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Paid to Paddle:

‘Living the Dream’ in the New Zealand sea kayaking industry.

A dissertation submitted in fulfilment of requirements for

Masters of Applied Science (Parks, Recreation and Tourism)

At

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By

Gareth Wheeler

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By

Gareth Wheeler

Work, leisure and lifestyle have long been areas of study and interest to researchers and of
more than passing interest to the ‘ordinary person on the street’. In contemporary society,
consideration of this ‘work-life balance’ and the blurring of the boundaries between work
and non-work, are an increasingly important area of study. Indeed, there is some evidence
that the promised popular ideal of a ‘leisure society’, predicted as a result of increasing
technological advances and greater affluence, has not eventuated, with people now
working longer and harder than ever before (Schor, 2006). This research looks at the
lifestyle and motivations of some young New Zealanders, who choose to live, work and
play in the outdoors, in particular, as sea kayaking guides.

Sea kayaks have been used for hunting and transportation for over 4000 years and, more
recently, as recreational craft as new technologies, production techniques, affluence and
mobility have made them more accessible to a wider range of people exploring leisure
options. Commercial sea kayaking in New Zealand is a recent phenomenon, having only
been established since the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. The growth of this industry allows
for a mix of work and play hitherto unknown.

Little study has been undertaken on those who choose to work in the outdoors for extended
periods of time (Barnes, 2003) and even less so, on those who work as sea kayaking
guides. This research explores the world of a group of 16 sea kayaking guides and seeks to
shed light on their rationale for choosing a particular employment and lifestyle. The
research is based on field work and data collected during 2010/2011 at the Abel Tasman
National Park, Fiordland National Park and Marlborough Sounds in New Zealand’s South
Island. Commercial sea kayak guiding in these areas is a significant employer of young
people, year round, and especially so during the summer months when the data for this
research was collected. Guides were observed at work and leisure during the 2010/2011
season. Reflection on these observations was supplemented by the literature and semi-
structured interviews. The results enhance our understanding of how some people are
active in creating and following their desire to be outdoors, adventuring, meeting new people and travelling. This blending of leisure and work leads to a temporary lifestyle of ‘employed transience’ (Adler & Adler, 1999). The results also indicate that for some young New Zealanders, the attraction to outdoor adventure guiding is a combination of People and Place. Factors such as a pioneering Polynesian and Pakeha culture, proximity to mountains, rivers, forests and sea, influential outdoor experiences with family and school, and a desire to meet new people and travel, are all offered as important reasons for choosing this particular lifestyle. The sea kayak guides in this research are not only identified by their work, but importantly at this stage of their life, identify with their work. Working, even if only for a short time, with like-minded people in the outdoors is increasingly seen as an attractive and viable option. For a short period of their lives, predominantly in their twenties, this transitory outdoor lifestyle is admired, desired, followed and, for most, ultimately left behind as life changes see a return to a more financially secure, settled and conventional career.

While this study focused particularly on sea kayak guides, the results have wider implications for understanding the complex nature of work and leisure and pose some important questions for educators, employers and policy makers in the future.
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To my students at CPIT hopefully this dissertation is proof that I sometimes do more than go paddling, read and drink lots of wine and coffee. You and your careers were the inspiration for this project. Of course, I expect you all to read and critique it one day.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.0 Personal Interest in this Research

“Two things started it all. My very first sea kayaking experience was a multi-day trip just off South Australia’s Yorke Peninsula, out to Goose Island to swim with the seals and then on to circumnavigate Wardang Island with a group of university friends. From the moment that first seal arched up out of the water over the front of my boat I was hooked. Since then, my friends and I sought to do at least one big sea kayak expedition every year. Second, a tramping trip to the Abel Tasman National Park in the mid 1980’s where during a particularly hot spell of weather we slogged with heavy boots and laden packs up the hills, along beaches and across estuaries whilst gazing enviously at some sea kayakers effortlessly skimming across the water, picnicking at deserted beaches, and exploring off-shore islands only accessible by water. ‘That...is the way to travel’ I said.”

The above was my opening statement in response to an interview question by the owners of Abel Tasman Kayaks as they sought to employ guides for the upcoming 1991/1992 summer season. My application was successful and I considered my employment as a guide, to be a dream come true. I was getting paid to take others paddling and walking in a most beautiful part of New Zealand. On the rare, bad weather days, when trips were cancelled, we would go white-water kayaking on the rivers. On days off, there were amazing personal recreation opportunities nearby involving mountain biking, white-water kayaking, tramping and fishing. Further, it fuelled a ‘travel bug’ as there was a constant stream of interesting, overseas guests sharing their stories. Since then I have paddled, guided, travelled and worked throughout New Zealand, the Pacific, North and Central America, the Mediterranean, Scotland, Wales, Scandinavia and South East Asia. After several summers working in the Abel Tasman National Park, followed by winters as an outdoor instructor in the Central North Island, interspersed with travel and work overseas, I am no longer a full time guide. I realised that if I was to achieve the goal of owning a house or land then I needed more financially secure and stable employment. Ultimately, the decision to take a two year, full time contract at an outdoor centre in the North Island, led me ten years later to the position where I train, mentor and assess those who wish to
pursue a career in the outdoors, many as sea kayaking guides. Now, through this research, after thirty years as an educator, instructor, guide, trainer, national assessor, safety auditor and consultant, I hope to explore and shed light on the world of those who work in this field.

1.1 Study Aims and Objectives

This dissertation explores the career choices and lifestyle of those who choose to work in the outdoor adventure industry. In particular, this study focuses on the New Zealand commercial sea kayaking industry. Evidence of sea kayaking dates back more than 4000 years in Inuit culture, but it is only this century that it has evolved from a subsistence lifestyle pursuit to a recreational activity. Following trends in North America, increasing and widespread participation (see for example, Davidson, 2004 who identified a peak for recreational sea kayaking participation at 80,000 in 2004-5 in New Zealand), has led to a growing commercial interest. In New Zealand this is a relatively recent phenomenon, having only started in the late 1980’s (Carr & Thompson, 2008), and little has been written thus far about those who work as sea kayak guides. Carr and Thompson (2008), put the number of commercial sea kayaking operators in New Zealand in 2005 at 49, with, at that time, there being approximately 150 guides who were qualified according to Sea Kayak Operators Association of New Zealand (SKOANZ) standards. The ‘birthplace’ and hub of this commercial activity is centred on the top of the South Island in and around the Abel Tasman National Park and Marlborough Sounds.

There does exist a more extensive literature on those who participate, or who are ‘clients’ in outdoor experiences (see Booth & Lynch, 2010 for a recent comprehensive bibliography), and aspects of this will be used to inform this research, yet there is little research on those who choose to immerse themselves for a much longer period of time by working in the outdoor adventure field, in particular as sea kayaking guides.

In an attempt to fill this gap, using my prior experience and observations, review of literature and themes which emerged from the research, I employ the following framework for this dissertation:

First, I discuss the importance of ‘People’ in the context of how and why a decision is made to work in the outdoors. In part, I use Barnes’ (2003) notion of ‘community’ and look at the significance of relationships with both the people one works alongside and the
guests on sea kayaking trips. Early formative relationships involving family camping and school Outdoor Education trips are also central to the decision to become a guide.

Second, using personal reflection on observations, interviews and research of the literature, I try to determine the importance of the physical and cultural environment to the identity of sea kayaking guides. I call this ‘Place.’

Next, using ‘Adventure and Travel’ as themes, I examine whether the unique New Zealand social and cultural phenomenon of overseas travel (colloquially known in New Zealand as an ‘overseas experience’ or ‘OE’), further contributes to a particular ‘world view and ‘workstyle’ choice for those who choose to be sea kayaking guides.

Lastly, the concept of ‘Life-span and Transition’ is employed. There is anecdotal evidence that three to five years is the time frame most guides stay in the industry. Sea kayak guiding is considered to be a ‘young person’s game’ with most not continuing much beyond their thirties (A. Thompson, President New Zealand Outdoors Instructors Association; L. Jago, past Operations Manager Abel Tasman Kayaks; P. Townend, President SKOANZ; D. Watson, owner Marlborough Sounds Adventure Company; personal communication, Sept 23-25, 2010). I seek to discover whether those who choose to work in sea kayak guiding see it as a career option that is sustainable in the long term.

Using this framework, my research explores the following questions:

- What are the influences on the lifestyle/workstyle choice of those who become sea kayaking guides?
- Does the decision to become a sea kayaking guide blur the traditional boundaries between work and leisure?
- To what extent are sea kayaking guides ‘employed transients’ at a particular stage of their lives?
- What is the importance of the outdoor and cultural environment to where and why sea kayaking guides work?
- What is the relevance of New Zealand’s ‘OE culture’ to the lifestyle and work choices of sea kayaking guides? (See Appendix A for indicative interview questions).
The predominant thread that connects and weaves all of these themes and questions together is that of Identity. The concept of identity has a multitude of theoretical frameworks and contexts. In the psychological, sociological and political worlds there exists a mountain of scholarly effort on identity and it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to fully explore this complex topic. However, for the purposes of this research, ‘identity’ will be examined briefly so that it contributes to an understanding of the life and work experience of a small sample of sea kayaking guides. I shall use work by, for example, Bauman, 1996; Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; Giddens, 1991; Munt, 1994; White and White, 2004 in the area of travel, tourism and identity to inform this research. I shall use the premise that identity construction is a process of continual review, appraisal, challenge and affirmation by self and by others. I believe that who one is, that is, ones’ identity, is closely linked to where one lives, works and plays, and so I am interested in the sea kayaking guides’ sense of who they are, what their motivations might be, what is important to them and what their lives are about.

1.2 Research Contribution

This research will contribute to the wider understanding and discussion on the constructed nature of adventure, identity, work, leisure, tourism and travel. The insights and implications from this study will be valuable for those studying the work and leisure interface, the wider tourism and outdoor industries, and future training programmes.

The Department of Labour (DOL) acknowledged that outdoor education and adventure guiding is a significant part of the wider tourism industry in New Zealand (Department of Labour, 2010). The tourism industry contributed $15.0 billion or 9.1% to New Zealand’s total GDP and directly supported 94, 600 full time equivalent employees, or nearly 5% of the workforce in the year up to March, 2009. Nearly 850,000 international tourists over the age of 15 participated in at least one adventure activity during 2008 and spent $3.0 billion, approximately half of the total international visitor expenditure (DOL, 2010, p. 12). Sea kayaking guides contribute to this tourism industry as increasing numbers of tourists choose to explore some of New Zealand’s less accessible places in this manner.

Therefore, research which offers insights into the motivations and experiences of young New Zealanders involved in adventure guiding as a career is relevant and timely.
1.3 Dissertation Outline

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter Two includes a review of literature organised into sections reflecting the relevant primary research themes. The first section provides a background to relevant work, leisure, tourism, adventure and the outdoors. It examines the work that has been done in this field and identifies the ‘gap’ in the area of research on outdoor adventure guides and sea kayaking guides in particular. Section Two looks at guiding, outdoor adventure guides and sea kayaking guides. The third section addresses the ‘community’ and relationships encountered, and is titled People. The fourth section reviews selected literature on Place and explores the importance of this concept to, and for, sea kayaking guides. How and why Adventure and Travel is important for some young people is examined in the fifth section. Lastly, in Section Six, literature on Life-Span and Transition relevant to the research sample is explored.

The methodology for this research is outlined in Chapter Three. A summary of the research approach applied to this study is presented and includes consideration of qualitative methods, interview techniques, the sample, analytical procedures and ethical considerations.

The findings of the research are presented in Chapter Four. The four central themes that emerged from this research and which reflect the interconnected influences on the identity, work and lifestyle choices of interview respondents, are discussed. People examines the impact that family and school experiences have on why people might follow a particular life path. It also examines the value that those working in the outdoor adventure industry place on the relationships generated with guests/clients and amongst those they work with. Place explores the impact and importance that the outdoors holds for those young people working in the sea kayak guiding industry. Adventure and Travel examines the role that adventure, travel and new experiences play in the work and lifestyle choices of the interview respondents. Last, the idea of Life-Span and Transition is used to examine the impact of relationships, finances, family, home ownership on a working and travelling lifestyle.

Chapter Five comprises the final discussion and the implications of this dissertation for theory, policy and, future research. It summarises and synthesises the findings from the previous chapters and in particular, those relating to the four key themes of People, Place,
The findings are then discussed in relation to their application to the outdoor, adventure, tourism and education sectors.

The appendices contain four pieces of information that give context and illuminate the research; Appendix A, the indicative interview questions, Appendix B, Research Information Sheet, and Appendix C, Participant Consent Form. Appendix D consists of notes of observations made when monitoring a group of Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology (CPIT) students as they prepared for a field trip away. These notes are presented to highlight the discussion in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3 about the contrast between outdoor and indoor learning experiences.
Chapter 2
Literature Review

2.0 Chapter Outline

This chapter reviews relevant literature to establish a context and background for the study. An introduction to the literature and guiding is provided in Section 2.1. Section 2.2 discusses “guides” and “guiding”. Section 2.3 looks at the role that relationships, People, and family and school experiences play in forming a predisposition to working or being in the outdoors. Section 2.4 leads into an examination of the importance of being and working outdoors or what I have called Place. Section 2.5 explores Adventure and Travel as means of identity formation. In particular, the cultural influences specific to New Zealand are examined. Lastly, in Section 2.6, the literature around Life Span and Transition is examined.

2.1 Introduction

Society and environment are inextricably intertwined, with one inevitably influencing and impacting on the other. We are what we do, think, dream, eat, wear, drive and live. Yet, ultimately as Handy (1993), has suggested, for many, it is work that defines us. Handy wrote that work has always played a major role in how people describe themselves, and it is therefore, a major component of their identity. Sea kayak guiding is a relatively recent occupation and to date little research has been published on the motivations of those who choose this career path, or as Barnes noted (1999), on anyone who chooses to work and thus spend an extended amount of time working in the outdoors. Interestingly, the study of those who participate and visitors is more advanced. “The motivations of visitors to protected areas have been well studied and certain motives are almost universal across several studies. These include getting away from it all, aesthetic/spiritual, physical challenge, sociability, simple lifestyle, individual/intellectual, habitual” (Booth & Lynch, 2010, p. 86). Thus we have to look to wider outdoor settings for research that might inform this study. Writers such as Beedie (2003), Beedie and Hudson (2003), Davidson (2006) and Pomfret (2006) have explored the meaning of mountaineering and addressed the way mountain climbing contributes to participants’ sense of who they are and what their lives
are about. Sharpe (2005) discussed the ‘emotional labor’ of adventure guides who worked at a company providing outdoor adventure trips. There has too, been a variety of research on the motivations, world, lifestyle and work of white-water raft guides and participants by, for example, Arnould and Price (1993), Carnicelli Filho (2010), Holyfield (1999), Holyfield and Jonas (2003), Jonas (1999, 2007), and Mullins and Wattchow (2009).

This dissertation complements research recently done by Carnicelli Filho (2010) who studied the lifestyle and work of rafting guides in Queenstown, New Zealand. In part, Carnicelli Filho built upon early research by Arnould and Price (1993) who described the experience of white-water rafting from both participant and guide perspectives. Referring predominantly to the adventure experiences of the participants, Arnould and Price pointed out that “identity construction is…a continuous process that depends upon both the activities of the individual and the ratification of by witnessing audience” (Arnould & Price, 1993, p. 182). The authors talked of the extraordinary experiences available via participation in adventure activities as contributing to symbolic capital and in turn, one’s identity (Arnould & Price, p. 182). This ‘identity construction’ however, applies equally to both participant and guide.

