produces a sense of ‘being at one’ with the environment that equates with pleasure and desire (Rossiter, 2007), awe (Ilundain-Agurruzu, 2007) or thoughtful reflection (Plummer, 2009). A key representation of humans and nature is the desire for, a connection with and an immersion in nature. The human and nature literature relates desire to be involved in nature as constituting pleasure (Rossiter, 2007). Desire and pleasure in the outdoors can take the form of a search for new experiences, or even fanaticism. Fanaticism occurs when people are driven by the need to experience nature in risky and extreme situations through facing danger. Even experiences of terror can produce intense pleasurable feelings (MacKellar, 2006).

When one’s body is pitted against the elements, a thrilling and risky pleasurable relationship with nature can occur. Peak experiences are produced, where the intensity of emotion can be overwhelming. Breivik (2007) refers to such experiences as ‘autotelic’ activities, undertaken simply to experience intensity of feeling. The autotelie is also referred to as an existential moment (Morris, 1966). Outdoor activities that produce intense emotion also constitute experiences of awe about nature. The sense of wonder about nature is reinforced through intense and risky ‘extreme’ activities (Ilundain-Agurruzu, 2007). But delight can also occur through thoughtful reflection. Reflecting on nature includes recollection of pleasurable activities undertaken in the outdoors.

Pleasurable relationships with nature work in many different ways. For some, connecting with nature has positive effects on the body. In New Zealand, a Maori health framework produced by Mason Durie (1994), presents dimensions of well-being, one of which is spirituality. For Durie (1998), a spiritual connection with the natural world plays a significant role in sustaining individual health. In Canada, the Inuit people consider that a strong bond with the natural world, an intimate and respectful one, enhances serenity and peace of mind (Takano, 2005). For others, engaging with nature develops aesthetic appreciation (Atherton, 2007), or moving through nature enhances pleasure with feelings of freedom (Straker, 2004).
These forms of pleasurable experiences, of risky thrills or contemplation, intensity, anticipation or aesthetic appreciation are all possible responses to New Zealand’s school education outside the classroom. Yet for non-specialist primary school teachers, a tension exists between providing for children’s enjoyable outdoor experiences and ensuring children’s safety.

One study, undertaken between November 2005 and May 2006 (Andkjoer, 2012), identified tensions in New Zealand’s outdoor education programmes, although not specifically for school outdoor education curriculum. In a comparative qualitative study of New Zealand and Danish outdoor education programmes in outdoor centres, polytechnic colleges and high schools, Andkjoer (2012) concluded that while New Zealand outdoor education is characterised by risk and challenge, it is also intent on safety provision. By contrast, Danish outdoor programmes feature a simple life in nature. The seriousness and professionalism of New Zealand’s outdoor education industry contrasted markedly with the focus on fun and risk for the participants. Young people participated in outdoor education for thrill and excitement, yet providers, who offered ‘fun’ activities of risk and adventure, very much emphasised safety aspects. Andkjoer (2012) identified a number of ambiguities within New Zealand’s culture of outdoor education, one of which was the contrast between adventure, challenge, and risk on one hand, with safety and standards on the other. Another ambiguity was between fun, and the seriousness and professionalism of the industry. Andkjoer’s (2012) study offered insight into the characteristics of New Zealand outdoor education, but did not provide a closer look at the identified ambiguities.

Andkjoer (2012) made connections however between certain features of outdoor education. Risk was connected to challenge and adventure, and also seemed to be connected to the experience of fun. Simultaneously, fun was in tension with safety. Risk and safety appear in a paradoxical relationship, as while adventure, challenge and risk form the basis of the outdoor experience, a major interest is also on safety and standards. It appeared strange to Andkjoer (2012, p. 126) to put effort into risk and challenge, yet at the same time aim for safety. He concluded that the tension between the ambiguities was an issue needing consideration for New Zealand’s outdoor education programmes.

Another issue needing attention from researchers, the recognition of pleasure, has been raised by others. For Pringle (2010), the pleasure of active movement has been downplayed in New Zealand curriculum documents. Noting the individual seduction of pleasurable play, yet the
official marginalisation of movement pleasure, Pringle argues for greater recognition of the educational value of movement pleasure. The enjoyment of active movement, such as running or trekking in the back country, is marginalised in school outdoor education/EOTC policy. Booth (2009) too claims a prejudice against pleasure in contemporary Australian state education policy. Outdoor education/EOTC policy is one example where the recognition of pleasure is limited.

New Zealand’s curriculum and policy documents that relate to the period of my data gathering are the 1999 Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) and the 2003 Safety and EOTC good practice guide (Ministry of Education, 2003b). There is limited recognition of the place of children’s enjoyment in both documents, with one mention of enjoyable activities, and another of the opportunities for children to enjoy the challenge and excitement of new experiences. My research considers the place of both pleasure and safety in primary school outdoor education and EOTC activities. Enjoyment of participating in outside the classroom activities, both for non-specialist primary school teachers and their students, provides the backdrop for the investigation into safety outside the classroom, and is illustrative of the tension between pleasure and safety. There is a further aspect of this study that provides another tension, and that is understandings of risk-taking in pleasurable, safe outdoor education. There is a dynamic where children’s risk-taking can be pleasurable, though there is always the possibility of damage and loss.

1.8 Safety, risk and pleasure

Safety and risk come together intensely in the outdoor classroom, and yet they are usually considered antithetical; safety is frequently defined as the antonym of risk. One explanation from Breivik (2007), is that the concepts of safety and risk are based in different views of the world. Referring to Greek philosophers, Breivik proposes risk as a dynamic moving cosmos (Heraclitis) and safety as a cosmos at rest (Parmenides). Breivik notes that Parmenides concluded that ‘thinking’ was to be trusted as opposed to relying on one’s ‘senses’. These thought forms, according to Breivik (p. 13), underlie Western dualist traditions: thought and feeling, rest and action, dynamic and static, risk and safety.

Such dualisms provide a useful focus for this project. For non-specialist primary school teachers, education outside the classroom is a site where the balance between risk and pleasure, or anxiety and enjoyment is a crucial element of children’s interactions. Managing the equilibrium is a complex task. Yet according to Christensen and Mikkelsen (2008)
children are able to balance both risk and safety simultaneously with enjoyment. Christensen and Mikkelsen reveal the ways that children engage with risk in their lives by both enjoying the riskiness of activities and by safe-guarding against harm. For others, it is children’s engagement with risk that becomes a positive action in the development of competent decision-making. Adventure activities also provide children with the opportunity to balance risk with safety where they test their boundaries and explore risk (Staempfli, 2008). The relationship between safety and risk is presented in other ways to account for dimensions of both.

A Kantian notion of sublimity captures the risk/safety relationship (Illundain-Agurrzuza, 2007). Some outdoor activities where the participant faces extreme risk can be sublime experiences according to Illundain-Agurrzuza. Sublime experiences express ‘elation and delight’ in contrast with the ‘extreme’ which entices danger. While school outdoor education/EOTC does not promote extreme or dangerous activities, the effects of participation in extreme sports offer an insight into the dynamic between risk and pleasure in the New Zealand context. Children are well versed in extreme activities as portrayed by various New Zealand media, and in some cases can experience the pleasure of such risk-taking activities – when there are safety systems in place.

One extreme activity that highlights a relationship between pleasure and extreme risk is the sport of BASE² jumping. Individuals launch themselves with parachutes, from buildings, antenna, bridge spans or mountains to experience the heightened pleasure of thrill and excitement. Extreme outdoor activities such as skydiving or BASEjumping are situations which have high possibility for dangerous outcomes and it is in these particular circumstances that risk and safety come together in moments of utter pleasure. For Illundain-Agurrzuza (2007) there is the moment when an extreme activity takes the breath away, but the very real possibility of death is simultaneously confronted. It is this moment of confrontation in risk-taking that makes the experience pleasurable.

There are arguments that support the promotion of risk-taking behaviour in modern life. One is that life is too safe. Furedi’s (1997) claim that the contemporary quest for safety produces risk-averse individuals, supports the promotion of risk-taking as a reaction against a safe lives. Leach (2008) argues that because individuals’ daily lives are safe, there is a need to seek adventure outside of their lives. Others argue that risk-taking has a historical basis that

² Building, antennas, spans and earth
needs acknowledgement in contemporary life. Risk-taking is associated historically with early seafaring adventurers seeking new goods or lands. Human societies developed because of a willingness to take risks. Lynch and Moore (2004) argue that risk-taking is central in modern capitalist societies, while Breivik (2007) similarly likens risk-taking to the wealth accumulation of capitalism. Lynch and Moore (2004) claim it is a paradox in present-day culture that promotes adventurous risk-taking to escape from modern society, yet that same society was built on risk and adventure.

Beck’s risk society thesis presented an argument of the potential threats or benefits of technoscientific industry. One pertinent critique of Beck’s (1992) risk thesis was the lack of acknowledgement of the social benefits of risk. For Ekberg (2007), Beck’s bias toward scientific risk excluded attention to the individual benefits of risk. The benefits of risk-taking contributed in the development of modern society (Breivik, 2007; Lynch & Moore, 2004), and a society averse to risk-taking is stagnant and paralysed (Ekberg, 2007). In an empirical study, Lupton and Tulloch (2002) studied participants’ understanding of risk, and while risk was associated with negative connotations, for many, risk-taking was represented as positive.

Risk-taking can be pleasurable and rewarding, according to Mythen (2007). Lupton (1999) argues that risk is generally conceptualised as something to be avoided, but against this is the desire to walk on the wild side (p. 149); there is pleasure in risk-taking. There is a positive side to risk-taking. Breivik (2007) argues the importance of risk-taking for children and young people to aid in their development – to be challenged and willing to take risks.

Internationally, challenges have occurred to the increased regulation toward children’s safety. In the early 2000s, public opposition emerged in relation to the detailed systems for risk management in children’s spaces (Staempfli, 2008). Playgrounds had become increasingly safer to protect children against potential injury and, in North America the fear of litigation was reducing children’s opportunities to explore risk. Gill (2008) argues that protecting children from risk-taking can lead to risk-aversion that leaves them ill-equipped to deal with ordinary everyday risks. Freedom from regulations is now an aspect of some promotion of children’s play in the United Kingdom, and adventurous play and activity is supported for children’s well-being and development (Gleave, 2008).

Several studies highlight the benefits of children’s risk-taking behaviour in the area of play. Christensen and Mikkelsen’s (2008) study of children’s risk perceptions and everyday risk management practices illustrates how children’s risk-taking is an important resource in their
learning how to manage and negotiate their risk landscapes. Their play and games is an important context for engaging with risk. For Gill (2008), children learn skills and gain experiences to enable them to face the unpredictable world. There is also evidence that children seek out and enjoy risk-taking (Gleave, 2008). Some school programmes recognise the need to develop children’s risk-taking behaviours. One of the aims of an outdoors school programme evaluated by Davis, Rea and Waite (2006) was for children to learn to live with risk, and make choices and take responsibility for their mistakes.

The notion of risk-taking is important in New Zealand’s school outdoor education, and risk-taking that occurs within risk-management systems. Risk-management approaches, derived from occupational health and safety assume importance in any planning when taking children outside the classroom. Non-specialist primary teachers’ employment of risk-management procedures to ensure children’s safety is balanced against their enjoyment from being outdoors. For children, the constantly changing and stimulating ‘risky’ outdoors is often more attractive than the ‘safe’ indoor classroom. Engagement with the natural world, being ‘in’ the outdoor world, is the site of children’s experiences of school-based outdoor education. Pleasure and enjoyment, anxiety, risk and safety feature in the natural world relationship. It is in the outdoor world, the dangerous, thrilling outdoors that the elements of safety and pleasure work together in New Zealand’s schools’ outdoor classrooms.

1.9 The study

This study focuses on how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom. Tensions between safety and risk, pleasure and danger for non-specialist primary teachers in the outdoor classroom are complex. There are two research questions; the first is “what is the meaning of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers?”, and the second “what are the effects of their understandings about safety in the outdoor classroom?”

This thesis explores ways that teachers and students enact and understand the tension between safety and pleasure. While the aims of the New Zealand’s education outside the classroom curriculum focuses on active and enjoyable participation in the outdoors, concerns about children’s safety have impacted on curriculum goals and practices. The teachers must balance between ensuring children’s safety outdoors, and encouraging their enjoyable participation in ‘risky’ outdoor activities. This study employs a social constructionist position toward safety in primary school outdoor education. The social construction of safety through
historical policy documents and teachers’ talk is investigated to unravel the tension between safety, risk and pleasure. The investigation is set against a background of children’s enjoyment of participation in outside the classroom activities. There is a considerable body of research on the pleasures of involvement in the natural world, and this research is presented in Chapter 3. Finally, the study is placed within the wider social environment of risk society, children and safety.

This study investigates ‘lay’ perspectives and discourses about the tension between safety and pleasure within the context of education outside the classroom. Non-specialist primary school teachers’ beliefs and approaches toward teaching children in the outdoor environment are examined. Safe practice is an important area of study particularly for non-specialist teachers working with children in the outdoors. The acceptance of ‘safe practice’ by teachers as a basis of practice is not questioned. Yet, the negative as well as the positive effects of a safety focus are less likely to be understood. Beliefs include over protectiveness and that safety is available at the expense of some benefit. These beliefs are common enough for the consequences to be worth investigating.

1.10 Structure of the thesis

The study takes a multifaceted approach to New Zealand’s non-specialist primary teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom. In Chapter 2 an historical perspective on policy for education outside the classroom is presented. I refer to the changing influences that shaped policy and make reference to changing rationales for taking children outside the classroom. Such activities beginning with the first 1877 Education Act, are traced up to New Zealand’s 1999 national curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999).

Chapter 3 establishes the wider context and traditions of teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom. I discuss aspects of individual’s pleasurable relationships with, and in, the outdoors. In particular, I explore the nature of thrilling, adventurous and challenging outdoor activities to provide a background to some of the tensions underpinning this study of non-specialist teachers, safety and the outdoor classroom in New Zealand’s primary schools.

In Chapter 4 I examine emerging meanings of safety over time. Grounded in an initial focus on language, I note how discursive shifts are reflected in changes to New Zealand’s outdoor education policy. This provides a framework from which to explore the social construction of safety as demonstrated in the empirical study.
Chapter 5 introduces the empirical aspect of the study and its multi-method approach. Key aspects of the research design are outlined. The research participants are introduced and some ethical concerns are raised.

Chapter 6 presents a phenomenological account of a small primary school camp. Experience was the focus of the analysis, to gain a sense of what the outdoors meant for individuals, but also to investigate how tensions were negotiated during the camp. The reported experiences of teachers, their beliefs and practices, along with those of students, parents and me contributed to the analysis.

Teachers’ beliefs about what counts as education outside the classroom is constructed and reconstructed in the talk of teachers in Chapter 7. I present the analysis of teachers who plan this curriculum and put it into practice in the outdoor classroom. A social constructionist approach is employed to reveal beliefs about safety and risk in this talk. My analysis considers three repertoires that teachers’ draw upon to talk about their beliefs and practices as they negotiate the tensions between safety and risk in the outdoor classroom.

In Chapter 8, I detail the workings of the identified repertoires. Through the lens of these repertoires, teacher perspectives and discourses about the tension between safety and pleasure in the outdoor classroom are demonstrated. A further finding of this chapter is the significance of the use of humour as a strategy for dealing with the tension between safety and enjoyment in the outdoors.

Chapter 9 discusses how safety is understood in the field, and how tensions between safety and pleasure affect New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers’ outside the classroom practices.

The concluding chapter 10 revisits the research questions, to examine how they have been addressed in the thesis. The contribution the thesis makes to literature about teachers’ practices is identified, limitations of the study are made explicit and possibilities for further study are suggested.
2  Policy, practice and the outdoor classroom 1877 - 2007

2.1  Introduction

This chapter reviews New Zealand’s policy and developments in education outside the classroom practice. Within the timeframe for this study, I begin at the 1877 Education Act which made primary education compulsory, and continue until the Ministry of Education’s (2003b) Safety and EOTC: A good practice guide for New Zealand Schools. The teachers’ talk extends the reach of the study to 2007. This usefully highlights how policy and context influences teachers’ beliefs and practices immediately prior to the introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum 2007. The scope of this policy analysis therefore is set between 1877 and up to but not including the 2007 curriculum.

At the inception of the 1877 Education Act, outdoor education as it is understood in contemporary times was not part of the formal curriculum. Even so, the space outside the classroom provided for aspects of learning (or training) that remained evident in the 21st century practices described in this study. Changes in policy toward outdoor classroom activities are highlighted in this chapter. The history of teaching and learning outdoors covers a wide range of activities, beginning with participation in military drill, and including activities to enhance physical development, and the encouragement of recreation and outdoor learning. It is also a history about changing forms of state control; from control though training the body, to improving individual and national health, to legislating recreational activity to controlling safety with students’ self-management.

This chapter recognises the shifting nature of the term outdoor education at the level of both policy and practice. For example, over time it has been considered both a school subject and an outdoor activity undertaken as part of schooling. The first part of this chapter therefore engages with the outdoor education literature, detailing the changing purpose for taking children outside the schoolroom. The second part discusses recent developments in outdoor education from midway through the 20th century when outdoor education gained credibility through formal inclusion in the curriculum and taking students outside the classroom to participate in real life experiences developed rapidly.
2.2 Part 1: Taking children outside the schoolroom

Most outdoor activity following the 1877 Education Act was not for educational subject learning reasons. The aims and purposes of the state, as well as dominant social movements, and interest group activity, have fashioned New Zealand’s primary school outdoor activities resulting in different types of ‘out of the schoolroom’ pursuits. Taking children outdoors, from the confines of the schoolroom, has served multiple purposes throughout New Zealand’s educational history.

Activity outside the schoolroom has depended on state and societal expectations at particular historical moments. Military drill, for example, a requirement for schoolboys from 1877, occurred during a militaristic period, but also at a time when working class children were considered to require some form of social control. At the beginning of the 20th century, a fresh air movement, linked to epidemics, poor child health, public health development and school medical services (Dow, 1995) supported taking children outside in the fresh air to benefit their health. The practice was supported by eugenically-based concerns over the moral, physical and intellectual ‘fitness’ of the collective race (Chapple, 1903). In another initiative, from 1900 swimming and life-saving programmes were developed in response to New Zealand’s high drowning rates. The activities of military drill, physical instruction, swimming life-saving programmes and outdoor education are illustrative of evolving and changing understandings of children, health, fitness and safety within schooling.

Education outside the classroom, as are other areas of curriculum, is shaped by factors outside schooling; external events, societal changes and political imperatives have played a part in out-of-schoolroom activities throughout the historical period. Official education policy has been and remains responsive to changing political and social circumstances. War, epidemics, increased leisure time and developing understandings of conservation affect educational policy. Social changes, reflected in policy, are evidenced in outside the classroom activities that began with the 1877 Education Act.

2.2.1 Military training and physical development

New Zealand’s 1877 Education Act established free, compulsory and secular public education. Clause 85 (p. 126) of the Act, stipulated instruction in military drill for boys, and “from time to time” the possibility of “physical training”. Space outside schoolrooms of “at least a quarter acre” was recommended for playgrounds. Playgrounds, introduced by the Act,
established a tradition in New Zealand of ‘outside the schoolroom’ activities, or play, in juxtaposition to ‘inside the schoolroom’ learning. The tradition altered little in the latter part of the 19th century though teaching in the outdoors gained prominence in the early 20th century through nature study (Morris Matthews, 2010), aquatics education (Moran, 1999) and physical education (Stothart, 1993).

One of central government’s earliest concerns was control of working class children. “Larrikin” behaviour was controlled by removing children from the streets and disciplining by means of military drill (May, 1997; Stephenson, 2008). Military drill “brightened and polished” children of the working classes according to an early ‘Schoolmaster’s Drill Assistant’ referred to in Stothart’s (1974, p. 10) history of New Zealand physical education. Although already doing such things as Indian club drill and extension exercises, girls were not included in compulsory military drill until 1901 with the Physical Drill in Public and Native Schools Act 1901. The 1901 Act required drill to be taught to both boys and girls over 8 years of age. A new form of drill, a modified version of military drill took place in the playground often accompanied by music.

Inclusion of girls in activities, associated with a move towards the demilitarisation of drill, introduced activities considered more suitable for girls. Girl-friendly activities consisted of gentler movements than those of military drill. Wands or streamers were used to enhance more flowing, less rigid exercise. In 1902 a visiting physical culture advocate and strong man, Eugen Sandow, described the country as leading the way in promoting physical culture (Daley, 2003, p. 197). At this time, physical culture was understood as regimes of physical activity for the enhancement of individual physique.

The 1904 school syllabus reinforced forms of physical activity other than strict military drill. Some regimentation of activities continued however. George Hogben, Inspector-General of Schools during this period, was of the belief that outdoor activity lessened anti-social behaviour, and was supportive of physical training in the 1904 syllabus. The syllabus included detailed prescriptions of exercises “performed in strict tempo to set commands” (McGeorge, 1992, p. 48).

A manual of physical exercises to assist teachers with outdoor drills became available in 1908. The manual demonstrated exercises that could be done using equipment such as dumbbells, wands or clubs. Non-military style physical activity was encouraged, although patriotism continued community support for military style training. But by 1910 physical
culture was taught to all students, both female and male. The uniforms of the time, gym dresses and cadet uniforms, were indicative of the disciplinary character of physical drills.

As primary schooling became more universal at the beginning of the 20th century schools were important sites for promotion of children’s health and physical fitness (Tennant, 1994, p.25). An amendment to the Education Act in 1912, indicating a focus on physical fitness, provided for the appointment of a Director of Physical Education. Favoured activities of the period from 1907 remained forms of drill, but increasingly games and dances were included as physical activities (Stothart, 1974). Children’s physical activity became important and by 1919 each primary class was required to have 15 minutes of daily physical exercise. Physical education was claimed, by some physicians, to reduce ill-health and outside physical activity was regarded as wholesome and healthy. Schools became the site for the management of children’s health.

2.2.2 Taking children outside the schoolroom for health

The state’s concern and responsibility for children’s health in New Zealand is traced to the 1860s (Tennant, 1994). At that time understandings of health were linked to the absence of disease and disease avoidance. Wholesome physical exercise and fresh-air were considered vital in avoiding ill-health from disease. A fresh-air movement, developed in European contexts and drawing on miasmatic theories of disease-carrying air (Rice, 2005), was established in New Zealand to counter the ill effects of ‘bad air’. Particularly for schools, disease was considered to flourish in the country’s overcrowded, poorly ventilated and badly heated schoolrooms. The fresh air of the school yard was a respite from the unsanitary indoor conditions (Wood, 2005). Being in the fresh air was established as a hygienic practice in New Zealand’s schooling.

The development of open-air schools, initially started in Germany for children with tuberculosis, began in Wellington when the first open-air classroom was built in 1914. Exposing children to sunshine and fresh-air for health enhancement was the ideal for the establishment of New Zealand’s health camp movement. The first health camp was run in 1919, a three-week ‘under canvas’ camp designed primarily to put weight on undernourished children. School camps and open-air classrooms were intended to improve children’s educational environment by exposing them to healthy fresh air and sunshine (Tennant, 1994, p. 29). Lynch (2006, p. 21) argues however that there was another purpose of the fresh-air camps, that of transforming children into strong and loyal citizens.
While the development of healthy young citizens continued into the following decade, another aspect emerged from children’s experiences of being in the fresh-air. The health camp movement gained in popularity throughout the 1920s and 1930s and lead to the formation, in 1936 of New Zealand’s Federation of Health Camps. For many children with the experience of attending a fresh-air health camp, the pleasure of being outdoors was a contributor to the growing pastime of recreational camping. Camping practices, originating in exploration, military excursions and for health reasons, became “an agreeable pastime, undertaken by choice” (Tennant, 1994, p. 34). During this period, children were regularly taken outside the schoolroom for nature study excursions and physical exercise, and increasingly school camping for enjoyment gained support in New Zealand’s educational circles.

2.2.3 Taking children outside the classroom for recreation

During the 1920s and 1930s a general interest in outdoor recreation led to the growth of tramping and walking clubs. From the late 1930s and early 1940s school children were regularly taken into the outdoors for walks and educational reasons. The first recorded school outdoor camp occurred in 1938. Occurring at Hunua, a nature area in the Auckland region, senior boys were taken to study nature and other topics (Lynch, 2006, p. 60). While engaging children’s learning in the outdoors through camping was supported by curriculum studies such as nature study, geography and moral education (Lynch, 2006; McGeorge, 1992), children’s wholesome engagement in the outdoors, the focus of the health camp movement, continued as a theme for the school camping initiative. Wholesome outdoor activities drew on children’s experience of pleasurable participation.

Outdoor recreational activity, for enjoyment, and for health, was further supported by New Zealand’s first Labour government. The 1937 Physical Welfare and Recreation Act encouraged physical recreational activity and the establishment of keep-fit classes in workplaces and schools. Fitness and recreation were considered by an advocate of the bill W. E. Parry, to be of national importance and to warrant the government’s attention (Lawrence, 2008). School camping gained momentum following the government’s focus on recreational pursuits. While the first recorded school camp during school hours occurred before the start of World War Two, school camping was discontinued throughout the war for economic reasons. The focus during this period was more toward developing physical fitness.
Recreation camps to develop physical fitness were organised during the war to energise workers. School leavers were also encouraged to keep fit by taking part in physical fitness activities and by joining exercise clubs. Supervised physical activities during the war, both in and out-of-school, supported national patriotism (Daley, 2003). Reducing anti-social delinquency was another purpose for the activities, as for control of larrikins in the late 19th century. These initiatives served to keep physical activity and recreation in people’s routines so that by war’s end they became established practices. School camping and outdoor education was re-invigorated in the post-war period, and gained momentum to emerge as a significant component of schooling.

2.3 Part 2: Outdoor education: learning and teaching

2.3.1 Taking children outside the classroom for experiential learning

A strong desire for security and happiness emerged at the end of World War Two (McDonald, 1978). For New Zealanders it was a time of prosperity and confidence. Full employment, guaranteed holiday pay and superannuation enabled and supported the pursuit of outdoor leisure activities. It was too, according to Lynch (2006), a generative time for outdoor education. Experiential education gained credibility in the progressive post-war period, particularly with advocacy from curriculum advisors. The Department of Education’s position was that learning was most effective through direct experience; abstract thinking developed by participation in real-life activities; outdoor activities enhanced the academic curriculum. Another feature of outdoor learning was the enhancement of positive social relationships between children and teachers.

Enjoyment was a feature of school outdoor activities. School camping, having gained support in post-war years, continued to develop in popularity during the 1950s. Lynch (2006, p. 81) details two school camps that occurred during this period. One camp, at Dunedin North Intermediate School (circa 1950), had Mathematics and English lessons taken outside, with time set-aside for enjoyable recreational activities such as singing, dancing and campfire stories (p. 82). Another camp initiated at a Wellington school in 1955, had similar activities. Education Boards initiated official approval for school camps from 1956 but there was no specific funding for school camps. Lynch (2006, p. 86) cites the first camp approved by the Auckland District Education Board organised by the education board’s physical education staff. Other education boards followed Auckland by supporting camps in their districts; the tradition of school camping began.
Other events occurring outside the school contributed to the school camping tradition. An Outward Bound movement was established in New Zealand in 1962 (founded in Wales 1941 by Kurt Hahn). New Zealanders increased their use of National Parks. Various environmental movements emerged in response to perceived destruction of the nature reserve. The Scouting movement, emphasising tramping and ‘camping out’ in nature was in a strong position. These initiatives supported school camping; tenting and cooking over an open fire in the natural environment. These outdoor experiences were supported by progressive liberal educationalists who favoured a child-centred experience-oriented approach. School field trips were a manifestation of experiential learning.

School field trips were based on cadet-style military-based training, and when compulsory military training ceased in 1959, field trips concentrated on real-life learning outside the classroom. Field trips introduced children to the people and resources of their communities. Guides to field trips listed places where pupils could be taken to support experiential learning in theme studies such as science or social studies (McBeath, Carleton & Smith, 1966). Children were taken to farms or factories to see particular industries’ operations first-hand. The field trip version of the value of the outdoors for learning did not, however, ignore promotion of pleasurable outdoor pursuits. During this period, enjoyment of the outdoors through exploration and adventure, building huts and climbing trees, characterised the outdoor classroom (Dowling, 1978).

Primary school outdoor learning and camping expanded during the 1960s and developed rapidly in some regions, notably Auckland because of the larger population and warmer climate. Taking children outside the classroom became a regular feature of schooling. The 1964 Education Act acknowledged the educational advantage of school camps for social and cultural value, but the government did not officially recognise camps by providing funding. However, school camping continued during this time. By the end of the 1960s, camping was established in all Education Board districts (Lynch, 2006). Where permanent camps were established, school camping developed more quickly and was more common in districts where teachers were enthusiasts, such as in the regions of Auckland, Nelson and Otago (Lynch, 2006, p. 104).

Teachers’ enthusiasm for taking children outdoors as part of schooling continued as school camps were considered to contribute substantially to children’s growth and development. Camps had a positive impact on children’s classroom relationships, and teachers in general,
supported the outdoor aspects of education. There were however, changes occurring in New Zealand’s wider socio-political environment that were to affect children’s outdoor learning opportunities and school camps.

2.3.2 Shifting support for outdoor learning and teaching

The growth in outdoor learning activities and school camps during the 1960s was to reduce at the beginning of the 1970s. New Zealand’s economic situation was seriously affected by Britain’s entry into the European Economic Community. This was a difficult time for the country and consequently for school outdoor activities. Fuel price increases, inflation and recession impacted on schools’ funding. While there remained official recognition from the Department of Education for outdoor learning, the small amount of funding that had been available for outdoor activities was reduced. There were calls to cut outdoor activities because of the expense. School camps, however, had strong community support from parents and school committees so were not affected to the same extent as other more expensive outdoor activities such as kayaking or ‘away from school’ study trips. Outdoor camps had educational value and teachers in particular found camps a useful way to engage children’s learning, particularly less academic children. The continued belief was that the outdoor classroom enhanced children’s lives through diverse learning environments (Phillips, 1983).

While outdoor learning and camps were supported by school communities, New Zealand’s difficult economic circumstances continued to impact on school funding. Schools struggled to maintain financial support for outdoor education programmes. However, as outdoor activities reduced somewhat in schools, there was a growth of independent organisations supporting outdoor activities. Organisations such as the New Zealand Mountain Safety Council, wildlife organisations, the New Zealand Forest Service as well as regional teacher associations assumed a significant role in promoting outdoor activity.

The growth of independent organisations supporting outdoor activities increased schools’ reliance on them (Stothart, 1990). These organisations provided both outdoor activities for children and independent training courses for teachers. There were members in the Department of Education who continued to advocate for schools’ provision of outdoor education rather than relying on external providers. Their argument was that teachers were the best people to encourage children’s learning rather than non-teachers from the outdoor organisations. A national teachers’ course in 1974 emphasised outdoor education as a “range of learning experiences designed to reinforce the development of abilities which help pupils
understand the world about them and their place in it” (Smithells, 1978, p. vii). As a consequence of lobbying by interested teachers and advisors, in 1974 the Department of Education established a District School Camp Advisory Committee to oversee school outdoor education.

Further support for outdoor learning occurred when a Committee on Health and Social Education presented the Johnson Report (Department of Education, 1977). The report advocated for both physical education and outdoor education as vehicles to encourage student learning. The Johnson Report, in contrast to views of schools as learning factories, advocated warm and supportive schools to foster moral growth (Codd, 1990). At the time of the Johnson Report, outdoor education had become focused more on teaching and learning, that is educating in the outdoors, and less on school camping. The idea of educating ‘in and for’ the outdoors developed contemporaneously alongside New Zealand’s conservation movement.

Renewed interest in school outdoor education occurred in the 1970s because of New Zealand’s increased awareness of nature conservation. The social and political upheavals of the 1970s, the financial crisis and ‘think big’ projects of New Zealand’s National party led Government were background to an emerging conservation movement. A major event that heightened conservation awareness was the National Government’s plan to raise the level of Lake Manapouri for hydro-electric generation (King, 2003). A nationwide furore ensued and a ‘Save Manapouri’ campaign was instigated in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While conservation ideals were to raise the profile of school outdoor education, there was a lack of national co-ordination for the area (Lynch, 2006). Opportunities for outdoor education, and funding, affected by New Zealand’s economic situation, improved during the decade of the 1970s after which minor funding became available. The Department of Education introduced funding for outdoor education by providing an annual grant to schools.

Financial support for each child contributed toward the cost of school camps. Ten cents per child in Forms One through to Form Seven supplemented schools’ outdoor education funding. Further events encouraged development of the curriculum. The 1973 national outdoor education symposium was followed by the Education Amendment Act 1974. Both actions assisted with the advance of outdoor education and teacher refresher courses followed. Following the release of the Johnson Report (Department of Education, 1977), a Year Book of Education (NZEI, 1978) focused on outdoor education after which, in 1980, the term EOTC (Education Outside the Classroom) was introduced. These developments
reiterated the importance of children’s learning outside the classroom. While the decade of the 1970s was a difficult one for New Zealand, and for outdoor education, by the end of the decade outdoor education had gained some traction, if not a place in the national curriculum. Outdoor education’s tenuous toehold in curriculum however, was affected by a period of major governmental reform.

Events occurred in the 1980s that were to impact significantly on outdoor education. The New Zealand economy was to undergo the most “rigid and extensive” restructuring programme of any country in the world (O’Neill, Clark, & Openshaw, 2004, p. 32). The newly elected Labour government of 1984 transformed the country in all government sectors, including that of education. With the intention of reducing what was considered a costly welfare state, the government under its new system of managing public finances undertook a sell-off of state-owned assets. The sell-off, which included airways, telephone and postal services, had social implications for the thousands of state workers who lost their means of employment. The reduction in state education expenditure again impacted on outdoor education. Per-child capitation funding was abolished in 1983 and by 1985 outdoor education did not count as an essential school activity in the monetarist focus of the period. A sharemarket collapse in 1987 reduced government education spending further, but through continued community support, and support from some departmental officers in education, outdoor education continued to operate to provide outside the classroom learning experiences. However, a number of accidents during school outdoor activities, directed attention away from learning and toward safety.

A series of accidents and student fatalities (drownings and falls) on school camps from 1978 to 1985 (Lynch, 2006, p. 175), resulted in the Department of Education releasing two circulars in 1985 on safety, supervision and legal aspects, and a policy statement in 1986 on student safety (Department of Education, 1985a, 1985b, 1986). The 1986 policy statement (Department of Education, 1986), while reminding teachers about their responsibilities for student safety, affirmed the value of outdoor education. Education outside the classroom was a medium for “furthering the aims of education” (p. 2). All syllabus subjects were suitable to outdoor learning and teachers were encouraged to make use of the “vitality of the world beyond the classroom” (p. 2). The Department’s encouragement of outdoor learning strengthened other developments - courses at teacher training colleges and, in 1987 the formation of a New Zealand Outdoor Instructor’s Association. The Department of Education
supported and affirmed the value of outdoor education, but in 1987 it was not a curriculum subject.

2.3.3 Self-managing schools: Stronger outdoor education

Against a background of economic restructuring, outdoor education proponents continued to lobby for their area. Certification of teachers taking outdoor education was advocated. After the fatalities between 1978 and 1985 during school outdoor activities, a risk management training and assessment scheme was created. Industry standards were set in 1987 for teacher training in risk-management. Increasing professionalisation of outdoor education leaders occurred during this reform period, both in education and in a growing outdoor education ‘industry’.

Educational reform of this period began with the Picot Report (Taskforce for Review Education Administration in New Zealand, 1988) which proposed extensive restructuring of the education sector. The Report shaped the Department of Education’s policy document ‘Tomorrow’s Schools’ (1988a) and moved school administration to a self-management model. A curriculum review in 1987 opened discussion on ‘core’ curriculum provoking debate within curriculum groups. Outdoor education was not part of discussions regarding curriculum revision, but as a part of physical education, was allocated a minor place in the merger of two subject areas – health and physical education (Tasker, 1996). The cost-cutting and streamlining of education’s administrative model, parts of which had been retained since the 1877 Education Act, created a devolved education structure. The Education Act 1989 produced a much smaller policy-focused Ministry of Education (Jesson, 2001, p. 98). The newly released New Zealand Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 1993) did not include outdoor education. Lynch (2006) suggests the focus of education reform toward schools’ financial self-management affected the low prioritisation of outdoor education.

Outdoor education was however, still supported by the new streamlined Ministry of Education. The new Ministry developed EOTC curriculum guidelines for schools and early childhood centres (Ministry of Education, 1992). The guidelines, first drafted by the previous Education Department, established a place in curriculum for EOTC, reiterating the value of outdoor learning. While teachers were reminded of their responsibilities for children’s safety with procedures for managing risk, the focus was on curriculum and learning opportunities. The EOTC outcomes, for example included ‘knowledge and understanding of the environment’, and skills of ‘decision-making and problem solving’ (Ministry of Education,
1992). The emotive aspect of outdoor learning was recognised where learners could undergo the ‘challenge and excitement’ of new experiences.

Ongoing developments throughout the last decade of the 20th century contributed to an established curriculum for outdoor education in New Zealand schools. A national conference on outdoor education in 1992 was supported by the Hillary Commission, a statutory body established by the Sport, Fitness and Leisure Act 1987 to develop and encourage sport, fitness and leisure. In the same year an advisory group was established by the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) to develop learning modules and Education Outdoors New Zealand (EONZ) a national professional association of outdoor teachers and educators, was established to become the national voice of outdoor educators (Education Outdoors New Zealand, 2011). In 1995 the Ministry of Education (1995) produced EOTC professional ‘good practice’ guidelines for Boards of Trustees in line with their statutory obligations for EOTC. The continuing initiatives - school and industry qualifications, increased recreational activities undertaken by New Zealanders and tourists, and specialist outdoor education organisations were part of the changing educational environment that contributed to outdoor education’s inclusion into the formal Health and Physical Education curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999).

2.3.4 Outdoor education in the formal curriculum

Outdoor Education became a key area of learning in 1999 with the release of the Health and Physical Education Learning Area of the New Zealand Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999). The stated intention of outdoor education in the curriculum was to provide students with opportunities to “develop personal and social skills, to become active, safe and skilled in the outdoors” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46). Becoming active and skilled in the outdoors was achieved though adventure activities and pursuits such as tramping, camping and rock climbing. Being active in New Zealand’s ‘great outdoors’ is a persistent aim, yet as well as considering children’s safety, there was an interesting turn to being skilled and learning ‘about the outdoors.

One change introduced to outdoor education was the idea of ‘critical examination’. Students would critically examine, as part of outdoor education, the “social, cultural, scientific, technological and economic influences on outdoor activities, on the environment and on how the environment is used” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46). Critical examination could include, for example, examining the impact of decreasing wilderness areas on outdoor
education. This was a move from active outdoor involvement towards inward thinking and critical examination. Inward looking to the self was reflected also in the safety focus in outdoor education where the student planned to manage their own safety as responsible individuals.

A revised good practice guide for EOTC (Ministry of Education, 2003b), following the 1995 document ‘Education Outside the Classroom: Guidelines for Good Practice’ (Ministry of Education, 1995), featured self-management and responsibility for all participants in EOTC experiences. The guide was released at the beginning of the 21st century four years after the 1999 curriculum and in response to a number of school camp drownings (see chapter 4 for details). Safety regulations dealing specifically with EOTC were also increased.

The 92 page Safety and EOTC guide (Ministry of Education, 2003b), had 43 pages of safety information, legal requirements and codes of practice with 49 pages of appendices of safety management systems. While students still had opportunities to “learn outside the classroom … experience enjoyment, adventure and challenge” they would also gain “knowledge and understanding of safe practices in the outdoors” (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 7). Students’ self-management in outdoor education, sat alongside the state’s safety policy requirements.

State intervention in outdoor education was evident in the management systems of the new century. Risk management initiatives operated in outdoor education centres, for example through EONZ who keep the Register of Outdoor Safety Auditors (ROSA), a collective of trained outdoor specialists who prepare and/or verify outdoor safety management systems. A National Incident Database records accidents in outdoor activities. There are standardised educational units of study and achievement in secondary schools. Outdoor education is a vocational choice supported with industry unit standards and qualifications. Further state intervention coincided with increasing commercialisation of outdoor activities. Professionalisation of the outdoor education and outdoor activity sector continues.

Outdoor activities and pursuits retain links to past practice. The Safety and EOTC guide (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 47) mentions outdoor pursuits as those activities that “involve moving across natural land and/or water environments by non-mechanised means” (non-mechanised pursuits include tramping, kayaking or rock-climbing). A 2005 outdoor education report indicated that twenty-eight percent of primary schools’ outdoor activities were pursuits with camping the most common single outdoor activity (Boyes & Zink, 2005).
Kayaking and tramping were also common. Education outside the classroom remains a popular activity. It has a curriculum, good (and safe) practice guidelines, programmes and trained experts who organise, plan and manage young people in their activities. Outdoor education is different from early times of camping in the fresh air or learning about nature though elements of earlier times remain, particularly in primary school outdoor education. There is however, greater safety focus in 21st century school outdoor education.

As in the past, there are reasons for taking children outside the classroom. In 1877 boys were taken outside the classroom for military drill, and all children had access to a school playground. In 1999 children and young people were facing “critical health and physical education issues” (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 5) regarding their health and well-being. Further, in 1999 children would “become safe” while they “investigate the importance of the outdoor environment and outdoor activities to the well-being of all New Zealanders” (p. 46).

Taking children outside the classroom fits with the Ministry’s vision for young people. There have been changes in the reasons for taking children outside the classroom in the past 130 years, and also changes in the direction of education policy. Rather than teacher practices for training and controlling young people, as in the past, young people are now expected to manage themselves in a context of government-led risk management systems. This development highlights one aspect of the tension between children’s pleasure of involvement in the outdoor classroom and the need for teacher practices that manage learner safety, particularly in the light of the ‘safe child’ debates.

Children’s pleasure and enjoyment of participation in outdoor activities persists. The following chapter turns to the ‘great outdoors’ to consider the characteristics of pleasurable relationships with the outdoors, and to highlight excitement, thrill and adventure as part of the New Zealand outdoor tradition which is reflected in teachers’ practices in the outdoor classroom. Both tradition and new developments in outdoor education values and practices are discussed in this chapter.
3 The wider context and traditions of teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom

Pre-European Maori were extremely skilled travellers who settled New Zealand at least four hundred years before European settlement (King, 2003), and some of the outdoor traditions and pursuits of Maori are drawn upon in New Zealand’s contemporary physical education. The ‘great outdoors’ referred to in this chapter draws on Pakeha adventure and discovery traditions. I highlight the ‘great outdoors’ to indicate the significance of the idea in New Zealand’s outdoor traditions and thereby to the social construction of teachers’ beliefs and practices relating to education in the outdoor classroom.

New Zealand’s great outdoors is understood as a wild and untrammelled space, a place consisting of magnificent scenery of unfolding and unexplored vistas. The great outdoors is entrenched in a New Zealand identity, literature and history. The notion of the great outdoors is built upon tales of intrepid adventurers crossing oceans in search of new territories, exploring the wilderness, fording rivers and traversing untouched tracts of native forest. The great outdoors, derived from Eurocentric perspectives, reinforced ideas of rugged exploration and adventure. People who survived the wilderness were hardy and resourceful. Freedom to explore wild areas was forged by early settlers and adventurers.