This research seeks to use the above and extend it by considering the realm of work and lifestyle choices by also using McGillivray and Frew (2007), who suggested that the search for, consumption of, and public showing of an experience, is a means to reinforce personal identity and accumulate symbolic capital (McGillivray & Frew, 2007, p. 54). Ferguson (2005), pointed to the construction of a ‘hero myth identity’ amongst Generation Y in relation to participants’ story-telling about adventure tourism experiences – it made the participants “cool” (as cited in Booth & Lynch, 2010, p. 87). In summarising the “potential for tourism for exploring the dynamics of self-identity,” (Li, 2010, p. 196), it was reported that:

For the most part, findings of these studies supported the notion that the anticipation of travel, the act of travel, and the narration of travel stories upon return are all tied to an imagination and performance which enables tourists to think of themselves in a particular way. (Li, 2010, p. 196).

Over the past two decades there has been increasing interest in the merging of work, leisure and lifestyle (see for example Adler & Adler, 1999; Barnes, 1999, 2003; Bauman, 1996, 2001; Beatty & Torbet, 2003; Boon, 2006; Carnicelli Filho, 2010; Cook, 2006;
Desforges, 2000; Duncan, 2009; Green & Jones, 2005; Haworth & Lewis, 2005; Hilbrecht, 2007; Iso-Ahola, Jackson & Dunn, 1994; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Lewis, 2003; McGillivray & Frew, 2007; Munt, 1994; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975; Schor, 2006; Urry, 2000; Vokerling, 1995; White & White, 2004; Wilson, 2006). Indeed, in contrast to Handy, there are some studies that suggest that it is not work that is central, (Dubin, 1956 as cited in Kelly & Kelly, 1994), and what is more important is the conditions that make work, or, for example, family or leisure, central. Munt (1994) also argued that the value of travel and tourism experiences lies in the accumulation of what Bourdieu termed “cultural capital”. Bourdieu (1984) identified the importance of the influence of family on shaping character through schooling, clothing, language, and the ability to demonstrate good taste as being an accumulation of “cultural capital”. Travelling and being able to tell stories about experiences is a major way of reinforcing that cultural capital. Munt (1994) suggested that travel and the accompanying stamps in a passport serve as an informal qualification and record of one’s experience and achievements. More recently, Desforges (2000) suggested this has evolved further where people now selectively and consciously choose aspects of their ‘biography’ to create or supplement their identity at any given time or situation and that “…travel is imagined as providing for the accumulation of experience, which is used to renarrate and represent self-identity” (Desforges, 2000, p. 942).

In focussing on the career choices and lifestyles of sea kayaking guides, I also employ Barnes’ (2003) assertion that the physical and cultural environment in which one works has a powerful effect on not only how one approaches the physical environment, but also one’s social and cultural identity. In addition, the term ‘employed transience’, (Adler & Adler, 1999), which is used to describe the movement and work/lifestyle choices of resort workers, also informs how young New Zealanders working as sea kayak guides seek to find meaning and position themselves in the world today. This follows Giddens (1991) who saw identity construction as an ongoing “project” involving in part, the creation of stories or narratives that were used to define who one was by what had been done, the present situation, and where one was going in the future.

The above might go some way towards explaining why some young adults are looking to work and create a lifestyle around their preference for being and recreating in the outdoors. That is, “Community, self determination, challenge, complexity and learning, then, are elements in work satisfaction, engagement, and productivity” (Kelly & Kelly, 1994, p. 257). Work by Adler and Adler (1999), Boon (2006), Beatty and Torbet (2003), Carnicelli
Filho (2010), and Duncan (2009) has suggested that some young adults might first follow a leisure interest, and then seek to find work that will enable them to pursue this. This work does not necessarily have to be in the field of their passion (e.g. kayaking, skiing, surfing, scuba diving, and mountaineering) but must be geographically close by. Thus they might find work in resorts, hospitality and trades or skills that are seasonally required (e.g. drivers, photographers, equipment technicians). A natural extension to this would be to argue that, for sea kayaking guides, their choice of occupation (and so their identity), is about being outdoors in the very environment they enjoy. Not only do they work in the outdoor environment they love, but as Carnicelli Filho reports about rafting guides, “….the difference is that they work effectively with their passion, with their hobby, with their favourite leisure activity” (Carnicelli Filho, 2010, p. 292).

After consideration of “guides” and “guiding”, the literature reviewed in the following sections will continue to focus on factors that influence ‘work choice’.

2.2 The Guide

The role of a sea kayaking guide encompasses that of storyteller, cook, safety officer, weather forecaster, ambassador, historian, maintenance person, botanist and counsellor, and more. Their lifestyle is frequently itinerant, dictated by the seasons and weather, and involves dealing with isolation, low pay, long hours and insecurity of work tenure (Van Gorder, 1996; Wendt, 2000). A stereotypical image of tour guides is that of the “bus driver/ archaeologist/ historian/ caterer/ raconteur” (Jacobson, 2010, p.3). Guides must also be able to manage the “isolation, hard physical labour…to a level above that of one’s guests/clients” (Wilson, 2010, p. 33).

Early research by Cohen (1982), differentiated between what he calls the ‘Original Guide’ who is “…a mediator between the tourist and the strange physical environment and the local population” and the ‘Professional Guide’ who “…mediates between the tourists and the cultural, aesthetic, religious, historical etc. meanings of the new environment” (Cohen, 1982, p. 51).

More recently Wyn (2005) described guides as “cultural intermediaries” and positioned them “…in the middle: blending education and entertainment, knowledge with a little panache” (Wyn, 2005, p. 400). He described the walking tour guides of New York City “…as creative, improvisational thinkers, intelligent historians, and passionate storytellers
of the urban landscape” where the best guides have the ability “…to mollify or good
naturally razz a group, educate and entertain, to attach local knowledge with popular
culture, and to struggle with the tensions of consumerism and perceived ‘in-authenticity’”
(Wyn, 2005, pp. 401-402). They use humour, imagery, sales technique, drama, narrative
(what the Americans would refer to as “making the pitch” or “shtick”), to manipulate and
help make sense of “…the diverse, often conflicting symbols, rituals, stories and guides to
action” (Swidler, 1986, p. 277) that define what ‘culture’ is today.

In line with a world that has become time and space compressed (Harvey, 1990), they are
freelance, part time, seasonal or ‘portfolio workers’ (Handy, 1995), peddling their skills in
the rapidly expanding, commodified, global market place. The world of outdoor adventure,
and the sub set of commercial sea kayaking, has not been immune to these developments.
Indeed, one might argue that in its current form and in the very commercialisation of sea
kayaking, the industry is merely a reflection of these trends.

In the sections that follow, four themes that have arisen from my personal experiences,
observations and review of the literature are presented separately. Importantly, they should
be considered here, and later in the discussion, as interconnected, with one informing and
influencing the other(s).

2.3 People

In this section, which I have called ‘People’, the literature identifies one’s family and
school experiences as important in determining future lifestyle and work choices. Ones’
identity is further linked to a physical and cultural setting, and a ‘community’ of
workmates and fellow activity participants.

Family and school experiences in the outdoors have a significant impact on the career and
life choices of young New Zealanders. Indicative of this is Irwin (2010), who opened his
research by stating, “My childhood included experiences that were then and to this day
remain commonplace in Aotearoa/New Zealand: farming traditions and family
celebrations, sailing, camping, fishing and tramping. As a consequence, I came to think of
my individual identity (as many people do), in terms of my family and the natural
environment…” (Irwin, 2010, p. 11). This is in keeping with Barnes (2003) who identified
that the physical and cultural environment in which one works has a powerful effect, not
only how one approaches the physical environment, but also on one’s social and cultural
identity. In New Zealand, the physical and cultural environments together create a powerful influence on career choice. For many, this career choice is also determined by their education.

In her 2006 work, Lynch noted that in the early part of the twentieth century “Outdoor education provided a much needed balance to the intellectualism of most school work” (Lynch, 2006, pp. 10-11). In the present curriculum, outdoor education is a subject in its own right, there is tertiary teacher training in Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC) and the teachers of this subject have gained a degree of credibility through its inclusion in the National Curriculum. More recently, as education has become more holistic and focussed on the needs of the child, outdoor education has flourished to the point now that it is a “part of New Zealand’s compulsory schooling culture” (Lynch, 2006, p. 217).

Given this, it will be of interest to note how much family and school outdoor education experiences play a role in the decision to pursue employment as a sea kayaking guide for the respondents in this study.

In addition to the importance of family and school experiences, Barnes (1999, 2001) noted that there was a community of like-minded people who made up the wider outdoor industry, and that those who worked together in the outdoor setting tended to have shared interests and values, most usually “…manifested in a common interest in the outdoors, a love of the wilderness environment and travel. These common interests often revolve[d] around a rejection of material gain for its own sake” (Barnes, 1999, pp.175-176). Whilst Barnes’ study was largely based in the United Kingdom, my experiences, observations and discussions with other outdoor educators suggest that this claim is also true of New Zealand. Kelly and Kelly, 1994, cited work (Chinoy, 1955; Epstein, 1990; Gerson, 1977; Granovetter, 1985; Hughes, 1958; Whyte, 1961), that places importance on informal relationships, social interaction, and bonds between workers as being a significant contributor to workplace satisfaction. Franklin (2006), used the word, ‘Communitas’ to describe the “…ready, spontaneous and close bonds established between tourists...[binding] together in a variety of ways people from different countries as well as those from guest and host countries...it secures brief or extended friendships, romances, exchange visits [and] correspondence” (Franklin, 2006, p. 400).

If one is able to extend this latter concept to where the sea kayaking guide might be considered a part of the ‘tourist’ group when working, even if in their own country,
relationships or ‘communitas’ may become evident. In the data introduced in Chapter 4 it will be shown that the importance of relationships that these sea kayaking guides have with both the people they work and the ‘community’ of guests on a trip is significant.

2.4 Place

Wendell Berry said that if you don’t know where you are, then you don’t know who you are (Berry, 1987). Relationships, people and community are considerations in a work choice, and so too is Place important. Much like ‘identity’, ‘place’ is one of those axioms that defy disciplinary boundaries. There are many volumes of literature on this topic in fields as diverse as geography, sociology, architecture, education, indigenous and gender studies, the examination of which is again beyond the scope of this dissertation. This study will use ‘place’ in a context of a physical environment where sea kayaking guides live and work.

Outdoor experiences in, on and around rivers, beaches, ‘the bush’ and mountains are commonplace for many New Zealanders. The introduction to the popular Lonely Planet Guide series to New Zealand (2006) stated, “A New Zealander is more likely to be spiritually fulfilled in the outdoors than in church. The land and sea were spiritual constants in pre-European Maori culture and they are scarcely less so today” (Bain, Dunford, Miller, O’Brien & Rawlings Way, 2006, p. 42). A ‘not factory’ orientation (Riley, 1986), and the ability of places away from industry and cities to enable spiritual and physical refreshment (Urry, 2000), helps explore the depth of meaning that being near water or the sea, or living and working in the outdoors is a defining, almost essential feature for the sea kayaking guides under study.

The American philosopher, Edward Casey (2001), presented a view of place at odds with what has come to be seen as a more traditional western view. This latter position sees cognition defining self, independent and separate from any environmental influence, whereas Casey rejects this, and believes that places are essential to one’s identity formation. One’s identity is co-constituted in an interaction between self and place. Place and identity are inseparable and indispensable.

Mullins and Wattchow (2005), in their study of river guides on the Snowy River draw upon Relph who said, “the word ‘place’ is best applied to those fragments of human environments where meanings, activities and a specific landscape are all implicated and
enfolded by each other” (Relph, 1976, as cited in Mullins & Wattchow, 2005, p. 4). Mullins and Wattchow (2005) further suggested that places are created through lived-experience and as such, places become “sources of security and identity” (Relph, 1976 as cited in Mullins & Wattchow, 2005, p. 4).

Mullins and Wattchow (2005) suggested that our understanding of home and place is often grounded in Heidegger’s notion of a ‘dwelling’ that encourages ‘rootedness’ and long term attachment:

While the professional discourse on landscape and place tends to celebrate rootedness and local identity, this may be a reaction to a very modern sense of alienation and placelessness resulting from too much travel and excessive mobility. According to [the] anthropologist Clifford...metaphors of ‘rootedness’ and strategies of fixing cultures to local places, reflect the particular desire of those cultures with the power to travel and transcend limits (Mullins & Wattchow, 2005, p. 8).

For some commentators, (Brookes, 2001; Raffan, 1993 and other nature writers such as Abbey, 1991; Berry, 1987; Lopez, 1986; McPhee, 1976, Muir, 1980; Park, 2006) recent trends towards increasing mobility and ease of travel have meant a lessening of place attachment and responsiveness. Studies of nomadic (for example, Australian Aboriginal) or travelling and trading cultures (for example, Central Asian, Pacific Island, or Chinese), might provide counter arguments to this ‘trend’. The argument for a re-examination of what people consider to be ‘home’ and place today is pertinent. For example, Cuthbertson, Heine and Whitson, (1997) argued that a deeply felt, more holistic, interconnected sense of place may be acquired via ‘conscientized travel’ (Cuthbertson et al. p. 111) and a “…lifestyle based on mobility” (Cuthbertson et al. pp. 73-74). That is, sea kayaking guides may have a sense of being at home in a variety of places in the wider world made possible via their travel and work in the outdoors.

In the search for identity, meaning and ‘home’, Wattchow (2005) has suggested that different types of connections are possible as one travels and experiences place:

It is possible to become aware of the need for one kind of ‘home’ or a centre, a dwelling-as-residing, and also the need for another centre of significance made on journeys within the outdoors, a dwelling-as-
wandering (Casey, 1993)...[this] might approach what Relph (1976) calls the experience of the ‘empathetic insider’ who is ‘open’ to the sense of place and is consciously attentive to localised meaning and expressions (Wattchow, 2005, p. 9).

The importance of this sense of freedom is confirmed in Riley’s (1986) study of hotel employees who emphasised a ‘not factory’ orientation. Riley discovered that those who chose to work in hospitality did so because it offered a level of flexibility not found in factory work, which was considered more routine and mechanised. Hotel employees felt they had greater control over their hours, working conditions and locations, meaning they could create their own terms. This is complemented by Kelly and Kelly, (1994), who found that work conditions had a strong influence on work satisfaction, when they stated, “Employment likely to have a higher level of self-determination yielded the greatest sense of satisfaction and productivity” (Kelly & Kelly, 1994, p. 271).

Urry alluded to a more holistic identifying with place when he stated:

Social activities are organised in terms of how people dwell within different places, how they sense such places through sight, smell, hearing and touch, how they move across and beyond such places and how much power of agency they possess to transform their lives and their immediate environment. (Urry, 2000, p. 202).

Urry suggested that if Nature was seen as somewhere away from industry and cities, it enabled spiritual and physical refreshment, and this may be an important motivator for choosing to work as a sea kayaking guide.