The ideals of freedom and wilderness accompanying European settlers are found in tales of exploration and journeying. Samuel Butler was one explorer who wrote in 1861 of the “vastness of mountain and plain, of river and sky; the marvellous atmospheric effects” (King, 2003, p. 173). Untouched vastness is an enduring image that sustains the notion of the great outdoors. Representations of wilderness, the mountains, hills and coastline adorn New Zealand’s tourism material. The vastness is an image encouraging individuals to explore New Zealand’s pristine wilderness. New Zealand’s image is that of a clean and green country (Tourism New Zealand, 2010).

A sequence of circumstances occurring during the early settlement phase subsequently affected New Zealand’s pristine landscape, and latterly shaped the environmental aspect of outdoor education. Introduction of alien plants and animals, and large numbers of settlers during the 19th century had a traumatic effect on the landscape. Introduced species contributed to the destruction of habitats and a reduction in the number of native animals and plants (King, 2003). Widespread acknowledgement of the destruction did not occur until the
middle of 20th century with the establishment of a conservation movement. Successful initiatives have repaired some damaged habitats and protected indigenous species, and conservation efforts are heralded in the wider community as upholding New Zealand’s great and natural outdoors. Icons of the great outdoors are prevalent today in areas of tourism, conservation and education.

The outdoors has a place in New Zealanders’ identity and memory. Actions in the outdoors work though tales of fording rivers, crossing swaths of bush or exploring a wilderness. The traverse of the Southern Alps to link both sides of the South Island is such a tale of intrepid exploration. The journey remains in memory but is manifest in outdoor activities undertaken in recent times. Attempts to climb the highest mountain (sustained by New Zealander Sir Edmund Hillary’s 1953 first ascent of Mt Everest), kayak the ocean, or bungee jump from the tallest structure are symbolic of earlier adventurous explorations.

A ‘Kiwi’ identity is strongly connected to being in the outdoors (Andkjoer, 2012). Perkins and Thorns (2001) concur to claim a ‘Kiwi’ identity that draws on adventurous exploration tales with active participation in the outdoors. Such narratives combine a Kiwi identity with an independent do-it-yourself attitude. For Lynch (2006), New Zealand’s traditions relate strongly to that of the outdoors. New Zealand’s early fresh-air movements established the virtue of going back to nature.

A tradition of going back to nature, through tramping, mountaineering or exploration, developed into forms of recreational pursuits (Perkins & Thorns, 2001). New Zealand’s version of the great outdoors is often characterised by rugged, adventurous individuals, tramping across the country. But this version has taken a different turn in recent times. While the great outdoors continues to provide adventure, it has now become a place of thrill and excitement. New Zealand is promoted by tourist agencies and outdoor education providers as a thrilling destination (Education Outdoors New Zealand, 2011). Where previously adventure had exploration at the heart, adventure is now promoted as a thrilling and exciting ‘authentic’ experience. New Zealand is a global adventure destination (Perkins & Thorns, 2001) and the great outdoors is the event. Tourists come to New Zealand for adventurous activity in the natural scenery. The adventurous facet has become one identifier of New Zealand culture.

Adventure is found both in New Zealand adventure tourism and school outdoor education programmes. Physical challenge and risk-taking through adventure activities shape the outdoor experience, described for adventure tourism: “This type of tourism is characterised
by … relatively high levels of sensory stimulation, usually achieved by … physically challenging experiential components … perceived as physically bracing, ‘adrenalin-driven’, somewhat risky, with moments of exhilaration.” (Muller & Cleaver, 2000, p. 156).

The adventure tourism experience parallels that of school EOTC and outdoor education: “Adventure education is based on activities that create challenge and excitement by deliberately exposing participants to elements of risk.” (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 46).

Sensory stimulation, challenge, risk, excitement and adrenaline all feature in outdoor activities. The following literature presents selected factors that describe the place of enjoyment in outdoor activities and partly explain children’s desire for adventurous, exciting and risky activities.

3.1 **Adventure in the outdoors**

There is a demand in recent times, for adventure and thrills in outdoor pursuits. Claims are made that the world now is too safe, so challenge and risk are missing in people’s lives (Breivik, 2007). Others claim the need for adventurous activity has a genetic basis. Links are made between risk, adventure and capitalism. Lynch and Moore (2004) argue that the pursuit of adventure assisted in the development of the modern world claiming that “risk and adventure have always been the fuel of capitalist commerce” (p.6). Links between adventure and capitalism are made in another manner by Breivik (2007) who likens risk-taking to wealth accumulation, the basis of capitalism. Breivik uses an example of Himalayan mountain traders to make his point. It was only the mountain traders able to traverse the risky high mountain passes who could reap economic benefit from their trading. Breivik also considers coastal people more likely to be risk-takers as it was access to the sea that enabled ocean exploration.

Ocean-going exploration of the globe occurred because sailors and explorers, such as for example, the 16th century Europeans Abel Tasman and Captain Cook, took risks and sailed in uncharted seas. Breivik (2007, p. 17) proffers the idea that challenge and risk have become “hard wired into our genes”, maintaining human adaptation involves challenge and risk. In the past, according to Breivik, risk, challenge and strong sensations were part of people’s everyday lives.

While Breivik (2007) suggests a predisposition for risk-taking indicates a positive response to adventure and challenge, he admits that in contemporary times people have different
acceptance levels of risk and challenge. Some outdoor participants do not seek risk-taking experiences. Delle Fave, Bassi and Massimini’s (2003) study of the climbing experiences of a group of experienced Himalayan mountain climbers, showed that climbers were motivated by adventure and challenge and not risk-taking. Some research claims different levels of risk-taking acceptance. Jack and Ronan (1998) correlate types of sport participation to levels of risk acceptance. Sky-diving and hang-gliding are high risk activities while running and golf are not. The kinds of activities that people take part in, they argue, indicate their risk acceptance levels.

With reference to New Zealand’s adventure tourism, Kane and Tucker (2004, p. 218) consider whether high risk activities are acceptable to tourists. They conclude that adventure tourists are adventurous within the confines of the tour’s ‘packaged safety’, with one participant noting the guides would be irresponsible if tourists were put in a ‘risk position’ (p. 227). ‘Insulated adventure’ describes adventure activities where participants are protected from serious risk (Schmidt, 1979). Atherton (2007) however, proffers that people need the challenge of participation in unpredictable environments; the adventures faced in current times, lack the dangers of previous times. One participant in Kane and Tucker’s (2004, p. 218) study claimed that it was safer to do “adventure tourism than … adventure”. While a focus on safety does not exclude the experience of adventure, others claim that for people with a history of risk-taking and adventuring, there are too many protections against adventurous risk-taking (Breivik, 2007; Furedi, 1997). Adventuring in the modern world is not the survival contest of the past (Ray, 2009), but an effort to have adventure within safe boundaries.

Leach (2008) argues that the rise in adventurous risk-taking behaviour is a consequence of a comfortable society. Adventure in modern life is missing because technological advancements have improved safety in many situations. Outdoor pursuits lose their adventurous edge if there is a too strong safety focus. Mountain climbing is one example where it is claimed safety provisions can affect the excitement of a climb.

Criticisms are directed toward making climbing safer as new technologies become routine and reduce excitement. Practices such as ‘bolting’ climbing routes for example, the traditional practice of securing a route with bolts and ropes, improve safety, yet for some reduce challenge and climbing complexity. Ebert and Robertson (2007) are critical of the practice because, while risk is reduced, the climb becomes mechanical by simply following a
bolted route. While bolting a route might lack adventure, and is mundane, it provides a safer experience.

For Ebert and Robertson (2007) safe bolting prevents climbers from being adventurous and exploring other possible routes. In Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing’s 1953 final climb of the ascent of Mount Everest, Hillary noted the biggest technical problem was a rock bluff barring the way along the final ridge (Barnett & Sullivan, 1988, p. 75). Noticing a crack between the rock and ice, Hillary was able to wedge himself in and push upwards. The action enabled him to get above the bluff to cut the final steps to the summit. One young climber in Butryn and Masucci’s (2009, p. 299) study admired Hillary because the feat was accomplished with “far less sophisticated technological accoutrements than people use today”. While technical apparatus provide safe experiences, it is argued that modified safe activities provide different forms of adventure than traditional activities. Inner-city climbing walls for example, provide climbing challenges similar to those of mountains.

Urban climbing walls are safer than real mountains because of simulated risks and dangers, yet the climb is no less heroic than a real climb (Marinho & Bruhns, 2005). The urban climbing wall, as does the real mountain, makes demands on climbers, and while urban climbers ‘play’ at being heroes, they experience aspects of ‘real’ climbing. Urban climbers also make demands on their ‘normally unused muscles’ (p. 228) when testing themselves on the climbing wall.

Heroic is a term not usually used to describe the actions of climbers participating in ordinary life activities, such as urban climbing. It is more likely used to describe participants in extreme natural world events. Anderson (2007, p. 77) uses the word ‘extraordinary’ for example rather than heroic, to describe the actions of extreme surfers. Surfers in Anderson’s study took risks in an effort to overcome their comfortable worlds. For those surfers a tame world was boring and not confronting enough.

For both Ebert and Robertson’s (2007) climbers and Anderson’s (2007) surfers, tame worlds lack risk and challenge. Anderson (2007, p. 72) likened this to William James’s tame world that lacked a sense of precipitousness or risk. Breivik (2007) too, argues people need the excitement of thrill and danger because safe societies are secure and boring. In dispute, Kane and Tucker (2004, p. 231) argue that people who are not risk-takers do not need to confront death or injury or precipitousness, but can be adventurous for example within the packaged
safety of a tour. There are tensions however, when risk-taking adventures are at variance with safe practice.

Andkjoer’s (2012), in his study of New Zealand outdoor education, considered the tension an ambiguity. Adventure, challenge and risk, the cultural characteristics of New Zealand’s outdoor activities, were major attractions, yet safety standards were the focus for the outdoor education industry. It seems strange he says, to put a lot of effort into risk and “at the same time or subsequently aim and search for safety. In this way it can be understood as a paradoxical spiral” (Andkjoer, 2012, p. 126). While Andkjoer links risk to adventure and challenge, he notes a further ambiguity, that risk seemed also connected to the “experience of fun” (p. 6).

From Andkjoer’s (2012) Danish perspective, the idea of fun in outdoor education is strange. Fun in Denmark is linked to children’s games, play, laughter and joy. Further, for Andkjoer, fun was in contrast to the seriousness of New Zealand’s outdoor education industry. In New Zealand, both participants’ safety, and the desire for thrill, excitement and new experiences are important. Novelty of experience is a motivator for outdoor activities, particularly in adventure tourism. Participants want to play ‘like kids’ when enjoying new experiences (Kane & Tucker, 2004, p. 230).

Kane and Tucker’s (2004, p. 229) study of New Zealand white-water adventure kayakers, sought to understand the experience of kayakers. The participants took part in an adventure activity centred on rivers in New Zealand’s South Island wilderness areas. Helicopters took the kayakers to remote rivers where kayaking was extreme rather than routine. The novelty and prestige of helicopter kayaking contributed to enjoyment of the activity. Participants were able to differentiate themselves from other kayakers because of the novelty of the experience.

There is a huge range of novel adventure activities available in New Zealand. Perkins and Thorns (2001) liken adventure experiences to ‘performances’. The performance describes the experience with the adrenaline rush from active participation. Perkins and Thorns distinguished between ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ activities. Hard activities are considered more extreme when the “adrenalin rush is more important than the ascetic gaze” (p. 196). The need for sensation and excitement, and adrenalin rushes is postulated together with the need for adventure as a basic human need. It is not different for children, as Staempflri (2008) notes.
For children, sensation and stimulation derive from activity in complex environments such as the natural outdoors.

3.2 Sensation-seeking

Stimulation through sensation-seeking is an element of adventure. For Leach (2008), thrill-seeking, excitement, sensation and novelty seeking are part of the call to adventure. Breivik (2007) claims that sensation-seeking is a behaviour to experience thrill and excitement. Novelty-seeking describes this disposition. The high altitude climbers in the study of Delle Fave et al (2003) however, were motivated more by challenge and the autotelic than by thrill-seeking. It is adventure tourists who pursue immediate thrills. For highly skilled climbers the essence of rock climbing is the opportunity for flow, skill and demanding tasks.

In one study of sensation-seeking behaviour, Jack and Ronan (1998) suggest that the particular activities or sports undertaken, relate to whether individuals are high or low sensation-seeking. Participation in some high risk sports such as hang gliding or climbing is more likely to rank higher on the sensation-seeking scale than participation in low risk activities or sports. Jack and Ronan’s finding corresponds to Perkins and Thorns’ (2001) distinction between soft or hard adventure activities. Breivik (2007) too, while not suggesting risk-taking is always a specific aspect of sensation-seeking, admits that it can be; highest sensation-seeking people prefer higher risk activities.

Adrenalin rushes feature in adventurous outdoor education when participants actively seek the immediate thrill of pitting oneself against nature (Thomas, 2004), or for fun and excitement (Kane & Tucker, 2004) or the risk and fun (Andkjoer, 2012) of participation. Thrill-seeking supports the human need for stimulation provoking strong positive sensations or feelings (Breivik, 2007, p. 11). Thrill-seeking pushes the body to its physical limits and “opens doors of perception otherwise closed in daily life” (Leach, 2008, p. 100). Participation in thrill and adventure activities can provoke ecstatic joy though Breivik (2007) admits ecstasy is a somewhat extreme emotion.

It is the unpredictability of moving experiences that constitute the element of surprise that moves participants out of ordinariness and complacency (Atherton, 2007). For example, the fluid dynamism of big wave surfing requires a constant bodily readjustment in the water on the part of the surfer to face the precipitousness of the situation (Anderson, 2007). Few people possess the skills and courage to challenge Mother Nature’s raw power and ride these
towering walls of water (Englehardt, 2000). But it is not adrenalin-seeking that motivates extreme activity participants; rather, for Anderson it is the opportunity to refine their physical and emotional skills.

When an adrenaline rush is sought, rather than skill development, there are claims that BASE jumpers, big wave surfers or extreme skiers damage the integrity of the sport. Instead of refining techniques, adrenalin seekers are more focussed on immediate thrills. Those who refine their skills focus more on a calm performance or action, whether jumping off a cliff, wave or mountain (Brymer & Oades, 2009). While sensation-seeking is part of the activity, it is not the prime focus, it is the search for ‘moments’ of autotelie, a higher order of sensation-seeking bordering on the spiritual or the transformative experience (Anderson, 2007).

Sensation-seeking is linked to risk-taking (Jack & Ronan, 1998; Pizam et al., 2004) and can be used to explain risk-taking behaviours (Ray, 2009). However, risk-taking is more likely attributable to participation in outdoor activities where there is a possibility of serious injury or death (Krein, 2007). But risk-taking also links to challenge and adventure. The pursuit of risk can be a motivator for taking part in activities in order to feel the edge and escape the comfortable tame world.

3.3  **Risk-taking as part of challenge and adventure**

Risk-taking may be the chance for loss but also the chance for gain. The ideas of benefit or loss are inherent in the idea of risk, but Bernstein (1996, p. 106) refers to the risk-taker as one who chooses “how much to bet or whether to bet at all”. Non-participation is an option in outdoor pursuits, but so is taking the soft option which is not as risky (Perkins & Thorns, 2001). Risk-taking has benefits, or losses, and in outdoor activities there are multiple opportunities for both.

Bernstein (1996) alerts us to the human ability to define what might happen in the future, to predict, and to choose among possibilities of action. For McNamee (2007, p. 8), risk-taking in itself is not sought, but it is the ‘risky activities’ that are pursued for the “joys and satisfactions they bring to a life”. McNamee argues that adventurous risk-takers are not irrational, but careful in choosing between or among the possibilities of actions.

Calculating the odds is part of risk-taking behaviour. In adventure and challenge activities there are a range of gains or losses. There are the positive gains of thrill, achievement, personal development, enhanced relationships, experience of novelty, and on the other hand,
the opportunities for loss. Losses range from serious death or injury, or failure to succeed. Krein (2007) suggests the possibility of serious injury or death are part of adventure sports, and because adventure sports often take place in remote areas, isolation is also part of the risk. Krein (2007) argues however, that for the adventurer the heightened sense of interaction with the natural world justifies the risk of such activities.

Adventure and challenge activities often involve physical danger and risk, and those who push the boundaries (and are motivated to), win the battle or gain the reward. Involvement in dangerous and risky pursuits can push the boundaries of one’s life in moving from the tame world to a more excitingly dynamic one. William James, the philosopher, considered it life’s necessity to engage in the “existentially more real” world of risk (Anderson, 2007, p. 72); life becomes more significant. Anderson argues that extreme paddlers are philosophers who have an ability to be in the world (in this case water) and the risks taken are for oneself in that world. It is further suggested that extreme paddlers are brought alive by the very serious risks they face. Krein (2007, p. 81) argues that it is in the powerful natural environments where adventure sports take place that participants can interact with the world in a way not found in other activities. The challenge of adventure and increasing search for thrill contributes to participation in even more extreme activity, and further, leading to the commodification of adventure.

3.4 Extreme activities and the commodification of adventure

Extreme adventure activities are at the furthest end of risk and thrill involvement in outdoor pursuits. ‘Xtreme’ activities/sports are activities with high levels of danger, and push the boundaries of what is safe and acceptable in terms of safety and risk. Xtreme activities are consumer products leading to both the commodification of ‘adventure’, and commodification of the wilderness.

The idea of adventure incorporates concepts of challenge, risk, journeys and freedom. Lynch and Moore (2004) argue that the idea of adventure is central to current practices in New Zealand’s modern recreation, adventure and outdoor education. Today adventure is “simultaneously commodified and romanticised as escape from modernity” (Lynch & Moore, 2004, p. 2). It is paradoxical when adventure and outdoor education and commercial adventure tourism are presented in escapist terms, as, according to Lynch and Moore (2004), the ideology of adventure was central to modern societies’ economic expansion when social and economic forces “harnessed the notion of adventure” (p. 2). A further paradox is that
modern outdoor adventure participants are able to safeguard against the risks associated with the adventure of earlier times (Lynch & Moore, 2004). Images associated with adventure to promote escape from modern urban life include the wilderness. Yet it is a wilderness that can be reached and connected with in some manner. More remote wilderness suggests adventure.

An untouched wilderness typifies the place for adventures in areas that are “geographically distant from everyday life and society” (Lynch & Moore, 2004, p. 3). For some, the inaccessible wilderness myth underpins adventure culture. Ray (2009) argues that in an era of environmental concerns, going back to the wilderness has become attractive. Americans returning to the wilderness, maintain an American identity by re-creating the ‘frontier’ encounter (Ray, 2009). A New Zealand identity has similar connections to the natural environment.

In New Zealand the bush, forests and coastline, the land itself, represents a special culture that people connect to, particularly during holiday periods and recreation. Lynch and Moore (2004, p. 3) link ideas of space and land, and independence, to some activities identified as ‘freedom recreations’. Snowboarding, mountain-biking and skate-boarding are activities highlighting freedom in the natural environment. These recreational activities are those commercialised through television events such as X games (a commercial event focusing on extreme sports), clothing and specialized equipment.

The commercialisation of freedom recreation and outdoor events provide opportunities for urban dwellers to connect with the ideas of challenge and adventure. Images present the events occurring in the wilderness, at speed, or in poses of apparent danger. The images contribute to the desire to be part of the action; “the imaginary search for pleasure linked to the image of the product” (Marinho & Bruhns, 2005, p. 227). The great outdoors is constructed as exciting, paradisal, a wilderness (Perkins & Thorns, 2001) and a fantasy (Marinho & Bruhns, 2005). According to Marinho and Bruhns (2005), for the urban climbers in their study, even the spirit of pleasure is commercialised.

Adventure tourism is a developing commercial market (Fluker & Turner, 2000). Perkins and Thorns (2001) consider adventure tourists an important segment of the industry. Increasing commodification of adventure experiences produced the adventurer consumer, and now older baby boomers (New Zealand’s population growth between late 1940s and 1961 resulted in a “baby boom”, King, 2003, p. 357) are targeted because of their greater discretionary spending (Muller & Cleaver, 2000). Schools are another targeted market and as Lynch and Moore
(2004) discovered, Tourism New Zealand encourages school students through its website with offers of the ‘incredible learning experience of studying in New Zealand’s outdoor adventure-land’ (www.newzealand.com). The website encourages students with a ‘totally different spin on education’ offering adventure schools in beautiful locations, focusing both on outdoor sports and activities and personal development.

Linked to the same impetus for excitement in the great outdoors, the outdoor education experience is similarly marketed by education, recreation and sport providers. A group of New Zealand secondary school teachers with a passion for outdoor education formed ODENZ (Outdoor Education New Zealand, 2010). Challenging and experiential programmes are offered, to international standards, based on New Zealand’s unique natural environment. Increasingly New Zealand primary schools are part of the commercialisation of the outdoors as students pay expert providers for the great outdoors experience.

Modern consumer culture and technological advances have produced new forms of the great outdoors. The modern outdoors engages students in ways that differ from those of New Zealand’s early settler adventurers. Challenging environments and pitting oneself against danger, heroism, wilderness, hard journeying and struggle, features of past adventuring, remain characteristics of outdoor activities considered by today’s standards to be ‘extreme’.

Extreme activities involve a real chance of death, yet also can offer the realisation that nature in its extreme, is “far greater and more powerful than humanity” (Brymer & Oades, 2009, p. 114). People participate in extreme activities for different reasons. Brymer and Oades’ (2009) phenomenological study of an extreme sport experience showed that people participated in extreme activities for personal transformative reasons, and that facing death was one such transformative event. That nature is so powerful that one might die, “acts as a pointer to our inner beings” (Arnould & Price, 1993 in Brymer & Oades, 2009, p. 122). This realisation is part of a thrill-seeking adventuring, an ideal commodified for young people.

Adventure is a commodity and Xtreme sports and adventure tourism are associated with the commodification. Xtreme sports/recreation events are a global phenomenon that impact on young people and children’s images of themselves. Young people become active thrill agents who can face danger, albeit in small doses. Adventure tourists are like children when they ‘play’ with thrills and adventure in small packages. Adventure is commoditised and for participants, becomes an important part of their identity (Butryn & Masucci, 2009; Kane &
Tucker, 2004; Marinho & Bruhns, 2005; Ray, 2009). The act of participation defines the active self; adventurer, hero, death defying, sexy or even cyborg.

Extreme sports and performances are regularly portrayed as sexy. Extreme activities come with an attitude as “the sexiest in the world” (Ilundain-Agurrizu, 2007, p. 152). Young participants appeal to advertisers, TV programmers and businesses. The idea of extreme adventure is sold to those who are not high risk-takers themselves, but are spectators of high risk activities. As Perkins and Thorns (2001, p. 186) note in ‘Gazing or Performing’, while tourists can be passive gazers or active pursuers the metaphor of performance is appropriate. The “tourist performance … incorporates ideas of active bodily involvement; physical, intellectual and cognitive activity and gazing”. Gazing at extreme activities fulfils a need for sensation and stimulation. Involvement occurs at a safe level, whether wearing the clothes, watching television or participation at a less extreme level. The urban climbing wall is an example where a diverse group of participants can “play at being heroes, simulating risks and dangers” (Marinho & Bruhns, 2005, p. 228). Similarly, educational outdoor activity (and play) is often sold as entertainment and pleasurable fun to engage the young consumer (Kenway & Bullen, 2001).

The pleasure of being in the outdoors and being active is commodified and technologised. A growing literature utilises both cyborg theory and sport sociology. Marinho and Bruhns (2005, p. 229) define cyborgs as “hybrid organisms both mechanical and organic, creatures linked to both social reality and to fiction”. With increasingly complex relationships between technology and people, researchers offer the notion of cyborg to explore and theorise the way technology blurs the boundaries between human and machine (Butryn & Masucci, 2009).

The literature is pertinent because theorising changes in the human/nature and technology/nature dichotomies raises questions about the extent of technology’s encroachment on wilderness areas. Butryn and Masucci (2009, p. 286) discuss the difficulties in describing ‘wilderness’ in comparison with indoor technologised settings when a true ‘wilderness’ is increasingly difficult to find. Butryn and Masucci name wilderness as “trails, ocean, urban parks, etc.” (p. 293) but on the other hand claiming that at the present time the natural world is never completely natural. “Human debris” or even the “cascade of radio waves” enabling global positioning systems (GPS) prevent the world from appearing natural (Butryn & Masucci, 2009, p. 296). As the boundaries between natural and man-made become blurred so do the boundaries between human and nature and technology.
Technology has profoundly changed people’s outdoor activities (Plummer, 2009). Plummer uses the case of Edmund Hillary and his climbing gear, to illustrate his point. Hillary’s gear was very basic by today’s standards (p. 328). Plummer is supportive of technology in outdoor pursuits because the advances made in clothing and gear, open up activities to a wider range of participants. New pursuits have developed because of technology – handheld GPS are used for example in geocaching, the outdoor high-technology treasure hunt (Plummer, 2009, p. 332), GPS are used for mapping and park visitor management and increasingly, for recreational safety. There are however, disputes about the range of technologies available and employed, because they detract from the wilderness experience. Proponents of this position argue for technology-free and rescue-free wilderness zones to enable people to take responsibility for their actions. Ebert and Robertson’s (2007) call against bolting climbing routes provided the same argument against overdependence on technology.

Those searching for genuine experiences are part of authenticity movements in outdoor activities and sport (Ilundain-Agurruzu, 2007). There are claims however that terms such as “natural and “technologized” are not ‘wholly unproblematic” (Butryn & Masucci, 2009, p. 298). In Butryn and Masucci’s (2009) research on cyborg athletes, participants themselves identified particular sport technologies as “useful, efficient, and in some cases indispensable, in their sporting efforts” (p. 298). Arguments on the use, or not, of technology in outdoor activities does not seem relevant to school outdoor education. But young people and children today have access to technologies unavailable ten years ago. It was a decade ago the internet search engine Google was created (1998), iPods were introduced in 2001 and Facebook in 2004, all technologies commonly used by young people. Yet, and particularly in relation to New Zealand primary school education outside the classroom, technology has not yet established significance. Often children are reminded to leave their technology behind when they are participating in education outside the classroom, yet technology solutions are employed to keep children safe during their outdoor experiences. What continues to be important however, is children’s connection with the natural world outside of the classroom.

3.5 The great natural world – the contemplative

In New Zealand’s great outdoors, pleasure is had from ‘messing about’ in nature; to immerse oneself in the beauty of the natural world, kayak along a meandering river, scale a high cliff, experience the thrill of catching a wave or simply to listen to the sounds of nature. An individual’s pleasure of being in the outdoors, in nature, is experienced in multiple ways. It is
the different forms of relationship with the outdoors that likewise constitute children’s enjoyment of outdoor education.

Part of children’s pleasure being outdoors, in playgrounds, paddocks or at the beach, is the contrast to being inside the classroom. Inside the classroom constitutes ‘work’, while outside the classroom correlates with enjoyment, release, freedom and pleasure. Outdoor recreational or leisure pursuits provide respite from school or work obligations. New Zealand children learn of the thrill and pleasure of being outdoors through their outside the classroom activities. Children experience the exhilaration of a fast ride, the challenge of a river crossing, or the sense of achievement from climbing to the top of a hill, a tree, cliff or wall. But pleasures are also gained from slow contemplation of the natural world. Outdoor experiences are often sought to capture the ephemeral or lasting pleasures from participation in outdoor activities.

There are a variety of outdoor experiences to invite pleasure, and both the range of activities, and the different expressions of pleasure are addressed. To elaborate, the focus here is on the pleasurable relationship with the outdoors as part of the safety/pleasure tension. In order to address the manner of pleasurable engagement in outdoor settings, the focus is on the ways of ‘being in nature’ and the ensuing experiences from a nature immersion (Plummer, 2009). In contrast to being active in the ‘great outdoors’, ‘being in’ nature relates to relationships with a natural world, a space external to the physical body yet the body is with and part of nature. The ‘being in’ nature includes ideas of peace, freedom, reflection and spirituality.

3.6 At one with nature

The idea of nature holds multiple meanings. Nature can be a place separate from and outside of the human body, although some consider humans as part of and not separate from the natural environment. Viewing nature this way accepts the notion of symbiosis; a kinship with nature is assumed (Martin, 2004). The integrative view of nature and human is an holistic one, where life-forms interact in a self-sustaining web. James Lovelock’s (2009) Gaia formulation claims planet Earth as “more than just a home, it’s a living system and we are part of it” (www.ecolo.org/lovelock).

An holistic view of nature/human aligns with indigenous and traditional views. One Maori perspective on health (hauora), presents a relationship with the environment as an aspect of human wellbeing (Durie, 1998). A similar conception of integration is found among the Inuit
of Canada where an “intimate and insuperable relationship with the land” affects health (Takano, 2005, p. 475). For Inuit elders, being separated from the land is a contributor to young people’s dysfunctional drug and alcohol abuse. For Maori also, lack of access to tribal lands is a sign of poor health as the environment is integral to health (Durie, 1998). Both Maori and Inuit perspectives of the environment have a spiritual component. For Maori it is ‘wairua’, a belief in God reflected through the relationship with the environment, and for Inuit it is ‘sila’, respect and awe for the universe and the outer world (Takano, 2005, p. 494).

A deep and connected relationship with the natural world and land is not always part of a western worldview that places humans in a dominant position over nature. This western view may serve to disconnect humans from the environment, with negative effect. Plummer (2009) argues that it is this worldview of human as separate from environment that has contributed to degradation of the natural world. The Copenhagen Climate Conference (World Health Organisation, 2009) demonstrated global concerns about the planet because of the detrimental effects of industrialisation and deforestation. For Plummer, planetary ills such as for example, global warming, or loss of species or over-population, are illustrative of separation from the environment.

Other than destruction of the environment, the ills of people are considered to relate, as Maori and Inuit views claim, to disconnection from the natural world. Yet both Straker (2004) and Plummer (2009) argue that increasing separation from the natural world instigates a view of nature as a special place. As Andkjoer (2012) claims, many New Zealanders have a special relationship with the outdoors. The relationship is close, personal and pleasurable, enhanced particularly from being in and with nature.

Problems arise however when there are decreasing wilderness areas in which relationships with nature can flourish. Destruction of habitats and environments and the growth of urbanization throughout the western world has led to fewer ‘wild places’ (Mincyte, Casper, & Cole, 2009). Where there is decreased access to nature, as for example in highly urbanised areas, there are increased efforts to re-create ‘natural’ environments where humans can connect with nature, or at least some form of constructed nature. Natural rock cliffs are recreated as urban climbing walls where humans experience the pleasure of climbing (Marinho & Bruhns, 2005). City parks become children’s adventure spaces (Corsi, 2002) or their playgrounds (Staempfl, 2008).
Preservation and enhancement of small pieces of nature in urban environments serve to reconnect people with nature (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2003). For urbanised people, access to nature increases the likelihood of greater stewardship of the environment. Stewardship to care for the environment is an increasing feature of a human/nature relationship at this time. Martin (2004) likens the kinship relationship as a respectful one.

Valuing nature and care of the environment has a place in New Zealand’s national curriculum. Both science education and outdoor education programmes include environmentalism. The 1999 national Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) encouraged students to understand the interdependence of themselves and the environment (p. 11). Further, the curriculum aimed for students to consider how the environment contributes to well-being (p. 17), to analyse aspects of environmental health (p.29), and to have opportunities to protect and care for the environment (p. 46). For students, connection with and caring for the environment places them in a relationship with nature. The nature of those relationships, according to the 1999 Health and Physical Education Curriculum (Ministry of Education, 1999) are of integration – student and nature, with students taking a stewardship role over nature. Being in nature, with nature and of nature presents multiple versions of the human/nature relationship and thereby multiple opportunities for framing teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom. Communing with nature has a sense of being in nature yet not being part of, so is indicative of a separation between human and nature.

3.7 The beauty of nature, immersion in nature, beauty and aesthetics

The idea of ‘immersion in nature’ evolved from a separatist view of human/nature, as the body is immersed in nature, but separate from, rather than being an essential part of nature. However, when acknowledging the beauty and serenity of the natural world, immersion in nature coincides in one way with integrative views such as that of Maori and Inuit. The Inuit, whose traditional relationship with the land is a symbiotic one, relate being on the land to serenity and peace of mind (Takano, 2005, p. 476). Connection to the land, for New Zealanders, is enhanced by nature’s beauty and serenity (Clark, 1976). Memories of nature as a beautiful place endure in many cultures (Schama, 1995).

An aesthetic sensibility can contribute to the pleasure of being in the outdoors. The majestic nature of seasonal changes contributes to ideas of beauty and aesthetics. Being in such a world, attuned to natural beauty can be a sublime experience. The ideas of the beautiful and
the sublime are cornerstones of aesthetics (Klinger, 1995). Being in the outdoors, in nature, generates a sense of wonder. Atherton (2007) claims it is active interaction in nature that effects people’s sense of wonder. Further, kinetic experiences develop aesthetic appreciation and feeling of the sublime (Atherton, 2007). Both Rossiter (2007) and Cant (2003) agree that people take part in outdoor activities (in their cases rock climbing or caving) for aesthetic reasons. Poetic engagement and immersion in nature’s beauty are justifications for being in nature.

Regular visitors to the outdoors encounter the “aesthetic experience of natural beauty with reassuring frequency; such is the bounty of nature” (Atherton, 2007, p. 51). Sir Edmund Hillary on the morning of his final ascent of Mount Everest reportedly said;

I looked out of the tent. Everything had frozen up, but there was a wonderful view. In the early morning light you could see for miles and miles and far below us were the row after row of icy peaks with dark valleys in between them and the early morning light was just starting to tipple the icy summits. It really was a wonderful sight. (Barnett & Sullivan, 1988, p. 73).

Hillary was able, even in a situation of struggle, discomfort and danger, to appreciate the beautiful view from Mt Everest.

Understanding the natural world, and immersing oneself in it by communing with nature, allows a reconnection with traditional views that nature is part of us. Such a re-connection with nature encourages people to become ‘at one’ with the natural world (Rossiter, 2007). This is a particular western view that, drawing on a need for reconnection with an increasingly distanced nature, supports quests for authenticity.

Authentic experiences, in real life settings, are sought in an attempt to reconnect with nature. Urban dwellers for example, may attempt to recreate more traditional lifestyles within a city life by having gardens or keeping animals. City-dwelling Norwegians, according to Garvey (2008), escape urban life by recreating traditional cabins in the country. Garvey (2008) suggests that while a Norwegian’s desire to retreat to weekend country cabins is a feature of urban life, it is also symptomatic of disconnected urban lives. Garvey argues that the Norwegian country cabin signifies rupture in modern life. While the cabin harks back to an earlier more primitive age, escaping stressful daily life becomes an attractive and pleasurable experience, a contrast to working life, or for the child there is the contrast to routines of
school life. The lingering question for the teacher in the outdoor classroom is how escape and
disconnection can open up opportunities for freedom, excitement and adventurous
educational experiences.

3.8 Recreation, pleasure and leisure in New Zealand

Recreation and leisure time spent in the outdoors is another aspect of the human/nature
relationship. Leisure and recreation in the natural world relate to a sense of freedom, and
happiness or pleasure. Natural environments are stimulating and complex, and people are
more satisfied with leisure in natural outdoor spaces (Staempfli, 2008, p. 273). Being in the
natural world is uplifting, an antidote to regulated workplaces and obligated activities.

Political disputes about recreation and leisure feature strongly in New Zealand’s social
history. Following Samuel Parnell’s struggle for an eight-hour working day, different patterns
of work enabled more time for leisure pursuits. New Zealand’s first Labour Day celebration
in 1890 was a consequence of Parnell’s lobbying. Compulsory schooling, with the 1877
Education Act, reduced the hours of children’s hard physical work (McDonald, 1978). Recreational time considered by the 1877 Act, was seen in the establishment of playgrounds
in each school. While playground games featured in children’s play, adult recreation turned
toward leisure, organised sport, or pursuits such as tramping, ambling, or climbing.

Lynch (2006) claims the popularity of tramping in the 1930s was due to the rise in numbers
of young office-bound workers, who were attracted to the physical exercise offered by
weekend tramping activities. Encouragement of physical fitness for the workforce was
supported by the 1937 Physical Welfare and Recreation Act. Water activities were also
promoted by the government. Although ‘bathing’ for health and life-saving had developed
earlier, life-saving followed the tramping club’s development with establishment of surf life-
saving clubs on many beaches. There are a broad range of recreational water-based activities
into the 21st century. A New Zealand cultural tradition exists around recreational activities.

Recreation and holidays, in New Zealand, often occur in uncrowded landscapes; beach,
rivers, or national parks. The natural environment is readily accessible to all, unlike in Britain
for example, where pastimes such as hunting and fishing are more the domain of the gentry.
Perkins and Thorns (2001) suggest it is New Zealand’s less socially stratified society that
permits participation in a wide range of outdoor pursuits. They also suggest that New
Zealand’s ‘do it yourself’ approach impacts on New Zealanders’ outdoor recreation choices.
Easy contact with coastline, and paid holiday leave enabled people in the past to build their own holiday accommodation. A significant factor in New Zealand holidaying is the move from urban to countryside or beaches during summer months when schools close and workers take annual leave.

Part of the reason for the enjoyable holiday escape from cities to beaches or countryside is freedom from work or school for rest, or for excitement or adventure. Release from labour constitutes pleasurable ‘free time’. Freedom is a component of leisure if experienced by choice. Indeed as Straker (2004) argues, the pleasure of participation in recreational activities occurs in part because of the idea of freedom. Personal choice, being able to do as one wants, sustains a sense of freedom.

Clark’s (1976) review of New Zealand outdoor education indicated that pupils valued free time in outdoor education as it gave them opportunities for self-directed exploration. ‘Freedom to choose’ was an important feature of a study by Davidson (2001) into pleasure in boys’ outdoor education. Students were offered opportunities for intrinsic motivation by being free to choose their activities. Greater engagement and exploration resulted. Davidson (2001) suggests that participants in the study gained understanding about positive freedom through spontaneous activities. Furthermore, Davidson (2001) considers that limiting opportunities to explore freedom restricts the chance for life-enhancing experiences.

While freedom to choose is a component of pleasurable leisure time, freedom is also a factor in transcendental moments. Experiences of freedom highlight the feeling of unity with the natural environment where you become part of the world. Straker (2004) suggests that it is not only freedom to choose that accounts for pleasure, but also active bodily movement in the world. Travelling through the world is an important aspect of feeling free: “we connect with places not just visually but with a body and the way we move into things we do. When we are able to move freely we are free” (Straker, 2004, p. 7).

Escapism is another feature of outdoor pleasure. A school outdoor education camp represents an escape from the classroom and the routines of ordinary school life, a less organised time not associated with restrictive timetables. There are still timetables however, but these are not as rigidly adhered to. New Zealand’s curriculum supports extending student’s learning beyond the classroom, a position that Waite (2009) agrees with. She finds it odd that learning only takes place in specific buildings such as schoolrooms or classrooms where timetables dictate when learning occurs.
The distinction between normal/usual life and recreation or outdoor/adventure education places boundaries around parts of life. Leach (2008) claims that moving and restlessness provide an opportunity to move outside the ‘orderly boundaries’ of our lives; adventurous activities deliver an antidote to comfort. Even making work an enjoyable adventure challenges repetitive and mundane routines. Hemming (2007, p. 355) discovered children were more active participants in activities when they subverted the ‘healthy’ physical activity toward pleasure and enjoyment. Participation in healthy activities was for their pleasure rather than for their health.

Pleasurable emotional connection with the natural world can be identified as ‘love’ according to Martin (2004). When people are confident in nature they are more likely to experience nature in a positive manner. Familiarity with nature or specific places also enhances positive experiences of nature. Activities are undertaken for the emotional pleasure of involvement in the outdoors. Emotions such as joy and satisfaction result from the human/nature relationship.

Experiences in the natural world have been described as ‘mythical’ where life’s fragility and one’s vulnerability and mortality are realised. Participating in activities particularly when facing extreme natural events such as storms, can transform one’s outlook. However, an emotional relationship with nature, one that is joyful or exciting or mystical can also be a transformative experience (Anderson, 2007).

3.9 **Transformation, the autotelie, the flow**

A transformative experience can change views of oneself or one’s environment. For Abraham Harold Maslow, the humanist psychologist, it was his heart attack that provoked a transformational change. The heart attack “triggered his desire to live every moment of every day” (Brymer & Oades, 2009, p. 116). Facing death produces a sense of the profundity of life. Confronting death or nature or “God, or our own potential” are examples of things more powerful than the self (Brymer & Oades, 2009, p. 116). Understanding the immensity of the world contributes to transcendental moments when the individual transcends the self to a near meditative state (Rinehart, 2007).

Transcendentalism, established by Ralph Waldo Emerson (Plummer, 2009, p. 43), linked the soul’s ability to transcend the material world. Individuals are in a complex relationship between human, nature and God. Confronting nature in these situations, for example in waves, mountains or rivers, in big wave surfing, BASEjumping or waterfall kayaking alters

Anderson (2007) argues that extreme sportspeople such as extreme surfers and white water paddlers, experience a sense of ‘being alive’ that is akin to spiritual insight. The action bringing about a sense of ‘being alive’ is a disengagement of the mind (Brymer & Oades, 2009) or experience of flow (Leach, 2008). Life becomes significant in these kinds of experiences. Confronting a powerful nature produces peak experiences or transformations. Taniguchi (2004) too claims that transformations occur from powerful experiences. One member of Taniguchi’s climbing expedition decided that it was one particular climb that personally defined him. It became a significant and powerful life event. The effects of transformative situations can be long-lived. Anderson (2007) agrees that while such experiences can be transformative, they are not necessarily mysterious but are a natural feature of human existence.

Another conceptualisation of intense experience is that of ‘flow’. While the idea of flow is easily translated in surfing for example, where the surfer does not fight the wave, and is in reality unable to because of the immense power of the waves, the surfer ‘goes with the flow’. The terms ‘in the flow’, and ‘go with the flow’ are derived from the work of Csikszentmihalyi (Levinson, 1997-98; Whalen, 1999). But Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow also relates to those moments in time, ‘in the zone’, when humans are in tune with the natural world. It is a Zen frame of mind (Leach, 2008).

Csikszentmihalyi’s theory of flow suggests a deep existential moment is reached when a person is involved in an activity to the extent that perfection is achieved. It is a peak experience, or the autotelic experience (Breivik, 2007, p. 21). Leach (2008, p.101) defines Csikszentmihalyi’s flow as “a state of joy that arrives when body and mind work as one to control the chaos of our environment”. Rinehart (2007) likens flow to a meditative state, Jirasek (2007) to optimal experience and Moller (2007, p. 192) to “feeling the pull of the edge”.

The flow achieved by mountaineers through their movements is less like the flow achieved by surfers, but more a meditative state when everything in the climb works together - the climber’s moves, the mountain, gear and weather. Autotelic motives play a part for
experienced mountain climbers who are more likely to experience flow or the autotelie. Delle Fave, et al. (2003) theorise that risk-seeking is not the motivation for experienced climbers; it is the flow. It is the action that brings about ‘being alive’ and disengagement of the mind from being in the flow. Life becomes significant in these kinds of intense emotional experiences.

Intense and passionate feelings about connecting with nature are not often encountered in the schoolroom. Connection with nature involves being active outdoors. It is not only looking at nature, though that can enhance a sense of wonder; it includes active participation in the outdoors. Martin (2004) considers that travelling through nature enables a connection with nature and appreciation, but a deeper emotional connection with nature achieved from integration, goes beyond simply travelling through nature. Perkins and Thorns (2001) distinguish between levels of participation in nature. Soft participators are observers of landscape, while hard participators are active in the outdoors, often participating for the adrenaline rush.