In his study of staff living and working in outdoor centres in the United Kingdom, Barnes also noted that the relationship, they had with the physical environment was significant. Barnes stated that these outdoor instructors “…typically appeared to approach the natural environment in an evangelical sense with a strong desire to pass on its benefits to others (Barnes, 1999, p. 209). As we shall see in Chapter 4, some sea kayaking guides work in an isolated, beautiful environment to reaffirm who they are and so they can share this with others. A part of their identity is inextricably linked to where they work. They identify with a place or a particular environment, in this instance, often the sea.
2.5 Adventure and Travel

In examining the literature around *Adventure and Travel* and how this might relate to New Zealand sea kayaking guides, it is anticipated that there will be both a ‘global’ and a unique ‘local’ context. Arguably no country today is immune to global trends such as technological advances, interconnectedness, ‘mobility’ and the ‘commodification’ of ‘adventure’. New Zealand is no exception and has a long and unique history of *Adventure and Travel*. A motivation/influence for some young New Zealanders to become sea kayaking guides is possibly a combination of this local and global ‘culture’.

The travel writer Mark Twain observed:

> Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry and narrow mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts. Broad, wholesome, charitable views of [people] and things cannot be acquired by vegetating in one little corner of the earth all one’s lifetime. (Twain, 1993, p. 38).

Knowing oneself and knowing others is part of that challenge of identity which has morphed and continues to do so. In the context of what he described as “liquid modernity”, Bauman (2001) has written:

> …the quandary tormenting men and women at the turn of the century it not so much how to obtain the identities of their choice and how to have them recognised by others, but *which* identity to choose, and how best to keep alert and vigilant so that another choice can be made in case the previously chosen identity is withdrawn from the market or stripped of its seductive powers (Bauman, 2001, p. 126).

This “liquid modernity” provokes anxiety in those who might seek stability, structure and traditional “community”, yet is liberating for others, for example, those young people who have little or no life commitments (Bauman, 2000).

In the past we may have relied on an externally imposed explanation for our identity. Elders, tradition and religion all played their part in defining who we are. Today, there is an opportunity to construct our life story internally. As Elsrud noted:
Identity is not given or static, but rather experienced as a dynamic and time dependent outcome of an ongoing creative process…Individuals are left alone to create their own identity stories through the means they are offered by society. The clothes one wears, the job one gets, the music one listens to, the people one socialises with, etc. are from such a perspective part of a narrative about identity – just as the choice to go travelling is. (Elsrud, 2001, p. 599).

We actively create and construct stories or narratives about what we have done, who we are and, who we want to be. These stories start and are situated in our cultural setting/context and are modified and redefined as we live, travel and experience. Identity is not a single, discrete fact but a multi layered, contextual construct that is continually being reviewed and changed throughout our lives. We use stories or narrative to create ways in which we find out, test and develop who we are. This is both for ourselves, and how we would like others to view us. Tooth and Renshaw described narrative as:

...fundamental to our diverse capacities to remember, to provide an account of self, and to represent our actions, motivations and place in society. The narrative mode is concerned with central aspects of the human condition – commitments and personal agency; motivations and emotions; collective experiences and cultural histories and myths. As such it is concerned with relationships between people, their activities within particular places and the ethics that arise in these specific relationships. (Tooth & Renshaw, 2009, p. 95).

In modern industrial society, work and lifestyle have been major determinants of one’s identity and well-being (Haworth & Lewis, 2005). Neumann’s description of adventure tourists was those who “…gained experiences that formed the basis for discovering, producing and transforming their core identities” (Neumann, 1992 as cited in Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 41). These experiences become stories that are told and re told to reaffirm the new or transformed identity (Scheibe, 1986).

In an increasingly commodified, ‘museumized’ (Suttles, 1984), connected, technology driven and post-industrial society, groups of short term, flexible, contract workers are emerging as an increasingly significant alternative to the traditional workforce (see for
example, Cook, 2006; Franklin, 2006; Giddens, 1991; Harvey, 1990; Ioannnides & Debbage, 1997; Lewis, 2003; Ravenscroft & Gilchrist, 2005; Ritzer, 1996; Vokerling, 1995). Consistent with this trend, some young New Zealanders do not want to, nor have to, be defined by a conventional, ‘9-5’ office job. For them, experiences have come to define who and what they are. Arguably, the work desired, and choices made by sea kayaking guides in the outdoor adventure setting, influence their lifestyle and their relationship with the environment and rest of society.

Travel and adventure tourists’ motivations are often described as ‘seeking’ or ‘escaping’ (Iso-Ahola, 1989). Whether one is ‘looking for something’ or ‘running from something’, photos, blogs, T-shirts, home movies and stories that are told and re-told, become a means of reaffirming identity. An explanation as to why a career in the outdoors or adventure industry might appeal is that “In our everyday worlds we continually aim for selves that transcend our situations… [We] struggle with the dialectic of routine and spontaneity, ordinary and extraordinary…we search for opportunities to “forge new identities”…to burst from our institutionalised bubbles” (Holyfield & Jonas, 2003, p. 301).

New Zealand’s geographical isolation has resulted in a mobile population, and the ‘OE phenomenon’ as a ‘rite of passage,’ further contributes to a particular world view and ‘workstyle’ choice for young New Zealanders (Wilson, 2006). McCarter (2001, as cited in Wilson, 2006) suggested that there is a ‘rootlessness’ in the New Zealand psyche, and that some young New Zealanders regularly move between different geographical locations and employment. There is often a conscious decision to follow a particular seasonal work/life style and overseas travel that combines work, meeting new people and adventure. Overseas destinations for young New Zealand travellers have traditionally been the United Kingdom but more recently Australia and South East Asia have become a cheaper and easier option for both travel and work (Wilson 2006). For sea kayaking guides, however, the southern winter is an opportunity to travel and work in the Northern Hemisphere or in the tropics.

Society and environment are inextricably intertwined, with one inevitably influencing and impacting the other. Hilbrecht (2007) noted that “...Rojek and Parker [also] recognise work as a pre requisite of leisure. Functions of employment, including access to income, social status, and identity development are all extremely important products of workforce participation” (Hilbrecht, 2007, p. 381). For those working in the sea kayaking guide
industry, however, the distinction between work and leisure can be blurred or ‘fuzzy.’ Leisure, training, work and travel are all a means to achieve different personal goals. This is common in other parts of the outdoor adventure industry where, for example, in the USA, there is a “…small community of men and women who have traded the 9-to-5 world for a different career path: guiding rafts and canoes down the nation’s wild and scenic rivers. It’s not just an adventure. It’s their job” (McLemore, 2002, p.1). Adventure activities for some, become a work opportunity and way of life for others. The seasonal, contract and itinerant nature of sea kayak guiding work almost forces the need to travel. As Carnicelli Filho observed, “The seasonality of their work and the necessity of travel to remain employed are some of the main tools that can be used to understand rafting guides’ lifestyle” (Carnicelli Filho, 2010, p. 288). Later, data will show that this is seen as a positive motivator by some young people working in the New Zealand sea kayaking sector.

Changes in mobility have had a significant influence on how one develops and constructs identity in contemporary times. The numbers, distances, speed, sheer scale and ease of travel today has literally made the world a smaller place. The associated reflection and creation of stories around the travel experience, is influenced actively by both home and destination. Some have suggested (Desforges, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Lanfrant, 1995; Urry, 1995; White & White, 2004) one is able to gain a renewed, more holistic understanding of oneself and others via travel. By way of contrast, however, Bruner (1991) uses the example of travellers not speaking the local language or immersing themselves for any great length of time in the culture of their destination, so that their own view of themselves remains fundamentally unchanged. Bruner argues that the often fleeting and transitory nature of these tourist and travel experiences do not always mean positive outcomes in terms of identity.

People today are able to travel more cheaply, easily and comfortably than ever before. They can gain a more global sense of who they are and where they belong via their own contrasting experiences and meeting like others en route. In the “developed West” at least, youth are relatively more affluent, physically able and emotionally unencumbered than their parents were. They are free to travel, work and seek adventure. Adventure has been described as a “…form of fateful action—action that is both problematic and consequential” (Goffman, 1967, as cited in Sharpe, p. 33). By pursuing adventure, one has the opportunity to show and form character. It is valued in our society to be able to control one’s emotions
in an adventure setting. When studying white-water raft guides Jonas (1997), found that the display of strong character was experienced as “internally gratifying, allowing one to feel better about oneself” (Jonas, 1997, p. 249). These displays of strong character translated into a gain of status amongst one’s fellow adventurers (as a participant) or workers (guide). “For adventure guides, fear and anxiety are forbidden emotions” (Jonas, 1997, p. 34).

There is further support for this identity construction via outdoor adventure experiences from the white-water rafting setting, where work by Jonas (1999) and Holyfield (1999) found that “people have historically accrued symbolic meaning from being outdoors as they practice resistance to routinised work and seek a more meaningful means of control over what Macbeth (2000) describes as an increasingly mundane, fixed work-centred and dehumanised capitalist society” (Holyfield, 1999, p. 4). Indeed, Macbeth (2000) categorised “Those seeking intense personal value from participation in adventurous activities…as authentic or ‘utopian’…adventurers, engaged in a lifestyle subculture…which has at its core a desire to challenge the existing social order” (Macbeth, 2000 as cited in McGillivray & Frew, 2007, p.58). Earlier, MacCannell (1976) characterised the tourist experience as providing a means to escape an alienating and inauthentic society, and as a search for authentic people and places. Travelling and being a tourist facilitated the discovery of more of oneself and place in the world. This is supported by the work of McGillivray and Frew (2007) that in the increasingly wired, connected and media-dominated world, the search for, consumption of, and public showing of experience, is a means to reinforce personal identity and accumulate symbolic capital (McGillivray & Frew, 2007, p. 54).

Paradoxically, the more outdoor adventure is packaged and sold as an ‘escape’ from all that is perceived bad about the modern world, the less “authentic” it becomes and the more it actually comes to resemble that world (McGillivray & Frew, 2007). Those working in the industry play an important role in the selling and maintenance of these experiences, including that of ‘living the dream‘ - be this for a visitor or guest on a trip, or indeed, those living and working as guides (Bangs 2000; Holyfield 1999; Jonas 1999). For those desiring to work as sea kayaking guides, this is perhaps an unacknowledged motivation. That is, if a client can become a ‘remarkable individual’ simply by purchasing an adventure experience, then it stands that those who guide or instruct those experiences must be even
more remarkable? Not only does one get paid to do this, but you also get to work in a beautiful place with “cool” people. Thus the equivalent of the ‘River God/Goddess’ (Holyfield & Jonas, 2003) might be found in the motivations for some sea kayaking guides.

2.6 Life Span and Transition

In the early 1900’s, anthropologist Arnold van Gennep demonstrated that various stages of life are characterised by series of role transitions. During these times of transition there is engagement in acts and ceremonies that allow separation from former roles and then provide entry into new ones. This movement is often between changing sets of social groups and is seen as major turning points in a life course (Silver, 1996). Life and work as a sea kayaking guide does not exist in isolation from this. The following section will review the literature as it applies to Life-span and the implications for work and leisure choices.

The idea of Life-span, and whether there is any relationship between work/lifestyle and the research on variables affecting leisure choice, such as family life cycle (see for example, Iso-Ahola, Jackson & Dunn, 1994; Kelly & Kelly, 1994; Rapoport & Rapoport, 1975), the presence of children, and a desire to be more settled, is used to examine the aspirations and reality of working in the New Zealand sea kayak industry. Iso-Ahola (1994), has written that the terms “life cycle”, “life span” and “life course” can be interchangeable, although “life span” is favoured by psychologists, whereas sociologists use the term “life course”. For the purposes of this dissertation, I shall use ‘life span.’

There are many models of human development looking at many different aspects. Those by, for example, Bruner (1915 - present), Erikson (1902 - 1994), Kohlberg (1927 – 1987), Piaget (1890 - 1980) and Vygotsky (1896 – 1934) are well known amongst educators. For the purposes of this research, I shall use the model by Levinson (1978), whereby one’s life was characterised by four ‘seasons’. Childhood and adolescence (up to 23 years of age), was followed by early adulthood (24-43), middle adulthood (44-63) and late adulthood (64 or older). The exact ages and stages vary with each individual, although Levinson suggested that everyone passes through the same developmental sequence. Key to this particular research is his view that there is a stable (structure building) and transitional (structure changing) phase in each ‘season’ and that “Entry to each season is preceded by a troublesome transitional period...” (Iso-Ahola, 1994, 231). A characteristic of the
transitional stage during the early twenties is that it is a period of questioning and searching for new possibilities in oneself and the world. Often this corresponds to a time spent studying at university. This may be a time of increased life possibilities, and one where other life course events such as family and work responsibilities are put on hold (Berno, T., Moore, K., & Raymore, L, 1998). It will be interesting to see whether sea kayaking guides at different ‘seasons’ of their life will exhibit, and have, different motivations.

These concepts of life span and transition fit with the idea that “Identity is not regarded as a fixed state which is already within a person, waiting to be (re-) discovered, but rather as a continuous construct describing an ongoing life-process, multi faceted, and changeable” (Elsrud, 2001, p. 598). In Canada, it is acknowledged that sea kayaking guides tend to work for between three to five years (SKILS, 2009.) There is further evidence from North America, where for example, Greg Herrington, chief executive officer of Texas River Expeditions at Terlingua said, “A lot of college kids work it a summer or two and think it’s sexy until they realise you have to work for so little pay. For most people, hitting 40 or getting a family changes the attitude about the river” (McLemore, 2002, p. 1).

Van Gennep’s (as cited in Silver, 1996, p. 1) term “rite of passage” is also applicable. “Young, long-term budget travellers have been found to be at a “life juncture” when they begin their journeys...That is, those who have recently completed university studies might be unsure about careers…Travel provides a way of postponing the assumption of adult responsibilities…the long term journey offers an opportunity to escape from everyday life, a space for reflection” (Muller & O’Cass, 2001 as cited in White & White, 2004, p. 201).

William Bridges uses the concept of “liminality” (from the Latin *limen*, for threshold), “…the state of being between successive participations in social milieu. The experience of being “between” is a rite of passage, a “transition rite” that accompanies every change of state, social position, or particular points in the life cycle” (White & White, 2004, p. 201).

Adventure trip leading in the outdoors is predominantly a “youthful enterprise”, the pay is low, day is long, and often involves heavy physical exertion. There is a time of life, usually the twenties, when this lifestyle is not only appealing but possible. There also comes a time when this lifestyle becomes less appealing and more difficult for physical, financial and emotional reasons. In a study of outdoor adventure guides, Sharpe (2005) found, “Most guides were in their twenties, often on a summer break from university. Tanned and fit
from days on the trail, guides were easily recognisable both by the healthy glow they exuded, and their conformity to the standard adventure guide uniform of water sandals and fleece jackets” (Sharpe, 2005, p. 35). Whilst an ongoing and ever evolving process, the search for meaning and identity, is often perceived as the preserve of youth. In their 1999 study of transient resort workers, Adler and Adler noted that:

Demographically, they were predominantly young, since many people live as seekers only briefly, exploring the world in their youth and then returning to mainstream lifestyles…more males than females…and typically middle-class [white], raised in financially secure environments, unplagued by fears of survival (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 35).

As the sea kayaking guides meet travellers from around the world and themselves journey and work around the world, they become more aware of who they are and where they wanted to be.

In their seminal study *Leisure and the Family Life Cycle*, Rapoport and Rapoport (1975) argued that work, family and leisure intersected at these times of transition to produce the character of an individual lifestyle at any time of life. Their four stages of the life cycle were; adolescent youth, roughly from the ages of 15-19yrs which were characterised by attempts at finding an identity and trying not to allow that identity to be lost. These young people were preoccupied with autonomy, stimulation and boredom, and work. They were interested in variety and ‘doing one’s own thing’. This was followed by young adulthood, where leisure activities are pursued that facilitates the transition into new family and work roles. During the “establishment phase” of work and family, any leisure activities are secondary to the demands of children and home. Last, during the pre-retirement and retirement years when the children have left home, there is often more time available to pursue leisure activities. The work of Rapoport and Rapoport can provide a useful ‘lens’ through which to view the life span and transitional phases experienced by the sea kayaking guides in this study. Given that most of the respondents fall in to the ‘young adulthood’ category, (See Table 1, p. 29), it will be interesting to view their perceptions of their current career choice as it relates to family and work roles.

In work that can further inform this research, Adler and Adler (1999) defined ‘employed transience’ as “…people who have abandoned the conventional lifestyle of security, continuity, and tradition and embarked on a lifestyle of transience” (Adler & Adler, 1999,
by choosing to work in resorts. These are “individuals who relocate around the world, impelled by their career aspirations or their search for the intense experience of the beauty, exotic nature and extreme recreation in various international destinations” (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 31). Adler and Adler incorporated the work of Klapp (1969), who wrote that modern society was characterised by a lack of coherent identity and used the term “seekers” to refer to people in search of identity” (as cited in Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 54). These ‘seekers’ “…carved out a journey through life, looking for adventure, excitement, and a sharpened appreciation of their world” (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 51). A checklist of experiences and locations is often a characteristic of these seekers as they head off on the ‘circuit,’ of, or example, Alaska fishing or cruise boats, windsurfing in Costa Rica, travelling in New Zealand, Australia or the Pacific. Adler and Adler identified that for seekers, working in the hospitality industry was often a means to make money and support themselves whilst travelling. The values, philosophy and goals of seekers included “…their pursuit of ‘experiential’ rather than material goals. Seekers sought and collected experiences, considering these the fundamental capital of life…They travelled for adventure, to experience danger, to endure harsh conditions, and to overcome heroic obstacles…[engaging] in journeys of self-exploration and discovery” (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 40).

2.7 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed selected literature to establish a context for the study beyond anecdotal evidence from amongst the guide community itself. These themes contributed to the categorisation of the literature and will also inform the methodology.

The first section provided a background to the connection between work and identity. The second section, People, looked at the role that family and school experiences play in forming a predisposition to working or being in the outdoors. Using in particular Barnes (1999, 2003), there was discussion around the idea of relationships developed between guide and guest and amongst the ‘community’ of fellow workers. The next section Place, led into an examination of the importance of being and working outdoors. Riley’s 19886b ‘not in factory’ motivation for hospitality workers was developed further to fit the ‘not indoors, not in an office’ mindset of the outdoor adventure guides. The fourth section looked at Adventure and Travel as means of identity formation. Work by (for example, Adler & Adler, 1999, Arnould & Price, 1993; Becker, 2003; Cuthbertson et al, 1997;
Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; McGillivray & Frew, 2007; Sharpe, 2005; Twain, 1993; and White & White, 2004) informed this approach. Further, cultural influences unique to New Zealand were examined (Wilson, 2006). Finally, using Levinson, (1978) “seasons” and in combination with the above research, literature around Life span and Transition was explored.

I contend that sea kayaking guides are an evolution, stemming from the ancient Greek Exegetai or ‘professional story tellers’ to the point today, where their lifestyle and work choice is seen as increasingly acceptable. By analysing the nexus of leisure, ‘workstyle’ and ‘work/life choices’, and social identity this research hopes to help better explain participation in, and to describe what work and leisure is or might be in the twenty first century for a small group of young New Zealanders who choose to become sea kayaking guides. For a period of their lives (usually in their twenties) a lack of ties and commitments mean some sea kayaking guides find their work as exciting and rewarding as any leisure activity. These sea kayaking guides consider remuneration as secondary to lifestyle, and as something to be directed towards saving for the next great adventure.

The next chapter looks at the qualitative research methodology adopted for this study and the rationale for this.
3.0 Chapter Outline

This chapter describes the research methods used in this study and outlines the rationale for the research. First, it establishes my position in relation to the methodology, using a biography and adopting a qualitative approach, which employs autoethnography and grounded theory. The second section discusses the research strategy and methods used. These include autoethnographic reflection, literature review, observations and interviews. An overview of the interview process, participant selection, data analysis and ethical considerations is also given. The final section addresses the limitations of these particular methods and this study. The chapter ends by summarising the research methods employed in this study.

3.1 Research Rationale

In one of the classic pieces of sociological research, *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, authors Thomas and Znaniecki propose four underlying wishes that govern human adaptation – desire for new experience, desire for recognition, desire for mastery, and desire for security (Burawoy, 2000). These ‘desires’ seemed to capture much of what I have lived, observed and continue to experience.

The qualitative research approach taken by this study was influenced by the above and was chosen as it allowed me to explore the little known and be both “...a participant in and witness to the lives of others” (Lofland, J., Snow, D. A., Anderson, L., & Lofland, L. H. 2006, p. 3). The study was exploratory, flexible and open to any emergent themes. Having lived and worked as a sea kayaking guide and interested to discover more about others who did so, I was influenced by Stake (2005) who stated:

> Qualitative case study is characterised by researchers spending extended time on site, personally in contact with activities and operations of the case, reflecting, and revising descriptions and meanings of what is going on. Naturalistic, ethnographic, phenomenological case workers seek to
see what is natural in happenings, in settings, in expressions of value...[where]...we see data sometimes precoded but continuously interpreted, on first encounter and again and again...An observation is interpreted against one issue, perspective, or utility, then interpreted against others. (Stake, 2005, p. 447).

I entered the research with some ‘pre coded’ data that arose from my experiences and reading of the literature, but in keeping an open, flexible approach, sought to support this further with reflection on observations and interpretations of others experiences.

There has been a conscious attempt to incorporate my own experience into this study as a means of reflection and introspection, and assume that even as the researcher I cannot be completely separated from my subject matter. This approach, whereby researchers describe their own perspectives and experiences in relation to their research has variously been called ‘autoethnography’, ‘autobiographical sociology’ and ‘telling personal stories’ (Lofland et al, 2006, p.12). Lofland et al, (2006) go on to say that “this style of fieldwork can be useful for some purposes, such as trying to understand the link between certain life experiences and associated emotional reactions, particularly of those studied” (Lofland et al, 2006, p. 12). Autoethnography situates the research in part, as a journey of personal awareness and discovery. Whilst this allows readers a glimpse into the researcher’s lived experience, it is hoped that my story provides a “…key to understanding a parallel experience of those being studied” (Lofland et al, 2006, p.12). It is a useful way to link theory and practice, but a danger and potential weakness is that this report becomes a self indulgent, autobiographical essay that is uninteresting to others. I have used the technique predominantly in a supporting manner so that my story is sustained by other methods of data collection, including reflection on my observations, a review of literature and the stories of those participants interviewed. In this way data is both confirmed and challenged by triangulation.

3.2 Research Strategy and Methods

Data for this study was gathered via reflections on observations of and interviews with sea kayaking guides working in New Zealand through the summer of 2010/11. After initial time was spent observing and reflecting on the sea kayak industry and guides at work in Christchurch, the Marlborough Sounds, Fiordland National Park and the Abel Tasman National Park, seventeen interview respondents, comprising five females and twelve males
ranging in age from 22 – 41 years, were selected insofar as possible to provide a mix of age, gender, sea kayak, professional and life experience. All but four respondents were graduates of CPIT’s Outdoor Programmes. Given the short time constraints to this particular research study (October 2010 – February 2011), participants were selected with a bias toward those with whom I already had close personal and professional contact in my capacity as a Programme Leader in CPIT’s Outdoor Programmes department. A list of 30 potential participants involved in sea kayak guiding and known to the researcher was compiled. These were approached via informal conversation, email and phone to ascertain their interest in participating in the research. All those approached were willing to participate and were very interested in the research topic. This interest and willingness to ‘help out’ stems in part for some participants, perhaps because of a desire to continue with further study in the future, and that the memories of having to conduct their own research projects as part of their CPIT studies, were still fresh in their minds. Some were not available for face to face interview due to the timings of my availability and their family or work commitments (e.g. away on multi day trips) but were motivated enough to participate as well as they could and submitted responses to questions via telephone and email. I acknowledge that the restricted size and nature of the sample limits the ability to generalise the findings to other guides, and the wider adventure, tourism and education sectors. (See 3.4 for further discussion of the research limitations).

My final number of respondents was determined by availability, time constraints and the advice of Strauss and Corbin (1998), who have written that in many studies a saturated data level has been reached (i.e. no new information is forthcoming from an interview) after 12 and 15 interviews. In a similar vein, both Bernard (2002) and Creswell (2007), suggest that 16 interviews is a useful starting point for qualitative interview research. I found that this was true of my study where the predominant themes were pre-established, confirmed early on, and recurrent with later interviews.

Several of the respondents had minimal ‘commercial’ sea kayak guiding experience (less than two seasons), but most had been guiding for more than three seasons. The range of personal sea kayak experience ranged from six months to more than ten years. (See Table 1 below for each respondent details: their education, whereabouts of their guiding experience, industry qualifications, and current employment).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Guiding</th>
<th>Industry Qualifications</th>
<th>Current Location</th>
<th>Guiding Locations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
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<td>3-5 yrs</td>
<td>Sea Kayak Guide/Instructor</td>
<td>Army Instructor/ChCh</td>
<td>Fiordland/ATNP/USA/Italy</td>
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<td>29</td>
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<td>Transient/Christchurch</td>
<td>USA/Chile/Italy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>3 years</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Guide/ATNP</td>
<td>ATNP/USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>OE Degree</td>
<td>1st year</td>
<td>Nil</td>
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<td>ATNP</td>
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<tr>
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<td>25</td>
<td>OE Diploma</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Guide/ATNP</td>
<td>ATNP/USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grant</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>OE Diploma</td>
<td>3 years</td>
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<td>Ops Manager/ATNP</td>
<td>ATNP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>OE Degree</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Sea Kayak Guide</td>
<td>Youth Worker/ChCh</td>
<td>Fiordland/ATNP/Australia/Fiji</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>37</td>
<td>B.A/TchDip</td>
<td>10+ yrs</td>
<td>Sea Kayak Guide</td>
<td>Guide/Marlborough</td>
<td>Fiordland/Marlborough/Europe/Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liam</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>OE Degree</td>
<td>3+ yrs</td>
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<td>Youth Worker/ChCh</td>
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<td>1st year</td>
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<td>OE Deg/TchDip</td>
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<td>Fiordland/Scotland/Canada</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>ATNP/Marlborough/Banks Pen/USA</td>
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<td>Ruby</td>
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<td>OE Diploma</td>
<td>5+ years</td>
<td>Nil</td>
<td>Youth Worker/ChCh</td>
<td>ATNP/Banks Pen/Costa Rica/USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tony</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>B.A/OE Diploma</td>
<td>10+ yrs</td>
<td>Sea Kayak Guide/Instructor</td>
<td>Ops Manager/ATNP</td>
<td>ATNP/Marlborough/UK</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tane</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>OE Diploma</td>
<td>10+ yrs</td>
<td>Sea Kayak/Raft/Instr/Asses</td>
<td>Tutor/Nelson</td>
<td>ATNP/Marlborough/Canada/OZ/Fiji</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Semi-structured interviews were undertaken with the written and verbal permission of respondents (see Appendix B and C). Interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed, reviewed and written up, and complemented by notes taken during and after the interview. The notes were a summary of key points and used to make links between responses which were utilised to identify themes and contribute to research findings. Pseudonyms (see Table 1), were assigned to each respondent and confidentiality maintained via password secure computers and locked filing system/office.

As the research and interview process unfolded, several patterns became apparent. Interviews were read and re-read to identify and code common themes, which, with the author’s experiences as a sea kayak guide and educator, were used to inform later interviews and research. Of interest is that the qualitative approach using flexible, semi-structured interviews allowed many respondents to comment that the process of developing responses to questions enabled them to reflect more deeply about what they were doing, their aspirations for the future and the nature of their work and values. I was interested in both the commonplace and the particular, but more importantly, and in keeping with Stouffer (1941 as cited in Stake, 2005), the aim of this project was to make a contribution to the field about what is different or ‘uncommon’.

Other studies in the adventure, recreation and tourism fields have utilised qualitative methods that have incorporated some form of induction (see Cater, 2006; Celsi et al., 1993; Kane & Tucker, 2004; Sharpe, 2005; Taylor, 2010). This approach is commonly used in qualitative methods, in particular in ‘grounded theory’ (Thomas, 2006). Using this strategy, one does not enter the study process with pre conceived expectations about the outcome. In my case however, my experiences had led me to believe that there might be some common themes or patterns that defined the work choices and lifestyle of sea kayak guides. I sought to explore these via this research. Thus, the research approach adopted was a combination of pre determined and emergent design. My research objectives emerged after reflection, repeated observations and ongoing reading and review of the findings gathered from the raw data. Semi-structured interview questions allowed discussion to take any direction without necessarily looking to confirm or deny a particular theory. The interview questions were designed to elicit information about what is important, the motivation, background, future aspirations and ‘life’ of the respondents.
(Appendix A). Interviews and observation of participants over a two month period resulted in an extensive body of information being gathered. This was analysed manually by the researcher. With continued listening, transcription and ongoing re-reading, themes and ideas emerged that were then taken as indicative of the respondents’ views. For example, the themes of the formative value of People and Place, the ideas of family/school experiences, and ‘not in an office,’ emerged in the early stages of fieldwork, confirming some of my initial reflections and of personal experience. These themes subsequently informed later observations and guide interviews. The process of investigation and analysis was an evolving one, with themes, concepts and theories emerging out of the research process while it was being carried out. Links were made between the research objectives and themes, and respondent quotations were used to further illustrate the meanings of these themes.

3.3 Limitations

A weakness of the qualitative research methods chosen for this study was the fact that only a small, select number of respondents known to me were observed and interviewed. Given this small, purposive, sample it is inevitable that any generalisations made and applied to wider circumstances or populations will be limited. The reader is cautioned that the limited sample might be biased toward those who ‘fit’ a particular pattern of young New Zealanders who have a strong outdoor orientation as a result of their family and education experiences. Given this caution however, I believe it is likely that similar responses would be gained from sea kayaking guides that were unknown to me.