Children enjoy active outdoor activities where there are opportunities to experience novel exciting challenges (Little & Wyver, 2010). Outdoor play activities that offer excitement and challenge are favoured, particularly those that are faster and higher (Gleave, 2008). In Little and Eager’s (2010) playground study, children preferred equipment that was challenging. This supports Stephenson (2003) and Gleave (2008) showing that many young children seek challenge to experience the sensations of height and speed. Older students can articulate the excitement of taking part in fast activities; one youth expressed that snowboarding was like flying and gave you a rush (Makens, 2001). It was the enjoyment of speed and the skill of downhill manoeuvring that gave pleasure.

Fun and enjoyment are important for children when participating in active outdoor activity (Hemming, 2007). Hemming’s study of children’s participation in outdoor play, sport and exercise confirmed the main reason for children's involvement was whether they considered activities pleasurable or not. Where school is involved, some researchers maintain children and young people are more absorbed when learning takes place outdoors (Waite, 2009) and are more motivated if it is fun (Andkjoer, 2012).

Children’s enjoyment and active involvement have also been identified when planning child-friendly parks and cycle tracks (Corsi, 2002). Children learning and participating in active play for pleasure and enjoyment are motivations for continuing activity out of school and
possibly to develop active adult lifestyles (Hemming, 2007). In New Zealand a significant number of adults participate in outdoor activities either through sport, recreation and leisure or adventure type activities (Boyes & Zink, 2005) that were introduced during their years of schooling.

3.10 New Zealand school outdoor education curriculum

New Zealand school outdoor education draws on elements from a variety of activities, relating both to immersion in nature and to adventure, challenge and risk-taking. Being in the outdoors, and being active outdoors, takes many forms in producing pleasurable experiences. The ideas of adventure and challenge are central to outdoor education, because of historical connections, but so too is the idea of pleasure. While the educative function of outdoor education is primary, other elements of the nature/human relationship emerge. Excitement and thrill-seeking, components of New Zealand’s adventure industry also comprise some of students’ experiences of outdoor activities. Excitement is not fundamental to school outdoor education, yet students are enticed to outdoor activities because of pleasure. Whether through school outdoor education, media attention or personal experience, students find pleasure in being active outdoor.

Outdoor education and EOTC are part of New Zealand’s national curriculum, and all students have the opportunity to take part in some form of outdoor activity. Secondary school students may not have the option of similar outdoor experiences to those of younger students, but can study outdoor pursuits through the qualification system (Outdoor Education New Zealand, 2010). Units of study include adventure learning, skill development or safety and risk-management.

Adventure-based learning offers activities to stimulate challenge and excitement. Learning coincides with having fun in the outdoors. Two interviews with outdoor education teachers illustrate this point (Ministry of Education, 2007). The first, a Year 10 teacher, states, “For me, adventure and experiential education is the most powerful medium for holistic learning”. The second teacher comments of Year 11 students “they have fun, but it is still school and the activities are designed to teach girls skills they can draw on in later life”.

Several of the skills that senior students develop are to do with safety and risk-management. Much has been written about safety in outdoor environments, student safety, risk and safe outdoor education. Yet a Danish researcher encountered an ambiguity within New Zealand’s
outdoor education culture where safety skills and standards contrasted with adventure, challenge and risk (Andkjoer, 2012, p. 127). He claims that risk relates to adventure and challenge, and simultaneously is connected to fun (p. 127). The notion of a paradoxical spiral (p. 126) was suggested to explain the effort put into risk and challenge at the same time aiming for safety. Yet, within the challenge and risk-taking relationship, safety is an important element.

It is not in dispute that achieving safety in life is an important task. Breivik (2007) agrees, but supports arenas where people can face risk and be challenged, because he argues, it is a necessary survival mechanism in today’s dynamic and shifting world. Staempfli (2008) too finds that children need adventure in play for their positive risk development. Staempfli maintains that children are prevented from experiencing risk-taking adventure because of excessive supervision and concerns about safety. To assist children’s development, Staempfli (2008) reiterates the need for children’s adventurous play, rather than an over-concern about their safety. But concerns about safety are important when taking children outside the classroom. Before presenting a consideration of safety and policy and practice, recent developments in outdoor education pedagogies are discussed.

3.11 Developments in outdoor education pedagogies

There have been developments in outdoor education pedagogies in the 21st century that challenge traditional approaches to the wilderness, risk-taking and adventure. Outdoor education pedagogies, those based on the romantic notions of wilderness and adventure, with more recent practices of risk-taking, are increasingly challenged by outdoor educationalists seeking to produce a more coherent and defensible set of values and practices (Wattchow & Brown 2011). Critiques of adventure and the pedagogy of risk have appeared in the last decade in a variety of forums. Early models of outdoor adventures and personal benefit programmes include Kurt Hahn’s Outward Bound movement, risk-taking approaches, and the development of interpersonal relationships. This traditional stance is increasingly challenged as the terrain of the new century is changing environmental ethics, a greater focus on contextual learning, social and cultural contexts and pedagogic responses.

Wattchow and Brown (2011) argue that the approaches that promote “the edge”, the flow, the antidote to modern life, are in tension with the educational justifications for learning through risk practices. Davis-Berman and Berman (2002) argue that employing risk as a ‘cornerstone’ of outdoor adventure education programmes, to develop personal growth by moving participants
out of their comfort zones, does not address differing perceptions of risk, nor emotional risks. They argue that risk-taking ignores participant’s emotional safety, and may contribute to anxiety. Beyond the comfort zone does not necessarily help peak learning experiences. The risk-taking situation, designed for ‘safe’ risk-taking, can be debilitating when participants have no control over the situation. Brown and Fraser (2009) concur that the traditionalist approaches of adventure education highlight danger, risk or uncertainty, and suggest other pedagogic possibilities. The proposed benefits of pedagogies of risk or anxiety cannot be taken for granted as valid to aid learning in all instances, and may not be appropriate in all contemporary programmes. In a review of risk programmes to achieve educational outcomes, Brown and Fraser (2009) suggest that learning might be better if the educational opportunities were addressed for the particular outdoor settings, for more contextualised learning. The outdoors becomes the community of practice where learning occurs in a reciprocal manner.

Experiential learning highlights the experiencing body in the environment, and reflection on that experience. Wattchow and Brown (2011) suggest that by focusing only on ‘the experience’, experiential educators ignore the contextual nature of those experiences. Wattchow and Brown (2011) instead suggest a place-based pedagogy where outdoor education is concerned with learning process, learners and the specific places where learning occurs. There is increased interest in place-based learning for outdoor education where people are attached to their local area and are more likely to understand sustainability. For Boyes (2012), engagement in local places does not use the theme ‘wilderness as a place to visit’ but uses the places where we live and can take responsibility for. A responsiveness toward place, yet not limited by place is more important argues Brown (2012) and offers a place-responsive pedagogy. Brown (2012) argues that responsiveness requires people to think in a socio-ecological way and act sustainably.

The trend in outdoor education toward place-based pedagogies highlights the increasing importance of sustainability and environmental awareness. The intent is a more nuanced awareness of the learning process, the social and cultural contexts of the learner, their experience and the significance of place (Wattchow & Brown 2011). It is further claimed that outdoor education needs to focus on authenticity and autonomy in individual choice, learners’ responsibility in decision-making and less on thrill or manufactured risk. For Brown and Fraser (2009), the educational opportunities approach includes activities of group enterprise
in communities to experience a re-visiting of activities, the social nature of learning and new decision-making.

Security in learning in outdoor environments is a focus for Davis-Berman and Berman (2002) who consider the possibility that growth and change occur in situations of safety, security and comfort, rather than in manufactured risk-taking environments. Brown (2012) too suggests encouragement and enabling to ensure students feel safe and comfortable in places to which they are attached and committed.

Enjoyment and pleasure, through thrill and risk-taking has become less important in outdoor education circles with more slow placed-based pedagogies. A slow pedagogy relates to immersion in environments at a slower pace, to gain new visions by travelling more slowly (Straker, 2012). Slow pedagogy links students to their history, to the place where they are, and to consider possible futures.

It is not that enjoyment and pleasure are not recognised, students identify enjoyment from their activities. Students report enjoyment when they are able to take control of their planning, decision-making and contribution; they understand enjoyment and can articulate the circumstances of their enjoyment (Brown, 2012). Students express pleasure at new experiences, when for example travelling along a new section of river (Brown, 2012). Outdoor educators too acknowledge the pleasure of participation in the outdoors. For Straker (2012) it is sometimes easy to forget that she became an outdoor educator because of pleasure and fun, the thrill of snow-sliding or watching a sunrise.

3.12 Pleasure at school

Pleasure in the classroom is not traditionally associated with learning. The school develops literate and numerate learners who are critical thinkers who engage with knowledge (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 8). The classroom is a place of learning, work and development of societal norms, any fun in the process is incidental (Grace & Tobin, 1997). Yet when children are outside of the classroom, the space is different and is associated with play and fun. Particularly in the early childhood context, play is considered to contribute to children’s cognitive development. While Grace and Tobin (1997, p. 177) claim fun at school is dictated by teachers for tension release or to encourage engagement in academic work, they see pleasure as produced by children “in their own way and on their own terms”. Hemming’s
(2007) study found similar results as children subverted healthy activities for the purpose of their own pleasure and enjoyment.

The emotive aspects of engaging in physical activities, like sport for example need consideration (Lupton, 1995). Games and sports are exciting and induce strong emotions and passion. Participation has been viewed as “an intense experience, uniting sensual pleasure…self-expression and fulfilment” (Lupton, 1995, p. 147). This expression is not unlike those of participators in out of the classroom activities, where students gain pleasure and satisfaction from their involvement. A pedagogical model for teachers to bring together education and pleasure is suggested by Lupton (1995) in the light of an emergent consumerism and in-school marketing in education. For Lupton, student and teacher engagement and learning in the ‘age of desire’ requires a different form, but one that keeps education in the forefront.

As the tension between pleasure and safety is the theme for my project, and having considered the different aspects of pleasure in outdoor activities, I consider safety in the outdoor classroom. The next chapter addresses the idea of safety and traces the emergence of the notion in New Zealand’s outdoor education policy and curriculum material.
4 Safe New Zealand: The meaning of safety
in New Zealand school outdoor education / EOTC

4.1 Introduction

The introduction presented two positions taken in this study. They are reiterated here; first that safety is often understood in relation to risk or danger, and second the meaning of safety is constructed intersubjectively within social contexts. For Rochlin (2010) safety is a positive construct and not just the opposite of risk; safety is more than the measurement of risk factors, a pre-existing entity or the reduction of accidents. Yet as the history in this chapter shows, the concept of safety, when understood as pre-existing entity independent of human cognition has strengthened over time, particularly in technological, scientific and quantifiable contexts. But Rochlin (2010, p. 1555) claims that, safety is “in some sense a story a group … tells about itself and its relation to its … environment”. This chapter tells a story about how safety was understood in different historical periods. This means that what is understood as safety is part of a continual process of interactions, and the “myths and rituals” of the social context (Rochlin, 2010, p. 1555).

The chapter traces the differing constructions of safety over time. I begin with a brief etymology that explores how the construct has been ‘worked upon’ over time. This is followed by an examination of the idea of safety in occupational safety and school outdoor education policies. The question “what is the meaning of safety, and how is it understood”, is discussed from an historical perspective, to illustrate the evolution of meaning, and the move toward a rational measurable objectivity regarding safety. The investigation of a selection of school outdoor education documents demonstrates the emergence and subsequent dominance of safety within them.

4.2 Historical safety

The tension between pleasurable, risky outdoor activity and safety occurs within an historical discursive context. The meaning of the word ‘safety’ and therefore what counts as ‘safe’ have shifted over time, and these shifting meanings inevitably inform policy that is concerned with safety. So in order to study how the idea of safety gained meaning in New Zealand’s education policy, it is useful to know how ‘safety’ appeared historically in contexts that impacted on educational policy. This chapter explores the development of the idea of safety
in the workplace, and traces how these became applied to children, non-specialist primary teachers’ practice and to school outdoor education.

Changes in the meaning of safety are illustrated through a brief study of the origins of the word. This is followed by examination of a selection of health texts, legislation, education department records, school syllabi and newspaper records illustrating an increased safety focus in New Zealand education. Attention is paid to the period between 1950s and 2000s as school outdoor education gained a place in New Zealand’s formal curriculum.

4.3 Development of the concept ‘safety’

The various meanings of the term ‘safety’ are products of cultural and historic ways of understanding the world. A currently accepted meaning of safety is comprehensive and covers all possible forms of harm to individuals, including spiritual and emotional harm. ‘Safety’ in its adjectival form is “the state of being safe, exempt from hurt or injury and free from danger” (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Early etymological references (13th century) to safety refer to safety of the physical body from danger and damage. Avoidance of bodily damage is still part of current understandings, but ‘safety’ has developed its own significance that extends far beyond that of the physical body.

Save, safe and safety have similar derivatives with different shades of meaning acquired since the earliest recorded usages. I suggest a simple model that expresses an evolutionary pattern to changes in the meaning of safety. Using different forms and senses of the word, and a quotation history of usages from the Oxford English Dictionary’s (2009) online version, the development of the word over time can be formulated simply as: save → safe → safety. This model is illustrative of the changing focus surrounding individual safety. Beginning with references to ‘save the physical body from harm’, later references note ‘safe’ as a form of protection against harm, and at a later date references note complex ‘safety’ systems to protect against all forms of danger. In the current era safety has become an objective entity, able to be measured and assessed. The shifts from save to making safe, to safety move from the ‘present sense’ focus of ‘save me’ to a future focus of ‘making safe’ then to ‘safety’, an absolute condition or state as a protection against all possible forms of harm. The move also suggests a move from a fatalistic view of an uncertain life to one ensuring certainty in the matter of protection of life (through safety).
Etymological accounts of save, safe and safety show origins of the words, their evolution and particular senses or meanings. The Oxford English Dictionary’s (2009) online version provides the textual references used. Chronologies present written examples of the word with dates [in brackets] of first usage. Using the references, I briefly chart below changes in the senses of the words, and then show how changes in outdoor education material illustrate those changing meanings. For example, to save (the verb), is to “deliver or rescue from peril or hurt; to make safe, put in safety” with references to saving life and rescuing from peril. In education material, to save is used mainly in terms of ‘saving’ from drowning which in turn prompts the development of life-saving and swimming activities.

Meanings of ‘to save’ from the 13th century refer to saving people, their bodies from hurt, misfortune and from danger (shipwreck, dragons or other perils). To save evolved from a focus on the body toward saving more than the body, for example toward making safe and protection of objects; securing property, city, state, or money. It further evolved to saving face, honour, situations and in recent times, computer data. To save retains the earliest recorded meanings of saving the physical objects of body and property but has expanded into ‘situations’ such as saving one’s honour or reputation.

The early examples of ‘safety’ similarly have the sense of ‘save me’ from danger which then developed into making safe, a sense of places of safety before turning towards the state of safety – almost a condition of being. The examples below, from Oxford online, illustrate the shifts in meaning.

In some English texts from the 13th century, the earliest references to ‘save’ refer to saving life and rescuing from peril. To save people, their bodies from hurt or misfortune, or save lives from shipwreck are examples from this period:

[1250] Lord saue us for we perisset (perish)

[13..] Saue me from his foule dragoun (foul dragon)

[1375] saf his douchtir fra bat wrack (save daughter from boat wreck)

Another move occurred in the meaning of safety where to be safe evolved from the earlier ‘save me from danger’ towards making safe. To ‘be safe’ meant preserved against danger rather than saved from danger. This move indicated a transition from the inability to control harm to life, except by engaging supernatural beliefs, to having some form of control. For
Lupton (1999, p. 7), these changes, associated with modernity, indicated risk events could be calculated and become ‘known or knowable’. The earliest references to ‘safety’ show that safety became dependent on the actions of others, a lord or a leader rather than a supernatural being:

[13..] at was e syngne of sauyte at sende hem oure lorde (a sign of safety)

[1375] And he eftyr his menge raid; And in-till saufte thaim led (after the raid)

Later, when greater control of safety was determined by individuals who were, as Kinder and Hilgemann (1974) claim, rulers of the world, references show groups of people or convoys of camel herders ‘taking charge’ of a more objective safety:

[1611] in the multitude of counsellers there is saftie

[1617] Merchants, passengers and drivers of loaded Camels, keeping together for safety against theves

By the 17th century there are signs that safety was evolving to mean itself as a thing, an entity:

[1697] All dangers past, at length the lovely Bride In safety goes

[1771] not to hazard the Safety of the Community

Changes in meanings of the word ‘save’ correspond to developments for greater security and protection. Possessions were made safe, ‘safeguarded’ from damage or loss in the 14th C, the people (15th century) and the city (16th century). The movement from meanings that are present-time focused to future-focus illustrate changing more expansive and confident (western) human views of the world. Greater knowledge and control of the world from the period of intellectual development in the 18th century was expressed in the invention of machinery such as the spinning jenny and the steam engine.

4.4 Safety and the modern world: Industrialisation and safety movements

Until the 1700s the world was largely rural and agrarian, but new technologies, particularly in Europe, developed newer forms of cultivation practices as the population of cities increased (Berry, 1990). An industrial market developed alongside a growing urbanisation. Berry (1990, p. 106) notes the “human dominion over nature” with urban growth that had begun in
the 17th century accelerating in second half of 18th century, particularly in the new industrial north of England. The factory work of the industrial revolution heralded serious accidents in a mostly rural population unused to the speed and power of machinery.

Control of worker safety became a popular concern during the 19th century and there were increasing references to specific safety contrivances. For example, Davy’s 1816 safety lamp for coal miners, safety bolts for guns [1881] and safety bicycles [1877] (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009). Such contrivances, protections and safety guards were products of scientific thinking with regard to protections against danger and for safety. Increasingly, during this time, the word safety was used to describe contrivances to ensure safety; contrivances constructed with a view to ‘safety in use’.

A further development in ways of thinking about safety occurred towards the end of the 19th century when safety could be controlled not only by contrivances but by systems and human practices. By 1891 the strength of building materials was assessed in terms of safety factors. In the 20th century safety committees worked for industries that codified safe practices for engineering and machinery use [1939, 1945]. Safety measures were instituted for the petroleum industry [1934], safety codes for workers exposed to ionising radiation [1961] and safety regulations for the atomic energy industry [1956]. Safety standards were devised for the atomic industry [1960] and safety margins [1967] for dealing with atomic material were calculated. Safety was also used in economics for example, with financial safety nets [1953].

Slogans such as ‘safety first’ to avoid workplace accidents, originated in the American railway industry [1873] and were taken up by Britain in the early 20th century for safety campaigns in factories and schools [1914, 1924]. Similar slogans emerged in New Zealand’s railway written material (New Zealand Government Railways Department, 1926). The development of safety as a manageable practice was emerging.

Practices such as safe sex worked for the condition or state of safety. The etymology shows appearance of a safety consciousness (1961) where safety became part of an individual’s way of thinking of themselves; a safe worker, a safe teacher, a safe adult around children or somebody who practices safe sex (an alternative to sexual activity [1968], protection against pregnancy [1973] or protection against AIDS [1983]).

The patterns identified in the development of meaning of safety show trends toward knowable futures and certainty and protection. Control of safety in order to protect against
harm, a predictable safe future has led to development of contraptions, systems and standards, measurable and calculable, and in modern times, internalised safe practices with safety consciousness. Next I turn to general trends in safety movements, in occupational health and safety, as they appeared in New Zealand examples. These trends are linked to school outdoor education policy and practice.

4.5 Safety reform movements

As indicated in the previous section, safety movements of the industrial era highlight changing meanings about safety. Initially, safety contrivances were developed in response to dangerous working conditions - such as for example safety rails around factory machines - and then by systems to protect workers. Social concerns about factory working conditions instigated safety movements. Because of the nature of factory work (long work hours, the speeds of machinery, lack of concern for workers, for example), injuries were common. Accidents from falling into machines or burns from steam engines often resulted in permanent damage or death (Shellard, 1970).

Experiences with British worker reform movements influenced New Zealand’s health and safety approach in the late 19th century. In Britain, the earliest piece of what is now considered occupational health and safety policy addressed long hours of work. The 1802 Health and Morals of Apprentices Act sought to limit apprentices’ hours of work to 12 hours a day. The legislation was followed thirty years later by the 1833 Factories Act which limited children’s work day to 8 hours a day. This was followed in 1847 by the Ten Hours Act for workers. In New Zealand however, it was not until 1890 that the eight hour working day became established. The horrors of some workplaces were the catalyst for the legislative response to health and safety in the workplace. The earliest concern in New Zealand was for the health of factory women working with inadequate ventilation. As a consequence of that concern, the 1873 Employment of Females Act was passed in New Zealand (Campbell, 1992).

Other legislation followed concerns about accidents or fatalities. Mines were notoriously dangerous places of work; there was always ‘blood on the coal’ (Armstrong, 2008). Sixty-five miners were killed in the 1896 Brunner mine disaster for example. The 1874 Regulation of Mines Act and the Inspection of Machinery Act followed a fatal boiler explosion on Thames gold field and the mine disaster at Kaitangata (Campbell, 1995). These early New Zealand legislative responses set the scene for the management of workers’ safety. In the next section I highlight changes in the manner by which worker’s safety was conceptualised with
regard to harm and injury. This is followed with an exploration of the idea of safety in policies of school outdoor education.

4.6 Accidents: Preventable misfortunes

The likelihood of accidental damage to bodies or death was considerably higher before the safety movements of the industrial period. In earlier, more fatalistic times, accidents were considered random events occurring through mischance and because of ill-luck. However, high rates of injuries during the factory era motivated the safety reforms where attempts were made to prevent accidents in some way, or at least to reduce them. The notion of accident as a ‘mischance’, an earlier understanding when chance and fate played a part in accidents, remained an understanding until the 1960s (see for example: The New Zealand Herald, 1967). But the idea that accidents were ‘preventable’ misfortunes (Furedi, 2001) gained purchase during the 20th century as complex protective systems were developed alongside understandings of the causative factors of workplace accidents.

The move from reducing accidents (in factories and mines), to preventing them from occurring, to protection against the possibility of an accident, even to the extent of banning the use of the word accident, coincides with changes in the idea of safety. That is, from a fatalistic acceptance of dangers, toward protection against danger, to the situation of ‘always being safe’. For over 100 years in New Zealand the state has regulated workplace health and safety with numerous pieces of legislation enacted to protect workers from accidental injury. Early legislation focused on conditions that could lead to serious injury such as those in the mining industry (Campbell, 1995). Miners suffering lung disease from inhalation of mine dust were able to gain compensation from 1915. Legislation related to the physical hazards of workplaces. Exposure to lead in certain industries was recognised as a health hazard in 1925 by New Zealand’s Department of Health and lead regulations were instituted. Industrial hygiene was promoted after the Davidson Report of the early 1940s recommended specialist factory inspectors to review hygiene practices (Campbell, 1995). The Factories Act of 1921-1922 was replaced in 1946 with additional references to include health hazards.

In 1950 a Workers’ Compensation Board was established by the Workers’ Compensation Amendment Act after a review of workplace accidents concluded that a more preventative approach was necessary. In response, a National Safety Association (NSA) was established in 1953. To encourage safety, the objectives of NSA were to prevent accidents through promotion of safe work practices. One objective was the publication of reports and research
on safety and accident prevention. Safety material developed for schools was shaped by NSA’s accident prevention approach to deliver messages to prevent road, water and electrical accidents. Twenty years following the formation of the NSA, New Zealand’s *Accident Compensation Act 1972* was enacted. Comprehensive accident compensation cover was provided by the Act on all sites, not just industrial sites, and guarantee of compensation removed New Zealanders’ right to take legal action against others for personal injury. Accident prevention became a serious focus for health and safety policy. In 1970 accidents were claimed a public health issue because of the hundreds of thousands of accidents estimated to occur every year in New Zealand (Copplestone, 1970). Accidents were no longer considered random events; they were preventable incidents.

It was not until the end of the 20th century however, the idea of ‘accident’ as a random occurrence was reconsidered by the powerful British Medical Journal (BMJ). The BMJ’s editor took a position that accidents were not random but preventable occurrences. Subsequently, in 2001 the BMJ proposed banning the word ‘accident’ because almost all injuries were preventable (Furedi, 2001). That ‘most accidents are preventable’ became a widely accepted view, considering that there is no such thing as an accident. Accidents do not occur because of chance, and they are not inevitable. For Furedi (2001), banning the word ‘accident’ is indicative of a safety conscious society, a society that finds it difficult to accept safety cannot always be guaranteed. In the following section I detail below the focus on safety in New Zealand’s outdoor education as an example of a safety conscious society.

Table 1 summarises the main points of the development of the idea of safety in policies of occupational health and safety and school outdoor education. The table features the simple linkage model save ➔ safe ➔ safety, and I use this model to highlight developments in the outdoor education documents.
Table 1

Developments of the term ‘safety’ - meanings, features and policy focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meanings (Oxford English Dictionary, 2009)</th>
<th>Features of meaning</th>
<th>Policy Focus New Zealand’s health and safety policy environment</th>
<th>Policy Focus New Zealand’s school outdoor education practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To save</td>
<td>Rescue from</td>
<td>Save from danger</td>
<td>Save life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present time focus</td>
<td>Save from</td>
<td>State protection of workers on dangerous sites</td>
<td>(1877-1960s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To deliver or rescue from peril</td>
<td>Requires intervention from another – denotes fatalism regarding danger</td>
<td>1900 Worker’s Compensation</td>
<td>Life-saving teaching (high rates of drowning)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires intervention from another – denotes fatalism regarding danger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Swimming encouraged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being safe</td>
<td>Prevent injury &amp; damage</td>
<td>Uninjured and preserved from danger</td>
<td>Prevent accidents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future focus</td>
<td>Prevent harm</td>
<td>From mid-16th C to be safe was to be kept secure or in safe custody</td>
<td>(1960s – 1980s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unhurt, uninjured, unharmed; having been preserved from or escaped some real or apprehended danger.</td>
<td>Prevent harm</td>
<td>State protection of workers in multiple sites – occupational hygiene</td>
<td>Avoid danger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prevent harm</td>
<td>Reduce accidents</td>
<td>Safe river crossings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote safety</td>
<td>Promote safe practice</td>
<td>Safety promotion by National Mountains</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promote safety</td>
<td>ACC 1972</td>
<td>Safety Council New Zealand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>Safety becomes an entity</td>
<td>The bride In safety goes (1697)</td>
<td>Safety becomes central</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The state of being safe; exemption from hurt or injury; freedom from danger</td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety is contrivances to protect workers</td>
<td>Word accident banned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(1880) – safety lamp, razors, matches</td>
<td>Health and Safety Code of Practice 1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety by systems and practices</td>
<td>Risk-management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety reform movement</td>
<td>Risk analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety measures, regulations and margins</td>
<td>Safety action plans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safe teachers, safe workers</td>
<td>The National Incident Database Project initiated 2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety and EOTC 2002 – safety becomes central</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Developments of the term ‘safety’ - meanings, features and policy focus
4.7 Education outside the classroom archival materials 1950-2003

Safety in the outdoor classroom has not always been the priority that it is in current times. There have been other interests for taking children outside: nature study, tramping, pleasure, environmental studies, personal and interpersonal development. The emergence of safety in curriculum and policy can be traced through a selection of archival material from post-World War Two until 2003 (Table 2). I propose the following time frames to coincide with changes in the wider policy environment; 1877-1960s (Saving lives), 1960s – 1980s (Prevent accidents) and 1980 – 2010 (Protect against all dangers).

The development of ideas about accidents, risk and safety is evident in the policies and other public documents that have regulated outdoor education in New Zealand since 1950. Text books, curriculum documents, Education Department, Education Board circulars, newspapers and health and safety legislation all provide insight into how safety is and has been understood in the New Zealand educational context. Although outdoor education has only been formalised as a school subject in New Zealand since 1999, earlier material mentioning ‘the outdoors’ in education relates to physical education, health education or school camping.
Table 2

Documents 1950-2003

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Document Title</th>
<th>Author/agency/place/publisher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Health Education: A Programme for Secondary Schools</td>
<td>Bedggood, L. R.; Auckland Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Health &amp; Physical Education in New Zealand</td>
<td>Bedggood, L. R.; Hamilton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Handbook for School Committees</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Information for School Committees</td>
<td>Auckland Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>School Camp Handbook</td>
<td>South Auckland Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Field Trips</td>
<td>McBeath, R. J., &amp; Carleton, O. B. &amp; Smith, W. E.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Newsletter No 5 to Head Teachers</td>
<td>Auckland Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>News items</td>
<td>The New Zealand Herald</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>School Committee Manual</td>
<td>Auckland Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1972/74</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Accident Compensation Act</td>
<td>New Zealand legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>School Committee Manual</td>
<td>Auckland Education Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Safety and Supervision (1978/73)</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Legal Aspects (1978/46)</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>The Outdoor Classroom: A Guide for Teachers</td>
<td>Phillips, V.; New Zealand Forest Service; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Safety and Supervision (1985/1)</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Legal Aspects (1985/2)</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Policy Statement on Education Outside the Classroom</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>Principals’ Guide to EOTC</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Education Outside the Classroom - Legal Aspects</td>
<td>Department of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>EOTC. Curriculum Guidelines</td>
<td>Ministry of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Guidelines for Good Practice</td>
<td>Ministry of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>Guidelines to the Health and Safety in Employment</td>
<td>Ministry of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Safety and EOTC: A good practice guide</td>
<td>Ministry of Education; Wellington</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Documents 1950-2003

75
4.8 Saving lives

The ‘save life’ focus became a feature of school safety education at the beginning of the 20th century. New Zealand has had high rates of drowning since the period of European settlement. Although Australia had higher drowning rates than New Zealand during its early settlement period, drowning was referred to as the ‘New Zealand death’ (Moran, 1999). To save lives, life-saving training began in 1900 with the establishment of the Royal Life-saving organisation. Life-saving groups continue in New Zealand with clubs on many beaches where life-guards are on duty throughout the summer swimming season. In the schooling sector, swimming instruction began in some New Zealand schools from 1919.

The 1919 Physical Instruction syllabus referred specifically to swimming and lifesaving (Moran, 1999). Learners’ swimming pools were built in some primary schools from 1941. It was not until high drowning fatalities between 1945 and 1950 (there were 636 deaths) that post-World War Two subsidies from central government provided the impetus to construct learners’ pools in many primary schools (Moran, 2001). The high number of drownings in the post-war period prompted the Department of Education, in 1949, to establish a ‘Prevent Drowning’ committee to promote water safety messages (Moran, 1999). After the National Safety Association was established in 1953, a Mountain Safety Council was created in 1954. A new school syllabus in 1953 supported swimming skill-development. The focus of all these initiatives remained on ‘saving lives’ compared to the more complex task of preventing accidents.

Occupational health and safety policies during the 1950s showed a movement from accident reduction to accident prevention, yet this move was not apparent in education policy. Accident prevention practices had ‘limited activity’ in various government agencies (Campbell, 1995, p. 90). The Department of Education’s policy documents retained a focus on saving lives. Swimming, life-saving, and first-aid featured in two 1950s health and physical education texts (Bedggood, 1950, 1954). While gaining health benefits from swimming was a priority, so too was ‘saving life’. There was no safety curriculum, and safety was understood in the sense of ‘to save’. A School Committee’s duty to save lives was met with regular fire and earthquake drills (Department of Education, 1957).

There was, however, in 1960 a move to a protective sense of safety with use of the term ‘safeguard’ in a School Committee information guide. To protect and preserve from harm, children were not saved from danger, but were safeguarded against any likely cause of danger.
A similar focus is apparent in another 1960 document, the ‘School Camp Handbook’ (South Auckland Education Board, 1960), where ‘preserve from danger’ relates to an earlier understanding of preserving from the danger of disease. A chapter in the handbook on health and hygiene, too, uses ideas from the 1920s referring to the importance of fresh air, sunlight and care of latrines. A section devoted to ‘safety and survival’ continues the hygiene theme noting the importance of boiling water to prevent intestinal upsets.

There was another more active sense of ‘preserving from danger’ though it relied on a child’s efforts. Children had to be able to swim sufficiently well to stay afloat, and to know mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. These skills were deemed necessary as New Zealand’s water environment was ‘dangerous’. The 1960 school camp handbook considered that few, if any, beaches were safe.

Precautionary measures for avoiding possible accidents were identified in the camp handbook. These included ropes for river crossings, and boats having life-jackets. The precautionary measures at this time, 1960, bear little resemblance to the measures adopted in later times that became much more detailed and focused on avoidance of danger and risk management. The idea of risk is not mentioned in this guide, but danger avoidance through accident prevention is evident. Dangers were seen as a physical material nature; they included drowning and the danger of disease.

4.9 Being safe: Preventing accidents

As New Zealand workplaces developed more rigorous accident prevention approaches during the mid-late 20th century, schools’ health and safety policy followed. Prior to a preventative approach, New Zealand’s workplace legislative position focused on the control of specific hazards (Wren, 2002). Schools had for example, safety policies for dealing with dangerous swimming pool chemicals, but neither the school yard nor the outdoor classroom were considered dangerous (unlike building sites, factories or mines), and were not, at the time, considered workplaces. Personal injury accidents occurring in workplaces were covered by work insurance schemes which allowed negligence claims, but not in schools.

Reference to accidents in a 1969 School Committee Manual (Auckland Education Board, 1969) was in regard to protection against negligence claims. After New Zealand’s universal no-fault compensation scheme was introduced in 1972 (implemented 1974), accident
compensation then covered all places of work, including schools and school campsites. The legislation impacted on schools’ practice and brought to the forefront injuries and accidents, although it was not until the 1992 Health and Safety in Employment Act that ‘safety’ became a particular element of focus.

The documents from 1950 – 1960s indicate that current understandings of ‘safety’ had yet to emerge. The idea of ‘being safe’ was evident, particularly by preventing accidents. The school committee material from the Department of Education and Education Boards had limited mention of accident prevention - often a sentence or two - and when accidents were referred to in greater detail it was with reference to indemnification of Education Boards and teachers or principals. Teaching material however, included some safety elements. For example hygiene and care of knives (when camping) were included alongside the view of the positive value of outdoor learning.

4.10 1972 Accident Compensation Act

Blaming individuals, and allocating fault, was a feature of the accident regulatory landscape before the Accident Compensation Act 1972. A 1968 news report is illustrative of the approach. Headlined ‘Concern over accidents at school’ (The New Zealand Herald, 1968), the report stated the Auckland Education Board’s (AEB) position on school accidents, that teachers might contribute to school accidents if they “innocently urge a child to do something” on the sports field. While a teacher might be blamed for contributing to an accident, in all likelihood they were deemed innocent participants. School Committees had responsibility to protect children, as outlined in their 1969 manual, but also to protect teachers against negligence claims (Auckland Education Board, 1969).

The 1972 Accident Compensation Act provided comprehensive cover on all sites, not just industrial sites, and the guarantee of compensation removed New Zealanders’ rights to take legal action against others for personal injury. As a consequence of the legislation, the Accident Compensation Commission (ACC) took over the safety function of the National Safety Association in promoting safe work practices. Workplace safety was established in the occupational sphere and began to appear in Department of Education documents.

Following the Accident Compensation Act 1972, a School Committee Manual (Auckland Education Board, 1976) reiterated the committee’s duty to “the health and welfare of teachers and pupils”, as did the 1969 manual. The only reference to safety was toward school
equipment and property that would only be replaced by the government if they had been subject to “reasonable safe custody arrangements” (p. 23). The idea of equipment security, subject to safe custody, links back to the mid-16th century notion of ‘safe’ as ‘kept securely’. Other than mention of the *Accident Compensation Act*, this was the only reference to safety in the manual.

Following the *Accident Compensation Act 1972*, the Department of Education issued two circulars in 1978 (documents 13 & 14). One issued 4th July referred to ‘Safety and Supervision for Outdoor Education’ (Department of Education, 1978a) and the other on ‘Legal Aspects’ was issued 12th May (Department of Education, 1978b). The Legal Aspects circular clarified the effect of the *Accident Compensation Act 1972* on outdoor education noting that failure to provide a duty of care to pupils could still be grounds for action based on negligence. Liability could arise if negligence was established, and in extreme cases prosecutions could occur under the *Crimes Act 1961*. The documents used the term ‘safety’, but retained the ‘being safe’ understanding of the term, and there was a ‘saving life’ aspect; competent teachers need knowledge of first-aid and accident procedures.

Increased mention of ‘safety’ is noted in the 1970s Department of Education files; the New Zealand Road Safety council 1970, Physical Education National Water Safety Committee 1971, General Mountain Safety Publicity and Instruction Campaign 1971 and the Safety Resource Sets 1977. Primary school education syllabuses had included road, water and electrical safety education for a number of years and teacher refresher courses at Teacher Training Colleges included similar safety education.

Accident prevention was part of school health and physical education teaching with life-saving activities, fire and earthquake drills, but there were moves toward ‘protection from’ accidents. During the 1970s, accident protection emerged as a focus in occupational safety and health. As part of a safety promotion movement, accident prevention approaches were moving toward protection against accidental injury, similar to that of ‘always safe’. In the late 1960s, an accident was proposed as a ‘disease’ that was sweeping the world. To link ‘accident’ and ‘disease’ together recalled the early 20th century when diseases killed large numbers of people. Copplestone (1970) achieved the link by highlighting the number and variety of accidental deaths in New Zealand. He succeeded in bringing to light deaths and injuries, with an estimation of 300,000 accidents a year. The establishment of a National
Accident Prevention Council was in part a result of his argument, and one that contributed to promotion of safety messages in secondary school curriculum.

4.11 Safety: Protect against all dangers

Socio-political changes in New Zealand from the mid-1970s impacted on government policy decisions, both in occupational health and safety and in the education sector. Worsening economic conditions, recession and inflation contributed to a reduction in government spending and government agencies were required to be more efficient and accountable (Duncan, 2007; State Services Commission, 1998). A dramatic shift in politics occurred under the 1984 Labour government with the transition from welfare state to market liberalisation. As a consequence of moves toward economic rationalisation, the state’s involvement in health and education was reduced (Duncan, 2002). In education, and outdoor education, the results were a decrease in spending and of government intervention. The effect was to move greater responsibility for student safety to principals and schools’ governance. Accordingly, at that time, safety became a major policy focus in New Zealand schools (Lynch, 2006, p. 173). The movement is evidenced by the greater focus on safety in outdoor education documents.

The Safety and Supervision circulars mentioned above (documents 13 & 14) were replaced in 1985 (documents 16 & 17). Organisational management featured as did competency, terms befitting the government’s managerial focus. Decentralisation in decision-making is evident as the Safety and Supervision circular notes the undesirability of national rules, but that schools must establish their own rules and guidelines covering all aspects of “planning, conduct, and safety of activities” (Department of Education, 1985b, p. 33).

Another important feature of the Safety and Supervision circular was mention of competent leadership; wise experienced leaders can assess dangers and be satisfied with safety precautions. The need for teachers’ outdoor expertise was to reduce, in future years, their historic wholehearted engagement in outside the classroom education as it became increasingly the role of expert leaders. However, during the period of the early 1980s school camps continued to expand and were still taken by non-specialist classroom teachers. Independent organisations supported outside the classroom education and teacher training courses. Non-specialist primary school teachers saw education outside the classroom as a useful way to engage with children and their learning. The outdoor classroom was considered to enrich the lives of children (Phillips, 1983). While teaching about safety at school camps
remained focused on personal cleanliness, kitchen hygiene and general camp tidiness to avoid ‘tummy bugs’, mention was made that while knives were permitted on camp, for safety reasons they were not to be taken out of the sheath unless for legitimate use. The particular focus on physical safety, rather than procedural solutions to safety, changed during the late 1970s to mid-1980s after a number of children’s deaths during outdoor education.

4.12 Fatalities

Ten child fatalities between 1978 and 1984 on school outdoor programmes (activities were mountaineering, flying-fox, caving, falls, fishing, tramping) fore-grounded the issue of safety (Lynch, 2006, pp. 158 & 175). Community and teacher responses to the fatalities however, were not to restrict outdoor activities, but to request better resourcing. The fatalities prompted the Department of Education to update the two circulars mentioned above: Safety and Supervision, and Legal Aspects of Outdoor Education (documents 16 & 17). The drowning fatalities were viewed as ‘avoidable tragedies’ (Lynch, 2006, p. 175); this is part of the emerging understanding of ‘total safety’. Tragedies are viewed as avoidable, fatalities are preventable. This understanding is part of the current meaning within policy and practice.

The updated circulars (Department of Education, 1985a, 1985b) and a national policy statement on EOTC (Department of Education, 1986) affirmed the value of the outdoors for educative purposes. Safety emerged as an important consideration, though not with the explicit priority it has at the current time. While the first consideration was for educational advantage, ‘safety’ had to be considered (along with teacher experience, time factors, and financial costs). Supervision needed to be of the “highest standard” with “all necessary safety procedures” taken (Department of Education, 1986, p. 4).

A tension exists in the Safety and Supervision document (Department of Education, 1985b). On one hand accidents are preventable but on the other they occur because of a trick of nature. The capriciousness of accidents, defying reason and control, was identified as one cause, although human reason (or lack of) was identified as another, caused perhaps by inadequate organisation, faulty procedures or neglect (p. 1). Greater levels of preparation, planning and organisation were necessary to prevent accidents. The 1985 Safety and Supervision circular also introduced the idea of minimisation of potential dangers for safe outdoor education. Minimising harm, avoiding serious mishap, avoiding death, defined safety, and was part of transformation of ‘safety’ as an objective entity.
The intermediate position, safeguarding against accidents, admits that accidents do occur, but protective systems can be put in place to reduce harm or damage. Expert leadership, in 1986, was deemed “the most important” factor in “safeguarding” against accident, much the same as the 1978 circular (Department of Education, 1986, p. 5). The notion of ‘safe practice’ appeared in the 1986 policy document, when it was linked to expertise. Ensuring safe practice meant using the expertise of national agencies such as trade and safety councils and sporting bodies. Expertise, from an occupational safety and accident prevention perspective, is drawn upon to ensure safety for school students in the outdoors. Safety was objectified in this document and is highlighted with the statement that a school’s written scheme would contribute significantly to “a better appreciation of safety” (Department of Education, 1986, p. 32). While safety gained importance in the policy statement of 1986, the extent to which planning for safety in the outdoor classroom became central was shown in following policy statements.

4.13 Risk management

The term ‘risk’ does not appear in the policy statements of 1978, 1986, or the 1987 Principals’ Guide to EOTC. The Department of Education (DoE) deferred to national advisory bodies and their accepted safety standards for activities. The underlying DoE support remained for the educational benefits of EOTC. Calls for certification of teachers taking outdoor education began after the series of accidents and fatalities between 1978 and 1984. The deaths gave impetus to initiatives by outdoor education experts, Department of Education personnel, and Mountain Safety representatives for a Management Training and Assessment scheme (Lynch, 2006). Risk management training for teachers was established. Industry standards were set in 1987. The professionalisation of outdoor education/pursuits leaders had begun, and with it the risk management of outdoor education.