The presence of a researcher is also known to influence or bias situations. In this case, I was known to all the respondents in some personal and/or professional capacity. It must be acknowledged that my long background in education, the outdoor industry and, in particular, personal involvement with these respondents on a teaching, professional and recreational level, also influences the interpretation of responses beyond that of what is merely written or appears here and is part of my “ethno biography”. Upon reflection, there were perhaps examples of when issues of gender and power differential influenced responses by some respondents. Awareness of this led to a deliberate choice of interview setting (generally the respondents’ ‘home turf’), consciously providing the option to not answer questions and varying sitting position (front-on versus side-to-side).
However, “Even when empathetic and respectful of each person’s realities, the researcher decides what the case’s “own story” is, or at least what will be included in the report. More will be pursued than volunteered, and less will be reported than was learned...It may be the case’s own story, but the report will be the researcher’s dressing of the case’s own story....[the reader is reminded] that usually, criteria of representation is ultimately decided by the researcher” (Stake, 2005, p. 456). As this research is my story, of the stories of other sea kayaking guides’, inevitably something will be ‘lost in translation.’ In an attempt to minimise this potential bias, reflection on observations, a literature review and semi-structured interviews were used to triangulate the findings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1999).

While the study was exploratory and not intended to be representative of all sea kayaking guides, it does provide an insight into a little-studied cultural phenomenon and world.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has set out the research design and methodology used. The first section outlined the rationale for the research methodology and situated it as part of a journey of personal awareness and discovery. A qualitative approach, using elements of pre determined and emergent design, was established and allowed for examination of a topic and sample that is largely unexplored. This technique allowed for the emergence and exploration of identified themes. The second section discussed the research strategy and methods used. Initially, autoethnographic reflection in concert with my own observations, were used to guide the major aim and object of the research direction. This in turn led to the specific methodologies used and interview questions asked. A review of literature and a series of interviews with a small, select group of sea kayaking guides’, was then undertaken to further inform this research in an attempt to link theory and practice. An overview of the interview process, participant selection, data analysis and ethical considerations was presented, whilst the final section discussed methodological research limitations.

The next chapter, Chapter 4, examines the data arising from this research, beginning with the study participants’ responses to the theme of People.
Chapter 4

‘Amazing people in amazing places’

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4.0 Chapter Outline

Using interview responses, observations and my own experiences, this chapter is presented in five sections. After an introduction, Section 4.1 explores the importance of formative experiences in the shaping of career choices on the part of sea kayaking guides. Two areas are examined: first, the role that family and school outdoor experiences play; and second, the relationships and community generated by the guides working in the outdoors, with guests on trips, and with the like-minded fellow employees. Section 4.2 seeks to establish the importance of the relationship between New Zealanders and Place. This is supported by the sea kayaking guides responses to questions such as ‘Where and why do you do the work you do?’ Section 4.3 examines the constructs of adventure, travel and new experiences and how they are important in the lives of the sea kayaking guides in this study. Section 4.4 utilises the concept of ‘seasons’ or stages of life and the transition in and out of these. The world of the sea kayaking guide is perceived to be, and is, a transient and temporary one. This has a contradictory appeal and a ‘downside’ which at different times seems matched with one’s physical, mental and emotional life stage.

4.1 People

Family and school experiences in the outdoors have a significant impact on the career and life choices of young New Zealanders. My own observations, coming to live in New Zealand more permanently in the early 1990’s, was one of continued amazement and delight at the variety and ease of access to the mountains, rivers, sea, lakes and forest in comparison to South Australia. Most New Zealanders seem to consider having to drive no more than two to three hours a normal state of affairs whereas my stories of ten, fifteen and twenty hour cross country journeys were met with disbelief. As we shall explore in Section 4.1.3, both formal and informal outdoor education experiences were and have been a significant part of the New Zealand school curriculum.
4.1.2 Family and proximity to water

With 15,134km of coastline and hundreds of lakes and rivers, many New Zealanders develop an affinity with water during their youth. Department of Conservation figures show 80% of New Zealanders have been camping at some point in their life (Department of Conservation, 2006). Lynch (2006) in her history of the development of outdoor education in New Zealand identified:

Burnt sausages, cold fingers and toes, sleeping in flapping tents, having great fun with schoolmates, friendly teachers, challenging activities on, under and above land and water, star-filled skies, nature studies of forests, seashores, mountainlands...these are some of the enduring memories of Outdoor Education for many New Zealanders.

Family and the proximity to the outdoors and water in particular, were found to be significant factors for respondents in my study seeking to become sea kayak guides. Paris, (All names presented in this research are pseudonyms. See Table 1 p. 29 for further identifying information) recognises the combination of both family and school experiences as being important:

During school I did a bit of outdoor stuff…quite a bit of outdoor stuff. My dad especially is into the outdoors. So…my love for the sea came from my dad cos we used to do quite a bit of fishing and diving and stuff together like that and then… sea kayaking in particular was with school, but I sort of developed paddling skills through being in the surf club because we were paddling surf skis.

Whilst growing up in Northland, James talks of backyard adventures making “skis...and ice axes [for] climbing the back wall.” He built row boats and rafts, and later, Boys Brigade, Scouts and outdoor education at school provided an opportunity for further adventures. For Robert, another respondent, family, school experiences and the accessibility of water and the outdoors was considered an important influence on his decision to continue studies and a career in the outdoors. With some understatement he said:

My family itself isn’t that [outdoorsy]…my mum is…as kids we used to go to a bush lodge every summer every month or at least three times a year and we’d stay there with a whole lot of family friends and that is
where I learnt to kayak and paddle and go into the bush and stuff but it was really my friends at school that really got me into anything really outdoorsy. My parents weren’t really into it. I was very sporty as a kid so it was sort of a natural. I lived by the beach so I was always in the sea since I could walk, the sea was at my doorstep, so that was one big thing I was always in. It was quite close to the bush from my house. The Kaimai’s [Ed. A range of hills in the Bay of Plenty region of New Zealand’s North Island near Tauranga and Rotorua] was probably 45 minutes away and that was really good just being able to get there and we would go as a family. But Sixth Form definitely was the big intro into Outdoor Ed.

In answer to the question of whether the sea or ocean is important to them, Ruby said:

Yeah. I enjoy snowboarding but the oceans is more my thing than mountains or anything else. I think it’s kind of possibly in my blood...growing up in Lyttelton and my father being a boat builder. Quite a few of my family are sailors and fisherman. It’s just something about the ocean that is kind of calming. I mean I did a little bit of sailing and stuff. My grandfather had a boat in Governors Bay and we went out sailing but not a lot. I was never part of any sailing school. Just going down on the wharves and fishing, swimming round Corsair Bay and that kind of stuff. Actually I was in a swimming club when I was young...

This type of paradoxical statement was common for many respondents. On the one hand they indicated that their families were not very “outdoorsy”, yet then describe memories of riding their bikes, swimming, surfing and fishing at the beach or local creek, and going on family holidays. As Irwin (2010) identified, this lifestyle was commonplace for many young New Zealanders, with the result perhaps that they under-valued its significance until later in life.

4.1.3 School

Briony was enthusiastic and animated when talking of the difference in culture between the indoor classroom environment and outdoor learning. She appreciated not being “hassled”
and indicated that she had a greater desire to learn during the outdoor classes. Like other
guides, Ellen also said:

...at school I was always in every outdoor class I could be or PE class, 
they were my main subjects. Outdoor education in high school my 6th 
form year was definitely the kick off for me...knowing I wanted to get 
down and do the Polytech diploma. So that’s kind of introduced me into 
the whole tramping and kayaking side of it.

My observations of CPIT Outdoor Programmes students also provided an interesting 
contrast between an indoors classroom session and the preparations for a field trip away. 
These confirmed an engagement level far more positive for the latter than was evident in 
the classroom. My notes from that time (See Appendix D, p. 1) show that there was more 
laughter, interaction and movement. Nearly a third of the class hadn’t been present for an 
indoor theory session the previous day, yet here they all were, on time, organised, 
interested and eager to get under way and out into the mountains. This was highlighted 
further with one student turning up, packed, ready and keen to go even when obviously 
unwell.

John’s experience highlights the value of having kayaks and a pool accessible during his 
school years in his development as a kayaker:

I used to muck around in the [sailing] boats and then...at high school the 
kayaks were stored in a shed right next door to the swimming pool and 
then canoe polo sort of started to make an appearance about...when I 
was about the 4th 5th form and so me and my mates every lunch time 
would get the kayaks out and put them in the swimming pool and 
start...learning how to roll, we just mucked around and kind of learnt 
how to do it and then when you play canoe polo...so that’s how I got 
into kayaking...

Other respondents (James, Robert, Grant), referred to practical or outdoor themed classes 
as ‘saving’ their high school years from being a disaster. They found that with skills and 
competency, success followed. They were more motivated, confident and able to flourish 
in a supportive atmosphere of shared values. For some of these sea kayaking guides, their 
school experiences can be seen as having a positive influence on their choice to pursue an
outdoors career, yet for others, school might be seen as a source of failure in that there was a ‘missed opportunity’ to somehow to capture interest in another (classroom based) subject area.

4.1.4 “Amazing people in amazing places”

Many of the respondents identified the importance of people as a highlight of an outdoor guiding career. ‘People’ here encompasses both the community of fellow guides and guests on trips. Lisbeth noted:

Highlights are definitely being amongst the beauty of the National Park and sharing this area with so many other like-minded people who return to Marahau year after year for the summer season. The atmosphere here is great with all the young people about who are always keen for adventures on days off. I also enjoy meeting new people from all walks of life and sharing our piece of paradise with them.

In response to a question about the highlight of working as guide, Liam very strongly identifies that working and guiding in the outdoors is about people and passing on a love for the outdoors:

Absolutely, absolutely, it’s about the people...enjoyment wise. I love working with high school age young people. They are all over the place mentally so it’s cool to get alongside them and try to help them flesh out what their life is that they are doing, what they’re becoming, and if you can use the outdoors as a tool for that, yeah, I’m stoked.

Colin and Cam too, see the community of people they work with as a positive. “The first thing I think about is the people I have actually surrounded myself with because they’ve all become my really good friends and I still keep up with them these days…” (Colin). Extended trips and journeys also provide the opportunity to develop that temporary ‘communitas’ referred to by Barnes (1999) and Franklin (2006) whereby one gets to know guests on a more personal level. Cam said:

I really enjoy [being] out there for multiple days with a group that you can actually kind of connect with on a bit more of deeper level than just taking people out for a couple of hours. The other highlight would
probably be the people that I work with, the guides, the other guides that I work with. They are the reason why I’ve stayed with the same company that I have, not the actual company itself...definitely the guides are what keep me coming back to that company.

Andy captures the importance of both people and the outdoor environment when he acknowledged that:

...in the outdoors you have an affiliation with people and the environment. I think [as] a lawyer you have a affiliation with people but not the environment, being a data entry [person] you have no affiliation with any people, it’s all computer based, so how I used to say it was, amazing people in amazing places and both of those were just as important. You could be in a really mellow sea kayak environment but because you have amazing people with you it’s fantastic.

Interestingly, several guides discerned that guests and fellow workers could provide both an important positive side to the job and a potential negative. Casey and Phillip capture this paradox when they talk of occasions when fellow workers let them down by failing to complete a cleaning task or were late for a water taxi pick up. Colin pointed out that occasionally guides might be at odds with business owners’ philosophies or attitudes. Guests too, need to take their role in the interaction seriously and can be a source of disappointment if they don’t appreciate where they are or what they are doing so that it impacts negatively on the experience of others (Phillip).

4.1.5 **People: Summary**

This section provides evidence of the importance that school and family experiences have on the career and life choices of young New Zealanders. Growing up in and around the outdoors is seen to be an important developmental marker for those who choose to work as sea kayaking guides. This orientation is confirmed by participants’ stories regarding their positive outdoor education experiences at school compared with their negative experiences in the classroom. The positive relationships and connections made with guests are seen as common experiences as the sea kayaking guides share their workplace and passion with others. The ‘awesome people in awesome places’ sentiment also comes through strongly in
relation to the community of guides that one lives and works with being a strong influence on the choice to become a sea kayaking guide.

Using Place as a theme, the next section further explores the importance and interconnectedness of People and Place.

4.2 Place

“...a fine way to make a living.” Coromandel sea kayak guide, Paris.

“Many people have a personal relationship to landscape and to being in the outdoors, and this connection seems linked to identity and to the understanding of being a “real” New Zealander. Nature and landscape is thus essential and is understood as an important and integral part of being a New Zealander and is linked closely to identity. To be a “real” New Zealander you have to be able to manage and survive in the outdoors, and you have to appreciate the New Zealand landscape” (Andkjaer, 2010, p.13). While this may seem exclusivist, many young New Zealanders do grow up “immersed in the landscape” in some way. The ‘swandri’ and the ‘gumboot’ typify an outdoor image that is quintessentially New Zealand. As identified earlier, this image is reinforced through camping holidays and the proximity to mountains, lakes, rivers and sea. For some young New Zealanders, with a background in and affinity with the outdoors, the appeal of working with people as a sea kayaking guide offers an opportunity to enjoy and pass on their love of place.

4.2.1 “Not in an office”

A preference for working outdoors versus indoors came through strongly in the interviews, consistent with what Riley (1986) called a ‘not factory’ orientation in his study of hotel workers. Job satisfaction was important to respondents in my study, more so than the money, and of the outdoor options, sea kayak guiding was seen as a preferred one. There was a definite reaction against working indoors, in an office. This ‘not factory’ mentality is attractive to these sea kayaking guides who call it “not in an office.” Paris captures this sentiment:

I’ve never really seen myself suited to an office job at all so the major bonus is working outside. I just find it more interesting to be able to work in the outdoor. I don’t think I would like [or] wouldn’t want to do
a job that I wouldn’t enjoy. Being able to work in the outdoors would be a fine way to make a living.

Respondents gave examples of how place and the environment in which they worked were important to them. Much as Casey (2001) has suggested (see Chapter 2.4), these outdoor places were essential to the identity of the sea kayaking guides in this study. This statement from Grant was indicative:

…people get a job inside and don't really realise that there’s outside...there’s so much outside...the views. We went sea kayaking and we went up on this hill and sorta looked over and the view was like, "Whoa!” You know this is quite something…you don't see this view everyday and I think as a guide taking people out and seeing those views every day, "Whoa" you’d really appreciate life and don’t expect all that.

A similar view was expressed by John, who obviously has a deep, almost spiritual connection with the landscapes where he works, when he stated:

Oh! Then working in Fiordland, it’s one of those mythical places that I should have spent a lot more time in, but haven’t been there for ten years. Every day on the water in Doubtful Sound would be like my first day, it was just awe inspiring. So for different reasons...Fiordland’s a real highlight just cos it was such a wild, exciting, amazing, environment...just so dynamic with tree avalanches and floods and I’ll never take that for granted.

Lisbeth sees the ability to spend her time “…in some of the most amazing places this world has to offer” as a major advantage of working as a guide. Being outside, by the sea is very important:

As I have grown up by the sea I have a great appreciation for it. I spend a lot of time at the beach, swimming, collecting shell fish and also spend a lot of time riding on the beach with my horse. Being close to the sea gives me a sense of calmness and freedom. The fresh air often blows worries far over the hill tops behind me and restores a new burst of energy within. I spent a year working in the Austrian mountains, this
was the first time I had been away from the sea for a long time and I really longed for it [the sea] even after just a few months.

Whilst some guides (Phillip, Casey and Ellen) struggled to convey in words their passion for working in and around the outdoors, Lisbeth eloquently illustrated hers:

I feel fortunate to be able to use the skills I have learnt over the past few years alongside my knowledge of this area to take people on a journey into the park by means of a sea kayak. Each day is like a journey for me as well, and so the time passes quickly and a day spent in paradise is hardly work. I choose guiding as I love being in the Abel Tasman National Park and thrive off the enjoyment and wonder first time visitors have for this magical place. I feel lucky to be able to spend time in and explore the wonders of our amazing outdoors. The beauty of our natural environment is something I appreciate deeply and the extremes of the elements opens my eyes to the uniqueness of Mother Earth during each new adventure. I have been to some incredible places and had the chance to see some of the intricate and magical ecosystems which highlight the small part I am in this wide web of life. Being amongst the outdoors gives me a sense of freedom, calmness, excitement, new energy and adventure. It is an environment which fosters new connections, enriching of friendships, offers new beginnings and self exploration.

Repeatedly, guides referred to a strong and deeply held connection to the environment. “Place” inextricably shapes their characters. Paraphrasing Berry 1987, (See Chapter 2.4), these guides have a sense of who they are because they identify strongly with where they are. Andy also talked of the importance of having a connection with place, in this instance the sea:

I have lived once or twice inland [away] from the ocean and a river and felt like I was missing something, so I need to be able to see the ocean or see a river...to see it and smell it and hear it...So living at Mt Cook National Park would not work, but living say [in] Colorado although its inland, there is a river right next to it, and Murch is inland but there is a
river right next to it. Right now I live in Sumner so the sea’s right there, so [for me] it needs to have that water environment somewhere.

Another respondent, James, traced his journey to becoming a sea kayaking guide as being largely dominated by the special nature of the places where he worked:

Then in 1999 I went down to Abel Tasman to do a work placement and I fell in love with the place and thought “Man, I want to work here.” I would say being able to spend your day in amazing places like Fiordland or Abel Tasman, a mind-blowing place, you’ve got people coming from all over the planet to come and visit it so it’s obviously a pretty special being out there every day.

The sea kayaking guides in this study are at home in, on, and around the water, in Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Canada, Fiji, and wherever they choose to travel. They live and represent both dwelling-as-residing and dwelling-as-wandering (Wattchow, 2005) scenarios. They develop a rootedness and attachment to a generalised outdoor setting and a more specific water-based location. They appreciate and value Fiordland, the Marlborough Sounds and the Abel Tasman National Park, but also develop the same but different feelings and values when they are working the ‘off season’ somewhere in the tropics or Northern Hemisphere (Cuthbertson et al. 1997).

For Cam, Casey, Grant and Tane the physical challenges of being and working outdoors was an important reason for pursuing this type of work and lifestyle. Expressing this sentiment, Tane said, “...definitely, I love being in the outdoors. For me it’s the outdoors and it’s the physicality of it as well...the challenge, the physicality, feeling like you’ve done something...”

Given that closeness to and interaction with the sea, water and the outdoor environment is seen as an integral part of their identity, these factors come together for young New Zealanders to view the outdoors as a desirable way to make a living.

4.2.2 Whenua

“Whenua is a product of people living in Pacific ecosystems in which they understood and regarded themselves as tied to the land, water and life around them...” (Park, 2006, p. 242).
In this sub section I shall explore Place and its importance for the sea kayaking guides in this study, providing a context by examining New Zealand’s unique history and culture, and wider global influences. For this research I have limited my discussion and understanding of Place to that of attachment to a physical setting. Whenua is an ancient Polynesian concept that encompasses both a modern literal definition of ‘land’ and the word for ‘after-birth’ or placenta. For Maori, the placenta was buried on the home marae ensuring a direct physical and emotional link to their place of birth, ensuring they became tangata whenua or literally ‘people of the land’ (Park, 2006, p. 240). Similarly, the respondents in this study emphasised a strong connection to the land and water.

Both Polynesian and Pakeha settlers of New Zealand were of pioneering stock, leaving the ‘safe harbour’ of their home, seeking new lands and opportunities and then having to adapt and create a life in a new environment. Whilst there may not be any genetic basis to this attitude or outlook, culturally and physically, New Zealanders today still, in relative terms, are closer to the outdoors, the mountains, lakes, forest, rivers and sea, than many people around the world.

In New Zealand, a Western construct and notion of capitalistic production largely informs our understanding of work and leisure. Other unique influences which impact on how we construct and view work and leisure include our temperate climate (outdoor activities/living, BBQ), geographic location as islands in the South Pacific (the beach and water sports), and a human history that has a Maori/Polynesian culture which has never been extinguished.

Further, a wider global process of the commercialisation and ‘packaging’ of adventure and the outdoors as a commodity is evident. There is, literally, an “industry” now around the job opportunities in, about and for the outdoors, that never existed before. Working outdoors as a sea kayak guide is one of these. The ‘Kiwi can do’ attitude is packaged together and situated within a context where outdoor adventure is sold as one important option in creating an identity. In recent times, New Zealand has sought to position itself as an outdoor adventure paradise. (See for example, Cloke & Perkins, 1998). The result has been an explosion in tourism ventures relying on the outdoor environment which depends on a skilled, seasonal workforce. (DOL, 2010, p.12). Government training schemes, tertiary providers and businesses themselves have offered incentives and opportunities to promote training and qualifications in this area. The result is that young people now have
the choice of not only working in the trades, on the land or going to university, but also in the outdoor industry. Given the seasonal nature of work in the outdoor industry and the lack of national regulations or enforceable minimum qualifications governing many adventure activities (Department of Labour, 2010), the pathway into this field is comparatively easier than continuing to study, becoming a farmer or gaining a trade as a carpenter.

In spite of some acknowledged downsides, the outdoor industry by is seen the respondents as a glamorous, ‘cool’ career choice. All respondents talk of enjoying the job, of being outside, and wanting to be on or around water. The appeal of working outside was apparent. Findings that there were possibilities of employment in this sector and the attraction of the ‘lifestyle’, appeared to be common to my respondents. Ellen alludes to the fact that the stories others brought back from their travels and adventures overseas were a significant influence in her decision to pursue this career path. The ‘interconnectedness’ of early family experiences, enjoying the outdoors and employment, was important for Grant:

Dad’s always been into hunting and fishing...and his dad was [the] influence on that. I did a lot of that stuff with my grandfather, he was probably the main influence for me [especially] the fishing and the hunting. They never really were into adventure activities, none of my family were ever into rafting or kayaking. I just figured that it would be quite a good thing to [do]. Seeing I liked hunting and fishing so much I thought if I did a job like sea kayaking or rafting or tramping, I could just be in the outdoors all the time. I would love to get a fishing or hunting job but that’s not really that legit, I don’t really think there is that many jobs going...I don’t think that’s very sustainable doing that...[not] a stable job, I don’t think you could get that if you were to do a job like that. So this allows me to be outdoors as well...

This option of being able to make a living and having a lifestyle of travelling whilst working in the outdoors is not only attractive, but more possible these days than it was in the past. As I noted earlier (Chapter 2.6), Adler and Adler (1999) identified such people as “Seekers”. Much like some of the respondents interviewed for this research, “Seekers” were described as being:
…drawn to these areas for their beauty and for the specialties they offered, to test themselves against the elements, to experience and learn about the world, and to assimilate different cultures. Often starting out as “time-outers” intending to take only a short break from their conventional lives, they often found themselves enamored of the experience. They then abandoned their initial plans to visit only one location and expanded their focus (Adler & Adler, 1999, pp. 35-36).

The sea kayaking guides in this study had often worked in Canada, Scotland, Norway, Australia, Central America, the Mediterranean and the Pacific, once starting on a particular journey finding it hard to stop.

Being on the water, near the river, outdoors, ‘not in an office’, was identified as being integral to their lifestyle and identity. As with the Queenstown raft guides in Carnicelli Filho’s study, sea kayak guides seemed to “…travel around the world looking for the opportunity to stay close to their leisure activity…the difference is that they work effectively with their passion, with their hobby, with their favourite leisure activity” (Carnicelli Filho, 2010, p. 292). As Phillip noted, they “…got the best job in the world…paid to paddle, and have fun”.

4.2.3 Place: Summary

The choice of sea kayak guiding as a job appeals because it is perceived as a counterpoint to “working in an office,” indeed, it is seen “...as a fine way to make a living”. As the respondents’ stories show, increasingly, sea kayaking guides today are no longer ‘alternative, greenie, hippies,’ but can slip effortlessly from one ‘persona’ and performance in the outdoors to another inextricably linked to the technology, the interconnected world and the world of the cafes, lattes and nightclubs. They have, or can create a version of self that is comfortable across many settings.

The next section will explore how People and Place intersect with Adventure and Travel experiences.
4.3 Adventure and Travel

*Ad venio*: Latin root for ‘adventure, whatever chance may bring’.

Changes in mobility have had a significant influence on how one develops and constructs identity in contemporary times. The associated reflection and creation of stories around the travel experience, is influenced actively by both home and destination. Through travel, one is able to gain a renewed, more holistic understanding of oneself and others (Becker, 2003; Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; White & White, 2004). People are able to travel more cheaply, easily and comfortably than ever before. They gain a more global sense of who they are and where they belong via their own contrasting experiences and meeting people who share their experiences and philosophies of life en route. At this stage of their lives, young people today are relatively more affluent, physically able and emotionally unencumbered than were their parents. They are free to travel, work and seek adventure (Bauman, 2001; Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; Munt, 1994).

4.3.1 An ‘Adventure ethic’

“If as Virginia Woolf (1998: 95) writes “every day holds more non-being than being” then the days of an adventurer would have a more than average share of authentic being” (Becker, p. 97).

Certainly in Western culture and especially those colonised frontier societies like New Zealand, “Outdoor adventure is solidly embedded within cultural scripts or discourses that link outdoor adventure experiences to ideas of authenticity” (Sharpe 2005, p. 45). That is, there is a belief that the outdoor adventure setting provides an opportunity to discover ourselves and live life in a more ‘real’ (authentic) way. We talk of ‘escaping’ the humdrum of everyday life, or the monotony of work. Sharpe (2005) has suggested two factors, which perpetuate this belief. First, the pervasive idea that in outdoor adventure settings, one’s character is revealed and formed due to the challenges and danger overcome. Manifestations of this, which are still with us today, include Kurt Hahn and the ‘hardship is character building’ origins of the Outward Bound movement and its motto, “To serve, to strive and not to yield”, private school philosophies such as “Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton”, ‘muscular Christianity’ and the YMCA movement, and indeed, adventure as a therapeutic tool for youth at risk.

Second, and equally pervasive, is a cultural understanding of nature as somewhere that is removed, or something that exists as a counterpoint to culture (city) and is therefore seen
as more real and authentic. We see nature as “ultimate and authentic, whereas that side of the world that we humans have organised is often seen as artificial and derivative” (Fine, 1992, p. 173). These contrasts continue to influence our thinking even as adventure and the outdoors are increasingly commercialised, packaged up, commodified and sold in the form of ‘outdoor adventure experiences’. In writing about white-water rafting guides, Holyfield and Jonas (2003) noted “The [River] God/Goddess identity exists within a larger community of adventure seekers of various types, and we associate it with the “adventure ethic”… a contemporary cultural phenomenon that links adventure seeking with cultural heroism and moral character…” (Holyfield & Jonas, 2003, p. 286). The authors argued that the life of an adventure hero is held up in contrast to those who lead an organised, structured, rational life.

Andy talked of the opportunity to travel as having:

[A] massive appeal, it is that I guess from the ages from 21 to maybe 30 it appeals. [You] can go and do the alternate summers, so northern hemisphere and southern hemisphere and that’s a massive appeal and it’s a good way to get your OE as a young Kiwi and work and meet some amazing people and of course sea kayak in...sea kayaking is in fantastic places, Vancouver, BC, anywhere really, California, Baja Coast, Mexico...

The opportunity to travel, meet people and learn about different cultures was an important motivation to travel and work for some of these guides. Colin said:

I got into the guiding world because it was a means to make money and also still be in the outdoors and it’s very attractive being able to go all around the world because I love culture and learning different languages and meeting new people so it was a way to one; travel, two; be in some beautiful places and do the things I like to do like being around rivers and three; doing what I know, something that I know and I’m good with.

Paris also identified travel as being a factor in his future plans:

The initial plan at the moment is to finish Teacher’s College and go travelling. I’m not exactly sure how long that is going to be for. That’s
why I want to do a summer of sea kayaking now so I have a bit of experience guiding, so I could use that overseas as well when I travel. I aim to work sea kayaking overseas at the same time as well...there are a few places…Maybe not all sea kayaking. I want to go to Canada and I thought if I could get a job near the hills there it would be quite nice to go snow-boarding in Canada.

Robert focused on the appeal of the adventure involved in sea kayaking:

Even the work I was doing as an arborist was outside and it was adventurous. I was climbing trees over trains going a hundred miles an hour so it was always a bit of an adventure. The thing about the whole adventure is what draws me. I really enjoy doing that stuff compared to something that I’d just be bored out of my brain doing just to earn money. I don’t really know how to explain how that is. I suppose when I tell a lot of my friends what I’m doing or what I’m going to be doing they are like ‘Whoa, that sounds mean’. They’re always saying ‘Oh! It’s the good life’ and I’m like, ‘Yeah’. I think that sort of sums it up.

Having people say it’s a good life, it’s gotta be and I know it is for me.

These ‘looking for adventure’ and “it’s a good life” comments link to earlier references relating to the ‘gathering of cultural capital’ and ‘identity formation’ (Arnould & Price, 1993; Desforges, 2000; Holyfield, 1999, Holyfield & Jonas, 2003; Jonas, 1999; Munt, 1994). Phillip referred to sea kayak guiding as “…pretty, cool, it makes you feel good” and Paris’s comment that it is “a nice way to make a living” imply that Ferguson’s (2005) talk of the ‘hero myth’ or Holyfield and Jonas’ (2003), ‘River God/Goddess’ are an influence here.

Sea kayak guiding offers perceived positive travel opportunities, yet there are also some aspects which are not so welcome. Some of these are more characteristic of tourism jobs in general. These will be addressed in following section.

4.3.2 Downsides

In spite of the appeal and possibilities of this outdoors work and adventurous lifestyle, all respondents acknowledged ‘downsides’ to a guiding career. These included the long days, the physically demanding nature of the job, low pay, the lack of career progression and
options, being away from family, and the repetitive, itinerant seasonal nature of the work.
Ellen identified that, “It’s a long day…pay is not very good. I guess you would be moving around a bit especially if you want to follow the sun like I want to…so it would be hard to settle.” Equally Briony said:

It doesn’t pay very well…it is quite a lot of work [and] it’s probably not something you’d do long term. I probably wouldn’t do it long term for the rest of my life [the] low pay, the hours and just cos I kinda see it as something to travel with all over the place and…eventually you probably wouldn’t want to travel any more, you might wanna have a home…

Paris noted that:

It can be a bit repetitive sometimes especially with guiding if you are going to the same place over again and being able to…keep up your enthusiasm and stuff if you’ve already seen it over and over again. I suppose you could just get used to it. Yeah, [and] I suppose it’s not the highest paying job in the world.

Robert implied that the transition from prior, more secure, paid employment to a sea kayaking guiding life was difficult in his comment that he would not be able to maintain this career for any length of time due to the fact that the seasonal, part time nature of the job not providing him with the “perks” that he had become used to.