Until this time, the DoE’s outdoor education approach, supportive of EOTC experiences, had not focused on ‘managing risk’ as a strategy to avoid danger or accident. The Department of Education did not take up the risk management of outdoor education, as promoted by outdoor groups such as the Mountain Safety Council and the Water Safety Council until after its 1989 change to a Ministry of Education (MoE).

Following the 1989 change, the newly established Ministry published ‘EOTC Curriculum Guidelines for Schools’ (Ministry of Education, 1992). These guidelines reiterated the value of EOTC and reminded all teachers to be familiar with safety and risk management.
procedures. The ‘Professional Practice Requirements’ section in the guidelines refers to safety, supervision, and risk-management. While safety was not the focus of the document, the positive value of outdoor learning was reiterated, safety was mentioned as a consideration for outdoor education. Safety was a consideration, rather than a central focus, but risk-management was taking a more central place. Risk management is evident in the document, as the risk management initiatives of professional outdoor groups were taken up by the Ministry.

4.14 Changes to health and safety legislation

In 1992, the Health and Safety in Employment Act (HSEA) moved responsibility away from government management toward employers. The change impacted on outdoor education. Individual school boards took responsibility for their school’s health and safety provisions. In consideration of the legislation, the Outdoor Safety Institute (1994) released ‘Safety Management: Guidelines for Schools’. The guide was more detailed than previous documents from the former Department of Education. In reminding schools of their responsibilities under the HSEA, the document attempted to cover all possibilities of safety provision in greater detail than previous guides. The detail would have shaped the Ministry of Education’s (2003b) ‘Safety and EOTC: A good practice guide’ a decade later.

The following year the Ministry of Education (1995) followed with a set of guidelines for EOTC, including a longer set of appendices than those of the Outdoor Safety Institute. The Ministry’s guidelines emphasised that responsibility for health and safety was now a mandated obligation, rather than the voluntary consideration of the past. A further development in outdoor education was increased individual responsibility for compliance to safety standards. This move brought the idea of safety to the forefront of individual non-specialist primary teacher’s outdoors practices, practices where the idea of ‘professionalism’ had emerged.

Sound ‘professional practice’ requirements for education outside the classroom included a greater responsibility to maintain accident and incident registers for example, or to undertake risk analysis for outdoor activities. Teachers underwent staff appraisals to check their capability to take children outdoors. Safety and risk-management gained a significant position with safety management checklists, emergency preparedness and risk-analysis management systems. The 1995 document ‘Guidelines for Good Practice’ was an indicator of changing societal expectations regarding children’s safety when participating in outdoor
activities. Many of the possibilities for harm were considered in providing for safe outdoor experiences.

Hogan (2002) questions the effectiveness of risk management approaches when following guidelines does not necessarily prevent accidents. Guidelines following industrial safety procedures have complex systems. He suggests outdoor programme’s risk management plans should focus on situations where death or disabling injury could occur, and leave all the other potential risks to be managed as routine safety planning procedures. Brookes (2011, p. 39) maintains that “fatality prevention must be approached from the standpoint that there is no acceptable rate of accidental deaths in outdoor education” (italics in original). It is the circumstances that offer the “best predictor of individual behaviour in different or novel circumstances” and that to understand the fatality is to identify the “set of conditions which contributed to each fatality” (p. 44).

Safe practice comes under particular scrutiny when there are child fatalities. The death of one child reinforces risk-averse practice (Connolly & Doolan, 2007). A number of deaths of children in outdoor education activities at the beginning of the 21st century illustrated the continued tension between safe practice and outdoor freedoms. The 1999 Health and Physical Education Curriculum’s Outdoor Education section (Ministry of Education, 1999, p. 46-47) is an example of the tension between the expression of children’s enjoyment in the outdoors with the proviso that safe practices should be followed. Children’s deaths during outdoor education at this time were to affect non-specialist primary school teacher practice, by reducing their involvement, or increasing teacher reliance on specialist trained teachers to take children outdoors. Further consideration of safety followed in 2002 that made taking children outdoors a more complex exercise.

4.15 **Amended health and safety legislation: Emotional harm**

The *Health and Safety in Employment Act* (HSEA) was amended in 2002 with several significant changes. One was increased worker participation in health and safety matters, another being acknowledgement of worker mental stress as an issue for occupational health and safety. Worker stress is a global health issue and one that contributes to loss of productivity and increased health costs (World Health Organisation, 2007). Avoiding significant physical harm remains a focus in occupational health and safety policy but also, increasingly, avoiding emotional harm. Emotional harm is referred to in definitions of safety. The possibility of emotional harm is a move from the possibility of physical harm to workers
of the industrialised age. Children’s emotional well-being is currently also a factor of safe education outside the classroom.

An updated EOTC guide was released by the Ministry of Education (2003b) after the amended HSEA 2002, and because of a number of child drownings between 2000 and 2001. Two Intermediate school aged boys were drowned while attending a school camp in the Kauaeranga Valley, two secondary school students drowned on school trip at Waihao River in Canterbury and in 2001 two primary school girls drowned while canoeing in the South Island’s Clarence River. The deaths were the impetus for the good practice guide to school safety management systems; ‘Safety and EOTC’ (Ministry of Education, 2003b). Safety became an important concern in education outside the classroom, an area that in earlier times had focused on recreational pursuits and pleasurable engagement with nature.

4.16 Safety and EOTC

The importance of safety and risk management in teachers’ education outside the classroom practice was apparent in the Ministry’s 2003 Safety and EOTC guide. New Zealand’s health and safety legislative requirements and outdoor education’s good practice standards were combined in the comprehensive 92 page guide. The first half of the guide reviews safety information, staffing, legal requirements and codes of practice, and the latter half has 49 pages of appendices - a detailed ‘toolkit’ of sample forms for safety management systems.

Individual responsibility for safety is one feature of the document. The designation of responsible, autonomous (and safe) students by highlighting self-responsibility at all levels presents a neo-liberal perspective of the safe child, a child who is independent and makes their own decisions (Duhn, 2006). Safety can be managed by the student who will develop skills enabling them to move “with safety”, develop safe practices for the outdoors and take responsibility for self and others (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 8). Students learn to monitor themselves and their own safe behaviour. They must for example use equipment appropriately and take care to “minimise damage or loss” (p15). Their responsibility is to be safe; to be risk aware, to manage risks, and be safety conscious.

While each level has specific safety responsibilities, safety as a shared responsibility is reiterated throughout, where all in the hierarchy of participation have specific roles and responsibilities. The latter are directly in relation to the statutory requirements and liability of EOTC. Community participation is highlighted where all individuals involved in EOTC can
be involved in the planning process. Working together facilitates the promotion of a culture of safety (Periam, 2002). For non-specialist teachers, safety was an important element of their shared outdoor practice.

The 2003 Safety and EOTC guide (Ministry of Education, 2003b) highlights safety in the outdoor classroom. There is recognition of the value of outdoor experiences but the document’s primary focus is on safety. Education outside the classroom safety policy documents of the previous 50 years, reflective of socio-political contexts, can be read to show the emergence of a safety focus. When the 1950s Department of Education material paid attention to safety, and when safety and accidents were mentioned, it was with reference to liability and culpability. Children’s deaths or accidents did not undergo the intense scrutiny and public debate that occurs in this era. Periam (2002, p. 1), in discussing the shared responsibility for safety, foregrounds children’s deaths to reinforce the importance of safety, noting that the deaths “have an enormous impact on all of us, not least the education profession”.

Children’s deaths in outdoor education reinforce safety policies and teachers’ safe practice. The impact of fatalities in outdoor education is part of this study. Interviews with non-specialist primary school teachers indicate that ‘safety’ is integral to their outside the classroom practice with risk (and death) avoidance playing a part. Tracing the emergence of safety through the documentation offers insight into how safe practice has become an important consideration for non-specialist primary school teachers in their work outside the classroom.

4.17 Conclusion

Safety is central in non-specialist primary school teachers’ practices in the outdoor classroom. Tracing developments in the meaning of safety using historical contexts, this section illustrated the manner in which the idea became embedded in education outside the classroom policy documentation. A simple model was formulated to convey changes to the meaning of safety. The model was employed to track changes in safety policies for education outside the classroom. Occupational health and safety policy progressions were linked to shifts in educational policy.
There are parallels between occupational health and safety and school safety systems. Complex risk-management systems and procedures, developed for workplaces, are now employed to organise school outdoor activities. A tension exists for teachers between ensuring safety in activities outside the classroom, and encouraging children’s participation in outdoor activities. This chapter has provided some insight into changing meanings of safety.

Further chapters elaborate ways in which safety is understood and experienced by non-specialist primary school teachers and children in the outdoor classroom or in teachers’ staffroom talk about their beliefs and practices such sites.
5 **The outdoor classroom: My research site**

5.1 **Introduction**

This chapter focuses on how I approached the matter of researching practice and experience in the outdoor classroom. Because I am interested in the role of safety and pleasure in the outdoor primary school classroom in contemporary New Zealand, I decided to examine the ways safety and risk and pleasure are played out in various sites where organised activities in the outdoors are taking place.

In previous chapters I examined New Zealand outdoor education documents to trace the ways in which societal views about risk, safety and pleasure have been written into policy over time. I have also taken account of the nationally specific context within which this policy developed: the Great New Zealand Outdoors. Now I turn to practice and experience. The sites I decided to consider are teachers’ talk, and children’s and other participants’ experiences of a school camp setting. These sites provide an opportunity to gain a sense of how the dynamics of risk, safety and pleasure affect non-specialist teachers’ beliefs and practices as they incorporate experiences in the outdoors into their students’ educational programme.

This chapter presents the sites of practice I have focused on, and my approaches to ‘capturing’ some teachers’ and children’s experiences of the outdoor classroom.

5.2 **Research approach**

The ontological position taken in this study regards the world existing only through people’s knowing of it. Such a position, while not denying the existence of a material world, asserts that the world of human experience, interactions and events exists only as people know those things. This knowing of the world occurs through the signs and symbols used for thinking and communicating, primarily represented in language (Stainton Rogers, 2006, p.79), and underpins the assertions that the only world we can study is the world of language meanings. Knowledge of the world is socially constructed rather than existing as a reality outside of the person waiting to be discovered (Burr, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). The constructionist epistemology claims multiple meanings or representations of the world. Further, the process of meaning making occurs within social and historical contexts. Safety, from this constructionist position is not an objective entity, because what safety means is constructed intersubjectively within social contexts.
A qualitative approach is the most appropriate method to explore the two research questions: the first is “what is the meaning of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers?”, and the second “what are the effects of their understandings about safety in the outdoor classroom?”

I locate the research in the qualitative tradition because it enables me to observe and examine the constructed nature of school outdoor education practice. As indicated in earlier chapters my overall study also seeks to answer how practice in the outdoors is understood by non-specialist teachers through particular tensions in policy, practice and talk.

Qualitative approaches to practice require the researcher to examine meaning. Meaning systems occur within language in social interactions, including the practices of school outdoor education. An interpretivist approach describes how meaning systems are generated and sustained (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p. 27) and provide a set of interpretive practices that offer insights to make the world visible (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). I use a variety of interpretive methods to open up the meaning systems in the study by focusing on both processes and the contexts. My research gaze turned to the interpretive processes of teacher talk, the contexts of policy and the physical campsite. An interpretivist approach suited my desire to undertake an in-depth investigation of the meaning systems embedded in talk and policy.

Because I am interested in how meaning systems of safety, risk and pleasure shape non-specialist teachers’ education outside the classroom practice, my attention was directed to the language used in policy and curriculum and to teachers’ talk about their practices related to safety, pleasure and education outdoors. I aimed to establish a sense of how experiences in the outdoors were shaped through the tensions in practice.

Of interest too was the experience of participants, both teachers and children, and my researcher-self in the outdoor activities at the campsite. Putting myself into the research process added another perspective to the study. It is a strength of an interpretivist approach that the researcher’s personal experience can become part of the study (Kidd, 2002). Accordingly, I include my narrative as part of the camp study as I explore how the experience was for me. As other parts of the research situation are pieced together, I acknowledge my own interaction with participants during the interviews as well as at the campsite. I realise, as Horsburgh (2003) points out, that I am an integral part of the world being researched. Data
collected are a result of my interactions with the participants, as both a researcher and a participant.

5.3 **Multiple methods**

A multiple method approach was taken to the research questions. Mixed methods combine both qualitative and quantitative research methods. For this study however I chose a multiple method approach which integrates different styles in one project (Hunter, 2007, in. Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p. 119), because it offers complementary insights to the research topic (Darbyshire, MacDougall, & Schiller, 2005). Within a case study I used interviews, questionnaires and participant observation methods to gain depth of understanding. Data were analysed interpretively drawing on theoretical insights from phenomenology and social constructivism.

I was inspired to this approach by other research in similar fields that have employed multiple method approaches. For instance, a study of childhood obesity and physical activity employed children’s focus group interview data as well as pictorial mapping of children’s activity environments and photographs to explore children’s perceptions of physical activity (Darbyshire, et al., 2005). Guided by multiple interpretive methods, Smith, Steel and Gidlow (2010) employed narratives and camera images to explore participants’ understanding of the experience of camping. I used a similar method and though did not link a written narrative to images I used my own interpretation of children’s drawn images and related this to children’s written questionnaire responses. Narratives were used in my study to complement other data and link to the ‘experiences’ of the outdoors. When exploring participant’s experiences, I considered Hales and Watkins (2004) phenomenological approach for making visible participants’ subjective realities in environmental education settings. My research process is also similar to that of Stan’s (2010) ethnographic approach. Participant observation and semi-structured interviews provided varied data in her study of teachers’ power to control children’s activities in outdoor education settings. Stan’s (2010) research presented a similar process where her study evolved in an emerging manner as her understandings developed. Vickerman (2007) used a similar process too where one part of her study built upon material from the previous part. In an exploration of the experiences of teachers preparing for the inclusion of special needs children in physical education programmes, Vickerman (2007) used questionnaire, and five face-to-face follow-up semi structured interviews. The
combination of questionnaires followed by face-to-face depth interviews allowed her the opportunity to identify general themes.

One particular qualitative study that resonated with me employed a grounded theory approach to develop a theory of deep experience. Nicholls and Gray’s (2007) study explored the experience of stillness within an activity-oriented adventure therapy programme. Their focus on out-of-the-ordinary or magical experiences took a similar view to one I wanted to take toward my experience of the weta walk during the school camp. My narrative of the walk is in chapter 6.

Elements of the research studies above inspired the methods I employed. There is no doubt that attempts to evaluate or assess safety knowledge and the implications for practice, across specific contexts (for example in the science classroom: Gerlovich, Whitsett, Lee, & Parsa, 2001, or fire safety in New Zealand households: Lloyd & Roen, 2002), and I recognise the importance of these approaches, such an objective was not the prime focus of the study, as I sought instead to explore how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom.

5.4 Study of practice

Following an interpretive approach, the second part of the research takes advantage of the view that multiple methods, data and perspectives add richness and depth to the inquiry. I incorporated three elements in the study. Having focused on the language used in policy to get a sense of how safety shapes teachers’ practice, I concentrated on participants’ responses to, and experiences of, a small school camp. In another chapter my focus is on teachers’ talk about education outside the classroom. I take a phenomenological approach to the experiential nature of outdoor education through the school camp, and social constructionism (Burr, 2003) informs a discourse analysis of teachers’ talk.

5.5 The sites of practice

The two sites of my empirical work are named the ‘Five Schools’ study and ‘Camp Case’ study. I used five schools to provide a range and variety of outdoor experiences and then focused on one particular school’s camping trip to explore the experiential nature of education in the outdoors.
The table below (Table 3) indicates the methods of the study. The multiple method design employed participatory observation, interviews, questionnaires, visual sources and self-study as data sources. Data collection occurred within an eight month period from the end of one calendar year to half way through the following year (2006-2007). In New Zealand these are the warmer months where most primary school outdoor education activities occur. Some schools use the winter months to take children to the snow for skiing, though generally this activity is for smaller groups of children rather than whole class activities.

Table 3

Two research sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Five Schools Study (included the Camp Case Study school)</th>
<th>Camp Case Study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Data</strong></td>
<td>Lead teacher interviews</td>
<td>Lead teacher interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus group interviews</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>Drawings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Drawings</td>
<td>Observations</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>My Participation</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Audio-tape</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Form of Analysis</strong></td>
<td>Social constructionism</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpretative Repertoires</td>
<td>Children’s drawings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Visual interpretation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>5 lead + 17 classroom teachers</td>
<td>2 Teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>82 Students</td>
<td>30 Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22 Parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Schools &amp; Deciles</strong> (NB)</td>
<td>A – urban city - decile 10</td>
<td>Semi-rural – decile 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>B – urban city – decile 9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>C – suburban – decile 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>D – suburban – decile 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>E – semi-rural – decile 8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Two research sites

NB: The decile rating is the indicator used to measure the extent to which schools draw pupils from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities (Ministry of Education website).

The study began with obtaining approval from the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. I decided to study a small school camp for close observation of outdoor education practice. I made a tentative request to one of the five schools (Table 3) in my local area to participate in the Camp Case Study, received a positive response and,
once ethics approval was gained began the organisation for my involvement in the camp. The camp occurs annually at the beginning of the school year, and I began the Camp Case Study at that time.

5.6 Five schools study

Five primary schools were selected through their school’s involvement in outdoor education programmes. The schools were known to me in my professional role as a teacher educator and school visiting lecturer. These five schools provided a range of teachers and children participants. The schools are situated across the greater Auckland metropolitan area: two urban schools, two suburban and one semi-rural school. A reason for selection of Auckland schools, rather than whole of New Zealand, was the range of schools available within a close geographical area. Within the greater Auckland region there are semi-rural schools as well as those in central city locations. As such, the schools could be considered to be representative of a range of New Zealand primary schools.

The Five Schools study involved each school’s lead teacher of outdoor education, non-specialist classroom teachers and children. Identified schools were approached through the Principal and Boards of Trustees for their agreement to participate. Once interest was established, and permission granted, the project was presented to teachers at a staff meeting. Both teachers and students within the schools were invited to take part in either interviews and/or questionnaires (the latter was the only option for children). Students were invited to participate via their classroom teachers, school assembly or the school’s newsletter. In each of the five schools, individual interviews occurred with the school’s lead teacher of outdoor education. Focus group interviews included self-selected interested non-specialist teachers. Interviews generally took between one and two hours.

I had planned teacher questionnaires, but as the research took place at the end of the school year, very few were returned and these were not analysed, but were used to guide teacher interviews. Children’s questionnaires were completed in all five schools. Each school used different systems for children to participate. Two schools, after ethical formalities, had all assenting children meet in the school hall to fill in questionnaires. At two other schools, children completed the questionnaires during their individual classroom time, and the fifth school sent questionnaires home with children. This last school had a limited response with only three questionnaires returned.
A total of 112 children’s questionnaires, including those from the Camp Case study, were analysed. Children’s questionnaires consisted of 12 questions requiring written responses, with a request for children to draw a picture of themselves doing outdoor education or camp. The drawings were analysed in conjunction with the questionnaires’ written responses. The 12 questions covered descriptions of children’s perceptions of their best outdoor education activities, worst and most scary activities, the kinds of things they and their teachers did to keep safe, and whether they had any accidents while participating in activities.

5.7 Camp case study

The case under study is an annual school outdoor education camp undertaken by one class at a time. The decile 8 primary school in a small town at the northern edge of Auckland city is in a semi-urban/rural area. The school’s 500 students are primarily European (at the time of this study European comprised 67.6 percent of New Zealand’s population with the Māori ethnic group the second largest at 14.6 percent, other major groups were Pacific peoples and Asian ethnics). The Camp Case school has a 30 year tradition of outdoor education in the form of school camps. Part of the school’s justification for continuing the school camp is to keep the ‘traditional kiwi’ experience alive for children. The school’s outdoor education ‘camping’ programme ranges from a sleepover in the school grounds at year 4, a three-day tenting experience at year 5, to a four day managed outdoor activity ‘camp’ at a recreational centre for year 6. My specific focus was the year 5 (age 8-9 years) camping experience.

I decided to study this particular camp for the traditional aspect and because of personal links to the school. I had taught at the school in the past and been involved in similar school camps. I made an initial approach to the principal of the school to ask if I could attend the next school camp. Many of the teachers at the school were past colleagues, and children’s parents were known to me personally. All parents of children attending camp were informed of the project through a school newsletter. Information and consent forms were sent home with children. Parents were informed that I would attend camp during the day to observe and record events, but not to video-record. Parents were informed that their children would not be identified. There was no disagreement with the arrangements and all consent forms were returned.

The camp occurred over a period of 3 days and 2 nights. Participants at camp, including the 30 Year 5 children, were six parents who stayed overnight, the teacher and me. A few parents visited during the day and 16 arrived for a nature walk on the second evening. I was mindful
of my participatory observation role, but comprehensive ethical guidelines were followed (see below).

Similar methods were employed for both the studies of practice: teacher interviews, children’s questionnaires, and for the Camp Case Study, parent questionnaires. My participation and observation began at the pre-camp planning stages. Two interviews were planned with the camp teacher before the camp and both took place. One was held during lunch time at school, and the other occurred at the teacher’s home. Another interview took place before camp with a different teacher who led a night walk during camp (the weta walk).

Before camp I met the camp class children and was introduced to them. I explained the research and the need for consent forms. Although a meeting with parents was planned, because of time constraints this was not possible, so I did not meet camp parents until I arrived at the camp. Some concerns about one particular camp activity appeared in parents’ written questionnaires, but none were about the research nor my presence during camp. Parent questionnaires were completed post-camp by parents, and returned to school while children completed their questionnaires during class time.

My observation and recording occurred during camp, then recording in diary format afterwards. There was one audio taken of the camp – but no voices were transcribed. The audio recording was of the night sounds in order to jog my memory of the event. The night sounds data related to my self-study narrative.

5.8 Research participants

Teachers, children and parents were involved in the two “practice” sections of the study. In the Five Schools Study there were five lead teachers, both female and male, and 17 teachers in the focus group interviews. In the Camp Case Study there were 30 children, six parents for the duration of the camp and 16 parents for the one night event. Two teachers were part of the camp study. Eighty-two children completed the five schools study questionnaires. Thirty children and 22 parents completed questionnaires in the camp study. For the whole study 24 teachers, 22 parents and 112 children participated. The total number of human participants was 158, excluding myself.

In-depth interviews took place with seven teachers, five from the Five Schools Study and two from the Camp Case Study. A further two teachers were significant in one analysis, the “cautionary tale”. The results of analysis of teachers’ talk form the basis of two chapters. An
introduction to the nine teachers is provided below. This is helpful for reading the discussion in chapters 6-8.

**Teachers in the Camp Case Study**

Suzie, female, 15 years practice, classroom teacher

Bruce, male, 25 years practice, lead teacher, enthusiastic outdoor educator

**Teachers in the Five Schools Study**

Ella, female, 25 years practice, experienced outdoor education lead teacher

Frank, male, 35 years practice, highly experienced outdoor education lead teacher

Gil, female, 25 years practice

Bev, female, 20 years practice, classroom teacher

Alana, female, experienced lead teacher, 20 years practice

Lizzie, female, enthusiastic young teacher with 5 years practice

Anne, female, 30 years practice, senior teacher with responsibility for small team

5.9  **Data collection methods**

5.9.1  **Interviews**

Focus group interviews are a quick and effective strategy for gaining in-depth perspectives about an issue (Berg & Latin, 2004; Davis, Kristjanson, & Blight, 2003). Where topics are sensitive in nature however, for example matters of personal loss, participants may be inhibited from taking part in the discussion. A skilled interviewer is essential as discussions can be dominated by some participants (Berg & Latin, 2004). In carrying out the focus group interviews, I took note of Berg and Latin’s list of competencies for interviewers that include being informed, sensitive, receptive and flexible.

I used a flexible semi-structured interview format. A general interview topic guide was prepared, with questions about organisational matters, considerations for keeping children safe in the outdoors, the place of risk, and changes in outdoor education practices. The interview guide was useful in opening the interview, but as the interview/s progressed I
wanted the interviewees open to thematic lines of inquiry. Topic guides specifying themes in advance, can give structure to an interview (Best & Kahn, 1998) but I preferred a general and open discussion. I did however, erect a form of boundary around the interviews (Sandelowski, Davis, & Harris, 1989, p. 79) using time frames and identifying general themes. I did not expect any consensus within the focus group interviews. Focus group sizes depended on teacher availability, and ranged between six and twelve, a suitable number for this form of interview (Buttram, 1990; Byers & Wilcox, 1988).

In-depth interviewing resonates with practitioners who are experts at listening empathetically (Padgett, 2004). As a former teacher I related to their talk and experiences. A weakness of the flexible semi-structured approach could be that important topics may be inadvertently omitted, but using the same interviewer helps with comparability across interviews (Best & Kahn, 1998). All the interviews in my study were taken by me.

Past experience had shown me that the organisation of interviews is difficult given teachers’ time constraints (Collinson & Fedoruk Cook, 2000). A solution was to have interviews with staff at their schools and all the interviews except for one took place at schools either during lunch break or at the end of the school day.

5.9.2 Questionnaires

Questionnaires were employed as an initial way in to teachers’ and children’s beliefs about safety and education in the outdoors. The teachers’ questionnaires asked about outdoor activities, the school’s safety policy, keeping children safe and risky aspects to the outdoor experience (for instance: are there aspects of outdoor activities that you think should be risky?). The purpose of the teacher questionnaires was two-fold: firstly to contribute to a guide for the interviews and secondly to provide a greater data source for analysis. I intended that the questionnaires would provide an opportunity for closer reading of safe practice. As mentioned earlier, few were returned and I made the decision to only use them to inform the teacher interviews.

Children’s questionnaire feedback, in contrast, provided rich data sources which offered insights into their experiences of outdoor activities. In particular, children’s drawings provided a way into children’s worlds of outdoor education.

The research process followed a similar path to that of Stan (2010) where each data collection cycle altered and added to succeeding cycles. As data were analysed alongside literature and
historical data, my understandings of the study developed and evolved. Coates’ (2010) study underwent a similar evolving process where the research process became a journey of discovery, not always easily defined and at times frustrating. My focus on the nature of the relationship between teachers’ knowledge of safety policy, their beliefs and their practices, also considered the relationship between pleasure and safety in education in the outdoors. Reading literature, interviews, questionnaires and observation of the school camp drew my attention to a tension between safety and pleasure. The research became an open-ended process of continual refinement.

5.10 Ethics

All research procedures were approved by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee. The detailed ethics application included 25 appendices of required consents and information pages for the observation and interview parts of the study. Ethical requirements of voluntary participation, the right to withdraw, anonymity and confidentiality were followed. Interview transcripts and questionnaire responses remain confidential. Focus group interviews could not guarantee anonymity and confidentiality, and participants were informed of this in writing. Participants’ rights to confidentiality and anonymity were upheld in writing-up the study. Ground rules were established for the interviews to create a safe and supportive environment. All interviews were recorded and transcribed by myself and no other party had access to the transcripts.

Particular ethical principles were applicable to my project because of children’s involvement, so my participant observations included informed consent to children and their parents. Students’ parents were informed of the research questionnaire via the school newsletter and invited to give consent for their children to participate in the questionnaire. Students were invited to participate in the questionnaire through the school newsletter and by their teachers. When parental consent was given, and children’s assent to participate was received, questionnaires were distributed to students during class time as part of their outdoor education studies or at a time deemed suitable by the teacher. No child expressed distress because of their participation in the study (Minimisation of harm, section 6, University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics).
5.11 Methods of analysis

As already indicated my analysis of data was guided by an interpretivist approach. Multiple data sources provided an opportunity to identify and discuss those elements of beliefs, practices and talk that make visible the tension between safety and pleasure in outdoor education. From questionnaires, interviews and participatory observation, I was able to draw on and combine diverse data for analysis.

Guided by Denzin and Lincoln’s (2000) argument that all research practices offer qualitative insights, I found that my multiple method approach gave me access to a variety of perspectives. The multiple method approach lent itself to different analytic forms. These forms of analysis are indicated in Table 3. I discuss the frameworks for my interpretive analysis in greater detail in chapters 6 - 8. In each of these chapters, an interpretive framework foregrounds the analytical work that follows. In chapter 6 my focus is on participants’ experiences and meanings of a school camp. A different interpretive framework forms the basis of the analysis in chapters 7 and 8. My focus here is on active meaning-making in teachers’ talk. My analysis of talk is guided by the concept ‘interpretative repertoires’. In both chapters my focus is on meaning.

For the interpretive approach to the Camp Case study, teachers’ beliefs about safety and participants’ experience was foregrounded to understand the social world of the school camp. Capturing beliefs and experience is an elusive task. I relied on my observation and participation in the camp. A small researcher self-study also contributed to my analysis. Teacher interviews and parent and child questionnaires, while limited or distanced methods of understanding experience, also contributed to the analysis. Children’s drawings from the questionnaires were included to give a sense of the experience of a school camp or other outdoor education activities. An outline of how I interpreted the children’s drawings occurs in Chapter 6.

The experiential approach permitted deep analysis of the camping experience, both for me and other participants. While it is not possible to determine ‘how the experience is for others’, it was possible to examine how the experience was for me, and to make links with others’ experiences through the analysis. Observations and diary notes added to my reading of the experience.
My analysis of teachers’ talk drew on Gubrium and Holstein’s (2003, p. 215) view that shaping reality centres on a methodical construction of “configurations of meaning”. Potter and Wetherell’s (1990) form of analysis, using the notion of interpretative repertoires, guided my analysis. This form of analysis, the results of which are presented in Chapters 7 and 8, enabled consideration of the manner in which the tension between safe practice and pleasurable risk-taking is negotiated and understood. Analysis was completed alongside safety and risk-anxiety literature to provide another background for reading the results. A deeper scrutiny of the data addressed how non-specialist teachers’ beliefs about safety affect their practice in the outside classroom.

Both analytic forms contribute to my understandings of the meanings of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers and the effects of their understandings about safety in the outdoor classroom.

While the analysis of teacher talk offers a fine grained view, the analytic focus on experience provided additional insights by employing a different method.

5.12 Conclusion

I have outlined broadly the approaches used in my research, and the multiple methods adopted to address the research questions. Identifying key participants and my approach to collecting information provides a focus for reading the analysis of chapters 6, 7 and 8. Teachers’ education outside the classroom practice is a complex site to study; I wanted to make my work come alive by taking an energetic, creative, fragmented approach, peering into a series of windows on experience and practice. I took this approach in the hope that my study would generate, and encourage a more nuanced and holistic look at primary school teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom, and a more comprehensive understanding of the tension between safety and pleasure.
6 Camping, learning and teaching

6.1 The campsite

The campsite with its rows of tents and busy children is seen from the top of the hill before the road winds down to the bay. The campsite sits alongside the beach, fringed with pohutukawa, facing the head of the Mahurangi River. A small island sits before the camp, the children call it Saddle Island, but the Maori name is Te Haupa Island. There is another small island, alongside the coast that is accessible at low tide, named Pudding Island. When the tide is low, the campers walk around the rocks toward Pudding Island, investigating the sea life in rock pools. It is after all, a school camp, and children are expected to learn something from the experience.

As the road turns down the hill toward the camp, the tarseal turns to gravel – unsealed – a feature of traditional ‘kiwi’ campsites; off the beaten track, off sealed roads, away from civilisation. Yet, on approach, the campsite is neatly marked out with all the tents pegged in an orderly fashion, facing the sea. Closer to the camp, the shrieking of children is heard as they play in a flat area between the sea and the tents. None of the children are playing on the beach, and a small fence, easily hopped over, separates the campsite from the beach. None of the children are beyond the fence.

There is a picnic table beneath an open sided tent where a small group of adults are preparing food. Beside the table is a barbeque with pots of water boiling. Another adult, the teacher, is in the middle of the campsite with a cluster of children. Other children are playing cricket or sitting on the grass talking idly together. It is a beautiful spot, a classic sandy beach camp. All the hallmarks of traditional beach camps are here – sand, sea, trees, sunshine, waves breaking on the sand and a slight breeze whiffling through the trees. The teacher enthuses “You just can’t get past it, the trees, the hills, the sea, the rocks, Pudding Island – I’m a fan of Sullivan’s Bay.”

6.2 Introduction

The focus of this chapter is the experiential “Kiwi” aspect of outdoor education. To explore how participants experience outdoor camping, and what it means for them, I focus on one case, the small school camp introduced above. I begin with my narrative of my ‘lived experience’ of outdoor education. The narrative draws on phenomenological understandings
to offer depth to my story. Of particular interest in this chapter is the experience of pleasure, but also how such pleasure intersects with concerns about safety. How pleasure and the tension between safety and pleasure are experienced is of further interest.

The essential features of the camp experience are presented from multiple perspectives: observation, my immersion in the camping experience, audio-taped sound, talk with other participants - parents, teachers and children, and children’s drawings. I also draw on children’s questionnaire responses from the Five Schools Study. My interpretation of these different ‘voices’ is presented here. My stories of the participants’ experiences are just that, my understanding of the meanings that others’ give to their experiences. I cannot relate the truth of those experiences, but consistent with phenomenological research processes, I can only present the sense that I have made of them. I do not assume these multiple realities can be simply captured for retelling; rather, selections are presented after reflection and contemplation on the variety of data sources. To illuminate how the outdoors is experienced, I turn to a variety of expressive forms.

6.3 Phenomenological insights of experience

“What is it like to have a certain experience?” and “what is the essence of an experience?” are phenomenological questions. Phenomenology permits openness to experiences and allows contemplation of how the world presents itself to us. The phenomenological research process is a to-and-fro movement between abstraction and the reality of lived experience in an attempt to gain some insight toward an understanding of those experiences.

Ortega y Gasset (1932, p. 170, in Crotty, 1996, p. 273) uses the analogy of a shipwreck to bring light to the phenomenological research process. The researcher feels lost, similar to that of the shipwrecked, while attempting to bring order to chaos. A paradox of the approach is that what is ‘in front’ for the researcher is not that which is described, but is a re-interpretation of the observed phenomenon. Putting aside taken-for-granted and familiar understandings enables the emergence of new meanings. Getting lost in the research process is part of a phenomenological approach. For example, in my actual lived world of one particular event, the night weta walk, there was no physical ‘getting lost’ in the bush, rather a getting lost in the intensified ‘peak experience’ (Brymer & Oades, 2009), the autotelie (Breivik, 2007, p. 11), or the existential moment (Morris, 1966) of the walk.
An intuitive approach is necessary in phenomenological research, letting go preconceived notions of a phenomenon to discover the meanings of an experience for the individual (Crotty, 1996; Ferguson, 2001). My Focus is on the ‘experiencing person’ (Schmidt, 2005). Some vignettes, such as my impressionist accounts, are attempts to ‘startle’ the audience (Van Maanen, 1988) with my own interpretation.

Experiences are the object of phenomenological inquiry. The various ways the camp was experienced is here at the heart of this section of the study. Aside from the other sources mentioned, an audio-tape of the night weta walk, left me with a ‘sound-scape’ of the remembered experience, allowing a ‘re-listening’ of the walk experience. While re-listening of the aural account took me to my actual ‘lived experience’, the audio presents an intangible version of the experience, confirming Crotty’s (1996) assertion of the difficulty of studying experience.

To take ‘experience’ as the object of study is an elusive task (Crotty, 1996). Experience is an ongoing stream of consciousness, a continual sensory input. The experiences of a group of people of a particular phenomenon are different for individuals at different moments in time, and even fractions of time are significant. The here and now of experience proves difficult to capture, with any interpretation subject to other perspectives. For that reason, I inserted myself into the research process to reflect on my particular perspective of some events. The audio-tape presented me the opportunity to reflect on immediacy of experience. The audio version of the walk offered memory recall of that lived experience. Questions could be raised about reflection on the nature of decontextualised recorded ‘sound’ experience when considering versions of reality. But the audio exploration is another attempt to consider multiple realities, and the bulk of this chapter relies on information from multiple sources.

To explore experiences of this particular camp, I refer to my observations, personal participation, and data from interviews and questionnaires. The interpretive process was shaped by my continual crossing between data collection and analysis. Drawing on Van Maanen’s (1988) ethnographic work for my discussion, I use his notion of confessional, realist and impressionist tales to assist my interpretive work. The confessional tale highlights my entry to the camp, my relationship with participants and my data collection modes.
6.4 My confessional tale: Past experience

I was involved at a personal level with the Camp Case study as my connection with the case study school dates back to the early 1970s. My own past teaching and organisation of outdoor education camps had occurred at the school. These experiences affected my involvement because while I was the researcher, I had a deep connection with the school and the teachers.

Case study research is characterised by time spent on-site in contact with activities and operations of the case. While researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world of the case (Stake, 1998, p. 103), they also share an interest in the personal views and circumstances of the case. Because of my history at the school, and close collegial relationships with a number of teachers and knowledge of many parents, I was mindful of my researcher position. I wanted to maintain some distance, yet become involved in activities. So I stayed at camp for two days and two evenings but did not sleep over-night. A set number of adults were booked for the site and because some parents were disappointed they missed out on sharing the overnight experience, I decided it was unfair to take a parent’s position.

As part of my attempt to understand and present the meaning of the experience, I took note of people involved, the setting, actions that took place, and participants’ responses. I used on-site observation, pre-camp classroom observation, meetings and interviews with the class teacher, the school’s outdoor education lead teacher, and parent and student post-camp questionnaires. When I was unable to see for myself what occurred, I spoke to parents, children and other teachers who were present at the camp. My ethics application gave access to the camp to observe, take notes but not to photograph children or events. I did however use a voice-recorder to record my observations for some events, notably the weta walk and children building sand forts.

My connection to the school enabled me to make good links with the 30 children and the teacher. I was approached by children several times to tell me that I had taught one of their parents. I endeavoured to create a position as a safe observer, that even while I was an outsider, like Lupton’s (1999) liminal other, I was known to many in the school community. Mindful of my responsibilities as an observer at camp, and new to these children, I visited the class the week before the camp, to introduce myself and explain the research. I discussed the need for the letters that they had to take home; participant information sheets both for themselves and their parents and the consent forms. Suzie (the teacher) interrupted to say to
the children that they had the same constraints on them as teachers did, regarding the necessary ‘bits of paper’.

My pre-camp diary notes (names are pseudonyms):

*When I was introduced to the class, the camp teacher [Suzie] mentioned that we were old colleagues. She directed the class to write this in their homework books that they met me today, and I was an old friend of their teacher. One of the children knew me because I had taught his older brother. I met [Sarah], a past pupil of mine who is now a teacher at the school, and hugged her after she had walked her class across the pedestrian crossing. Part of this was to let children know that I was part of their community, if not their immediate community then one of their community’s previous teachers.*

The interviews that I conducted with Suzie, and Bruce, the two teachers involved in the camp, included personal references to our shared history, and these added to the richness of my narrative. In this form of research, the researcher is part of the research process and shares the life of the researched. For Van Maanen (1988), the author is close at hand in confessional, and this was the situation here. Alongside a history with the teachers and children, there was also my history of the place. I had developed strong links to the area after teaching for several decades in the Mahurangi region.

The camp site, at Sullivan’s Bay, is significant in Mahurangi history. Now an Auckland Regional Park, it has a protected status in the local area. It holds a special place in the situating of many locals who trace their family bonds back several generations. Place is important to culture and identity (Straker, 2004), and Mahurangi identity is shaped by proximity to the Mahurangi River. An early river settlement, The Mahurangi area has a strong boating history; it is the place of the annual Mahurangi Regatta, and there are several boatbuilding yards within the boundary. At the time of this study, the Mahurangi region, at the outer edges of Auckland city, has become a recreational area easily accessed by urban dwellers. Sullivan’s Bay retains a sense of ‘old place’, particularly because of its untouched nature but also because of access to a nearby pioneer graveyard.

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3 I am not related to the European Sullivan settlers
Map 1: Campsite at Mahurangi

Because of my history of the area, I wanted to produce a map, to relate my experience to a spatial scheme of the environment. The sketch map was important to me to orient myself to major known landmarks of the immediate area. Sketch maps assist in externalising environmental knowledge (Coluccia, Iosue, & Brandimonte, 2007) and here I needed to present and refine my knowing and orientation of the camp setting. I placed the campsite, cemetery and weta walk as locaters to identify their relationship to each other. The map enabled an overview of the distance between the campsite and weta walk. The children did not have to walk from the camp, to Te Muri and then to Wenderholm as the Puhoi River is too large to cross. They were transported by bus to Wenderholm.

Bruce, the lead teacher, mentioned during one interview, that when his class walked to Te Muri and the cemetery, he pointed out Wenderholm for the weta walk. According to Bruce, the children mistakenly thought they would have to walk from the camp to Wenderholm; “They had in their heads that they were going to have to tramp all the way”. The children were confused because of the distance, thinking they had to swim across the Puhoi River. The children’s misunderstanding lead Bruce to trick them, and I elaborate on this in Chapter 8, because the trick serves an interesting purpose for Bruce – if not for the children. But I could understand the children’s confusion; they had forgotten they were to be driven to Wenderholm for the weta walk.
6.5 **Realist tales: Preparation for camp**

Lather (1991) alerts us to realist texts that assume the world out there is one that is known about in common-sense ways. For Van Maanen (1988) a realist story presents a descriptive account lacking authorial voice as the writers of such texts absent themselves from the story. The realist account here includes information of particular and ordinary details, often mundane but descriptions that set a background for the impressionist interpretation. In this realist account, I include some detail of the camp.

Organisation for the camp occurs to a high degree and campsite bookings are made months in advance. Organisational procedures have been established over the past decade since the camp was first initiated at the park. The class programme for the first term is almost entirely taken up with camp study. While the focus is on children’s learning in the outdoors, there is recognition of the enjoyable pleasure to be had in outdoor environments. For a significant number of children it is the first time they have been away from home, and the first time they have slept outside in the dark. There are no night lights at the camp ground and a gas-light is kept alight to comfort children and to light the way to the toilets. The long-drop toilet is a source of amusement or dismay, and features in camp stories and songs.

Because there are two sites for the camp experience, Suzie’s pre-camp tasks involve organising transport. Cars are needed to take children to the Sullivan’s Bay camp site, which is 16 km from school. Further transport takes children from Sullivan’s Bay to Wenderholm for the night weta walk (see Map 1). This is a total return distance of 24 km. For the teacher it is a huge organisational task, requiring attention to a myriad of details: “It’s not only the cars, but the forms for the cars’ warrant of fitness.” (All vehicles must have a current New Zealand warrant of fitness). Transport is necessary too for the camp equipment. There are sleeping tents, two marquees, barbeques, food, cooking equipment, tables, trestles and chairs for the adults. It appears more like preparing a battalion of troops for resettlement than it does a traditional small scale beach camp.

The teacher involved in this camp, Suzie, and others who take the same camp with their individual classes, claim the camp is a Kiwi-style camp. Being Kiwi aligns the camp with the Great Outdoors, the active New Zealand tradition. Bruce compares the New Zealand school camping experience with that of an English colleague:
This is a Kiwi thing; it’s definitely a New Zealand thing. You know people that come out from England to go camping with us, they’re shocked to the max - you remember George - he came camping with me - well he had a heart attack because he said “When we go camping in England, we pay for a reliever to look after the children that can’t afford to go camping, and we go to Brighton, and we stay in a hotel”.