These drawbacks however, were acknowledged, rationalised and seemingly outweighed in the minds of the respondents by the advantage of being outdoors, working with people and having the opportunity to travel with the sea kayaking and other skills they possess. In this sense they are similar to ‘Seekers’ (Adler & Adler, 1999). John acknowledged that the downsides may themselves be creative forces, generating adventurous solutions as he sought to travel “…for adventure…endure harsh conditions and to overcome heroic obstacles…” (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 40):

You’re never gonna buy a mansion in Fendalton being a guide and more than that over a year it’s quite an inconsistent income, so even if you wanted a mortgage or something it would be quite difficult to convince a bank, it’s quite difficult to budget in some ways. That’s probably just
about... the insecurity can be kind of exciting, that’s all part of travelling isn’t it? You look back and sometimes when you’ve absolutely run out of money and at the time you think you’re going to have the worst time of your life and you look back and think “Far out that was fun” cos you had to get quite creative and just...

4.3.3 Adventure and Travel: Summary

This section noted that adventure, travel and new experiences are important features of the lives and identity of the sea kayaking guides in this study. Whilst identifiable in and of themselves, these characteristics should not be considered in isolation, but build upon and interlink with the earlier themes of People and Place. There are perceived “positives” of this lifestyle, outweighing any “negatives” especially, that by being a guide, one is able to accrue further cultural capital and status by, for example, becoming a “River God” (Holyfield & Jonas, 2003), which is beyond the reach of a tourist or participant.

The next section completes a picture of this particular life and work style by examining the Life Span and Transition of these sea kayaking guides.

4.4 Life Span and Transition: ‘it’s a young person’s game’

“You’ve gotta do this between 20 and 30...that’s when you have no commitments...you have the time, energy, and money doesn’t matter...the world is your oyster!” Past student and well-travelled outdoor adventure guide, MR, talking to Certificate level Outdoor Recreation students at CPIT.

The idea of life span and transition in and out of different life stages is salient to the perceptions of these respondents. Leading adventure trips in the outdoors is predominantly a “young person’s game” (Colin). There is a time, usually in the twenties, when this lifestyle is not only appealing but possible. Adler and Adler, 1999, Desforges, 2000 and Sharpe 2005, have suggested that whilst an ongoing and ever evolving process, the search for meaning and identity is often seen as the preserve of youth. When talking of junior staff, Tony identifies the process of transition:

He doesn’t know...where can he go? He could go into another outdoor centre, OPC, Tihoi, Boyle River which will pretty much just be like
Outward Bound, maybe not the same different place, different things but the same kind of thing going on but how long can he do that for? If Alice gets pregnant and they have kids then that centre life doesn’t really work for them, so if you broadly say most people are going to get married and most people are going to have kids to continue the universe...then really the only jobs in the outdoors that can really sustain that kind of life are the job, is the job that you have as a Polytech tutor that gives you salary and set work hours and all that kind of stuff, but as a pure guide, unless you are very good in a range of disciplines, making a living in the outdoors long term is tricky unless you move into the sort of thing that we’ve talked about

Rapoport and Rapoport (1975), suggest that this transition from young adulthood to mid-life “establishment” is one where the orientation to work, buying a home and starting a family becomes more apparent. A job that has transient lifestyle and intermittent low pay such as sea kayak guiding, clearly becomes more difficult and less attractive at this life juncture.

The life stage of ‘young adulthood’ also allows other respondent goals to be realised. Amongst these, was being able to do physical work in the outdoors. Tane, Grant and Casey all identify with the “challenges” and satisfaction of meeting those in an outdoor setting. These sea kayaking guides fit the ‘living for the day’, hedonistic attitude evident in ‘Seekers’ (Adler & Adler, 1999). Meeting new people, experiencing new cultures and satisfying travel lust, was also important for many. Ruby captures this when she says:

I love meeting different cultures and seeing different...I’ve travelled a little bit but as far as the world scale goes I’ve only just touched the surface. There are a lot more places I would like to go and the places that seem to attract me the most are a little bit Third World. A little bit more tropical places like Central America and the Caribbean and places like that. I guess I’ve been drawn to those cultures since I was young. I used to go to Latin American dance parties when I was a kid and Latin American dance lessons and just into the music and the culture. I’ve learnt a little bit of Spanish. That’s what draws me there but then there is Africa and parts of Europe. It’s a big world.
Ellen noticed that the younger guides:

...that come through, are just out of their [study], do a couple of years [and] they always move on. With guiding, a couple of years [and] they’ve had enough. They want to move up and on to bigger and better things...some of them still guide but just travel around different parts of the world rather than being stuck here in the one spot.

This was the case for Casey who is undecided as to whether to return to further study or continue travelling and adventuring once the season is finished:

Once I finished studying at Polytech, I wanted to be working in the outdoors cos I’d been training up for it for three years and just been waiting to get out there...and I love this area so much, it was just the really easy option. You know, it’s six months, I mean, you can choose what you do after that and [I] heard lots of cool stories from other guides so...

The experiences of the sea kayaking guides above, highlight and support findings related to youth, the motivation for travelling, adventure and identity formation, the idea of developmental lifespan ‘seasons’ and they complement other research findings (Adler & Adler, 1999; Desforges, 2000; Elsrud, 2001; Holyfield & Jonas, 2003; Jonas, 1999; Sharpe, 2005; White & White, 2004).

Conventional career and commitments were not followed. Guides learnt skills and earned qualifications that enabled them to find a job anywhere they went. Being at a life juncture or transitional/liminal phase often at the end of their tertiary studies, “They were travelling seminomads, making money and developing skills. They could have fun and do leisure work. They could live anywhere in the world. They made the conscious decision to enjoy their lives in the immediacy of their youth rather than waiting until they were fifty of sixty years old” (Adler & Adler, 1999, p. 41).

4.4.1 “Buffers, stepping stones, kickstarts and Gap Years”

There is a limited ‘life span’ to sea kayak guiding, most seeking to spend their twenties travelling, having adventures, being open to possibilities and meeting new people before
looking to settle down to more conventional and better paying careers. Different guides have different terms for this short ‘shelf life.’ Andy put it this way:

My words [of advice] would be, it works really well as a three [to] four year buffer from people going from high school through to university study or a career move. There’s very few people, and so it should be I think at this stage, that stick out and use sea kayaking all their life, but it’s a fantastic way to have an OE both in your own country and both overseas. So it’s a good way to meet and hang out with different people and different cultures, so I don’t think it’s sustainable for more than three to four years doing back-to-back seasons. So as soon as you have done six to eight seasons you have probably done enough sea kayaking in your life. As a full time permanent guide, unless you move through the ranks and become senior instructors, Ops managers and owners of companies and maybe even work for Polytechs and other organisations…[it is unlikely] that you [can] do it throughout a year

Cam and his partner are about to continue their careers at a leading outdoor centre in New Zealand, having secured a three year contract beginning in May, at the end of the summer sea kayaking season. He talks of guiding being a “kickstart”. Tony, who has worked through the ranks from boat washer, guide, senior guide, trainer, operations manager and who is now somewhat removed from day to day sea kayaking, but still has a managerial role within a large company, calls guiding a ‘Gap Year’. That is, a short time away from what you are going to do next in your life, for example, study or find ‘secure’ employment. Phillip calls guiding, a series of ‘stepping stones’ towards a future career. Tane, now married with two children, works at a polytechnic with a responsibility for training future guides. He sees guiding as ‘a filler’ before new opportunities present themselves as he moves through his life.

Lisbeth intended:

…to move towards becoming an outdoor educator and so hope[d] to remain in the outdoor industry for a while. I realise that when I have a family, the type of activities I participate in may change in regards to the risks associated with them…I don’t see guiding as something I want to do long term, as I would like to move to using the outdoors for
education rather than tourist recreation….I know for those with families the seasonal work wasn’t a reliable source of income and they found work that will provide a year round income…

Most of the guides’ friends, whilst saying they would love “to be out paddling in paradise for a living…don’t really see kayak guiding as a ‘real’ job” (Lisbeth). A lack of further career options and progression at senior guide, trainer, operations and management levels mean that the long hours, low pay and itinerant lifestyle start to take their toll. Setting up one’s own business is another option for some of these young people; however, many are already carrying student loan debt and in their initial chosen career of working in the outdoors, are unlikely to have made many inroads into that debt. Unless they have some independent financial means, starting up and owning their own business is an attractive, if unlikely possibility. Having worked in the industry, many will have decided that even owning your own outdoor adventure business is not necessarily a pathway to financial security. Tony who has moved sideways and upwards within a large tourism company, said:

...certainly buying into the tourism business is something that Jo and I were pretty clear about right from the get go...just wasn’t what we were looking for...nah, not into that...I don’t think the returns are worth the risk, certainly if you don’t own the land.

The seasonal nature of the work is also a factor. Initially the challenge, adventure and novelty of the itinerant lifestyle appeals; ultimately however, the recognition comes that there are more disadvantages than advantages. For example, Briony says:

…I kinda see it as something to travel with all over the place and eventually you probably wouldn’t want to travel any more, you might wanna have a home…no…maybe, I wouldn’t sea kayak guide…for a long time, but I’d do something with…in the outdoors, but it might just end up somewhere based…in one place … I wouldn’t be doing the travel overseas, guiding in different places…

Andy, who has worked in a training and operations role at a sea kayaking company, believes it is a great job but not sustainable for too long:
...sustainable for a few... its hard work, so you’re on...for seven days a week for three months...and it’s not a highly paid industry which is fine if you are a younger guide, when you’re at that age you can go overseas and do a lot of work, but not so good if you’re trying to maintain that throughout your mid to late twenties to thirties. It’s not sustainable...

Ruby provides a female perspective and noted:

I guess it’s sustainable but only for so long. For myself, things have changed and I’ve started to think more about getting older. It never meant much to me before but now I’m starting to think that maybe I’d like to own a house one day or have an actual base and settle down. I think most of them [sea kayaking guides] are a little bit younger and they just haven’t got to that stage yet.

Similar to the Canadian research (SKILS 2009) noted in Chapter 2.6, Liam agrees and says:

It’s sustainable for a good maybe three to four years but eventually as life progresses you want to actually claim your spot that you’re going to stay in. You can’t go back to back to back seasons for too many years in a row...so I don’t think it’s that sustainable for a long period of time, for myself it wouldn’t be anyway, because you couldn’t really, if you wanted to get married and have a family, you can’t really keep doing that. That’s where teaching...teaching is something that you can actually...teaching’s not seasonal...

As an example of other career options, most respondents identified a teaching career as one that would enable them to earn better pay, work with people, have a home and still have good holidays to travel. Robert, who has recently graduated and previously travelled and worked overseas, is able to contrast his experiences and make a considered decision as to what his future might be, after guiding:

I couldn’t handle doing guiding as such for a long time. I like a bit of security in what I am doing even though it might not be hugely long term. In saying that, I do like to move around as well. [Laughs]...which is kind of hard I know. Once I start to settle myself down and get a bit
older I think I’ll be wanting job security in terms of not having to go
look for other work. So I can definitely see myself doing the whole
teaching thing later on…

Other career alternatives mentioned included the police force, getting a trade such as a
builder or carpenter, counselling and working with youth at risk.

4.4.2 Life Span and Transition: Summary

This section has illustrated how the career of those who work in the outdoors is a
temporary and transitory one. Sea kayak guiding was seen by respondents as a means to an
end, a passport to travel and meet people, and not as a lifetime career option. The
responses from this research sample support the anecdotal evidence that there is a
‘lifespan’ of three to five years in the industry. This happens at a transitional time of life
during a person’s twenties, when he or she has finished study, or is more physically able
and there are few financial and emotional commitments. As guides grow older, their
thoughts turn outwards away from the adventure and travel to a more balanced view that
incorporates a home, a stable, secure income and relationships and family.

4.5 Chapter Summary

Using People, Place, Adventure, Travel and Life-Span as themes, this chapter has
highlighted responses from sea kayaking guides, and related this to the literature reviewed
in Chapter 2. The significance of themes is captured by the phrase, “amazing people in
amazing places” (Andy). This ‘catch-all’ for these sea kayaking guides, identifies the
appeal and motivation for seeking this type of seasonal, low paid work and transient
lifestyle in their youth.

The final chapter will synthesise the four themes discussed above and make
recommendations for further research. The insights and implications from this study will
provide insight for those studying the work and leisure interface, the wider tourism and
outdoor industries, education and future training programmes.
Chapter 5
Conclusion

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5.0 Introduction

The sea kayaking guides are not only identified by their work, but more importantly at this stage of their life, identify with their work. Their work and its embedded identity “embrace” them. They are both attached to, and committed to, the role. Working with like-minded people in the outdoors, even if only for a short time, is increasingly seen as an attractive option. Guides choose their job and lifestyle as a result of family and school experiences in their formative years. They pursue specialised training and qualifications which are then used to travel, have adventures and meet new people. During their twenties they actively look for, and embrace a lifestyle of what described as “employed transience” (Adler & Adler, 1999). Life-stage changes ultimately see them settling down into a more conventional and financially secure career.

The participants in this study emphasised that family and school experiences had a significant impact on their career and life choices. For many, growing up in and around the outdoors, family camping trips were commonplace. Later, school and tertiary outdoor education experiences were often remembered and identity created via stories told, just as much for the friendships cemented on these trips, as for the activity or physical location. Working in the outdoors and ‘not in an office’ has strong appeal for these sea kayaking guides. Being able to meet people and travel to pursue this work and an adventurous lifestyle both within New Zealand and overseas, are attractive options. Certainly for many of the respondents in this study, a significant feature of their work as sea kayaking guides was both the relationships (“communitas”) generated with guests, and the community formed with fellow workmates over a season.

The decision to become a sea kayaking guide seems to reflect a trend today where the boundaries between work and leisure are less clear. The commodification of the outdoors has meant the job of sea kayaking guide is not only possible, but valued to some extent during a transitional time of one’s life. An itinerant lifestyle that facilitates, travel, meeting new people and work in a spectacular physical setting around the world, is sought after by
this group of sea kayaking guides. The significance of New Zealand culture that values the outdoors to the extent that outdoor education is an acknowledged part of the school curriculum and where an ‘OE’ is a rite of passage, contribute further to a norm that sees “getting paid to paddle” as a “fine way to make a living”. There is however, a limited ‘life span’ to this type of job, most seeking to spend their twenties working as guides, travelling and meeting new people before looking to “settle down.”

As Desforges (2000) succinctly describes when discussing youth and travel:

> Youth is imagined as a period in life when new experiences are important. In later periods of one’s life… commitments to others, in the form of jobs and personal relationships mean that it is impossible to pursue new experiences through mobility. These participants felt that unless they experienced the world in their youth, they would feel a sense of lack later in their lives having missed out on the opportunities to develop a youthful identity for themselves (Desforges p. 93).

As highlighted earlier (see Chapter 2.6, 4.4), the sea kayaking guides of this study fit Bauman’s (2000) concept of “Liquid modernity” and Rapoport and Rapoport’s (1975) category of transitioning into and through ‘young adulthood’. For some of the younger guides, the lure of adventure and travel is strong and they are able to actively embrace and pursue this as they have few commitments. For others approaching, and in their thirties, this itinerant lifestyle has ‘worn thin’. As relationships with a partner have strengthened, considerations of children, home and stable income have come to predominate. These people have lessened their guiding and travel commitments and are often considering different career options.