The level of preparation for this traditional New Zealand camp experience has changed since my own teaching career. During the years from 1975 to 1990, I organised and participated in similar school camps at the same school. I cannot recall a level of organisation similar to that of the case study camp. We did not, for instance, prepare safety cards such as those hanging on the marquee pole. These laminated cards detail what to do in emergency situations; evacuation procedures, what to do if child is missing, camp rules, all contact phone numbers – the Ranger, principal, local doctors – “procedure action cards that cover basically every eventuality, so it’s all on an action plan card so you’re not (wasting time) looking for it”. Other cards demonstrate how to erect tents, identify tent equipment and outline daily menus.

6.6 My journal narrative of camp preparation

During a lunchtime discussion with me, Suzie described her preparation for the camp. She indicated the large information file commenting on the huge impact camp organisation has on her workload. All teachers taking camp have to up-skill with a first-aid course every two years. Children’s contact details and medical forms need completion. Some children were not up-to-date with their tetanus injection. Suzie indicated children’s health and safety and medical files and laughed about one student’s grass allergy. She rolled her eyes: “the camp is on grass!” She looked harassed.

Suzie noted that her organisation never finishes because the camp is a complex expedition. For this particular camp, the Regional Park office omitted to block-book the campsite, requiring negotiation with the office for the camp to proceed. It sounded a very stressful time and she looked tired. In support of camp however, she said, “It’s cool though, because camp develops lots of skills in children and shows different children in different lights”. Some reluctant children had never been away from home unless to visit grandparents. Suzie uses soft toys in the classroom as a calming influence for children. She will take the toys to camp to help children who are stressed being away from home.
The camp rules went home with each student’s ‘behavioural contract’ forms two weeks previously and Suzie had ‘thrashed’ the information. The camp study has been combined with reading work; everything is integrated according to Suzie. Topic work includes the night sky, wetas, all work leading up to the camp, with follow-up studies after camp. Evacuation procedures are discussed at a pre-camp meeting, “It just goes on and on”. Suzie suddenly stopped in the middle of her discussion with “Oh, I haven’t done a map”. I presumed the map was required for parents driving to the campsite [I should have given her mine].

I had a look at a child’s topic book showing study on the night sky and wetas. The children were drawing wetas that afternoon. They were very well informed about wetas. At some point during the afternoon Suzie asked the children to draw the campsite and indicate where the out-of-bounds areas were. She was reiterating camp rules and reinforcing the penalties for children who did not follow the rules, that is to be taken home or to be put in a tent alone at the back of the camp ground. It sounded somewhat sinister and threatening, similar to other management and control practices teachers employ, and threats I had previously used myself.

Participation in my research is another stress for Suzie and because of this I have reduced some of her involvement. I had asked for two interviews but I will take the portable tape recorder and record observations during the day and any conversations with her. One problem I have is the consent of parents attending camp. While I gave Suzie the participant information sheets and the consent forms for this group of people, I had no opportunity to meet the parents to obtain interview consents. It is possible that I will have reduced data for the case study as a result, but will still collect detailed observations during the time I am at camp.

6.7 At the campsite: My observational narrative

My observations during camp were noted during the time I was there, or else recorded in the evening afterwards. I wrote this after two days at camp:

*In terms of a study on safety, the camp has been relatively uneventful. I noticed however, that Suzie was watchful of the children. She focused on ensuring children were in the right place at the correct time. When children were building their sand forts on the beach, she was very alert to children who moved too close to the sea. After the sea came over their sea forts, some children ran into the waves. Suzie immediately, much faster than I anticipated, herded children back above the tide line. She was also very protective of children who were anxious*
about doing the Burma trail (a rope trail through an obstacle course) in the dark or blindfolded.

It occurred to me during camp, that a safety focus contributes another level to real life on camp. Suzie and parents are responsible for ensuring the safety of the students on camp, yet their attention to children’s safety does not appear to impact on the children. For example, I noticed children were doing the same kinds of things they did twenty years ago when I organised school camps. I noticed children were as engaged in the activities as those that I recall. The boys still played cricket, the tents were still untidy, they ate their meals, shouted and screamed when they were building sand forts, water-sliding and having fun. It appeared that children enjoyed their outdoor activities, particularly the faster and noisier activities. Yet while I had my observational material, I gained further indications from children about the way they understood their experiences through their questionnaire responses.

6.8 Children’s experience: Questionnaires

I used children’s questionnaires in both parts of the study, the Five Schools study and the Camp Case study. Children’s questionnaire responses permitted a deeper understanding of children’s outdoor education and camp experiences. I understand that while questionnaire material is limited for capturing experience, I reflected on the responses to add depth to my observational material of children in action.

My interpretation of the children’s responses indicated they were overwhelmingly positive about their involvement in outdoor education: 91% indicated wanting to do more outdoor education. According to my reading of the questionnaires, children wanted to do more outdoor activity because it was pleasurable. Pleasure, enjoyment, love, enjoy and cool were terms used in explanation. Pleasure at being outdoors, doing activities that are fun and challenging, and learning at the same time, all were seen as characterising education outside the classroom. The outdoors was contrasted with schoolwork and being indoors, though for some students the educative part of outdoor education was referred to in conjunction with pleasure. For example “Having fun while learning,” it is “more fun and a cool way to learn” and, “because you learn and you don’t know because you are having fun”. Others enjoyed new learning “I loved learning about new stuff” in the outdoors “because I like exploring the outdoor world”.

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Love also related to being in the outdoors, outside in the open-air, “I love doing outdoor education, it’s thrilling, I love going outside”. Pleas to have more schooling in the outdoors used the idea of pleasure in justification; “I want to do more because we hardly ever go on school trips” and “because I enjoy it”.

A small number of responses indicated not wanting to do more outdoor education. One child wrote that she would get too tired, and another that he already did enough exercise, “I already do enough and I run between 25 and 30km per week on top of 2 rugby trainings and a rugby game”.

In reply to the question “What is your favourite activity? Why is it so good?” children wrote of pleasure, excitement and thrills. Participation in some activities was exhilarating; when you are on the trampoline “you go really high and you kind of fly”. Adrenaline rushes from participation in fast activities, or achieving a skill was noted in races where there was a “massive adrenaline rush to win” and climbing high ropes for the “adrenaline rush”. It felt good to surf and “stand out on the board surfing the waves”, rock climbing because “you can go up high and it’s so fun” and sailing because “it’s neat fun when you go fast”.

Experiencing freedom featured in children’s favourite activities, both freedom from school but also freedom from restrictions of being earth-bound. Responses noted favourite activities were the “trapeze, because it feels nice in the air”, “the Flying Kiwi, because you fly really high” and kayaking because “it’s really fun and you think you’re about to fall out but not”.

Freedom has its constraints however and children recognised this. One child wrote of time restrictions: “Three days of camp isn’t that cool ... people used to go for at least one week, now we can barely get to do everything without rushing”. In terms of preparation for three days of camp, or sailing or when visiting a marae, children realise the need for planning; being in the outdoors requires forethought – spontaneity is not always appropriate for outdoors engagement. They need to be, as one child wrote “always one step ahead” and consider their behaviour (or possible mis-behaviour) “beforehand”. Requiring approval from parents or caregivers involved completing permission forms, acknowledging medical problems and being alert to the risks before enjoying the experience.

For camp, one child noted: “We have weeks of having it in our topic lesson and going over the rules”. Studying about an event before participating in it was the norm as these responses,
from a number of children, to the question “How do you prepare for outdoor education or camp?” indicate:

...discuss the menu, how to be safe, how to do the activities, study about it in class, fill out forms of how well you can swim, talk about rules, be divided into camp groups and talk if you can work with them, learn safety rules, listen to instructions...

The level of preparation for going outdoors was highly detailed. Preparing for all possible eventualities was evident in responses; one child organised “water, good strong shoes, big jacket, spare clothes, first-aid, food, a beanie, a survival blanket, a bag, a mattress, sunblock”. Some children prepared for fun with “skits, hair and makeup, black caps” by “learning songs or dance, organizing groups, skits, mattresses” although one anxious respondent was prepared for “not being killed” and another for “not going to barf”. Children were mindful of the need for preparation before going outside while able at the same time to consider the pleasure of involvement.

Children enjoyed taking part in activities with fun, excitement and thrill as pleasurable aspects of the experience. My camp observations confirmed this interpretation of their pleasure. I remembered children sliding down hills on cardboard, or on water slides, shrieking and laughing, juxtaposing my memories with the questionnaire responses.

6.9 Children’s experience: Drawings

The final section of the children’s questionnaire directed children to draw themselves doing outdoor education or camp activities. Visual images, as representations of the real world, are important forms of communication. Visual images, as for the audio-taped sound-scape of the weta walk are interpreted through human consciousness, presenting multiple possible interpretations. In the phenomenological research process, interpretation involves a constant moving between one’s thoughts, data, experience and reflection. In the following section I present another of my interpretations of children’s experiences. Drawings of themselves doing outdoor education gave me access to their outdoor experience.

Children’s drawings are increasingly valuable in fields where children’s views and perspectives are the focus of the research project. Children’s drawings are used as a way into the world in which children live and are used in health studies. Miles (2000) for example, used children’s drawings for the development of therapeutic interventions to assist children suffering the effects of war. According to Miles, children drawing their experience of war
were similarly able to draw hopeful scenarios for their future. Children’s drawings assist in clinical diagnoses (Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995) or helping deal with sexual abuse (Briggs & Hawkins, 1996). Children’s drawings are useful in exploring their beliefs about health (Onyango-Ouma, Aagaard-Hansen, & Jensen, 2004; Piko & Bak, 2006; Williams, Wetton, & Moon, 1989) or perceptions of smoking (Woods, Springett, Porcellato, & Dugdill, 2005).

One particular method of gathering children’s views through drawings is that of the draw-and-write technique pioneered by Noreen Wetton (MacGregor, Currie, & Wetton, 1998). The technique, developed as part of a school health research project in the 1980s, used children’s drawings to elicit understandings of what being healthy meant to them. It has since been used as a tool to illuminate children’s understandings in a diverse set of projects. Children draw what they understand about the topic of the research and explain their drawings through writing. MacGregor, et al. (1998) used the technique to discover what primary school students expected to see in a health-promoting school. The children were asked to draw a healthy school and write down why they thought it was a healthy school. Information from their written responses supported analysis of the drawings. MacGregor, et al’s (1998) analysis relied more on the written responses than the pictures, although general features of the pictures were noted that supported categories formed from analysis of the children’s writing.

6.10 Interpretation of drawings

Interpretation of drawings is a problem for the draw-and-write technique. Adults place their own interpretation on drawings and fail to make time for children to have their ideas heard and understood (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999). Language is a difficulty when researcher and children do not share a common language. Teachers were needed for example to interpret drawings of the war trauma children in Miles’ (2000) study, though Miles acknowledged that it might have been better for children to interpret the drawings themselves. Children’s age and language acquisition may also cause difficulties for interpretation. Language clarity is important when researching with children as images need to be translated into words for analysis (Harrison, 2002). An important feature of the draw-and-write technique however, is that children’s writing, or text on drawings, is used in the interpretation of drawings (MacGregor, et al., 1998; Miles, 2000; Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995).

Children’s drawings are a useful way of data gathering to explore children’s beliefs and of describing the world in which they live (Backett-Milburn & McKie, 1999; Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995; Woods, et al., 2005). For some researchers however, there are concerns.
when children are treated as objects of research, rather than active participants in the research process. A growing body of research about children’s views and perspectives is valuable when the research outcomes benefit children, as for Miles’ (2000) war victims. There is a trend to involve children in the research analysis process, rather than using them as the objects of research. Punch (2002) reminds that the method is only useful if based on children’s skill levels rather than on adult competencies.

While use of children’s drawings raises ethical concerns regarding children in the research process, that is, using children’s artwork makes the research “on” children rather than “for” children, ownership of drawings is a further concern for some researchers (Pridmore & Bendelow, 1995). Ownership of the drawings in my research was considered in the ethics approval process. Both parents and children were informed that no one would see their responses except me, and the questionnaires (and drawings on them) would be destroyed after 6 years, as required by the University. All children who participated assented and signed their consent.

One challenge to the use of children’s drawings is because of the possible harm to children. Miles (2000) considered whether drawings showing effects of war trauma could lead to further trauma but found little evidence to suggest this. Another consideration was the possibility of voyeuristic attention from journalists when children’s drawings showed war and violence. Countering criticism of the draw-and-write method with war victims, Miles supported the use of drawings to assist with children’s therapy in developing a hopeful view of their future.

Supporters of the draw-and-write method argue that it lends itself as a quick method of data gathering. Employing draw-and-write in a school context is helpful because it is a quick method and shortens the time for school visits (Woods, et al., 2005). Certainly this was the case for my study gathering children’s questionnaires at the conclusion of the school year in December. The end of the school year in New Zealand is traditionally a very busy time when assessments and reports are completed. But it is also a time when schools are more likely to focus on outdoor education as opposed to more traditional academic curriculum areas. This also meant children’s questionnaire and drawing data related to recent outdoor education experiences.

In this study, children were subjects of research, but they were not the prime focus. The draw-and-write technique was part of data gathering but the method was not specifically
followed as children were not directed to explain the drawings; children were simply asked to
draw a picture of them *doing* outdoor education or camp. Their drawings presented another
perspective on outdoor education. While I admit that interpretation of artworks is always
problematic, one solution was to identify emotions portrayed in the pictures and link the
drawing to the child’s favourite activity. Typically there was no written text on the drawing
page, but all the drawings showed children doing recognisable outdoor education activities.

I read the drawings as children’s expressions of their outdoor experience. From the facial
depictions, the drawings revealed happiness was the dominant emotion. I assumed several
things here. First, on the basis of Noreen Wetton’s work, where children’s understanding of
health indicated children equated health with happiness, that is drawing healthy people with
smiles, I assumed smiles indicated enjoyment of participation in outside the classroom
activities and noted the drawn facial expressions. Second, I assumed the children’s written
responses of their favourite activity also indicated enjoyment of participation. For both the
smiles in the pictures, and the comments of favourite activities, children’s pleasure was a
dominant feature of their outdoor experiences.

The two drawings below are typical children’s expressions of their involvement in outdoor
activities. Drawing 1 portrays a wide smile which speaks to me of the enjoyment of sailing
and beckons me into the pleasure with the wave of her hand. Drawing 2 similarly invites me
into the multi-vine climbing activity with wide-open arms and a smile. I read of a secure
relationship with other children represented by the arrow directed to “my group”.

**Drawing 1: Sailing**

**Drawing 2: The Multi-vine**
Seventy of the 112 pictures showed children’s smiling faces. Other drawings showed no mouths drawn, or the figure was drawn from behind. Only one picture, Drawing 3, had a downturned mouth where the illustration showed a child banged on the head by a yacht’s boom. The child’s written response to Question 12 “Have you ever had an accident?” was “I got hit in the head with a boom when I was sailing” (male 10).

Another image, Drawing 4, showed a dead or exhausted child (tongue out, crosses for eyes) and this student (male, 11) listed 5 mishaps in response to the question about accidents, while the written response to the question “Would you like to do more or less outdoor education?” was that he already did enough activity with running and rugby training (mentioned previously).

Many drawings related to the child’s favourite activity. The two pictures below are examples; Drawing 5 shows a child abseiling; joy is evident on the girl’s face and her arms are high and open. Abseiling was her best outdoor education activity. There is a wide smile again on Drawing 6 – the Flying Fox was this child’s favourite activity because he enjoyed flying into a pond. A sense of exhilaration is shown by his smile, up-raised arms and the splashing water.
I “read” several stories from Drawing 7. The illustration shows the Case Study campsite and one of the walks around the bay and across the hills. I followed the same track myself; it was steep and the children were much faster than the adults. The artist has mapped the area with the campsite (bottom left of picture – difficult to see because the image was cropped), Pudding Island, a boat with an outboard motor and the steepness of the trail. The picture illustrates the delight of height and distance that enables a view of familiar sights. The drawing also speaks to me about children’s energy and speed. The child artist liked “everything about camp”. 
An overwhelming number of children’s written responses indicated wanting to do more outdoor education. One child who did not want to do more outdoor education wrote that she enjoyed outdoor education but did not want too much, “I like the amount of outdoor education that we do already. If we did too much it would begin to get tiresome”, (female, 10 years).

My interpretations, drawing on observations, participation in some of the campsite activities and the children’s questionnaire responses support my contention that pleasure for children is a significant motivator for participation in outdoor activities. I turn now to a particular activity of the school camp that I participated in: the weta walk.

The weta walk is my impressionist tale, my participation in what I identified as an exciting activity. The weta walk provided the opportunity to get lost in the experience as I moved between experiencing the walk, remembering the walk, and then re-experiencing it via an audio-tape taken during the walk.

6.11 An impressionist tale: The weta walk experience

Van Maanen (1988) suggests impressionist tales evoke a participatory sense of described events. He asks the audience to relive the tale rather than analyse or interpret. I used the walk to provide a sense of the dramatic tones of the experience. The vignette below attempts to
draw the reader into the experience of the weta walk, relating the event suggestively. As Van Maanen says, “Make of it what you will” (p. 103):

It was really dark! We stumbled at first. At night the bush is oppressive. The walk was confined by regulated space, walking in single file, the children were told to be quiet in order to hear the sounds of the night. When Bruce stopped the group to discuss an item of interest, walkers at the rear of the file could not hear. This caused some confusion. I was at the back of the group and did not know what was happening. Stopping and starting with no indication of what was happening was disconcerting. The ground is uneven and even torch-light fails to show gnarled roots growing into the path, or the slippage of gravel from the pathway.

Even though children were allowed to use torches, an audiotape of the walk indicated they still found the walk difficult. The walk was quiet except for footsteps and whispered voices and occasional muted excitement when weta were found. One large weta was discovered by a small group of children. I stood behind with several parents while Suzie questioned children about weta anatomy. I could hear parents whispering that they did not like weta but this did not appear to be a concern for children. They were excited at finding weta for they are not numerous and are difficult to spot on trees.

The track winds upwards through native bush to a grassy knoll overlooking an estuary, then drops downhill to where glow-worms can be found, before passing beside State Highway 1 to return to the cars. The upward track ends on a grassy knoll giving a view of the night sky. Bruce took the opportunity to question children on their knowledge of stars and to introduce a method of locating the stars of the Southern Cross. Afterwards the track went downhill toward overhanging banks and glow-worms. The track’s steepness was alerted to children and parents. However, several people slipped and Bruce, at the front of the pack, paid little attention to those at the back. Suzie with the rear group was able to control the speed of their descent. The track wound steeply downwards to a bridge where children could stand and look for glow-worms. There was a hushed silence during this time and clusters of glow-worm were visible.

Walking in dark bush is not something that many children or parents had done previously. There was an element of excitement, but also fear; it is difficult making your way in the dark when the track is unknown. The walk requires a reasonable level fitness in the daytime, but in the dark it becomes more difficult, particularly for adults who were ill-prepared and without adequate footwear. Parents were not told of the condition of the track before the walk. The
adults that I walked with grumbled about this. I found the walk difficult myself as I was also not aware of the nature of the track nor the distance nor time to travel.

6.12 Multiple ways the weta walk was experienced

Phenomenology involves listening, re-listening and contemplation. The weta walk was a phenomenon worthy of inquiry because it offered an opportunity to involve all these actions in attempts to understand the essence of this experience. Was it pleasurable being in the dark? Was it an experience to be savoured, or one to reject and never attempted again? An audio-tape of the walk enabled another listening of the event, a re-listening, contemplation and “surrendering” to the experience. Contemplation, the open receptive stance (Crotty, 1996, p. 278) was achieved through re-listening to ponder on the meaning of the walk for myself and what it meant to others.

Parents in my immediate vicinity during the walk found it challenging, irksome and dangerous (one twisted an ankle). But for me it was an extraordinary experience. Being in native bush at night with the sounds of the night is an unusual experience for many people, and certainly it was for me. Darkness exemplified feelings of being alone. Sounds were intensified and lack of visual stimulus only enhanced the experience. I do not say that there was no light, but that light is very reduced in the bush.

What the world means to us - and in this case what the night world meant to us as a group - was affected by features of the walk; the dark, steepness and difficulty of the track, not knowing where to go or put one’s feet on a gravelly steep track certainly intensified the experience. Sounds were brought into relief - and this is shown through re-listening the walk with the audio-tape. The trip, a gradual discovery of the night, follows Schmidt’s (2005) assertion that intense experiences are like swimming in a pool of wonderment, though in this case we were struggling on a track of wonderment.

6.13 My experience of the darkness

Contemplation of the event, and participation and immersion in it, informs this section. My experience of the weta walk is only understood in terms of what it meant to me. My subjective meaning of the walk, the experience of, and immersion in the walk put myself into the research process. Walking at night, through bush, was not a prior experience for me. It was in turn, exhilarating, disconcerting, humorous and scary. As a researcher exploring the phenomenon, I remained open to the complexities of the experience. My body momentarily
came into consciousness when I was afraid that I might slip, fall and break a bone, yet I was also aware of a freeing delight. As it was difficult to read faces in the dark, I listened to others around me to grasp how it might be for them and found similar whispered concerns about falling, and a sense of the unusual.

My researcher-self found the experience of the walk intimate and stunning in a natural world sense. It was dark, creatures of the night were a focus, and my involvement was personally confronting. Being in the dark, I experienced an elemental sense of fear, excitement and freedom, invigoration of the unknown; nobody ‘knew’ others. In a sense we were all walking alone grappling with the darkness. The only sound was the tromping of feet on the gravel path. The audio-tape that I listened to afterwards elicited vivid memories of the walk. Memories of tiredness, dark, lack of balance, odd hushed murmurings, creature sounds, and calls of Morepork (owls).

I can only assume from my participation, and from conversations with teachers and written comments of others (parents and children) what the experience meant for them. What people said (or wrote) about the weta walk provided some insight into their reality of the event, as language opens up common understandings (Cameron, 2001). The discussion which follows explores how children, their parents and teachers experienced the walk.

6.14 Children’s experience of the walk: Remembered anxiety

Anxiety is one indicator of participants’ relationship with risk and danger. The night walk was not particularly dangerous or risky, but was an unfamiliar experience for many participants. Before the walk there was a sense of subdued excitement, and during the walk some incidents agitated anxiety - the dark, a fall and some slips. Children, though not appearing anxious before or during the walk reported being anxious after the walk. This was not surprising. Beforehand the teacher hyped up the walk by creating it as much more exciting than it actually was. But children’s and parents’ written post-walk comments referred to the dangerousness of the walk, with the possibility of harm. My observations during the walk lead me to assume that while many children were reasonably confident, some did find it a scary event.

The weta walk was identified by one-third of the camp children as the “most scary” activity. When I reflected that children were taken by car at night-time to an unknown location, past
their usual bedtimes, this was unsurprising. Little of the darkened environment was familiar. People were known, but not all, and there were as many parents as children on the walk.

Children reflected uneasiness of the dark, again this is unsurprising as fear of the dark is a primal fear. The unknown, and the darkness, contributed to this remembered apprehension. Being lost in the dark and that one might never be found is a common childhood fear. One child’s response highlighted this fear, “I slipped and I was worried that I was going to get lost”.

Damaged bodies must have appeared in the imagination of some of the children, as they did for myself - several wrote about falling down - losing bodily control and getting hurt, “I thought that I was going to fall down off the edge” because there were “narrow parts in the big hills that you could fall down into”.

For another child the weta walk was the worst activity because of the length of the walk, “you had to walk for ages”. However, these comments did not appear to be their experiences during the walk; I did not ‘hear’ fear from children. I did hear irritation and concern from parents about the dark and the slippery nature of the track. For children I heard some excitement at locating weta, or glow-worms or locating the stars of the Southern Cross.

Yet, when children had time to ponder on and consider their experience of the weta walk, the responses did not correspond to my relating of the event. For example, fear of weta was mentioned even though pre-camp study included detailed work on weta, a form of desensitisation. One child thought that a weta was going to jump out at her. Admittedly weta are fierce looking insects but they have an undeserved dangerous reputation. Another child wrote that a weta did jump on her leg - I am uncertain of this as I heard no cries during the walk, and the night was still enough to hear Morepork calls echo through the bush.

Children’s experiences of the walk, as determined by their written and spoken words, did not correspond to those of their teachers, neither the enthusiastic one, Bruce, taking the walk, nor other teachers who had previously done the walk and enjoyed it.

6.15 Teachers’ experiences of the walk: Control

Prepared outdoor education teachers are in control; they know what will happen and the walk is well planned. They have completed the walk during the day, and if uncertain they enlist a practised teacher to supervise, as happened on the night that I did the walk. Teachers have
told children about the night life they will encounter, and where the walk will take place, and the need to be fit. Organised teachers are then able to relax into the experience. Bruce, the practiced teacher, in a one-on-one interview, dubbed ‘the Fun-maker’ (in a following chapter), said that he was invigorated by the experience and loved it, “I just love it for the kids being out there, being able to do night sky with no city lights around. The peacefulness ... there is time to boast their knowledge about weta stuff”. It appeared important for this teacher to showcase to parents what children had learned; “The parents go, ‘Oh I didn’t know they knew so much’. So it’s a bit of push-sell”.

For the teachers, the weta walk is an established part of their school camp; they know in advance how the walk will unfold. They are secure that they have taught well, and children have learned about nature encountered on the walk. The children for their part have mapped the walk and learned about insects and birds. They know how they will be transported to the track (although some forget this detail). Many children had never walked at night through bush but from my observation they were not overly perturbed by the event. They trusted their teacher to know what to do.

Their parents had a different experience. I observed some anxiety on the night (concern about slipping, being unfit, not knowing where exactly they were to go) and this apprehension was expressed in their questionnaire responses.

6.16 Parents’ experience of the walk: Anxiety

Observing parents on the weta walk, taking part in the activity, and considering parents’ questionnaire responses, I was able to make some sense of parents’ experience of the walk. Children at risk, and risk anxiety are common aspects of parental relationships (Scott, et al., 1998). During the walk however, I did not hear parents voicing any concerns. At the tail end, I heard some slipping on the gravel track, both children and parents, and when we paused I heard whispers about “How much further ahead?”, and “Which direction?” as unlike the teachers we did not know these things. The parents and I did not voice our concerns or anxieties, but parents did write afterward about their anxiety when there was time to reflect on the experience, as I was able to.

Many parents’ responses identified the weta walk as theirs and their child’s least-enjoyed activity. Possibly because they themselves had to drive to an unknown destination, it was night-time and they felt ill-prepared. One parent questioned “the necessity of travelling at
bedtime from a safe isolated environment by car, on a busy road to another location! When there could be a similar experience to be had on-site or close by”. Parents had concerns about the weta walk because it was not much fun for themselves and many children due to the pace they were expected to keep. They did not always feel safe where they were walking due to the lack of light. Their experience was reflected upon as a less than desirable one.

Some of the responses had a “grumbling” feel to them and the essence of the experience was not positive. Lack of fun for parents and children was identified, particularly because of the speed to keep pace with the lead teacher. It was a “crazy weta walk”, and “wasn’t much fun for many children and parents due to the pace the children were expected to keep” and “at the end of the day, wetas are not that exciting for everyone”. Several responses wrote of the weta walk that was not a walk but a march.

The lead teacher was criticised for lacking sensitivity toward the needs of children (they were tired having had a long walk during the day), walking too fast (it was a march) and making parents feel inadequate (made children and parents feel like idiots). The weta walk lacked enjoyment. However, for one parent, the night was thrilling. It was exciting being in the dark, doing something unusual; it was “the thrill of the dark” and their child “most enjoyed the weta walk because it was something different, an evening activity, in an exciting environment”.

For me, it was also exciting though I felt lost, uncertain and unable to look ahead to ascertain the terrain. The parents and I had to trust the teacher in charge. It was an uncomfortable feeling. It was not a dangerous track, but the unknowingness of it made it appear so. As Ortega y Gasset notes (in Crotty, 1996), getting lost is part of the phenomenological process. I had not expected to feel quite so lost and lacking in control. But when I opened myself to the experience, surrendered to it, grasped its impressions, these data enabled me, like a fisherperson, to lift the net to see what I caught (Crotty, 1996, p. 278). Part of my contemplation of the experience involved listening during the walk, and re-listening to the audio-tape of that night walk. Crotty (1996) notes that the idea of listening is part of the phenomenological inquiry, as part of an open receptive stance. The audio-tape offered me this opportunity to re-open myself to the night walk.
The experience of re-listening: The taped version - the aural account

I hear footsteps tromping, crunching on the track. There are murmurings, and then the sound stops. Later there are the calls of ruru (Morepork) echoing through the bush. Listening to the audio-tape is an illusion; if I close my eyes I am really back in the dark, listening in the blackness, tromping on gravel; as the tape winds on, I am there on that walk in that place. It is an evocative account of the evening. There is a feeling of transcendence from meditating on the sound. The tape records the sounds of footsteps, whisperings and rustlings. The audiotape cannot be transcribed; it is a sound record of that evening and of that particular walk. The tape-recording’s soundscape captures the walk for interpretation by the listener, in this case, myself.

The audio was one way to re-experience that real world engagement of the physical body. The real world experience of the walk was limited by reduced vision but the audio version limits all senses except that of hearing. Re-visiting the experience aurally of course is different from the original experience. However, Dewey (1938) claimed that the quality of an experience has an impact on subsequent experiences, with every experience taking up something from earlier experiences. So, initially experiencing the walk positively, as powerful and invigorating, as did the parent who found it thrilling, would mean a similar experience when re-visiting the walk via the audio-tape.

Participants on the walk who listened to the audio would interpret it as an account of that night. After the camp, children constructed a sound play of the walk. I listened to it and was immediately taken back to the night and of tromping through the bush. With an array of sound instruments the children captured the experience for listeners. But would listeners who had not been on the walk have grasped the nature of the experience? No. They would have constructed their own meaning around the soundscape, but would not have been transported back to that specific night walk.

That night walk offered physical experiences close to nature. The audio-tape offers one version of the event experienced as a listened event. For me, the recorded sound was a true account of my experience. Experience is not only formed through talking, but also from listening and thinking. The sound-scape provided another source of information to make meaning from. The audiotaped sound is not of the real world; it has an illusionary feel to it that is reminiscent of the actual event, but it is not the actual event. The tape reminds me of
that night; I am transported back to the event and think of illusion when listening to the tromping of feet in the aural world.

The notion of trompe l’oeil (Johnson, 2005) comes to mind when listening to the footsteps tromping on the gravel pathway. While trompe l’oeil work is a visual trickery, one version of reality, the tape is an aural version evoking the walk that I took part in, and the illusion is of being there again at that time. The physicality of the walk is not re-experienced; it is remembered and felt through connection with the audio; as a listener I am connected to the visual and physical world by the authenticity of the sound (Keller, 2006). My experience of the walk, and of revisiting, raised questions on the importance of the experiential nature of school outdoor education. Experiential education, beginning with John Dewey’s progressive approach, is entrenched in New Zealand’s outdoor education programmes. My experience, the mystical, the authentic, enjoyable and challenging is one that is familiar to many participants in outdoor education.

6.18 Comment

This chapter has offered multiple versions of the school camp and of the weta walk. My overall impression of the camping experience was one of pleasure. On the whole, concern about children’s safety was not often expressed during the event. A tension between pleasure and safety was present in parts of the weta walk, yet as I commented in my post-camp diary, while student safety worried the teacher before the camp and parents after the camp, as expressed in the interviews and questionnaires, safety did not appear to be a major worry for children. Perhaps their lack of understanding about safety contributed to children’s enjoyment of school camp and other outdoor education experiences. One child expressed a strong resistance to safety talk. In reply to the question “What kinds of things do you do to keep safe in outdoor education?” wrote “I don’t CARE!!” Adult concerns about safety are another matter however, and the following chapter steps aside from the pleasurable experiences of outdoor education, and investigates how anxieties about children’s safety shape non-specialist teachers’ practice.
Teachers talk: The repertoires

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I turn away from the experiential aspect of education outdoors and turn toward teachers’ talk and the constructive processes operating in the field. What counts as education in the outdoor classroom is constructed and reconstructed in the talk of the teachers who plan its curriculum and put it into practice. Here I consider how teachers’ talk does this construction work, particularly as they negotiate the tension between “pleasure”, “safety” and “risk”. For teachers, safe practice is often in conflict with the promotion of adventurous risk-taking. An analysis of their talk shows how the tension between safety and risk-taking adventure is managed by fluid movement between argument and justification.

My analysis of teachers’ talk is guided by the concept “interpretative repertoires”. This means I focus on the linguistic resources employed by teachers when discussing particular versions of education outside the classroom. Transcripts of teachers’ talk, are not seen as simply describing teachers’ realities but as specimens of collaborative interpretive practices (Talja, 1999). It is these interpretive practices that construct or form reality for teachers’ practice.

Taking a social constructionist position, I focus on meaning-making derived from the social interactions and language resources available to this study’s particular educational groups. Shared meanings about schools’ education outside the classroom are reflected in language resources such as health and safety policies, school practices or outdoor education/EOTC guides. I take seriously Gubrium and Holstein’s (2003, p. 215) argument that the exercise of meaning-making is a methodical one, so I have focused on the methodical construction of versions or accounts, paying attention to patterns of argument, descriptions and evaluations found in talk, as well as the content of the talk. Because meaning-making occurs in reciprocal talk, I show how tensions between safety, danger and adventure play out in teachers’ shared talk about their work and experiences in education outside the classroom.

The term interpretative repertoire is used by Potter and Wetherell (1990; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) to highlight the situated and action-oriented nature of meaning-making in talk. Interpretative repertoires are the recurrent language units that enable speakers to construct their accounts. Recurrently used systems for “characterizing and evaluating actions, events and other phenomena” (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 149) are often “assembled around … vivid images” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992, p. 90). It is these interpretive systems that are used
to construct versions of events. This approach recognises there are multiple versions of events, and variability in versions, or accounts, and it is this feature that offers an analytic lever when focusing attention on specific details in talk (Potter & Wetherell, 2004).

Interpretative repertoires are always versions organised in particular contexts and in the performance of procedures or actions. Identification of repertoires depends on their recognisability and on shared social and cultural knowledge (Taylor, 2003). A fine-grained analysis (McCreanor & Nairn, 2002) was necessary to identify the most systematically used meanings in teachers’ talk. My analysis concentrated on the language used, the kinds of descriptions and accounts of education outside the classroom and the construction of different versions.

Drawing on Potter and Wetherell’s (2004; Wetherell & Potter, 1992) analytic method, I have paid specific attention to the ways teachers reported on, and rationalised, their actions to others. I identify and document how available discursive resources are used by teachers to organise their beliefs and actions. I show how actions are constrained by available resources. Analysis also focuses on variability of interpretations to bring out the background assumptions “rarely voiced but which are implicitly part of a particular way of talking about things” (Talja, 1999, p. 472).

I was particularly interested in the ways in which talk was presented as reasonable because rationality alerted me to the interests and orientation of the speaker. Searching for rationality in accounts is a distinguishing feature of Potter and Wetherell’s (2004, p. 247) version of discourse analysis. While my analysis considered the situated nature of talk, the action orientation of language use, my attention was also on meanings and topics, grammar and cohesion of teachers’ talk. Variability of accounts, persuasive or argumentative organisation of talk revealed the operation of the constructive processes and the functionality of the repertoires.

The process of mapping the repertoires identified the procedures through which versions were constructed and made to appear factual. Descriptive resources of the repertoires were identified. Persuasive argument used to support particular versions, or the way versions were manufactured is indicated in the analysis. Also taken into account during analysis were the positions held by teachers. Those with greater power in the school hierarchy were in a position to have greater sway in argument. One of the analyses demonstrates a positioning struggle between two teachers and the repertoires they employ as signs of a “rhetorical
struggle” (Potter & Wetherell, 1990, p. 3). Rhetoric or argumentative threads signal when talk is displayed as rational and difficult to challenge, as happened when teachers employ the safe practitioner repertoire.

7.2 The teachers who talk

I interviewed 24 female and male primary school teachers from both parts of the study, the Five Schools and Camp Case study. The interviews were conducted either in small focus groups of teachers involved in some way with outdoor education or in one-on-one interviews with lead teachers of outdoor education. Lead teachers are in charge of their primary school’s outdoor education programme and most had specialist training in either risk-management systems, or some form of activity training such as kayaking or skiing. Each of the lead teachers who took part in talk with me or in a group has over 20 years primary school teaching experience (see chapter 5). I named the lead teachers, but did not name the participants in the focus groups, because I was more interested (for the group situation) in the workings of the repertoires, the fluid “in action” use of repertoires, rather than the individual teachers. One focus group situation however, did present an opportunity to highlight the argumentative threads, and the two teachers are named Lizzie and Anne (see chapter 8).

7.3 The analytic process

To analyse the teachers’ talk, I focused on combination of patterns of discourse and use of particular terms such as risk, safety, enjoyment or adventure. I concentrated on the existence of a particular combination of patterns, regular patterns or recurring patterns of discourse. Particular patterns enabled identification of teachers’ repertoires in outdoor education/EOTC. As Potter and Wetherell (2004) suggest, I first identified recurring patterns, themes and concepts found in the teachers’ talk. My process of analysis followed consideration of these aspects (Potter & Wetherell, 2004):

1. Using variation as a lever.

2. Reading the detail.

3. Looking for rhetorical organisation.

4. Looking for accountability.

5. Cross-referencing other studies of teachers’ talk.
My careful reading of the transcripts focused on these five actions. Variation within an individual teacher’s talk, or between talk alerted me to the function of a repertoire. My main focus was searching for rhetoric because key features of a repertoire are drawn upon in argument. The five analytic foci do not all have the same status as some refer to textual features considered important by discourse theorists while others refer more to “craft skills” (Potter & Wetherell, 2004, p. 254). They are not seen as distinct from one another but “often overlap and as the analyst becomes more skilled the separation becomes less clear-cut” (p.254).

One of the central features of this approach is a concern with rhetoric; that is looking for persuasive organisation. I inspected teachers’ talk for the way it was organised to make argumentative cases to undermine opposing cases. For Potter and Wetherell (2004, p. 257) rhetorical organisation of talk draws attention “away from questions about how a version relates to some putative reality … and focuses it on how a version relates to competing alternatives”. This was especially useful during my analysis when argument occurred. Oppositional cases led to my growing understanding of the different repertoires drawn upon. My naming of the repertoires came at the end of analysis, and afterwards I was able to describe the function of the repertoires. For example when the “safe practitioner” repertoire was employed by teachers, teachers who employed the “adventurous risk-taker” repertoire were made to appear dangerous and unsafe. The “safe teacher” was privileged over “risk-taking” and “thrill-seeking” teacher. This formation is discussed in detail below when outlining the “safe practitioner” repertoire.

Looking for accountability in talk is closely linked to the concern with rhetoric. Establishing one’s actions and claims as accountable “can be viewed as constructing them in ways which make them hard to rebut or undermine” (Potter & Wetherell, 2004). Accountable claims which seem to be “fair and objective” (p. 258) are difficult to counter. Justifications were a focus here, and of particular interest was how accountability was employed with reference to the themes of child safety and accidents.

Accountability was only one of the five actions employed in my process of determining the repertoires drawn upon when teachers talk about education outside the classroom. The repertoires were only named after a deep reading of transcripts and consideration of the five aspects to identify themes. Reading the detail enabled a close analysis of language and the
way it was used to establish and defend arguments or positions within the topic of safety and education outside the classroom.

7.4 Naming the repertoires through analysis

Naming the repertoires is the endpoint of the analytic process after systematic examination of data (McKenzie, 2005). I made multiple readings of the transcripts before I named the repertoires. My deep engagement with the texts through multiple readings alerted me to the range of devices employed to privilege some teacher accounts over others. The way language was used to establish and defend an argument or position, the way argumentative points were made, the organisation of the language and the resources drawn upon enabled a description of the patterns, or interpretative repertoires. Some of the interpretative resources available that teachers drew upon to construct outdoor education practice had patterns of good professional or unprofessional and safe/unsafe constructs. The resources evidenced in discourses drawn up by teachers are part of the available language resources mentioned earlier.

From my analytic position, a difficulty arose when reading data because my assumptions about what teachers were thinking came to the forefront. I needed to remind myself to return the focus of data as “specimens of interpretative practices” (Talja, 1999, p. 472) rather than as descriptive statements. I needed to consider the workings of discourse. Standing aside from the interviews in this manner was difficult as I was both interviewer and transcriber. My analytic focus was on the rhetorical and argumentative organisation in the textual data and not the reactions or my assumptions about teachers’ understandings.

The analytic process is summarised:

Close reading of texts→identify recurring patterns in talk→themes, commonly used linguistic resources→search for variation, rhetoric, accountability→name repertoires. The process is not linear, but an insightful practice on the part of the researcher where naming the repertoires is the final step of the analysis. It became apparent that there were three significant repertoires that teachers drew upon when constructing accounts of their actions and beliefs in outdoor education. The descriptions, functions and effects of the repertoire were identified during the analysis.

I named three repertoires from my analysis: Safe practitioner, Adventurous risk-taker and Fun, pleasure and excitement seeker. The fun repertoire drew on resources of laughter and humour. The safe practitioner and adventurous risk-taker repertoires were more significant
discourses when talking about education outside the classroom, and on occasion worked in opposition to each other. It was difficult to argue for risk-taking against safe practice, particularly when the topic of children’s accidents or deaths arose. I describe the repertoires in the following section. In this discussion I use interview extracts and highlight the repertoire’s language resources. The safe practitioner was the most commonly drawn-upon repertoire and this section is the most detailed.

7.5 Safe practitioner

The safe outdoor educator talk has certain clear characteristics: a constant reference to risk and mention of the possibility of children’s deaths. This repertoire is most commonly drawn upon by teachers when describing their own education outside the classroom practice. Key ideas and terms employed included risk management, being aware, our school, being professional and focus on safety.

Analysis of the talk, of the argumentative threads, suggested subject positions were at play in sections of talk (Wetherell, 1998, p. 400). Subject positions were taken up, intentionally or unintentionally when teachers wanted to present themselves in particular ways. The safe practitioner for example, presents as a careful professional who conforms to safety regulations and is vigilant and aware of what children are doing at all times. When drawing on this repertoire teachers assume responsibility for child safety by being alert. The possibility of the death of a child is proffered to support a vigilant stance because “You never know what could happen if you are not alert”. The death of a child, particularly from drowning is a winning argument drawn from this repertoire.

The evaluative functions of being watchful (of children) and always present become good characteristics of a safe practitioner: “It’s not bad to be vigilant”, “It’s more professional”. Reference to past organisation of outdoor education presents lack of vigilance as a negative feature: “In the past we were not as careful” and calls into question former relaxed and unsafe practices:

We used to go to the beach, the whole school would go into the sea and parents would just be standing on the edge of the water... after those two children drowned, we went to the beach and we had big ropes with all the fathers standing in a big wall along the sea. And then we decided that it was just too much of a worry for everybody so we never went again. (Ella experienced female lead teacher)
20 years ago you roped in a handful of parents...and you went OK, well I know Joe Bloggs and he sails a boat and he’s got a couple of Optimists [sailing dinghies] so let’s take the kids sailing. (T3 young female teacher)

Drawing on past practice and comparing that with current good practice was a device used to present oneself as safer than other teachers. Comparisons such as this were common linguistic devices to sustain the version of oneself as safe, and more particularly used in relation to other schools or other teachers.

The safe practitioner repertoire justifies the use of safety mechanisms (conforming to Ministry of Education (2003b) safety guidelines), the reduction of outdoor activities (to take children away from harm) and non-involvement in outdoor education (outdoor education is constructed as unsafe).

The safe practitioner position affirms support for safety regulations and the use of Risk Analysis and Management Systems (RAMS). While the safe practitioner presents the use of safety management systems as essential, the argument is undermined and contradicted when a teacher speculates that “RAMS can’t cover everything” and uncertainty or uncertain outcomes are presented as facts, and examples are called upon to legitimate this. Calling into question the ability of RAMS to cover every possibility of risk protection is shown:

We had a trip on Monday night and we were doing a sleepover and we had to vacate all of the children from the room that they were sleeping in because there was ... [something on the roof top] so we had to get them out ... now that wasn’t written in a RAMS, we didn’t assume that that was going to happen we didn’t – it’s just one of those things. So...any number of RAMS you write you can’t cover all things. (T14 experienced female teacher)

You think about that child who collapsed at the cross country race - well that certainly isn’t in our RAMS cause why would we foresee that a child would have a heart attack? (T13 young female teacher)

After 9/11, I took a group down to the Cup Village – I took all of a year (school group) down there – it was the day that they threatened to poison all the food - so we ended up in a terrorist situation\(^4\) that we hadn’t put into a RAMS. (T14 experienced female teacher)

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\(^4\) A terror alert occurred in February 2003 after cyanide found in letter to US Embassy, Wellington.
Such situations were called upon to illustrate the uncertainty of safe practice when safe outcomes cannot be absolutely guaranteed. Uncertainty is a feature of risk society (Beck, 1992) where dangerous outcomes are unpredictable; hence this counterargument is used to display the ultimate inability of the RAMS to ensure accident-free outdoor education. And yet, conversely, the use of RAMS was frequently invoked as an indicator of safe practice.

Taking children into the outdoors is unsafe, risky and dangerous in this repertoire. Employing the safe practitioner repertoire, outdoor education activities are brought into being as risky; the riskiness of outdoor education supports non-involvement and avoidance of the outdoors. The ‘outdoors is dangerous’ argument supports reliance on experts who are named as professional instructors, and brings to the forefront child deaths. A drowning incident where two children died was a recurrent resource supporting the riskiness of outdoor education activities:

Anything to do with water is generally considered as a higher-risk activity and there are guidelines in our documentation for the sort of ratio that you would need when you are doing some. (Frank, experienced male lead teacher)

...made me very aware of the possibilities, I mean that child could have just stepped in the water and she could have gone. (T15 young female teacher)

...there have been some drownings on school camps in previous years. (T22 experienced male teacher)

The danger of outdoor education was called upon in interviews to justify a reduction in school’s outdoor education activities. Teachers that had previously taken overnight camps either at school or in a safe place were loathe to take camps because of the higher risk involved. In the following extract a teacher employs the safe practitioner repertoire to argue against letting children sleep out in a tent. She calls upon a situation of danger and uses the ‘past was safe’ argument in support:

You didn’t used to think twice about going down to the local farmer and pitching a tent. Now everybody thinks twice about that, it’s not just an EOTC issue, it’s a safety issue from

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5 The incident occurred in 2004 on a school camp: two boys drowned and the Coronial inquiry found negligence on the part of the adults in charge of the camp. The Ministry of Education subsequently increased the safety requirements for children taking part in water activities.
parents’ perspective, it’s like we are in [a small rural school] and you don’t just let your kids go camping without really seriously thinking about it. Last year we were at Chosen Valley, there was a prison escapee who got loose in the hills, now we didn’t tell our children about it, but the previous year, we had allowed the facility for children who wanted, only those who wanted, to actually spend a night under canvas. We stopped that last year, we let them go under canvas but it was in the grounds whereas before we had actually sent in them into the bush with parents. But we didn't do it last year because we had the reports that this guy was on the loose. I mean, he got caught, and our kids never knew a thing about it, but, he was in the Bombays [a range of hills] and we were in the hills, and he’d already held up somebody with a shotgun, and we didn’t need that. [nervous laughter] (Gil, experienced female lead teacher)

The above account highlights the risk of camping outdoors. At the same time it presents a case for the unlikeliness of there being a problem “I mean he got caught” and subsequently calling on the “he was in the hills and we were in the hills” argument for the possibility of both worlds colliding; a gun and children - an unconceivable disaster. In another interview a teacher warrants his account by calling on another police case that could also have had unthinkable consequences had there been children camping at school at the time. Both arguments support cancelling overnight school camping:

I had a programme we ran here for many many years where we started with the new entrant classes and we gradually built up to older classes. Year Two would camp overnight in the school grounds, you couldn’t camp them overnight in the school grounds now... [Why not?]… the risk is too high because of the people that come through the school grounds, the yobbos that are around. We had a stabbing on the bottom field down here a while back that was actually on a television police programme. It wasn’t the school involved, it was people using the school as a shortcut to get from point A to point B and having a rumble in the middle. But what happens is that this school gets the bad effect of that, and because there’s a heck of a lot of people around doing those sorts of things it’s just not worth the risk of camping one hundred 6 and 7-year-olds in the school grounds overnight…it’s more dangerous not because of what you are doing but because of outside influences beyond your control such as people high on P or whatever, drunken louts, gang turf battles or all that sort of stuff. (Frank, experienced male lead teacher)
The teacher presents overnight camping in the school grounds as dangerous because you can’t trust the yobbos, the risk is too high. This version presents a powerful argument for not having school camps: use of the terms stabbing, drunken louts, gang turf battles and police create images that do not fit with commonly held images of children camping, that is singing around the campfire, toasting marshmallows or happy campers who commune with nature. Camping is depicted as a dangerous and unsafe activity.

7.6 The interpretive task of dealing with ‘safety’

An argument of the safe practitioner repertoire is to justify the use of professional instructors for outdoor education. Professionals have a qualification; “I thought they would just be trained in quite a basic way but it turns out a lot of them have got degrees and masters in recreational type studies” (Bev, experienced female teacher). Expert instructors are understood of as more capable because their risk management systems are more comprehensive and they better understand health and safety requirements. As keeping children safe is a key element of the safe practitioner repertoire this argument takes the responsibility for safety provision away from teachers and avoids the anxiety of not providing for safe activities. It has the effect of reducing or even absolving teachers’ responsibility:

*I’m relaxed with kids on the high wire because I know they (the experts) wouldn’t be going there without somebody having really thought through the RAMS and the paperwork like this in here.* [Points to school’s EOTC planning folder] (Gil, experienced female lead teacher)

In contrast to the argument that safety systems cannot prevent all danger, claims are made that qualified experts can manage safety requirements. This stance absolves the teacher from responsibility for children’s safety. The use of qualified instructors is further legitimated with the claim that the teacher is free to stand aside from activities and observe the children. Doing proper teacher things such as getting to know children and seeing them in a different light provides opportunities to enhance teachers’ practice by awareness of children’s strengths and abilities. It also allows the teacher’s non-involvement in the activities:

*It’s cool to have that opportunity because as a teacher, especially with so many kids, I’ve got 34 kids in my class, you never get a chance to step back and see the kids in different ways, but experts give you a chance to step back and see kids. You just see another side of some of the kids, another little aspect to their personality even if you know them quite well. Most of the kids...basically all cope well with things...then you see some kids at either end of the
spectrum. But yeah, you see how they cope, even in the dining room eating their meals, how they go to bed at night. I think you get a bit of an insight to maybe what their family life might be like, by how they cope with the other kids, or how they cope with other adults like the instructors and parents. (Bev, experienced female teacher)

While arguments are presented that safety systems are necessary in outdoor education, a counter-argument can be employed that over-attention to health and safety regulation and systems has the effect of reducing outdoor education: “Outdoor education camps are non-existent in the UK because of health and safety” (T21, British teacher). In a segment of talk during a focus group interview the claim of non-existent camps is expanded by another teacher who maintained that health and safety further limited outdoor education because of the ever-widening field of safety concern. Not only do teachers concern themselves with a child’s physical safety, but that they must also consider damage to the child from the sun (wearing sunhats), or mosquito bites or walking barefoot in the sand (where they might step on broken glass). Teachers “…ensure the kids’ physical safety, and their emotional safety and their health safety, and there’s more pressure… you feel more pressure” (Bev, experienced female teacher).

In the following extract a challenge was made to an increasing safety focus with reference to not just sunhats but appropriate sunhats (those with flaps to protect ears from sunburn). In challenging the attention to detail, reference is made to serious safety concerns while continuing to make the point of the pervasiveness of a safety focus. The adventurer risk-taker repertoire is also drawn upon in this segment with reference to the traditional barefoot Kiwi thing:

It’s not just the, “Oh my god they could fall in the water and drown”, it’s every little detail it’s like the concept of safety has become more pervasive you know it’s like are we making sure they drink water, we making sure that they have their sunhats on. OK, we have the child who has asthma or we have the child who has serious bee sting allergy and stuff... we can foresee these but then it becomes broader and safety issues start to include all kinds of details you know like some schools talk about you have to be wearing shoes... now as Kiwi kids you grew up not wearing shoes and half my class kick their shoes off really quickly and are we responsible for ensuring that ... so that kind of whole safety thing becomes more and more detailed’ (T13)
The challenge to what is considered an excessive safety focus while employing the safe practitioner repertoire enables this argument by referring to a level of ridiculousness with the appropriate sunhats, yet also draws on the possibility of a child drowning. The teacher in making this statement is seen to be serious about children and their safety by making this reference, but is at the same time able to ridicule the extent of safety concerns.

7.7 The safe practitioner repertoire and accidents

When employing this repertoire accidents are presented as a consequence of others’ carelessness (parents, other teachers, and children) because the safe practitioner is always careful and prepared for safety. Lack of organisation and preparation are spoken about as potential contributors to accidents which are then used to justify one’s own high level of preparation for safety. Accidents are linked to lack of care, or preparation, organisation or awareness. Lack of preparation is corroborated by giving examples of accidents that have occurred: the case of the drowning is brought up to support bad teacher organisation and preparation, “Two children drowned, insufficient RAMS, one child jumping on the other, couldn’t find them at the bottom of the pool” (T14).

Conversely, the same case was brought up to support good safe teacher practice “I worked with the music teacher who had been in charge of the camp, and knew that she would have been one of the most organised, planned, most safety conscious people” (Bev, experienced female teacher). This extract came from a one-on-one interview with Bev where she called on a teacher she knows personally, to demonstrate that herself and her colleague are the safest teachers. Blaming was also employed in this extract where the child was at fault because he “kind of wandered out of the area, he’d been told not to go past a certain point, but he did” (Bev). Lack of knowledge of the case is balanced with “I don’t know all the rest of the details” and concludes with a statement that it must have been “very sad for the parents”.

Avoidance of accidents and the possible death of a child justifies safe practice. The drowning case is recounted to support safety mechanisms and the consensus view that “dreadful things shouldn’t happen” or “it’s a cautionary tale” and shows “how accidents can occur very quickly if teachers are not aware”. The safe practitioner repertoire is warranted with the avoidance of children’s death or accidents. There was total consensus in teachers’ assertions never to want to deal with the death of a child.
A number of accidents however, aside from the drowning case, were called upon to support a view that it is not possible to prevent accidents, as for the inability of RAMS to cover all situations. A child collapsed with a heart attack at a cross country event, a terrorist situation at the Auckland waterfront, a child fell onto electrified railway tracks, a child suffered multiple bee stings, or one was skiing too fast down the mountain. These were cited as being beyond the control of teachers and therefore not their fault. In several of the cases it was the fault of others; children were fooling around and not paying attention to the rules, children not doing what they were told to do, like child who poked a stick into the beehive. Blaming the other was presented as justification for not achieving safety.

Often versions were presented that contrasted one’s own practice as ‘safe’ in comparison to others, “I’m different because I’m more organised…I don’t want to make mistakes, I want to get it right, I want to make sure all bases are covered so therefore I do that well ahead of time” (Bruce, experienced male teacher). The positioning of self in relation to others appeared regularly in the talk where one’s own school or one’s self did outdoor education safer, better, our school’s RAMS are more detailed, they were not as organised (or capable, responsible or careful) as us, and we (or I) are better and safer. These versions were able to call on the deficiencies of others.

7.8 The safe practitioner repertoire and risk and challenge

A compelling argument is made in the safe practitioner repertoire to reduce risk in activities. For outdoor activities this reduces the height (closer to the ground therefore less significant injury), or introduces safety harnesses, or modifies the activity to make it safer. If an adventurer risk-taker repertoire is employed some of the modifications become laughable. In this extract a teacher (T14) argues that a school’s health and safety obligations can be managed by bringing activities into the school [rather than taking children out of the school into the outdoors]. In response, the other teacher (T13) argues that the activities lack challenge, but agrees that while children are outside the classroom, they are only just outside the classroom:

_I think more and more we bring the activities to the schools, your responsibility is covered… for a lot of the safety issues … not all of them, but to bring the activities in and there are a lot that we can bring, like climbing walls and you can do dry sailing with the Optys [Optimist sailing dinghies] on the grass and, there’s any number of activities that the schools that make that becomes an option because of safety concerns … that may be the way it goes._ (T14)
Unfortunately that gets tamer and tamer and you get in that catch 22 and yeah they’re outside the classroom - about 5 metres outside the classroom [laughter] - it’s not quite the same. (T13)

In another interview there was positive acknowledgement about finding ways to deal with a reduction in outdoor activities and having to rely on outside providers (experts) who bring equipment into the school to offer challenging activities. One teacher admits to dealing with the conflict: “I think we had a backlash about safety and I think ... that we are getting over it and we’re finding ways to deal with it and are getting comfortable and are just going on. In a lot of ways that’s quite good”. (Gil, experienced teacher)

7.9 **The safe practitioner repertoire and teachers constructed as ‘anal’**

A recognisable descriptor in the safe practitioner repertoire is of a teacher who is careful, detailed and focused on child safety management systems; they are described as anal. Anal is constructed as a personal quality that indicates the features mentioned. A self-described anal teacher constructs these features as positive characteristics. Described as anal by others constructs anality in negative terms, or as a joke at the expense of the teacher defined as such; they have an excessive focus on safety compared to a more relaxed approach. While this descriptor was more commonly employed in the case study interviews it was also referred to in other interviews and having the same features. In one example a teacher recounts a child describing another child in negative terms as anal and she challenges him by portraying anality in positive terms:

[One of the students] ... said one of the boys in his camp group was anal. I asked what he meant by anal, and he said they had to line up their shoes in the tent, the tent had to be tidy and he planned all the food, and I said well did you go hungry and he said no, and I said did you eat well? And he said yeah we had better food than anyone else and I said so what's wrong with being anal then? I said did you have a good time? He said yeah. (Ella, experienced female lead teacher)

For Bruce, a teacher who describes himself as anal, clear links are made between careful organisation, camp rules and the prevention of injury (or death). An experience is offered to support his position:

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6 *Anal links to the psychoanalytic term anal character.*
The reason I’m really anal about water is because a few years ago when ... (my son was at camp), I went down there and there was that child that drowned and after that I thought I never, never, never want to have to say to any parent your child’s drowned because they didn’t follow instructions. (Bruce)

In presenting himself explicitly as anal (in this case careful), details were elaborated on why he was anal, and on the argument to support his stance:

My most anal rule is no one’s ever allowed on the sand without my permission ... and I’m just really strong on that ... [Why is that?] Because on the sand day or night leads to people playing in the water which leads to drowning. (Bruce)

He is compelled to clarify the situation:

I’m anal about water, I’m not anal about cleaning their teeth or anything like that - I don’t care if they don’t clean their teeth for three days ... but I’ve now become more anal in my old age. (Bruce)

A dilemma emerges for this speaker where anality has positive and worthwhile features, but if provision for safety was regulated in such a way that might prevent taking children out into the outdoors, anality is not a good characteristic, it becomes bad:

I would hate to see government regulations get so anal that we wouldn’t be able to do this stuff. (Bruce)

By describing himself as anal, Bruce confirms the detail with which his safety action plans are prepared. There are safety action plans for nearly every possible scenario where harm could occur. While these can be drawn from the Ministry of Education’s (2003) guidelines for safe practice in EOTC, Bruce is able to describe in detail the safety action plans specific to the setting where his school camp takes place. Other teachers agree with Bruce’s high level of preparedness and while they jokingly acknowledge his anality, his actions are also evaluated in positive terms:

Bruce has very very high standards for himself in terms of running the camp and making sure the kids are just ... everything is perfectly organised. (Bev, experienced female teacher)

In terms of anality, it was suggested by some teachers that parents characterise teachers as anal. A teacher draws upon one example supporting this characterisation. The example
referred to parents drinking alcohol on school camp. In this particular school, and for many others, before parents attend camp, they sign a form to agree alcohol has no place on camp. This however, does not preclude alcohol being consumed: “they will sometimes buy themselves a bottle of wine and sit round after the kids are in bed at night time yeah, yeah and that’s what they do as adults” (Bev). In this situation parents are seen able to make a personal choice to drink alcohol and yet this teacher constructs parents as irresponsible if they do drink alcohol as the following extract demonstrates:

You can’t rely on them [parents] to do the same things that you would do. They can be unreliable. And it’s probably that alcohol thing, cause I think it’s hard for us that if parents have signed this thing (the form) and then they still choose to have some alcohol, um yeah, I guess it’s a bit of an attitude thing really. They don’t see it as being as important as what we [teachers] do. Maybe they don’t have that overall sense of responsibility and maybe they think we’re anal. (Bev)

This extract shows the work being done in accounting for parents as being responsible enough to choose whether or not to drink at camp, yet irresponsible if they do choose to drink. This argument enables the teacher to be seen to be responsible yet not one who would stop parents from drinking alcohol although drinking is considered irresponsible. The contradiction is then accounted for with anality and positioning oneself as “maybe I’m anal”. Irresponsibility can also be constructed as unreliability.

Parents can be constructed as unreliable and untrustworthy; this was a common theme employed in the safe repertoire. This is unsurprising as the official document “Safety and EOTC” (Ministry of Education, 2003b) constructs them similarly. In creating a metaphor of a sailing boat to highlight safe practice, the Ministry of Education describes parental input:

Parents … are the spinnaker. Their involvement can be unpredictable. If appropriately selected and briefed, they can become a strong and well-trimmed spinnaker that maximises the performance of the boat. If not, they may become a sloppy, flapping spinnaker that blows out, hampering the boat’s performance or sabotaging it completely (p. 11).

When parents are positioned as unreliable, justifications are made by teachers who are selective about which parents accompany them on camp. The appropriate selection is often done in an underhand manner but in such a way that parents are unaware of the selection:
You’ve got to be careful, we are very careful who we choose to go. The way we do it sometimes is we say oh, so and so, we took the first five parents that applied or we did a draw and we drew the names out of a hat, and we haven’t done that at all we have actually chosen the parents very very carefully before we take them. (Ella, experienced female lead teacher)

Parents are understood by teachers as problematic. They are necessary for adult/child ratios, but they are not like teachers. Teacher T9 highlights this by drawing on a case to support construction of parents as unsafe, they are not like teachers because they are not responsible or serious enough and they do not understand the risk of leaving children unattended. Parents are not teachers:

I’ve seen them with their back to the water talking to each other, lunchtime comes, I remember at the Leisure Centre, a very structured day, except for lunch, and as soon as lunchtime came around the parents said “Oh, we’re just going up the road for a coffee”, when actually lunchtime was part of the day and probably the most dangerous part of the day because it’s not structured. (T9)

Claims are that parents are not serious enough about children’s safety, and are unqualified; they are not safe teachers, they are just parents:

I think part of the problem really was that the adults are parents and they don’t necessarily take it as seriously as they should. (T12)

In response T11 argued that lack of qualifications contributes to parents’ lack of seriousness. The need for a qualification in outdoor education activities supports expertise as a requirement for safe practice. There is some confusion however, as while parents are not qualified, neither are the teachers, “Well they are not qualified instructors... but we are not qualified instructors either” (T11). There were conflicting positions regarding the need for qualifications in outdoor education and the section “Cautionary tales for the safe practitioner” in the following chapter highlights the conflicting arguments about the need for qualifications in outdoor education.

7.10 Summary of the safe practitioner

The safe practitioner regards safe practice as a common-sense taken-for-granted basis for their work in outdoor education. This repertoire is drawn upon by teachers when justifying
their safe practice in outdoor education. Teachers who use this repertoire position themselves as complying with safety regulations and risk-management systems.

The case for safe practice is mobilized in several ways. The safe practitioner repertoire makes a case against high risk-taking in outdoor education, and effectively silences those who draw upon other repertoires - for example the fun, pleasure and excitement seeker or adventurous risk-taker. This silencing is managed through justification of accident avoidance. When children’s death or accidents are in teachers’ talk, there is a total consensus of the desire to never have to deal with this. Safe practitioner was a commonly drawn-upon repertoire during the interviews. The safe practitioner repertoire can be contrary to a position in outdoor education that draws on resources of adventure and risk-taking, challenge and experiential learning. The following repertoire outlines the adventurous risk-taker, which is in tension with the safe practitioner repertoire.

7.11 The adventurous risk-taker repertoire

Outdoor education is desirably risky in the adventurous risk-taking repertoire where the linguistic resources of adventure and challenge are used. One of the identifiable elements is that risk-taking behaviour is considered advantageous for children’s development. Life is risky therefore children need to learn how to deal with risk. Teachers need to “extend children for them to be able to recognise what the risks (are) and then be able to manage those risks in a controlled environment” (Frank, experienced male lead teacher). Outdoor education activities that ‘challenge’ children are argued for by teachers employing this repertoire. Teachers using this repertoire justify their own experiences as appropriate for an outdoor educator/teacher and do not see the need for qualified professional instructors.

The adventurous risk-taker repertoire includes descriptions of outdoor education such as a challenging experience, taking a risk, pushing the boundaries and getting children outside their comfort zone. New Zealanders’ historical relationship with the bush, the great outdoors, is invoked in this repertoire; walking through the bush, investigating the wilderness, crossing rivers, climbing mountains and facing challenge. Lead teachers (and male teachers) were more likely to draw upon this repertoire than others. In the old days is constantly called upon when comparing current outdoor education practice with that of the past. In the past outdoor education was higher (the climbing activity), harder (steeper hills), longer, scarier (children got frightened) and more challenging.
Teachers using the adventurous risk-taker repertoire construct outdoor education in a traditional manner relating to an historical idea of the wild, untamed New Zealand environment and adventurers struggling with the wilderness. One argument employed maintains is that risk-taking is something urban people need to come to terms with, that is for children whose only experience is the urban environment (at city schools).

Teachers drawing on this repertoire were able to explain in detail the purpose of activities that children undertake. Most likely activities are described as extreme or risky with children freaking out because they are out of their comfort zone. Teachers drew upon the adventurous risk-taker repertoire to position themselves as daring, different and more adventurous than other teachers. In the following extract a female lead teacher positions herself in this way by calling on the inability of other teachers to be as adventurous as her. In doing so, she positions the other teachers as ‘soft’: “The other teachers were too frightened” (Ella). In a narrative of a bush walk she makes the claim that she would have taken children much further on the walk:

*I would have taken the children up, I would have challenged the children and taken them up. It was just a little bit nerve wracking at the beginning climbing over those rocks, but the boys loved it ... but if you’d had three kids and an adult we would have done it perfectly. The other teachers were too frightened. [Frightened of what?] Danger, getting hit by a car, the kids slipping over the side of the wall when we were going up there ... they thought the kids would get their feet wet, I don’t know. (Ella)*

Other teachers’ fear is dismissed and minimised by relating it to just children’s wet feet. In this account the possibility of an accident is called upon, but Ella claims that had the ratios been better it would not have been an issue. The assertion that the boys would have loved it supports her position.

The validity of a teacher’s own experience in outdoor education is legitimated through this repertoire by presenting situations that illustrate where it has been tough, no damage had occurred. One teacher had worked on the tough ski-fields when younger, another remembered “As a kid being on the boats with no lifejackets - no problem”, while another was a scout for 18 years “That’s how I learned to abseil and how I learned to climb rock walls and how I learned to put up a tent, at scouts”. (Ella)

This following account shows that while an activity can be frightening, it is survivable:
I remember, going to these scout camps and we used to do them without harnesses on. I remember going across this one 30 feet up being petrified that I was going to fall and all that was holding me was two wires. Walking across the rope thing I was actually walking across the wire and there were to ropes there. It took me a good hour to get across myself. And there was no safety there. (Ella)

Challenge is a core element of this resource. In a challenge discourse accidents are constructed as unavoidable and just accidents. This is a contrast to safe practitioner where accidents are constructed as preventable (if enough care and preparation is taken). When challenge is called upon as an essential element of outdoor education it holds a central position in the adventurer repertoire argument:

You see accidents can happen anywhere but you’ve got to be realistic. Can you not give the kids these challenges? And I felt it would be safe enough because we had enough parents but the other teachers outvoted me 5 to 1. But then I’m a bit of a dare devil ... and I just think it would have been a wonderful challenge and perhaps we could have had a group going back the way we came in. (Ella)

Accidents are minimised in this repertoire with descriptors such as ‘he was lucky that time’, it was ‘just a little … (cut, break, bruise)’ or, they will ‘learn to not do it again’. In the following case Ella ridicules the safety focus of another teacher while conceding that while an accident could have occurred, it didn’t, and then proceeds to draw on an example where an accident did occur, but not at school. The anecdote positions the accident as an act of fate that could not have been prevented and Ella cements her argument by stating that accidents are just an unlucky occurrence that occasionally risk-takers face:

They [the other teachers] felt clambering over the rocks one of them could have slipped and had an accident. Yes they could have, but one of the kids has come back to school with a broken arm today - she was doing a flip-flop where your body goes back and your feet follow your arms - and she got a broken arm - nothing at all to do with school. That was at home. (Ella)

The adventurer repertoire was employed at times as a reaction to the safe practitioner repertoire: to undermine safe practice. One occasion reference was made to the current softness of outdoor education and of children. Children need to toughen up and, in confronting situations, just need to get over it. This was modified, however, when the safe
practitioner repertoire came into play and enabled the teacher to make some allowances for children’s fears. Gil, an experienced lead teacher, drew on a parent’s right to withdraw their children from a surf trip. “It’s an outdoor education trip - there are risks” but it was “OK” to “pull kids from that trip” and verified this with support of others “there were about three parents in the school who pulled their kids from that trip, and everyone was quite cool about it”. In a following extract Gil reiterates parental choice but also calls on the rights of children to make their own decisions regarding involvement:

So parents have that opportunity, you can make that choice, you have to be allowed to make that choice, but I notice that more and more kids are quite disappointed in their parents when they do make that choice. I have kids here who say, I wanted to go swimming today but Mum wouldn’t let me, says it is too cold. (Gil)

In the segment of talk that follows on directly from that above, Gil claims that children who are soft, are really soft, “The thing is, the soft ones are soft, oh dear, and their parents will often allow them” (to not participate). She then immediately drew on a situation in support of her claim; a parent who prevented her child participating in a school triathlon because she was on medication, who “frankly didn't look that sick to me”, then followed with the assertion, “We have got so cotton-woolish, this is ridiculous”. The reduction in the height of school playgrounds is then attributed to a cotton-woolish other who removed all the playgrounds “and all the stuff that used to be really fun”. The arguments employed in Gil’s talk draw upon ideas of risk, protection, challenge, parental and children’s rights and fun, while upholding the adventure risk-taker position.

The third repertoire named from analysis considers the enjoyment gained from participation in outdoor activities. Fun and excitement are key elements of the next repertoire which incorporates the pleasure of active involvement.

7.12 Fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire

The fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire is drawn on to justify participation in outdoor education because of the enjoyment element. This repertoire was not commonly drawn upon, nor regarded as particularly legitimate in a serious conversation about outdoor education. When it was, it was more likely employed by experienced teachers with a personal history of enjoyment being in the outdoors. Aspects of humour are employed to sustain a
pleasure orientation to outdoor education. (Humour is highlighted in chapter 8 as a strategy to manage the tensions of practice in outdoor education).

The fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire constructs outdoor education as an exciting experience for both children and teachers. When drawing on this repertoire teachers evaluated children’s behaviour in terms of pleasure and excitement. They used descriptors such as, “The kids had a ball” or, “We all had fun”. Teachers employing this repertoire were enthusiastic in their accounts of outdoor education experiences, both for themselves and their students.

Some teachers claim that children learn better by doing rather than sitting in a classroom. Children who do not excel at academic work may be able to demonstrate abilities in outdoor education activities. Using the fun repertoire, teachers argued that many children are turned on to learning by being outside and doing fun things. In addition, the teachers in this context learned more about their students, and this improved the teacher–learner relationship. Outdoor education was seen to change the dynamics of a child–teacher relationship with positive consequences for classroom work.

A justification for outdoor activities proffered through the fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire, is that children will remember a school camp or an outdoor activity (with pleasure) but might not remember events or learning situations that happen within the classroom:

This is everything that they remember. Everything. You ask any adult what they remembered about school, they remember their best teacher and the worst teacher, and every single camp and trip they went on. (Bev)

You know, I ask my kids at the end of the year what was the best thing about school this year, and 28 out of 30 of them most years would say camp - and that’s way back in term one - and that’s their memory. (Bruce)

The descriptor love is often used when accounting for outdoor experiences. Comments about outdoor classes include such as, “It was cool”, “I loved it” or, “The kids loved it”:

You know, I just love it. I just love it for the kids, knowing that the campsite is safe, there’s no people going through the camp so it’s safe from that, just waking up in the morning to that view, it’s just amazing. (Bruce)
Love, enjoyment, pleasure, excitement, amazement and fun are drawn upon in descriptions of education outside the classroom. The children’s questionnaires responses drew predominantly on these resources and offer a greater pleasure orientation more often than did teachers in interviews.

The three repertoires named in the study were the most prevalent linguistic patterns identified in teachers talk. The language resources employed were drawn from the wider social environment of children and both the policy documents and their experiences with children in the outdoors. This analysis gives some indication of how tensions between safe practice, adventure and risk-taking, and enjoyment are rationalised and justified. The next chapter details the contradictions and tensions in segments of teacher talk, either between two teachers, or in the transcripts of a single teacher. It is the dynamics of tension between these repertoires that play a part in teachers’ beliefs and understandings about education outside the classroom.
8 Repertoires in action

8.1 The interpretive task of dealing with tensions in practice

This chapter focuses on the contradictions and tensions surrounding the interpretive practices discussed in chapter 7. Detailed here are four analyses. Three relate to the use of interpretative repertoires in the service of acceptable versions of teacher practice. The fourth analysis considers the role of humour in teacher talk as a strategy to negotiate the tensions in outdoor education practice. All these analyses show the tension between the repertoires is in motion as the talk moves fluidly between different versions when teachers struggle to legitimate their actions. The first section presents an analysis of one focus-group interview, specifically focusing on the talk of two teachers during an interview with five in total.7

8.2 Part 1: Cautionary tales

Illustrated here is the talk of two teachers, their language-in-use, habitual lines of argument and the warranting versions employed for justification of accounts. While the previous chapter discussed the logic of repertoires, this analysis considers the constitutive aspects of language: the dialogic, variable and argumentative. Repertoires are fluidly moved between: the two teachers draw on what is necessary to legitimate their versions. My interest is in the parts of arguments and warranting devices that make these teachers’ versions plausible and “unproblematically factual” (Potter & Wetherell, 1990, p. 214).

My focus is on the operation of the constructive processes as the two teachers struggle for ascendancy through competing accounts. When one account was privileged over the other, undermining by the other occurred. I do not intend to display the versions in an oppositional manner, though the argumentative threads in this extract of talk do have some oppositional sense. There are instances where argument is made to directly contradict the other speaker, and these are indicated. The dialogic nature of the discussion is highlighted to explore how one utterance is made in response to the preceding one, that is, to show repertoires in use.

The aim of this analysis was to look for regularities in teachers’ versions of their practice. Looking for regularity also alerted me to inconsistencies in accounts. Inconsistency was apparent when one version of events was presented, then altered in response to a challenge by the other (Wetherell, 1998). According to Wetherell, variation often occurs between

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7 The three other teachers in the interview had little to argue. Anne and Lizzie contributed two-thirds of the talk.
consistent themes and for this analysis the focus was on parts of the interview where a particular topic was under discussion. This sharpened the search for variation. The two teachers were positioned in ways which enabled alternative winning arguments.

The two teachers struggle to develop their versions of education outside the classroom as legitimate in the face of contrasting or conflicting versions. They both draw on cultural narratives of child safety and responsible and appropriate teachers’ behaviours to make sense of their practice. As Wetherell (1998, p. 268) notes, language is “intensely situated” and, because of the nature of reciprocal talk, versions are produced and fluidly change as the dialogue progresses.

The two women teachers are Lizzie, young and relatively inexperienced, and Anne, an older, more experienced teacher. It was easy to see them as protagonists in the focus group setting; Lizzie sat slouched on her chair and leant on the table with ease, while Anne sat in a more reserved, upright manner. Lizzie challenged much of what Anne asserted was good practice in outdoor education. Equally, Anne challenged much of what Lizzie had to say.

In their comments there was jostling for legitimacy and superiority, with the need to have the last word to close down parts of the discussion. It was not difficult to see such jostling in oppositional terms: the younger teacher versus the older one, with the young teacher attempting to challenge the established order of conformity and regulation. The young teacher regularly called on ideas of freedom and rebellion, drawing on the adventurous risk-taker repertoire. Anne, the older teacher, predominantly employed the safe practitioner repertoire.

Three key areas of dispute occurred between the two. These related to the financial cost of outdoor education, the danger of outdoor education and the value of a teacher’s personal outdoor experience. Each dispute was followed by some points of agreement between the pair.

8.2.1 The expense of education in the outdoors

In this sequence Lizzie argued that one of the problems for education outside the classroom is the expense and costs that “just snowball”. Anne immediately challenged Lizzie saying a recent overnight camp was “very reasonably priced”. While presenting the cost as reasonable, Anne conceded that extra funding had been provided by a local city council, and admitted that external providers had been employed. Lizzie continued that even if it was
reasonably priced, when external providers are used for every activity the costs add up. Lizzie drew on the past when costs were nothing “but a box of chocolates for parent helpers”. Anne agreed this may have been the case, but she then changed direction, in order to present a winning argument, that activities available to children nowadays are better than those offered in the past.

Lizzie challenged the notion that activities are better than those offered in the past. Anne hesitated then claimed that now there are a “greater variety” of activities. Another teacher interrupted and called on a cost-free activity the school had taken part in courtesy of a voluntary organisation. Anne concurred, but then in support of her argument that education outside the classroom can be provided at a reasonable cost, changed tack arguing the main cost is transportation of children to and from activities. It is these costs that are “making the activities pretty prohibitive”. The argument is closed down at this point.

Following this, I asked a question about the value of education outside the classroom. Both Lizzie and Anne took a traditionalist view to concur that education in the outdoors is the ‘Kiwi way’. After some discussion on the value of outdoor education involving other teachers, Anne revisited the argument about cost by bringing in a new issue, that of adult/child ratios. While appearing to agree with Lizzie about needing extra funding for activities, “even if the money can be found”, there is difficulty in obtaining suitable adult/child ratio because either both parents work, or they are solo parents.

Anne suggested that a solution to both the problem of lack of parent help and transportation costs is to bring activities to the school rather than take children to the activities. She presented the case of sailing on grass (dry sailing) as an example of what could be done. This solution to expense was also presented as a solution to safety concerns. This version is discredited by Lizzie arguing that it makes the activities less challenging, “tamer and tamer” and agrees that “yes the children are outside the classroom” but that they are a minimal distance outside the classroom “about five metres”. She laughed at that point and said that it was not quite the same.

In response to Lizzie’s humour, another thread was introduced by Anne. She agreed that outdoor education might be tamer but it was far safer. Education outside the classroom is positioned as potentially unsafe and dangerous and Anne calls on the drowning case to produce a cautionary tale.
8.2.2 Danger of the outdoor classroom: Cautionary tales

To have an unassailable position in the talk, Anne recalled the situation where two children drowned during a school camp. She mentioned the concern of both school administration and teachers about the fatalities. In response to another teacher who maintained safety regulations are good because they protect teachers, Anne agreed that compliance with safety regulations is necessary because there have been “some nasty situations and you have to be aware”. In response to my question about nasty situations she returned to the case of the two children’s deaths to support her cautionary position.

To underline her position, Anne then drew on another where children were lost “up in the Waitakere hills”. Anne reiterated that such dreadful things should not happen. In response to my question about teachers being more aware nowadays (than in past times) of keeping children safe, she responded again to assert the importance of knowing the cautionary tales. Such tales help teachers understand that situations can “turn to custard extremely quickly”. Anne warranted her account as serious and referred to RAMS which she considered would reduce dangers. In response to Lizzie, a concession was made that systems would not identify and remove all possible risks, but reiterated the cautionary tales to support teachers’ caution.

When a question was asked about the school’s response to accidents, Lizzie argued that the response was usually one of over-reaction. After an incident, the activity was either prohibited or yet “another piece of paper” was created, requiring new forms of safety compliance. Lizzie attempted to undermine Anne’s cautionary discourse by arguing the accidents are typically random unforeseen events, not always occurring because of teacher negligence. Lizzie challenged a safety focus by recalling lengthening lists of safety provisions, the “never-ending things you have to bear in mind” that she considered as “more and more bizarre”.

Anne agreed that some incidents are unforeseen, drawing on a terrorism case to justify the need for teachers’ constant awareness. Lizzie immediately responded to argue that even constant awareness is unable to protect children all the time. She drew on the situation of a child’s heart attack at a school athletic event. There had been no indication that the child was unfit or untrained. Anne recalled the school’s triathlon of the previous day, admitting that the possibility of child death or injury had been on her mind. An argument was offered by Lizzie of the need for people trained in first-aid to be on hand for events like triathlons. This solution diverted Anne from the touchy subject of predicting child death and introduced
another thread of argument, that of teacher qualifications. Teachers just received a “general teacher training” that did not involve specialist work in either outdoor activities or first-aid. Lizzie interrupted to state that the “whole outdoor qualification stuff” is just another complication, reducing outdoor opportunities for teachers and children.

8.2.3 Valuing teacher’s personal outdoor experience

Drawing on the adventurous risk-taker repertoire, Lizzie noted her personal experience in kayaking but admitted to never getting the qualification. Personal skill and ability to teach kayaking were acknowledged in contrast to the piece of paper that would have endorsed her expertise. The argument for experience against qualification is a recurring resource in the adventure repertoire. While Lizzie drew on past experience as a valid resource, she questioned whether experience would be sufficient if lack of formal qualification was challenged. A negative response is proffered by Anne by calling on “the court of law” where a case “wouldn't hold up based only on experience” and a Board of Trustees could be “taken for thousands and thousands of dollars”. The assertion provided Anne with an opportunity to reiterate the need for caution.

Lizzie however, argued that qualifications stopped teachers from taking outdoor activities - activities that were done in the past are not taken now. Anne argued that activities are still being undertaken but are balanced against cost. Carefulness is reiterated by Anne. The word vigilant is employed by calling on teacher professionalism that it is not bad to be aware of what could happen. The qualification argument is employed again by Anne to argue that if you are not qualified you lack necessary knowledge for safe practice. A reiteration is made that qualification is not a bad thing if it makes teachers more vigilant. The argumentative thread in their talk was apparent, but the following sequence illustrates the tenacity of both to maintain their stances.

Here Anne presents Lizzie as uninformed about safety and vigilance and not knowing the facts. Lizzie however, shows that she is informed.

I asked why teachers were not previously aware of safety matters. Anne brought in the issue of liability because “people didn’t get sued in the past”.

Lizzie immediately reacted to ask whether any schools had actually been sued. She asserted “It’s hard in New Zealand to sue people for money so while there is all the talk about boards being taken for thousands of dollars...where has this occurred?”
Anne immediately responded that, “Yes, schools have been sued”.

Lizzie again asked if it had actually occurred.

Anne responded in the affirmative.

Lizzie again asked if it had actually happened and again drew on the difficulty in New Zealand to sue people in these cases.

Anne drew on a case of negligence, and the drowning case to shut down the young teacher.

Lizzie was silenced momentarily, then agreed that yes a child could drown and it’s scary but also suggested that safety has gone mad, and now it is the little details such as sunhats that matter. She drew on the traditional adventurer repertoire where, “Kiwi kids grew up not wearing shoes” to argue that the whole safety thing is far too detailed because while children wear school shoes, they “Kick them off as soon as they can”.

In response to my question about any effects from a safety focus, Lizzie claimed that safety prevents children from taking risks. Anne mentioned that because of safety, school playgrounds have lower height restrictions. Both comments produced silence until Lizzie responded with an outburst that teachers now have to “tell children off” for swinging on playgrounds. She maintained that swinging takes skill and judgment and if children fall or break an arm “clearly that's not a good thing”, but called on a principal who once said children generally break their arm only once. She argued that restrictions affect children’s development in terms of learning where their body boundaries are.

Not to lose the argument, Anne called on the challenging contemporary playground equipment and sketched a playground 30 years ago with only two pieces of equipment and some trees. Lizzie interrupted immediately with, “Yes but, you used to be able to climb to the top of the tree!” Anne, not to be outdone, stated that in the past, in many schools, you were “not allowed to climb trees”. At their primary school, while children are not allowed to climb trees, a school further up the road allows children to climb trees. Anne constructs their school as safer and more conscientious than the absent other school introduced into the argument. This is a common ploy for winning arguments.

Anne further argued that equipment used nowadays is more interesting and challenging than in the past. Lizzie interrupted that the equipment may be brighter and more interesting but she is not sure that if it is more challenging. But Anne called again on her experience of the past
where there was only one jungle gym in the playground of 600 children and that nowadays there is much more equipment for kids to play on. Anne was the experienced *knower* and Lizzie was again silenced at this point.

### 8.2.4 Safe practitioner logic

The combative discussion seemed only to be able to come to an end when Lizzie appeared increasingly to integrate elements of the safe practitioner repertoire into her talk, admitting that it was necessary to have and use RAMS forms, “*to fill in the forms*”, and attempt to foresee accidents. She repeated the need “at the same time” to have fun and adventure and to learn about safety by doing things. But the power of Anne’s experienced caution and insistence on unforeseen events seemed to require that the safe practitioner logic, with its risk awareness come first, providing a background against which fun and adventure can be experienced. In drawing on her seniority and professionalism, Anne presents her arguments as indisputable. Lizzie finally had to concede to the general consensus that safety regulations and caution should prevail in outdoor education planning and activities because “*you need to be aware of risks*”. Employing this argument, taking children into the outdoors is seen by safe practitioners as primarily, an unsafe, risky and dangerous business.

In the next section, another experienced teacher lead teacher, Frank, drew on ideas similar to Lizzie’s challenge to risk, qualifications, safety compliance and pieces of paper. The following example demonstrates the tension between adventure, risk and safety, illustrating within one lead teacher’s interview, the way in which repertoires are drawn upon to sustain an argument. In addition, this case shows the fluidity with which repertoires are drawn on when presenting oneself as a rational safe adventurer.

### 8.3 Part 2: Frank the adventurer

Drawing on a one-on-one interview with Frank, experienced male lead teacher, this section presents another example of repertoires in action. Examples show the manner in which repertoires are drawn upon to argue a case. Here the adventurous risk-taker and safe practitioner repertoires are highlighted. The adventurous risk-taker repertoire is predominantly drawn upon in this extract when talking about outdoor education. The function of this account is to present an identity as a rugged outdoor enthusiast where it is argued that safety is a necessary element of teacher educator practice - to a certain extent. A strong theme in this interview was that teachers’ practical experience in the outdoors should be privileged
over a qualification in various outdoor pursuits. In this interview the safe practitioner repertoire is used both to support regulation in outdoor education, and also to challenge over-regulation. Contradictions in the argument are highlighted to illustrate how these are managed.