This research highlights how we are both anchored in society and free of it. We can resist as well as cooperate with our constructed and social identities. Today, sea kayaking guides are not the only people seeking and finding identity through their work and travels. Work still is a major way in which we in the “developed West” define ourselves. The difference now is that the choice of ‘vocation’ is looking more and more like a ‘vacation’ for some. Young people are looking to work and create a lifestyle around their preference for being in or near the outdoors. The sea kayaking guides of this study actively want to work “not in an office”, in an activity where they have a relatively high degree of autonomy. They are motivated to gain employment in the very environment they enjoy, that is, as sea kayaking
guides working outdoors, on the water. They seek to combine a lifestyle of adventure with a job.

As evident from the respondents in this sample, the accessibility of mountains, rivers and sea in New Zealand, has led some young New Zealanders to develop an affinity for the outdoors. This in turn becomes their ‘classroom’. They develop a passion for freedom, exploration, and physical challenge, all of which can be forced into the background in a more traditional classroom setting. Despite these students having much to offer, there is a danger of losing those who do not excel academically. As Lynch (2006), observed, outdoor education and the attainment of outdoor industry relevant credits is one way in which some students are able to maximise their time at school. For some, there is the discovery that there are considerably more work and lifestyle opportunities available in the wider outdoor adventure industry (of which sea kayaking guiding is a part), than in previous decades. Interestingly, and consistent with Barnes (1999, 2001), many of the respondents in this study who did not enjoy school intended to train as teachers and were keen to pass on their love of the outdoors and a more holistic style of education.

The participants believed that working as sea kayak guides offered them the freedom to travel to exotic locations, experience adventure and meet new people. They sought to pursue these advantages, which outweighed the acknowledged downsides of this lifestyle such as low pay and long hours, for a period of time during their twenties.

The sea kayak guides in this research are and feel like citizens of the world. They are fortunate enough to be able to travel where and when they want. They are comfortable wherever they go. For the sea kayaking guides in this study, a motivation to pursue this work and lifestyle is in part, an extension of being a participant in adventure activities. That is, they believe that the travel and adventure stories they are able to tell as a result of living and working in the outdoor adventure environment, ensures their cultural capital is enhanced further than if they were ‘merely’ tourists or participants. (Adler & Adler, 1999; Cook, 2006; Desforges, 2000; Holyfield, 1999; Holyfield & Jonas, 2003; Kane & Tucker, 2004; Li, 2010; McGillivray & Frew, 2007; Munt, 1994; Taylor, 2010; White & White, 2004). A common reference throughout was that of envious friends who wondered at “...wow...getting paid to paddle...around in the sun all day...how did you get the best job in the world?” (Phillip). As Casey put it:
I think just spending every day in a really cool place, really beautiful place and having the Abel Tasman as your office is pretty awesome, and there was a time at the end of one trip where we were sitting waiting to be picked up from the bus and one guy was like “Oh, I’ve got to go back to work on Monday, I really don’t want to”...complaining about how they have to go home and the holiday was over, and then I was sitting there and I was like “Oh, yeah, when do I have to...Oh, wait, hold on a second...I am working!” Sometimes it can be just like you are on holiday...that’s awesome.

5.1 Limitations

As Sharpe (2005) indicated in her study of adventure guides, “Although establishing insider status is an essential step in ethnographic research, I was cognizant that my connection to the organisation may have fostered a desire to tell a certain story about the organisation that may not have reflected the organisational reality. Gathering a representative sample of events and supporting my claims with data helped reduce this possibility.” Again, the reader is cautioned that this research is my interpretation of a small part of the stories of a select number of sea kayaking guides in New Zealand. All respondents were known to me in a personal and professional capacity. Whilst in a role that no longer is sea kayak guiding full time, I acknowledge I am a part of their world and have an interest in, and a desire to ‘tell their story.’ Within the scope of this research, I have attempted to validate the research findings through gaining ‘representative samples’ and looking to my own experiences and the literature.

In using interviews as a primary method of gathering information, caution must also be shown in interpreting information offered, transcribed and finally “selected” for presentation. Charmaz (2005) pointed to the equal importance of “silences,” or, what is not said, as being just as relevant for researcher, respondent and reader. Another limitation of interviews as a data collection method is that people may report things differently to what actually happens or what they actually do. I sought to compensate for this by using my own experiences and observations.
5.2 Practical implications of the research

The importance and value for these respondents of gaining skills and competence in a supportive environment cannot be underestimated. For the sea kayaking guides in this research, finding a niche where they could utilise their skills, gaining confidence outdoors was important. Within budget, human and physical resource constraints, schools should seek to provide a well rounded, holistic education that meets the needs of the child, gives them skills to participate positively in society, and allows them to consider and have the skills and attitude to explore the possibilities that life in the twenty first century might bring. The advantages and pitfalls of a ‘liberal’ versus purely vocational education need continuous debate and ongoing research.

Tertiary educators could attempt to find a balance between providing the specific skills and competences that are deemed necessary for a particular field and ensuring that these are transferable in some holistic way to other areas at a later date. An education for, about and in ‘Life,’ that provides an understanding of what has gone before us, a feel for the present, and a sense of optimism that with their abilities they could ‘change the world’ in the future, is a worthy goal for teaching staff and institutions as a whole.

For employers and businesses, acceptance that the nature of work has changed, and that those coming into the workforce are looking beyond the pay cheque, is essential if they seek to hold on to good employees. Providing a flexible, open format that emphasises travel opportunities and utilises the outdoor environment, with part-time or extended time-off options, would be one way that young people will be attracted to stay during their twenties. The ski and white-water rafting industries have long had informal and formal arrangements with ‘sister’ companies where instructors and guides have been able to ‘follow the season’ to a different hemisphere (Alpine guide and New Zealand Rafting Association Senior Raft Guide and Assessor, A. Moore, personal communication, August 16, 2010). The sea kayaking industry could adopt a similar model where reciprocal agreements with overseas national qualification bodies or even those negotiated between companies, help facilitate overseas work and travel, but also go some way to encourage the seasonal return of experienced and qualified guides. As the life circumstances of these guides change, a ‘salary package’ offering a more consistent year round income, and work that utilises their skills and experience in a training or mentoring role, might see significant benefits for employers, sea kayaking guides and the wider tourism industry.
5.3 Future research

The research on which this dissertation reports was exploratory, and involved a small, select, sample. There are thus limits to the extent to which findings of this research can be generalised to the total ‘workforce/play force’ of New Zealand sea kayaking guides, yet alone to all outdoor adventure guides in New Zealand or overseas. The results are consistent, however, with a wider body of research literature and with anecdotal evidence about the career spans of New Zealand outdoor adventure guides.

A search for “Identity” is the common thread that links the lifestyle, work choice and responses of the sea kayaking guides’ in this research. This idea of “identity” came to me late in the research process, and given the limited time constraints of this research project, I was unable to fully incorporate such a complex topic into this study. I agree with Barnes (2003) and Li (2010), that further study looking at identity development and tourism/travel participants, through closer analysis of the links between identity formations in those who choose to work in an outdoor setting, is desirable. The idea that some young people are today consuming adventure work experiences much like others consume and use adventure to define themselves, is also worthy of further attention by researchers.

On a more instrumental level, ‘on the water’, social science participant observation and interviews would strengthen this research. A larger, more varied subject group and more in-depth, ‘in the field’ and follow up interviews would provide rich material for further study of the aspirations, motivations and reality of this research group. This would provide the opportunity to see if comparable findings could be generalised to other sample groups, outdoor adventure activities and settings. A longitudinal research programme tracking sea kayaking guides as they moved through their careers would provide more detailed data especially in the context of ‘lifespan and transition.’ Reflections on the part of experienced guides who had moved out of full time guiding and for various reasons are no longer ‘chasing the summers’ such as Tane, Andy, Tony and John among my respondents, contrast with those just starting out. One year, three year and five year follow up studies would help establish benchmarks by which further research would add to the collective body of knowledge around education, work and lifestyle.
I do believe that as Giddens (1991) and Bauman (1996, 2001) have suggested, identity is a dynamic entity, constantly being formed and reformed throughout a lifetime as others act ‘on’ and are acted ‘upon’. Every individual brings a different story and experiences to their current occupational and lifestyle choice. These will continue to be modified as their work, play and life circumstances change. For young New Zealanders, aspiring to work as sea kayaking guides, living and working in the outdoors is, and can be, a “fine way to make a living” even if it is just for a short, defining period of their lives. The skills they learn and stories they have will hopefully stand them in good stead as the educators and ‘influencers’ of the future.


Appendix A.

Indicative interview questions:

1. Tell me the story of how you came to be a sea kayak guide.
2. How long have you been working here?
3. What have been the highlights and lowlights of your experience?
4. What do you hope to do once the season finishes?
5. What or who have been the influences on your career choice?
6. Explain what things (ideas, moments, people) you will take away with you that will be of benefit in your future career.
7. Where do you see yourself in 5 years time?
8. Paint a picture for me about how you see your role/job as a guide/working in the outdoor industry.
9. Is there anywhere/any job in particular you would like to work?
10. What do you see are the pluses about working as a guide/in the outdoor industry?
11. What are the drawbacks of working as a guide/in the outdoor industry?
12. What attributes do you perceive as being required to working successfully as a guide/in the outdoor industry? (Knowledge? Skills? Attitude?)
13. Can you see yourself working in the industry for a long time? Why/why not?
14. What do you do/or anticipate doing in the off season?
15. What sort of things do you do on your days off?
16. How important is the sea/ocean to you?
17. Why is being outdoors important to you?
18. Why did you choose guiding and not some other form of employment?
19. What are your old friends doing and what do you think are their motivations for that? Are they happy? Are you/they envious?
20. Where/Have you worked overseas? Doing what kind of work?
Appendix B

Lincoln University, Department of SSPRTS

Research Information Sheet

Life of a Guide: Living the Dream in the Outdoor Adventure Industry

Participant Interviews

Dear Participant:

You are invited to take part in a Masters of Applied Science Dissertation research project that looks at your perception of work and lifestyle in the outdoor adventure industry. I am interested in your thoughts, ideas and your ‘reality’ working in this sector.

You are being asked to do an interview that might take between 30min and 90min. (See indicative questions attached).

Participation in this study is voluntary: you may withdraw at any time up till Jan 15, 2011 and you do not have to answer questions you do not want to answer. Your responses will remain anonymous, meaning it will not be possible to connect you with the information that you have provided. No individual will be identified in any report of the results. While retaining anonymity, if you do not wish to have your direct comments from the interview used in publicly available reports (NZOIA newsletter), conference presentations (e.g. Australian or New Zealand National Outdoor Education conference) or publications (e.g. Annals of Leisure Research, NZ Journal of Outdoor Education) they will not be used, though you may still participate in the project. The interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. If you do not wish to be recorded, notes will be taken of the interview instead. A copy of your transcript or notes will be sent to you for your own records so that you might clarify or add material.

The information from all interviews will be stored securely at a locked, “password protected”, private home office and at Lincoln University for seven years. After the seven year time frame the interview information will be destroyed. If you have any questions about the research, please contact Gareth directly or his supervisors Bob Gidlow (bob.gidlow@lincoln.ac.nz) and Grant Cushman (grant.cushman@lincoln.ac.nz).

Attached please find a consent form which, if you agree to participate in the research must be completed before the interview begins. The consent form requires you to insert your name and your initials to indicate your agreement to participate.

Thank you very much for your assistance with this project. Your contributions are appreciated and will help extend our understanding of work, leisure, identity and lifestyle.

Sincerely,

Gareth Wheeler

gareth.wheeler@lincoln.ac.nz

Hm: 03 981 7185 Mob: 021 170 4731

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee
Appendix C

Participant Consent Form

Life of a Guide: Living the Dream in the Outdoor Adventure industry.

Interview Consent Form for Participant: Please read fully and insert your name and/or initial as requested.

I, (print name) _______________________________, have read and understood the Research Information Sheet of the study being undertaken by Gareth Wheeler (Lincoln University).

I agree to participate in this research project and I understand that I will be participating in an interview.

My initials at the end of this sentence indicate that I give my consent for this interview to be digitally recorded.

__________ insert initials

I understand that all information provided in the interview will remain anonymous and be kept securely by the researchers and no individuals will be able to be identified in publications arising from the research.

I am aware that my participation in the interview is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time from participating in this research project up until Jan 15, 2011. I understand that I may choose not to answer any question.

I understand that there are no anticipated risks or benefits to me personally through participation in this study.

I understand that a copy of the findings from the final report will be available to me should I request it.

My initials at the end of this sentence indicate that I give my consent for direct quotations to be used from my interview for the research report and for publications in an anonymous format.

__________ insert initials

Signature_______________________________________

Date____________________
Appendix D


Part 1: Reflection on Data.

What is going on? The ‘engagement’ level amongst the students was quite different in this pre-field trip setting. Nearly a third hadn’t been at any classroom sessions the previous day and yet here they all were, the majority on time, organised, interested and certainly eager to get underway and out into the mountains. In Tim’s case this meant even turning up when obviously not well.

There was much more laughter, movement and interaction than in the classroom.

Chap, Cat, Romy, Krissy and Al all role modelled an approach to class, study, presentation, personal and professional organisation and actively tried to make connections (e.g. being referee for jobs) beyond what was immediately happening.

What story/patterns are emerging? Last week’s theme of ‘time’ has evolved into ‘professionalism’ or the colloquial “on-to-itness” and how this might transfer to the outside world.

There were more examples of senior students as ‘role models’ for the first years and making links to the workplace. Cat and Romy being seen/visible as taking on board the gear shed sign out and hire job responsibilities and Krissy turning up with the avalanche forecast even though this is not necessarily her area of expertise/enjoyment. With Al highlighting the latter in front of the rest of the group as an example of ‘on-to-itness’ and professionalism the message is reinforced.

Part 2: Reflection on Method.

What is working/not working and why? The dictaphone is not working…got batteries sorted but couldn’t find any micro tapes…not even at Dick Smith in the city anyway! I was ‘interested’ throughout the duration time, I think perhaps it was the outside, more practical setting and participating more rather than just purely observing. Some other form of recording (voice recorder or video?) might help me capture observations more
efficiently…a different style than committing them to writing and memory when ‘filling in the gaps’ later.

**What can you learn from your experience in the field?** This time round I made more of an effort to look for connections and links from the previous weeks observation and my research interest. I was still conscious of my ‘insider/outsider’ role as lecturer/student/observer at different times and places for the people involved…but more relaxed about this. Seidentop’s Active Learning Time (ALT) or Time on Task (ToT) ideas of ‘time sampling’ are probably more suited to the more formal class and I felt no need for this type of strategy this time.

**What did you do well/what did you struggle with?** I felt less nervous and much more relaxed this time round. I made an effort to interact more and ‘be myself’. Certainly the ‘less formal’ gear shed setting proved to be different to the classroom. I still managed to get direct quotes down on a regular basis and capture other aspects of the actors, activities and place. I took fewer notes and tried to write them up sooner. I think in retrospect I achieved a ‘Moderate participation’ role which was ‘balanced’ between being a detached observer and active participant.

**What is the next step?** More practice and observations will give me more confidence. Find Dictaphone tapes (or get a new digital one!) so that this mode of recording is possible…will have to get this sorted for interviews. Change my position (physical location) more regularly as an observer and/or trial ‘actively’ participating and then writing notes up later.