An argument is made that health and safety requirements and procedures are much stricter than they used to be. In maintaining this, past experiences are called upon as ‘better’ days for outdoor education. The claims employ comparisons with the past which are legitimated through Frank’s long experience in outdoor activities. These include starting out as a “lifty on the ski fields”, running camps at Motutapu Island, “I used to run camps there and we would take them kayaking. I’ve done kayaking for years and I would take them snorkelling and all those sorts of things,” and running a programme at school for many years.

In calling on the ‘past was better’, the adventurous risk-taker repertoire was drawn on to argue that the more challenging activities of the past were designed to extend children so that they were “able to recognize what the risks were and then be able to manage those risks in a controlled environment”. Frank had recently returned from a school tramping trip where they went “tramping for five days ...the second day was 16 kilometres of up and down and things like that. Sleeping out in tents in the middle of nowhere at Karekare”. The students learned to put up tents themselves because an argument was made that if the tent collapsed on the first night, “The second night you are using the tent you’ll do it differently, won’t you?” A tough-love style of camping justified ‘learning from experience’ and claims that strong young people are built as self-sufficient and able to take responsibility; they are problem solvers who can recognize and manage risk. These linguistic resources draw strongly from the adventurous risk-taker repertoire.

Preparation for a tramping trip was justified claiming it a hard challenging experience. The pre-trek training involved a strict exercise regime six weeks before departure, children training in their boots and packs on so that they were prepared. While children had to take responsibility for themselves, they also worked on team-building exercises. Survival is a significant resource in the adventurer repertoire and Frank readily invoked this: “If the kids hadn’t worked together last week they just wouldn’t have survived”.

The difficult and hard nature of aspects of outdoor education is presented with “You might be shaking in your boots and your knees are knocking together... and it makes you want to crap yourself”. Immediately following this extract Frank proffers that “It’s not really dangerous”
because it is a perceived risk as opposed to a real risk. In the adventurous risk-taker repertoire, risk is constructed as either real or perceived. Real risks are manageable by employing risk assessment and management systems. A claim is made that outdoor education “builds people who can recognize and manage risk”, while at the same time pointing out that “you will never ever eliminate all risk”. A possibility is called upon where children might get out of bed and “catch their toe in the bedclothes, fall over, smash their skull on the edge of the dressing table” to attribute risk to any and all actions that children undertake. The justification for taking part in risk activities is supported by arguing that risk is everywhere, but risk can be managed through safety systems. ‘Everything involves risk’ is a common rationale drawn upon in this repertoire in support of risk-management systems.

Drawing on the strength of personal past (and long) experience, Frank challenges stricter health and safety regulations. While Frank compensates for the increase in regulations by calling on organisations that were “quite frankly a danger to themselves and to the people they were taking ... schools whatever” and defining the organisations as having a “sort of cowboy mentality”, he asserts “I feel that some of the things went far too far”. In justifying this claim he calls on accident statistics to support his idea that an increase in safety regulations has had the effect of actually increasing accidents. He relates a case where a considerable reduction in the height of a high ropes assault course after OSH (Occupational Health and Safety) visited, actually “quadrupled the accident rate”.

Frank is able to manage two different stances when drawing on the safe practitioner but to different effect. He invokes ‘quadrupled accident rates’ as a cause of increased safety systems, yet on the same occasion maintains that increased regulation has positive effects. He claims that cowboys in the industry have been controlled by tighter regulations. This is good because previously “there were lots of accidents that should never have happened”. Analysis uncovered instances such as this one where opposing positions and contradictions are managed fluidly within one segment of talk.

A common device employed to manage contradictions is that of blaming. Blaming deals with conflicts and contradictions of practice. When Frank maintains that “safety systems are only as good as the people who are using them” he blames others who do not follow rules. While it is not possible to have risk-free activities, Frank considers that children should be able to understand the difference between real and perceived risk. Children’s accidents have also increased because they don’t listen to instructions. Frank relates it as, “I don’t have to do as
I’m told, I don’t have to hang on, I’m going to be a big bravado and so, they waltz off and 
they fall off and hurt themselves”. Frank relates an event on a skiing trip where a child had to 
be airlifted to hospital. The case supports his argument with the fact that the child “broke all 
the rules - did absolutely the complete opposite to what he’d been told to do”. Blaming the 
child supports Frank’s argument that accidents are the fault of people rather than the safety 
systems.

Instead of blaming children, a complete reversal is managed in one sequence where Frank 
blames the very systems he supported previously. The greater requirements of the regulatory 
environment is criticised in this claim, “I don’t know who started it [the increased safety 
regulations], some bureaucrats somewhere and Wellington decided it was good idea that we 
needed to protect our children from themselves”. System blaming is apparent with the claim 
that the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC, the government agency controlling New 
Zealand’s universal no-fault accident compensation scheme) has got some part to play with 
the increased regulation that outdoor education has to deal with.

The argument against ACC illustrates the conflict that Frank manages in the discussion. An 
“ACC mentality” is called upon to blame individuals’ lack of responsibility in protecting 
themselves from injury. In Canada if you do not sweep the snow from the footpath outside 
your house, and someone slips and breaks a leg, you are sued, “not the council”. Immediately 
after this however, in order to be seen as fair, this claim is made, “As much fault as there is, 
stupidity as there is in ACC, stuff that happens, I think overall it’s a far fairer system than 
litigation”. This shows the fluidity with which accounts are managed by both agreeing and 
disagreeing with claims.

There was a further example of system and person blaming in another section of the 
interview where Frank blames society for the irresponsibility of individuals. Referring to a 
situation where school camps can no longer be held on the school grounds because of 
drunken louts in the playground, society is blamed because of an individualised culture of 
‘what’s in it for me’ while alternately blaming the individual who never takes responsibility 
or blame: “Personally, I think society has become a very much what's in it for me, it’s never 
my fault it’s always somebody else’s fault that something’s gone wrong, and it’s a blame 
mentality to blame somebody else all the time”. The adventurous risk-taker repertoire is then 
drawn on to argue that people need to “know their own limits” and to be “able to recognise 
what is the risk” in understanding the consequences of their actions.
A habitual line of argument for the adventurer is crediting the value of experience over that of qualifications. The call for personal experience as indicated earlier is a strong resource the Adventurer draws on when challenging the need for qualifications. Experience is privileged over younger qualified instructors who are seen to simply have “the piece of paper” and lack the longer experience and history of involvement in outdoor activities to call upon. According to Frank, young people think that a qualification overrides experience; “They’ve been conditioned by the system .... As long as you’ve got everything in quadruplicate and on paper you’re fine, ... you don’t actually necessarily need any experience”. The adventurer is experienced. Experience is validated in numerous ways; calling on “a guy I know” who has been running a rafting company for 30 years without a qualification, his own experience of taking school camps for 20 years, and successes where his best practice system was taken and used as a model by EONS (Education Outdoors New Zealand, 2011) who “actually took my system and published it”.

Frank constructs himself as a competent outdoor educator. Competency is presented as being able to do things, “I have done kayaking for years” and being able to operate at a high skill level, “I look first at the capabilities of the people running any activities and say, ‘Have you have experience in doing these sorts of things? What are your skill levels?’” The qualification system is challenged at this point by calling on his expertise “I personally look at it another way” - skill and experience rather than qualification. In this manner, a long work experience history has legitimacy. The fluidity between competing concerns is again in evidence when the argument moves from “I’ve got 30 years’ experience, I’m competent” to “I haven’t got time to get a piece of paper”.

The Adventurer is in a bind. Unless he gets a qualification (a piece of paper) there is no official recognition for him. He does follows a “paper trail” that shows the stages and the steps gone through in complying with health and safety regulations, yet seems not to have time to complete the registration. Another hurdle is presented because the paper trail is lengthening: “There is a heck of a lot more paperwork”, and the bush trail is shortening; the Adventurer is getting older:

You know, as I get older ... I used to be clambering around the trees topping and pruning and trimming and everything like that and now I try and get up and think, well five years ago I would’ve leaned out and grabbed that branch and swung across to the other one, you know, but now I think no, no way.
Recognition that his past adventurous activity, such as swinging in trees, could have dangerous consequences, the Adventurer admits to careful safe practice as a wiser course. Both conforming to safety regulations and recognising his limits with self-responsibility, entitles this claim “You damn well make sure that you do it the right way”. While Frank is a tough adventurer, drawing on both the safe and risk-taking repertoires, ultimately, and to avoid personal danger, safe practice is the more appropriate resource for an outdoor education teacher. The rationality of safe adventure draws together both risk and safety, Frank has become the Safe Adventurer.

8.4 **Part 3: The funmaker**

The next example illustrates the work of different repertoires to achieve a similar result to that of Frank. This section highlights the different work done when drawing upon oppositional repertoires while simultaneously managing the contradictions and complexity of practice. The extract is also an example of the fluidity and ease with which repertoires are taken up variously to justify particular actions and beliefs.

Here, the fun, pleasure and excitement seeking repertoire is employed to sustain oneself as a funmaker, yet as the analysis indicates, an unusual contradiction emerges. The contradiction shows a heightened tension between pleasure and safety. The funmaker is able to maintain a position as a safe practitioner, yet is also able to manage dilemmas about having fun with children. Humour is used as a resource by Bruce to both present, and resolve, dilemmas of his practice. He constructs himself as a safe practitioner but in some circumstances appears to be unsafe particularly in relation to children’s perception of risk, or their emotional safety.

Drawing on a one-on-one interview with Bruce, experienced male teacher, this section highlights the way that fun and safety are played out to establish Bruce as a safe funmaker. The function of this account is to establish a particular position as an anal teacher regarding safety, but also one who has fun with children. How an oppositional stance is sustained can be illustrated particularly in regard to discussion of water activities and extreme activities. In this account the extremist is one who takes children’s outdoor education activities to the edge of acceptability: “Don’t you ever tell her what I do [said in a whispered voice] ... box-sliding, but I go extreme!” (Box-sliding is an activity where children sit on a flattened cardboard box and slide down a grassy hill, and extreme is an indication of the hill’s steepness). The positioning of himself in relation to another teacher who would not approve of extreme box-
sliding helps to maintain a view of himself as someone who does exciting activities with children.

This particular transcript illustrates a version of outdoor education that draws considerably from the fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire that is, on occasion, in direct conflict with the safe practitioner repertoire. This section shows how these two repertoires are “fluidly drawn on” (Wetherell & Potter, 1992) in the course of the interview, moving from one to the other with apparent ease while dealing with inconsistencies and contradictions produced in the account. Fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking was a dominant resource employed in his descriptions of a class camp which included, “It’s all about fun”, and “The hilarious thing is…” and “They love it”. It is worthwhile noting that these resources justify using the repertoire, but as I show, it is more for Bruce’s pleasure than the children’s.

While the extract draws significantly from the fun, pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire, it shows how dilemmas and contradictions are managed while also using the safe practitioner repertoire. This analysis focused on those sections of the text that indicated the complexity of the interpretive process. Of particular interest was the way in which repertoires were used to manage issues around child safety. A recurrent theme in all teachers’ talk was the issue of child safety in water - in particular child drowning. This particular interview illustrates the difficulty faced when dealing with competing concerns; the justification for fun and the argument for safety provision around water. It also illustrates how humour is employed to get around the contradictions of not taking children swimming (where they could drown), but by playing tricks on children to enable having fun in the water.

Bruce’s self-identified anality around water was self-attributed as a strong positive characteristic for ensuring child safety. The justification for anality called on a situation where a child drowned on a beach-based school camp that his son had attended (referred to previously). This was reiterated by his never wanting tell a parent that their child had drowned. This is further elaborated with not wanting “children drowning because they don’t follow instructions”. Rules ensure situations where children never drown, particularly if they are not allowed in the water, or only in very controlled circumstances. The rule-based safe practitioner repertoire was employed in maintaining that children on school camps need to be controlled by rules. In Bruce’s case the implications of the safe practitioner repertoire are the extensive situations where children are controlled.
Managing and controlling children to keep them safe was achieved in multiple ways with justification through the rule-based safe practitioner repertoire: “I’m really anal about the camp rules”. The numbering of children in tents, children not allowed on the sand without permission, no electronic equipment, when children are walking anywhere and tramping - they stay in line - these rules sustain a version of an accountable and safe teacher, even a super-safe teacher. There are instances of rules too which are justified in the name of the child’s well-being. Children are not permitted to bring a watch to camp because “I don’t want them waking up at 6 and saying “Oh let’s get up””. Children don’t get out of bed “til I say”. They are allowed to read in bed, talk quietly because other children might be tired and sleeping and have the right to sleep. The position of “I take care of time for you” is an indication of the level of control. There is a sense of “if this is done” then I will permit you to have fun. Camp situations are controlled in order to achieve this. A confirming claim is made that when children are asked at the end of the year what was the best thing about school “28 out of 30 of them most years would say camp”.

A further justification of the value of outdoor education occurs when the adventurer repertoire is drawn upon to describe the value of being in the natural environment: “They just get to appreciate being out there, you know in nature, on the beach doing things that don’t cost a lot of money. And, it’s New Zealand, it’s our coastline, it’s our stuff”. The advantages for children on school camp are linked to Bruce’s past experience in the Scouting movement where the adventurer repertoire is drawn upon: “I think back to childhood when I was a little boy scout and a cub, and the camps that we used to go on in the bush and tramping, whatever - [big sigh] - you know most kids don’t get to experience that nowadays ... anything from constructing a bivouac ... I can remember when...”. This extract serves two purposes; one an evaluative function asserting that the outdoors is good for children by associating it with his similar enjoyed experiences, and secondly as a justification that children need to enjoy the outdoors. The experience of a United Kingdom colleague is called upon to support this stance by contrasting the New Zealand version school camp with the English version of going to Brighton to stay in a hotel and “that’s their camping ... they’re used to having it all on tap”.

I move now to the contradictions that arise when talking about children in and around water. Bruce, a self-characterised anal, defines water activity as dangerous if there is a possibility children could drown. An argument is made restricting children’s access to the water with “on the sand, day or night, leads to people playing in the water which leads to drowning”. One effect of the argument was that children were not permitted to go in the water to swim
until there were watchers on the beach and the teacher is in the water to mid-thigh: “...There’s that really strong rule - no one’s in there [water], but then when I go swimming I put on my wetsuit, I go out in the water, parents supervise – they’re on the beach, they’re on the bank, they’re in the water but no one goes past me. And I don’t go out past hip height.” The water is unsafe argument also serves to restrict children’s access to kayaking because “it’s a water safety thing”, though an argument was also proffered that kayaking was done in the following year camp so “why would you steal something from Year Sixes?” (The class year group following Bruce’s Year Five class).

The contradiction around water is noticed when mention is made of other water activities. The campsite (chapter 6) lies on the coast, and several activities involve walking across an estuary or around the coastline at low tide. These walking activities are not considered dangerous enough for children to possibly drown. However, Bruce mentioned a time where humour was employed to trick children into thinking that they could drown. The children had to cross the estuary on part of a day walk; they are told “…togs on, T-shirts off, and your backpacks on your head.” Two children considered to be dags were enlisted to support the trick. At some point during the crossing Bruce will drop to his knees in the water “up to his neck” and the two children behind him will also drop, and “scream their heads off” at the same time. At this point in the interview he laughs uproariously because the rest of the children thought there was a big hole in the estuary that they were walking into and “they were all a little bit sort of worried”. The deployment of humour, that of trickery and teasing, serves as a joke on children because they are frightened (but there is nothing to be frightened of), and to allay the teacher’s fear of child drowning (because there is no chance that they could drown). The comment of ‘a little bit worried’ minimises children’s anxiety while constructing the teacher as a jokester – the Funmaker who is able to have fun around water while maintaining anality in other more dangerous situations.

Teasing was employed with children, again around water, when they prepared for the night weta walk (chapter 6). In this section there is a description of preparing children for the walk. Children are told to take their packs and walk along the beach and be prepared to strip down to their bathing togs to cross the estuary. The parents have been enlisted in the trick as their cars are parked further along the beach to drive children to where the night weta walk takes place. According to Bruce, the children were concerned because it was night and they would have to cross the estuary in the dark (the distance away for the night walk had been pointed out earlier to the children who understood that it was a long way to walk). Bruce describes
the children’s reaction as one of concern about crossing the estuary but continues to tease them with “what do you think we've been practicing for all this time in swimming (back at the school pool) sculling and doing backstroke?” The children’s response is related as acceptance of this point when “they go, oh!” and it is not until they have walked along the beach to the parents’ cars that the joke is realised.

This sequence illustrates the manoeuvring made in dealing with children’s safety around water, dealing with his own water anxiety, children’s anxiety about water and maintaining his position as funmaker. It neglects the account of teasing and lack of truthfulness about events (the children will be taken by car and will not cross the estuary in the dark); the funmaker is just having fun. This version does not ask “At whose expense is the fun taken?”

Humour is used to manage other accounts where there is the possibility of harm to children. In relating the activity of box-sliding down a steep hill, damage to children is minimised with “They are covered in grass and they’ve got grass burns” at which point he laughs (with merriment). My query about whether any child has been hurt is challenged with the minimisation “Sure they may have got a grass burn - so, what?” The dismissal of my query of the possibility of an accident leads to a complete change of direction in the interview, and in response to my question about safety, he responds with “I think sometimes teachers get worried about protecting their backsides.” The contradiction is managed with a dismissal regarding the dangerousness of the activity, by drawing on the adventurer repertoire where risk-taking activities are acceptable.

It is worth noting another extract from the same interview where similar contradictions are managed by employing several repertoires in an explanation. In response to a question I ask whether preparing for children’s safety is a concern, the reply is again dismissive of concern about accidents by calling upon both the adventurer risk-taker and fun repertoires to argue that extreme activities can be both dangerous and fun. The dangerous aspect is highlighted (but minimised), “You know, if they break an arm, they break an arm” because “my stuff is a bit more extreme” (the adventurer) and the children “have a ball” (fun pleasure and excitement) as the final justification for extreme activities. This segment of talk also calls twice on the safe practitioner with reference to anality and water:

No, the water is my only issue. You know, if they break an arm, they break an arm, and that’s ... so my stuff is a bit more extreme, my waterslide is actually where they do their box-sliding
and my box-sliding is where you’d never ever think of going because it’s too steep - but, you know they had a ball. So no, it doesn’t worry me. The water’s the only thing that worries me.

Teasing children is also about scaring them; to frighten them for a laugh. While the laugh is for the teacher, it is regarded as fun for children too, particularly at the end of an activity when they have ‘survived’ the fright and realise they have been tricked. This account constructs the Burma trail activity as both fun and scary at the same time, and calls into question another teacher’s Burma trail because she doesn’t do it at night (when it’s scarier) but during the day when it is not as much fun:

*I’ve got parents ... in the dark with water pistols and animal noises and bits of fur or jelly or whatever and ... the kids go away shaking, but when they come back they’re laughing, they realise ... how they’re being conned* [and of the teacher who does the Burma trail during the day] Oh, I can’t get over that ... we never do it during the day.

The legitimacy of the funmaker draws on mystery, “to me ... it’s all about, it’s about myths and mystic”. Mystery is defined as the children not knowing what will happen “because that’s all part of it”. If children ask what will happen or where they have been, it is never answered, “So for me, camp has created, being created around a lot of myth and mystery”. In positioning himself as funmaker, he positions another teacher as not being mysterious enough, “The whole idea is ... you’re supposed to put in this, a little bit of mystery and a bit of fear - well not fear, but, but mystery around the whole thing - what’s the point of doing it if they can see where they’re going? She couldn’t understand that”. There is a telling come-back from ‘fear’ (children’s fears and anxieties are another element of safe practice, and one that is mentioned in the Ministry of Education’s (2003b) sample Health Profile that parents should alert teachers about before camp), when Bruce counters with “Well not fear, but...” in order to be seen as a teacher who is not fear inducing. While the oral account indicates pleasure from relating children’s fears - of water, scary things at night, estuary crossings and mosquitoes in the long-drop toilets - there were repeated examples of minimising the negative effects on children by presenting a funmaker position.

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8 Is there any information the staff should know to ensure the physical and emotional safety of you/your child? (For example cultural practices; disability; anxiety about heights/darkness/small spaces; pregnancy; behaviour or emotional problems). (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 61).
In this account outdoor education is described as “myth and mystic and rumour”. For Bruce outdoor education is all about the not real. Humour and trickery, myth and mystic, children are “being conned, they’re all sucked in” and to the funmaker “that’s part of fun about camp”. This goes to the extent that although it is necessary to keep the lids down on the long-drop toilets because they smell, the funmaker tells the children they “must put the lids down on the toilet so that the mosquitoes don’t fly down and bite you on the bottom when you’re sitting on the toilet”. Bruce’s version of outdoor education was not readily drawn upon by other teachers in the interviews and I would suggest that at this moment in time it is not a common repertoire; providing for safety in outdoor education is an important concern. Bruce did bring to the forefront examples of parental support for this approach, but there were not many. Much of the warranting for this version was on the basis of his experience.

The safe practitioner repertoire was readily drawn upon by Bruce when explicating safety processes and practices as mentioned earlier, by presenting a high level of preparation:

*If I know that I have done everything in my power to eliminate all ... factors and that I’ve got a couple of my action plans ... I’ve got my parent ratios right ... I’ve got first-aid things ... I’ve got all my emergency services backed up ... no alcohol comes on my camp ... We are all set to go at all times ... yeah ... I don’t worry about it.*

Yet the fun pleasure and excitement-seeking repertoire accounted for a considerable section of the interview. Bruce claims both as a safe practitioner and as a funmaker,

“I don’t think that I will give up being anal for the fact of fun”. Bruce won’t give up fun, yet the story is one that includes extreme safety measures. The balance between fun and safety rests on his employment of humour. I suggest that teachers’ use of humour is a powerful strategy to live with and cope with the tension between safety and pleasure in outdoor education.

The mobilisation of humour enables teachers to manage the difficult work of both a commitment to children’s safety, and to their enjoyment of being with children in outdoor environments outside the classroom. The next section illustrates how humour is used to lighten collegial discussions about children’s accidents and to minimise any anxiety at the possibility of dangerous outcomes. The forms of humour discussed below, are generally not shared with parents or others who are not teachers, and are revealed in teacher-only spaces.
8.5 Part 4: Humour

Humour enables teachers to negotiate the tension between providing enjoyable and challenging outdoor activities and ensuring children’s safety. Humour was an important analytic topic that assumed different forms in order to achieve certain interpretive tasks. Five forms of humour were identified from interview data. The five different forms are categorised as: black humour; put-downs; nervous laughter; mocking; and delight in silliness.

As a facet of teacher talk, humour drew on the three identified repertoires. Humour is useful in that it can reveal the workings of repertoires. For Mulkay and Gilbert (1982), humour was an important analytic topic revealing scientists’ interpretative resources. Sanguinetti (1999) identified teachers’ humour as a tool to lampoon an Australian national educational initiative, while for Wetherell (1998), laughter served a specific purpose in conversation when descriptions were heard as a joke or otherwise. Humour is used as a coping strategy (Warner, 1991), to scorn opponents and lower their status (Bonaiuto, Castellana, & Pierro, 2003; Tumkaya, 2007) or to maintain group solidarity (Everts, 2003; Fine & De Soucey, 2005).

While the previous chapter presented main features of interpretative repertoires employed by teachers when talking about outdoor education, this section attempts identification of some characteristics of the interpretative resource of teachers’ humour. Instances when teachers laughed in interview were examined, as humour is generally defined in terms of this characteristic expression (Weisfeld, 1993). Weisfeld notes however, that expression of laughter does not take into account emotional or cognitive states, instead prefers “humour appreciation” (p. 141) to define humour. I use the points where laughter occurred during interviews to uncover the reasons for the humour response. The purpose of the laughter, and responses from others were the focus.

On a descriptive observational level, I noticed that laughter was used to make fun of another person’s position, serving as a putdown or in support of another speaker. Humour was also used on occasion to lighten talk about the possibility of children’s accidents. For example, humour was employed after or during descriptions of ‘close calls’ where children had been in danger. In these cases, joking was used to minimise anxiety about danger. In two sequences of talk when teachers talked about skiing incidents where children had been in dangerous situations, humour was used to indicate relief and to argue that the children did not die and came to no harm. In one situation the child went too fast downhill and smashed into a tree: “She didn’t look very good but she was alright”. The other child had to be airlifted off a
mountain because of a skiing accident, which was minimised as “just a little bit of drama”. Another teacher laughed, recounting an incident where the children were sliding down a steep grassy hill, and hurt themselves: “It was only a grass burn”. The minimisation of these situations employed an argument of “She’ll be right”, a New Zealand identity characteristic claiming the worst is not going to happen, so do not worry about it (Braun, 2008).

8.5.1 Categories of humour

Types of humour were categorized according to functions drawn from literature (Everts, 2003; Fine & De Soucey, 2005; Kotthoff, 2006; Mulkay & Gilbert, 1982; Weisfeld, 1993) and from my interview analysis. As I was an interview participant as well as the interviewer, I judged the effects during interviews and in post-interview analysis. I categorised the humour in the five ways mentioned above. Use of humour illustrated the complex ways of bridging tensions in teachers’ talk. Black humour was a darker form of humour, employed in cases where tragedy and death were averted. Humour was used to put down others, nervous laughter was used in cases of uncertainty, mocking humour ridiculed and made fun of others and humour I characterised as Delight in Silliness occurred during recounting mirthful or absurd events in outdoor education.

8.5.1.1 Black humour

Black humour satirises life’s tragedies. While black humour can be a resource employed to help deal with the possibility of child's death or serious injury, there were very few instances of laughing at tragic cases or mocking them. The closest was recounting when death or serious accident did not occur and tragedy was averted. Strong claims were made in all the interviews that the death of child would be the worst thing that could happen in outdoor education. It is unlikely that teachers would employ black humour in a public sphere, as in the formal interview situation with an unknown interviewer, as moral restraints operate around children’s death. Possibly black humour is employed in teachers’ more private spaces “backstage” (Vaughan, 2007) away from public view, but I have no experience of this.

Humour identified as black humour was employed when relating dangerous situations that could have, to use Anne’s term above, “turned to custard”. Situations where there was a possibility of death or accident were laughed about and any subsequent damage was downplayed as being only minor. In one group interview, a teacher laughed at the possibility of children being hit by cricket balls when talking of a case where a number of games were
played simultaneously in a small playground. In another interview a teacher laughed at the impossibility of a child drowning when the child’s parents would not let the child anywhere near water, “…and we have some children where it’s very hard to … convince their parents to… [let their children swim]” (T18). This comment caused an interjection from another teacher claiming “Well, no drownings here then!” (T 20) resulting in uproarious laughter from the group.

8.5.1.2 Put-downs

Humour was employed to put down others, or to dismiss others’ anxiety or risk-management systems (or lack of) or their position. Laughter accompanied these put downs but was often done in a kindly joking fashion. It was not necessarily to hurt, but to denigrate the other teacher in a laughable way; ‘having a dig’ at another. The other is put down for their lack of ability in whatever area is in discussion. It served to brush off others and make their contribution meaningless with a retort equivalent to “I don’t think so!”

Put-downs were also used on occasion to vent frustration at others. These others generally were often parents who were considered lacking in ability in comparison with teachers. Others were also qualified instructors who were seen to not perform at an appropriate level. Blaming was an element of this humour. One teacher accounted for her accident (sprained ankle) by blaming a father who moved a child’s bed into her way: “I felt like slapping the father!” (Ella, derisive laughter). Another teacher used this type of humour to put down a parent when they suggested school camps were like holidays, “…The parent said “Yeah, I'm going to take my deck chair, and book and I'm going to have such a good holiday”” (Bruce employed “Yeah right!” laughter in response).

When humour was employed to put down others, it was also used for silencing effect and to position the speaker as more knowledgeable than others (Bonaiuto, et al., 2003). In one example, Lizzie the adventurous young teacher silences Anne, the older safer teacher by laughing at her claims that outdoor education is as challenging nowadays as it was in the past (employing a “yeah right!” response). This type of humour was also used to put oneself down. In Bruce’s case he puts himself down because he is not as well prepared as others might think. When I commented with admiration to him on the thickness of his health and

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9 A joking response that indicates disbelief and disagreement.
10 “Yeah, right”, a joking response that disputes claims made.
safety folder, he snorted with laughter, “I’ve no idea what they are ... what the rules and regulations are!” (Bruce)

8.5.1.3 Nervous laughter

Humour was employed to defuse nervousness and anxiety at accounts of close calls. Accidents were minimised and the laughter has the sense of “You really have to laugh don’t you!” (an element of the “she’ll be right” attitude - don’t worry, the worst didn’t happen). If this attitude was not held, the situation would be too ghastly to contemplate. While this form of laughter invokes death, it also reminds us of the lucky escape and the not death. In one interview, a teacher recounted an event where a girl slipped off a railway platform onto the train tracks. The girl had dropped her lunch box and wanted to retrieve it. All the interview participants, myself included, laughed nervously in an “Oh my god! Oh no!” manner; the possibility that the girl could have been killed was too horrendous. Nervous laughter united the group in reliving the event. At the end of the narration, when the girl was lifted off the tracks by her hair just before the train came, there was further nervous laughter. When an explanation was given that the girl had tried to get her lunchbox because there was still lunch in it, the interview group moved from nervous laughter to erupt into cheers of laughter; a celebration of life.

Some of the difficult situations faced in outdoor education were minimised using humour. Nervous laughter accompanied minimisations of accidents. The skiing incidents and the grass burns case are examples of minimisation of danger. In one group-interview, a situation was related where the child could have been allergic to bees, and this is worthwhile noting because it has the sense of slapstick about it, and had the effect of uniting the whole group with laughter:

One of the kids poked a stick into a beehive and the bees chased him down the hill - and he had bee stings all over him, but nothing swelled up - he obviously didn't have allergies and he didn’t want to ring his parents because he’d be in trouble because of the bee stings. We didn’t have cellphones then, there was no phone at the Scout Hall or anything like that, but we had a bottle of vinegar and we tipped it all over him and that’s what we did, [laughter] and he survived. He could have died, but the first thing I asked him was “Are you allergic to bees?” and he said, ‘No”, but we would have rushed him to the doctor because there was a little township about 10 miles up the road and we would have, but he could have died in that time. But he had these little bumps all over his head and up his arms and on his shoulders
and ...when I think about it we were so casual about it and we had a bottle of vinegar for the chips that night and we just poured it over him, and there was no phone in the hall, and the parents had all dropped their kids off there and left them in our care ... [laughter] ... and this happened! (Ella)

This description elicited much laughter with comments regarding the loss of vinegar for the chips that night. The story had the function of uniting the group in laughter because the child survived and it was fortunate that he was not allergic to bees.

8.5.1.4 Mocking

This type of humour made fun of others (or self) or situations. Safety action plans were mocked because there are too many of them, and for example, was there an action plan if a child got packed up inside a tent when de-camping? A teacher was mocked because glitter was left behind inside school tents after a camp, “...and glitter - what was she doing on camp with glitter?”

There is limited cellphone coverage in some areas used for outdoor education (national reserves, wilderness reserves, some coastal areas), so when I asked a question in one focus group about the usefulness of cellphones I was mocked:

It depends where you are! (T18, laughter from the group)

If you're in the Hunuas – there's no phone coverage! (T19, laughter)

In the same interview teachers mocked again when I asked about the value of camps (for children).

Instead of responding with regard to children, the teachers turned the question around by referring to the value of outdoor education, or lack of, for themselves. Monetary values were placed on teachers’ experience of school camps because of the responsibility and time involved. They made fun of the amount of time spent on school camp, the lack of remuneration, and if they were paid per child it might be worthwhile:

We should get more money for being out on camp. (T23)

We need $20 a kid. (T18, laughter)

$20 multiplied by 180 children over 24 hours... (T18)
It’s common to get paid isn’t it? (T21)

Well, you do get free food. (T20)

In the same interview, another response to the question about the value of outdoor education indicated support for outdoor education but a challenge to mathematics and perhaps a call for subversion:

Well I think that outdoor education should stay and it should be more encouraged within the school as well ... who cares about the maths! (T21 said in a whisper, as an aside … accompanied by laughter)

We should be subversive really. (T18)

There were many occasions where a mocking humour was used, often towards themselves, or at children although generally a more gentle form of humour was employed when talking about children and the funny things they did.

8.5.1.5 Delight in silliness

Laughter occurred in sequences where the humorous things that children did were discussed. This form of humour could involve teasing children. Slapstick was also an element of silly humour. This form of humour was employed when describing situations of sheer enjoyment, delighting in the ludicrous or ridiculous. In one description of a camp’s organisation, that teacher laughed at the ridiculousness of getting year 5 children to pack up tents, but also mocks another teacher for their lack of organisation:

I’ve got the tents all numbered and I have to do that because [the other teacher] used to take them on camp you know and three tents would come back in one bag, and no-fly [laughter]. And the fly sheets would be over there and the tents ... there’d be no pegs for this one. So I made all these bags because when you get a tent it’s so compressed and packed up and squashed together and fits perfectly in a zipped bag - but you try and get Year Fives to put back in the thing and they can’t even get the fly in let alone the tent. [Laughter, Bruce].

In another example Bruce recounts being approached by a child who said he was not comfortable about being naked. Bruce laughed and commented that he wondered where the child got that idea from:
And I’m thinking where did he get that from? What’s he talking about. Because it’s the river you see. The child thought that he had to take his clothes off to cross the river. It was so funny - I said “Look, look”, you know, “the moon’s dull” [Poor kid]… he obviously thought we were going to have to take our clothes off and swim across the river ... and I was thinking, Oh my God ... where did he get that idea from?” (Bruce)

Bruce laughs with delight when tricking children into doing something silly, or into believing something that is not going to happen, for example telling children that they will be eating possum burgers for dinner. He laughed at the silliness of children taking doll tents to camp “…Three of them blew over at night, they’re … you know … the ones you have up in the lounge”. I was teased in one interview too, because the teacher could remember me coming back from a school camp at Tawharanui once and saying: “I'm never going back there - it was cold, and the mince got burnt”. [much laughter between the pair of us, “Did I? I can’t remember”] “Yes, you were absolutely up to the back teeth with it.” I was flabbergasted because I could not remember saying this as I have fond memories of school camps. I had forgotten, perhaps conveniently, the irritations and frustrations of taking children into the outdoors.

To conclude: in this chapter I presented a variety of examples of discourse situations to illustrate how the complexities of practice are managed. This analysis showed the fluidity in which repertoires were drawn upon in the maintenance of particular stances in outdoor education practice. It is an intricate process to manage different or oppositional stances in the maintenance of acceptable positions. These positions, as identified in the earlier analysis draw from the three repertoires, primarily safe practitioner or adventurous risk-taker. Contradictions became evident as repertoires were fluidly drawn upon in shaping what is considered acceptable practice. A struggle for legitimation was also apparent between differing versions. Considering the plausibility of differing versions permitted opening up the process of maintaining an ascendant position. A tension was apparent in this process, as the talk moved fluidly, in motion, within the networks of versions. The work done in maintaining versions was also apparent for the various forms of humour identified in teachers’ talk. In the following chapter, I elaborate on the effect of this tension. Further, I consider the network of relationships between safety, risk, adventure, danger, pleasure or anxiety.
9 Discussion

9.1 Introduction

Reminiscent of a walk through the bush, this thesis has traversed the field of New Zealand primary school education outside the classroom in order to answer the research questions; “what is the meaning of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers?” and “what are the effects of their understandings about safety in the outdoor classroom?” Glimpses have been taken into specific practices at certain points to uncover, and highlight how safety is understood, and the relationship between risk-taking and pleasure. I have considered the significant issues relating to safety of children in the outdoor classroom, investigated the policies of safety for education in the outdoors, and deliberated on the tendency for both non-specialist primary teachers and children to be attracted to education outside the classroom. I have taken a night walk on a school camp, and observed and listened to teachers talk about their practice. The traverse has stopped at the various points to take a closer look, to peer into windows to enhance understanding of the tensions between safety and pleasure that need to be negotiated for these teachers. In this final chapter I make sense of key features that my journey uncovered; safe children, experiential pleasure in activities, the dangerous terrain of children in the outdoors, and how the outdoors and experiences of it is shaped in talk and practice.

The study focused on New Zealand’s non-specialist primary teachers’ beliefs about children’s safety, the place of pleasure in the outdoor classroom, and the ways in which the seemingly unresolvable nexus between safety and pleasure is negotiated in their practice. By drawing on social constructionism I considered how both safety and pleasure are understood by these teachers. In this concluding chapter I discuss these understanding and tease out the complexities of practice regarding safety and pleasure in the outdoors for children and teachers. While I argue that a tension exists between safety and pleasure in non-specialist primary school teachers’ outdoor practice, there are links to other related notions; risk, adventure, danger, and anxiety. Further, I suggest networks of meanings to explicate the relationships between these constructs. The notion of networks permits an explanation of both the acceptable and controversial positions regarding safe and pleasurable educational practice in the outdoor classroom, and additionally, the complex processes of managing tensions within the networks. A network model also enables discussion of the particular ways
that tensions between safety and pleasure have contributed to shape policy and affect teachers’ practice in the outdoor classroom.

As demonstrated in the teachers’ repertoires, education in the outdoors presents a site where the complexities of practice are shaped by a multitude of factors that come to attention at specific times, or similarly can fade from focus at other times. The site constitutes a continual process of social interactions where meanings and understandings are fluid and changeable (Wetherell, 1998). A history of outside the classroom activities and related policy in New Zealand illustrates changing social concerns and foci, and meanings regarding school children and the outdoor environment (Stothart, 1993). However, Wattchow and Brown (2011) draw attention to the fact that practices considered acceptable in the past, have no place in contemporary experiences in the outdoor classroom. The safety of children is an example of changed societal expectations where attention has turned toward expectations of high levels of safety provision, and away from, for example, adventurous risk-taking. From reading the policy documents it appears that understanding risk and adventure in the outdoor classroom has turned toward ‘safe risk’ and ‘safe adventure’. A tension emerges when providing for safety, yet at the same time enjoying the pleasure that risk and adventure can provide (McNamee, 2007).

I argue that for non-specialist primary teachers, educating children outside the classroom is a site where the balance between safety, risk and pleasure, or anxiety and enjoyment is a crucial element of interactions, and that managing the equilibrium is a complex task. The notion of networks of meanings brings to the forefront the points, or intersections in meanings, to show how and where tensions appear in talk, practices and the experiences of participants in primary school education outside the classroom. Analysis of teachers’ talk using Potter and Wetherell’s (1987; 1990; 2004) interpretative repertoire approach has shown the fluidity with which different meanings are drawn upon in the service of argument and positioning. What is acceptable at one time, in one discussion is unacceptable by others at different times. The analyses in chapters 7 and 8 show the movement and elasticity of meaning-making through the rhetorical process of establishing truth. Meanings are fluid, changing, enacted and reshaped, changing in significance over time, and with different individuals, and in changing circumstances. As the historical and policy study showed in chapter 4, the notion of safety has evolved in meaning and significance over the historical period.
The notion of fluid, changing and elastic networks of understandings, as the interpretative repertoires showed, can pinpoint how meanings change through talk and actions (Wetherell, 1998). Talk and arguments appear and are challenged, or disappear or are compromised - there are not static networks of understandings but they are fluid and are changeable according to circumstances. In the networks it can be shown how the ‘safe child’ is understood, where risk consciousness comes into being, how children’s deaths are spoken about, and how pleasure is expressed.

9.2 A social constructionist network of meanings

As this thesis has taken a social constructionist approach, networks of meanings lends itself to opening up a discussion of the constructive processes of establishing for example, what is safe, or risky or dangerous and how pleasure is experienced. Networks of meanings sit well within social constructionism where understandings are intersubjectively constructed through social processes (Burr, 2003; Gubrium & Holstein, 2003). These dynamic processes result in a collective framing of safety or risk or danger. I draw on Lupton’s (1999) work on the social construction of risk. How these ideas are understood is a product of social networks of understanding, that is, socially constructed meanings (Burr, 2003). Meanings are made in the network of multiple linkages of talk and social processes, which in turn shape the experiences of the outdoors. Here I refer also to Hilgartner’s (1992) notion of a socially constructed network of linkages of meanings.

Hilgartner (1992) proposed a social constructionist network perspective on risk, suggesting that things, activities or situations deemed to be dangerous, become understood as ‘risk objects’. Lupton (1999) claims a similar position where meanings are constructed within specific socio-cultural and historical contexts. Meanings are associated with risk, and danger becomes associated with the things, activities or situations that are deemed risky. Hilgartner (1992) uncovered networks of risk and the linkages in policies, language and actions. In a similar manner, understandings of what constitute safe practice, safe individuals, pleasure or dangerous activities can be established through linkages of meaning. I use this notion to draw together the threads of the thesis, and the findings of my analyses, to make sense of safety and pleasure in education outside the classroom, and of the experience and beliefs for the group of people who were participants in the study.

The notion of a network is useful to elaborate the tensions within education outdoors. Considering a wide encompassing network of talk, action and experience permits opening up
the network to identify situations where tension is apparent. I conceptualise a network of meanings, connections, and relationships with changing tension and significance at different periods in time and for different groups of people. I find Hilgartner’s (1992) discussion of the social construction of risk, and the establishment of networks of meaning useful in reading my work in the field. I discuss how tensions shape interpretations and beliefs about safety, risk and danger, adventure and pleasure in experiences in the outdoors – and the dynamic processes by which meanings are made in talk, experience and action.

I suggest an elastic network, where meanings about safety, risk danger, enjoyment, adventure, anxiety or freedom are made fluidly within talk and in physical experiential practices, and while policy meanings come to establish certain processes and systems, these are not always able to account for, or stipulate, the events or situations that arise in educational experiences outside the classroom. The elasticity of understandings is explained within the moment by moment situations of talk, action and experience. An elastic model explains the links that are tight and strong at some points, but loose and tenuous at others. An activity might be considered risky at some times, and for some teachers and for some children, yet safe in other circumstances, and for other individuals, and at other times. The model also permits multiple connections – for example between anxiety and fear, and safety and pleasure, or danger and risk, and in different contexts. As Lupton (1999, p. 31) notes regarding Hilgartner’s (1992) work, there are an infinite number of potential linkages possible within a network - and here I focus on those points that are relevant to the study from an infinite number of possible points. I identify these points as ‘hotspots’.

A notion of networks explains the tension spots that emerged from the research data - the points where I considered tension was apparent. In order to open up the social nature of the tension spots, as Hilgartner (1992) did in his study, I focus on key findings that arose from the study. These findings draw attention to networks that I suggest operate in various ways and in various contexts in primary school education in the outdoors. Use of the term ‘hotspots’, focuses attention to where intensity of meaning is directed to those situations throughout the course of the educational experience that was central to this study, and the intersection points, that bring together the themes of the thesis.

9.3 **Key elements: The hot spots**

The key hotspots identified here are representative of the complexity of the intersubjective meanings of the social world of children and the outdoors. As Lupton (1999, p. 110) argues,
there are many ways to understand how risk has meaning for example, and one of the ways is through the relationships between members of social groups and networks. Networks are intricate, changing and developing as sense-making occurs within social relationships. These networks of meaning around safety, risk, adventure, danger, pleasure or anxiety affect teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom. The field is not static, but fluid and constantly changing through connections and relationships, evolving as attention is focused in newer ways toward children and their safety, or toward teachers and responsibility, or toward children’s outdoor activities. Thus many instances give light to sense-making within the network. Highlighting the ‘configurations of meaning’ (Gubrium & Holstein, 2003, p. 215) offers opportunity to explain the practices in this field.

The following examples are only indications of tension points, because as Hilgartner (1992) maintains, there are many points within a network of meanings. While Hilgartner (1992, p. 41) claims it is dangerous to take anything for granted when analysing the social construction of reality, I suggest that certain points, events, and circumstances are important here and help bring together the interests of this thesis.

These situations are the intersections of meanings, and become the site of tension. Tensions between safety, risk, adventure, danger, pleasure or anxiety are evident in the talk and experiences in this area. How these have emerged at this point in time will be discussed when the situations are detailed. The situations I highlight here for discussion are related to children and water, whether at the beach, a swimming hole or a pool. Another situation which brings together key ideas relates to teachers’ enjoyment when with children. Having fun, or laughing out loud, are deemed inappropriate when working to keep children safe, regardless of whether the setting is inside or outside the classroom. A further point of conflict is the place of parents in education outside the classroom; this is specific to the New Zealand context as parents historically and in accordance with expectations laid out in the policy have played a significant supportive role in school outdoor activities. To highlight another point, I include one further example to explore; what I determine is the ‘unimaginable event’. I include this because the possibility of the unimaginable presents a powerful idea that is inherent in many of the practices of non-specialist primary teachers working in the outside classroom. The unimaginable also brings together the themes of the thesis.
As Hilgartner (1992) notes, there are multiple points within a network of meanings, and in the following section I detail and discuss these situations where meanings intersect, and are relevant to this study.

9.4 **Hotspot: Drownings**

One of the hotspots of the study, persistent in teachers’ talk throughout the research was the matter of child deaths, or more specifically child drowning. Many of the experiences of the school camp involved water activities; swimming, kayaking, yachting or surfing and children’s participation in these events brought to the forefront the possibility of accidental drowning (Moran, 1999). Because of the emotional awareness of recent child deaths from drowning, or even the *possibility* of drowning, fear, risk anxiety, danger and safety intersected in the interview data in teachers’ talk.

While there were no drownings during the period of data collection, the high profile drowning cases in New Zealand during school outdoor education activities remained persuasive. Those drownings were imagined or revisited by teachers in the study. The floating bodies of drowned children were a recurring image supporting safe outdoor practice. I imagined the bodies myself, pale shapes floating beneath the surface of the swimming hole. At the time I had read the media reports, the coroner’s findings, and other “death by drowning on school camp” reports. While teachers talked about drownings, I imagined my own response should a death have occurred on my camp. I certainly could relate to comments of teachers’ personal experiences. Dead bodies affect the consciousness of the living, whether through media reports or in memory. These bodies, ever floating, reside in these teachers’ consciousness.

Yet, to go beyond the grim fascination toward such deaths, I sought to consider how death affected outdoor practice. Death is a rare occurrence during school events and activities. When death does occur however, media reporting is intense; death is a key element of mass media (Walter, Littlewood & Pickering, 1995). The rarity of deaths intensifies interest in them (Davidson, 2004). Death anxiety is manifested even though none of the teachers had experienced death on an outdoor education/EOTC activity. But New Zealand is a small country, and the primary school educational community, numbering in thousands, is relatively small and well-connected, so that all of the teachers knew of the recent drownings (2000 – 2001), or knew of somebody who had been where the deaths occurred (or said they had). The floating bodies of the drowned children drew attention to deaths that are relatively
rare but always frightening (Glassner, 1999). Fear of death is brought to the forefront by bodies floating in the waterhole, but the bodies also generate death and anxiety. As Bruce noted: “I never want to tell a parent that their child has drowned, I never want to face that”. From the teachers’ talk it would appear that this fear and anxiety is one of the factors that direct attention toward safe practice in order to avoid death.

Other worst case scenarios, or other deaths, were mentioned to support teacher’s safe practice. Risk analysis management systems (RAMS) were also referred to in relation to the drownings, even while it was accepted that the RAMS would not have prevented the deaths. The risk management systems employed at the time (Ministry of Education, 2003b) attempted to account for all risks, as do outdoor education teachers, yet, while teachers accepted the RAMS were unable to protect children all the time, drownings, or children’s accidents were still brought up in support of RAMS. The effect of drowned children establishes heightened levels of risk awareness and risk aversion. Aversion to risk-taking, in the service of preventing child deaths, and avoiding activities with the potential for harm or death of children, provided convincing justification for safe practice.

Images of these extreme consequences have a significant impact on what is deemed appropriate in teachers’ planning for outdoor activities. From the findings I would suggest reduced challenge and risk-taking activity and intensification of anxiety about taking children outside the classroom have become more apparent. Death during outdoor education activities confirms the outdoors as a site of anxiety. The outdoors becomes dangerous, and, regardless of the actual rarity of deaths, taking children outside the classroom, in New Zealand, in these schools, at this time, has become a project that requires significant organisation. Planning the school trips must incorporate consideration of the possibility of accident or death. Yet as both Hogan (2002) and Brookes (2011) maintain, focusing on situations where death could occur is a more manageable approach rather than focusing on all possible risks. Taking children outside the classroom is a serious matter if children’s safety is compromised, yet also produces another tension, identified by Andkjoer (2012), that of the dilemma of pleasure and enjoyment. The ambiguity Andkjoer claimed, introduces another hotspot in the network, that of teachers’ pleasure when interacting with children.

9.5 Hotspot: Teachers’ pleasure

When teachers take pleasure having fun with children, several intersections occur between any or all of these points: pleasure and anxiety, fear, risk or danger. Having fun with children
is inappropriate on many levels, but the most significant in this case is the lowering of the teacher's safeguard. It is not possible for a teacher to be watchful and alert if they are relating to children in pleasurable ways. The teacher becomes unsafe because they are not constantly alert to protect children and keep them safe; pleasure is not appropriate in educational settings. A number of researchers have noted the role of teacher as keeping a watchful distance from children (Jones, 2004, in particular in the New Zealand educational context). In this research teachers seen to be enjoying activities with children can be considered to step beyond the mark of suitable or professional behaviour. A professional teacher with the responsibility for children's safety risks the displeasure of colleagues or parents if they are seen to be enjoying, with children, the pleasures of outdoor engagement.

When teachers use humour it is to mediate the tension about safety and the context of the pleasure for being in the outdoors. This hotspot of teachers’ pleasure with children establishes a teacher position of not to be observed enjoying oneself. In understanding the meaning generated here, this position serves two functions. First, while protecting teachers, it also prevents their exhibition of pleasurable participation, and silences a public acknowledgement of their pleasure. Teachers’ pleasure is unacceptable and remains hidden. I will discuss the ramifications of hidden pleasure further in the concluding chapter, that pleasure from humour is hidden, yet also helps deal with teacher anxiety. This action however occurs not in public spaces of teacher/student/parents/others, but in teachers’ private spaces of staffrooms and group discussions. Teachers cannot be seen to make jokes about children’s safety. The tension point occurs where the teacher cannot be in control of students if they are not watchful and alert, and always on duty. A further point here is the notion of teachers’ professionalism, particularly when in charge of activities where parents and others are present. Parents are at the intersection of another hotspot in school outdoor activities, and this is a point relevant in New Zealand as parents have traditional involvement in school pursuits outside the classroom.

9.6 Hotspot: Parents

Parents are a point of tension at the intersection of safety, risk, danger, panic, risk anxiety and teachers’ safe professionalism (Lupton, 1999). Parents become the ‘other’ in primary school education in the outdoors; they are different from teachers and do not have the same level of professionalism as do teachers. The ‘other’ becomes a subject of anxiety and concern (Lupton, 1999, p. 124); parents are NOT teachers and are not able or skilled enough to
manage children’s safety. They are not careful or watchful enough; having ‘others’ at the outdoor site without training (for activities), or unqualified, is deemed dangerous (Ministry of Education, 2003b).

Lupton (1999) notes of the liminal other, the stranger outside the social group as a threat to social order, the one who carries a sense of danger (p. 134). At the time of this study, prior to recent MOE regulations being put in place, parents become the incapable and dangerous ‘other’ - not able to be controlled - worse than students in many respects. As T3 commented, 20 years earlier any ‘Joe Bloggs’ who could sail a boat was a good target for parent help on camp. Today there are occasions when parents are denied visitation rights during school ‘away’ camps because they might disturb the order and safety of the camp. Parents are unpredictable; they may ‘sabotage completely’ the safe boat of EOTC as identified by the Ministry of Education’s 2003 Safe EOTC Guidelines, (p. 11). This was evidenced in teacher talk; parent’s status is problematic and their lack of attention could be harmful for children.

Parents are Lupton’s (1999) liminal figures; the in-between, neither friend nor enemy, yet posing a threat of danger if left to their own devices. They are banished from the camp unless they have services that are invaluable, and upon which the camp depends, then they become indispensable, yet still remain on the outside. They do not see children's safety as seriously as do the teachers as their in-between status as neither teacher nor qualified helper establishes ambivalence; they can be untrustworthy and their position problematic. As teacher Bev asserts: “You can’t rely on parents to do the same things that us teachers would do”. The presence of these unreliable ‘others’ coincides with, and brings into being, the possibility of dangerous outcomes for children, and the fearful consequence of death. Worst case scenarios were prevalent in teachers’ talk.

9.7 Hotspot: The unimaginable event

I identify the unimaginable event as another hotspot that establishes, for these teachers, taking children outside the classroom as a risky activity. The worst unimaginable events are called into being and become tension points that are the focus of risk anxieties, dread and fear of taking children outside of the classroom for outdoor activities. The unimaginable emerges in teacher talk as the “You never know what will happen...the dreadful things I never want to face”. The unimaginable looms over the outdoor event where children are present and even when the teacher is in control of the activity. While some teachers ascertain risk with an attitude of “she’ll be right” and avoid the unimaginable (Braun, 2008), for many the
unimaginable is a consequence of not planning, not keeping safe, not being careful enough: the gunman who goes mad and the yobbos in the school grounds are always present. Intense media reporting of events constantly replays the unimaginable which can haunt the consciousness of teachers (and parents, even as they are disabled from control in the outdoor setting) (Glassner, 1999). While the unmentionable event produces avoidance of risk and danger, and supports risk management, it has a control mechanism. When nasty situations are brought into the present by the unimaginable, as is evidenced in the quote immediately above, danger is presented to control wayward and ill-prepared teachers (Jones, 2004). According to Gill (2008) this can inhibit teachers or leaders from fully supporting children’s engagement in outdoor activities.

I have used the notion of hotspots to illustrate the tension within a meaning network of infinite possibilities for these teachers. While these points are only some of the possible interpretations, I suggest they are significant in shaping these non-specialist teachers’ beliefs and practices. Safety and death, unsafe others, pleasure and danger are features present here. In the following section I turn to a discussion on the impact that these tensions, and others have on the teachers’ practices outside the classroom. As I have indicated, there are multiple sites of tension, and some of the cases discussed below have elements that are interchangeable with others. My interpretations are just that - my interpretations of this particular terrain. They are however informed by my reading of the circumstances, individuals and experiences, and engagement with bodies of literature pertinent to this study.

I turn now to a discussion of the tension between safety, risk, adventure, danger, pleasure or anxiety, and I discuss the effects of these intersections in the light of my interpretations within this study.

9.8 Risk consciousness

One claim I make, in this instance, is the prevalence of risk consciousness and risk anxiety in non-specialist primary school teachers’ beliefs about safety in the outdoor classroom. Risk consciousness and risk anxiety direct the practices of these teachers and the policies of EOTC. Given the intersections in the field – children, danger and risk, this is unsurprising. Risk is everywhere (Ropeik & Gray, 2002), and here is linked to children in the outdoors. Risk management processes are important for any activities outside the classroom. There are detailed safety rules, risk management plans, and critical incident considerations. Such systems support the containment of children and serve to allay teacher fears and anxieties. As
the research has indicated they can also prevent teachers from fully taking advantage of the outdoor classroom. Yet the options, a reduction in safety systems for example, are constrained by the possibility, the unimaginable, of harm to children. Risk-taking in water makes this issue more complex, as children die from drowning, and in New Zealand this is a serious health and safety concern (Moran, 1999). Activities in water provoke the highest level of risk awareness.

Risk awareness of children, in the outdoors in risk-taking situations, establishes the outdoors as a site of anxiety for non-specialist primary teachers, as much as the touching children panics established teaching as a dangerous enterprise (Jones, 2004). When the outdoors is dangerous or unsafe for children, watchfulness, vigilance, and surveillance prevail. Jones’ work illustrated the extent of watchfulness by teachers when working with children and their fear of accusation of abuse. In the outdoors too, safety is understood and enacted when teachers are alert in their supervisory role (Gill, 2008). One consequence of risk anxiety here, as the research has endorsed, is that teachers’ action in the field is restricted. Primary school outdoor education is now left to experts, people with training and qualifications in specific activities and expertise in safety and risk management systems (Ministry of Education, 2003b).

Another consequence of risk anxiety is the production of anal teachers; teachers who enact high levels of caution, and supervisory tactics to keep children safe. One of the teachers in the study modified his behaviour around water and became extremely cautious and careful. Self-identified as an ‘anal’ teacher, he went to extreme lengths to prohibit children from water activities to prevent any child drownings. Yet, the same teacher was able to manage the conflicts of safety and pleasure by enacting what may seem unusual rituals around children and water. This was an indication of the tension. Anal becomes the practice of risk avoidance. Higher levels of vigilance and surveillance from the 1980s (Department of Education, 1985b) and the subsequent absolution from responsibility by reliance on trained experts who have the qualifications to manage risk and danger (Ministry of Education, 2003b), supports risk avoidance. There is evidence however that a similar cautionary measure in a different context has worked against the opportunity for children to engage in challenging outdoor activities (Gleave, 2008). One situation however, that provokes the highest levels of risk avoidance and anxiety, as discussed previously, is for children and water. The levels of risk anxiety, border on generating social panic about water activities.
9.9 Social panics

Social panics about death are facilitated by media (Connolly & Doolan, 2007), but while media play a crucial role, they are only one point in the network (Hilgartner, 1992). However, media accounts of drownings on school camps during the period of this study were to have a significant effect on the practices and talk of these non-specialist teachers (e.g. see Glassner, 1999). As the teachers in the study attested, panics about dead children served to restrict their practices with children in the outdoors, and reduce opportunities for challenge and risk taking activities (Gleave, 2008). These panics regarding child deaths intensified their anxiety about taking children outside of the classroom, and as with the unimaginable, produced a limited form of outdoor experience.

The previously noted drowning incident where two children died was a recurrent anecdote which facilitated an underlying anxious panic, and endorsed the “riskiness” of outdoor activities for the teacher participants, who brought their anxieties about the deaths into talk in support of different positions. Their panic supported non-participation in water activities, reduced teacher involvement in outdoor education excursions, and prohibited children from, in one situation, going anywhere near water. Justification of safe practice and vigilance are served by anxious panic (Gill, 2008). Risk aversion, avoidance of activities with potential for harm or death of children, provides justification for the less frightening safe practice. The death of a child is a deeply disturbing experience, and one that Hilgartner (2007, p. 154) notes challenges the vision of orderly systems. The safety systems employed in school education in the outdoor context is an example that, if followed, plans for no harm to children or other participants. Any challenge to safety systems that protect all children is a minor voice in the discourse simply because of the possibility of deaths. Yet as Hogan (2002) and Brookes (2011) suggest this need not be the case. But overwhelmingly, in this study the major concern for these teachers is about children’s safety – the paramountcy principle underlies all practice. Social panic about children’s safety above all else leads to the new child in the outdoor classroom – the safe risk-taker – the child who is protected in order to take safe risks in the outdoors.

9.10 Safe child

The safe child of the new millennium has been characterised as the ‘cotton wool’ child – a child protected from all harm, the safe outdoor child, the safe risk-taker within prescribed limits (Furedi, 2006). Certainly teachers in this study understood the notion of the ‘cotton
wool’ child, but the dilemma for some of them was the conflict between the paramountcy of safety with the pleasure of challenge, risk-taking and trying new experiences. As Waite (2009) claims, part of the problem is the risk-averse culture which supports teachers’ limitation of children’s outdoor experiences. The safe child, the cotton-wool child is apparent in the primary school outdoor education/EOTC practices of this study (Ministry of Education, 2003b). The child is protected from harm, linked, roped, contained within boundaries, is subject to safe risk activities, and cannot go on the beach unless supervised. As were the children in the research study, safety is prioritised over their risk-taking.

I suggest the child of outdoor education is similar to the safe outdoor teacher – practising self-surveillance, watching oneself and others (Ministry of Education, 2003b; Scott et.al 1998). In the camp case study, a small fence separated the children from the water - but they did not go near – they produced their own watchfulness. Children are able to safely assess the personal and physical risk to themselves because they are watching themselves being careful (Christensen & Mikkelsen, 2008). In the 2003 safety guidelines this research referred to, the Ministry of Education noted the safe child who ‘must’ take some responsibility for themselves, avoid behaviour that could lead to accidents, and report any incident immediately (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 15). The safe child self-monitors to protect themselves, and others, from harm and unsafe practices. Incidents, accidents, hazards, damage or loss, and unsafe practices become the students’ repertoire in school’s education outside the classroom; the message here is that the outdoors can be dangerous.

9.11 Safety is understood in relation to danger

Another important aspect of the study is that the space outside the classroom can be dangerous. As Hilgartner (1992, p. 46) asserts, any entity can become a risk object when it is linked to harm. This is supported by Davidson’s (2008) claim that mountains become ‘killers’ when people die on them, so that the outdoors is a site of danger when identified as hazardous, or as a site where there is the possibility for damage and loss.

Analysis of policy documents provided another interpretation regarding the outdoors and safety regulation. When health and safety standards direct schools’ outdoor safety policies, a number of problems arise. These include both restrictions for outdoor spaces and of children’s activities. In New Zealand, health and safety codes ensure appropriate, and safe, design and construction of children’s outdoor activity areas. Rather than using what is known about children’s activity, play and development, children’s outdoor spaces are shaped by
safety standards (Herrington & Nicholls, 2007). Design of children’s safe outdoor activity areas and playgrounds, leads to a restriction of space and possibilities for children’s play experimentation. Throughout the world, children are prevented from active play and running in outdoor spaces and school playgrounds for safety reasons (Booth, 2009).

The space outside the classroom, the outdoors, can be dangerous, regardless of the actual rarity of death, and deaths in school outdoor activities are uncommon (Davidson, 2004). The unpredictability of safe practice and of risk-taking, because the future is unknown and uncertain (Beck, 1992), associates the outdoor environment with harm. But more than that, it establishes a form of feedback loop – the outdoors is associated with danger, is linked to deaths, and becomes unsafe, therefore it is necessary to have precautionary safety measures. By linking deaths to outdoors, then to unsafe, the outdoors, and particularly water activities become dangerous, thereby justifying heightened attention to safety and vigilance. What is understood as safe (and dangerous) is located within the continual process of interactions in the social context (Rochlin, 2010). When the outdoors, the space outside the classroom is dangerous for these non-specialist teachers, they never know what will happen. This point was characteristic of the safe practitioner as articulated in the teachers’ talk; the outdoors is risky and the uncertainty of safety is linked to danger, death and lack of control. These teachers’ understanding of the outdoors as dangerous extends to their beliefs and the activities that are provided for their students.

Some activities are simply recognisably dangerous. Lynch’s (2006, p. 173) mention of a 1987 example of students ‘skiing’ along a beach at 20-30 kilometres while towed behind a four-wheel drive, is not an acceptable activity in any school activity outside the classroom. Activities like this are inappropriate, and not permitted, and understood as extremely dangerous. However, the deeming of an activity as dangerous is social and becomes legitimated through a collective framing of risk and safety. Activities that are deemed dangerous have high levels of risk-management imposed on them, with water activities having the highest. As has been argued and demonstrated throughout the thesis, the social meanings and interpretations are from a variety of sources; the individual players, teachers, children and parents, and the media and policy makers, who come to understand what are acceptable and tolerable safety limits. However, the limits of what constitutes safe practice are constantly altering within social contexts. While skiing behind a car is unsafe, for some individuals walking up a hill, or walking at night has become unsafe.
A tension exists when activities have become risky, yet are considered in other contexts exciting or challenging. This is a dilemma for outdoor activities that involve school children; how safety is understood by teachers affects the nature of the type of actions undertaken. If box sliding down a hill or playing on the sand by the seashore are unsafe, then pleasure and thrill are denied. The effect of avoiding risky activities makes many activities previously considered acceptable, unsafe. When walking up a hill, as the teachers in Ella’s group decided in chapter 7, was unsafe and to be avoided, children are denied the opportunity afforded from getting to the top. Simple things are unsafe - paddling in the water for example, though there are always the negative situations drawn upon to support the notion of unsafe water and vigilance, as water is the most unforgiving substance. Camping at night away from home requires soft toys for emotional support. Such stances affect involvement in outdoor activities. Yet, from my observation, talking with teachers and my participation, children expressed pleasure at taking part in risky exciting activities.

9.12 Children and risk-taking

The prevailing safety messages that teachers operate under are not like those for children, particularly when children take part in their outdoor activities. Many children welcome excitement and challenge in activities, even if there are elements of risk (Waite, 2009). Children learn about risk-taking, and their bodies, by taking risks (Christensen & Mikkelsen, 2008). While risk-taking and challenge can be learned for example, in ‘safe’ games, safe forms of risk-taking do not help children to learn about risk-taking, or from making mistakes (Gill, 2008). Christensen and Mikkelsen (2008) claim children’s risk engagement is an important resource where they learn from their errors; engaging in risk-taking teaches children to manage and assess risk, and to enjoy the action. According to Gill (2008) children’s risk-taking is beneficial for children in negotiating their risk landscapes. From this stance, it could be argued that while reducing risk-taking opportunities may benefit anxious teachers, it is not beneficial for children, and may reduce their active involvement in outdoor education. I note here however, that current debates in outdoor education, as referred to in chapter 3, are moving toward place-based pedagogies to highlight environmental and sustainability concerns (Wattchow & Brown, 2011; Brown, 2012) and away from a focus on risk-taking thus minimising the concern about risk.

The children of this study however, were attracted to risky, fast, thrilling activities. They preferred the excitement and exhilaration of activities that provoked the ‘adrenaline rush’.
Children used terms such as ‘adrenaline rush’, ‘thrilling’ or ‘go fast’ when describing the pleasure of participation in the outdoors. Staempfli (2008) argues that because of children’s access to fast paced video-games, children need access to excitement and physical activity within the context of their adventurous outdoor play. Yet, from this study, concerns about children’s safety override children’s desire for exciting, fast or risky activities.

According to some of the teacher participants, these children were young consumers lured by the fascination of media images showing wipe-outs, adventure sports, survivor and ultimate force programmes. And it was for this reason the children were denied their video games on camp. Traditional narratives of adventure and risk are well suited to these exhilarating activities. Often, in the primary school setting, children would be involved in excitingly safe activities where safety provisions are paramount in line with Ministry of Education policy. It is a contradiction when “safe risk” involves the thrill of risk-taking. Where there is heightened attention to safety, children are less practiced at testing the boundaries and exploring risk (Staempfli, 2008). Under such circumstances activities may well appear excitingly safe - form of ‘theme park’ outdoor education (Kenway & Bullen, 2001).

It was startling the extent to which the entertainment aspect of their outdoor experiences was valued by these children who participated in the qualitative questionnaires. They are entertained in multiple ways from climbing wall activities, water sports, and overseas trips as well as conventional school camps. They reported experiencing yachting, canoeing, hiking and rock climbing with the impetus to get them actively involved. They were taken to recreation centres where trained experts are available to teach water skills. In some cases they are transported by bus to climbing walls or outdoor climbing frames to experience the thrill of height and speed activities. The general consensus among the children was that outdoor activities were much better, more exciting and more challenging than indoor ones. Yet, in the context of school EOTC policy and practice, the activities are to be ‘safely challenging’ and provide ‘safe risks’. What dominated for the children in my research was the enjoyment of participation and an important reason for participation was pleasure, with adrenalin buzz and excitement.

Of the variety of outdoor experiences, children in both parts of the study, related more positively to challenge and risk activities rather than contemplative ones. For the non-specialist teachers however, the interest was more toward participation in outdoor nature and less toward risk-taking activities. Perhaps it indicates the difference between children’s
‘experiencing’ and teachers’ rational thinking of ‘what could happen’ because ‘you have to be aware of nasty situations’. For me the contemplative was the powerful experience of the weta walk, and certainly I did not want to be risk-taking in the dark. The weta walk became my autotelic experience (Brevik, 2007), my existential moment that generated intense feelings of wonder about being in nature. Most parents reported that the walk was not enjoyable, except for one whose response mirrored mine, enjoying the thrill and excitement of the night environment.

One feature that became apparent from the study was that for teachers, enjoyment and fun were submerged. Framing activities as unsafe and risky forces the pleasure of involvement underground. The pleasure of participation in activities intersected with responsibility for children’s safety, and the necessity to not let their guard down in order to maintain high levels of vigilance. Teachers cannot be seen to make fun of children and their safety. Pleasure was not much recognised by teachers. Except for Bruce in chapter 8, who managed the difficult intersection of danger, risk safety and fun, pleasure is silenced in their outside the classroom programmes. The difficult interpretive task of managing the appositionally safe, yet risky but pleasurable, was a difficult one. Many, unlike Bruce, were unable to contemplate such a transgression from the prevailing safe practitioner to fun-seeker.

9.13 The logic of safe practice

Through my analysis of the teachers’ talk, the safe practitioner repertoire dominates. Whilst fun and adventure might be experienced in the outdoors, it is against a background of safe practice. Given the nexus of danger, safety and risk that permeates the risk sociology and practitioner literature (see for example Beck, 1992; Lloyd & Roen, 2002; Lupton, 1999) awareness of danger, safety anxiety and reliance of risk management systems would feature here. Prioritising safety aligns significant aspects of practice with safety systems, for protection against danger (Lloyd & Roen, 2002). When translated to the outdoor classroom context, Safety considerations and provisions assure no harm occurs to children or any other participants during any activities. Safe practice serves to avoid danger to protect children. This logic demands the certainty of overall safety, not the uncertainty of dangerous outcomes. Risk management systems protect against danger. Yet, safety cannot be guaranteed as has been understood in some instances by the reality of child deaths. The tension between safe practice and adventurous risk is a dilemma for the safe practitioner even when, as noted by
Frank in my study, there is just a little bit of risk. But some risk acceptability must have a place in adventurous activities in the outdoor classroom.

One example of limited risk acceptability is toward children and tree climbing. A number of the teachers spoke of their school’s restrictions towards tree climbing. Children are banned from tree climbing because they might fall, but in Ella’s view, if children were able to climb trees they could learn about the limits of their bodies, learn risk-taking and experience the challenge and pleasure of tree climbing. One school camp did permit tree climbing under supervision, and with ropes, and another school kept an area of the playground free for climbing. Jackson and Scott (1999) argue that children’s leisure practices have become overly constrained by systems of control. For Ella, prohibiting children from climbing, for the safest intentions, also served to restrict their capacity to experience the satisfaction of climbing.

The tension between adventurous risk-taking and safety is a key feature of these teachers’ outdoor practice. Narratives of adventure and risk-taking persist while safety increasingly dominates. For the period this research covered, safety was a defining feature in teachers’ beliefs and practices with children in the outdoors as it is in contemporary life, and in child protection. In outdoor practice the effects are increased levels of protection, and reduced opportunities for risk-taking. Children’s risk-taking, a traditional characteristic of outside the classroom activities, is in conflict with safety and accordingly justifies high levels of safety precautions. The work done to balance risk-taking with safety precautions has been highlighted in the analysis chapters 7 and 8. There is however, one aspect of balancing the tension between safety, anxiety and pleasure, that has been noted and was evident in the study, yet not acknowledged, and that is teachers’ humour. Humour negotiates the tension between risk and pleasure.

9.14 Humour: A strategy to negotiate the tensions in the outdoor classroom

A surprising and unexpected interpretation from the study was teachers’ mobilisation of humour to manage safety in outdoor education. Teachers employ humour to manage a difficult and demanding job. As indicated in Chapter 8, humour is used to disrupt one’s version of reality but in a non-serious way (Bonaiuto, Castellana, & Pierro, 2003). Humour can ridicule oppressive regimes, or challenge and subvert normal practices (Vaughan, 2007). Humour, in the ‘little bit of drama’ situation, is employed both to support safe practice, and to resist anxieties about children in danger.
Tulloch (2004) suggests resisting anxiety is an alternative to a discourse of risk. Further, Tulloch considers both risk and fear discourses can be actively resisted. Some teachers rejected the ‘outdoors is dangerous’ discourse, and employed humour to manage a form of ‘danger denial’. It is difficult to challenge familiar positions around safety and children, with tensions between anxiety about children’s vulnerability and their competent risk-taking. Contradictions and tensions were apparent within teachers’ talk. Yet, humour was mobilised as a coping strategy to deal with the possibility of accident, injury, death, but also to minimise any harm that happened to children. This approach however, only worked if nobody died or was seriously injured. That an accident could have happened, but it didn’t, served to reduce anxieties because death wasn’t an outcome.

That accidents could have happened, but didn’t, drew on visions of traditional risk-taking adventures in the outdoors but at the same time acknowledged and brought home the possibility for loss. On a number of occasions harm to children appeared to be minimised in a joking manner with “oh, she’ll be alright”, or, “it’s OK, no harm done”, but was perhaps an expression of relief from possible disaster. A near-miss while skiing, a grass burn, a saved lunch box from the railway line, bee stings that could have proved fatal, were all examples where humour was employed to resist discourses of danger, loss or risk and safety. The examples of the use of humour from my research suggested that it was a mechanism though which teachers were able to negotiate the tension between providing enjoyable and challenging outdoor activities and ensuring children’s safety.

9.15 **Concluding comment**

Safety has become a dominant idea that shapes and is expressed in formal outdoor education/EOTC policy. As shown in previous chapters discussing relevant bodies of literature, the current context for the development of more complex safety management systems and escalating concerns for child wellbeing, has occurred alongside the emerging professionalism of outdoor expertise. These factors have significant implications for the non-specialist primary school teachers, and for their beliefs and practices when working with children in the outdoors.

Also significant within a career trajectory are the shifts in policy and practice and the need to adapt to changing regulatory expectations and objectives. These issues were articulated, in some form or another, within the findings of the research conducted for the study. Discussion
of child participant contributions to the study, presented primarily in chapter 6, reflected how teachers’ beliefs and practices defined the parameters of their experiences in the outdoors.

Safety anxiety affected these non-specialist primary teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom. It was easier for teachers to watch children when their activities were restricted and children reported they more often participated in outside the classroom activities within the confines of the school playgrounds. Children were less likely to have extended periods of time engaged in outside the classroom activities and more likely to be restricted in the variety and form of activities they had access to. Providing greater access to safe outdoor activities limited children’s opportunities for exciting risk-taking.

This project has explored the dynamics of tension in teachers’ practice outside the classroom. The subject area is shaped by tensions between exciting, risky and safe opportunities to learn. It is this tension that produces a form of safe outdoor experience yet the tension is one that also creates the frisson, the dynamic excitements that result from being active in New Zealand’s outdoor environment. The effects of such tensions produce both beneficial and problematic outcomes for New Zealand primary school non-specialist teachers.
10 Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

This study began with an intention to investigate teachers’ outside the classroom practice and the policies in which those practices were embedded. Of interest are the ways in which beliefs and understandings of children’s safety are expressed through policy and school practice, both in current and historical contexts. This study was not about the commercial outdoor education industry. Rather, the study was intended to engage with the outdoor education literature around issues of safety in the outdoor classroom. Having experienced first-hand the complications involved in implementing policy prescriptions, I sought to investigate teachers’ sense-making of the policies regulating outdoor practice. Because of the nature of the questions that emerged from my initial investigation of literature relating to children and safety, risk sociology, safety systems, teaching outside the classroom, education and children’s spaces, I became aware of the need to take account of socio-political factors if I were to understand the rationale behind the ways in which experiences were shaped. These factors were themselves complex, and included shifts in approaches to formal outdoor education policy, historical and cultural factors specific to the New Zealand context, wider global trends and political imperatives. This underscored a major theoretical focus for the thesis.

Another dimension to this study was to investigate non-specialist teachers’ beliefs and practices about the nature of their safe outdoor practices. Beliefs include overprotectiveness and that safety is available at the expense of some benefit. Both lay beliefs are common enough for the consequences to be worth investigating. My research, by focusing on both policy and practice, anticipated finding out how teachers understood and enacted their safe practice. A social constructionist position is taken in the study. This is intentionally and respectfully distinct from empirical approaches to safety in education outside the classroom. In coming alongside these empirical approaches, this study’s social constructionist position provides another aspect of policy and practice: that of how beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their outside the classroom practice.

The chapters of the thesis have identified and provided discussions on theories critical to comprehending the background to policy development and its roles and practices in the New
Zealand public education system. The social construction of safety is investigated through historical policy documents alongside teachers’ talk to highlight a tension that exists for non-specialist primary school teachers between safety, enjoyment and risk when working with young people in the outdoors. This chapter in drawing together the findings of previous chapters, will address the two research questions of this study, and its contribution to the educational literature of teachers’ practice. It will conclude with a reflection of the limitations of this research and suggestions for further research deriving from project.

10.2 The research questions

There were two research questions directing the study, and this section attends to both. The first question asked how non-specialist teachers understood safety with “What is the meaning of safety for non-specialist primary school teachers?”

Through the analysis of the policy documents it was possible to see how ideas about safety emerged and gained significance over the historical period. As educational documents they focused on the safety of children. Changing ideas and acceptances of safety in relation to children and the outdoors reflected shifting societal expectations and concerns. The evolution of understandings of safety toward a future focus where safety is predictable and guaranteed was apparent from the analysis. One of the ideas about safety was that it took precedence over pleasure. Children’s safety is therefore of significant and paramount importance in the outdoor classroom. Yet fun and pleasure exist within the safety parameters and requirements for taking children outdoors. While pleasure is a compelling aspect of such activities, more particularly for children, at the time of the completion of this thesis, there was limited recognition of pleasure. Nonetheless, the study showed a tension between safety and pleasure especially as it linked to other related ideas; risk, adventure, danger, and anxiety. The talk and practices of non-specialist primary teachers’ safe outdoor practice emerges from these historical antecedents. How safety was understood and enacted in multiple ways at the time of this study shows the moving terrain of meanings of safe children in outdoor educational environments.

The various ways safety was understood raised the second question for this research that is “What is the effect of teachers’ understandings of safety in the outdoor classroom?” Education in outdoor contexts is influenced by the many complex factors that reflect the social and policy shifts over time and place. In this study I have focused on these shifts in terms of meanings that are produced through the networks of multiple linkages of talk and
social processes. It is these meanings that shape the beliefs and practices of the teachers and therefore to a large extent the experiences of the outdoors for the students. The study highlighted a fluid and constantly changing field where interconnections brought into focus the shifting ideas about children and their safety, about teachers and their responsibility and about what was considered the optimal and desirable educational outdoor activity.

As noted above, tensions between safety, risk, adventure, danger, and anxiety were a feature in shaping the beliefs and experiences of the teachers in this study. A key finding of the research was that for non-specialist primary teachers, educating children outside the classroom required a careful balance between these often contradictory elements of their interactions with the outdoors. Managing the equilibrium proved to be a complex task for variably experienced teachers.

There were teachers who acknowledged the place of fun and enjoyment for children and themselves, and these teachers were able to navigate the complexities between pleasure and safety, yet in this study these situations and those teachers were few. One teacher included the notion of ‘myth, magic and mystic’ in the outdoor education experience, but this was unusual. Minimising children’s fears with humour was more likely, though making fun of their fears was not. More obvious was the use of humour to deal with the anxieties of practice, particularly after difficult or dangerous circumstances. Humour, a negotiator of the tension between safety and pleasure, illustrates the elasticity of hotspots within situations, talk, action or experience. Different forms of humour came into play depending on the circumstances.

The study demonstrated that children could also take some control over the nature of their own experiences. While outdoor education safety policy maintained a technical focus, pleasure and enjoyment were side-lined in practice and policy but not in the physical realm of children’s and occasionally of teachers’ experiences. So, while safety had become a central theme in teachers’ outdoor practice over the period of this study, children’s experiences particularly remained immediate, uncontained and exuberant with delight in their adrenaline rushes and outdoor activities.

10.3 Contribution to the literature on teachers’ beliefs and practices

This research contributes to literature on teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom by examining how safety documents and teacher practices may be interpreted
using a lens of overprotectiveness and with a premise that safety is only achievable at the expense of some benefit. The research exposes a tension between safety and enjoyment that primary non-specialist teachers experience and negotiate when interacting with children in the outdoor classroom.

10.3.1 Approach

The social nature of meanings of safety is an under-researched area, specifically as it relates to teachers’ outdoor practice. Taking a social constructionist approach to investigate the beliefs and practices of non-specialist primary school teachers when working with students in the outdoor classroom addresses a lacuna in the literature and does so in a number of ways. The multiple methods design has provided many lenses through which richness and depth have been added to the inquiry. Historically specific understandings of safety that were gained through examination of the language used in policy, has been assembled in an original way in Table 1. These data have provided an ‘official’ sense against which to read the beliefs and practices of non-specialist primary school teachers in their work. This is particularly interesting given the ambiguous position these teachers were by then occupying as ‘non-expert’ professionals. The social constructionist approach also allows an understanding of agency in making sense of the complex and often contradictory ways in which the policy has been interpreted in practice. The use of interpretative repertoires provided insights into how meanings could change through talk and actions, and how participants were using available meanings for particular purposes. This was one avenue through which the tensions between pleasure and safety became so apparent. The second was from the insights gained from the children’s agency.

10.3.2 Development of an original concept

This thesis introduces an original concept ‘networks of meanings’ to provide an accurate understanding of what the research findings were conveying. The concept coheres with a social constructionist framework to take account of the construction of meaning in policy documents and the implications for practice. The networks of meanings framework highlights intersections of meanings over time and place; invites interrogation of acceptable and controversial perspectives on safety/pleasure [in discourse and in practice]; highlights the need to manage tensions; and centralises the implications of the above for teachers’ beliefs and practices. The exploration of networks of meaning could be useful for exploring
meanings of safety and the implications for priority learners including Maori, Pasifika and children with special educational needs.

Further, the thesis shows the significance of the way ‘safety’ and the ‘safe child’ are understood by teachers in the outdoor classroom, where and under what circumstances risk consciousness comes into being, and how shifting meanings were legitimated through legislation. The implications of this in shaping the ways that children’s deaths are spoken about and responded to in particular contexts are presented. Also demonstrated is the marginalising of specific meanings and the privileging of others. Finally, the thesis identifies discourses of pleasure and the ways they are expressed in outdoor classroom practice at an intersection of safe/safety/risk/risk management/danger/anxiety and adventure.

10.4 Contribution of the thesis to my personal beliefs

This study has confronted my personal experience, beliefs and attitudes regarding education in the outdoors. In part the historical work provoked a reflective stance toward my own meaning-making about children and the outdoors. Throughout the research I have come to more highly regard the educational importance of children’s activity in outdoor places. I realise that my teaching experiences of the past were a product of the socio-political, experiential and progressive approaches of that period. I do however also appreciate individual agency toward pushing the boundaries of the increasing restrictions that teachers and children currently operate within.

10.5 Limitations

The study investigated meanings about safety and how those meanings shaped policy, teachers’, children’s and parents’ practice. Those meanings are fluid, enacted differently, in changing circumstances and in historical periods. As meanings are shaped, they change and have moving significance. Because of the context specific nature of such meaning-making, the results are not generalisable as such, but the interpretive process of meaning making, the constructionist approach can shed light in other similar situations. This may include the exploration of networks of meaning for priority learner groups such as Maori, Pasifika or children with special educational needs. In this study meanings about safety are not fixed, the notion is elastic, and there can be no absolute guarantees. ‘Safety’ is neither achieved nor a given here, because the multiple human and physical factors involved in outdoor activities make the site a vulnerable one.
This thesis does not examine safety for its potential to contribute to the reduction or avoidance of accidents. Rather, the thesis explores how meanings of safety and beliefs about children’s safety are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers, as lay people, in their practices outside of the classroom. Although the thesis engages with some of the outdoor education literature, because of its focus on beliefs about and attitudes towards safety from a non-specialist teacher perspective, it does not suggest making a contribution to this body of work. Nor does it present a comprehensive analysis of the policy for its potential to reduce or avoid accidents. The study looks at understandings about safety in the outdoor context and at meanings of safety as expressed in the policy documents and its implications for practice.

10.6 Future study

Teachers’ humour is an important resource and one that needs further consideration. It is an important strategy to manage the fluidity between safety and risk, pleasure and danger. Humour enabled an opening up of the anxieties around children’s risk-taking and danger in the outdoor classroom. While safety was shown to be a significant factor in outside experiences, humour and pleasure mediated the safety regimes. Yet pleasure and enjoyment are often not acknowledged as children’s safety is an important aspect of practice. Further research might provide insights into this complex issue that was raised through this study.

Acknowledgement of the value of children’s risk-taking deserves further attention. Safe risk-taking is an accepted part of practice, but this is limited to higher levels of restriction than in previous times. This is unsurprising given the general climate of concerns about children’s safety. The Play England programme (Gleave, 2008) offered a new approach toward children’s safety in support of their risk-taking, and consideration of the pleasure of outdoor participation. There are ways for teachers and children to circumnavigate the restrictions imposed on practice. One of these ways may be employing discourses of excitement and thrill, pleasure and enjoyment, not in the manner of extreme risk-taking, but taking these aspects as important elements of outside the classroom activities.

This study has highlighted the importance of an historical analysis of policy in examining the social nature of policy development. There would be considerable benefit in cross disciplinary (philosophy/sociology/ political economy) policy focused studies that locate policy shifts in political, economic and social contexts to interrogate the impact of shifting philosophical underpinnings of education policy as ‘policies of their time’.
10.7 Messages from the research for the New Zealand context

This study is not representative of New Zealand’s primary school EOTC/outdoor education, as a small and contained study it cannot be, but messages can be taken from the research.

First, a message for Ministry of Education policy makers: pleasure is silenced in the outdoor education curriculum documents. I suggest the discourse of pleasure is recognised with images of enchanted, enthusiastic and active children alongside safety messages in documents. Policy makers could recognise the pressures teachers work under to manage both the curriculum goals of EOTC and the need to ensure children’s safety.

Second, a message for teachers: how we frame what we do in our teaching can place limitations on our work, or, alternatively, extend the boundaries of possibility. Teachers are all informed by the same curriculum, but there are multiple perspectives on how permissive or otherwise, curriculum, policy and RAMS are. Our interpretations and beliefs shape our experiences of the outdoor classroom. This means that what is understood as safety (and pleasure) is part of a continual process of teachers’ interactions, and teachers’ “myths and rituals” of the social context (Rochlin, 2010, p. 1555).

Third, a message for academics and researchers: ways in which meanings of safety, and beliefs about children’s safety, are interpreted by New Zealand’s non-specialist primary school teachers in their practices outside of the classroom signal a tension between safety and pleasure. Ongoing research into the ways in which teachers understand this tension and its effect on teachers’ beliefs and practices in the outdoor classroom is needed. Some exploration has been made into the absence of pleasure in state policy and physical education (Booth, 2009; Pringle, 2010). Further research to explore these complexities could address this tension between safety and pleasure in education in the outdoor classroom.
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